



# Folklore

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# **Folklore**

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Mari Sarv, Ave Goršič, Risto Järv

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## PERFORMING AN ARCHIVE: AIMS, INTERESTS, IDEOLOGIES AND EXPECTATIONS

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**Abstract:** Public archives are repositories of human memory and history, which collect, preserve, and provide access to the records and documents creating a bridge between the past, present, and future. Archives are dynamic structures that can be interpreted as knowledge hubs, with channels of information flowing in them, activities performed within the “black box” of the institution invisible for outsiders, and channels to disseminate information for groups that they serve. These channels develop and are designed under the impact of several factors. In this article we present six factors that have shaped the development and functioning of the Estonian Folklore Archives. We first illustrate the impact of these factors, browsing through the historical periods of Estonian folkloristics. Successively, the articles of the current volume on various aspects of tradition archives are introduced and presented within the framework of the hub conception, and the relevant impact factors are highlighted. The article demonstrates that ideological framework, public expectations, institutional status, research paradigms, individual incentives of the people in charge, and (developments in) technological equipment constantly shape the content and operation of tradition archives in various time periods and circumstances.

**Keywords:** folklore archives, folklore collections, disciplinary history, ideology, knowledge hubs

## **INTRODUCTION**

Archives are repositories of human memory and history, which collect, store, and provide access to the materials conveying records from past to present society, and from the present to the future. However, archives are never mere collections of documents, static or neutral entities. They are dynamic and complex systems that are influenced by several factors. There are always purposes, intentions for creating and using these collections, ideologies and public interests behind these intentions, and last but not least real persons, researchers and archivists who implement and factualise the intentions, as they have the power to control and direct streams in and out of archives. The current volume, based on the papers presented on the occasion of the 90th anniversary of the Estonian Folklore Archives (EFA; see Archives 2017), brings into focus the role of cultural archives as a mediator of knowledge between various times, interest groups, and communities.

An archive is a kind of black box, and what happens inside remains hidden for outsiders, direct or indirect users of archives, who are not aware through what kind of processes and selections the materials reach the archives, how the archival items are organised and systematised, and which materials and why are selected to be presented to the public. In conceptualising the essence of archives we also have to keep in mind the ambiguous role, dilemmas and opportunities of an archival researcher in fulfilling the public task, responding to the requirements of funders, and performing their personal agenda.

The current introductory article of the volume seeks to outline the conceptual framework of the main factors that contribute to the creation and performance of an archive and to reveal the influence of these factors and instances of reconciliations in the case of the Estonian Folklore Archives and, in a wider context, as presented in the articles of this volume.

## **FACTORS SHAPING THE PERFORMANCE OF ARCHIVES**

The concept of a public archive encompasses a tacit or explicit agreement between an institution and society to (collect and) store certain kinds of materials for the future and for public purposes. We tend to consider archives as anonymous entities standing steady as rocks, performing their obvious actions without much ado. However, for the emergence of reliable archives, often a considerable effort of individuals, backed up by the communities concerned, socio-politically suitable momentum, and secure facilities are needed. The agenda and aims of an



archive, which for an outsider may seem self-evident, need to be configured as an intellectual effort of the people in charge. The practical activities within an archive require considerate weighing of the options and resources, and making responsible choices, keeping in mind the expectations and needs of the society and/or various communities, as well as predicting what might be relevant information for the future people. When planning and designing the collection and acquisition of materials, organising the materials, deciding what is relevant and what is not, and mediating these materials to the public or to the international research community, researchers and archivists have to find their way how to negotiate and reconcile different aims, interests, ideologies and expectations.

Based on our knowledge and experience in the history of folklore collecting in Estonia and maintenance of the Estonian Folklore Archives, we have listed six main factors influencing the performance of archives:

- ideological framework;
- sociocultural situation, public needs and expectations;
- institutional status & funding;
- research paradigms;
- individual interests & choices of archivists;
- development of technologies.

In the following we will illustrate the impact of these factors during various periods of the history of collection, maintenance, and dissemination of information related to Estonian folklore. In addition, the collection of articles dedicated to folklore archives offers us a splendid opportunity to test this conceptual framework with a wider set of experiences, to observe if and how much these factors are revealed in the research articles focusing on or at least relating to the archival matters.

## **HISTORICAL PERIODS OF FOLKLORE COLLECTING AND COLLECTIONS IN ESTONIA**

This chapter observes how the abovementioned factors have impacted folklore collecting and archive formation as well as the research and public uses of the collections in different time periods of the history of Estonia. The periodisation is based on the main political and ideological turns: gaining independence in 1918, losing independence in 1940, and regaining independence in 1991.

## **Developing a nation under German and Russian colonisation (1850–1918)**

By the nineteenth century Estonia formed part of Tsarist Russia. At the same time the region was locally ruled and administered by the Baltic Germans who had arrived in Estonia in the thirteenth century under the aegis of Christianisation but had step by step acquired the lands and enslaved the local people, Estonians. The romantic, Herderian views of folklore as a “true nature” of the humankind gained popularity in Europe, and reached the educated Baltic German upper class, who started to note down and also publish the information about Estonian folklore, mythology, customs, and habits. Folklore collection started among German Estophiles in the mid-nineteenth century.

In the second half of the nineteenth century more and more Estonians succeeded in receiving academic education. They inevitably found themselves on the borderlines of two social strata. Estonians started to publish books, calendars, and newspapers in Estonian and for Estonians, which led to the rise of national self-awareness and political movement. As most of the historical knowledge about Estonians was written down by foreigners, an idea evolved to collect information about the past of Estonians from Estonians themselves. The Society of Estonian Literati (1872–1893) was led by some of the most notable Estonians at the time (F. R. Faehlmann, F. R. Kreutzwald, J. Hurt) and the Society’s main aim was to publish books in Estonian to balance the great number of books in German; in addition, campaigns were launched to note down folklore and language.

The leading figure in some of the most important campaigns was pastor and linguist Jakob Hurt (1839–1907). He initiated a nation-wide folklore collecting campaign in 1888, which lasted up to his death in 1907. The call to collect folklore in its broadest sense was published in several daily papers. All these calls were positively received and the response to Hurt was larger than it had ever been for a collecting call (Mälk 1963: 251). It has been estimated that the amount of correspondents Jakob Hurt had was around 1,400 people. In parallel, and partly as a competition to Hurt’s campaign, a similar large-scale action was performed by M. J. Eisen, who turned his attention mainly to folk narratives and short forms and published several popular books within a short period of time. At the beginning of the twentieth century a large-scale collection of folk melodies was organised by Oskar Kallas under the aegis of the Estonian Students’ Society (Jaago 2005; Järv & Sarv 2014).

The nation-wide folklore collecting campaigns helped to increase political awareness and ambitions, forming a basis for the nation-state (like in several other countries) (Ó Giolláin 2000; Anttonen 2005: 82). Participation in folklore

collecting gave everyone a possibility of a personal input into the national processes and also encouraged women to step up from their previous hidden position in the public sphere (e.g., Kikas 2017). For this higher purpose there were contributors feeling motivated to educate themselves to read and write. The campaigns brought Estonians closer to the modern society with its literary culture and diminished gaps between the social classes and genders. The collecting work helped to increase the value of Estonian culture for Estonians themselves (since in the modernising society the ruling German culture as a literary culture was seen as more advanced, valuable and important), and to bring Estonians as a community first to the same level with Germans, but in a broader perspective closer to the image of a proper nation.

The collecting work of this period took place partly on a private initiative, but in many cases also under the name of larger societies or organisations, which gave a greater weight to the undertaking. For example, Hurt's collection campaign was officially conducted within the framework of scientific activities of the St Petersburg Academy of Sciences. Although the collections belonged to private individuals and societies, it was clear that they were intended to serve the public interests, that is, mainly the interests of the Estonian community. Hurt considered it necessary to write down "not only the beautiful, but also the obscure", including superstition and customs, which caused clashes with other pastors; he had to justify that all the information was necessary for the benefit of science and had to be accurate (Kalkun & Sarv 2014). In organising his collection actions, Hurt followed the model of the historical-geographic research paradigm emerging in neighbouring Finland and invited people to note down all the variants of the songs and other texts in all the details and linguistic peculiarities, as well as the data about the informant (his/her age or birth date and place of residence). Those principles yielded a large collection of folklore with decent metadata, suitable for scientific research.

During this period the collecting work was carried out largely on the initiative of individuals, without the constant institutional and state support, although there was some support from the different academic societies of that period. On the other hand, these initiatives fell on fertile ground in society, as a necessity emerged to foster national identity in the conditions of colonial suppression. The Estonian-oriented reputation of public figures, such as Hurt, Eisen, and Kallas, made it easier to draw people into the collecting actions.

The wide thematic range and the archiving principles worked out by Jakob Hurt determined the scope and standards of folklore collecting, archiving and folkloristic research in Estonia for a long time. Matthias Johann Eisen started to give the collected folklore (folk narratives, riddles, etc.) back to people through popular publications of (reworked) folklore texts, thus feeding into the activity

of folklore collecting but at the same time actively contributing to the tradition of literary transmission of Estonian folklore.

Although Estonians' (predominantly peasants') literacy rate was exceptionally high due to the wide network of elementary schools, amounting to 97% according to the 1897 census, the writing habits took time to spread (Raun 2017). As Estonians were, by and large, excluded from the administrative organisation of life, the necessity to use writing was limited and the peasant society functioned predominantly as an oral community. From 1866 the administration and courts of lower levels were transferred to Estonians (Traat 1968) and after that writing skills among peasants improved gradually. The folklore collecting activities induced by the first nationwide calls in the 1880s turned out to be the first serious attempts for many of the contributors to express themselves in writing (Kikas 2014). In order to organise a collecting campaign of folk melodies, Oskar Kallas needed people with specific notation skills. The solution was found through engaging in the fieldwork the students who had started their academic education in the St Petersburg Conservatory (Sarv 2002). The post service and the print media (newspapers) played an important role in folklore collection.

This period is also characterised by the early spread of more advanced technology for documenting reality. The phonograph was invented already in 1877 and by the end of the century the commercial production of recording machines and wax cylinders was established. The first voice recordings of Estonian folklore were made by Finnish folklorist A. O. Väisänen in 1912 with a phonograph acquired by the Finnish Literary Society, an organisation established in 1831 to promote the Finnish language and literature, and to collect and document Finnish folk poetry.

### **Independent Republic of Estonia (1918–1939)**

After gaining independence, the ideological situation in Estonia changed. The long-dreamt freedom had been gained, and the first concern was to establish all the state's functions. Tartu University was reorganised to provide education in Estonian (instead of Swedish, German, or Russian as before), and the chairs to develop research and education in the fields relevant for Estonia were established, among others the Chair of Estonian and Comparative Folklore. The students and emerging scholars in various Estonian studies needed the folklore collections to be available, as did the writers and composers. One of the brightest students of the newly established chair, Oskar Loorits (1900–1961), took the initiative to establish a folklore archive, a place where to gather all the private folklore collections, and make them available for the public. His ideas

found support, and in 1927 the Estonian Folklore Archives was established as an independent institution within the framework of the Estonian National Museum, with stable facilities and some permanent funding from the state (Berg 2002; Järv 2013). The archives also took the task of systematic folklore collecting, aiming first to cover the “white spots”. Most of the work was still done with pen and paper, but the archive acquired a phonograph for sound recordings, and at the end of the 1930s recording of the best singers and players was organised at the studio of the Estonian National Broadcasting, using shellac discs. The number of audio carriers was limited, however, and only selected best examples of songs and instrumental music were recorded. In the fieldwork also the photo camera was used on a regular basis. The archives also benefited from the use of typing machines; several copies enabled to systematise the texts and spare the original manuscripts. For indexing the content registers and card file systems were established. As the folklorists working at the archives obtained a profound knowledge of the functioning and performance of folklore during their systematic fieldwork, the ethnological viewpoint on the collection as well as the research paradigm developed at the archives next to previous, mainly philological one: it was considered necessary to not only record and analyse texts, but also to inquire how, when, and for what purpose folklore was used or performed (Västriik 2005: 208). At the end of the 1930s the network of voluntary correspondents was established, guidelines and questionnaires were published, and the tradition to hold gatherings of the correspondents was started. In this way the connection with the communities providing information was re-established and maintained. In the changed political situation, it was now considered necessary to collect folklore not only from Estonians, but also to some extent from the representatives of the other peoples living in Estonia (Swedes, Russians, Romani, Germans, Jews).

Oskar Loorits established the archives as a multifunctional hub, which combined collecting, storing and systematising, research and publishing of folklore. The archives found itself in an international context that followed similar paths in the neighbouring countries, forming a network of collaboration and mutual counselling (Bula 2017).

## **World War II and Soviet occupation (1940–1991)**

The war brought about the loss of independence and almost 50-years-long Soviet occupation. Estonia was occupied by the Soviet Red Army in 1940 and was incorporated into the USSR. Extensive mass deportations to Siberia were carried out in 1941. The Soviet occupation was followed by the German occupation in

1941–1944, and by another Soviet occupation from 1944 onwards (along with the second wave of mass deportations in 1949, and repressions among the members of the cultural elite). For fear of the latter, ca 80,000 Estonians fled to Sweden, Germany, and other Western countries.

After a decade of reorganisations and instability, breaks in the operation of the archives, evacuation and re-evacuation of the collections, the Estonian Folklore Archives ended up in the following situation. The Estonian National Museum was divided into a literary museum (including the folklore archives) and a museum of ethnography. The Estonian Folklore Archives was renamed as the Department of Folklore of the State Literary Museum of the ESSR. In addition, the research function was separated from the archival function, and for that a new institute of language and literature was established in Tartu in 1947 and it moved to Tallinn in 1952 (Kulasalu 2017). The official agenda of the archives was supplemented by the compulsory “public enlightenment” or popularisation function. Oskar Loorits, the former head, ideologist and motivator of the archives, had fled to Sweden during the wartime, but one of the co-workers, musicologist Herbert Tampere, succeeded in stepping up and taking charge of the position of the head of the archives from 1952 to 1967.

The whole period is characterised by double ideologies: that of the occupants, backed up by administrative and military power, and the nationalistic one seeking to preserve the national identity, language, culture, tacitly omnipresent but suppressed in the conditions of occupation, and, by and large, hidden from public communication (see, e.g., Annus 2018). In the performance of the archives both ideologies had to be negotiated to follow the principle of the proverb “the wolves are fed and the sheep are safe”: it was necessary to obey all the commands and regulations from “above” but it was done as little as possible. Instead, the archives strived to proceed with the action plan established by Oskar Loorits (who had become persona non grata in the conditions of the new political situation). On the one hand, the archive was working according to the new ideology and its demands, on the other hand the staff continued many of their previous practices. Especially in the first decades of occupation one had to be very cautious with any kind of expressions of nationalism. The head of the archives, Herbert Tampere, having been repressed and spent a year in prison, nevertheless succeeded in conveying the action principles and mentality of the prewar archives to the new co-workers, carried on and advocated the ethnological direction in the research, was concerned about the new generation of specialists in the field, and encouraged young co-workers to dedicate themselves to research. His way to maintain the archives, adhere to its action principles and conduct the research was challenging in the political-institutional situation of the time (Kippar 1999; Hiiemäe 2009; Goršič 2018).

Later on, in the 1970s and 1980s, the contacts with Finnish folklorists brought about fresh winds and new research directions, for example those related to children's lore and contemporary folklore (Järvinen 2008).

In terms of folklore collection, the network of co-workers was carefully maintained throughout the whole period. In addition, it was decided to conduct extensive (and sometimes interdisciplinary and interinstitutional) yearly fieldwork expeditions. Pen and paper, typewriters, and post service were still relevant. The development of tape recorders enabled the archives to make more and better-quality recordings during fieldwork, although tape supplies were still limited and clear preference was given to musical folklore.

Also, folklorists did their best to organise seminars and meetings with informants and co-workers in different corners of Estonia, to continuously collect and fill in the gaps in folklore collections, given the limiting possibilities of political ideology.

In the conditions of censorship and ideological pressure there were subjects that had to be avoided in the collections as well as in public output. The study of (folk) religion and religiosity was condemned; there was only one proper viewpoint on "bourgeois Estonia". It was clear that especially in the early Soviet occupation, but to a remarkable extent up to the end of the occupation it was not possible to document the real opinions, viewpoints, religiosity, or humour that circulated unofficially among the public. In the 1950s the collections of the EFA were censored for anti-Soviet, Christian and sexual folklore (Kulasalu 2013). The political framing also limited the possibilities of collection and research – it was safer to focus on historical and unpolitical records of folklore (Saarlo 2023). However, conditions permitting, even banned actions such as folk belief research were cunningly presented as following the political orders (Goršič 2018).

### **The independent Republic of Estonia (1991 until today)**

The end of the 1980s was strongly carried by the national spirit. The transition to independence brought its own problems, but also new opportunities. This meant changes in the directions and conditions on many levels, most prominently political, but also institutional, financial, and technical, as well as in the research directions and archival work.

After regaining independence Estonia once again faced the task of establishing all the state institutions in the conditions of a tight economic situation. Folklore archives still formed a part of the literary museum that was renamed as the Estonian Literary Museum (instead of the previous State Literary Museum).

In 1995 the original name of the Estonian Folklore Archives was re-established. The unleashed feeling of nationhood was blossoming and interest in folklore collections as one of the cornerstones of cultural independence grew. Since then, interest in various phenomena of traditional folklore has been increasing, the collections of traditional folklore are in consistent use in different kinds of creative re-uses, most visibly in the contemporary music scene where the branches of traditional and folk music enjoy the popularity comparable to pop and rap. It has been pointed out that while the national awakening of the nineteenth century gave rise to the tradition of song festivals, the regaining of independence at the end of the twentieth century was accompanied by a wide-spread rise of folklore movement (Rüütel 2010: 615). This also meant that there were communities who immediately needed services and counselling from the experts at the archives in order to engage in their professional activities or hobbies. The importance of the archives was made loudly heard by the communities of musicians and cultural organisations in 2020 when the archives faced funding problems in connection with the reorganisation of the research funding system. A public appeal concerning the funding of the humanities and Estonian studies was made to the ministry and the parliament (Avalik pöördumine 2020), which draw attention to the research funding issues, and among other things led to establishing a specific research funding programme on Estonian culture.

In the 1990s the definition of folklore broadened considerably (see, e.g., Jaago 1999), and that in turn opened some doors that had been closed for quite a while. In the new political situation already from the end of the 1980s, it was possible to start collecting political folklore, student folklore, soldier folklore, children's folklore, organise expeditions to collect the folklore of diaspora Estonians, record in growing amounts urban folklore and folklore in the online environment; also conscious observation, recording and research of belief folklore was carried out, which under the Soviet regime had been suppressed. Many publications were based on the results of recent collection campaigns, so what was collected in campaigns reached the public faster than before, and research and publications were more connected with a specific topic (Hiimäe 2002).

Research began to resurface alongside collection work already in the earlier decades but was not presented as work of primary importance. In 1997 the official status of the Estonian Literary Museum changed from the sub-institution of the Academy of Sciences to a research and development institution under the Ministry of Education, and from 1998 onwards the Estonian Folklore Archives was mainly funded as a research group. Now research rose to the forefront alongside collecting work, also being greatly influenced by folklorists' personal interests. The folklorists working in the folklore archives were strongly motivated to publish research articles, participate in international research communication,



and obtain academic degrees, as it gradually became more and more important to secure the funding and continuation of all the activities of the archives. The funding scheme neglected the need to finance archival work for a long time. Later a special funding programme was established for research collections, and by now the collections of the Estonian Literary Museum are directly funded by the Ministry of Education and Research, while research funding, on the other hand, is, by and large, project-based.

In the new era, also fieldwork equipment and the digitisation of archival records started to change rapidly, and has continued until today. The creation of the Estonian Literary Museum's file repository KIVIKE in 2010–2012, of which the EFA's collections form a part, and its numerous specific web-gates based on the archival collections, have given a new direction to the technical operation and accessibility of the archive. However, reaching the digital world does not automatically mean solving the problems of archiving and data accessibility, but new and more complicated ones have also arisen. Digital systems need their own innovations and solutions. The data carriers, programmes, etc., change quite quickly, which means considerable visionary work in folklore archives: what happens to the current data carriers, how to preserve them, how different programmes and storage units understand each other and are to be read in the future. Also, digital open-access archives mean a new responsibility for the folklore archives, since not all data are meant to be reached and used by the wider public. By now, a large part of the cultural communication takes place through electronic channels and online fieldwork and collecting campaigns have become an essential method of documentation next to in-person fieldwork and interviews. In the field of place lore, the geoinformation technologies have opened up new ways to document, disseminate, and analyse the information. While in the previous decades the main issue was scarcity of data carriers (wax cylinders, magnetic tapes, photo films), today we face the problem of excessive abundance of available information, and the question is how to make meaningful choices about what to consider valuable enough to preserve in the archives.

Despite all the turns and changes, the main aims of the performance of the Estonian Folklore Archives have remained the same throughout the almost a hundred years of its existence. Oskar Loorits's visions and aims (see, e.g., Loorits 1932) have proved to be justified, as have his principles to combine collection, archival work, research and dissemination under the same institution. From today's viewpoint this seems to be the key to a fully functional folklore archive. In so doing, the materials of the archives have become well known and are in wide academic and popular use in the society.

This same question of what an archive could achieve with its materials and open accessibility is pounding in the heads of most folklorists working in folklore archives across the globe: here we often find ourselves involved in another dance of the good and the (d)evil – that of the obligation to collect, preserve and give back to the society, but also to protect and stress the value of privacy and data that is accumulated in the ever-evolving knowledge hubs that the folklore archives are.

## **ARCHIVES AS KNOWLEDGE HUBS**

On the one hand, and already by definition, archives have the task of collecting and perpetuating knowledge from the past and/or contemporary era for the future, while on the other hand, archives already live in this future – the formation of public archives often proceeds from the need to have access to valuable materials or documents. For an outsider managing archives or collections may seem to be mainly technical work consisting in preserving items and making them accessible. Insiders know very well, though, that there are several aspects that shape the in- and out-flow of information, and the activities in-between, in the core of the hub.

We can divide the articles of the current volume into three groups: (1) the ones dealing with the flow of materials into archives; (2) the articles that focus on the actions and activities within the archives that by and large remain invisible on the outside; and (3) the articles inquiring about the new life and uses of archival materials that through different channels and dissemination have flown out of the archives.

In his article on ethnographic fieldwork at the Veps, **Indrek Jääts** details the five expeditions made by Aleksei Peterson, director of the Estonian Ethnography Museum, and his colleagues to the Southern Veps' villages (Leningrad Oblast, northeastern Russia) in the late 1960s. As an important insight into disciplinary history, the article also highlights the person of Aleksei Peterson and his mission in recording the Veps material and the bond nurtured between the Estonian ethnographers and the Veps locals. Here, the personality of the researcher, the sociocultural situation, ideological background, institutional framework, recording technologies, as well as research paradigms directing the fieldwork are equally handled. **Jacek Jackowski** explores the value of different types of sources of traditional music in the context of contemporary Polish folk music research and practices, contemplating the real quality and historical truth of the contemporary revival or reconstruction of music. On the one hand the article focuses on the work of folklore collector Oskar Kolberg, and the use

of technologies in documenting musical folklore, on the other hand it observes how the different contemporary communities of musicians can make use of those recordings. **Yanina Hrynevich** examines the formation circumstances and development of folklore collections in Belarus, concentrating on the main ideas and the most influential collectors and groups of collectors and the ebbs and tides of the political eras that have influenced this process.

The articles and discussions concentrating on the internal, hidden work of the archives constitute the bulk of this volume. **Rūta Žarskienė** analyses the activities of the Lithuanian Science Society and the history of its folklore collecting, pointing out the utopian ideals the researchers of the early twentieth century had, which proved to be the stronghold of the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore and the Lithuanian Folklore Archives. The article also illustrates the laborious work of compiling collections and modern digital databases. **Liina Saarlo** illustrates in her article the chess game between the politics, ideologies, folklorists and archives on the example of the Estonian Folklore Archives. Saarlo, on the one hand, explores the Soviet modernist worldview expressed in research policy, including folkloristics, and its acceptance among Estonian folklorists, and on the other, analyses the balancing act of authenticity in folklore research. **Päivi Mehtonen and Tarja Soiniola** describe an interdisciplinary project set up for the collection of manuscripts produced during the period of ca. 1780–1830 by craftsmen and peasants along the coast of the Gulf of Bothnia in Finland, the preservation process of the collection, but also the background of the not necessarily positive backdrop of forming such a historic collection. Here, the focus lies on the ability of digital technologies to bring together the bits of information stored in different archival collections. **Victor Denisov** lists the important work of Udmurt and Estonian researchers in collecting and preserving Udmurt folklore; **Katalin Lázár** describes the labour and pains of compiling an elaborate database on Hungarian traditional games; and **Mall Hiemäe** discusses the historical process of collecting folklore in Estonia and how the Estonian Folklore Archives has built itself up as a knowledge hub, and the responsibility it bears to its informants.

In the out-flow frame, **Helen Kõmmus** studies, compares and analyses participatory music making at Estonian and Finnish folk music festivals. Kõmmus argues that although the social dynamics of Finnish and Estonian festival participants may vary, the ultimate goal is still to form a united community, (re)presenting the old for the future of the new, also describing the dynamics of the groups. **Sille Kapper-Tiisler** analyses a part of dance folklore that is not so easily archived, described or reproduced – the bodily dimension of dance movements. She points out that as well as archives, human bodies are also knowledge hubs, which collect, preserve, develop and pass on knowledge.

In order to understand the dance manuscripts in their depth, the dance descriptions need to be re-bodied to realise their true nature. The article highlights the deficiency of technologies in storing bodily habits and experiences. **Carne Oriol and Emili Samper** illustrate the experience of opening a folklore archive structured under a university to the society and the social impact an archive could possibly have on the society with its activities and open-access databases.

## **CLOSING REMARKS**

It is a common mistake to think that a folklore archive is something local. The truth is that folklore archives are very international in their content. The Estonian Folklore Archives stores, as also exemplified in this volume, in addition to the material and metadata on and from Estonians, some special collections from Estonian ethnic groups, neighbouring nations, rare recordings or back-up copies from other Finno-Ugric nations. Yet, they are bound together by the fact that the archive was established and is administered in Estonia.

As we can see from the historical turning points, ideals, and dilemmas discussed in this volume, also the problems folklore archives or indeed, other memory institutions, face, are quite similar, if not the same. Political funding decisions, ideological frames, strong independent researchers and the balancing act between the public requests of open access and the need to protect (meta) data privacy constantly shape the content and operation of a folklore archive. It may sometimes even require patient waiting after political decisions before moving on with archival and research work.

We hope that with this volume we can illustrate the agenda and aims of a folklore archive from the perspectives that are not necessarily so obvious. Even if on a larger scale this does not alleviate the constant pressure on a folklore archive to prove its necessity, it hopefully provides a deeper understanding of a living, evolving, and forward-looking knowledge hub that an archive is.

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# ALEKSEI PETERSON IN THE SOUTHERN VEPS VILLAGES IN 1965–1969: A CHAPTER FROM THE HISTORY OF SOVIET ESTONIAN ETHNOGRAPHY

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**Abstract:** The article examines the five expeditions made by Aleksei Peterson, director of the Estonian Ethnography Museum, and his colleagues to the Southern Veps villages (Leningrad Oblast, northeastern Russia) in the late 1960s. These research trips marking the rebirth of the Finno-Ugric direction in Estonian ethnography (ethnology) constitute an important part of disciplinary history. The article, based mainly on fieldwork diaries, focuses on the everyday life during the research trips (logistic challenges, relations with local authorities and the Veps) and analyses the attitudes and knowledge production practices of Soviet Estonian ethnographers interested, above all, in traditional peasant culture.

**Keywords:** Veps, Estonia, ethnography, fieldwork, Soviet Union

## INTRODUCTION

This article focuses on five research trips to the Southern Veps organised by Aleksei Peterson and his colleagues between 1965 and 1969. These expeditions are an important part of disciplinary history because they mark the rebirth of the Finno-Ugric direction in Estonian ethnography<sup>1</sup> after World War II (see Jääts 2021). Here I would like to focus on the everyday reality of this fieldwork, analyse the knowledge production practices of Soviet Estonian ethnographers and shed light on Peterson's motivation to undertake those journeys to the land of the Veps.

What were the goals of these research trips and how were they related to the other activities of Estonian ethnographers? What were the logistical challenges faced on the Veps journeys? What about the personnel of the expeditions and their mutual relations? What were the relations with the local authorities? How did relations develop between the Estonian ethnographers and the Veps

villagers? What were the work methods and results (ethnographic descriptions and collected items, film, photographs, drawings) of the trips? Why were Estonian ethnographers always interested in old things and phenomena instead of contemporaneity?

Estonian ethnographers had visited the Northern and Central Veps on a few occasions before 1965 and the Veps trips continued after 1969 (including those to the Southern Veps). And yet, the five research trips under examination comprise a separate whole. All of them are connected by the person of Aleksei Peterson, director of the Estonian National Museum (ENM)<sup>2</sup> in 1958–1992. He simply came along on the first trip, but in subsequent years, he was the initiator and leader of the expeditions. The impressions of the first Veps trip discussed here were so vivid and strong that Peterson initiated a series of research trips that continued until 1983. In 1970, Peterson expanded the former study area to the Central Veps in Vologda Oblast. However, in subsequent years he returned to the Southern Veps repeatedly.

The main source for the article is the fieldwork diaries. It was considered self-evident that ethnographers keep a diary during fieldwork, but there were no strict guidelines for how to do it. Diaries had to be handed over to the archive of the institution organising the fieldwork. Thus, they were a kind of public documents and ethnographers had to decide what sort of information to include or omit. All the diaries studied here, except for Viires 1965, were kept collectively, taking turns. There was no intimacy in them. Every line was visible to everybody and obviously it had its impact on what was written and what was not. Keeping a diary was one of the fieldworkers' duties, but also a social activity. Daily events were often recorded a day or two later, when they were probably already partly forgotten. Therefore, it is important to examine the diaries side by side with other sources. I examined the photographs, film clips, and drawings originating from that period, as well as the collected items and ethnographic descriptions. I also analysed the academic and popular texts based on the material collected on these research trips, as well as reports of the expeditions in Estonian media at the time. In addition, I interviewed some of the people who participated in these trips.

I also partook in fieldwork in the Southern Veps' villages in 2014 and 2015. That is why I became interested in the activities of my former colleagues in these places. I believe that personal experience helps me to better understand those earlier expeditions. I can confirm that the Estonian researchers are still remembered in the Veps villages. The trips that took place in the 1960s have merged in the local memory with the later ones and ethnographers with folklorists, but Aleksei Peterson's name is still familiar to many members of the older generation.

## **BACKGROUND IN DISCIPLINARY HISTORY**

In the wake of World War II, Estonia was annexed by the Soviet Union and Estonian ethnography was made a part of Soviet ethnography in the late 1940s. By that time, Soviet ethnography had become a well-controlled and centralised system culminating, at the apex of the pyramid, in the Institute of Ethnography at the Academy of Sciences of the USSR in Moscow. In the Soviet Union, the branch of scholarship dealing with peoples and their cultures was called ethnography,<sup>3</sup> and it was treated as a sub-discipline of history. Its theoretical foundation was historical materialism. The basis was the evolutionist ideas of Lewis Henry Morgan and Friedrich Engels, which held that the development of human society is driven by progress occurring in the production of material benefits. Estonian ethnography, defined in the 1920s by its founding father Ilmari Manninen as a science that mainly investigated the material side of traditional peasant culture, was able to find its niche in Soviet ethnography (see Jääts 2019).

The primary object of study of the Soviet (and former Russian) ethnography was peoples and one of the main research topics since the 1930s had been ethnogenesis – the birth and evolution of ethnic units at different levels of development (tribes, peoples, nationalities). It was studied in cooperation with archaeology, history, linguistics, folkloristics, and physical anthropology. The role of the ethnographers was to study traditional folk culture in detail, in order to ascertain the ethnic history of peoples and their cultural ties to their neighbours. Ethnogenesis studies made Soviet ethnographers investigate the past.

A new direction that was added in the late 1940s was the study of contemporary processes related to culture and everyday life (including ethnic processes). The socioeconomic changes that occurred under Soviet rule had to be reflected in a positive way. Estonian researchers participated actively and effectively in the study of ethnogenesis but were not willing to deal much with the socialist present for ideological reasons. Heirs of the pre-war national school of ethnography, they preferred to keep their gaze focused on the relatively apolitical past (Konksi 2009: 311–326; Jääts 2019: 8–10).

Estonian ethnographers focused mainly on studying Estonians but had always been interested in other Finno-Ugrians as well. The political border that had separated Estonian ethnographers from their eastern linguistic relatives in the 1920s and 1930s disappeared after World War II, but this did not automatically mean that conditions were created for Finno-Ugric studies to flourish. The concept of linguistic relatives, which had influenced Estonian ethnography before the war, was condemned as being ‘bourgeois’ in the 1940s under the impact of teachings promulgated by Nikolai Marr (Japhetic theory) and

supported by the Soviet leadership. Besides, the Estonian National Museum, the main institution of ethnography in the late 1940s, went through troubled and difficult times (see Astel 2009). There was no sufficient energy for doing fieldwork even in Estonia, not to mention the Finno-Ugric areas. However, things started to improve in the 1950s.

Stalin renounced his support for Marr's teachings in the summer of 1950, and they were quickly abandoned. One could again talk about Finno-Ugrians and their linguistic kinship. Paul Ariste, an influential linguist from the Department of Finno-Ugric Languages at the University of Tartu, and his colleagues started to organise research trips to the Finno-Ugric peoples (Ariste 2008: 290, 295). In addition to languages, they were also interested in traditional folk culture and brought some ethnographic items from their expeditions for the ENM. Ariste tried to inspire ethnographers (and folklorists) to join linguists in their Finno-Ugric studies and finally he succeeded.

The ENM was subordinated to the Academy of Sciences of the Estonian SSR (today the Estonian Academy of Sciences – EAS) in 1946–1963. The academy – meaning first of all academicians of the field, archaeologist Harri Moora and linguist Paul Ariste, both leading the study of Estonian ethnogenesis – started to stress the need to collect ethnographic objects in danger of quick vanishing in 1957, and do this not only in Estonia but also in neighbouring territories (EAS 1/10/65, lists 4–6; 1/1/376, lists 186, 190, 192). The way for ethnographic fieldwork in the areas of eastern Baltic Finns, including the Veps, was open. Ethnographic data from neighbouring areas and the closest linguistic relatives had to be taken into account when studying Estonian ethnogenesis.

According to the leading theoreticians of Soviet ethnography, the main contemporary ethnic process occurring in the Soviet Union was inter-ethnic integration, which meant cultural convergence of various peoples. In the field of material culture, this meant the abandonment of archaic traditional cultural elements in favour of modern standardised industrial production (Bromlei & Kozlov 1975: 535–536). For researchers who were interested in traditional forms of culture, for example, in the context of ethnogenesis research, this meant they needed to take quick action.

Aleksei Peterson, a young and energetic ethnographer, was appointed director of the ENM in the summer of 1958 to achieve the goals proposed by the Academy. Peterson was born in southern Estonia in 1931, into an Estonian peasant family belonging to the Orthodox Church (hence the Orthodox first name). He studied history and ethnography at the sovietised University of Tartu and joined the Communist Party in 1957 – an important prerequisite for becoming director of a big museum. Yet, on the other hand, he was an Estonian-minded

man, indirectly linked to the pre-war national school of ethnography through his mentors (Harri Moora, Ants Viires).

The ENM was transferred to the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Culture of the Estonian SSR in 1963. This meant that since then cultural activities and collecting started to be stressed rather than academic research. However, on Peterson's initiative, an effort was made to continue as a research institution.

## **THE GENERAL OUTLINES OF THE EXPEDITIONS AND THE REPORTING IN THE MEDIA**

The first research trip discussed here took place from 9 June to 4 July 1965 (Viires 1965). Visits were made to the Southern and Central Veps villages of Boksitogorsk, Tikhvin and Podporozhye districts in the Leningrad Oblast. The expedition was organised by the Academy of Sciences of the Estonian SSR, and led by Karin Mark, a well-known scientist studying the physical anthropology of the Finno-Ugric peoples. The trip was made in a van belonging to the Academy, and since there were some vacant seats available, a few ethnographers (Ants Viires, Aleksei Peterson, and artist Evi Tihemets) were also taken along.

Peterson was studying old Estonian farm buildings back then and joined the expedition probably out of general interest in the field. This was his first trip to the Veps. He had probably read Aino Voolmaa's (one of his colleagues at the ENM) report on her research trip to the Central Veps in 1963. Voolmaa had written, "There is plenty of ethnographic material here. It's a fairy tale land. Such antiquities have been preserved here that we will never find in our own country anymore" (ERM TAp 544; see also ERM EA 97: 129). These impressions probably inspired Aleksei Peterson to seize the opportunity and visit the Veps area himself.

During the first stage of the expedition, the Estonians' base camp was in Sidorovo (Sodjärvi in Veps) in the Boksitogorsk district, and then in Ozyora (Järved in Veps) in the Podporozhye district. It was impossible to travel by a motor vehicle directly from one region to the other and so a long detour had to be made. Instead, Viires, Tihemets and Peterson undertook a five-day hike (about 80 km) through small and remote Veps villages and thereafter reunited with the main part of the expedition. Sixteen items and 135 photographs by Peterson accrued to the ENM Veps collection as a result of this expedition.

What Peterson saw in the Veps villages provided such inspiration that he decided to return with a film camera the next summer. When he returned from the trip, Peterson gave an interview to the *Edasi* newspaper. It was primarily

archaic features that enchanted him. He affirmed that this journey would not be the last one and stressed that ethnographers had to hurry because old phenomena were quickly disappearing as a result of modernization (Vajakas 1965; see also Peterson 1969: 319; 1970a: 10–11).<sup>4</sup>

In August 1965, soon after the first expedition under observation here, the 2nd International Congress of Finno-Ugric Studies took place in Helsinki. For the first time, it was attended by a large delegation from the Estonian SSR, including Peterson and other ethnographers. Harri Moora made one of four plenary presentations, dedicated to the early history of agriculture in Estonia and neighbouring areas. Finnish ethnologist Kustaa Vilkuna spoke about Finnish plough types (Hallap & Tedre 1965: 698, 700–701). Peterson was apparently listening with great attention.

Attending such a large international academic event definitely had an inspiring impact on the Estonians, including ethnographers, working in the field of Finno-Ugric studies. They saw that foreigners, mainly of course the Finns and Hungarians, were also interested in the Finno-Ugric peoples and languages. However, as a rule, foreigners were not allowed to participate in fieldwork in the Soviet Union. Thus, the Estonians had an advantage and they made use of it in the subsequent decades. Finno-Ugric studies were a welcomed way to international academic communication for Estonian scholars who had been quite isolated from the world outside the Soviet Union since the end of the war.

Soviet Russian ethnographer Vladimir Pimenov published his monograph *Вепсы: Очерк этнической истории и генезиса культуры* (Vepsy: Oчерk etnicheskoi istorii i genezisa kul'tury (The Veps: A Study of Ethnic History and Genesis of Culture)) in 1965. The book dealt primarily with the ethnogenesis of the Veps, and Peterson read it carefully. He found that Pimenov had mainly based his study on archaeology and folkloristics, and his treatment of the Veps' material culture remained superficial. Peterson believed that the Veps' material culture, which had received scant academic attention until that time, was of key importance in studying the ethnogenesis of all Baltic Finns (Peterson 1970a: 10–14). Thus, he saw his opportunity there in the field of Veps studies.

The second research trip under observation here was the first one organised by the ENM and took place from 30 May to 20 June 1966 (ERM TAp 565). Two men participated – Aleksei Peterson and Toivo Pedak, camera operator and photographer. They worked in the Veps villages in the Boksitogorsk district. The main purpose of the trip was to film the slash-and-burn agriculture. Three items, 274 photographs, and about 1000 m of film were added to the ENM Veps collection as a result of this expedition.

The Estonian public was informed about the expedition shortly after by the newspaper *Edasi* (Luts 1966). Peterson spoke about the trip on Estonian

Television on 20 September 1966 (ERM A 1/1/225, sheet 32; Linnus 1967: 347). Unfortunately, no recording of the interview has survived.

The third expedition took place from 21 August to 20 September 1967 (ERM TAp 573). This time, it was a larger undertaking and more people participated. Naturally, the expedition was led by Peterson. Toivo Pedak went along to film and photograph the project, and Lembit Lepp was the artist. Two ethnography students, Lembit Võime and Hugo Puss, worked as assistants. Again, they visited the Veps villages in the Boksitogorsk district, most of which were already familiar to them. They went in the autumn because they wanted to record the harvesting and threshing methods.

Seventy-two items, 83 sheets of drawings, 199 pages of ethnographic descriptions, 351 photographs, and about 3000 m of film accrued to the ENM Veps collection as a result of this expedition.

A short note was published about the research trip in the newspaper *Sirp ja Vasar* (Lepp 1967). Later, a five-part series of articles about the expedition ran in the newspaper *Edasi* between April 2nd and 6th in 1968 (Lepp et al. 1968).

The fourth research trip took place from 10 July to 1 August 1968 (ERM TAp 574). This time, in addition to Peterson, the team also included camera operator Toivo Pedak, photographer Vello Kutsar and artist Erika Järvekülg (as of 1972 Pedak). Again, they travelled to the Boksitogorsk district, to the places that had already been visited.

Twenty-nine items, 50 drawings, 284 photographs, and about 2500 m of film were added to the ENM Veps collection as a result of this expedition.

The fifth and last expedition discussed here took place between 28 August and 12 September 1969 (ERM TAp 575). Peterson was the leader again and the team included Toivo Pedak as a camera operator, Vello Kutsar as a photographer and Erika Järvekülg as an artist. A student named Ene Ammer accompanied them as a second artist. This time they travelled in a van that had been acquired by the museum, and a bus driver went with them. They visited the Southern Veps' villages in the Boksitogorsk district, where they had not been before. The autumn rains hampered the work of the expedition.

This time the outcome was 51 items, 98 drawings, 245 photographs, and an unknown amount of film.

## **THE LOGISTICS AND EVERYDAY LIFE OF THE EXPEDITIONS**

Perhaps the greatest problem in the Southern Veps' area in the 1960s was the bad condition of the roads. This meant that the connection with the rest of the world was poor. However, the archaic nature of the Southern Veps' villages

had been preserved due to their relative isolation. The roads connecting the villages were also in a poor state. The network of roads in the Southern Veps' area dated back to the time before motorised transportation. One could get through on foot or on horseback, but not always in a wagon. Sleighs were used also in the summertime. In some places, log pathways led through the bogs. Collective farms had some trucks and tractors that could get through when it was dry, but during the wet season they damaged the road to the point that it was even difficult to use horse transport. The more remote villages could only be accessed by trucks or tractors in the wintertime. There were no passenger cars in the Southern Veps' villages at that time.

For the Estonian ethnographers, the roads posed constant logistical challenges. In 1965, an Academy of Sciences' UAZ-450 van, which had four-wheel drive, made it all the way to Sidorovo. Between 1966 and 1968, the trips were made by a K-750 motorcycle with a sidecar. The journey from Estonia was quite long and arduous and required physical toughness and patience. Even the highways that led to the last larger settlements before the Southern Veps' villages were very bad in places but were being repaired over the years. Tens of kilometres of especially bad roads separated Southern Veps' villages from the Leningrad-Vologda railway. It was possible to travel this distance on a narrow-gauge railway that had been built for transporting timber from the forest. The motorcycle was loaded on a platform car, and then slowly moved through the forests and bogs separating the Southern Veps from the rest of the world.

The motorcycle was needed for travelling between the villages. The film equipment weighed about 50 kilos and it could not be carried far by hand. At least two people had to travel on the motorcycle because one would not be able to push it out of the mud holes. But getting stuck in the mud was quite common. The overloaded Soviet motorcycle broke down quickly on the bad roads and often needed to be repaired. Some places were not accessible by motorcycle. In these cases, one moved on horseback or on foot. Sometimes a sovkhos truck or a tractor would give a lift. Occasionally, boats were used. The rivers and lakes were the oldest routes in the forest zone.

In 1969, the expedition used a UAZ-452 van acquired for the museum along with a trailer for transporting the collected objects. Previously, most of them had been sent to Estonia by mail. Although the van was brand new, it still needed to be repaired from time to time. And it repeatedly got stuck in the autumn mud.

In the land of the Veps, the ethnographers always had one place where they stayed longer, a starting point for their excursions – the expedition's base camp. Between 1965 and 1968, this was in Sidorovo, and in 1969 in Radogoshch (Arskahť'). In Sidorovo, which the Estonians often called the unofficial capital of the Southern Veps, they usually lived in a school dormitory. After all, they



travelled mostly during the summer months, during the school holiday. It was the common practice of Soviet ethnographers – fieldwork, mostly collective, was carried out in the summertime (see Dragadze 1978: 66). On the way to and back from the land of the Veps, and when making excursions from the base camp, they overnighted in people's homes or in empty houses, which the local authorities permitted to use. Sometimes, they also had a tent with them, but they seldom used it.

On the long trips to and from the land of the Veps, they mostly ate in cafeterias, where they existed. There were no cafeterias in the villages, but the Veps were generally hospitable, and often the ethnographers were fed by the people they were interviewing. Sometimes, they were also offered vodka and home-brewed beer. The food selection in the small village stores was quite meagre, but something could still be picked up for a small group of travellers. On a few occasions, they also purchased food and drink from the village people, and fishing and mushroom picking provided additional nourishment.

They ate what there was and when they had the time. The work was of primary importance, at least as far as Peterson was concerned. When the group was larger, they formed informal kitchen crews.

In the case of larger expeditions, quite a lively social life developed. In the evening, they had drinks, went to the sauna, joked around, and kidded each other. Often, they watched movies or attended dances at the village club.

In 1965, Ants Viires as the oldest and most experienced one, was the leader of a small group of Estonian ethnographers. From that trip, Evi Tihemets remembers Peterson as a nice and helpful companion, with good abilities to find and carry objects (Tihemets, personal communication, 5 May 2015). Starting in 1966, Aleksei Peterson was the indisputable leader of the expeditions, and in the collective diaries, he is called the 'leader' or the 'chief'. He gave assignments and organised the work. But Toivo Pedak also participated in four of the trips discussed here. He was irreplaceable as the camera operator and technician, and his experience in the Veps area almost equalled that of Peterson's. From the diary, it appears that he viewed Peterson's role as the leader with some irony and allowed himself some wilfulness. Some competitiveness seemed to have existed between the two about who was more skilful, cleverer, and stronger (Võime, personal communication, 29 November 2017; Pedak, personal communication, 1 February 2018). Nevertheless, generally, Pedak was a trustworthy and responsible companion. Otherwise, he would not have been asked to come along repeatedly. Pedak's Russian was not good, but he was there to work, not talk.

Women came along on the last two expeditions. Peterson had quite a traditional and patriarchal understanding of the roles and jobs of men and women. He believed, for example, that cooking and cleaning were women's jobs, whereas

dealing with machinery and boats was men's area of expertise. Generally, they managed. The men cooked when necessary and mended their own clothes if needed.

The ethnographers tried to organise their work as rationally as possible and often agreed on their visits to local people in advance. At the same time, they were also opportunists and had always to be ready. When it rained, they busied themselves indoors, conducted interviews, made drawings and took photographs, rummaged around attics looking for old items, organised their notes, and kept diaries.

## **RELATIONS WITH THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES**

Few foreigners moved around the remote corners of the Leningrad Oblast. They were quickly noticed and caused distrust in the local authorities. The paranoid vigilance regarding spies that dated back to the 1930s was still there in the 1960s. To dispel the suspicions, the new arrivals had to have a legitimate reason for being there, and to prove it by documents. When it became clear that they were scholars from Soviet Estonia, a brotherly republic, the locals offered to help as much as they could. After all, science had to be supported. Expeditions fitted well with the spirit of the era.

First, one had to visit the regional committee of the Communist Party with one's letters of recommendation (from the Academy of Sciences of the Estonian SSR, later the Ministry of Culture of the Estonian SSR). Those visits were primarily courtesy calls. The ethnographers wished to operate in the 'domains' of the local authorities, and not notifying them would have been frowned at. If the documents were in order, getting a permit was actually no problem. From the regional level, the approvals moved downward to the directors of collective farms and chairmen of village councils. The regional committee also provided authoritative information about the local conditions.

In Sidorovo, the most influential contact for the scholars was Aleksei Mikhailovich, the chairman of the collective farm called *Druzhba* (Friendship). Vladimir Stepanovich, the director of the primary school in Sidorovo, was also a very useful figure. He provided lodgings in the school dormitory. Warm relations with these men existed for years. The ethnographers went fishing with them, drank with them, and helped them when possible. For example, the expedition photographer took pictures of the spring graduations and first schoolday events. In 1967, Peterson and Puss made a presentation about ethnography at Sidorovo school and explained their goals and activities.

In addition, there were the lower-level authorities, for example, the farm brigade leaders. They helped if needed and organised transport and lodgings if possible.

In later decades, when doing fieldwork among bigger Finno-Ugric peoples having Soviet-style territorial autonomy, Estonian ethnographers usually had a regional museum as the local institutional partner and mediator with villagers. The Veps did not enjoy even the lowest level of autonomy, nor did they have a regional museum of their own. Thus, Estonian ethnographers had to address the Veps directly.

## **INTERACTION WITH THE VEPS**

In the backwoods villages that the ethnographers visited for the first time, they were often initially greeted with great distrust. The locals, frightened by the repressions of the late 1930s, were afraid of strangers and did not want to be photographed. They hid in their houses, locked the doors, and demanded to see documents. After all, who knew who might have been lurking about? Often, the work and activities of the ethnographers initially seemed incomprehensible to the locals. On their first trip, the Estonians were thought to be German spies, because of the baseball cap that Peterson wore. Explanations had to be provided (Tihemets, personal communication, 5 May 2015).

But once they became acquainted, local people were usually very friendly and hospitable. They offered the visitors food, drink, and sometimes even lodgings, and invited them to have a sauna. The Veps and Estonian languages are quite similar, and when the Veps discovered this, common words were often found together. They rejoiced in the linguistic kinship and a sense of brotherhood developed. In some cases, they spoke about the Estonians being 'like old relatives' (Tihemets, personal communication, 5 May 2015).

The fieldwork diaries reveal that the Veps were generally quiet and hard-working. They spent plenty of time in the forest – fishing, gathering mushrooms and berries, making hay. They did not always have time to talk with the ethnographers, but if it did not disturb their own work and activities, they were usually ready to help. Sometimes the Estonians also lent them a helping hand. This helped to develop mutual understanding.

The ethnographers' equipment – film and photo cameras, and tape recorders – were quite extraordinary in this remote area and caused excitement in the villages. During holidays, the Veps drank for days, especially the men. And this significantly hindered the work of the ethnographers, because the intoxicated

men did not provide reliable information. They were just offering vodka and their home-brewed beer, asking to be photographed and talking nonsense.

After years of visiting the same places, close acquaintances and friendships developed. The Estonians were accepted almost as part of the community in Sidorovo. They joined in the celebrations at the club, visited acquaintances, and helped fix their radios and boat engines. Romances also developed between young Estonian men and local maids.

Based on their research interests and goals (traditional peasant culture, ethnogenesis studies), the Estonian ethnographers went to the Veps villages primarily in search of the old and archaic. For example, Toivo Pedak, who travelled around the environs of Radogoshch, writes about a beautiful view of an even more beautiful village – “like an old fairy tale” (31 August 1969, ERM TAp 575).

Lepp et al. (1968) view the people in the Southern Veps’ villages as “something resembling an ancient community” (2 April). The meals were conducted “according to the old customs – a bowl in the middle of the table, with everyone taking a spoonful and putting it in their mouth” (5 April).

For the Estonian ethnographers, the land of the Southern Veps was like a living open-air museum, a window to the Veps’ past, but also to the Estonians’ own past. This view was rooted in the concept of the evolutionist ladder of linear development inherent both in old-school Finno-Ugric studies (the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries) and in Soviet ethnography. It was believed that the Veps were a bit behind Estonians and what had already disappeared in Estonia could still be seen and studied in the remote Veps villages, at least in part.

The contemporary land of the Southern Veps was seen as a backward province and observed through the eyes of civilised city people. For instance, in the diaries, there are many critical comments about the way the locals dance at the village clubs. Estonian ethnographers were not interested in modern Soviet phenomena in the land of the Veps. In fact, they disliked them, because they were spoiling the ideal picture of ancient villages of the Baltic Finns.

The great similarity between southern Estonia and the land of the Southern Veps is often mentioned in the diaries. For Peterson, who came from southern Estonia, this concurrence apparently made a significant impact during his first trip. In some sense, it was as if he had ended up back in his own rural childhood.

## **ETHNOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTIONS**

Estonian ethnographers were mainly interested in the past and they worked with their ears rather than their eyes (see Dragadze 1978: 66). They sought to interview older people who remembered the old times. The ideal interviewee was an old, but still clear-thinking, sober, intelligent, and talkative Veps. A man rather than a woman, because of the ‘manly’ research topics (transport, buildings, agriculture) of male ethnographers. The conversations could last for hours. Notes were taken, and on the last three visits, some talks were recorded on tape. The interviews were conducted in a mixture of Russian and Veps. The ethnographers asked their questions in Russian, at least at first, before they got used to the Veps language. The answers were in either Russian or Veps. “At first, we could not understand what they were saying, but by the end of the expedition, we were slowly starting to become oriented” (Lepp et al. 1968, 5 April).

One way that the Veps language entered the conversation was through the names of the items the ethnographers were interested in because this was important when studying cultural contacts and ethnogenesis. Their ethnographic notes overflow with Veps words and terms. According to Vöime (personal communication, 29 November 2017), Peterson often emphasised the necessity to write down the correct Veps names of objects.

## **COLLECTION OF OBJECTS**

On the first two expeditions being examined here, the collection of objects was not a separate goal, but some objects of interest were received as gifts or found in abandoned buildings – mostly tools and items made of birch bark, also some items of clothing. In subsequent years, serious attention was turned to collecting objects, and this was quite successful. More than half were received as gifts, and the rest were bought. It seems that people were quite willing to give up their old tools and items they did not really need any more. But they asked to be paid for clothing. Weaving cloth at home was very time-consuming and the product was considered precious. However, much depended on the specific person, and his or her character. Generally, it seemed that men were more generous, and women more practically minded. However, the Veps were not willing to give away, or even sell, everything that the ethnographers were interested in. In those cases, drawings or photographs were made of the objects.

The collected objects were registered and packed for transport. Most of the goods acquired were sent to the museum by post. Very large objects (ploughs,

wagons, sleighs) were not yet being collected at that time, because it would have been too difficult to transport them to Estonia (Lepp et al. 1968, 2 April). The more distant goal, which was kept in mind right from the start, was to achieve a representative material overview of traditional Veps folk culture (see Linnus 1970: 245). The ethnographic items were seen as objects of study. It was hoped that careful analysis of the collected things would help to answer the raised research questions. On the other hand, the objects also had an illustrative and popularising function – they could be displayed in future exhibitions.

Laura Siragusa and Madis Arukask (2017: 76–78, 81–87) examined the fieldwork led by Peterson in Vologda Oblast (visits to Pätzhar and Pondal) in the 1970s. They acknowledge Peterson's achievements in collecting objects but blame him for his view that “the objects have much more value than the people”, whom Peterson perceived “mostly as keepers and potential donators of traditional, local materials” (ibid.: 86). True enough, Peterson's goal was to accumulate and study the material peasant culture within the context of the then Estonian and Soviet ethnography (ethnogenesis, ethnic history, cultural relations). At the time, Peterson and other ethnographers primarily focused on peoples and their history, and contemporary individuals were of less concern. For Peterson, the people, mostly older Veps, served, above all, as informants, a door into the past. However, this did not hinder him from treating the Veps with sympathy and respect, as well as forming long-term friendships with some of them. A similar attitude of regarding people as mere “informants” is also clearly expressed by Vladimir Pimenov in his memoirs (2015: 209–210).

Collecting Orthodox icons was an interesting subtopic of those expeditions. In Soviet academia, religion was considered a topic of folklorists rather than ethnographers. However, Estonian fieldworkers were interested in icons, and it was relatively easy to get some from abandoned houses or from people turned away from Christianity under pressure of Soviet ideology. Very few of the acquired icons ended up at the museum (not interested in religious items, as a rule). Icons were kept for oneself, as they were somewhat in fashion among the intelligentsia of those times.

## **PHOTOGRAPHING**

Photographs were taken during all the expeditions under discussion here. This was a relatively fast and easy way to record what one had seen. In 1965, both Viires and Peterson took pictures. Later, a special photographer always travelled with the expedition (T. Pedak, V. Kutsar). Photographs were taken of the ethnographic items, means of transportation, buildings and their details,

tools, village scenes, as well as local people and events. The expedition members and their fieldwork, their adventure, was also photographed. The photographer was generally welcomed at village festivals, and there were always many inebriated men who wanted to be photographed. Soviet photo equipment was what it was, and the picture could also be ruined by a defective film. Mistakes could also be made in developing the photographs. Therefore, the quality of the hundreds of black-and-white photographs made on these expeditions fluctuates and is sometimes poor.

## **DRAWING**

The artists often worked apart from the others, at their own pace. They made drawings of ethnographic objects, buildings and their details, and sometimes people. Thus, their work partially overlapped with that of the photographers, but they were much less efficient. However, a drawing of an object or building that includes measurements is usually much more informative than a photograph. Basically, the artist followed the orders of the expedition leader but also showed personal initiative when finding something inspiring. The artist's job description also included measuring the buildings and drawing their plans. As a rule, an assistant helped with this work. When it rained, the artist might be found sitting in a friendly home or empty house, drawing household utensils and furnishing. According to Erika Pedak (Järvekülg at the time), the expeditions were the main reason why she worked at the museum for years for such a low salary (Pedak, personal communication, 1 February 2018).

## **FILMING**

During the expeditions to the Southern Veps between 1966 and 1969, special emphasis was placed on recording the old, and quickly disappearing, work methods and customs on film.<sup>5</sup>

The importance of ethnographic films was discussed at the 2nd International Congress of Finno-Ugric Studies in Helsinki in 1965, which Peterson attended (Hallap & Tedre 1965: 700). At the same time, the idea of producing a joint Estonian-Finnish film on the Finno-Ugric peoples was born (Lõhmus 2011). Thus, an interest in the Finno-Ugric peoples and in the ethnographic film was in the air, and in the early summer of 1966, Peterson and Pedak went to the land of the Veps with the museum's professional 35 mm Konvas camera. The main focus was on slash-and-burn agriculture. The year before, this archaic

way of cultivation had still been practiced on the collective farm and Peterson definitely wanted to record it.

The slash-and-burn technic was no longer practised that year. But the people who knew how to do it and the necessary tools were still available. With persistent organisation, Peterson was able to arrange a small enactment of slash-and-burn cultivation, which was carefully recorded.

In addition, that year and the following years, a series of activities were filmed, including harvesting with sickles, threshing with flails, haymaking, planting potatoes, letting the herd out to pasture and bringing it home, traditional cooking and beer brewing, having a sauna in the oven, doing the laundry, building a dug-out boat, making birch-bark shoes, swingling flax, and spinning with a spindle. Religious activities were also filmed in some cases; for example, a village festival in Sidorovo and commemoration of the dead in Pelushi (Peloo) graveyard, where Orthodox Christianity merged with remnants of animist beliefs.

As a rule, the filming was not spontaneous, but planned very carefully, mainly because of technical restrictions. Film was always in short supply. Since the sensitivity of the film was low, the filming had to be done outdoors in bright sunlight, and often the cameraman had to wait for a cloud to get the shot. For the indoor shooting, the lighting was carefully arranged before the camera started to roll (e.g., 3 September 1967, ERM TAp 565). It was unthinkable just to observe local everyday life with the camera, as it is often done in visual anthropology today.

As mentioned above, Peterson was interested in the past, in traditional peasant culture, and he wanted to show it on film too. When possible, the signs of modernity (power lines, tractors, asbestos cement roof tiles) were left out of the shot as they ruined the picture. Peterson made ethnographic films in almost the same way as feature films are made. But instead of the actors, he had the villagers, wearing old-fashioned clothes and holding old-fashioned tools. It was important to depict the work process or other activity as accurately, authentically and scientifically as possible (Peterson 1975; 1983).

As the museum director, Peterson was not obligated to deal with filmmaking, which was quite troublesome. However, for him, this was part of his self-realisation. It was not common at all in the Soviet Union during those times that an ethnography museum was making films. In fact, it was a grey zone – not officially stipulated, but not directly prohibited either. Peterson was one of the pioneers in this field in the Soviet Union and was proud of that. The material that was filmed in the Veps villages between 1966 and 1969, as well as in subsequent years, was later made into two films – *The Making of Dugout Boats* (1980) and *Vepsians at the Beginning of the 20th Century* (1981).<sup>6</sup>



## THE MAIN ACADEMIC RESULTS OF THE EXPEDITIONS

The 3rd International Congress of Finno-Ugric Studies took place in Tallinn in August 1970. This was a great event, for which Estonian scholars had prepared for years, and it did not leave the ethnographers untouched.

On the occasion of the congress, the ENM published a volume entitled *Läänemeresoomlaste rahvakultuurist* (On the Folk Culture of the Baltic-Finns) (1970). Peterson was represented with two articles in this book. The first, opening article, “Eesti etnograafide ülesandeid läänemeresoomlaste uurimisel” (The Assignments of Estonian Ethnographers in the Study of the Baltic-Finns) (Peterson 1970a), was already quoted above. The second one was dedicated to the development of the forked plough in Estonia and the Veps’ area and was based mainly on the material collected during the fieldwork in the Southern and Central Veps’ areas between 1966 and 1968 (Peterson 1970b). Many well-known scholars (incl. I. Manninen, G. Ränk, K. Vilkuna, and H. Moora) had dealt or were dealing with the history of agriculture and farming tools. It was somewhat risky to intrude with one’s own ideas, which had not been completely considered and justified from every angle. But it was not Peterson’s style to keep his ideas hidden. Previously it had been thought that the forked plough was a relatively late (beginning of the 2nd millennium AD) loan from the Eastern Slavs or Balts. However, when researching the Veps’ forked plough, Peterson found that it was closely related to slash-and-burn cultivation, and surmised that the plough was invented on the mainland of Estonia at the beginning of the 1st millennium AD and then quickly spread to the Veps (Peterson 1970b).

Peterson published his article “Vepsa ait” (The Veps Storehouse) in volume 24 of the ENM’s Yearbook (1969, actually in the summer of 1970) dedicated to the congress. He used storehouses as a probe into the distant past to explore the ethnic history of the Baltic Finns (Peterson 1969).

Peterson’s article “Lõunavepsa linandusest” (On the Flax Production of the Southern Veps) was published in the next volume of the ENM’s Yearbook (1971) and was also based primarily on the fieldwork material. Peterson claimed that the growing of flax was a very old phenomenon among the Baltic Finns and closely related to slash-and-burn agriculture (Peterson 1971).

In summary, it can be said that Peterson loved to emphasise the old age and local origin of the phenomena he studied. He tended to defend the creativity of the Baltic Finns and reject widespread theories of cultural loans from the Slavs and Balts. This may have been an expression of his Estonian, and more broadly, Baltic-Finnic mindset.

## CONCLUSION

This article examined the five expeditions made by Estonian ethnographers to the Southern Veps' villages between 1965 and 1969. At that time, the roads connecting the land of the Southern Veps and the rest of the world were in poor condition and posed constant logistical challenges for the Estonian scholars. The Southern Veps led a quite isolated life, and therefore much that was archaic and fascinated the ethnographers still survived there or had disappeared only recently. This remote corner of the then Leningrad Oblast was a kind of window to the past for the Estonian researchers who were mainly dealing with the issues of ethnogenesis at that time. They were interested in ethnic groups and their history rather than contemporary individuals. Influenced by the evolutionist concept of linear development, they tended to believe that old material still available in the Southern Veps' villages (but not in Estonia anymore) could shed light on the past of Estonia too.

The traditional material culture of the Veps had not been researched much and Aleksei Peterson saw his opportunity and mission there. Modernisation was already occurring and everything old was in danger of disappearing. The ethnographers who were interested in this had to hurry to save what was possible for science. The traditional peasant culture of the Veps was recorded on photographs and film; ethnographic interviews were conducted and drawings were made, and objects were eagerly collected. It required a team of two to six people. Fieldwork was collective and carried out in the summertime – as a rule in Soviet ethnography. The material gathered was quickly made available to academic circles in the form of presentations and articles. Reports on the expeditions appeared in the Estonian media. The public was apparently interested, and the research on the linguistic relatives received positive feedback because it was related to the Estonian national identity.

The attitude of the local authorities toward the ethnographers was generally positive. The spirit of the era favoured science and expeditions. Initially, the Veps were distrustful, especially those in the farthest and most isolated villages. The ethnographers had to explain their goals and prove them with documents. Later on, the estrangement dissipated, and when the kinship between the Veps and Estonian languages was discovered, the arrivals were greeted as long-lost relatives. As the years passed, the Estonians started to be treated almost as their own in Sidorovo, which was repeatedly the site for the ethnographers' base camp.

An important link between the five research trips under examination is the person of Aleksei Peterson. The first time, he was just a bystander, but what he saw and experienced in the Southern Veps' villages had such an impact on him

that he initiated an entire series of Veps expeditions. As the museum director, he was not obligated to research the Veps personally and to go on the quite tiring expeditions. However, Peterson was an ambitious man. He wanted to make a name for himself in science, including in the field of ethnographic films. He could have documented the socio-economic changes in the Veps' villages and applauded the Soviet-led progress, thereby promoting his career. His interest, however, lay in the past, in the traditional peasant culture and in ethnogenesis. In addition to everything else, these Veps trips were certainly an adventure, a welcome escape from the daily routine, not only for Peterson but also for his co-workers. People were usually happy to go on expeditions. They felt they were doing the right thing, promoting the Estonian cause in a way.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The discipline, mainly studying the material side of traditional peasant culture, was called 'ethnography' in Estonia up to the 1990s. Its counterpart in the Soviet Union was also labelled 'ethnography'. I use the term of the era under discussion in my article instead of 'ethnology'.
- <sup>2</sup> The official name of the Estonian National Museum (founded in 1909) was changed repeatedly during the Soviet period. I use the ENM throughout the article for the sake of simplicity.
- <sup>3</sup> The discipline had this name already in Tsarist Russia. The tradition continued in the Soviet Union and helped preserve the label in Estonia as well.
- <sup>4</sup> P. Ariste (1964: 5) gave a cause for studying the Veps much in the same vein. Peterson was probably familiar with his text.
- <sup>5</sup> On ethnographic films made at the ENM during the Soviet period see Niglas & Toulouze 2010.
- <sup>6</sup> The films have been issued on a DVD under the heading *Estonian Ethnographic Film III. The Vepsians* (ENM 2015).

## ARCHIVAL SOURCES

EAS – archive of the Estonian Academy of Sciences  
ERM A – archive of the Estonian National Museum  
ERM EA – ethnographic archive of the Estonian National Museum  
ERM TAp – fieldwork diaries of the Estonian National Museum  
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# ***IF OSKAR KOLBERG HAD HAD THE PHONOGRAPH... OR HOW TO READ THE OLDEST ARCHIVAL NOTES OF POLISH TRADITIONAL MUSIC THROUGH THE PRISM OF PHONOGRAPHIC EXPERIENCE***

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**Abstract:** The article explores the value of different types of sources (written, audio) of traditional music in the context of contemporary Polish folk music research and practices. The military twentieth century rendered a large gap in the records (especially in the sound recordings) of traditional music and in order to obtain a more coherent and complete picture of the essence and development of traditional music, it is necessary to combine all the bits and pieces in different types of recordings. The most recent research has allowed us to study the first notations of traditional music made by Oskar Kolberg in the nineteenth century in quite a new context – via audio experiences after listening to archival recordings. The “phonic age” delivered additional data about traditional music – not only lyrics, melody, intervals and formulaic notation of rhythms, but also every detail that could not have been captured and saved with the use of traditional musical notation. The appearance of new techniques of sound recording has a particular meaning and influence for the reconstruction of the ancient sound of village music and for styles and manners of performing. It is important not only for musical performers but also for theoreticians who often face the problem of how to interpret historical descriptions of music or how to truly perform historical reality (e.g., ethnomusicologists, ethnographers, film and radio-audience producers, etc.).

An experimental study was conducted in collaboration with contemporary musicians on how they interpret the acquisition of a new piece written down over one and a half centuries ago. The results revealed notable differences between the musicians with academic education, younger generation revivalists, and traditional musicians in terms of acquiring the style of performance but also in shares of improvisation. In addition, the notation is not able to describe the nuances of performance and therefore the audio recordings or live models are of extreme value in the practical learning and researching of traditional music.

**Keywords:** traditional music, archival sound recordings, Oskar Kolberg

## INTRODUCTION

Modern ethnomusicology observes significant transformations of culture, traditions and musical practices in the rapidly changing world. This discipline as a humanistic branch of science increasingly asks questions about the subject of contemporary fieldwork, repertoire, and musical practices (what is traditional, what is new, what is local, what is from outside, what is becoming part of the culture and what is forgotten, etc.). Through the prism of archival, documental heritage (sounds, films, pictures) we try to see, research and evaluate reality. This rises many questions, for example:

- To what extent should we record contemporary manifestations and performances of traditional musical practices that still exist? Nowadays there are many different frameworks for performing traditional songs and music – from old, preserved and still cultivated rituals up to stage performances or revitalised (reconstructed) performance situations.
- To what extent and how should we collect sound and audiovisual documents that present traditional musical repertoire today? There is an opportunity for developing methods of gathering and describing filed materials (Jackowski 2023).
- Can traditional music be considered as still alive or can the performances be considered as the relics of the past? Is the traditional old repertoire performed today (revived or reconstructed) just a manifestation of the still alive musical culture, a kind of continuation in modern, quite a different world, or is it only a romantic comeback of the past as an antidote to the developing civilisation, longing for the old lifestyle?

These and other similar questions have been often discussed in recent years.

In this paper I would like to present the problem of the present state of the musical folklore archive and ask whether completed collections (which could be dated back as far as almost 150 years ago) should be closed and presented in a form of simply a “sound museum” or should they still serve as a continuing part of the documentation of traditional music in contemporary contexts. From the author’s point of view recordings from various generations and decades could be a proper foundation for research of the vivacity (what has been preserved, what has gone by, and what new has appeared) as well as variability of living representations of musical folklore. There is also one more important context for presenting the article: to view and research non-recorded materials (in the case of Poland the oldest available musical transcripts/notations were made in the nineteenth century) in comparison to sound recordings made later, as the next and new stage of documentation in the “phonic age”. The latest research allowed us to look at these first notations of traditional music in quite a new



context – via audio experience after listening to archival recordings. The “phonic age” brought about additional data regarding traditional music – not only lyrics, melody, intervals and formulaic notation of rhythms but also all the details that could not have been captured and saved with the use of traditional musical notation. Thus, the existence of sound recordings has a particular meaning and it influences the contemporary reconstruction of the ancient sound of village music as well as styles and manners of performance. It is important especially for music performers but also for theoreticians who often face the problem of understanding historical descriptions of written music or historical sources of repertoire. The report aims to show how the oldest written transcriptions of Polish traditional music can be deciphered and understood in the later context (after almost 100 years of the existence of phonographic sources) and how important is ethno-phonographic experience and historical knowledge for the contemporary performers grown up in villages, towns, and cities. For all of them the historical sound recording could work as a missing link in traditional, oral direct transmission of the repertoire and style of performance.

Founding, setting up, managing, and preserving folklore archives are obvious activities for archivists, scientists, ethnographers, musicologists, etc. But many people (non-specialists, outside the field) could simply ask: what for to collect written (“silent”) manuscripts of old traditional songs, why gather recordings of folk music and additional information about them, to spend time and money on these non-profitable activities?<sup>1</sup> The researchers struggle with questions about how to make this heritage interesting and attractive for the contemporary people, especially the young generation of potential musicians, composers, scientists, and teachers. There could not be one answer to these questions: from the general, monumental and obvious statement about the special importance of preserving tradition, history, heritage, and so on to service various groups of people with academic and personal interest in these questions (historians, ethnographers, ethnologists, dialectologists, musicologist, literaries, etc., as well as regionalists and tradition lovers). In addition, there are people who want not only to research, analyse, measure, and catalogue, but also to bring back to life the songs and music in many contexts. It should be stressed that using traditional repertoire as a source of inspiration or citation for composing works of classical music has been very popular from the nineteenth century (especially in Romanticism) until today (e.g., Chopin, Bartók, Kodály, Dvořák, Grieg, Szymanowski, Sibelius). A contemporary modern manifestation of this musical inspiration in Poland is the so-called folk music movement, which could be generally understood as a new sound of traditional music or citation of folk melodies and songs in modern arrangements (Rokosz 2009; Trembaczevska

2022). It is not traditional music in effect, but quite a new musical quality, style and genre based more or less on traditional repertoire.

Another important issue is to try to preserve in practice the living traditional repertoire in its original sound, and the purpose of this article is to focus on this particular aspect. In contemporary Poland – similarly to many European countries – traditional musical repertoire exists in both contexts – primary/original (as a historical relic, still alive generally in its ancient form) and new, modern (as a way of continuation in a new form, revival or reconstruction). The border between these contexts is not clear but the first sphere (conservative) is rather elderly people's domain and the second one is rather open to the new generation. Due to the lack of events, such as traditional weddings or other celebrations, especially the ritual repertoire disappeared from real life, but instrumental music still accompanies dance parties organised by a part of the young generation (especially from the cities) who want to learn to play and dance in the traditional style and who are lovers of folk tradition as a lifestyle and an antidote to the developing civilisation. In this case the general context (dance) has partly survived, but the society has changed from a small (relatively enclosed) village group to a mixed one composed of mainly city people. Also, a part of traditional musical culture – folk piety (mainly catholic, but also orthodox and protestant) – and sparsely preserved rituals and customs celebrated mainly by the older generations, with some participation of children and the youth, have survived in the living practice (Jackowski 2012). Quite a new context that appeared in the twentieth century is musical folklore as a stage performance (e.g., during festivals, competitions, etc.).

The purpose of the article is to show how archival documents can help the abovementioned groups in the preservation, continuation, revitalisation or reconstruction of the fading musical tradition. The documents preserved in archives are necessary for the context of musical activity, which seeks to keep original, traditional musical repertoire in its original context (e.g., prayer, ritual) or in its original function (e.g., dance). There exist also other aspects of old songs and music performances, for example, reconstructions for artistic reasons (stage performances, film, theatre). For all these groups the documentation of traditional performances is a starting point for further artistic, reconstructive or cultural activity.

Many of the contemporary soloists and musical groups who try to preserve traditional music in the living practice (revival, reconstruction) and play old traditional repertoire remind us of groups of people who reconstruct history (historical reenactment of battles, events, historical weaponry, etc.); they are (usually) amateurs (which means they are not academically educated in music or history), lovers of tradition or history, and they pursue it as a kind of hobby, subculture in modern time, as a pastime or even lifestyle (e.g., wearing specific

clothes every day). It is difficult to compare these musical reenactment groups with ancient or early music ensembles because the latter ones were usually created relying on long musical, historical, and musicological studies and after in-depth practical studies at music schools. Many of the newly created revival groups performing traditional music repertoire in Poland (except for a few cases of bands consisting of classically educated musicians and singers) present their music in public almost immediately after being formed and even achieve popularity a few months after starting their activity. In some cases – according to interviews with their members – they start learning to play an instrument (fiddle, folk-accordion) and after two to three months start playing at folk dance events.

The abovementioned way and method of self-learning, oral learning or learning under the wing of an older master of instrument playing or singing in traditional style states a significant difference between traditional and early music ensembles. The contemporary circles of younger-generation urban folk musicians are mostly oriented towards historicism and reconstruction valuing the more archaic layers of tradition. They have good knowledge of the historical tradition and have their clear preferences as to what parts of traditional music they consider valuable, and what they prefer not to convey. Their masters – often still active musicians – accept the changing cultural context (what has contemporary value is what allows them to stay in their profession). This way of transmission cannot be considered as a full continuation of tradition but a revival of a chosen part of the repertoire acknowledged as valuable because it is old and historical. Contemporary ethnomusicological research should consider the changing musical culture observing also new melodies and modern dances played in traditional style by older musicians approved by them and the community in which they act (they earn money by playing both for the elderly and young wedding guests, though). The reconstructive attitude (correct in a way) – as a guard of the old repertoire, old corpus of the tradition – is typically historical, closed and inhibiting traditional musical practice at a certain point of its development. This attitude also brings the new generation of performers closer to ethnomusicologists who often prefer historical and not ethnological observation of the researched object. Despite the criticism of especially the second half of the twentieth-century changes, transformations, disappearing or even killing the traditional culture (when festivals, competitions or folkloristic groups became popular also as manifestations of politics or when old, pre-Second Vatican Council devotional practices in churches disappeared), the newly created traditional music groups sooner or later get on stage themselves. They also start running various workshops and trainings, using modern (unknown in ancient traditional culture) methods or digital tools (e.g., the Internet) in order to find space for their activity in quite another world devoid of the old

ritual and small social context. This is a new challenge for ethnomusicological research to examine these movements but also help them to find, read properly and understand historical sources. I have purposefully skipped here the problem of infrequent relic cases of direct oral transmission between generations in situ, for example, when the grandfather who is a traditional fiddler, who formerly used to play at old traditional weddings, teaches his grandson.<sup>2</sup>

When users of the archival collections are looking for music for their needs, they presently have two corpuses of archival materials: the oldest written corpus (materials dating back to the middle of the nineteenth century) and the corpus of audio and audiovisual materials. The latter one is formed of very few records from the first half of the twentieth century (because the sound recordings made during the interwar period were almost totally destroyed during World War II) and of a significant collection of sound recordings made from 1945 until today. The oldest, monumental sound recordings of traditional music registered in the Polish area were made very late in comparison to other European countries because of a very difficult political situation in the country (lack of independence until 1918). The first known audio recordings of the Polish repertoire were made in 1904, 1906, and 1913–1914, and they were rather individual scientific experiments with a phonograph than systematic registration in the field. All these pre-World War I episodes as well as the beginning of the first sound archives in Poland, which were founded starting from 1930, have been described and published almost completely (Jackowski 2014a). Due to the loss of recordings made during the interwar period and the small number of early pre-war sound documents (and lack of information about these recordings), the new postwar Polish musical ethnography as a scientific discipline had to be based on the nineteenth-century works of Oskar Kolberg, which at that time (immediately after World War II) had not been completely published and were preserved as manuscripts.

## **THE OLDEST WRITTEN SOURCES OF ETHNOMUSICOLOGY: OSKAR KOLBERG'S WORK**

Oskar Kolberg (1814–1890) was a Polish ethnographer, folklorist, and composer. He was the first to start writing down Polish folk songs and melodies during field excursions. His predecessors (e.g., Zygmunt Gloger), mainly literaries, usually wrote down only lyrics without notes. Early pre-Kolberg written records of music were compiled by composers, very schematically and not always directly from the authentic performer. Oskar Kolberg was the first who, as a musician, began the systematic notation of notes and lyrics and took into consideration

the main feature of musical folklore – its variability. Oskar Kolberg remains known as the one who did titanic work – he wrote down about 35,000 songs and melodies. During his life only 8,000 were published. Most of the rest of the materials (except for some parts published before 1910) were not published until 1962. Today the publication series of all Oskar Kolberg's works consists of 85 volumes (Antyborzec 2015).<sup>3</sup>

Oskar Kolberg's work methods (pencil, clear card<sup>4</sup> and ear) that were common at his time as well as the work itself were criticised from the very beginning but especially in the twentieth century when the phonograph was already known but not used on a regular basis in Polish science. The first wave of criticism (from F. Chopin and Karol Libelt) concerned the earliest editions of Kolberg's records (Kolberg 1961 [1857]) in which the author added piano accompaniment to homophonic melodies. Further on Kolberg published melodies without his own creative additions – without accompaniment and without composed instrumental preludes. But the imperfection of his work was still a topic of criticism and discussions. Critics made the accusation that Kolberg's records missed folk polyphony and instrumental music and that his work was not precise enough in dialectological and phonetic aspects.<sup>5</sup> The twentieth-century folklorists and musicologists accused Kolberg of making the initially complicated original folk melodies simpler in his records. They also blamed him that he missed and did not take into consideration free tempo and mixed double and triple meter in his notations, that he did not note down numerous alterations, ornamentations and intonation details as very important aspects of traditional live performance (Sobieski 1961b: 107–108).

Adolf Chybiński (1880–1952), a famous Polish musicologist, was one of the first scientists who regularly stressed in his works (beginning 1910) the significant importance of using the phonograph for creating new kinds of sources for Polish musical ethnography. He compared European experience (especially Austrian, German, and French) with the undeveloped situation in Poland. Chybiński mainly criticised the lack of sound sources in Polish musical ethnography which at that time was only based on the imperfect written sources provided by Oskar Kolberg and Zygmunt Gloger. Chybiński postulated starting field documentation, using a phonograph, to set ethnographical sound archives and completion and verification of Oskar Kolberg's work on the basis of sound recordings. His argument was that written materials were not of sufficient cognitive value in the twentieth century, when in other countries the Edison phonograph was a regular scientific equipment for research. Béla Bartók asked Chybiński in his letter written before 1937: "Is Polish musical ethnography still based on Kolberg's works?" (Chybiński 1937: 105). Both Bartók and Chybiński were aware that in Poland many traditional singers and musicians existed at

that time, the musical folklore was still alive, and should have been preserved in sound recordings. It should be stressed that Chybiński criticised neither the person of Kolberg nor his titanic work. He focused on the almost total lack of sound recordings in Poland from the beginning of the twentieth century and treated Kolberg's written records as the only source for research and publications. He also understood and justified Kolberg's imperfect sources, stressing that the author was making his transcriptions in very difficult conditions. Kolberg sometimes noted down the music immediately, in a hurry, in original live contexts of inns, during rituals, work processes, etc. Not always could he count on the possibility of a few repetitions of difficult melodies. So simplifications were inevitable in these conditions. The topic of documenting traditional melodies by Oskar Kolberg, difficult conditions of this work and the quality of written recordings resulting from these circumstances were discussed by Danuta Pawlak (Pawlak 1990). In commentaries to his transcriptions Kolberg himself wrote about many difficulties and great problems in making proper records (Sobieski 1961b: 110).<sup>6</sup> In Chybiński's opinion only the phonographic method of recording melodies could have created a reliable and full-value source for scientific analysis and research (Chybiński 1910: 8–9).<sup>7</sup> As it was stressed above, although starting from 1930 the first Polish sound archives were founded and the initial research using new phonographic sources was carried out,<sup>8</sup> almost all the interwar collections were destroyed or lost during World War II.

In this situation the problem of the lack of sound sources for research on Polish traditional music reared immediately after the war. At that time the disproportion between Poland and other European countries in terms of sound documentation of traditional music increased. After the war, Marian Sobieski wrote that many Polish sound documenters still worked using a pencil and five-line stave instead of electro-acoustic recordings on plates or even magnetic tapes. He compared them to “walking on foot during the era of cars, planes, and trains” (Sobieski 1949: 194; Sobieska & Sobieski 1973: 531). Sobieski, along with his wife – as creators of the postwar sound archive of Polish traditional music (which is still the largest and oldest sound archive in Poland) – were aware of the very difficult situation and poverty after the war. Their first recordings were made by using homemade electro-acoustic equipment and only from 1945 onwards the systematic sound documentation of Polish traditional music was carried out. Despite creating rich sound collections after the war, Jadwiga and Marian Sobieski valued Oskar Kolberg's work as the first level of documentation and the oldest source of repertoire. They stressed that in spite of many difficulties, Kolberg took into consideration – as much as possible (without the phonograph) – many details and characteristic features of folk music, e.g., melody variants, distinctions of tempo, melismatics (Sobieski 1961a).

## **WAYS OF MUSICAL UNDERSTANDING OF KOLBERG'S NOTES: AN EXPERIMENT**

In order to imagine and understand what kind of difficulties Oskar Kolberg had during his fieldwork, experimental research was carried out.<sup>9</sup> A few old-generation traditional musicians, also classical professional musicians and new-generation non-classical educated performers of traditional repertoire were invited to take part in the research and documentation.

The first stage of the experiment consisted in working in a way similar to that of Oskar Kolberg. Meetings of musicians educated in higher music schools and traditional musicians were organised in order to try to record the performances of traditional melodies played in traditional style (having all specific elements, e.g., non-equal intonation, rhythm changing, *tempo rubato*, ornamentations, etc.) in real time by ear, using only pencil and stave, that is, cards with five-line system for musical notation. According to the general opinion of the students of higher music schools, writing down the melody by ear – especially a traditional homophonic melody – is not very complicated due to the typical school exercises based not on original live performance (or field recordings) but on artificial, simplified versions of traditional melodies (in effect devoid of the characteristics of traditional performance features and context) performed by a professional, classically educated singer, that is, sung according to the manuscript of normative character.<sup>10</sup> It is not very difficult, especially when the students can hear several repetitions of the record (the same record, not a live performance), which is normal practice during musical dictation exercises. But in the framework of the experiment the situation was different: during the meeting with an authentic traditional performer it was not possible to make a sound recording as in Kolberg's time. According to my observations, the different setting entailed many difficulties: when the traditional performer was asked for subsequent repetitions, they were able to do it, yet the repetitions were never an exact copy of the original version, but different variants of it; some elements were added and some disappeared during new performances. The participants of the experiment were able to write down only the general sketch of the melody, but in order to make a detailed transcription of variants (including e.g., ornamentation, changing of tempo and its features) the best way would be having audio recordings at the transcribers' disposal. A recording is, nevertheless, a copy of a singular (individual) version – one among many variants which together create a real image of the melody and its variability in the player's individual musical style. If the traditional performer was asked to play in a slower tempo – in order to make grasping and writing down the details as well as more difficult parts and shorter notes of the melody possible

or to remember the shape of the melody better – it was very strange, uncomfortable and abnormal for the performer. In this situation they felt like a fish without water and would very quickly get back to the normal tempo and style of improvisation. The experiment showed how difficult writing down melodies performed in a traditional folk style can be, how important and helpful sound recording is for written documentation of such kind of music and how imperfect a written source can be in comparison to the audio one.

The second part of the experiment consisted in the comparison of various ways of performing of a few melodies chosen from Kolberg's work. This part of research was supposed to demonstrate how many various musical performances are possible based on one written (not audio) historical source.

There were a few melodies chosen from Oskar Koberg's works. The selection was dictated by the availability of parallel sound recordings of variants (which was the main difficulty) almost identical to those noted down by Kolberg. Moreover, I tried to find the melodies and the corresponding recordings from the same region of Poland or from a nearby area.<sup>11</sup> It was also important to find such historical melodies and songs that are not popular and known today (variants of some pieces recorded by Kolberg are very popular today in the repertoire of folk ensembles of song and dance or remembered by the older generation of musicians).

1. "Biegła Marysia" – wedding song (written source: series *Dziela Wszystkie Oskara Kolberga*, vol. 18: *Kieleckie*, part 1, no. 158 (handwritten manuscript of Kolberg: file 43, sign. 1352, c. 12r); audio source: *Gdyby Kolberg miał fonograf* (Jackowski 2014b), CD 1, tracks 74–77 – 4 singers born between 1879–1889, rec. between 1952 to 1953).
2. "Czyje to koniki" – popular song (written source: series *Dziela Wszystkie Oskara Kolberga*, vol. 25: *Mazowsze*, part 2: *Mazowsze Polne*, no. 540; audio source: *Gdyby Kolberg miał fonograf* (Jackowski 2014b), CD 1, track 14 – fiddler born in 1880, recorded in 1966).
3. A dance without a name (*Oberek*) described as: *od Sochaczewa* (written source: series *Dziela Wszystkie Oskara Kolberga*, vol. 25: *Mazowsze*, part 2, *Mazowsze Polne*, no. 452). "U nasego pana" – a harvest song (written source: series *Dziela Wszystkie Oskara Kolberga*, vol. 18: *Kieleckie*, part 1, no. 12; audio source: Phonographic Collection of the Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences, sign. T0380\_28 – singer born in 1928; T0457\_09 – singer born in 1918; MZamoj\_MC0107A\_01 – singer born in 1923).
4. "Tańczuj ze mną" [*Od Skierniewic*] (written source: series *Dziela Wszystkie Oskara Kolberga*, vol. 25: *Mazowsze*, part 2: *Mazowsze Polne*, no. 275; audio source: "Szałamacha" Polish Radio Archive, fiddler born in 1905).



At first, written melodies were transcribed in music notation software and played electronically (MIDI). It was an example of how literally, in a mathematical way (only pitch and rhythm), the information saved by Kolberg can be read and played. According to the listeners' opinion, it sounded very schematically and synthetically. The MIDI player reproduced all the information contained in the graphical notation. But the notation was prepared by man for man and in the next stages I tried to find out what various musicians could find "between notes", how important was human imagination, knowledge and experience in the process of reading historical musical notation.

The next stage was to ask classically educated singers (e.g., a soprano) or instrumentalists (e.g., piano or violin players) to sing or play the same melodies from Kolberg's notations. They were informed about the songs/melodies that were noted down by Kolberg in villages in the nineteenth century. After the observation of the process of reading and playing and after comparison of performances it was found that this group of musicians tried to play or sing very literally (like from the score), according to written notes without changes or additions. The most noticeable creative contribution was that they added a human touch to the performance: a simple differentiation in agogics, dynamic elements, phrasing according to lyrics or the shape of instrumental melody (creating a sense of acoustic space). In the case of professional classically educated musicians yet another feature was also very clear: all musicians tried to keep their performance within the framework of the written notes and lyrics, which meant that ornamentation and improvisation factors were not the most important for them. They wanted to play well, correctly and aesthetically<sup>12</sup> and treated the written source record as a kind of score, pattern, or prescription very carefully, doing everything possible not to exceed the frame of the source notation. Only a few of them were not so disciplined and tried to add some tempo changes. It was probably due to the fact that they were aware of the folk provenience of the source. Yet, their weak aural and practical experience in village music (in Poland, until today there has been no systematic theoretical or practical course in traditional music as a frame subject at music schools<sup>13</sup>) caused the trials to be something slightly different than the written pattern but still far from being typical village music (lack of characteristic "white voice" singing or playing the instrument and the sound of violin usually used for playing classical music; e.g., Polish village fiddlers use mainly the upper part of the bow when playing short rhythmic units; the way of the grip of the bow; using the upper range of the violin (usually A, E strings) which causes very specific sounds).

The third stage of the research was to ask contemporary singers and instrumentalists to perform traditional songs or melodies in a traditional way. The performers of this part of the experiment were selected from a group of

performers of contemporary generations, living mainly in cities, not educated in a classical way (familiar with music notation as it was of a great meaning for the project), but – to revive traditional music – trying to sing and play in a traditional style. To familiarise them with old, traditional manners, their experience and education was based on listening to archival recordings and – when possible – learning orally, directly from the oldest generation of traditional performers who were still alive. This way they were more competent to interpret Kolberg’s transcriptions in the proper style. The question was: how similar will their performances be to the sound of archival recordings? Their way of performing sounded very interesting, similar in its character to the original roots and – according to common opinion – closer to the village sound and character of the music than in the case of the first group of musicians. What was interesting was the fact that none of the performers (singers and violinists) asked about the regional provenience of the written source and played it according to their own regional experience (e.g., a song written down by Kolberg in Kieleckie region, which is the northern part of Małopolska, was sung in the style of Mazovia region – central Poland). Several performers of this group presented even more than one variation of the performance. The written records were treated by the performers of this group fairly freely and singing or playing could be characterised as more free-rhythm, with longer final notes in phrases, *tempo rubato*, characteristic natural timbre of voice or characteristic “village way” of playing the fiddle. It could be said that their performance made this schematic, historical, over 150-year-old Kolberg’s record more vivid. Moreover, the result can be understood as a reconstruction with some elements of creativity. The written notes were treated by musicians more as a sketch or a general theme for free improvisation. Free attitude was heard more in the rhythmical dimension than in the melody, which is the biggest difference between “classical” and “revival” attitude. The new folk musicians embedded the written melody in a more flexible (*tempo rubato*, accents appeared, many rhythmical changes were applied during instrumental performance) rhythmic progression. In comparison with “classical” performances they felt in the first place that Kolberg’s rhythmical level was the only normative simplified record of something elusive and could not be read literally. In the “revival” case nearly the whole pitch and shape of the melody were saved and included during the performance with only a few changes in the ratio between lyrics and certain notes applied. Even when the performers were asked to base literally on the pattern written down by Kolberg (which was typical for the classically educated performers from the first group), live performance forced them to modify (or maybe verify?) the record at certain points so that the singing or playing would sound naturally. The phrase layout also underwent some performance changes

in regard to bar lines used in the historical record. This in turn led to changes and shifting stress accents. The more the process was intensified, the faster the melody was becoming similar to dance.<sup>14</sup> Slight changes to the intervals in relation to the written record can also be noticed. Especially fiddle players changed the character of the written source almost totally, and it was the only (sufficient) factor to start improvising based on the written theme. “Classical” performances were very literal in terms of rhythm and melody range and ornaments were added only “accidentally” by the group of musicians who were aware of the village provenience of the melodies. The first example was treated by one of the “revival” musicians in both ways – as a ritual, slower song, and as a couplet of a dance character. This means that the written record saved by Kolberg without clear information about the tempo could be understood in many ways. Different performers had different approaches and one performer used even more than one approach.

The next and the smallest group of performers were traditional musicians (fiddle players and singers) chosen from the oldest generation of village or small city inhabitants. Both features were important for the project: they had to be experienced traditional musicians which meant that formerly they had played during, for example, traditional weddings and custom events or, at least, had the experience of playing at traditional dance meetings. They also had to know the music notation on a basic level (which was not typical and popular/usual in the case of traditional musicians), but they had to acquire their musical skills by oral transmission. The character of this group’s performances was similar to that of the “revival” group, especially in one specific aspect: for them the written document was simply an impulse for improvisation. But, unlike the first and second groups, they did not care about fidelity to the musical notation presented to them. Playing according to notes was very difficult and tiring for fiddlers and in many cases they just could not play the written melody or they found no associations. But after playing or singing the melody to them, they very quickly (sometimes after a few bars) recalled and played from memory some pieces that were already familiar and more or less close to the original. Moreover, some of them claimed – after listening – that the melody was not properly noted, and it was easier to play by ear. This attitude of the performers (that was very engaging for them because of the need to “decipher” written notes) was initially surprising for the researcher (ethnomusicologist or musician) who was simply expecting to listen to music according to the written, original source. After long and difficult trials to read and understand<sup>15</sup> Kolberg’s written notation, at some point the last group of performers could find or even create a piece similar to the written theme and play it in the original style. Their final performances were usually the most different ones from the original written

source and as compared to the other groups of performers because traditional musicians rather created new melodies or variants than “reconstructed” the original, Kolberg’s notation. For authentic traditional musicians it was more important to find some piece similar to the written source (e.g., some known variant at best) or to play whatever similar than to play literally written notes. They had no need to enrich their repertoire with a written melody. To compare the effects of the project we can state the following:

1. The first group (classical musicians) – accurate reading of the written source as a score and only little creativity (reconstruction);
2. The second group (musicians playing in the traditional style, “revival”) – quite accurate reading of the written source and significant element of creativity (reconstruction + strong creativity, ornamentation, improvisation);
3. The third group (traditional musicians) – treating the written source as an association with a variant or another similar melody known to the performer (no reconstruction or creativity, looking for associations with familiar repertoire).

In the case of songs the singers, after having had a look at the lyrics, sang the variant of the written song known to them (“Oh, we know this but we sing it in our way”, and then they sang their own variant) or claimed that they did not know the song at all.

The project indicated and confirmed that Kolberg’s work was meant for classically educated musicians (like Kolberg himself) and in a way translated the traditional music language into the quite different language of classical music, thus forming a kind of a glossary. The question for whom Kolberg wrote down thousands of melodies is still open. From the contemporary point of view the answer may be: for the future. Already in the nineteenth century Kolberg was aware of the passing and disappearing of many traditional customs, rituals, songs and melodies and he did everything he could to save the repertoire. His work and methods constituted a pattern for further sound archives which gathered sound recordings containing more information than written notes. Oskar Kolberg created a written version of ethnomusical sources for reading (which requires certain competence), but sound archives gathered audio versions of sources for listening. Today, the sound recordings could therefore be treated as a missing link in direct (oral) transfer.

Finally, as the last stage of the project, some of the oldest documental audio examples were chosen from the sound archive according to similarity to Kolberg’s written examples used in the experiment. The oldest available, on a larger scale, audio recordings of Polish traditional music are the post-war records in which the singing and instrumental performance of the generation of perform-

ers born in Kolberg's times have been embalmed. Kolberg collected songs from the people whose children and (perhaps) grandchildren were later recorded on the phonograph and who, most probably (maybe even during Kolberg's visits) were listening to their grandparents performing the songs. Thus, taking into consideration the preservation of oral transmission of the repertoire, they undoubtedly took over the style and repertoire of their ancestors, often almost in the unchanged form. Although chosen sound examples are not exactly the same as the transcriptions written almost a century earlier (which is expected due to the change and variability characteristic of folklore), they still present what Kolberg was not able to grasp, either precisely or in sketches, in his notes: the style, the manner, the ornamentation, the real sound and pitch, the timbre, the dynamics, the tempo, metrical changes, rhythmic latitude, etc. The sound recordings help us in terms of correct interpretation of specific notes and indications made by Kolberg, which came into existence much earlier than the possibilities of traditional music transcription from recordings and the principles of notation of traditional music (Sobieska 1964). The chosen sound examples were finally compared with the above-described performances of Kolberg's transcriptions. None of the performances was very similar to the variants recorded 70 years ago. Moreover, it seems (after a comparison with archival recordings) that the second group of performers approached contemporary reconstruction too creatively. So maybe the truth is somewhere in between the first and the second group. The chosen archival audio examples were presented on a CD album published in 2014 (Jackowski 2014b). Archival sound recordings could therefore be treated as an audio supplement to the abovementioned Kolberg's work as a glossary similar to the ones commonly used in foreign language learning: a handbook with a glossary and added audio recordings that are helpful for practising.

## **IF KOLBERG HAD HAD THE PHONOGRAPH**

Oskar Kolberg died in 1890, 13 years after Thomas Alva Edison constructed the phonograph, which immediately became a helpful equipment for ethnographic research on traditional speech and music (Kominek 1986: 34–42; Janczewska-Sołomko 2000: 8–20). The first documental “ethno-recording” was made exactly in the year of Kolberg's death. Three months before Kolberg's death, Jesse Walter Fewkes recorded, in the State of Maine, the repertoire of Indian Passamaquoddy (Fewkes 1890a, 1890b, 1890c, 1891a, 1891b; Gilman 1891, 1909; Densmore 1927). Two years later the phonograph was used for recording folk music by Béla Vikár for the first time in Europe.<sup>16</sup>

So, we may wonder if Oskar Kolberg knew about the phonograph or even possessed one. If he had had a phonograph and eventually used it and the potential recordings had survived until today, we would have in our possession recorded music performed by people born as early as at the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>17</sup> It is almost certain, however, that this did not happen due to the following reasons:

1. The first news about this novel invention appeared in Polish popular newspapers quite quickly; the first records can be found in February 1877, in the year when the phonograph was patented by Edison (Anonim 1878). Then, increasingly, papers (especially the technology-oriented ones) informed their readers about the phonograph and its potential use in offices, industries, language teaching, artistic music, etc. One of the authors asked in his paper if sound recordings would be the same for music as photographs for art painting (Bodyński 1880–1881: 89–90). In 1879 the phonograph was presented in Warsaw (Sienkiewicz 1879) and the second show took place in 1890 (J. 1890). Of course, opinions about the new device and about the quality of the first recordings were diverse.

In 1890 newspapers also informed their readers about the first use of the phonograph for ethnographic documentation by Fewkes. But it was the last year of Kolberg's life (Anonim 1890).<sup>18</sup> The next news contained information about Franz Boas's expedition (Anonim 1896), dialectological research based on sound materials conducted in Collège de France (Krček 1899), and Béla Vikár's activity in Hungary (Eliasz-Radzikowski 1900). Reports of the International Folk-Lore Congress in Chicago, where the recordings of the Navajo Indians' singing were presented, are of great value (Żmigrodzki 1894: 637). After the Congress in Paris in 1900, Polish readers were informed about documentation and research led by B. Vikár and Leo Azoulay from France (Żmigrodzki 1901a: 83; 1901b: 122).

2. Even though Oskar Kolberg was interested in technical news of his time, the technique was not at the centre of his interests. He knew about photography used for book illustrations, he was even persuaded to use chromolithography for saving pictures of traditional clothes, but he remained faithful to traditional drawings made by Wojciech Gerson.<sup>19</sup>

3. In comparison to Kolberg's very skilful and fast work ("ear-pencil method") the new technology of recordings could seem very complicated and time-consuming to him; for example, recordings made by Juliusz Zborowski in 1913–1914 are really imperfect due to technical problems of the pioneer use of equipment by an inexperienced documentalist (Szurmiak-Bogucka & Jackowski 2015). In addition, the heavy equipment and the need to possess back-up wax cylinders would have been complicated for the old-age

scientist in the field. Kolberg noted down about 35,000 songs and melodies during his career as a researcher (in the field and through correspondence). In comparison, the interwar sound archives recorded about 10,000 items less during the nine-year period. It should be stressed (as mentioned above) that the quality of the sound recordings was thoroughly discussed at that time. 4. The last reason for the late use of the phonograph in musical ethnography was reluctance and aversion of scientific, conservative environment towards the novel technical inventions. Despite the efforts of several scientists to buy a phonograph and equip a laboratory with it, the directorial body of the Academy of Learning in Kraków<sup>20</sup> was still afraid of the “devilish machine” or “magical ventriloquist” as they called the phonograph at that time (Scheminzy 1943 [1935]: 288; A.M. 1878: 358; Szarlitt 1929: 354; Dahlig 1997: 62).

## CONCLUSIONS

Summarising, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- Even though the last years of Oskar Kolberg’s life were lived in the “phonic age”, he had no possibility to use Edison’s phonograph in his documentation. So, the oldest corpuses of manuscripts of Polish traditional music are only written and “silent”, yet still very important and primary for ethnomusicological (and multidisciplinary) research and musical activities.
- There are almost no recorded sources of Polish traditional music in the archives from the prewar and interwar periods (due to the war losses); this part of history (sound sources immediately after Kolberg’s times) is almost a “black hole” in Polish ethno-phonographic history – it means we are able to compare nineteenth-century written materials only with the sound sources from after 1945.<sup>21</sup>
- Due to the (nearly) complete lack of audio materials from the interwar period there is no continuity between Kolberg’s sources and currently available audio sources recorded after 1945. We can assume that in the most active time of Kolberg’s life (when the researcher was about 40 years old) he noted down the repertoire of young and mature performers (those 20 years old and older). These performers would have been over 90 years old when systematic and large-scale sound documentation started in Poland in the interwar period. Even if the performer survived World War I and could be recorded, the recordings (the final phase of his/her musical activity which is of no value for the reconstruction) did not survive. If Kolberg had noted down a 20-year-old performer, that

person could have been recorded after two world wars, for example, in 1950, as an 80-year-old performer.

- Today the work of Oskar Kolberg – as a still priceless historical source – should be studied afresh and verified by researchers, artists, performers, etc., based on phonographic sources. This work adds further questions about the real quality and historical truth of the contemporary revival or reconstruction of music, which are rated positive and very often described as “he/she plays/sings just like one hundred years ago”.

In 2014 the CD “If Oskar Kolberg Had Had the Phonograph...” was published by the Sound Collection of the Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences (Jackowski 2014b). Two CDs present vocal and instrumental sound examples recorded after World War II, which were chosen according to their similarity to some manuscripts prepared by Oskar Kolberg over 150 years ago. These chosen sources could help us imagine how this handwritten music really sounded. Based on phonographic documentation we could make more reliable reconstructions of style, manners, and sound. Written historical transcriptions were and still can be played or sung by various groups of performers. Thanks to contemporary technical methods everybody (even those who do not know the notes or cannot play an instrument) can listen to a chosen melody written down by Oskar Kolberg. Those who can play an instrument, for example the piano, can play the melody according to the transcription. The melody can also be sung by singers – both artists and amateurs. Probably, such edited transcriptions sounded in many bourgeois flats in the nineteenth century even if Kolberg published pure melodies (as a source) without piano accompaniment. The conclusion is that merely a musical manuscript and classical music education are not sufficient for the performance of written traditional music in its proper style. A comparison of “classical” performances of traditional music transcriptions with stylistic ones could help us understand the importance of the performer’s good and balanced experience (theoretical and practical). The basic element of the experience is knowledge of the regional style which could be learnt through a personal contact with a master or, eventually, by using the historical audio sources. Recording and comparing how various contemporary performers read and play old manuscripts was one part of the project. The second part was searching the archive for sound recordings of variants of older handwritten transcriptions, comparing them and making them available to young performers as a source of learning. The experiment demonstrated how different oral transmission is from the written one (educated transmission) and how strange and unfamiliar musical notation is for traditional musicians even if folk music is written down.



As the last generation of traditional performers is gradually disappearing, sound recordings become a substitute for real meetings with humans and their music. Maybe in the twenty-first century, when the old traditional repertoire is still performed, but usually in the context other than the original one, we should slowly change the known, “oral transmission” to the “audio recording transmission”.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> These are the very first and most fundamental questions we (ethno-archivists) must respond to when presenting our work to pupils, students, etc.
- <sup>2</sup> The conference organised by the Polish National Seminar in Ethnomusicology (Warsaw, 14–15 April 2018) was dedicated to musical tribes in Poland (see <http://www.etno.imuz.uw.edu.pl/vi-krajowe-seminarium-etnomuzykologiczne/>, last accessed on 21 November 2023).
- <sup>3</sup> See also <http://www.oskarkolberg.pl/pl-PL/Page/64>, last accessed on 21 November 2023.
- <sup>4</sup> Kolberg sketched the staves himself.
- <sup>5</sup> Contemporary to O. Kolberg, philosopher Karol Libelt underlined the schematic character of musical transcription in comparison with live performance (Michałowski 1999: 18; Kolberg 1961 [1857]: VIII). F. Chopin in his letter to his family, written on 19 April 1847, expressed a critical opinion of Kolberg’s early published works. However, with time, the great Polish composer started to appreciate the great work of Kolberg (Kobyłańska 1972: 161, 164). Another, anonymous critical opinion was published in the periodical *Dziennik Domowy* (Anonim 1842: 174). In the first decades of the twentieth century and during the interwar period – when musical ethnographers began to record with a phonograph – Adolf Chybiński and Karol Hławiczka, among others, resumed the undermining of the worth of Kolberg’s transcriptions (Chybiński 1910: 9; Hławiczka 1936: 4; Chybiński 1947: 16–17).
- <sup>6</sup> He also mentioned in his letters some problems and difficulties appearing during his fieldwork (e.g., O. Kolberg’s letter to Józef Ignacy Kraszewski, written on 6 June 1857 (Kolberg 1965: 74). The possibility to replay sound recordings many times, and possibilities of instrumental analysis (e.g., measuring tones) have had an influence on developing more detailed musical transcription methods.
- <sup>7</sup> Despite such an opinion, Adolf Chybiński based his work on Kolberg’s transcriptions in a number of his scientific works (e.g., Chybiński 1907; 1937; 1951). Based on Chybiński’s abovementioned work, Piotr Dahlig explained in 2014 that Kolberg fully understood folk performances (thanks to his experience and long fieldwork practice) and made them complete when possible under contemporary conditions. Dahlig called Kolberg’s records musical frescos with a musical sense of added non-acoustic projection. It means that Kolberg’s records were not only a “graphical copy of an acoustic phenomenon” but interpretations of many musical elements presented in transcription (Dahlig 2014a: 11; 2014b: 7). We do not know if Kolberg used a similar method that the later Bulgarian researcher Wasyl Stoin practiced. Stoin, during his field excursions made in the 1930s, first listened to the melody a few times and after he had studied it completely, he presented the song to its original traditional performer and after acceptance, he noted it down.

- <sup>8</sup> The creator of the first Polish sound archive in Poznań, Łucjan Kamiński, was a defender of Kolberg's work and methods. Kamiński regarded the sound document as "musical photography" and his musical transcriptions reached the limits of detail (Kamiński 1934, 1936; Sobieska 1964: 73–75).
- <sup>9</sup> Only the first stage of a more advanced analytical project was carried out but even these results are very helpful in presenting the difference between understanding classical music and traditional music. Audio examples of the research were presented during the conference *Archives as Knowledge Hubs: Initiatives and Influences*, and are available at <https://www.uttv.ee/naita?id=26251#>. They are also available with commentary in Polish at <https://www.polskieradio.pl/8/478/Artykul/1247537/>, both last accessed on 22 November 2023.
- <sup>10</sup> For example, audio recordings made as educational materials for ear training (aural skills) present traditional songs at the basic level of difficulty. It is worth stressing that the recorded songs were sung by classical singers – very rhythmically.
- <sup>11</sup> The comparison of Kolberg's notations with very similar variants among the sound recordings made almost a century later was the idea for a 2CD-album *Gdyby Kolberg miał fonograf* (Jackowski 2014b). The album is available online at <https://etnofon.pl/plyta/gdyby-kolberg-mial-fonograf/>, last accessed on 22 November 2023.
- <sup>12</sup> In the case of music performed by a pianist or a soprano during this stage of the project we could imagine how Kolberg's published recordings could be sung and played by, e.g., young upper class girls learning music at courts. What could be interesting is that there are records of some "artistic" performances even in historical recordings, which could be a proof of some songs functioning in various styles.
- <sup>13</sup> This situation is slowly changing and this article describes the situation in 2017.
- <sup>14</sup> It is worth recalling that in Polish traditional music many melodies function as song and dance melodies, which is why both singers and instrumentalists took part in the project.
- <sup>15</sup> Which was also a typical element for this group of performers.
- <sup>16</sup> In 1900, during the Congress of Folklorists in Paris, members of the meeting were informed about 500 wax cylinders recorded by B. Vikár in Hungary (Anonim 1901).
- <sup>17</sup> It is possible to imagine when we analyse the survived recordings of the Sound Collection of the Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences; e.g., performers born in 1899 were recorded in 1990.
- <sup>18</sup> O. Kolberg died in Kraków on 3 June 1890.
- <sup>19</sup> See B. Hoff's letter to O. Kolberg written on 17 December 1867 (Kolberg 1965: 224–225; Turczynowiczowa 1948).
- <sup>20</sup> The Polish Academy of Learning bought the first phonograph only in 1914 (Kaczmarek 1953: 22; Zborowski 1934: 9).
- <sup>21</sup> After World War II, from the second half of the twentieth century until today, collections of audio and audiovisual recordings of traditional music have been gathered. Among them, the collection of the Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences is the oldest and the largest one (ca 150,000 records from 1945 until today).

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# THE HISTORY OF THE FORMATION OF FOLKLORE COLLECTIONS IN BELARUS

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**Abstract:** The article focuses on the knowledge of the formation circumstances and development of folklore collections in Belarus in historical perspective. The history of collecting Belarusian folklore is explored, concentrating on the main ideas and the most influential collectors and groups of collectors. The research questions concern the main collection centers, gathering strategies, and their changes in accordance with the dominant state ideology and cultural policy.

The study reveals that the growing interest in collecting folklore was closely connected with the process of national revival and the creation of the Belarusian state. Initiated by the passion of individual amateur collectors and local historians, the collection of folklore gradually became an important national task and was concentrated in the main scientific centers.

Besides state ideology, the greatest influence on the formation of folklore collections, their form and content, is exerted by the goals and approaches of individuals. The personality, the level of education and age of the collector have a direct impact on the collection processes and, respectively, on the data obtained as a result.

**Keywords:** Belarus, folklore, history of folklore studies, archives, folklore collections, groups of collectors, preservation, the collection of folklore records

## THE BEGINNING OF THE COLLECTION ACTIVITY

The beginning of the collection activity in the field of folklore and ethnography on the territory of Belarus dates back to the late eighteenth–early nineteenth centuries. Interest in collecting folklore developed under the impact of the ideology of romanticism, according to which folklore was understood as an expression of the people's soul. The first collectors were educated noblemen. The main bulk of data during this early period was collected by Zaryjan Dalienha-Chadakoŭski (1784–1825) (Aksamitaŭ & Malaš 1991), Jan Čačot (1796–1847) (Czczot 1844, 1846),

Alexander Rypiński (1809–1886) (Rypiński 1840), the Tyszkiewicz brothers – Kanstancin (1806–1868) (Tyszkiewicz 1871) and Jaŭstach (1814–1873) (Tyszkiewicz 1847), Romuald Zienkiewicz (1811–1868) (Zienkiewicz 1851), and others.

At the turn of the 1850s, Russian officials took up the ethnographic study of the Belarusian territories, which was caused by the revolutionary situation that developed before the abolition of serfdom, as well as the desire to restore the Commonwealth within the borders of 1772<sup>1</sup> (Hilievič 1970: 34). At first, this task was entrusted to military officers. Folklore and ethnographic materials collected in the Belarusian territory, along with detailed statistical information, geographical descriptions, maps and plans, were collected and published in the multi-volume edition *Materialy dlia geografii i statistiki Rossii, sobrannye ofitserami General'nogo shtaba* (Materials for Geography and Statistics of Russia, Collected by Officers of the General Staff) (Bobrovskiy 1863; Korevo 1861). The collected materials are of unequal scientific value, since they were collected, edited and commented on by people who differed in political views, worldview, and attitude to the Belarusian issue (Hilievič 1970: 35).

After the January Uprising of 1863–1864, led by K. Kalinoŭski,<sup>2</sup> the collecting activity began with renewed vigor and approach. This work was subordinated, above all, to the ideology of that time. During this period, there was an urgent need to study the region, collect items and sources proving the existence of a common historical past of the Russian Empire and the annexed territories. Visiting Russian officials took up this task (Komzolova 2004). One of the most characteristic publications of this period was P. Gil'tebrant's *Sbornik pamiatnikov narodnogo tvorchestva v Severo-Zapadnom krae* (Collection of Folk Art Records of the North-Western Territory) (1866). The publication contains 300 folk songs and a small number of riddles and proverbs without scientific classification. The author compared Belarusian songs with Russian ones and tried to prove their similarity. At the time, the collection was heavily criticized for being biased (Pypin 1891: 121).

A large collection of folklore and ethnographic material, documented in the second half of the nineteenth century, is contained in the publications of Pavel Shein (1826–1900) (Shein 1873, 1874), Zinaida Radchenko (1839–1916) (Radchenko 1888), Evdokim Romanov (1855–1922) (Romanov 1886), Vladimir Dobrovolsky (1856–1920) (Dobrovolsky 1903), and Dmitry Bulgakovsky (1843–1918) (Bulgakovsky 1890).

At the end of the nineteenth century, Belarusian folklore came to the attention of foreign – Polish (Federowski 1897–1981; Kolberg 1968) and Czech (Kuba 1887) – researchers.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century collection activities became even more widespread, which was due to the increased activity of national forces;



first of all, with the newspaper *Naša Niva* (Our Field), which was published in Vilna from 1906 to 1915. This newspaper became the center of the formation of the national elite. The second incentive was the February Revolution and the fall of tsarism in Russia in 1917. Under the influence of romantic ideology, the collection of folklore was perceived as “the patriotic duty in the age of nation-building” (Bula 2017).

In the context of significant transformations and changes in the political and socio-economic situation, the idea of creating an independent Belarusian state was implemented in the form of the Belarusian People’s Republic, which was proclaimed on March 25, 1918. However, already in December 1918, the Red Army occupied Minsk, and on January 1, 1919, the formation of the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic (BSSR) was proclaimed in Smolensk (Ioffe & Silitski 2018: 282).

### **COLLECTING FOLKLORE IN WESTERN BELARUS (1921–1939)**

The year 1921 brought a new historical turn for the Belarusian territory. According to the Riga Peace Treaty, the signing of which ended the Soviet-Polish War, part of the Belarusian territory was transferred to the Polish Republic (Ioffe & Silitski 2018: 282). In this territory, so-called Western Belarus,<sup>3</sup> the main center for collecting folklore and ethnographic data during the interwar period was the Vilna Belarusian Museum named after Ivan Luckievič, which was founded in Vilnius in 1921 and existed until 1944.

Many national figures of that time attributed folklore to the most important ethno-determining features, fully reflecting the identity and difference of Belarusians from other peoples. So, for example, in 1912, on the pages of the Belarusian calendar of *Naša Niva*, collector of folk songs Anton Hrynevič reasoned: “A human song reflects a person’s soul, their pain and grief, their needs, desires and life itself. As a person is recognized by their face, so the whole people, their character and soul are recognized by a song, especially a folk song” (Bielaruski kalendar 1912).

The idea of collecting folklore, which was understood as a treasure of the folk soul, was popularized through the media. Among various folklore genres, folk songs had a special place. Detailed instructions and calls for the collection of folklore were regularly published on the pages of periodicals and appealed primarily to people with musical education – organists in churches (e.g., *Bielaruski Trubadur* 1926: 5). The organist was both a bearer of tradition and a competent collector, and at the same time they were considered as potential creators who, based on folk songs, would compose authors’ works in the same style.

Interest in folk songs had several practical aspects. The first one is related to the inclusion of folk songs in the school educational program and their popularization through amateur choirs (Bielaruski Trubadur 1926: 5). The second one is related to the need for a Belarusian religious song, which would be created according to well-known folk patterns. The main idea was that “Belarusian songbook will introduce our language not only into the church, but also into the living mass of people, thereby bringing our people closer to a complete revival in everyday life and in church life” (Biełaruskaja Krynica 1926: 6).

Folklore and ethnographic materials, collected through newspapers and magazines, by students of gymnasiums and other amateurs interested in folklore, were accumulated in the archives of the Vilna Belarusian Museum. In 1944 its richest collections were divided between the museums and archives of Soviet Belarus and Lithuania. The folklore part of the manuscript section, miraculously surviving and preserved, was “rediscovered” by specialists from the archives of the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore only at the beginning of the twenty-first century (Žičkienė 2006; Labačeuskaja 2012). This pointed to the existence of several diligent and indefatigable collectors of Belarusian folklore and ethnographic data in the 1910s–1940s. The geography of the rediscovered folklore records covers not only the entire territory of Western Belarus, but also the adjacent regions of modern Lithuania and Latvia, where compact groups of the Belarusian-speaking population historically lived.

## **THE CREATION OF A COORDINATING CENTER FOR THE COMPREHENSIVE STUDY OF BELARUS**

The creation of a new state – the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic – raised the question of determining the historical roots and the foundation on which it would be built, and included a preliminary full-scale collection of materials. Thus, ethnography and ethnographic knowledge, in the broad sense, acquired a special role in the newly created Soviet Union. By gathering ethnographic data that influenced ideas about territories and peoples, ethnographers and local collectors participated in the formation of the Soviet Union. The state used ethnographic knowledge in determining its policy (Hirsch 2022).

The center that set the direction and coordinated the work on the “scientific study of Belarus in all respects” (CNA NANB, fund 67, inventory 1, file 4, p. 1) was the Institute of Belarusian Culture, established in early 1922 on the basis of the Scientific and Terminological Commission under the People’s Commissariat for Education of the BSSR.



**Figure 1.** *The staff of the Scientific and Terminological Commission, 1922. The Central Scientific Archive of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus. Unknown author (Žylunovič 1991: 88).*

The 1920s are the time of the Belarusization policy, the aim of which was an increase in the use of the Belarusian language in culture, education and science. This policy largely determined the paths of cultural development of the BSSR at an early stage. A. Čvikievič, scientific secretary of the Institute, noted that “the needs of life and the energy of the national revival of Belarus required the establishment of a much larger-scale institution” (1926: 10). The Institute was founded “as a scientific research institution on the state budget and, at the same time, as a cultural and social institution, providing through its bodies a direct link with the broad laboring class” (ibid.: 11). From the moment of its foundation, despite the significant centralization of the management of economic and cultural life, “the Institute was the executor, and often the initiator of many undertakings in solving cultural and scientific problems” (Kasciuk & Pietrykaŭ & Tokaraŭ 1993: 3).

Not only theoretical research, but also practical solutions were expected from the Institute. “The Institute was a methodological center in the implementation of many areas of work, actively participated in the implementation of government tasks, helped to develop policies not only in cultural and scientific, but also in other areas” (ibid.: 4).

The structure of the Institute initially included two sections – the humanities and natural sciences. Much attention was paid to the study of Belarusian literature, art, history, ethnography and folklore, as well as the development of a whole range of practical problems of Belarusian linguistics. However, during its activity, the structure of the Institute changed more than once. In March 1924, a large-scale reorganization took place: separate sections of ethnography and geography, art, law, pedagogy, medicine and veterinary medicine, as well as a socio-economic section were created. The activities of all the humanities sections, to one degree or another, related to the study of folk culture. The Institute became a center that united the national scientific elite, created a wide network of local correspondents and set the main directions in the study of folklore and ethnography.

## THE CENTRAL BUREAU OF LOCAL HISTORY

Since 1924, activities in folklore studies have been concentrated in the newly formed Central Bureau of Local History.<sup>4</sup> Through the Bureau, the Institute managed local history work and coordinated the process of documenting various kinds of scientific material. For this the Bureau carried out active work on the establishing of links with local lore societies and the creation of new ones and was responsible for the general management of their activities (consulted and provided them with methodological instructions and programs), as well as organized local lore congresses (Ćvikievič 1926: 23). For the members of local history societies to be aware of current approaches to the collection and folklore studies and ethnographic materials, the Bureau sent out protocols of meetings, reports and resolutions of the relevant sections of the Institute. The Bureau maintained regular correspondence and exchange of publications both with the parent organization and with local societies. The exchange of experience took place within the framework of various scientific events.

The local lore societies had educated members – teachers and their children, pupils and students, agronomists, composers (VOKM, fund 37, inventory 1; 4; 5), who collected the materials. For the members of local lore societies, the most effective collection method was considered *stationary*, when collectors worked in the area of their residence; in addition, the *expeditionary method* could be used (GAVO, fund 1947, inventory 1, file 10). Members of local history societies were taught that the documented materials should be stored in four copies, and the most valuable ones should be published in newspapers, and “this will be a big task for Soviet local historians in the cultural revolution” (VOKM, fund 40, inventory 2, p. 120).

Until the end of 1926, the Central Bureau of Local Lore financed the activities of local lore societies and sent out the journal *Naš kraj* (Our Land)<sup>5</sup> free of charge.

The results of collecting and research work were available to the general public in the journal *Naš kraj*. In the first issues of the periodical, the program-guide for the collectors of the Belarusian musical and ethnographic art (Hrynievič 1925: 45–48) was published. The author aimed to record rural folklore (calendar and family songs), everyday songs, children's folklore, songs for dances, and folk religion with full information about the informant. The program for collecting oral folk art, compiled by the Literary Commission of the Institute of Belarusian Culture (Prohrama 1925: 43–47), was created under the influence of the new Soviet ideology. The program explained in detail that it was necessary to write down also the new folklore items – the Red Army, political, revolutionary, and insurgent songs, tales of riots, insurrections, and revolutions, fantastic, animal and social tales, etc. It also published comments on typical mistakes made in previously documented materials.

The Bureau received all materials from local history societies, among which data for the dictionary of the living Belarusian language, folklore items, descriptions of ancient monuments, arts and nature, etc. prevailed (Čvikič 1926: 88). On journal pages the results of the collecting work of the local lore societies were summed up: according to ethnographer A. Šliubski's calculations, 8,565 folklore items were sent to the Bureau in 1925–1926, 13,459 the next year, and 12,776 in 1927–1928 (Šliubski 1927a: 22–35, Šliubski 1927b: 12–23).

However, not only the task of collecting material, but searching for a connection with the historical past was entrusted to local history. The first issue of the academic local history journal *Naš kraj* wrote:

*Our past has not been studied to the necessary extent, and if it has been studied, then in those directions that were useful to the past authorities in our region. Due to this, views that have already become a scientific tradition have been formed, although they do not correspond to reality at all. Studying the old corners of our past in a new way and searching for new ones is one of the important tasks of modern local history in Belarus.*  
(Ad redakcyi 1925: 3–4)

At the same time, the emphasis was placed on the applied nature of research, since “modern local history is interested not only in purely historical, ethnographic or natural science issues; it focuses on building in all its forms, is based on the present and uses the past as material for the future” (ibid.: 3).



*Figure 2. The Central Bureau of Local History, 1926 (Ćvikievič 1926: 85).*

The work of the Bureau became more and more active. At the beginning of February 1926, Minsk hosted the First All-Belarusian Local History Congress, the focus of which was the activation of collecting and studying scientific materials. The speech of the outstanding Belarusian writer and folklorist Maksim Harecki was devoted to the importance of timely documentation of folklore. After the report, a discussion took place with the participation of Anton Hrynievič, the secretary of the Song Commission, in which the emphasis was placed on the practical significance of collecting activities. It was assumed that it was necessary to collect materials for children and use them in the educational process to create songbooks (Smolič 1926).

This led to a significant intensification of local history activities: new societies were formed, local history activities acquired a scientific content. From the moment of the Congress to September 1926, the Bureau received 5,007 folklore items from local history societies (Ćvikievič 1926: 88).

In 1927, the Second All-Belarusian Local History Congress was held and the results of local history work were summed up. During the congress, a significant expansion of the local history movement on the territory of Belarus was noted (founding of new local museums and libraries, the appearance of local history

descriptions of some regions of the BSSR, the growth of collecting activities, training personnel of local history societies). At the congress, the structure of local history organizations in the republic was approved, with the Central Bureau of Local History leading and coordinating this work (Smolič 1927).

## **THE ROLE OF ETHNOGRAPHY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BSSR**

The role of ethnographic science in the development of the BSSR became the subject of discussion at the festive meeting of the Ethnographic Section of the Institute of Belarusian Culture, which took place on June 3, 1925. The meeting was preceded by serious preparatory work: announcements were made in the media, representatives of other sections and commissions of the Institute and local scientific institutions were invited (CNA NANB, fund 67, inventory 1, file 6, p. 108). The meeting brought together the scientific elite (15 members of the section and 30 invited guests).

The protocol of the meeting describes the main contradictions in detail. After S. Katzenbogen's report, "The role of ethnography as an independent research science", a discussion on the status, subject of study, main goals and objectives of ethnography took place. The prevailing opinion was that it was wrong to understand ethnography as a descriptive science or part of any other discipline, since it is an independent science that is engaged in "a comprehensive study of the people, their physical nature, way of life and culture, spiritual and material" (CNA NANB, fund 67, inventory 1, file 6, p. 109).

In the report "Ethnography in the cultural and Soviet construction of Belarus", read by the historian and ethnographer Michail Mialieška, the emphasis was placed on the applied nature of ethnography, and its fundamental role in the development of national culture was postulated (CNA NANB, fund 67, inventory 1, file 6, pp. 110–113). The author emphasized the need to search for national features and differences that were necessary for the development of Belarusian culture:

*We see how our state institutions – the theater, musical college, art college –, our artists and poets seek out Belarusian folk characteristics, how they build all their work almost completely on those artistic patterns and manifestations that our people have been compiling and shaping for centuries. (CNA NANB, fund 67, inventory 1, file 6, pp. 110–111)*

M. Mialieška identified the urgent tasks related to folk songs: “The rich Belarusian folk melody still remains in the midst of the people and a number of ethnographers-musicians are needed to record this song and arrange it” (CNA NANB, fund 67, inventory 1, file 6, p. 111).

The protocol showed what steps it was decided to take to implement the urgent tasks facing Belarusian ethnography. Among them was the establishment of links with local history organizations, the creation of a network of correspondents to collect materials “in the field” and study them, and the publication of the works of the Ethnographic Section. The participants decided to publish, in the near future, a collection for affiliated local historians who begin their fieldwork, to draw up a program, a plan and route for an ethnographic expedition the next summer to collect material on anthropology, folk life, culture, language, folklore, etc. The question about the creation of ethnographic departments at state museums was raised (CNA NANB, fund 67, inventory 1, file 6, p. 109).

The Ethnographic Section began active work. It was replenished with freelance correspondents, among whom were mainly students of the Belarusian State University and local historians (CNA NANB, fund 67, inventory 1, file 6, pp. 118–119). The driving motive was joining the community “which determines the ways in which Belarus needs to be studied” (CNA NANB, fund 67, inventory 1, file 6, p. 120). Members of the section established contacts with local history societies, conducted written and oral consultations, sent methodological instructions and recommendations upon request. In addition, the Institute sent its specialists to assist in organizing the activities of societies and preparing reports (CNA NANB, fund 67, inventory 1, file 6, p. 28).

In 1925–1926 members of the section conducted several expeditions to the Mahilioŭ district, the Bychaŭ district, to the Sebezh, Nevel, and Velizh districts (I. Sierbaŭ), to the Sluck district, to the Homiel and Rečyca districts (A. Sieržputoŭski) (Ćvikievič 1926: 49–50). During the expeditions, valuable materials related to the life of the population, folklore and the language of the Belarusians were documented. As a result, *Ethnographic Materials* (tales of the inhabitants of Polesie) by A. Sieržputoŭski were published.

## TURNING POINT OF THE 1930S

In 1929, the Academy of Sciences was established, based on the Institute of Belarusian Culture. The Ethnography and Folklore Sector was formed at the Institute of History, which became the center for studies for the next three decades.

However, in the late 1920s – early 1930s the situation changed significantly. This period is characterized by massive repressions that seriously affected the



scientific sphere (Tokarev & Makhnach 1992). The changes concerned research topics and strategies. Studies of traditional folklore were declared outdated and irrelevant to the new Soviet reality. The journal *Savetskaja kraina* (Soviet Country)<sup>6</sup> published an article by Maisej Hrynbliat, entitled “For the Study of Folklore of the Era of the Proletariat Dictatorship”. The author declared all previous approaches to be relics of the past, “national democratism”:

*Questions of folklore, in general, were one of the central issues that were “developed” by a company of “ethnographers” – Lastoŭski, Šliubski, Kaspiarovič, Mialieška, and others, and it is no coincidence. In folklore, they diligently searched for “scientific justification” for counter-revolutionary “scientific theories”. ... On the basis of all that has been said, it is quite clear why the national democrats so ardently “studied” and collected ancient folklore and brushed aside modern folklore in every way. (Hrynbliat 1931: 124)*

The attention of ethnographers and folklorists should have been focused on the new folklore of the revolution and socialist construction, which glorified the new Soviet way of life and stigmatized its enemies (ibid.: 123–124).

These “modern folklore” trends were reflected in the publications *Lenin and Stalin in Belarusian Folk Art* (Butelin 1937), *The Red Army and Defense of the Homeland in Belarusian Folk Art* (Čyrvonaja 1938), etc. In general, folklore collections published in the Soviet period usually began with sections “Modern songs” or “Songs about oppression and serfdom”.

Compared to the 1920s, archival materials of this period indicate a decrease in collecting activity in the field of folklore and ethnography. The increase in the number of local history organizations at factories, museums, and schools took place according to the top-down directions and did not lead to notable results.

During the Second World War, most part of the collected folklore and ethnographic materials stored at the Academy of Sciences were lost.

## **THE INSTITUTE OF ART, ETHNOGRAPHY AND FOLKLORE NAMED AFTER K. KRAPIVA**

In 1957 a new story began with the founding of the Institute of Art, Ethnography and Folklore named after K. Krapiva of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus. The creation of the institute was an important step towards coordinating the scientific research of Belarusian culture. Previously, groups of scientists in different institutions had been studying the different aspects of Belarusian culture.



**Figure 3.** *The staff of the Institute of Art, Ethnography and Folklore. Unknown author, 1980s (AIMEF, photographic collection).*

Initially the Institute was comprised of four sectors (history of theater, cinema and music, history of fine arts, ethnography, and folklore) and an archive. Folklore materials were separated into an independent part of the archive, which was named *Kaliekcyja fałklornych zapisaŭ* (The Collection of Folklore Records). This collection is the largest and oldest folklore archive in Belarus.<sup>7</sup>

Now the collection belongs to the Department of Folklore and Culture of the Slavic Peoples and is a part of the Center for the Belarusian Culture, Language, and Literature Research of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus. In 2001, the collection obtained heritage status for its contribution to national sciences (Decree 2001). The collection includes audio and video records, photographs, manuscripts, and musical note transcriptions. The main body of the collection consists of Belarusian folklore, but there are also collections of Russian, Polish, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Jewish and Romany folklore. It contains more than 70,000 sound recordings and 400,000 folklore texts of ethnic folklore, which were made in field expeditions throughout Belarus and neighboring countries from the beginning of the twentieth century to the present day. The oldest manuscripts in the collection date from the years 1910–1912. This is Jewish folklore documented by Yakov Sheynin in Viciebsk (AIMEF, fund 9, inventory 5, file 21). Materials are obtained from different sources: from field expeditions, from personal and university archives. Collectors are professional researchers, amateurs, and university students.

Fieldwork at the Institute of Art, Ethnography and Folklore began in the 1960s and is continuing to the present day. From the early days of the Institute, researchers were faced with an important task to collect folklore from all over the territory of the BSSR because almost all the collected materials had been destroyed or evacuated during the Second World War. Also, the director of the Institute, P. Hliebka, formulated a task of republican significance – the preparation of a multi-volume edition<sup>8</sup> dedicated to Belarusian folklore. The years 1970–1980 was the period of the most intensive fieldwork for the preparation of this publication. Although the first volume of *Pesni sovetskogo vremeni* (Songs of the Soviet Era) from the series *Belarusian Folk Art* (Kabašnikaŭ 1970) became a tribute to the times, collectors focused on different types and genres of traditional folklore.<sup>9</sup> Religious folklore, spells, and anti-Soviet folklore (ideologically unsuitable jokes and anecdotes) were often ignored.

Basic amounts of folklore material were gathered in the Soviet period by professional researchers – Michail Hrynblat (1905–1983), Arsień Lis (1934–2018), Anatoł Fiadosik (1926–2005), Kanstancin Kabašnikaŭ (1927–2012), Halina Bartaševič (1932–2021), Larysa Barabanava (1951–1989), Anton Hurski (1936–2016), Uladzimir Sysoŭ (1951–1997), Lieanila Malaš (1927–2012), etc. Since the 1990s Uladzimir Vasilievič, Tacciana Valodzina, Alena Bohanieva, Iryna Vasiļjeva, Iryna Smirnova, and others continue collecting work.

In Soviet times, the most common form of conducting fieldwork was complex expeditions. This means that the expedition group included specialists of various profiles – folklorists, ethnographers, musicologists, artists, and photographers –, and each of them performed a corresponding task. Expeditions were organized with the help of local administration. Working with local residents, representatives of local administration pointed out cultural mediators (the oldest and most knowledgeable villagers). Complex expeditions made in every region of the BSSR and border areas often involved foreign experts (Chernihiv region, Ukraine; Bryansk, Pskov, Smolensk regions, Russia; Vilnius region, Lithuania).

Also at that time, joint Belarusian-Ukrainian and Belarusian-Russian expeditions were organized. For example, in 1980, Kanstancin Kabašnikaŭ and Halina Bartaševič organized Svietlahorska-Loeyskaja expedition in cooperation with Russian folklorist Viktor Gusev, and Belarusian-Ukrainian expedition together with composer and folklorist Mihailo Hajdaj. In both cases, the attention of researchers was mostly focused on songs; also charms and ethnographic descriptions were collected. The materials collected during such expeditions were not preserved as a whole but were sorted out by individual institutions and specialized archives, which subsequently affected their preservation.



**Figure 4.** A complex expedition of the sector of folklore, 1970s. From the personal archive of *Arsien Lis*.



**Figure 5.** *M. Hajdaj* in the joint Belarusian-Ukrainian expedition in the village of *Kamyanka* in Chernihiv region in 1980. Photograph by *K. Kabašnikaŭ* (AIMEF, photographic collection).



*Figure 6. An individual expedition in Hlybokaje, Viciebsk region, in 2017. Photograph by I. Vasilyeva (AIMEF, photographic collection).*

For documenting folklore researchers used professional technical equipment which provided high-quality records. However, the main problem was the limited number of reels or tapes that were given for an expedition. In the years 1960–1990 the institute’s staff solved this problem by increasing the recording speed to save space. This method was applied when recording folk prose (tales, legends, etc.). Another solution was to record only a part of the folklore item (as a rule, one stanza), which mainly concerned songs, ballads, and romances. The records of the period are characterized by a lack of context: researchers documented mainly folklore items or their parts, but not the whole conversation with the informant. The interlocution was described in field diaries and today cannot be reconstructed in detail. Another problem is that in most recordings the informants were identified, but more information was gathered only on the informants who offered the greatest number of recordings.

Since the early 1990s, the approach to the organization of fieldwork changed. Researchers preferred individual expeditions instead of complex ones. Nevertheless, the main trend “to collect pieces of the “oldest” folklore genres and melodies” remains relevant. In the 1990s–2000s there were also some unspoken ideological limitations: researchers did not collect and preserve

political folklore. Only a few fieldwork tours in Belarus were devoted to topical/popular topics – internet, political, urban, etc. folklore. In modern conditions, when documenting folklore occurs with the help of digital Dictaphones, photo and video cameras, the researchers were able to record a conversation with informants without restrictions.

A significant contribution to the development of the collection was made by amateurs, as a rule, local people without special educational background. They documented data that was considered old and therefore valuable and important for preservation and transfer to future generations. The main difference is that amateurs have an opportunity to document folklore in natural conditions. While the researcher is alien to the local community, the amateur has the ability to document folklore without any restrictions. They document folklore in the daily routine and on the days of calendar or family holidays and their attention is devoted to texts and melodies. This observation is also confirmed by the fact that in almost every amateur collection there are re-sung songs from memory. They recollect the songs that were heard in childhood or youth from the older generation and which cannot be recorded today. Another reason is the loss of records. In this situation, the recording quality is not the main problem.

The data collected by amateurs are not limited to audio and video recordings, manuscripts and photographs. They may include herbarium, correspondence, and list of villagers, family trees, sketches, and information from the media. Data are accompanied by the comments of the collectors, which explain important aspects of the existence of certain items.

A distinctive feature of amateur records is the lack of information about the collectors and their motivation. As a rule, amateurs consider this information not to be important, although personal interests are always reflected in the collected material.

An integral part of the collection of folklore records is students' collections. A part of them was transferred from the Belarusian State Pedagogical University and Mahileu and Hrodna state universities in 2012–2014. These holdings consist of data that were collected by students of the philological faculty within the framework of folklore practice in 1960–2009. The general strategy was to document folklore in native villages and towns during the summer holidays. Another part included records made by students under the scientific guidance of academic researchers (e.g., AIMEF, fund 8, inventory 91, file 301; AIMEF, fund 8, inventory 90, file 252).



*Figure 7. University students process folklore materials during practice in 2015. Photograph by Yu. Vnukovich (personal archive).*

Students' collections, as a rule, include audio records, fieldwork diaries, cards and notebooks with texts covering all aspects of rural folklore. In general, student records are of low technical quality, since they use personal technical equipment (tape and voice recorders, mobile phones).

In spite of students' appropriate educational background and use of special questionnaires, the reliability of these materials was questioned by researchers. These data could not be the only basis of academic research. With all the drawbacks of student materials, they were digitized and systematized; however, they must be verified before integration into the academic sphere.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The collection of folklore materials from different historical periods was influenced by changing ideologies and cultural policies. The beginning of the collection activity in the late eighteenth–early nineteenth centuries was associated with the era of romanticism. Documentation of folklore in the 1850s–1860s was

connected with the policy of Russification of Belarusian territories before and after the uprising of 1863. The rise of collecting activity in the early twentieth century was associated with national identity growth and development. Two scientific centers in the BSSR and Western Belarus, which coordinated the collection of folklore and ethnographic materials, were headed by representatives of the national elite. The national elite – writers, composers, artists, teachers, museum workers, etc. – was widely involved in the collecting work. Folklore and ethnography (in the broadest sense) were understood as one of the main tools for constructing Belarusian identity in the BSSR in the 1920s. The late 1920s – early 1930s were the turning point in research topics and approaches, as the main part of the national scientific elite was repressed. In the 1930s–1970s, research attention was mainly concentrated on “modern folklore” and “Soviet folklore” (Red Army, political, revolutionary, insurgent songs, etc.). The period since the 1970s is characterized by the interest in traditional folklore types and genres. Despite the publication of Soviet folklore, they greatly predominate.

From the 1960s the Institute of Art, Ethnography and Folklore named after K. Krapiva became the main center for folklore and ethnography studies where the archive – the collection of folklore records – was created. Materials reach the archive from different sources: from field expeditions of professional researchers, from personal and university archives.

Folklore materials collected by professional researchers are characterized by high quality, which makes it possible to use them not only for research, but also for popularization. Specialists generally describe the folklore of a certain locality and then focus on the subject of their own scientific research. The interest of researchers focuses mainly on folklore units, and not on the history of a particular locality.

Amateurs do not use questionnaires and instructions, but write down everything that is considered old, traditional, and local. Thus, these materials require structuring, systematization, additional conversation with the collector and processing due to the low quality of audio recordings. A significant part of the materials requires verification and identification of their place in the structure of the folklore archive.

Student holdings are considered only a result of university practice, and not valuable sources for studying the traditional culture of Belarus. For introduction into scientific sphere, they need verification. Despite the fact that fieldwork of professional researchers, amateurs and students focuses on traditional culture, materials collected by researchers cover the greatest diversity of topics.



## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The division of the territory of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth between the Kingdom of Prussia, the Russian Empire and the Habsburg Monarchy towards the end of the eighteenth century, in 1772, 1793 and 1795 respectively. As a result, the Belarusian territories were included in the Russian Empire.
- <sup>2</sup> An uprising of national revolutionary forces in part of the lands of the former Commonwealth against the Russian rule and for the restoration of the Commonwealth within the borders of 1772.
- <sup>3</sup> This territory of Belarus was part of the Polish Republic in the period from 1921 to 1939.
- <sup>4</sup> The Bureau was created at the Institute of Belarusian Culture, on the model of the Russian one, which had branches in Moscow and St. Petersburg and coordinated local history work in the USSR and was also subordinate to it.
- <sup>5</sup> In 1925, the monthly journal *Naš kraj* began to be published, which marked the beginning of a new stage in the development of local history and Belarusian ethnography in general. "From that moment on, all those materials that were previously stored in the archives of the Central Bureau of Local History, all those instructions, questionnaires, methodological references, etc., which were previously difficult to access for an outsider, appeared on the pages of the new journal, acquired a new significance, turned into life," emphasized the scientific secretary of the Institute of Belarusian Culture A. Čvikievič (1926: 86). Thanks to the publication of the journal *Naš kraj*, relations with the provinces have significantly intensified and reached a new level, and the number of correspondents of the Bureau has increased.
- <sup>6</sup> At the end of 1930, the journal of the Central Bureau of Local Lore, *Naš kraj*, was renamed as *Savetskaja kraina* (Soviet Country).
- <sup>7</sup> Today in Belarus there are also folklore and ethnographic archives of the Students' Ethnographic Association (1998), the Free Archive (2007), as well as archives at the Belarusian State University and local ones in Polack, Homiel, and Brest.
- <sup>8</sup> Similar series were published in all Soviet republics.
- <sup>9</sup> The edition *Belarusian Folk Art* was awarded the State Prize of the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic (1986) and currently has 47 volumes in total.

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- CNA NANB – Centralny navukovy archiū Nacyjanalnaj akademii navuk Bielarusi.  
[Central Scientific Archive of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus.] Fund 67, inventory 1, files 3, 4, 6.

- GAVO – Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Vitebskoi oblasti. [State Archive of Vitebsk Region.] Fund 1947, inventory 1, file 10.
- VOKM – Vitebskii oblastnoi kraevedcheskii muzei. [Vitebsk Regional Museum of Local Lore.] Fund 40, inventory 2, p. 120; Fund 37, inventories 1, 4, 5.

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## FOLKLORE ACTIVITIES OF THE LITHUANIAN SCIENCE SOCIETY: UTOPIAN GOALS OR INSIGHTFUL IDEAS?

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**Abstract:** This article deals with two activities of the Lithuanian Science Society (LSS, 1907–1938) and the history of the folklore collections it accumulated. Its members encouraged people to record folk songs, fairytales, stories, riddles, and other forms of folklore, and they tried to gather in one place all the older manuscripts that contained folklore. This way, the LSS's folklore archive was formed at the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1908, Eduard Wolter, a member of the LSS, made the first folklore sound recordings with a phonograph apparatus. The chair of the Society, Jonas Basanavičius, knew about the Phonogram Archives of Vienna and Berlin; therefore, he encouraged the establishment of such an archive in Vilnius. Another idea of the LSS, initiated by Mykolas Biržiška, was to gather all the songs in one place and to publish a national songbook. Unfortunately, these goals were visionary and utopian for this period of cultural development in Lithuania.

In this study, the birth of these ideas and the path to their realisation are chronologically reviewed. The author discusses the reasons why they were not accomplished in the first part of the twentieth century, and gives explanations for why they were successfully implemented in the second part of the twentieth – beginning of the twenty-first centuries. The historical-political context as well as the actual digitisation of intangible heritage archives help clarify the process.

**Keywords:** Lithuanian Science Society, Vilnius, phonograph recordings, phonogram archives, cylinders, folklore manuscripts, songbook, Lithuanian Folklore Archives, digitisation

The Lithuanian Science Society (Lith. Lietuvių mokslo draugija) is the first Lithuanian public scientific and cultural organisation, founded in Vilnius in 1907. With its establishment, the foundations were set up for the rebirth of Lithuanian science and its development in the Lithuanian language. The LSS

is also closely related to the early beginning of the folklore archives at the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore (ILLF) – the oldest and largest repository of Lithuanian folklore in Lithuania or elsewhere in the world.<sup>1</sup>

The Lithuanian Science Society was very active in its early beginnings. The Society's statutes of association state that the LSS was to “explore the Lithuanian nation and its land”; therefore, one of its five main tasks was to “collect various Lithuanian material” (Seselskytė 2006: 272). The Society's library was founded in 1907, and the archives in 1908. Other Lithuanian cultural organisations as well as members of the LSS and other people donated manuscripts that had already been collected. For example, the chair of the LSS, Jonas Basanavičius, donated manuscripts of his own and of other Lithuanian writers and cultural figures, such as Motiejus Valančius, Antanas Baranauskas, Laurynas Ivinskis, Antanas Juška, and Jurgis Zauerveinas (Georg Zauerwein), as well as various documents, newspapers, and folklore material gathered by himself (Nezabitauskis 1990: 272). The Society was comprised of several hundred members; it founded sections and commissions for different scientific fields, including ethnography, medicine, pharmacy, law, pedagogy, philology, folk song research, experimental psychology, statistics, and economics. Studies as well as folklore and other materials were published in an academic journal of the LSS, titled *Lietuvių tauta* (The Lithuanian Nation). The journal was issued from 1907 to 1936.

A concentrated gathering of Lithuanian folklore and old artefacts began: songs and their melodies were being written down, as well as other genres of folklore. In 1909, a Commission for Songs was established by those who were interested in collecting folk songs. In 1910, Kazys Grinius and other members of the Folklore Commission released “The Short Programme for Gathering Folklore Material”, which provided instructions on how to gather folklore material and old utensils, and how to interview people (Grinius 1910). Money was allocated to be awarded to the best collectors. For example, in 1913, those who collected the most folk songs were awarded premiums of 100 roubles (Valaitis 1932: 18).

The chair of the Society, Jonas Basanavičius,<sup>2</sup> and other members – Eduard Wolter, Aukusti Robert Niemi, Adalbert Bezenberger, Filipp Fortunatov – actively promoted the collection of folklore and attempted to gather all the already-collected materials in one place. The organisational measures were highly effective, which is why the Society received manuscripts from all over Lithuania. The LSS's archive formed a separate division for folklore, where, alongside new collections, old and valuable folklore manuscripts were also kept; for example, multipart songs *sutartinės* written down by Mykolas Ksaveras Miežinis in 1848, orations gathered by Vincentas Ordavičius (Wincent Ordowski) in 1856,<sup>3</sup> and material from the personal archives of famous Lithu-



anian writers and cultural figures of the nineteenth century. This is how folklore archives started to be formed; prior to World War I, the Folklore Archives had already collected 45,000 manuscripts (Viščinis 1968: 432).

During the period of Polish occupation of Vilnius and its region (1919–1939), the Society's activities were considerably restricted and some of the members were forcefully exiled to independent Lithuania (e.g., Mykolas Biržiška and others); the Society also lacked financing and suitable premises. After moving several times, in 1932, the LSS, with all its resources, was headquartered in the house of Petras Vileišis (located at 6 Antakalnio Street, currently the location of the ILLF). The death of the long-time Chair of the Society, Jonas Basanavičius, in 1927 was a serious blow to the LSS. However, the active members (Marcelinas Šikšnys, Jurgis Šlapelis, Vytautas Alseika, Bronius Untulis, and others) came together and after a few years the LSS's activities began to recover. In 1929, during the Christmas holidays, courses teaching folklore collection methods were organised mainly for teachers. In 1931, an announcement was published for the Vilnius-region Lithuanian community, encouraging not only teachers but also gymnasium students and people in the countryside to collect folklore. The best 14 collectors were given monetary awards for that year (Seselskytė 2006: 280; Valaitis 1932: 24, 25). The archive was slowly being processed, with inventory being made of early manuscripts, taking particular note of the main genres of folklore.<sup>4</sup>

The activities of the LSS were halted by the Polish authorities in 1938. When Lithuania regained Vilnius in 1939, the Society's property was nationalised. In 1941, the collections of the Lithuanian Science Society became part of the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of Soviet Lithuania. In 1952–1990, folklore collections were stored at the Institute of Lithuanian Language and Literature. Since 1990, most of the LSS's collection has been preserved at the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore, which is housed in the historical building of the Lithuanian Science Society.

## **THE FIRST IDEA – THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PHONOGRAM ARCHIVE IN VILNIUS**

The first sound recordings of Lithuanian folklore were made by Eduard Wolter – a professor at St Petersburg University and member of the Russian Geographical Society. He was an authority on the Lithuanian language, archaeology, ethnography, and folklore, as well as one of the founding members of the Lithuanian Science Society. In 1908–1909, Wolter recorded songs and instrumental music (using the Edison cylinder phonograph) in eastern and southern Lithuania as

well as in the Lithuanian-language ‘islands’ of Zietela and Ciskods, located in modern-day Belarus and Latvia.<sup>5</sup> One hundred and thirteen cylinders containing 165 folklore pieces have survived to this day (Nakienė 2011: 171). The biggest part of Wolter’s recorded phonographs – a collection of 99 cylinders entitled *Wolter, Litauen* – is held at the Berliner Phonogramm-Archiv (Ziegler 2006: 317). The phonograph collection of the Lithuanian Folklore Archives at the ILLF includes 14 original wax cylinders. Wolter maintained a close relationship with the archive in Berlin, sending his cylinders with a request for them to be galvanised. He had agreed that each cylinder sent to Berlin would be used to produce a matrix that was to remain at the Archive, while he would receive two copies. One copy was to be sent to his workplace – the library of the Russian Academy of Sciences in St Petersburg, and another one was allocated to the Lithuanian Science Society (Andronov & Andronova 2010; Ziegler 2011: 24–26).<sup>6</sup>

On 11 July 1909, at the third annual LSS conference, Wolter demonstrated during his presentation the phonographic recording technique as well as songs that had already been recorded.<sup>7</sup> This possibility to record sound with modern technology was of particular interest to Jonas Basanavičius. Using the example of the Berlin and Vienna archives, he had the intention to establish a phonogram archive also in Vilnius, at the LSS. In September 1909, in the newspaper *Viltis* (Hope) (No 105, p. 25), Basanavičius published an appeal titled “Regarding a phonogram archive”, which proposed to the LSS Song Commission’s members to not only write down songs, but also record them, “because notes, even when precisely written, are not the same as a living voice” (Basanavičius 2004: 158–159). On 4 October, in Berlin, he purchased a phonograph apparatus and by the end of that same year was already recording folk songs around the city of Kaunas (Basanavičius 1936: 116). Materials on 22 wax cylinders, recorded by Basanavičius in different places throughout Lithuania in 1909 and 1912, have survived to this day, and they contain 40 songs. After his death, this mission was continued by Matas Untulis. He recorded songs from the regions of Lida, Švenčionys, and Vilnius-Trakai. The legacy of this LSS member is made up of 20 cylinders containing 118 pieces (often only the first few verses of a song were recorded). In 1911–1912, in Lithuania, folk songs were also phonographed by Aukusti Robert Niemi, professor at Helsinki University. He recorded 73 cylinders (333 tunes) for the Finnish Literature Society (Niemi 1996: 175–176).

Unfortunately, the beginnings of the phonogram collection never evolved into a specialised archive; only a small number of cylinders were collected, and some of these fragile objects were lost during the two world wars and years of political overthrows in the first half and middle of the twentieth century.



**Figure 1.** *The board of the Lithuanian Science Society in 1911–1912. Sitting from the left: Juozas Kairiūkštis, Antanas Smetona, Aukusti Robert Niemi, Jonas Basanavičius, Antanas Vileišis, Jonas Vileišis. Standing from the left: Juozas Balčikonis, Zigmas Žemaitis, Mykolas Biržiška, Jurgis Šlapelis. Kaunas University of Technology library (inv. no. Atv. 699).*

## **THE SECOND IDEA – A NATIONAL SONGBOOK**

The main basis for the realisation of the second idea – to publish a national songbook – was the Lithuanian Science Society’s collection of folklore manuscripts. There is no exact data on how many collections of folklore manuscripts were gathered during the heyday of the LSS. However, it is clear that some collections had been borrowed and never returned to the archive; therefore, they remained in private collections or were simply lost. The Folklore Archives of the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore currently hold a large part of this collection – 1,269 manuscript sets (over 50,000 pages and about 82,000 folklore pieces), recorded in 1800–1937.

Folklore manuscripts, once belonging to the LSS, are also held in the Manuscript Department of the Vilnius University Library. Here one can find a collection comprised of 86 LSS folklore manuscript sets (about 2,600 pages, appr. 4,350 folklore pieces, compiled in 1866–1923) in the archive of LSS member

Jurgis Šlapelis and his wife Marija Šlapelienė. The Vilnius University Library obtained this collection from Šlapelis' daughter, Gražutė Šlapelytė-Sirutienė, in 1977–1978 (Žukas 2006: 6).

In 2013, this early collection, the Lithuanian Science Society's folklore manuscript collection (nineteenth century – beginning of the twentieth century), held at the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore and at Vilnius University Library, was included in the Lithuanian national register of the UNESCO programme "Memory of the World" as a subject of documentary heritage, registration No 55.

The author of the idea to gather together all of the recorded folk songs and to publish a national songbook was Mykolas Biržiška – a notable cultural figure, literary historian, professor at Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas, and signatory of the 1918 Act of Independence. After Poland's annexation of the region of Vilnius, the LSS's resources were no longer accessible to the members of the LSS living in Kaunas, the temporary capital of independent Lithuania, and this is why the collections had to be copied. Basanavičius' letter from 9 May 1926 points out that under the initiative of Biržiška, songs from the LSS's manuscripts were copied and sent to Kaunas – they were to be published in the almanac *Tauta ir žodis* (Nation and Word),<sup>8</sup> or in a special publication. Biržiška had decided to prepare a Lithuanian folk songbook based on Krišjānis Barons' Latvian collection, *Latvju Dainas* (Latvian Songs).<sup>9</sup>

In 1924 and 1925, Biržiška submitted to the Lithuanian Ministry of Education a work plan for song management and publication, in which three aspects were marked out. The first was reprinting of valuable and rare song editions, such as those of Ludvikas Rėza, Simonas Stanevičius, Simonas Daukantas, Georg Nesselman, A. Juška, and others. The second one was a further orderly collection of living song tradition by crowdsourcing of society, schools, etc., and their publication. The third of the main planned activities was the preparation and publication of a great collection of songs – 10 volumes in total – systemising the already published, archived, and newly gathered song material. Work was planned to begin in 1925, with completion set for 1935. According to researchers, this plan shows that the author realised neither the complexity of this work nor the volume of the preparatory and editorial job (Pšibilskis 2009: 283–284; Sauka 2016: 101). The project was not accomplished because at that time there was a lack of specialised institutions in Lithuania (Žukas 1969: 132–134; Daugirdaitė 2015: 27).

However, my research shows that, in fact, preparatory work for compiling a national songbook was actually started. Jurgis Šlapelis, a member of the LSS's Song Commission, remained in Vilnius and at that time was a teacher at the Vytautas Magnus Gymnasium. He was appointed as being responsible

for rewriting the songs stored in the Society's archive: after taking manuscripts from the LSS archive, he gave them to the Gymnasium's students to copy. This is confirmed by a notebook from Jurgis Šlapelis stored in the Manuscript Department of the Vilnius University Library Šlapeliai Archive (signature: F119-44/4). On its cover it says: "Songs written down from the Science Society's archive". While looking through this notebook, it became clear that work had been carried out over two years (from February 1926 until February 1928); nearly 143 transcripts were compiled, and 4,645 songs were written down. A letter by Biržiška, in which he asked to find already copied song texts from Simonas Daukantas' manuscripts in 1921, was found in this notebook. Biržiška wrote that he had paid for this job himself and asked to rewrite the song lyrics once more if it would be impossible to find those previous copies.<sup>10</sup>

Transcripts made by Šlapelis' students were sent to Kaunas and kept at the Folklore Commission, founded in 1930 by Biržiška, Vincas Krėvė-Mickevičius, and Balys Sruoga. Later the transcripts were preserved at the Lithuanian Folklore Archive, established in Kaunas in 1935, which in 1939 was incorporated into the Institute of Lithuanian Studies. In late 1939 and early 1940, the newly established Institute was moved to the regained capital city. Therefore, these transcripts made their way back to Vilnius and were placed in the same archives as the originals from the LSS. A box with copies was kept in the archives for about two decades. In 1959, a young researcher, Kostas Aleksynas from the Institute of Lithuanian Language and Literature, was given the task to register those manuscripts, and they were included in the first deposits of the LSS's collection (Lith. LMD I). Today they are preserved at the Folklore Archive of the ILLF, together with the rest of the Lithuanian Science Society's collection (more about the manuscript collection of the LSS, copying process, journey of copies, etc., read in Žarskienė 2016). The originals from which the songs were written down are held in the Šlapeliai Archive at the Manuscript Department of the Vilnius University Library.

Unfortunately, the idea to publish the song collection was not implemented in the first part of the twentieth century either; the preparatory work for the songbook was not completed, and not a single volume was finished by the time World War II began.

## **REALISATION OF UTOPIAN GOALS**

Due to the world wars and two occupations, the LSS did not implement these ambitious ideas, although they were not completely abandoned. The idea to record folklore with sound recording devices, to gather large numbers of sound

recordings and to establish phonograph archives in Vilnius started to be implemented in Kaunas 25 years later. In 1934, the Commission for Gathering and Handling of Folk Melodies was established, because the majority of folk song recordings of the time contained no melodies, only verbal texts. One year later, the Commission purchased a stationary phonograph apparatus and began to record folk music on discs. This activity was continued by the Lithuanian Folklore Archives. Well-known folk singers, musicians, and narrators were invited to the Archives to record their repertoire on phonograph discs. In 1935–1948, nearly 7,000 pieces of Lithuanian folklore were recorded, using the stationary phonograph;<sup>11</sup> this led to the creation of a collection of sound recordings that is still being accumulated to this day. Although a specialised sound archive was not established, from that time on, folklore was being purposely recorded with increasingly more modern recording devices (magnetic tapes, audio cassettes, mini discs, etc.), and now we have a significant collection of sound recordings at the Folklore Archives of the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore.<sup>12</sup>

Since 2001, a long-term programme for the preservation and publishing of archived sound recordings has been implemented at the Folklore Archives of the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore. With financial support granted by the Ministry of Culture, the recordings from the phonograph discs were digitised at first, and the first Excel-format data base of old sound recordings was created. Restored records of folk songs and instrumental music, best reflecting folklore traditions from different Lithuanian regions, appeared in 2003–2005 in a series of small books with CDs, under the general title of *Phonograph Records of 1935–1941* (Nakienė & Žarskienė 2003, 2004, 2005a, 2005b). The programme was continued with the digitisation of wax cylinders. In 2006, an expert on old sound recordings, Franz Lechleitner from the Vienna Phonogram Archive, using a self-constructed phonograph set, transcribed 107 cylinders into a digital format. Better-quality phonograms were selected and published in the book *The Phonograms of Lithuanian Ethnographic Music 1908–1942* (Nakienė & Žarskienė 2007).<sup>13</sup> In 2008, the Phonogram Collection of Lithuanian Folk Music (1908–1949), preserved at the Lithuanian Folklore Archives of the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore, was included in the Lithuanian national register of the UNESCO programme “Memory of the World” as a subject of documentary heritage, registration No 28. In 2011, during a joint project with the Berlin Phonogram Archive, another publication of sound recordings, related to LSS-member activities, saw the light of day – *Eduard Wolter’s Cylinders Recorded in Lithuania (1908–1909), Held in the Berlin Phonogramm-Archiv* (Nakienė & Žarskienė & Ziegler 2011).

In 2004–2009, carrying out projects granted by the State Science and Studies Foundation of the Lithuanian Republic, a Database of Folklore Audio Recordings

was created, and since that time sound recordings of phonograph wax cylinders as well as discs have been available online.<sup>14</sup> In 2009–2011, the Institute was invited to take part in the international project *EuropeanaConnect* (coordinated by the Austrian National Library, supported by the European Commission), and to provide Lithuanian folklore examples for Europe's digital library *Europeana* (Žarskienė & Nakienė 2010). The songs selected as being most interesting were the old archival sound recordings, and songs from various genres that had been published on the CDs included in editions of the books of Lithuanian folk songs. Therefore, it is now possible to hear Lithuanian folk songs and instrumental music not only in our databases, but also in the *Europeana* portal.<sup>15</sup> It is important that recordings of the ancient multipart songs *sutartinės* as well as instrumental polyphony played on multi-pipe whistles *skudučiai*, five wooden trumpets *ragai* and five-string zither *kanklės*, sung and played by authentic village performers, are also there. These examples introduce the polyphonic singing and playing tradition of *sutartinės*, which in 2010 was included in the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Together with project partners from Poland, Hungary, and Slovenia, a virtual exhibition, “Weddings in Eastern Europe”, was created from the archival material that combines sound recordings and photographs from the 1940s.

In 2007, the creation of a strategically important Database of the Lithuanian Folklore Archives was started, primarily aiming at protecting the manuscript collections. The database was structured to conform with the bibliographic systems and the international archive standards. Three levels of description – the fund, the record unit (e.g., collection, magnetic tape, video cassette) and the document (e.g., a separate document in the collection, a unit of the sound recording, etc.) – are presented hierarchically. Such a structure is universal and serves to describe not only manuscripts, but also other kinds of material. Data on persons, localities, terms, keywords, and bibliographic references is connected to the information system of Lithuanian cultural heritage, *Aruodai*.<sup>16</sup> From 2010 to 2012, the project under the heading *Lietuvių tautosakos rankraštynas: skaitmeninimas ir sklaida* (Lithuanian Folklore Archives: From Handwriting to Digital Broadcasting) gained impetus, and the oldest manuscript collection, i.e., the folklore manuscripts of the Lithuanian Science Society, were digitised.<sup>17</sup> After introducing the common search engine with the database of Folklore Audio Recordings, the old sound recordings from 1908 to 1949 were integrated into this database.

As already stated, in the first half of the twentieth century, there was no special folklore or cultural institution, and, therefore, the idea to compile a great national songbook could not be implemented. This idea slowly came to fruition in later times and is still being implemented. From 1956, the process of compiling

folklore card file catalogues gained impetus. Over the course of many years, card catalogues of different folklore genres were created, including catalogues of folk song lyrics and melodies, and seven books of song lyric catalogues devoted to different genres (work, wedding, youth, love, family, historical, etc. songs) were already prepared by scholars of the Institute during the Soviet period and published in 1970–1986. The eighth book of the catalogue, *Vaišių dainos* (Feast Songs), was compiled by contemporary researcher Vita Ivanauskaitė-Šeibutienė in 2010 (Ivanauskaitė-Šeibutienė 2010). By creating a strong scholarly base and training a group of specialists, the idea of a national songbook finally became a reality.

In 1980, the first volume of the fundamental multi-volume compendium, *Lietuvių liaudies dainynas* (Lithuanian Folk Songs), was brought out; since then, a new volume has been published every few years.<sup>18</sup> An audio CD containing sound records of some songs included in the book was first published in the 15th volume of the songbook (Dringelis & Nakienė 2000); since then all volumes have been supplemented with one or two audio CDs. The 23rd volume representing wedding songs about leaving for the groom's house was issued in 2011 (Daugirdaitė & Ramoškaitė 2011). One more volume of wedding songs – the 22nd (Aleksynas et al. 2019) and a feast songs volume – the 24th (Ivanauskaitė-Šeibutienė & Ramoškaitė 2019) were published at the end of 2019. The 25th volume, containing songs of pasturage, hunting and fishing (Krikščiūnas & Stundžienė 2020) was brought out at the end of 2020. In the future, the Institute plans to prepare more than 10 new songbooks.<sup>19</sup>

## FINAL REMARKS

Undoubtedly, utopian ideals do not often seem to be insightful ideas, but research into the activities of the Lithuanian Science Society proves otherwise. At first glance, the completely utopian ideas raised about 100 years ago by the LSS later became the key strategic goals of the specialised folklore institutions, and to this day they are being successfully implemented at the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore. The small collection of the phonograph cylinders of the LSS recorded at the beginning of the twentieth century has now grown into a large fund of audio recordings including phonograph discs, audio tapes and cassettes, and digital records which are held at the Folklore Archives of the Institute. The idea to publish a national songbook was not realised in the first half of the twentieth century but it was not forgotten, and in 1980 the first volume of the Lithuanian folk songbook was issued. To this day,



25 volumes of the national songbook, including different genres of Lithuanian folk songs, have already been published.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the cylinder and manuscript collections of the Lithuanian Science Society were digitised. Manuscripts are published in the Lithuanian Folklore Archive's database, while sound recordings – in the database of Folklore Audio Recordings and in printed editions. Therefore, anyone who is interested can now find the oldest Lithuanian manuscripts and sound recordings of folklore, see the manuscripts of noted figures of Lithuanian culture, and listen to authentic performances of Lithuanian folk singers and musicians from the first half of the twentieth century.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> According to the data of 2017, about 10,400 manuscript collections of the ILLF are stored in the Lithuanian Folklore Archives, containing up to two million folklore pieces, ethnographic descriptions, etc. Personal manuscripts of folklore collectors and researchers are kept there as well. The sound collection contains phonograph cylinders and discs, magnetic tapes and cassettes, and digital recordings. A collection of photographs, negatives and video recordings has accumulated as well.

<sup>2</sup> J. Basanavičius (1851–1927) was a physician by training, but he was also a journalist, politician, historian, and folklorist. He was an active proponent of the restoration of independent Lithuania and a signatory of the Act of Independence from 16 February 1918. Today Basanavičius is considered the patriarch of the Lithuanian nation.

<sup>3</sup> See folklore manuscript sets: LMD I 754, LMD I 165.

<sup>4</sup> According to the data of the LSS archivist Antanas Valaitis, 6,595 songs, 300 humorous songs, 2,496 fairytales, 566 legends, 3,740 beliefs, 5,471 riddles, 21,563 proverbs, 29 games, 220 laments and other genres had been registered in manuscript sets until the end of 1931 (Valaitis 1932: 29).

<sup>5</sup> More about Wolter's collection, the peculiarities of Lithuanian folk songs and instrumental music, the difficulties of transcribing, and discoveries through research read in the articles by Austė Nakienė (Nakienė 2011) and Rūta Žarskienė (Žarskienė 2010, 2011).

<sup>6</sup> At present, the Lithuanian Folklore Archives still contain 20 copies that were sent to the LSS.

<sup>7</sup> From the book of the LSS's protocols of 1908–1911 (LLTI BR, F22–2, l. 63).

<sup>8</sup> Continuing scientific publication of the Faculty of Humanities at Kaunas University.

<sup>9</sup> The letter is held in the Jonas Basanavičius collection at the manuscript fund of the library of the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore (signature: LLTI BR, F 22-59, l. 6).

<sup>10</sup> VUB RS F119-44/4, l. 15.

<sup>11</sup> The stationary phonograph was used during the war and also the postwar period. In total, over 9,000 folklore pieces were recorded during the years 1935–1948. Unfortunately, some discs were damaged, and approximately 6,700 recordings have survived to this day.

- <sup>12</sup> The collection of audio recordings at the Folklore Archives of the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore includes: 117 phonograph wax cylinders, comprised of 331 recordings (1908–1949); 980 phonograph discs, comprised of approximately 6,700 recordings (1935–1948); about 5,600 magnetic tapes, containing about 265,000 items (1952–1994); about 2,180 audio cassettes, over 54,000 items (1971–2012); about 225 MDs, comprised of 280 hours of recordings (2000–2007); about 1,500 CDs (digital recordings), comprised of over 1,600 hours of recordings (2004–2017).
- <sup>13</sup> When preparing the publication, mistakes were made in identifying the person making the wax cylinder recordings. The registration book lacked some information, so nine cylinders recorded by Wolter (LTRF v 6, 9–12, 14, 28, 54, 55) were ascribed to Jonas Basanavičius. Also, on those cylinders there was no recording of Basanavičius' voice, as was believed earlier (Nakienė & Žarskienė 2007: 91; Nakienė & Žarskienė 2011: 62).
- <sup>14</sup> See <http://archyvas.llti.lt/irasai/>, last accessed on 28 July 2023.
- <sup>15</sup> See <https://www.europeana.eu/portal/en>, last accessed on 28 July 2023.
- <sup>16</sup> See <http://www.aruodai.lt/>, last accessed on 8 September 2023.
- <sup>17</sup> See <http://www.tautosakos-rankrastynas.lt/>, last accessed on 8 September 2023.
- <sup>18</sup> Information about all issued volumes of *Lithuanian Folk Songs* can be found on the webpage of the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore (see [http://www.llti.lt/lt/dainynas\\_leidyns/](http://www.llti.lt/lt/dainynas_leidyns/), last accessed on 8 September 2023).
- <sup>19</sup> See <http://www.llti.lt/lt/dainynas/>, last accessed on 8 September 2023.

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- LLTI BR – manuscripts at the library of the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore
- LTRF – phonograms at the Folklore Archive of the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore
- VUB RS – manuscript at the Vilnius University Library

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**Rūta Žarskienė** (1964–2023) was Senior Researcher at the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore. She oversaw the digitization of the Lithuanian Folk Music Phonogram Collection (included in the UNESCO Memory of the World Register in 2007), and the Lithuanian Science Society's Collection of Folklore Manuscripts (included in the Memory of the World Register in 2013). Thanks to her correspondences, copies of Lithuanian folklore recordings have been transferred from foreign archives: the Eduard Wolter collection of recordings (1908–1909) from the Berlin Phonogram Archives, and the Aukusti Robert Niemi collection of recordings (1911–1912) from the Finnish Literature Society. In 2013, she initiated the transfer to Lithuania of the archives of Dr. Jonas Balys, a famous Lithuanian folklorist in the USA. In 2021, she received the Lithuanian Culture Ministry's Prize for the Promotion and Dissemination of Traditional Culture.

# THE CONTRADICTION FOUNDATION OF THE ESTONIAN FOLKLORE ARCHIVES: TRADITIONALITY AND MODERNISM, UNIFICATION AND SEGREGATION, AND BASICS OF AUTHENTICITY

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**Abstract:** The Estonian Folklore Archives (EFA) has intertwined with the basis of reasoning about folk and nation in many ways. The article discusses opposing concepts that affected the foundation of the institution and the development of its collections while altering according to prevailing ideologies.

Traditionality and modernity, and unification and segregation were interlaced while constructing the Estonian nation during the period of national awakening (starting in the 1850s). In this modernist process the history of Estonians had to be (re)created. Country-wide folklore collection campaigns were organised, during which young people were gathering material from old people about culturally outdated genres and obsolete knowledge.

These large collections became the basis of the EFA in independent Estonia and, according to erstwhile principles, the collection of folklore and filling in the white spots on the Estonian map continued. However, since there was no longer any threat to nationality, folklorists also began to experiment with new methods and study the genres, or social/national groups, which so far had been regarded as marginal or insignificant.

The Soviet occupation was accompanied by major ideological changes. As a result of constant external pressure, folklorists enclosed themselves into ethno-centrist conservatism – folklore of Estonians and kindred peoples, archaic genres of peasants' tradition – were preferred to be recorded and studied once again. Authenticity – the set of qualities of texts such as archaic, traditional, oral, or reliable – became the supreme principle for collecting and publishing. Interest in ethnic minorities and contemporary topics arose only at the end of the Soviet era, experiencing an explosive success in the re-independent Estonia.

**Keywords:** Estonian Folklore Archives, ethnic, national, folklore, traditionality, authenticity, modernism

## INTRODUCTION

During the past five years, Estonia has celebrated several national anniversaries: the centennial of Estonian independence in February 2018, 150 years since the first song festival in July 2019, the centennial of the national university (University of Tartu), and also of the Chair of Estonian and Comparative Folklore in December 2019.<sup>1</sup> Anniversaries were also celebrated by the Estonian National Museum and the Estonian Folklore Archives. At the same time, critical statements about Estonian nationalism, its provinciality and segregation, even accusing national festivities of fascism and apartheid, were expressed more frequently in the Estonian media.<sup>2</sup>

For that reason, the topic of nation and nationality has been revisited yet again in speeches and discussions. Recent conferences on Estonian studies (and other humanities) as well as special editions of philological journals have centred on the topics of nationalism, with titles such as ‘We are Europeans, but let us become Estonians too! Dialogues with Estonia’, ‘To all Estonian peoples’, ‘Humanities and nation’.<sup>3</sup>

The reasons for the increase in interest in the subject are not only the anniversaries, but also societal developments in Estonia and in Europe on a larger scale. Globalisation, the European immigration crisis and extreme nationalism and xenophobia that feeds on them can be mentioned among the driving forces behind this. Thus, there is a growing need to discuss and (re)interpret the concepts and categories of the Estonian nation and citizenship. Discussions about nationalism – the negative and positive connotations of this concept, the possibilities of moderate or liberate nationalism – are topics in political and cultural as well as academic forums.

The third reason – connected with the globalisation of the academic world – is the coercion on Estonian studies and humanities in general from the major trend of internationalisation of scholarly research. Estonian humanitarians, oriented to the international audience – perhaps not always quite voluntarily –, see the intensifying pressure towards research topics, methods, and even theoretical background by academic politics (and finance) and feel as if the connection to “their people” – the Estonian audience – and their field of study hung by a thread.

The motivation for this article is my long-term interest in Estonian folkloristics in the changing political environment after World War II. Soviet folkloristics – and more generally, cultural politics – has been a subject to several stereotypes. One of them is the opinion that since Soviet cultural policy preferred folk culture (folk creations, *narodnoe tvorchestvo*) to the “high” cultural phenomena, folklore and folkloristics benefited from the favoured position. This relates to the Soviet national politics that was publicly represented by



an international spirit, equality, and brotherhood of nations. Per contra, one of the hardest accusations to annihilate someone's opponents at the time was that of nationalism.

In addition, I was motivated by the Soviet modernist worldview, which was also expressed in research policy, including folkloristics, and its acceptance among Estonian folklorists. Here, too, there is a contradiction between the official rhetoric and the scarce contribution of Estonian folklorists to the collection and research of modern folklore.

In addition to the self-evident wish to understand how Estonian folklorists managed and adapted in such a difficult situation, I also have a more straightforward wish to understand what kind of and to what extent changes actually took place in this period. In other words, we must understand what were the positions of Estonian folklorists on the scale of openness-closeness, self and other, or archaic-modern before this difficult period.

This article is dedicated, above all, to the historical formation of the collections of the Estonian Folklore Archives (EFA), which is impossible to discuss without bringing up the development of Estonian folkloristics in general. Due to the common definition of folklore – the archaic oral heritage of the peasantry<sup>4</sup> – folklore archives are also assumed to be a strictly national, conservative, static, self-absorbed system. In fact, over time, depending on the political circumstances, the archive collection and research strategies have been quite varied. I am particularly interested in the changes that took place in the archive collection policy and research policy during the sovietisation processes, and those changes will be examined most meticulously. Below, the contradictory principles that have influenced the formation of the archive collections will be discussed: folk and nation, traditionality and modernism, uniting and segregative, and finally the concept of authenticity.

I realise that while talking about nationality and folklore, many concepts consist of former trend words, presently anachronistic and unwanted, contradictory and overlapping, political and ideological, such as identity, etic-emic, self-other, etc. I am aware of many of these, and certainly many have been dismissed unworthily. However, I do not avoid or use any of them emphatically, but only as based on my subjective preference. Here I have been mostly inspired by and relied on – in addition to numerous Estonian authors – the writings by Benedict Anderson (2006 [1983]), Pertti Anttonen (2005), and Miroslav Hroch (2000 [1985]).

I also acknowledge that any historical review in the form of an article can only be cursory and superficial, but I do not have the aim to give a reference review or just another overview. Perhaps the main impulse for writing this article was one very ethnographic and poetic figure crossing my mind while

reading the writings on the nation building of Estonians, or the development of Estonian folkloristics – a Chinese finger trap, where the threads are bound, being alternately visible and hidden, but still bound and present at the same time.

## NATIONAL AWAKENING AS THE STARTING POINT FOR ESTONIAN FOLKLORISTICS



*Figure 1. Peeter Tatz and August Martin documenting folk tunes in Näsare farm, Pöögla commune, Karksi parish. ERA, Foto 1994.*

The Estonian term *rahvus* (nation) denotes a community with a common language and culture rather than a political or territorial entity. For that reason, the term “nationalism” has gained its negative meaning in Estonia only recently, since the fight for the nation’s right to exist and survive has been seen, first of all, as a fight for cultural identity and self-determination. Due to historical and geographical reality, this struggle was topical from the time of the national awakening in the 1850s until the end of the Soviet period.<sup>5</sup>

Estonian folkloristics was born within the framework of Estonian national movement, becoming one of its cornerstones; it was closely intertwined with the construction of the Estonian nation, with gaining, losing, regaining, and

maintaining its cultural and political independence. Significant events in the history of Estonian folkloristics were connected or coincided with those of the Estonian nation. The founders and theorists of Estonian folkloristics were actively involved in the construction of Estonianness or attributing a meaning to it. In general terms, Estonian folkloristics has a national basis – unlike colonial, anthropological, exoticising, or other approaches studying “other peoples”.<sup>6</sup> In the latter sense it is also important that the concept of *nation* largely overlaps with the concept of *folk* in Estonian, both conceptually and linguistically.

The development of both Estonian society and Estonian folklore was related to developments in Europe (especially in Eastern Europe) as well as in the wider world. The process of independence of Estonian cultural identity reflected similar developments in Europe, and the political independence of Estonia and loss thereof became possible due to political events in Europe. The development of Estonian folkloristics was in the same wave with European folkloristics, with the probable exception of the Soviet-era folkloristics.

When dealing with the Estonian Folklore Archives and Estonian folkloristics, it is unthinkable to disregard the contribution of the pastor and linguist Jakob Hurt (1839–1907). Besides respect for his monumental life work of collecting, studying and publishing Estonian folklore, we need to point out the dichotomies and contradictions he exceeded – valuing archaic traditions in the modernising society, and uniting people through collective endeavour while segregating traditions of other ethnic and social groups (non-Estonian and non-peasant). These conflicting circumstances have been essential throughout the history of Estonian (and international) folklore research and have been influential until today.

The emergence of the Estonian nationality and its connection with folkloristics are not unique. It developed in parallel with other Baltic nations, following the patterns of the independence processes of the Eastern European (small) nations, especially the isolation and resistance to another, ruling nation, using history to justify modernisation.

Jakob Hurt chose the collection of folklore as his tool for national awakening. Estonian folklore had been previously collected by Estophiles of Baltic German origin, as a literary hobby or amateur linguistic activity inspired by the ideas of the Enlightenment, or a collection of anthropological curiosities (Valk 2007; Lukas 2011). In the 1880s and 1890s, collection of their own “old treasures” and providing help in the creation of their own history united and uplifted people from the Estonian nation from all over the country and from all layers of society. With the clarion call ‘To all enlightened sons and daughters of Estonia’ (published in the newspapers in March 1888), and through a skilful PR campaign (publishing reports on collected materials and inspired correspondents’ letters,

etc., along with a personal approach), Hurt managed to engage approximately 1,400 people from all over the country (and diasporas); almost 115,000 written pages were sent in over the years 1860–1906. The nationwide collection campaign became an inspiring example – thus Matthias Johann Eisen and others collected materials for various purposes (see, e.g., Hroch 2000 [1985]: 76–85; Kikas 2014; Jaago 2005; Kuutma 2005).<sup>7</sup>

The lifelong work of Hurt gave way to the institutionalisation of Estonian studies: the Estonian National Museum was founded in 1909 and the Estonian Folklore Archives in 1927, to preserve his folklore collection and to continue his work.

## WHO ARE THE FOLK? UNITING AND SEGREGATIVE BASIS OF THE ESTONIAN FOLKLORE ARCHIVES



*Figure 2. Besides repairing the handle of the scythe, Jüri Pent tells ancient stories and recites verses. Ullo Toomi writes them down. Otsa farm, Särevere commune, Türi parish. Photograph by Ullo Toomi, 1939. ERA, Foto 1671.*

A prerequisite for the construction of a nation is to connect people who feel communion despite being strangers – to create an imagined community, as Benedict Anderson has concluded (Anderson 2006 [1983]). Hurt created the Estonian community through the folklore collection campaign, instigating people with speeches, calls and reports via the media.

The aim of the Estonian national movement in the nineteenth century was to construct a nation based on cultural and linguistic unity – and differences – similarly to other East-European small nations / ethnic minorities (see, e.g., Tamm 2008). We should bear in mind that the territory of the Estonian ethnos was a part of the Russian Empire, and was divided between two provinces: northern Estonia belonged to the Estonian Province, southern Estonia (along with northern Latvia) belonged to the Livonian Province.<sup>8</sup> In consequence, while constructing the Estonian nation, one had to unite people from different territorial areas, with different dialects and micro-cultural aspects (see Valk 2014: 223–227).

To reference Alan Dundes (1980 [1977]), we can ask who are the folk we are talking about in relation to folklore. Reflecting the specifics of the Estonian language (and history), the terms “folk” (Est. *rahvas*) and “nation” (Est. *rahvus*) are markedly similar in spelling and can at times be of similar meaning. *Rahvas* (folk, people) is a social category, relating to a socially, economically and culturally marginalised community: “others”, mostly country folk, who, as a result of Estonian colonial history, were mostly ethnic Estonians – *undeutsch, nerusskie* – (non-German, non-Russian). During the past millennium, various colonists had filled the higher strata of the society – the aristocracy and bourgeoisie of Swedish, Danish, German and Russian origin.

Because of the ostracisation and marginalisation of ethnic Estonians, national leaders did not see the possibility to build up the Estonian nation as a part of German or Russian culture/nation but alongside them, even opposing to some extent. Hurt did not pay attention to the ethnic minorities living in Estonia. Baltic-German and Russian aristocracy and bourgeoisie were not seen as folk, because, according to the principles of the time, higher strata of the society did not form communities with their own folklore (see, e.g., Dundes 1980 [1977]: 2–8). They were seen as representatives of high/formal culture, administrative power, the empire, and an ethnically/culturally privileged group and the majority in a broader sense (see, e.g., Valk 2014).

In contemporary discussions about nation(alism),<sup>9</sup> its uniting function is often left aside, and the focus is on exclusion and segregation. Thus, some researchers do not interpret the folklore collection campaigns of the nineteenth century as a unifying event, but as the isolation of ethnic groups by traditional-cultural markers (e.g., Arukask 2011: 93).

The identity of small nations and ethnic groups (also minorities), with an emphasis on intersectionalities and distinctions, grows especially under oppression – for example, under the impact of imperial Russification, which was the case in Estonia (and in other Baltic provinces) in the nineteenth century. After gaining national and cultural independence in 1918, the constant pressure of Germanisation or Russification evanesced, and the ethnic identity was merged with national and/or state identity. Also, folklorists started to collect and research the folklore of ethnic minorities and neighbouring peoples, looking for connections and associations in content and spread, and even in the origin of folklore (e.g., Valk 2016: 639–641). Indeed, comparative studies have always been the core and actual part of the discipline because of the international essence of folklore genres.

The folklore of neighbouring peoples and local minorities was not the mainstream research topic in independent Estonia, yet it was not completely ignored. Folklorists' personal research interests were mirrored in the collection policy of the EFA. Here we can point, of course, to the head of the archives, Oskar Loorits (1900–1961), who had great merits in collecting, publishing, and examining the Livonian language and folklore, not to mention supporting the Livonian identity through these activities.<sup>10</sup> Professor Paul Ariste (1905–1990), a linguist who started his scholarly career at the EFA, enthusiastically documented folklore and ethnology of ethnic minorities and kindred peoples until the end of his life.<sup>11</sup>

The EFA sent students of Russian philology to the Russian villages (Old Believers near Lake Peipus, also Russians in the Pechory region) to collect Russian folklore. One of the EFA's Russian collections consists of impressive seventeen volumes (ERA, Vene), extending to more than 10,000 pages (Salve 2002: 34–38). Later, smaller collections from other peoples were added, and the gathering of the folklore of related Finno-Ugric peoples also began (Västriik 2010: 10–14). However, the collection of and research into the Baltic German heritage did not start with considerable enthusiasm.<sup>12</sup> In this case, moderate interest could have been mutual. Could the Baltic German community, which lost its socially privileged position during the independence process of Estonia, agree to be a research subject of folkloristics? Could they consent to consider themselves as a folk, or did Estonian folklorists see the Baltic-German ethnic minority as a folk?

However, philosophers and ideologists had not stopped thinking about and discussing the nation's identity, its uniqueness and *élan vital*. Here Oskar Loorits was the prime mover; he used his knowledge of comparative folkloristics in his disquisition about Estonianness (see Västriik 2005).<sup>13</sup> During the first independence period, the concept of national sciences was also introduced into the humanities, with one of its aims being the separation of national phenomena/features from the foreign ones (see Tamm 2008: 22–25).



**Figure 3.** Erna Tampere and Otilie Niinemägi writing down songs. Metsara village, Põide parish. Photograph by Herbert Tampere, 1956. ERA, Foto 2632.

After World War II, Estonia underwent systematic changes in political life and structures of societal management in the course of sovietisation reforms – brought about by the application of the unifying model for republics of the Soviet Union – which changed the institutional and personal networks, as well as the standpoint of folkloristics and other Estonian studies. With the need to constantly oppose the previous socio-political order, preceding research efforts were declared to be tendentious and even detrimental, thus discursively discontinuing the development of Estonian studies.

At first glance, the ideological background of the Soviet humanities – constant emphasis on the importance of folksiness – and the official politics of favouring indigenous peoples (*korenizatsiia*) in different periods (e.g., Slezkine 1994) might allow folklore collection and research to rise to the top of the research hierarchy in the humanities. However, the question was: What was considered as folk culture? Was there any intersection with folklore? In addition, how did the collection and research into folklore coexist with the campaign to uproot “bourgeois nationalism” during the Stalinist era?

Researchers of sovietisation have revealed that the ultimate purpose of *korenizatsiia* and later national politics was to abolish nations and ethnicity. The construction and supporting of national identities and ethnic cultures

was just an essential link to get the society from clan system to socialism. The creation of literary languages for ethnic minorities was necessary for people to read communist literature and understand their class bonds and obligations (Hoffmann 2018: 66–73; Slezkine 1994).

Ethnic circumstances in occupied Estonia in 1940 were different than the ones in Central Asia after the annexation to the Soviet Union. Estonia – and other Baltic states – was an established national republic and its population’s aim was to continue to maintain their ethnic identity and cultural independence.

According to the studies on the subject of Estonia’s political or cultural life during this period, the accusation of bourgeois nationalism was not associated with nationality or ethnicity, but was simply an antithesis to everything Soviet (see, e.g., Zubkova 2009).

Many researchers referenced in their studies how in reality the country was governed with the imperialistic chauvinism of Great Russia, even if the official Soviet ideology declared all peoples living on the territory of the Soviet Union to be equal (see Annus 2015). The nation was again defined in terms of social concepts – as in Estonian and Livonian provinces in the Russian Empire. The Soviet nation was based on social class, citizenship and territory, and was highly ideologised and idealised. Ethnic minorities were tolerated in the Soviet Union only as long as they remained peasants and workers.

The political pressure to become one big Soviet nation was followed by adaptive resistance in annexed Estonia; for folklorists this meant the return of focus to the archaic folklore of the agricultural society and a certain level of ethnic restraint. For academics, the study of archaic peasant folklore was, to a certain extent, an opportunity to engage in national culture, avoiding the mandatory Soviet propaganda on the one hand and official repression on the other. Popularising folklore through publications, folk music ensembles, festivals, sound recordings, exhibitions and museums – especially when it came to archaic *runo*-songs, place-lore, calendar customs, etc. –, or using folklore as a source of professional art creations was a safe way to resist sovietisation and maintain a sense of Estonianness.

The folklore studies of the Stalinist era “revealed” the friendly relations between Estonians and Russians, which had been supposedly concealed in the publications of the previous era in “bourgeoise” Estonia. During the post-war years, Estonian intellectuals were obliged to enter the Russian-speaking scientific arena. The history of Estonia was considered a part of ancient Rus history, where the Eastern Slavic and Russian influences were emphasised, while the connections to Finnic, Scandinavian, Germanic or Baltic traditions remained in the background or were not mentioned at all.

Relations between the Estonian and Russian peoples were brought into focus right away. Ethnologists adapted very successfully and started researching



the ethnogenesis of Estonians; archaeological, ethnographic, folkloristic and dialectological fieldwork was conducted in eastern Estonia, with its ethnically mixed population (e.g., Moora 1956; Jääts 2019). At the end of the 1940s, folklorists sent Russian philology students to the areas around Lake Peipus to collect Russian folklore. Despite the efforts, the material was of no primary importance, and it was archived separately from the main collections, without any special research being based on it.

When the Chair of Russian Language of the University of Tartu began to organise its own fieldwork in the 1960s, the efforts of Estonian folklorists to collect Russian folklore ended. The prejudicial feelings towards the collection of Russian folklore are clearly represented in the post-war manuscript series “RKM, Vene”, which consists of only four volumes. It is highly probable that Estonian folklorists were interested in the Russian influences on Estonian heritage. However, the constant dominant presence of Russian culture as a domain for comparison succeeded in nipping the potential of such research in the bud, and folklorists directed their steps back to ethnocentrism.

While Russian neighbours and local minorities were excluded from the folklore collection and research priorities, the geographical and ethnic area of the concept of kindred peoples broadened noteworthy during the Soviet period. The Estonian folklorists’ interest was turned to kindred peoples since they had feelings of greater solidarity and belonging because of the similar political background. Hence, organised folkloristic and ethnographical expeditions to Finno-Ugric peoples began, for which being a member of the Soviet Union gave hitherto non-existent opportunities (Salve 2002; Västriik 2010).

Thus, the collections of the EFA labelled “other nations” grew in the form of Finno-Ugric material, and the accrument of recordings of other peoples living in Estonia was very limited in the Soviet period. The documentation of the folklore of national minorities in Estonia was resumed only in the 1990s, when during the great collection campaign of the pupils’ lore, folklore was also gathered from Russian schools. Estonia’s re-independence was also accompanied by the growth of interest in Russian Old Believers living around Lake Peipus, as well as Ingrian Finns, Romas, Baltic Germans, etc., along with the rise in the self-consciousness of national minorities and the establishment of national associations. Research on Russian speakers who had immigrated during the Soviet period has taken off only in recent years (e.g., Seljamaa 2016).

Today, we need to rethink what is the task of the Estonian Folklore Archives. The main task is undeniably to record Estonian national intangible heritage – as relevant to the national archives – considering the political meaning of the concept “national”, despite linguistic or ethnic relations. The EFA should definitely be a place to record also non-Estonian heritage from Estonia.

Since the area of activities of the Estonian folkloristic research has extremely expanded geographically, another aspect here is that the archives should, in fact, refrain from becoming a collection of curiosities or colonial archives. A very enlivening example of this problem is the idea expressed by Indrek Park, an Estonian-origin researcher of Native American languages, of preserving his Mandan language manuscripts alongside the Finno-Ugric collections of the Estonian Literary Museum (Niglas 2020).

Today, this idea seems somewhat unacceptable – considering the discussions on cultural appropriation, the interweaving rights of communities, performers and collectors, etc. However, the complexity of the collection politics demonstrates the historical facts that the EFA possesses several old collections which were collected using copyright-disregarding practices unthinkable today. For example, we must be grateful for the Baltic Germans' literati who copied old manuscripts of *runo*-songs from each other in the early nineteenth century, or the copied sound recordings of small Finno-Ugric peoples from the Soviet period, whose original recordings have been lost from local museums by today.

In the globalised world of tourism and international scholarship, we should reconsider and discuss the tasks and opportunities of the EFA in collecting, opening, researching, and publishing of folkloric materials.

#### FOLKLORE ARCHIVES RELYING ON TRADITIONALITY/ARCHAICITY AND MODERNITY



**Figure 4.** Sound-recording. J. Kikas by the microphone, E. Pärnamets waiting for his turn. Erna Tampere and Herbert Tampere writing down. Photograph by Richard Hansen, 1957. ERA, Foto 3134.

Another two contrary factors interweaved in the establishment of the Estonian folklore collections are traditionality/archaicity and modernity. The concept of folklore is characteristic of the modern culture which seeks its roots and qualities in traditions (Valk 2016: 638–639).

While constructing the identity of a small nation – essentially a modernist undertaking –, one of the main tasks is to construct the nation's history, to establish the justification for the existence of ethnic or social groups that were marginalised so far. Because Estonians – feudal serfs up to then – did not have their national (written) history, and Baltic-Germans' historical literature was territorial and focused on the Baltic-German culture, Estonian history had to be established – as Marek Tamm concludes, 'to write Estonians into history as a nation' (Tamm 2008: 503). The main idea of folklore collection was to collect oral history, i.e., evidence about the historical past of Estonians (see, e.g., Bendix 2009 [1997]; Jaago 2005; Saarlo 2008; Särg 2007; Valk 2005).

Folklore – based conceptually on J. G. Herder's ideology and Hurt's personal preference for the older, alliterative folksong, *runo*-song – was considered as the spirit of the people, "the old treasure", the most precious evidence of the nation's former greatness. For the nationwide folklore collection initiative to succeed, Hurt first had to change the perception of folklore as something obsolete and immoral through speeches and publications (Kikas 2014).

One of the prerequisites for the modernisation of the Estonian society was broad-based literacy that conduced to the vanishing of the archaic oral traditions. The spread of popular literature made songbooks with rhymed songs available country-wide, which in turn led to the spread of songs of a newer style. Alongside the process, the *runo*-song tradition became obsolete because it was no longer adequate to fulfil people's aesthetic, emotional, and musical demands. Oppositely, broad-based literacy created a prerequisite for people – ordinary rural habitants; there were enough of those who were able to write down folklore.

Hurt's great victory was, firstly, that he was able to make it clear to Estonian intellectuals that, if they were educated, they did not have to give up being Estonians (Raun 1986; Leppik 2013). Hurt's bigger hat trick was that one of the conditions for becoming a nationality was creating history by collecting archaic folklore, "old treasures" – *runo*-songs, fairy tales, legends, proverbs, etc. This was done by those same people with innovation-oriented thinking – students, village schoolmasters and teachers, members of literary societies, etc. – who had to raise confidence in the elderly people, who barely dared to know and remember something as retrograde as a *runo*-song. Into the gold fund of Estonian folkloristic writing belong descriptions by students-stipendiaries in their fieldwork diaries of elderly rural women, who did not dare to sing in front of young collectors or who were fleeing from their homes to escape the collectors.

Until the 1930s, when folklore collection was seen as saving the old treasures, elderly people who presented old stories and songs that they remembered from their childhood were primarily interviewed. The stories and songs of young people – in fashion at that time and reflecting the contemporary world – were mostly abandoned in terms of both saving time and resources as well as lack of interest. That is why the Estonian folk collections consist of archaic heritage presented by older people – in other words, memories of memories.

From the 1930s to the 1980s, folklore was defined by the characteristics that it considered to be essential: traditionality, collectivity, orality, and anonymity (Jaago 2010: 593). With the independence of the discipline, also the folklore research, methods and subjects regenerated and broadened. Professor Walter Anderson<sup>14</sup> renewed the research area with an interest in the phenomena that had so far been regarded as marginal, such as the written spread of folklore, child lore, lore of ethnic minorities, etc. Along with the novel issues, Anderson also introduced new collection methods, such as the questionnaire survey. His mass collection campaign in schools, on the other hand, was caused by the need to gather all possible text variants inherent in the historical-geographical method (Seljamaa 2005).

With the establishment of the folklore archives, a new research centre was created, manned by “young angry men”. The head of the EFA, Oskar Loorits, called for a methodological extension of the studies through philological, cultural, psychological, aesthetic, and sociological research instruments (Loorits 1932: 27; also 1936). In the evolution of the ethnological school at the archives, the focus of the study as well as the collection was on the personality of the performer and on the presentation context, stressing the importance of the text, presentation, and context in the case of folklore (Hiimäe 2005; Viidalepp 2004; Jaago 2010). Therefore, during the collection, which was generally an attempt to gather folklore material from the areas or on the topics that had not been otherwise or enough covered, attention was also paid to documenting the performer’s entire repertoire, not just recording the older genres.

Despite the renewal and expansion of research areas, the archaic folklore of Estonian peasants, however, remained the mainstream in the research; marginal and contemporary, as well as new trends and methods had been left on the sidelines. There was no particular interest in other social groups or in contemporary folklore issues. For example, the heritage of the Baltic Germans was not documented or studied (the collection of the Baltic German child lore by Anderson was an exception).



**Figure 5.** Herbert Tampere is writing down Otto Vares's tunes. Himmaste village, Põlva parish. Photograph by Erna Tampere, 1966. ERA, Foto 7693.

In the 1940s and 1950s, Estonian folklorists ended up bearing the aftershocks of the modernisation of the Soviet folkloristics (see, e.g., Panchenko 2005). Just like in Soviet Russian folkloristics in the 1930s, the archaic tradition of peasants was undermined, displaced by collection and research of a new, “Soviet people’s folklore”. The term “folklore” was replaced by “folk creations”. The focus was on contemporary Soviet folklore, which included workers’ folklore about the struggle between the social classes, heritage connected to the Great Patriotic War,<sup>15</sup> and folklore of collective farms. At the same time, the tone and orientation of the new folklore was determined from above: the so-called working masses were to praise the new social order and the Soviet leaders, while bourgeois Estonian and German occupation figures and so-called retrogrades were presented in feverish and satirical depictions.

Estonian folklorists were saved from the stigma of nationalism by the linguistic and conceptual difference between the words “nation” (*rahvus*) and “folk” (*rahvas*). The definition of folklore, which was in use in Estonian folkloristics, was directed to the past, denoting the oral tradition of common people, culturally and economically marginalised in pre-modern, agricultural society in the past centuries under monarchies that changed in the course of history. Details of Estonian history – foreign conquerors and rulers, peasants’ serfdom, etc. – had

a positive effect on the studies of archaic folklore against the Soviet political background. The traditions of the twentieth-century farmers, especially in connection with the independent Republic of Estonia, were not safe to collect or study. The materials, primarily about the older tradition and archaic folklore, were still being collected from the country folk during the twentieth century. In contrast, the research object of Soviet folkloristics reflected a modern model of culture, where cultural self-expression had already separated from everyday life and was channelled into professional or amateur cultural activities. Soviet folk creations were the product of modern thinking that, in addition to folklore and folklorism (amateur performances in folksy style), included literary pieces and individual creative works (see Oinas 1985). The publications, directed to the masses, showed Estonian folklorists as researchers who had taken to the new trends and the usage of the new terms and new fields of research with enthusiasm. However, collection and research into folk creations had never taken off properly (e.g., Saarlo 2018: 19–22; Jaago 2019: 130–131; Kalkun & Oras 2018).

From the distance of disciplinary history, but being familiar with the stage performances of folklore in the Soviet period, one can easily adopt a stereotypical opinion that during the Soviet period the folk culture blossomed as a result of the working class being in a privileged position in society and of Soviet cultural policy favouring creative self-expression. Actually, not every kind of folk culture was in a favoured position. The Soviet folklore mentioned above had a limited subject matter, often representing a parallel reality. The real folklore of the time, which could be critical of the societal order or related to folk beliefs, was proscribed: it was forbidden to share it with strangers, to collect or to archive it (e.g., Goršič 2018; Krikmann 2009).

In the 1960s, after some restrictions in the Soviet society were eased off, the interests of folklorists returned to more recent matters, and questionnaires were issued about songs about historical events and social struggles, on contemporary traditions, etc. Following the example of Finnish colleagues, who formed the only accessible connection with Western folkloristics for Estonian researchers, child lore became the new collection and research topic in the 1970s. Despite the new trends, the main collection strategy up to the end of the 1990s was expeditions into rural areas, where attempts were made to record all existing folklore materials (songs and narratives) of particular regions. Archaic folklore was still preferred to urban and contemporary lore.

As with ethnic minorities, the collection and research of contemporary topics evolved explosively in the context of the social changes that took place due to Estonia's re-independence. The EFA have not intended to collect "archaic folklore" anymore, but even when gathering memories, one reaches the modern times – the daily life in collective farms and suburbia. The focus of the

discussions and efforts is on contemporary lore, which is rapidly emerging, changing and disappearing, and its registration and documentation is technically complicated in many ways.

## **AUTHENTIC, OF LITERARY ORIGIN OR INDIVIDUAL CREATION**



*Figure 6. Students writing down folk tunes in Ohepalu village, Kadrina parish. Priit Raik, Anni Kroll, Enn Kivinurm, Elisabet Vari, Alma Talve. Photograph by Herbert Tampere, 1969. ERA, Foto 8809.*

Authenticity has been one of the most important principles in Estonian folkloristics and here the above-discussed concepts of archaic/traditional versus modern and native/indigenous emerge. Ülo Valk has pointed out traits such as old, valuable, and oral in the concept of authenticity in Estonian folkloristics (Valk 2005). If we consider the importance of folklore texts in constructing Estonian national history<sup>16</sup> and the influence folklore has had on building up and inspiring Estonian professional culture,<sup>17</sup> it is comprehensible why documented and archived folklore was (and in some sense still is) expected to be authentic.

The question of authenticity has been the central point of folklore research throughout the history of the discipline (Bendix 2009 [1997]). Discussions about the concepts of tradition and authenticity, as well as improvisation and variation, orality and literacy, public and private, have built up folkloristics and developed the academic knowledge base. The meaning of traditional folklore has disintegrated from traditional peasants' folklore to several different phenomena. Also, in the history of Estonian folkloristic tradition, we must question the formulation and delimitation of the concepts of traditional and authentic (cf. Anttonen 2005: 11).

The problem of authenticity of folklore, i.e., the quality and trustworthiness of collected (and written) texts, has been present since the country-wide folklore collection campaigns at the end of the nineteenth century, when notes about places and singers' names became obligatory (Valk 2005: 34; see also Bendix 2009 [1997]: 95). The provenience of (re)written songs, the singer's name or even place of residence were not emphasised before systematic/scientific collection; a remark "from people's mouth" was considered satisfactory.

The list of folklore genres, drawn up and disclosed by Hurt, was relatively long, including genres publicly not approved, such as superstition and obscenae. For the sake of research, all genres of traditional lore had to be documented. Thus, the criteria of authenticity were not thematically but historically conditioned – older genres like *runo*-song were considered to be more authentic than the newer style of singing, because of the borrowed essence of the latter (Särg 2007; Oras 2017). The reason for this partiality was the situation that folklore texts were seen as historical documents, testimonials, not as poetic texts (Hurt 1989 [1876]: 31–35).

One of Hurt's requirements to his co-workers was to write down only traditional folklore, and not to copy from literature or to write creations of their own. Because of this requirement, several correspondents have confirmed that they have written down only what they have heard with their own ears, adding nothing. Today, experienced researchers of archival texts take this statement as a symptom, a hallmark for especially irresponsible copies from books or romantic-poetic experiments in *runo*-song form (Salve & Saarlo & Saukas 2019: 60). Hurt himself noticed this phenomenon and noted delicately in his newspaper reports that one or another contributor had sent the creations of their own (Valk 2005: 34). Also, other collectors have faced the same problem. Researchers of vernacular literacy and of contributors of folklore collecting campaigns in the nineteenth century have paid attention to the drawing power and complexity of the status of 'the man of letters', and also to the difficulties for the writer to delimit their different roles – a mediator of folk traditions and a creative author (Kikas 2014; Salve & Saarlo & Saukas 2019: 55).



We can assume that the basis of the Estonian Folklore Archives – collections of older manuscripts – consists of recordings of traditional oral peasant tradition, different genres of folklore, with piquant additions of amateur poetic creations and copies of literary texts and re-folklorised texts. Over time, attitudes to the written origin of folklore texts or to the role of individual creativity in variation and improvisation of folklore texts have changed.

During the first period of Estonian sovereignty, after the establishment of the EFA, when folklore research emancipated and broadened its area of topics and methods, the concept of authenticity started to expand and became more flexible. It may be said in addition that the distinction and diversification of theories and methods somehow shifted the authenticity in its rigid sense out of focus (Bendix 2009 [1997]: 97). The use of the innovative methods – such as ethnological research, the study of performers-singers and storytellers, their repertoire and performative processes – adopted by Herbert Tampere, revealed the complexity of the concepts of traditionality and authenticity. Nevertheless, the contemporary folklore processes of the period – individual/vernacular literary creations, folklorisation of literary texts, and re-folklorisation – did not reach the focus of the academic research.

The collection of folklore texts was guided by sometimes conflicting directions. Generally, folklorists preferred oral traditions of a particular ethnic group of a particular region, of indigenous people (not immigrants or emigrants), but there were also deviations. For example, a voluntary contributor of the EFA, Priidu Tammepuu, who recorded the unconventional repertoire of a storyteller from Laiuse parish, was instructed contradictorily by archival officials. His correspondence from 1938 reveals that Rudolf Põldmäe and Richard Viidalepp instructed him to avoid individual non-traditional creations, but Oskar Loorits encouraged him to record untraditional narratives as an example of narration processes.<sup>18</sup>

The experiments with contemporary Soviet folklore and folk creations in the Stalinist period frightened off Estonian folklorists from exploring the boundaries of tradition and authenticity for almost all of the different Soviet periods. The established preset of folklore phenomena favoured by the Soviet officials – folklore groups and dance ensembles performing arranged folklore texts on stage – became a popular way of hobby cultural activities for Estonians but ignored the study object for folklorists. The concept of folklorism – the use of folklore by amateurs or professionals on stage, the “second life” of folklore – acquired a negative connotation of non-authenticity (see, e.g., Kalkun & Oras 2018).

During the process of conservation in Estonian folkloristics, the concepts of authenticity and traditionality became more prominent criteria for collection and publication.<sup>19</sup> However, “literary influences” was often a euphemism

for rewritings from books by correspondents, but also for learning songs from textbooks, and “individual creations” was a stigma for non-collective verbal expression. The recording and archiving of texts of literary origin or individual creations was avoided. Folklorists’ question about the origin of the song – from whom did you learn the song? – was a kind of an authenticity test.

But there are numerous examples of how the so-called authenticity scale was blurred. On one end of the scale, we have traditionally orally reproduced songs, inherited from family or local community members, on the other – amateur contributors of archives, who committed fraud by unscrupulously rewriting from literary sources. In the middle we have performers or collectors who might not have been aware of the literary origin of some well-known songs and considered them as a part of their local and/or family song tradition.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the literacy rate of Estonians was about 45–50% but in 1887, 77% of the population was able to write and 91% to read (Liivaku 1995: 40, 86). In the Soviet period, the secular publications of informative and entertaining functions, so-called folk-books, were studied in terms of the subject of relations to oral traditions – both as documents of folklore texts and as sources for oral traditions (e.g., Tedre 1965; Vinkel 1966). In the nineteenth century, some *runo*-songs along with romantic-patriotic songs were in the assortment/canon of folk-books, also folk songs and their adaptations were printed in the songbooks for choirs and schools (Rüütel 2012 [1969]: 30–33; Särg 2005: 29–30). During Soviet times, a possible link to printed sources discredited the song variant as well as its singer/performer for folklorists, and it was a strong reason for excluding it from publications.

As an example from today, editors of the academic *runo*-song volume *Vana kannel XIII: Laiuse regilaulud* (The Old Psalter XIII: *Runo*-Songs of Laiuse Parish) (Salve & Saarlo & Oras 2019) were repeatedly confronted with the fact that some country-wide known *runo*-songs had been published in the nineteenth-century folk-book and re-folklorised in a modified form. The best-known example is the song “Suude sulg” (Mouth’s Quill), which had been published by Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald already in 1840 (Kreutzwald 1840: 25–26). The song has been recorded all over Estonia in approximately 200 variants, and in Laiuse parish in nine variants.<sup>20</sup> According to Kristi Salve, some words and phrases foreign to the *runo*-song poetics, which appear in writings all over Estonia, frequently in a distorted form (*keelekõlks*, *pajatisvaip*, etc.), leap to the eye. The song’s distribution is influenced and predisposed by Kreutzwald’s publication. The variants from Laiuse parish are recorded by trustworthy contributors; they coincide neither with each other nor with the printed text. It is obvious that the literary version returned to the oral tradition – (re)folklorisation. In such

cases it is complicated to make any decisions about the authenticity of the texts (Salve & Saarlo & Saukas 2019: 78–79).

The origin of the performer – i.e., the place of birth – is another factor affecting the estimation of the authenticity of a folklore text. For example, in one volume of the academic *runo*-song series *Vana kannel* all *runo*-song variants collected in one parish are published. The singing tradition of one parish is considered to be an entirety and distinctive from other ones, even those from neighbouring parishes.<sup>21</sup> Also, because the *runo*-song tradition was archaic and vanished (with some remarkable exceptions of Setumaa and Kihnu Island) from “actual tradition” during the collection period all over Estonia – the performers of *runo*-songs remembered the songs their parents and grandparents were singing – it was presumed that people learned their *runo*-song repertoire in their place of birth. This is the reason why the compilers of *Vana kannel* usually exclude songs of performers who were born in some other parish. The segregation was made on the basis of origin – songs from other parishes were not authentic for the publication.

Similar selections were made during the fieldwork in the Soviet period. Folklorists did not refuse to record the repertoire of newcomers – especially because collected recordings were archived and made available, linked to another parish’s material.<sup>22</sup> But if choices needed to be made – for example, because of temporal, material or other limits – then newcomers, especially those from urban areas, were left aside. Because the archaic tradition was preferred, it was presumed that only native habitants knew the authentic local tradition.

Authenticity is the concept that – and the importance of which – has changed most within time, research methods and ideologies. It is clear today that the value of the archived folklore texts cannot be decided on the basis of their authenticity. I have to agree with Ülo Valk that although authenticity can be functional in separating some kind of archival texts from some others, it should not be judgemental in valuing collectors or archives (Valk 2005: 38). Philological work on texts can reveal links and influences between written and oral texts. It is obvious that in the nineteenth century the archaic folklore was written down in an already modernised society, where there was no rigid border between the new and the old, but rather mixed links and divergent transitions. Researchers of vernacular literacy reassess the work of the collectors who had fallen into disgrace at some point.

The issue of authenticity of contemporary folklore, or even the adequacy of the concept for analysing the contemporary non-institutional creativity, are not discussed in this article.

## IN CONCLUSION

The article is dedicated to the collections of the Estonian Folklore Archives and discusses the opposing concepts that have affected the foundation of the archives and the development of its collections.

It is trivially obvious that, in a period of crisis or pressure, inward recourses, conservatism, and a vision of the past are being used to protect national (or ethnic) identity. Nonetheless, I believe that there are some points of interest in the formation of Estonian folklore collections and the development of the EFA.

Firstly, the situation of the national awakening period, so-called Hurtian times, when the modernist, rapidly changing cultural and economic relations in the society probably had a great chance of leading to the disappearance of Estonians as an ethnic group. The emerging citizenry of Estonian ethnic origin did not, however, choose the Germanness of landlords, or Russianness of the Emperor, but opted to value Estonianness as such. An archaic part of culture, folklore, was chosen as a cornerstone for the identity creation of a modern nation – no matter how constructed we can see it today. It can be concluded that the cultural foundation of the Estonian nation has been based on the memories about the memories.

Secondly, the forced modernisation at the beginning of the Soviet occupation, in which quiet ignorance, an emphatically conservative approach to folklore, its collection and research, was chosen. This resulted in the abandonment of the collection and research of contemporary folklore, as well as the ignorance of many minority groups. The focus on self and exclusion of others was chosen as a strategy of self-defence or national resistance.

This is the Chinese finger trap<sup>23</sup> bounding of opposite values in the development of folkloristics and the formation of folklore collections. In every period – during the national awakening, the Soviet annexation, as well as the periods of independence and re-independence of Estonia – there was a thread of folkloristic (and nationality) values on the surface, co-existing at the same time with other, opposed values hidden somewhere inside. Inside the trap there is the concept of authenticity, which is directly linked to all the opposites surrounding it: archaic or modern, self or other, peasant or urban, folk or non-folk, etc.

The question for now is whether the folklore archives as such have a future. There are two aspects. Estonian folkloristics has been extremely archive- and text-centred, and has made efforts to broaden its sources and perspectives during past decades. The folkloristic study of archive texts, once at the forefront, has now become peripheral, an outsider in the perspectives of funding. However, this research tradition is of great importance in Estonian studies, in writing Estonian cultural history. Every generation could have the right to

have a position in the Estonian *runo*-song tradition – to give just one example here – or the obligation to open up the personalities, motivations and achievements of people who have ever collected folklore texts.

The second aspect is the addition and growth of archives today. It is clear that so-called archaic folklore – remains of the traditional folklore of peasant society – can no longer be harvested to fill in the white spots on the Estonian map. The task for archives is to collect contemporary or near-historical traditions. The archives will have a future only if their collections contain sufficient data and memories that are essential for the identity construction of current and future generations. And that is the basis from which the whole debate on the future should begin.

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## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The first all-Estonian Song Festival took place in Tartu in 1869 and was dedicated to the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the abolishment of serfdom. Estonian independence was established on 24 February 1918. The Estonian national university was established in 1919 (University of Tartu), and in the same year the Chair of Estonian and Comparative Folklore was founded. The Estonian National Museum was founded in 1909, its sub-institution, the Estonian Folklore Archives, in 1927. On Estonian history see, e.g., Kasekamp 2010; on Estonian folkloristics see Valk 2005 and 2007.
- <sup>2</sup> The essay was completed before Russia militarily attacked Ukraine on 24 February 2022. In the context of the changed international policy, the programme of the last youth song festival, held on 2 July 2023, was not criticised for including only Estonian songs. On the other hand, the issue of nationalities has arisen in a new way in the context of the reception and coping of Ukrainian refugees in Estonia.
- <sup>3</sup> The first title is that of the annual conference of the Centre of Excellence in Estonian Studies (held on 27–28 April 2018), paraphrasing the clarion call of the literary society Young Estonia from the early twentieth century: 'More European culture! We are Estonians, but let us become Europeans too!' The second one is a citation from the Estonian Declaration of Independence (Manifesto to the Peoples of Estonia, 1918),

acting as the title of an issue of the Estonian Writers' Union's journal dedicated to national minorities (Vikerkaar 2018). The third is the title of an issue of a philological journal dedicated to Estonian studies (Keel ja Kirjandus 2018).

- <sup>4</sup> This definition of folklore is, of course, prejudiced and now outdated, but in fact, outside of folklore discourse, still generally applied.
- <sup>5</sup> On Estonian national awakening see, e.g., Karjahärm 2007, Annus 2019: 465–469.
- <sup>6</sup> Retrospectively and reflectively, we can point out some traits of the abovementioned approaches while dealing, for example, with ethnic minorities and minor kindred peoples (e.g., Kalkun 2017).
- <sup>7</sup> About the European parallels see, e.g., Bendix 2009 [1997], Bula 2008, Ó Giolláin 2000.
- <sup>8</sup> The division of the current Estonian territory into Estonia and Livonia dates back to the thirteenth century, the beginning of foreign conquests. In the course of various wars and rulers, the boundaries have changed, and a more permanent division has been established since the sixteenth century. On Estonian history, see Kasekamp 2010.
- <sup>9</sup> Avoiding delving into the myriad of interdisciplinary writings on nationalism, I rely here on the writings of Özkirimli (2000, 2005), and on Estonian culture studies, e.g., Peiker 2016, Monticelli & Laanes 2017, Laanes 2015.
- <sup>10</sup> About Oskar Loorits's comparative studies, see Selart 2013, Arukask 2009, Västrik 2010.
- <sup>11</sup> By virtue of Paul Ariste, small collections of folklore of Romas, Jews, Estonian Swedes, and a number of Finno-Ugric peoples are found in the EFA archives, not to mention his life-work, the manuscript of *The Votic Ethnology* (5,499 pages). About Ariste's folkloristic activities, see, e.g., Salve 2005, Arukask 2009.
- <sup>12</sup> In the manuscript series 'ERA, Saksa', there are only 800 pages, collected mostly by the students of the University of Tartu. Prof. Walter Anderson had started his questionnaire collections among Baltic-German students (see below).
- <sup>13</sup> In this area, Estonian folklorists followed the same direction as other European countries of the period.
- <sup>14</sup> Walter Anderson was of Baltic-German origin, and the first professor of folklore at the University of Tartu (1920–1939).
- <sup>15</sup> The Great Patriotic War is a term used in the former Soviet Union, and still in Russia, to denote a part of World War II, primarily the front between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany.
- <sup>16</sup> Or some images, metaphors and symbolic scenes of it; see the discussion about the *droit du seigneur* (e.g., Metsvahi 2019); and "The Great Battle for Freedom" (Tamm 2008: 505–507).
- <sup>17</sup> On the use of *runo*-song as the basis of Estonian professional music see, e.g., Särg 2007.
- <sup>18</sup> EFAM, Tammepuu, M 1: 3, 8/9; 10/11; 12/3; 14/5; 20/1.
- <sup>19</sup> Of course, one of the reasons among aesthetical and ideological criteria was material – recording with new technical equipment needed resources (electricity, magnetic tape, transportation, etc.) which were limited during the first decades of the Soviet period (Oras 2008).
- <sup>20</sup> In *Vana kannel XIII*, a total of 1,709 text variants of 628 song-types have been published. Leaving aside abnormally "big" types of children's songs, there are only 10 song

types represented by more than 10 variants. Most of the song-types are represented only by 1–3 variants (Saarlo 2020).

<sup>21</sup> The parishes used to denote the territorial origins in Estonian studies are historical territorial administrative units that were originally shaped by tribal relations. The establishment of church parishes started in the thirteenth century. Because of manorialism and serfdom, cultural differences between tribes deepened through the centuries; that is why parochial origin determined the characteristics of both material and immaterial peasant culture even in the nineteenth century. In the late nineteenth century there were 112 parishes in Estonia.

<sup>22</sup> I.e., the labelling of the collected material was doubled: one label indicated the performer's living place, the other the place of birth.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Estonian *kassimärss*, see [https://www.muis.ee/en\\_GB/museaalview/469185](https://www.muis.ee/en_GB/museaalview/469185), last accessed on 18 September 2023.

## ARCHIVAL SOURCES

### Manuscripts and photographs in the Estonian Folklore Archives of the Estonian Literary Museum:

EFAM, Tammepuu = Priidu Tammepuu's archives  
ERA, Foto = Photographs of the Estonian Folklore Archives  
ERA, Saksa = manuscripts of German folklore  
ERA, Vene = manuscripts of Russian folklore  
RKM, Vene = manuscripts of Russian folklore (before 1995)

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# HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN PARTICIPATORY MUSIC MAKING AT A CONTEMPORARY FOLK MUSIC FESTIVAL: RUNOSONG NESTS AT THE VILJANDI FOLK MUSIC FESTIVAL AND *PELIMANNI* EVENINGS AT THE KAUSTINEN FOLK MUSIC FESTIVAL

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**Abstract:** The article studies, compares and analyses participatory music making at Estonian and Finnish folk music festivals. By comparing the empirical research materials collected during comprehensive fieldwork in 2004–2019 from the *regilaulupesa* (Eng. runosong nest) of the Viljandi Folk Music Festival (Est. Viljandi pärimusmuusika festival) in Estonia and from the *pelimanni* (Eng. folk musician, fiddler) evenings of the Kaustinen Folk Music Festival (Fin. Kaustisen kansanmusiikkijuhlat) in Finland, answers were sought to the following questions: What kind of participatory music making takes place at these folk music festivals? What are the social dynamics between and within the groups and individuals in participatory music making situations? How are the primary and secondary functions of music making formed? As a result of the qualitative comparative phenomenological research, it was found that although in participatory music situations at Estonian and Finnish folk music festivals the musical behaviour of participants and the social dynamics of groups could differ radically, they still strive for direct musical experience at a community and personal level and bring the older musical tradition closer to the contemporary people. During participatory music making the secondary function, that is, musical behaviour directed outside the group, could turn naturally into a primary function – musical activity that unites the community and fulfils its internal needs. Situations of participatory music making at Estonian and Finnish contemporary music festivals revealed the common music making as a cultural, social, creative, and emotional phenomenon which has symbolic and direct connections with traditional Finnic folk music culture.

**Keywords:** participatory music making, folk music festival, ethnomusicology, musical behaviour, empirical fieldwork

The field of contemporary music festivals is like a rich soundscape, set by musical, social, historical, economic, and even political sound colours. The distinctive feature of folk music festivals against this general festival background is the association of the music that sounds there and the cultural and social context surrounding it with the traditional lifestyle and worldview, which ideally also considers it natural to involve a person in community activities, including music making. Thus, one would think that today's big folk music festivals are an open environment for everyone to take part in musical life, whether it is by performing music, enjoying it or participating in its creation here and now.

But what is the situation in reality? In academic research, folk music festivals appear mainly as events for performing and listening to music. Usually, research focuses on creative practices, changes in tradition, history of the event, and social reflections. However, the classification of music festivals based on Swedish experience refers to carnival-type festivals, where sometimes the border between performers and listeners disappears (Ronström & Malm & Lundberg 2001: 58–59; see also Ronström 2016).

One such festival, which combined the characteristics of a carnival-type party and a music festival and maintained a balance between participation and performance activities was the Falun Folkmusik Festival – one of the models for the Viljandi Folk Music Festival. The festival was based on three equal components: concerts, courses, and folk festivity. The model for the last part of this triplet was earlier gatherings of traditional violinists and a carnival party (Falun 2023).

Since experiences and practices have become the central cultural goods in today's world, it is important to take a closer look at the situation and possibilities of participatory music making at folk music festivals. Participatory music making is also a relevant topic because studying it helps to understand, more generally, the nature of this impact and importance of music making for both the individual and the community.

The aim of this article is to compare the possibilities and situations of participatory music making at Estonian and Finnish folk music festivals and to analyse the roles and behaviour of the participants. The article seeks answers to the following questions: What are the participatory music performances that take place at the Viljandi Folk Music Festival (Est. Viljandi pärimusmuusika festival) in Estonia and at the Kaustinen Folk Music Festival (Fin. Kaustisen kansanmusiikkijuhlat) in Finland? What are the social dynamics between and within the groups and between their members in the participation situations, including musical behaviour, self-expression and establishment through music making, and which changes occur in roles? How are the importance of music

making in a group and the change or blending of primary and secondary functions manifested?

The research of the Viljandi and Kaustinen festivals was initiated and has been supported by my hobby of traditional music making, as well as my work at the Estonian Folklore Archives of the Estonian Literary Museum. I have performed at the Viljandi festival as a singer and violinist and have been doing volunteer work since 1999. Since 2005, I have participated in the Kaustinen festival as a member of Antti Koiranen's Finnish traditional music ensembles Nuolipelimannit and Koiranen Kollektion. Through the opportunity to participate, I came into good contact with the organizers and musicians of both festivals, which facilitated carrying out ethnomusicological fieldwork.

The first part of the article examines the concepts and theoretical background of participatory music making and provides an overview of the previous studies and research methods in Estonia and Finland. The second part introduces the conducted fieldwork and the methods used to deal with participatory music making in this research. The third part presents the participatory music situations selected for analysis from the Viljandi Folk Music Festival in southern Estonia and the Kaustinen Folk Music Festival in western Finland: these are Viljandi *regilaulupesa* (Eng. runosong nest) and Kaustinen *pelimanni* (Eng. folk musician, fiddler) evenings. The fourth part consists of an analysis of examples of participatory music making. This is followed by topic-related discussion, results, and conclusions.

## **RESEARCH THEORIES, CONCEPTS, AND METHODS**

The theoretical approach and terminology of social aspects of music, including common music making, have been shaped and conceptualized by American ethnomusicologists Alan Merriam (1964), Alan Lomax (1968, 1976), and Thomas Turino (2008), New Zealand-English social scientist Christopher Small (1999), German musicologist Ernst Klusen (1986) and others.

The music of a participating nature has also been described and studied through the empirical material of one musical tradition by several researchers from the Nordic and Baltic countries, among them Heikki Laitinen (1994), Ingrid Åkesson (2006), Guntis Šmidchens (2014), Ingrid Rüütel (2005, 2006) and Taive Särg (2014).

Alan Merriam suggested that music as a process should be studied on three analytical levels: conceptualization about music, behaviour in relation to music, and the sound of music. Without concepts about music behaviour cannot occur,

without behaviour musical sound cannot be produced, and music itself in turn shapes the concepts about it. Merriam considered the principle of treating music holistically as central to understanding music making (Merriam 1964: 32).

Alan Lomax's extensive study of traditional music in the 1960s aimed to find connections between community singing style and social organization. The cantometric method created for this purpose used the term "singing style" in a broader sense. The singing style included the social structure of the singing group, musical qualities, voice generation strategies, linguistic and cultural features, as well as the performance of singing and its arrangement. Lomax stresses that knowing the community's way of life is crucial for the interpretation of the musical tradition (Lomax 1976; see also Allpere 1988; Rüütel 2022: 31–32).

The contemporaries and classics Merriam and Lomax, who influenced each other as well as the circles of ethnomusicology, both highlight in their works the importance of studying music as action and behaviour. They emphasize the inseparability of thinking and theoretical understandings, social and aesthetic aspects in making music. Thus, their approach provides the theoretical background supporting this study for a comprehensive understanding of participatory music making.

Several social science theorists who have influenced ethnomusicology as well, have also recognized that music is a phenomenon that is closely related to human cultural and social behaviour. Christopher Small discusses the context and organization of music performance as an influence on social dynamics, explaining how the concert situation creates a set of hierarchies and subgroups, separating audience and players, as well as audience members from each other. He shows that music making can follow more diverse social patterns, which in turn allow new social groups to emerge and change the roles of the individuals participating in the group (Small 1999: 16; see also Hadar & Rabinowitch 2023). From the point of view of this article, it is relevant that in a music festival situation, people communicate with each other through participation in musical activities, and the impact of this music can only be assessed through experience (Small 1999: 20).

Ernst Klusen distinguishes, based on performance, primary, secondary,<sup>1</sup> and mixed functions of a folk song. Singing in the primary function, or "inward", occurs between group members for their own use and is not intended to be performed for an audience (Klusen 1986: 185). Secondary performance, that is, performing for people outside the group, is related to the secondary function of singing – audience-oriented performance (ibid.: 189). Intertwining of primary and secondary functions can occur in situations where singing has a primary function, but the specific singing situation is initiated from outside of one's



group by a secondary stimulus, performance to others. Primary and secondary functions, with their combinations, transitions, and overlaps, characterize the living forms and realms of common song (*ibid.*: 192–193).

Thomas Turino divides music making into four categories: participatory, presentational, recording, and produced music. Participatory music is a situation where all those present freely and actively participate in a common musical being: playing an instrument, singing or dancing. In the case of presentational music, the performers and the audience are clearly separated. The audience can sing or dance along to the musicians performing on stage, but they are not the focus of the event. High-fidelity recording is a documented recording of a stage performance or a faithful imitation of a live musical situation. Studio sound art is a music recording, the production of which uses professional audio technical capabilities and the result of which cannot be reproduced in real time (Turino 2008: 26–27).

Klusen's and Turino's views complement each other in formulating the musical processes and functions that arise in the group. In the context of the current research, their treatment of primary and secondary functions and categories of music making forms a network of concepts, based on which the musical behaviour of groups of people in participatory music making can be more thoroughly described.

In today's anthropology and ethnomusicology more and more attention is paid to the researcher's own direct experience. The self-reflection and phenomenology provide the theoretical and methodological background for its approach. Self-reflection is defined in science as a personal analysis process during which a person actively becomes aware of the values, beliefs or understandings underlying their actions, as a result of which their new knowledge is formed, learning takes place and behaviour changes (Bolton 2001).

Phenomenology is a philosophical tradition that seeks to understand the world through people's direct experience. In the case of the phenomenological method, qualitative research methods are mainly applied – interviews, conversations, and participant observations. Analysing the functioning of the community and the behaviour of its members helps to make sense of the social dynamics of situations. Since the researcher's own subjective and conscious experience is preferred as the subject of phenomenological research, and the researcher's scientific approach is aimed at discovering new things, phenomenological qualitative research as a method is relatively free and flexible (Orbe 2009: 749–751; Lester 1999: 1). In applying the phenomenological method, I have been inspired by American ethnomusicologist Vanessa Thacker's doctoral thesis devoted to the study of Irish folk songs (Thacker 2018).

Estonian and Finnish traditional music researchers have used several interdisciplinary collection and research methods in the study of musical events, including participatory music making, according to the broad perspective of ethnomusicology. Qualitative structured, semi-structured and dialogic or conversational interviews and quantitative multiple-choice and open-answer paper and online questionnaires have been used in the research of traditional communities, hobby collectives and professional ensembles that practise folk music. Researchers have highlighted that oral material collected in an informal and free conversational atmosphere and open-text questionnaires yielded significantly more relevant data than limited-choice responses (Laitinen 1977; Rüütel & Tiit 2005, 2006; Särg 2014; Kästik 2014).

One productive method in the context of documenting Estonian and Finnish folk music culture has been participant observation, collecting data while participating in the activities of the researched community. This type of activity provides an opportunity to understand and make sense of the studied culture and its inherent values and their significance through collecting and describing the observed situations (Särg 2014; Haapoja 2017).

Participant observation is often accompanied by audiovisual recording, which provides an opportunity for auditive and visual analysis afterwards. An older but still relevant way of storing data is also taking written notes and keeping a fieldwork diary. One should be prepared to use such an old-fashioned but still sufficient documentation method in situations where audio and video recording is not possible or appropriate due to technical problems, a suddenly arising collection situation or the sensitive or special atmosphere of the situation (Kuutma 1998; Rüütel 2000; Haapoja 2017).

The method of handling the fieldwork materials has often been the transcription of the recordings and a detailed, thick description of the collection situation. In this case, the relevant research method has been close reading of source texts created by the researcher, that is, repeated reading and thorough consideration of the material (Geertz 1973; Kuutma 2008).

## **PARTICIPANT OBSERVER IN PARTICIPATORY MUSIC: WORK PROCESS AND METHODS**

Festivals have become one of the central and beloved forms of folk music experiencing in both Estonia and Finland in the second half of the twentieth century (Kuutma 1998; Rüütel 2004; Määttä 2005; Asplund 2006). This article focuses on the comparative study of participatory music making at two folk

music festivals: the Viljandi Folk Music Festival in Estonia and the Kaustinen Folk Music Festival in Finland.

The Viljandi and Kaustinen festivals have grown out of communities that value folk culture and are interested in the revival of traditional music. These two music events have basically the same goals – to make the local traditional music culture more understandable for today’s people and, at the same time, to bring the diversity of the world’s folk music culture closer to people (Kõmmus 2019: 134).

The Viljandi Folk Music Festival first took place in the town of Viljandi in southern Estonia in 1993. Estonia’s largest folk music festival was based on the enthusiastic activities of the teachers and students of the Folk Music Department of the Viljandi Cultural School, which promoted learning traditional music naturally, experientially and by listening. A direct model was the Falun Folkmusik Festival in Sweden, where young musicians who studied in Viljandi had the opportunity to participate several times in the early 1990s. The Viljandi festival takes place over four days in the last weekend of July. Until 2023 the party had an average of 800 performers and an about of 26,000 listeners per year (Kõmmus 2005; Kiviberg 2019; Viljandi 2023).

The Kaustinen Folk Music Festival took its beginning in the village of Kaustinen in the region of Central Ostrobothnia in western Finland in 1968. The biggest folk music party in Finland emerged from the playing traditions of local folk musicians (Fin. *pelimanni*, Eng. folk musician, fiddler). Traditional participatory music making has been a natural part of the festival life there since its beginning, as local musicians were self-evidently involved in the running of the festivity (Asplund 2005). The festival takes place in the second week of July and lasts for seven days. Until 2023 the number of performing musicians was 4,000 on average and the annual audience is about 48,000 (Laitinen 1977; Cantell 1993; Määttä 2005; Asplund 2005; Kaustinen 2023).

Observing, collecting and comparing data concerned with common music making during the folk music festivals of Viljandi and Kaustinen has been a long-term ethnomusicological journey. Some of the collection and research methods used in this research were selected from among the methods listed above before the beginning of the fieldwork process, some were developed during the research and analysis according to the concrete situation.

During the period of fieldwork, in the years 2004–2019, several qualitative interviews were conducted with team members, performers and listeners at the Viljandi and Kaustinen folk music festivals. Dozens of hours of audio and video recordings were collected from both parties, written records were made and fieldwork diaries were kept. Festival publications, programmes, flyers, newspapers and audio records were archived. A significant amount of empirical

material was collected as a result of the participant observations carried out in Estonian runosong nests and Finnish *pelimanni* evenings.

The materials from the Kaustinen festival were collected by the author of the article during the fieldwork done as an individual researcher. At the Viljandi festival, fieldwork was carried out in cooperation with researchers and employees of the Estonian Literary Museum, the Estonian Folklore Archives and the Estonian Traditional Music Centre. Kanni Labi, Aado Lintrop, Triinu Ojamaa, Taive Särg, Olga Ivaškevič, Airika Harrik, Maike Tubin and many other colleagues and collaborators have made their valuable contribution to documenting the festivals. The collected video, audio and photo materials are stored in the Estonian Folklore Archives of the Estonian Literary Museum, and in the possession of the author of this article.

I have considered qualitative semi-structured conversational interviews to be one of the appropriate ways to capture participatory music making as a process at folk music festivals. When creating relevant questions for a broader study of festival culture, I used as examples Heikki Laitinen's overviews of festival research topics (1977, 2003 [1989]) and the survey questionnaires prepared by Ingrid Rüütel and Ene-Margit Tiit for the Baltica festival participants (2005).

The full version of the qualitative interview questionnaire about the Viljandi and Kaustinen folk music festivals contained 12 broad topics, which were divided into more detailed questions. Since 2004, I have used the following topics in preparing and conducting several different interviews and questionnaires related to festival culture: 1. the time when the festival started; 2. the birth of the idea of the festival; 3. the message of the festival; 4. the impact of professional folk music education on festivals; 5. the festival as an all-inclusive folk music party; 6. the musical face/character of the festival; 7. the musical content of the festival; 8. concepts of folk music; 9. the influence/social pressure of society and audience on the festival; 10. economic strategies for organizing the festival; 11. the festival team; 12. cooperation of the festival team with other organizations (see Kõmmus 2005).

In the interviews for the current study on common music making at the Viljandi and Kaustinen festivals, I focused on one of the aforementioned topics – the festival as an all-inclusive folk music party, the possibilities, importance and necessity of free participation, singing, and playing instruments at a contemporary folk music festival. This broader topic was divided into more detailed questions. It was rather a survey plan, because the wording and emphases of the questions formalized before the fieldwork varied and changed during the conversation according to the experiences and preferences of the interlocutors in making music together. The questions to discuss were the following.

1. How long have you been participating in runosong nests / *pelimanni* evenings? How did you join this event, hear about it, get here?
2. How important is the possibility of free music making, singing, playing instruments at a big organized festival?
3. Can singing and playing instruments together unite a random group into a cohesive community? What is needed for this: a suitable place, a common repertoire, an inspiring atmosphere, the presence of instruments, organization or randomness?
4. What have you experienced, found out, learned thanks to making music together: new folk songs, musical instruments, techniques of singing and playing instruments, the effect of singing together, discovering your own musicality?
5. What is the meaning and significance of making music together for you personally? What have you felt, experienced emotionally thanks to participatory music making: the courage of self-expression, self-confidence, creativity, sense of belonging?
6. What does the term “the musical mother tongue of the people” mean to you?

The total number of interviewees and conversation partners was estimated at 40, with whom I communicated both in larger groups and person to person. In more detail, I documented 14 conversations held in Viljandi and 10 in Kaustinen, the written data of which are in my possession. The discussions did not take place in a planned and targeted way but were shaped according to the situation. Since sound recording did not feel natural and comfortable in every situation, it was easier to take notes and records and keep a fieldwork diary afterwards. Participants in the conversations were interviewed anonymously. The reason for this approach was to create a relaxed and informal atmosphere that would encourage free conversation.

To approach the collected materials, I followed the example of the works of Taive Särg (2014) and Heidi Haapoja (2017), who have documented and researched the singing of runosongs in modern singing situations. When analysing the collected sources, I used the thick description of the interviews and situations, in which I was guided by the works of the American anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973) and the Estonian culturologist and ethnomusicologist Kristin Kuutma (1996, 1998, 2008).

Taking into account my fieldwork done during a longer period and at different festivals, I have followed the qualitative comparative phenomenological approach, which includes several qualitative methods, e.g. participant observation, interviews, and conversations (Orbe 2009: 749–751; Briggs 1986; Õunapuu 2014; Vuori 2021).

During the participatory music fieldwork, a need arose to apply self-reflection as a data collecting method (Bolton 2001). As the initiator of qualitative interviews and conversations, I first told the interlocutors about my experiences of singing and playing instruments and the personal and professional interest that developed under their influence. In the informal atmosphere created in this way, people were mostly open about expressing their opinions, both alone and in a group. Self-reflection still required prior self-analysis and understanding of my own musical behaviour. Such a self-reflective process, in turn, facilitated the analysis and understanding of the material obtained during conversations and observations.

## **CHARACTERIZATION AND FORMATION OF RUNOSONG NESTS AND *PELIMANNI* EVENINGS**

Estonian and Finnish ethnomusicological tradition, as well as its applied direction, the study of the revival of music, has been significantly influenced by a local special feature – the common Finnic runosong tradition, which has a long and rich history of collecting and researching. The runosong heritage has been considered one of the important and unifying features of the musical cultures of Estonian, Finnish, Karelian and other Finnic nations (Kallio & Frog & Sarv 2017). The musical tradition, which was in a dying phase from the end of the nineteenth century, has shown signs of revival since the beginning of the global folklore movement in the 1960s (Rüütel 2004; Hill & Bithell 2014). The participatory music making opportunities brought to life at today's Estonian and Finnish folk music festivals, including runosong nests and *pelimanni* evenings, are one part of such a process of revitalizing local folk music.

### **Runosong nests**

The Estonian name *regilaulupesa* (Eng. runosong nest) was first introduced in 2007, when the Viljandi Folk Music Festival was dedicated to the Finnic runosong. A common singing area was opened in the courtyard of the Kondas Centre, the centre of naive art named after local naive artist Paul Kondas. In the following years, song nests were also held in other places of the festival area, including on the free or green stage of the festival.

Both professional and hobby musicians were invited to the runosong nest, and at agreed times they led song circles, in which all who were interested were invited to sing along. The repertoire consisted mainly of runosongs, but newer

rhymed folk songs were also sung. The socially free atmosphere offered a new opportunity to participate for those festival visitors who were used to passive listening at big concerts.

There were also free singing gatherings, when the lead singers and the repertoire were shaped spontaneously. Since the singing area was usually outside the festival's chargeable area, many people used the opportunity to spend their free time singing comfortably together during the breaks, after or even instead of the official programme.

The organizers of the Viljandi festival were inspired by language learning to create a runosong nest. In language pedagogy the theory and practice of language nests have been developed in which all communal communication takes place in the language being studied. Through so-called language immersion, children self-evidently acquire language by communicating naturally (see Language nest 2023). The first language nests were established by the Maori in New Zealand in the 1980s. The children were taken to study there with older people who spoke Maori as their mother tongue, and only Maori was spoken together. This was done both to learn the language and to increase pride in one's culture (Davis 2019).

Based on the same principles, Võru language nests for children were created in Võru County starting in 2004. The language nest was meant as a kindergarten or a kindergarten group working with the language immersion method. At the start of the project children were spoken to in their own language on some days of the week, but as time went on, on every day of the week (Mattheus 2004; Nutov 2011; Plado & Faster 2020).

Observational data and conversations with the participants in the first runosong nest held in 2007 allow to assume that the idea of acquiring cultural behaviour through direct experience reached folk music circles through Võru language and culture enthusiasts who were also involved in organizing the first singing nest. The founders of runosong nests were also inspired to follow the parallel of language learning by knowing that the Hungarian composer, linguist and philosopher Zoltán Kodály, as well as the Estonian composer and advocate of Finnic folk music traditions, Veljo Tormis, figuratively called folk song the musical mother tongue of the nation (Kodály 1971; Rüütel 1999; Tormis & Lippus 2000).

### ***Pelimanni evenings***

During the fieldwork done at the Kaustinen Folk Music Festival, gatherings with common playing of instruments and singing together attracted attention. These events were not part of the official programme of the festival but took place

in a free party atmosphere and in various places to which people had access. There was no definite name for such gatherings, but since the participants in the musical performances mostly called themselves *pelimanni* (Eng. folk musician, fiddler) and the jamming and singing mostly took place in the evenings after the official programme, I call these meetings *pelimanni* evenings.

Kaustinen *pelimanni* evenings, where primarily folk instruments are played together but also singing occurs, are a natural continuation of a long-standing community tradition, in which local folk musicians, such as the local legendary violinist Konsta Jylhä, played and sang together at village parties and anniversaries, weddings and funerals. With the birth of the Kaustinen Folk Music Festival in 1968, common music making gained a new momentum and over time opened up to singers, instrument players and regular party guests from outside the community. The repertoire of playing together has naturally expanded, diversified, and become more modern. However, participatory music making as a phenomenon has been preserved in a way close to communal tradition (Asplund 2005: 91–93; Koironen 2006).

The places and participants of these meetings were not permanent but formed naturally: the participants gathered spontaneously in a free festival area, in cafes or in lodging houses. The lead singers and instrument players were both local *pelimannis* and professional musicians who played instruments and sang together. Everyone could come up with their favourite piece or song, start with it and encourage others to join playing or sing along. Usually 1–2 players would start playing some well-known tune and were joined by other players and singers during the first verse.

The song repertoire generally consisted of Finnish newer fun and vigorous dance songs with final rhymes (Fin. *rekilaulu*) and long melancholic ballads (Fin. *balladi*), but runosongs belonging to the older song layer were also sung. Popular folk songs and author songs heard and learned from the festival stage also sounded.

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF PARTICIPATORY MUSIC MAKING SITUATIONS

The analysis of the material collected during the participant observation revealed characteristic and similar features that emerged at both events. When making music together, the inner and outer spheres of the group often became more flexible, the dividing line between the artists and the audience accepted in a normal festival situation became more diffuse.



It was interesting and at the same time required discretion to observe and document situations in which all those present had the opportunity to musically express their musical preferences, attitude to the situation and the feelings arising during the event through active participation. This also led to situations in which invited lead singers and active participants could start a musical dialogue with each other.

The roles of leading and following singers could even be changed, if, for example, the singers in the crowd took over the song with the “right words” or intervened, in their opinion, with more suitable songs. This could be done in a supportive and accepting manner, as well as in a competitive and provocative way. Through active music making, it was possible to reach a level of social and creative as well as emotional and personal communication, which has common features with the traditional community lifestyle.

In order to exemplify these statements, I will analyse two examples observed and captured during participant observations made at the Viljandi and Kaustinen festivals in 2007.

**The first example** is a competitive situation that arose in the runosong nest of the Viljandi festival, where two different singing groups met.<sup>2</sup> The first group was a well-known folklore ensemble with long-term performance experience, which was invited to lead the song nest. The singers performed a traditional village wedding competition song with ritual cursing between the groom’s and the bride’s relatives, led by two choirs, imitating primary singing.

The second group was a circle of friends of women with considerable experience in singing together. They intervened in this song situation by interjecting and oversinging a freely improvised dance song and running between the two rows of wedding singers with a tail dance.

The unexpected competitive intervention significantly enlivened the atmosphere of the singing nest, which had turned into a concert. Interlude singers and runners clearly enjoyed influencing the situation and manifesting their attitude. After a couple of brisk rounds, the intervening group sat down again and watched the first group’s reactions to the situation with interest. A conflict situation arose, where the first group was visibly disturbed by the interference but continued to perform in a professional manner. The singing group ended their presentation with dignity and then calmly left the runosong nest.

After talking to both sides separately, the leader of the first folklore group admitted that she was shocked by the situation. Unlike the usual stage performance, their ensemble had prepared a workshop-style event, where they planned to perform the programme of wedding songs in a pedagogically exemplary way and equipped with explanations. The other people in the runosong

nest were not directly invited to join the wedding singers, but they were not forbidden to sing along from their place.

The female singing fraternity was visibly excited after the singing incident. They explained that at first they had no plans to interfere in the situation, but the theme of the song nest and the dynamics of the event encouraged them to participate with their own song. The performing folklore ensemble was invited to show competitive singing and ritual chanting of two wedding choirs. The group of friends came to listen with interest to the thematic hour advertised in the programme of the runosong nest, but as the “wedding” progressed, they came to an understanding that the idea was good, but its implementation was lifeless in their opinion.

They came up with an idea and perceived a suitable opportunity to make the whole situation more authentic and engaging with their oppositional participation. The singers also said that they got encouragement for this from their experience at the Seto traditional village party, where women’s *leelo*<sup>3</sup> choirs tried to outsing each other with sonorous voices and beat each other with words, and thus also held a singing competition.

At first glance, there had been a personal and emotional confrontation between the two groups, a violation of the rules of courtesy, which the singing group invited to lead the event seemed to have the right to establish. In essence, however, the conflict was triggered by the broader idea of bringing back the participatory singing to the runosong nest, preferring natural group singing over a performance situation. Singers from the audience signalled this with competitive singing action.

Such a “singing competition” between two groups vividly characterized the interweaving of the primary and secondary functions of participatory singing formulated by Ernst Klusen (1986). There was a situation in which singing had an intellectual and emotional task that united the ensemble: learning wedding songs, reconstructing the song ritual and reviving the tradition. But the specific singing situation was initiated by an external stimulus, that is, an invitation to perform with a thematic programme to others.

The singing function of the second group was clearly primary, that is, based on the needs of self-expression within the group. It happened spontaneously for the mutual entertainment and excitement of the group members and, due to its improvisational nature, was not intended as a performance for the others, but as an encouragement to them as members of the wider group to participate.

The given example, in which different functions of participative singing began to compete within one situation, demonstrates a mixed function arising from the intertwining of primary and secondary ones (see also Särg 2014). In an atmosphere conducive to free musical expression, an intermediate situation

arose, in which the participants were two active singing groups that knew their own group's internal dynamics and repertoire well. In the controversial singing situation, primary and secondary approaches were represented. At the same time, both groups were involved in a natural situation of participatory singing, in which they communicated with each other through singing, resulting in a new quality that changed the participation functions and roles.

**The second example** is a collective improvisation of a folk song that arose during the participation performance at the *pelimanni* evening of the Kaustinen party. On an ordinary evening of the festival, in the festival accommodation place, a musical meeting took place, in which a family ensemble, a folk instrument group and musicians and singers who freely joined them participated. An older member of the ensemble started a runosong, sometimes recalling the song and words, but still studiously continuing. It was a folk song with a simple runosong melody and narrative text. The leading singer's goal was to introduce to the audience, through performance, an older runosong and to give a style example of it. Since it was not a widely known song, no one could support the singer at first.

After a few verses, accordion players began to support the singer, playing a simple accompaniment to the tune. The group started humming along to the tune, and when there was a pause in the words, they tried to come up with the words and create new verses, cautiously at first but then more vividly. As the song progressed and gained momentum, everyone present happily joined in, singing along to the song.

The initiator of the song calmly gave up her leading role and joined the choir. A couple of younger co-singers naturally took over the part of the leader and improvised the words in the runosong style with the encouragement and support of the other participants. They sang about what, who and how was seen and experienced there and then. Improvising a common song brought excitement, fun and creative joy to everyone present. In the course of participatory singing, the pedagogical performance, which initially had started as a secondary one, turned into a primary creative experience confirming the group's cohesion.

Talking to the first singer afterwards, she expressed her sincere enthusiasm that the song developed from her solo performance to a common improvisation, and that the musical experience had a unifying effect on the group. She experienced her change of role from the leader to a follower as positive and necessary for the success of the song. The new lead singers were in turn surprised and excited by the logical structure of the runosong, its inspiring effect and the support of the group. They said that they did not experience their own setting of words as a performance for others, but as a creative activity involving all the participants.

This is an example of a participatory singing experience initiated by a need of creativity and a change of roles influenced by the natural dynamics within the group during collective music making. According to Klusen's (1986) approach, this was the primary function of singing, in which improvisation took place within the group based on the need for its members to express themselves creatively and unite the community. According to Turino (2008), it was a participatory music situation in which there was no distinction between the performers and the audience. The primary goal of singing and playing instruments together was to actively involve all the participants, who naturally began to play the necessary roles in the given situation.

## **DISCUSSION AND RESULTS**

At first glance the examples described above seem different in character and nature. In the first – Viljandi – case, the secondary and primary singing functions were in opposition. Through the contradiction, the differences in the ways of expression and behavioural strategies of the groups that took part in the participatory singing situation and through them the establishment of their communal role became vividly evident. Contrasting the primary and secondary approaches highlighted the different needs and goals of groups carrying their own intra-group lore.

In the second – Kaustinen – example, it was a change in the singing function that took place during the participatory situation, a natural transition from performing, that is, the secondary function, to singing together, that is, the primary one. The exchange of positions of the community members took place naturally through collective improvisational activity, which gave the group a creative and uniting experience.

At a closer look, both situations are genuine examples of participatory music making. The whole group gathered to participate in the event was involved in a singing situation, during which smaller active groups expressed their views, communicated, and influenced each other through singing.

During the participant observations made for this study in Estonia and Finland, it emerged that in the participatory music performances participants tried to approach the communal performance of the runosong in different ways and to get an immediate common singing experience. Singing nests and playing evenings became meeting places for people belonging to the so-called folk music network, while also being open to new interested folk music lovers who were less familiar with this tradition.

Although participatory music making was semi-spontaneous at these festivals, because meeting places and times required agreements depending on the festival programme, its content and nature, that is, participatory music making, still had natural social parallels and cultural connections with the old Finnish music tradition. In the folk culture of the Finnic peoples, singing together was also, to a certain extent, a part of organized events, such as family and calendar holidays (weddings and rituals), festivities and gatherings (youth swinging evenings and parties following bees), etc.

Based on the ideas of the folk song as a nation's musical mother tongue popularized by Kodály and Tormis, the participatory music making that was documented at the Viljandi and Kaustinen festivals can be seen as the emotional, creative and social language of communication of a community. In the context of participatory singing at both Estonian and Finnish festivals, experiencing the old folk songs sung by new participants was similar to a natural language learning process, where the means of self-expression, experience and courage were gained during active participation in the tradition process. Thus, singing, which started in the secondary function, that is, performing to others, could carry out the primary function – participatory music making with insiders through shared positive or even negative experiences.

## CONCLUSION

Contemporary folk music festivals, which bring new life to traditional music, have become part of the revival movement of folk culture and provide an appropriate substance for examining the situations of participatory music. The Viljandi Folk Music Festival in Estonia and the Kaustinen Folk Music Festival in Finland have grown out of communities that respect older folk music heritage while adapting it to the world music culture. At these events, the old tradition is revived and presented in an understandable and engaging form for today's people.

The main goal of this article was to observe the situations of participatory music making at contemporary folk music festivals in Estonia and Finland and to analyse the musical behaviour and roles of those who participated in them. In order to do it, the article examined the runosong nests at the folk music festival in Viljandi and the *pelimanni* evenings at the folk music festival in Kaustinen.

The comparative study of folk music festivals in Viljandi and Kaustinen has been a long-term process. Since the beginning of the fieldwork, carried out at these festivals in 2004, I have observed the collection and research methods used by other researchers who have studied music festivals. Their fieldwork at

folk music festivals has usually involved participant observations, qualitative interviews and quantitative questionnaires, and audiovisual and written recordings. Detailed transcriptions of audio and video recordings, thick descriptions and close reading of written records, collecting situations and fieldwork diaries have been used as methods of analysis of the collected materials.

In this article the runosong nests of the Viljandi Folk Music Festival and the *pelimanni* evenings of the Kaustinen Folk Music Festival are approached through self-reflection and qualitative phenomenological methods, that is, participant observation and qualitative interviews.

Considering the internal, sometimes sensitive group dynamics in the participatory music making situations, it was mostly preferred not to use audiovisual recording technique but to make notations in the fieldwork: making on-site and later notes, writing descriptions and fieldwork diaries. The information received has been thickly described in detail in terms of content and context.

Based on these empirical fieldwork materials, answers were sought to the questions of what kind of participatory music making takes place at these folk music festivals, what are the social dynamics between the groups and people being involved in participatory music making, and how the primary and secondary functions of music making are formed.

Therefore, two situations of singing experienced and collected during participant observations at the Viljandi and Kaustinen festivals in 2007 were compared and analysed more closely. In the first example, which featured the runosong nest of the Viljandi Folk Music Festival, a competitive confrontation arose between two singing groups. The second example from the *pelimanni* evening of the Kaustinen Folk Music Festival was about the creation of an improvisational song by a unitary singing group.

In Viljandi runosong nests and Kaustinen *pelimanni* evenings, a process of open participation developed naturally, which provided an opportunity for both creative cooperation and competitive confrontation. It was interesting to observe how the positions and roles of individuals and groups changed during participatory music making in both cases. Despite the different strategies, all approaches served the same purpose: to bring the tradition of older folk music culturally, creatively and personally closer to the contemporary festival participant. In the course of striving for this goal, the secondary function, that is, musical behaviour directed outside the group (performance, teaching) could turn into the primary function, that is, musical activity that unites the community and fulfils its needs (e.g., common creation, sense of belonging).

During the participant observations made in Estonia and Finland, it turned out that although in participatory music situations the participants' musical behaviour could differ radically, they still tried to get direct emotional singing

experience in a community and at a personal level. Comparing the described strategies and functions of participatory music making revealed the similarity of shared music making at Estonian and Finnish festivals as a cultural, social, creative and emotional phenomenon.

Contemporary participatory music making observed at folk music festivals has both symbolic and direct connections with traditional Finnic folk music culture. The positions and relationships of active leaders and passive observers, the motives and goals of action can dynamically change and get mixed in the course of free musical activity, just as it has happened in the traditional syncretic village community. The traditional song culture could also consist of the cooperation or competition of different groups within the same tradition and the mixing of the primary (internal) and secondary (external) functions of the musical life realized with their participation, which in the end could lead to new qualities that strengthened the group internally.

Participatory music making at contemporary folk music festivals in Estonia and Finland, including runosong nests and *pelimanni* evenings, are musical encounters worthy of attention and research. This kind of events in a narrower sense fulfil the tasks necessary for the functioning of festival participants' communities and, in a broader sense, the goals of reviving folk music. In this way, emotional and educational singing and playing together helps to develop people's personal creativity, thereby raising their self-esteem and creating a sustainable sense of community among the participants. On the other hand, participatory music making helps to popularize folk music as the intellectual and emotional mother tongue of local people, and thereby broaden people's positive attitude towards world music.

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## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The terms “primary” and “secondary” are not evaluative or hierarchical in any way for Klusen or in this article but are based on the common language of denoting the closer, related to oneself, and the more distant, separated from oneself, with the words “this/first” and “second”.
- <sup>2</sup> Estonian Folklore Archives of the Estonian Literary Museum. ERA, DV 515. Runo-song nest of the Viljandi Folk Music Festival < Viljandi parish – Taive Särg, Helen Kõmmus (28.07.2007).
- <sup>3</sup> Seto *leelo* is the traditional polyphonic singing style of the Setos living in southern Estonia (Seto 2023).

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- ERA, EV 350–361. Runosong nests at the Viljandi Folk Music Festival 2019. Video recordings by Maike Tubin. Materials are archived at the Estonian Folklore Archives of the Estonian Literary Museum in Tartu, Estonia.
- Interviews with organizers, performers and participants of the Viljandi Folk Music Festival in 2004–2019. Recordings and manuscripts by Helen Kõmmus. Materials are in the possession of the author.
- Interviews with organizers, performers and participants of the Kaustinen Folk Music festival in 2005–2019. Recordings and manuscripts by Helen Kõmmus. Materials are in the possession of the author.

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# ARCHIVES AND THE BODILY DIMENSION OF TRADITIONAL DANCE KNOWLEDGE

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**Abstract:** For a dance researcher, audiovisual recordings are the most informative part of archives. For various reasons, in Estonia, re-embodiment of traditional dances has been based more on verbal descriptions and less on film and video. Nonetheless, some analysis has been done by today, and some findings on individual, local, and temporary variability of traditional dancing in different parts of Estonia exist, and some clips have been published. Despite of availability of archival video recordings, folk dance teachers usually prefer verbal descriptions, which leads to the loss of a great deal of detailed information. In the article, I explore some of the reasons for this situation, based on my own teacher practice and a case study inquiry among teachers of high school girls' dance groups involved in the process of the 12th Youth Dance Celebration in 2017. In this project high school girls' groups were proposed to learn *Ristpulkadetants* (Crossed Sticks Dance) in an unusual way – as a supplement to verbal descriptions, an archival movie clip was provided to teachers as source material. This made it possible to investigate teachers' interest in the use of film, as well as the facilitating or hindering factors of actual use. About a fifth of the involved teachers expressed an opinion that archival recordings contain information not yet verbalized in descriptions and could help them in adding new qualities to the bodily dimension of their own and their students' dance. As a result of the study, it can also be said that archive videos of a traditional dance are not that available to folk dance teachers as they would like them to be.

**Keywords:** audiovisual recordings, dance education, dance knowledge, dance research, folk dance, traditional dance

## INTRODUCTION

For a dance researcher, audiovisual recordings are the most informative part of archives. Along with drawings, photographs and manuscripts they form abundant and reliable collections of dance knowledge. The bodily dimension of dance knowledge, however, is not stored in archives. Analytically, dance movements

can be separated from the dancer's living human body. In practice, they do not exist as abstractions. In order to understand dancing recorded in archives, it has to be embodied again by a dancer.

In Estonia, re-embodiment of traditional dances has been based more on verbal descriptions and less on film and video. For a long time, little use of audiovisual data was caused by the limited access to them. Today this technical constraint has been eliminated. Digitalized film and video sources of the Estonian Folklore Archives have been available for analysis for about a decade. Some findings on individual, local, and temporary variability of traditional dancing in different parts of Estonia are now there, and some clips have been published.

Today, traditional dances are often taught in folk dance groups. In spite of the availability of videos, folk dance teachers consistently prefer using verbal descriptions. From my personal practice I believe to know some of the reasons: an image, especially a moving picture, is much more informative than a verbal description, its layers open one after another to a specifically focused viewer during several observations only; this takes time and is much more exhausting than a quick look at a schematic notation. Even if the analysis has been done before, detailed information derived from audiovisual sources may be considered irrelevant in teaching folk dancers in a group.

I am very grateful to the Estonian Folklore Archives for the opportunity to address the burning issues connected with the ephemeral bodily nature of traditional dance knowledge. In a sense, our body is all we really have. Living traditional knowledge resides in that body only and makes it feel and act as a human being. Besides the archives as knowledge hubs, we could imagine living human bodies as vivid hubs where particular knowledge is gained, collected and preserved as well as created, produced and developed.

The aim of this article is to discuss the problems arising in the intersection of those two different hubs – when traditional dance knowledge is collected in the field and preserved on the archive shelves, and what happens when the human bodily dimension of the knowledge once lost has to be restored or recreated again, for example, for real dancing in a real body which is not the same and maybe even not very similar to the former one. For that purpose, I followed an example of publishing an archival recording of the performance of a traditional dance for learning, and I am going to analyse this case as well as the surrounding broader landscape of folk dance teaching in Estonia today and its connection with and attitude to the use of audiovisual archival sources.

As to my personal background, I am a traditional dance researcher, concentrating on the historical traditions of dance in different regions of Estonia, and besides that, addressing the revival of folk dance and neo-traditionalist phenomena to be observed nowadays, as well as the history and present of stage

folk dance and folk dance as a leisure activity in Estonia. I am also a practicing folk dance teacher and traditional dance teacher, making a quite clear difference between those two. In the context of this article, the concept of traditional dance can be understood as dances once “learned through unorganized visuo-kinetic transmission” (Bakka 1999: 74), narrowed down to the dances with an imagined or proven relation to peasant culture. I also use the term *folk dance* in this text mainly in phrases such as *folk dance teacher*, *folk dance group*, *folk dancer*, and *stage folk dance*, all referring to a specific but quite popular field of leisure activity, based on learning and performing traditional or stage folk dances in fixed organized groups with more or less professional guidance.

## **DANCE KNOWLEDGE IN THE ARCHIVES AND PUBLICATIONS**

For a dance researcher, audiovisual recordings are the most informative part of archives. Along with drawings, photographs and manuscripts they form abundant and reliable collections of dance knowledge. Dance knowledge, as a theoretical construct, has been claimed to consist of articulated knowledge and bodily knowledge. Those two “are usually interwoven or complementary modes of profound dance knowledge” (Parviainen 2002: 22). According to Parviainen, the articulation of a phenomenon that happens only in bodily awareness cannot translate the bodily knowledge into a literal form but it can only indicate the existence of bodily knowledge. The existence of bodily knowledge is indicated in archival manuscripts as well as in drawings, photographs or audiovisual recordings. Hence, the bodily dimension of dance knowledge itself is not stored in archives because analytically dance movements can be separated from the dancer’s living human body; in practice, they do not exist as abstractions.

In order to catch the bodily dimension of dance knowledge, recorded in archives in whatever format, it has to be embodied again by a dancer – so can the bodily part of former knowledge be restored to some extent, and I argue that audiovisual sources with moving pictures provide plenty of opportunities for that, more than verbal notations, drawings or even photographs could. This has been shown, for example, in Norwegian traditional dance research where traditional dance analysis has been done on the basis of film and video material during several decades already (e.g., Bakka & Aksdal & Flem 1995) and the results are now actively spread in society (Bakka 2011; Bygda Dansar 2017). It is relevant to mention the Norwegian experience here because this has also been an example and source of inspiration for Estonian researchers and dance students (Estisk 2015). Bodily knowledge, as it is found in various practices such as any kind of dancing, playing a musical instrument or medical care, has

been addressed as “living knowledge transmitted from a body to a body very often through learning-by-doing” (Parviainen 2002: 22). This is more than true in the context of traditional dancing. Many problems we face in traditional dance revival movement in Estonia come from the gaps in the bodily dimension of traditional dance knowledge, which, in turn, are caused by interruptions in direct knowledge transmission from former traditional dancers to us.

Traditional dance research often relates to revival practices where questions about knowledge transmission in modern and contemporary conditions become especially visible. In Estonia, for about a century, re-embodiment of traditional dances has been based more on verbal descriptions and less on film and video. Verbal notations and descriptions of dances have been published in numerous books (e.g., Raudkats 1926; Põldmäe & Tampere 1938; Toomi 1947, 1953; Torop 1991, 1995; Rüütel & Kapper 2015) and actively used by folk dance teachers throughout the 90-years’ history of the Estonian Folklore Archives. Some photographs are also printed next to the descriptions but the main part of knowledge is still derived by teachers and re-embodied by dancers on the basis of written word, accompanied by sheet music and sometimes graphic depiction of a schematic floor pattern, movement trajectory or dancers’ position to each other. Books are the main source of information for folk dance groups, and nowadays they constitute an important section of the environment where traditional dances are re-embodied. The individual bodily dimension, missing from book knowledge, is added by dancers and their teachers according to their present living human bodies’ knowledge coming from outside the relevant dance tradition and even from outside of the traditional society.

## **WHAT KIND OF KNOWLEDGE CAN AUDIOVISUAL RECORDINGS PROVIDE?**

Audiovisual recordings provide hints to observers and analysts whose aim would be to restore the traditional bodily knowledge: film and video recordings reflect details of individual body positions, hand holds, neck and head hold (all that is very seldom described in detail in verbal notations), also partners’ positions to each other and their change over time during a single dance (e.g., due to spinning direction), step length, step direction, timing and *svikt* (vertical movement of the gravity centre of the body; see Blom 1981; Bakka & Aksdal & Flem 1995). With these scant data it is possible to, first, copy the filmed dancers, thereby experiencing cognition, sensation and feeling, similar to those the movement caused or included for the filmed dancers, and second, find logical connections between movements and their visual appearance.



In the Estonian Folklore Archives, dance films have been stored since the 1960s. It is mainly former peasant dances that were already going out of fashion at that time and were kept in the memories of older people or some exceptional communities only, where peasant traditions lasted longer. In the Estonian Film Archives there are also some excerpts containing dances from the 1930s, and later examples can be found in the Estonian Public Broadcasting Archives. The oldest dance recording in Estonia originates from Setomaa (Pääsuke 1913). For a long time, scant use of these audiovisual data was caused by the limited access to them. Perhaps it would be more correct to say that there was no access to the films preserved in the Estonian Folklore Archives. By now, technical constraints have been eliminated – digitalized film and video sources of the Estonian Folklore Archives (ERA DV 110–119) and other Estonian archives have been available for analysis for about a decade. They have been used for analysis to a small extent in student works and for learning purposes.

Besides the poor technical conditions of that time, there arose another reason during the Soviet period for scant or no use of audiovisual sources in dance research as well as revival activities. As I have suggested before (see Kapper 2016), it was the detailedness and diversity of the information contained in film and video. As we know, for presentational purposes, in general, but especially during the Soviet regime, traditional dances were standardized and stylized to meet the dominant aesthetic and political requirements. The individual and improvisational characteristics of traditional dance, well revealed in film and video recordings, also directly refer to the generally uncontrollable nature of folklore (see also Giurchescu 2001: 117). Their real content did not support the attempts to set norms and formal standards necessary for stage folk dance. Therefore, it was unnecessary or even inadvisable to see or analyse those sources. Thereby, an important opportunity to maintain and develop bodily knowledge in traditional dancing was left aside, while dancers' bodies were subject to the demanding workout for the unified stage folk dance.

By today, thanks to the access provided by the digitalization, some analysis of traditional dance examples on film and video has been done and first findings about the individual, local, and temporary variability of traditional dancing have been published (Rüütel & Kapper 2015). The volume of a book with first video-based *descriptive* (not *prescriptive*; see Nahachewsky 1995) dance notations refers to a problem that we face when tackling the video-based analysis with an aim to restore the bodily dimension of dance knowledge – it is the amounts of information included in an audiovisual recording, and the difficulties in its articulation.

By today, some of the audiovisual recordings preserved in the Estonian Folklore Archives have also been published in their original format, on DVDs,

such as dances from Kihnu (Kapper 2010) and Saaremaa islands (Rüütel 2014). One detailed attempt to restore the ephemeral dancing knowledge on the basis of verbal descriptions was done by some dancers in Hiiumaa in 2013, and was documented and also published recently as a DVD (Kõmmus 2017). During the period of the research project presented in this article, only one video clip was published online by the Folklore Archives. It is unfortunate because, as life has shown, a DVD publication is not enough anymore. Today we witness the situation where people expect everything they would need to be available online. In the case of books there is yet a habit (or we can even call it a tradition) of using them (at least among folk dance teachers when speaking about teaching traditional dances), but it is different with film and video. No “tradition” of using the VHS or DVD could develop before we had the Internet and YouTube, thereby the latter seems to have become a handy tool even for researchers. Recently, I was finishing an article for a volume edited by a Norwegian colleague. I was writing about Estonian *labajalg*-dance (flat-foot dance). As it is going to be an online publication, my colleague asked me to add a video link to the text because “YouTube videos are not representative” (he knows my material well enough to be correct in that). What does it show? Even dance researchers find YouTube as one of their first everyday tools in looking for some information. Why should we think that it is different by ordinary folk-dance teachers or folk dancers, which means, any people? If we want archival dance knowledge to be spread and re-embodied, we have to make it easily available.

During the period between presenting the first version of this article and finishing it, traditional dance videos from Saaremaa (Rüütel 2018) were also published online as a special issue. I suggest that publication on YouTube would raise the user numbers more quickly and provide easier access to the material, as well as spread the knowledge in a more efficient way. Besides all the trash we can find online, publishing of archival traditional dance clips on YouTube could also be a balancing power which could at least raise questions among folk dance teachers, amateur dancers, and enthusiasts.

Today, folk dance groups are often the environment where traditional dances are taught. The problem that has attracted my attention in connection with archives is the fact that in spite of the technical availability of audiovisual sources, professional folk dance teachers consistently prefer to use verbal descriptions in teaching traditional dances.

## **WHAT ARE THE REASONS FOR THE SCANT USE OF AUDIOVISUAL RECORDINGS BY FOLK DANCE TEACHERS?**

Being a practicing dance teacher myself, I believed I knew some reasons why folk dance teachers consistently prefer using verbal descriptions. Being aware how much more informative an image, especially a moving picture, is, and how its layers open one after another to a specifically focussed viewer, during several observations only, and also knowing how much time it takes and how much more exhausting it is than a quick look at a schematic notation, I honestly believed that these are the reasons for preferring books with short schematic scores. I had also noticed that even if video analysis had been done before, and then presented to the reader in detail, like in the book *Kihnu tantsud* (Dances from Kihnu) (Rüütel & Kapper 2015), the abundant information derived from audiovisual sources was just considered irrelevant in teaching folk dancers in a group. I was an example myself when using short keywords only to make notes for myself when preparing a dance class. But I certainly had the bodily knowledge in me, derived from recordings during the visual and embodiment analysis process.

It is important to mention that detailed information obtained from audiovisual sources is never completely ideal. For example, based on discussions with local dancers, several versions and details were left out from the book *Kihnu tantsud* during its editing process. Almost everything considered random or accidental or even undesirable or just “wrong” by community members was left out. Nonetheless, the amounts of information remain considerably larger than in the schematic *prescriptive* notations usually employed in folk dance teaching, and many details are also considered irrelevant in teaching in many cases. Last but not least, the ability to notice important aspects in video-recorded dancing may also be lower than expected.

Thus, being a practicing teacher myself and having done consulting work with colleagues in the processes of Dance Celebrations (2011, 2014, 2017) and the folklore festival Baltica (2007, 2010, 2013), I believed I knew part of the reasons for the scant use of audiovisual sources. Anyway, to find also other viewpoints or to confirm my ideas, I turned to my colleagues, folk dance teachers, in Estonia. I made use of the opportunity to show some archive films to a group of rather experienced folk dance teachers, let them analyse one clip in brief and then discuss the problems they could see with the use of audiovisual recordings in folk dance teaching (Kapper 2017b, private collection). The group consisted of about 20 active teachers from various age groups and with different backgrounds, from a BA in choreography to decades of working experience and self-teaching. The main conclusion we arrived at together was that folk

dance teachers fully understand the importance of careful watching, analysis and embodiment of archival videos because this can provide new information that is not present in verbal descriptions. But, at the same time, the same folk dance teachers claimed that archival videos are not available for them. This was in September 2017. According to them, this is also the main reason why they do not use videos in their everyday work when teaching traditional dances. They also emphasized in the conversation that it was not the time-consuming nature of video-based analysis and embodiment or the number of details derived from videos. It was just availability, they said. If they had them at hand, they would use them.

Intelligibly, those were the ideas expressed in an open conversation with colleagues, with their own face and name and in an environment where people had gathered to be educated, learn something new and gain new experiences. In real everyday work there may still appear other reasons such as lack of interest, because the bodily knowledge developed on the basis of audiovisual recording may not be directly applicable in teaching stage folk dance (which is the main activity of most folk dance groups today) or even counteracts in this process, for example, creating confusion among less experienced dancers.

To better understand the situation, and hopefully move towards solutions in the future, I had addressed the same and similar questions already before the above-described conversation, inquiring of the teachers of high school girls' dance groups involved in the process of the 12th Youth Dance Celebration that had taken place in the summer of 2017. Dance Celebrations are huge folk dance events with mainly new original stage choreography (in national style, i.e., partially based on traditional folk dance elements) and involving tight competition for performing places. This time, during the one-and-a-half-year process of the celebration, each age group also had to learn a traditional dance form which was then danced together at common rehearsals – before the real competition, proposed as a relaxing and entertaining joint activity. The target group of my inquiry, the teachers of high school girls' groups, was selected because of their very special chance to use that very archival recording I mentioned before – the only one that had been published online then.

## **THE CASE OF RISTPULKADETANTS**

About a year before the celebration, in 2016, high school girls' groups were proposed to learn *Ristpulkadetants* originating from Saaremaa, performed by Marie Harjus (62 years old) in 1961 (ERA DV 117 < Mustjala parish – H. Tampere 1961). Both verbal descriptions and this movie clip were provided as source

materials (Tiis 2016). With my inquiry I wanted to find out to what extent they used the video source and what they generally thought of this opportunity.

The video was published by the Estonian Folklore Archives in the “virtual cellar” of the Estonian Literary Museum (Kivike 2016). Everything was technically perfect. There were two options to open the file – as MP4 or AVI –, there was no requirement to log in to see the material, the link to the database was printed in the book of dance descriptions (Tiis 2016), and it also opened through a QR code printed next to the verbal description in the book. Once opened, the link could be shared via any smart device and anyone’s favourite communication channel or social network. The video link was referred to at a teacher training seminar (Kapper 2016, personal collection), and it also included a short introduction of the dance version presented in the video clip.

The filming in 1961 had been done just professionally – there is only one person in the frame and every detail of her movement can be followed, unlike most clips we have, in which it is often quite tricky to track one dancer or a couple for a longer period of time. It is 36 seconds long and consists of three episodes; in the first one the dancer is presented in full height, then the footwork is shown separately and, in the end, there is another elderly woman in the frame watching the dance and probably commenting on it. The film clip is mute. What is even more interesting is the person filmed – it is the same woman who had shown and/or described another version of *Ristpulkadetants* to collectors a quarter of a century earlier, in 1936, when she was 25 years younger (ERA II 128, 258/9 (1) < Mustjala parish, Ninase village – Marie Harjus, 37 years – R. Põldmäe and H. Tampere 1936). One of the collectors, ethnomusicologist Herbert Tampere, is also the same for both sources. The dance versions presented in those two sources are different from each other even in their main step pattern, hand positions of the dancer are also different, and smaller details cannot be compared as they are not recorded in the verbal description.

High school girls’ groups learned the *Ristpulkadetants* and danced it together at first joint rehearsals in January and February 2017. In Tallinn, where the joint rehearsals began in January (Kapper 2017a, private collection), there were four high school girls’ groups only but they all performed the version suggested by the verbal notation in the book of dance descriptions (Tiis 2016). As I had no opportunity to see the joint rehearsals of high school girls’ groups all over Estonia, I asked the stage director of these groups to remember what versions were danced and she suggested that “there was everything”, including individually created versions that were not provided anywhere, and those that were partly the version from the verbal description and partly from the film (Helin-Mengel 2017, personal communication). This might refer to a relatively even use of both sources as well as little use or little attention to any of

them. The latter is also possible because this was not a competition dance but one just for dancing together; moreover, a short demonstration of both dance versions was provided at a teacher training seminar, too. So the version really performed by girls at the joint rehearsal did not exactly show if the video had been used or not.

Therefore, that spring, in May and June 2017, when the second round of joint rehearsals was also over and all tensions were down, because decisions had been made about who was allowed to participate in the main rehearsals and performances of the celebration, I inquired the teachers of high school girls' groups about their experience in teaching *Ristpulkadetants* to their students with the help of this published video. The inquiry was sent out by e-mail to the addresses the teachers had given to the register of participants in the dance celebration process, and it consisted of a link with eight questions. The answers were collected anonymously. Respondents, however, were encouraged to add their names and preferred contact data in case they were interested in a further discussion on the topic. Three teachers used this opportunity and shared their experience in more detail, generally coinciding with the ideas from the experienced teachers' group that if the videos had been more easily available, they would have loved to dive into them in search of new knowledge to be embodied.

In the process of the Dance Celebration, there were 42 groups of girls with a total of 51 teachers. I got answers from 21 of them. From those who answered, 10 teachers said that they had opened and seen the video of *Ristpulkadetants*, five of them several times and five just once. Different devices were used (smartphone, desktop computer, laptop) but the main method of finding the video was searching the database according to the reference given in the book. Only one teacher had used the QR code.

I also asked them if they suggested that their dancers watch the video, and all the 10 teachers who had done it themselves also said they did. Four of them watched it together with the girls, and one teacher said they learned the movement together with girls by the video. Five teachers just suggested that the girls watch the video in their free time. The teachers who did not use the video themselves did not recommend it to the girls either. To access the video, the girls needed just one first impulse from the teacher because the link was not available in any public place. The book of dance descriptions, with the link and the QR-code, was distributed to teachers only; these books are not sold in bookstores and arrive in libraries later, when the learning process of the corresponding celebration is under way or already completed.

The rest of the teachers, 11 people, who answered that they had not seen the video, justified their answer in two main ways – by reasons related to technical aspects or by lack of will or interest. The respondent could select several

reasons, therefore the total number of reasons is higher than the number of respondents who did not see the video. The answers can be grouped as follows (number of answers in brackets):

1. Reasons referring to technical possibilities or user skills:
  - I do not have a smartphone (2);
  - I failed to use the QR code (1);
  - it was difficult to find the video in the database (1).
2. Reasons referring to lack of will or interest:
  - I did not notice the video link, I did not know there was a video (3);
  - I did not consider it important because I had the description (1);
  - I did not have time for that (1);
  - it is easier to teach by a description (4);
  - I did not need the video because I knew the dance before (5).

As we can see, these anonymous answers do not exactly coincide with the results of the discussion with the other group of teachers who were thinking rather theoretically – if there was access, then I would – and sounded rather positive at least in the lively discussion. The anonymous answers as grouped into the above two main kinds of reasons show that there is a stronger connection with the will or interest in the possible information contained in the video (total 14) than with technical availability (4).

## **CONCLUSIONS AND QUESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE**

Conclusions about both teacher groups I have referred to here seem, to some extent, support the idea that in general there is some interest at least among some (maybe about 20% when speaking on the example of high school girls' group teachers) folk dance teachers in using archive videos. The interested teachers see the aim of using videos in the opportunity to get more detailed information about traditional dancing and build the bodily knowledge necessary for enjoyable and successful performance. Those people express the feeling that videos contain something that has not been verbalized in descriptions and this could help, first, in adding new qualities to the bodily dimension of their own dance knowledge, hopefully followed by a further development in their dancers' minds and bodies. Both groups also say that the videos are not that available to them as they would like them to be.

What can the archives and researchers do here? Should we boost the online publishing of archival recordings? What about special issues (such as Kivike 2016 or Rüütel 2018) versus or in cooperation with YouTube? *Retk läbi Setomaa*

(A Journey through Setomaa) (Pääsuke 1913) was published on YouTube by the National Archives of Estonia in 2014 and has been watched about 9,000 times by now, and the same film is also available on other channels. Anyway, I can argue that most folk dance teachers are not aware of the fact that traditional Seto dancing can be seen, learned and taught on the basis of this film. So, something needs to be changed in the users' minds before we can move to the construction or reconstruction of bodily knowledge with the help of archives. Probably folk dance teacher education and myself as a university lecturer should be blamed here; on the other hand, these are also possible resources to be used to put new approaches into practice. I am grateful to the Estonian Folklore Archives for their work in preserving and publishing the valuable materials for further and broader use.

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# OPENING ARCHIVES TO SOCIETY: THE EXPERIENCE FROM THE FOLKLORE ARCHIVE AT ROVIRA I VIRGILI UNIVERSITY

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**Abstract:** The Folklore Archive at the Rovira i Virgili University (URV) is a university archive. The materials it stores are products of the fieldwork conducted by students on the Catalan Studies programme and the work done by professors researching into folk literature. From the year of its creation to the present, the Archive has adapted to the needs of the society of which it is a part. The present article discusses two issues. First, it explains how the results from our university research are transferred from the Archive to society (web, specialized digital resources, social networks, etc.). And second, it describes a specific activity entitled *La ciutat a cau d'orella* (The whispering city), which focuses on legends and involves several entities in Tarragona (city hall, public library, schools, youth organizations, writing workshops, etc.). This activity can be regarded as a way of developing mutual relations between the academic world and the general public.

**Keywords:** archive, society, web, legends, city, Tarragona, folklore

## INTRODUCTION

The relationship between archives and society is not always bi-directional, in the sense that archives usually draw on materials generated or coming from society, but there is not always a counterpart. In this sense, it is interesting to see how archives can adapt to the needs of the society of which they form part and how this adaptation can change this existing relationship. The following

is an example of this kind of mutual processes, based on the case study of the Folklore Archive at the Rovira i Virgili University (URV).

## **1. FROM THE ARCHIVE TO SOCIETY**

The Folklore Archive at the Rovira i Virgili University (URV) is a research unit which was set up by the professors Carme Oriol and Josep M. Pujol (1947–2012) in 1994 and it is currently directed by Carme Oriol. The Archive, the first of its kind linked to a Catalan university, contains graphic, sound, and audiovisual documents, most of which come from interviews carried out in the southern regions of Catalonia and are an abundant and valuable sample of the folklore of the area. The Archive is mainly dominated by oral folklore documents, but in recent years it has also incorporated pieces of non-oral folklore, in order to stimulate the conservation and study of the new genres that have arisen in contemporary society.

The research dynamic that has been carried out and the Rovira i Virgili University's commitment to promoting research activities have made it possible to have technical support staff. Thus, between 2000 and 2002, the Archive had the technical support of Mònica López, a graduate in Catalan Philology, while from 2005 to 2019 the technician in charge of supporting research activities was Emili Samper, a graduate with a PhD in Catalan Philology. From January 2020 to September 2023, the research support technician has been Sílvia Veà, also a graduate with a PhD in Catalan Philology. From September 2023, the research support technician is Àngels Galtés, a graduate in Catalan Philology and Advertising and Public Relations.

The collection preserved in the Folklore Archive of the Department of Catalan Studies at the Rovira i Virgili University was first started from the material collected by the students of folklore and folk literature. Lectures on these subjects began in the academic year 1979–1980 on the degree programme in Catalan Studies, which has been uninterruptedly taught at the university up to the present day. However, as well as material constantly being provided by teaching activity, other material is regularly added to the collection by inter-university research projects on folklore and popular literature.

### **1.1. Teaching at the university**

Although the first material to be preserved in the Folklore Archive was collected in the academic year 1979–1980, the Folklore Archive as such was not founded

until 1994 when it was recognized as a research facility within the Faculty of Arts and was provided with an area for self-study and all the necessary computer equipment (Oriol & Pujol 2011).

The creation of the Archive in 1994 was no mere chance. Fundamental to the process was that one year before, in 1993, Carme Oriol had been a visiting scholar at the Anthropology Department at the University of California, Berkeley. While there, she had become familiar with the UC Berkeley Folklore Archives, which had been set up as a complement to the lectures on forms of folklore, taught by Alan Dundes at the university in the 1960s. Despite the fact that Alan Dundes passed away in 2005, the archives continue to operate under the management of Professor Charles Briggs (Thompson 2016: 117–118). Professor Dundes' teaching and advice were essential to creating an awareness of the importance of archives to the study of folklore and the need to preserve the material generated by student fieldwork in a university archive.

As well as the creation of the Archive, the visit to Berkeley had another important result: as from 1994 students were given methodological guidelines based on those used by Professor Dundes at Berkeley and they worked with a similar model of the index card. However, it was soon seen that information technology could be used to construct a database that would facilitate information management and storage. So in 1995 students started working with a database that enabled them to enter the information directly in files that were subsequently added to the archive's general internal database.

In 2010 the management of information was further improved with the implementation of an online database, *ArxiuFolk*<sup>1</sup> (The Folklore Archive's database), which enabled students to enter data directly. Thus, data no longer had to be moved from one computer to another with floppy disks; all the students could work from their own personal computers and enter data into the common online database.

In the academic year 2000–2001, a new line of work was initiated: the collection and study of rumours and contemporary legends. It is still ongoing at present. Under the guidance of the lecturer in the subject and using specific methodology and criteria, a great deal of material has been generated, which students have presented in the form of a written and digital report. In order to facilitate information management for the students, in 2016 the online database *RumorFolk*<sup>2</sup> (database of rumours and contemporary legends), was designed (Oriol & Samper 2016: 74–75). Students can work online from their computers and enter the information into their personal space in the database. Once the files have been revised, they are included in the general database. As it is a specific database, one of its aims is to facilitate the cataloguing of rumours and contemporary legends by using a typological system that is similar to the

one used to catalogue tales.<sup>3</sup> At the moment, the material that has been collected since the academic year 2000–2001 is being transferred to the RumorFolk database, so it still has very few entries.

To sum up, the teaching activity at the university, which uses specific methodology and criteria, and the students' work have generated a series of materials. The Folklore Archive has preserved these materials and has been working hard to improve accessibility for people interested in consulting them. Since 1979, the Archive has gone through several phases.

- Between 1979 and 1994 the materials collected by the students were mainly tape recordings with their corresponding typed transcriptions. When the Folklore Archive was founded in 1994, the recordings started to be digitalized and the work was ordered and classified. Nowadays, this material is not available online, although the aim is that it will be at some time in the future.
- From 1994 to 2010:
  - All students started work with the same model of index card inspired by the one used by Alan Dundes in his university lectures. However, this card soon became an entry in a database and by 1995 students were entering information into an internal database which made it easier to subsequently add it in a common database (later to become the ArxiuFolk database).
  - In the academic year 2000–2001, the line of work with students on rumours and contemporary legends was the embryo of the future RumorFolk database.
- As from 2010:
  - In 2010 the online database ArxiuFolk was created.
  - In 2016 the online database RumorFolk was created.

All the students get training in archiving the materials and some of them even collaborate in the revision and cataloguing of the materials thanks to collaboration grants. The databases are used also in some preliminary research such as end-of-degree thesis by students from Rovira i Virgili University and other universities. External users who wish to consult, in particular, the ArxiuFolk database, have to contact the Arxiu de Folklore technician to request access, explaining the reason for their query and the time they will need to consult the material. Over the years, a wide range of requests have been received: from current and former students of the university itself to students from other centres or researchers who have requested access to these materials in order to carry out their research.

## 1.2. Research at the university

Since the year 2000, research projects have been run for which specific databases needed to be designed to facilitate information management.<sup>4</sup>

The first project was called *Rondalles catalanes* (Catalan Folktales), led by Carme Oriol and Josep M. Pujol and carried out in two stages, one between 2000 and 2002 and the other between 2005 and 2007. The aim of the project was to study and catalogue the folktales collected in the Catalan linguistic and cultural domain since 1853, when the first collection of oral-tradition folktales was published. The project's most visible results were *Índex tipològic de la rondalla catalana* (Typological Index of the Catalan Folktales) (Oriol & Pujol 2003), *Index of Catalan Folktales* (Oriol & Pujol 2008) and the database Rond-Cat: Catalan Folktales Search Engine,<sup>5</sup> which has been available online since 2004. The database is available in Catalan, English, French and Spanish and uses the criteria and numbering system of the international catalogue by Aarne, Thompson & Uther (Uther 2004) to catalogue the versions.

The second project was the *Bio-Bibliographic Repertory of Catalan Folk Literature*, directed by Carme Oriol and carried out by an interuniversity research group. The project took place in three stages between 2006 and 2018 and studied the paper publications (books and magazines) containing data on Catalan folk literature and folklore, as well as their collectors and researchers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The project's most visible results were the books *Repertori biobibliogràfic de la literatura popular catalana: el cicle romàntic* (Bio-Bibliographic Repertory of Catalan Folk Literature: The Romantic Project) (Oriol & Samper 2011), *Història de la literatura popular catalana* (History of Catalan Folk Literature) (Oriol & Samper 2017), and *A History of Catalan Folk Literature* (Oriol & Samper 2019), and the database BiblioFolk: Repertori Biobibliogràfic de la Literatura Popular Catalana<sup>6</sup> (Bio-Bibliographic Repertory of Catalan Folk Literature), available online since 2009.

## 1.3. Commitment to society

Ever since the Folklore Archive was first set up in 1994, there has been clear progress both in the visualisation of the activities promoted by the Archive and in the dissemination of its collections. From the initial concept of an archive exclusively for preserving material and for being occasionally consulted by researchers in situ, it has become an archive that makes its collection available online and makes its activity known to society through its website. The online

presence of the Archive makes consultation easier and extends the number of possible users.

In the first decades of the twenty-first century, more specifically between 2004 and 2022, the Folklore Archive progressively opened up to society. Firstly, access was provided to six specialized databases that had been generated by teaching and research activity in the areas of folklore and folk literature. These databases were, in order of creation, RondCat (2004), BiblioFolk (2009), Arxiu-Folk (2010), RumorFolk (2016), Folkloristes (2018) and TermFolk (2022). Then the website of the Folklore Archive,<sup>7</sup> active since 2012, was created with news and information about projects, symposiums, the journal *Estudis de Literatura Oral Popular / Studies in Oral Folk Literature*,<sup>8</sup> and access to the six databases through the section “Recursos en línia” (Online Resources).

Lately much has been said about the social impact of research, a concept that is used in some countries to provide universities with resources and it is increasingly used to evaluate European projects. For example, the Seventh Framework Programme of the European Commission says the following: “Project proposals should nail down the types of impacts they expect to obtain and to include in which way they will be measured, and assessed”.<sup>9</sup> This programme describes the impact of research “as a demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to society and the economy”.<sup>10</sup>

A reflection on the role of folklore archives in our society suggests that they can have this impact on society. Ramon Flecha, professor of sociology at the University of Barcelona, distinguishes between the concepts of dissemination, transfer, and social impact (Flecha 2016). Dissemination is what is said to happen when society is aware of our research. Transfer is when our research is used in society. And finally, social impact is when transfer achieves social results in a positive way. The Folklore Archive at the URV has made a great effort in dissemination and transfer over the past few years.

### ***1.3.1. Dissemination: Social networks, symposiums, seminars and presence in the media***

The activities organized by the Archive or carried out by the people involved are continuously publicized on the Archive’s website and the social networks (Facebook and Twitter).<sup>11</sup> Both accounts were created in May 2012. Currently the Twitter account has 1,080 followers and follows 1,021 profiles, and the Facebook’s page has 477 followers.<sup>12</sup> In October 2018, both accounts were officially incorporated into the Rovira i Virgili University’s active social media accounts,



which are supervised by the university's Communication and Marketing Office and they have to follow specific graphic requirements as they are part of the official image of the university.<sup>13</sup> This meant placing the Folklore Archive at the same level, in this sense, as other units or departments of the university that also have a presence on these networks, as well as promoting the cohesion and the image that the university offers on the Internet. The aim of the presence of the Folklore Archive in these networks and the reason for its creation is to disseminate the activities organized by this research unit as well as the activities in which the researchers who are part of it participate (congresses, conferences, publications, etc.). It also informs about other activities that may be of interest to researchers in this field. An example of this is the live monitoring on the Twitter account of the conferences organized by the Archive or of those in which researchers participate. In this way, the use of these networks is basically informative and they do not function as repositories of materials. One consequence of this activity is the interaction with other profiles on these networks, whether they are from the university itself with which a constant relationship is maintained, such as Publicacions URV (URV Publications),<sup>14</sup> which has published several books and publishes the journal *Estudis de Literatura Oral Popular / Studies in Oral Folk Literature*, or from other entities, such as l'ETNO Museu Valencià d'Etnologia (Valencian Museum of Ethnology),<sup>15</sup> with which a relationship of exchange of publications and dissemination of activities with common interests is maintained.

Likewise, the Archive has been actively involved in organizing symposiums on the study of issues related to its area of expertise in order to release results of research into society (see Appendix 1). The seminars organized in recent years have been useful not only for bringing together the researchers involved in the research projects led by Carme Oriol and coordinated by the Folklore Archive but also for publicizing the progress that has been made in research on the history of Catalan folk literature (see Appendix 2).

As part of the process of dissemination, mention should be made of the presence of the Folklore Archive's researchers in the media, since it is one of the most common ways of publicizing research (and can have a direct impact on society). Presence in the media, which has increased in recent years, can be of various types. We are including in Appendix 3 some representative examples of each item. This presence in the media means a greater projection of the activities carried out by researchers and is also a good way of bringing the results of this research nearer to society.

### **1.3.2. Transfer: Databases**

The Archive's online resources are freely available to anybody interested and they are discussed in lectures and publications for academics (congresses and scientific journals) and the general public (talks in libraries and associations, magazines).

Transfer is also a reality insofar as research can create new knowledge. This is particularly clear in the case of the databases resulting from research projects, such as RondCat and BiblioFolk. For example, the former has led to the production of the two catalogues of Catalan folktales and has been used by numerous studies (articles, books, talks and presentations at congresses); likewise, it has been used to produce catalogues in other geographical areas<sup>16</sup> and by teachers, oral narrative professionals, and cultural mediators to extend the repertory of folktales. The latter has been used, for instance, as a basis for *A History of Catalan Folk Literature* (Oriol & Samper 2019) in English, and as an extended version in Catalan, *Història de la literatura popular catalana* (Oriol & Samper 2017), both fruit of a collaborative effort between researchers from various universities and research centres, who have joined forces to create a broader study of Catalan folk literature, which addresses the Catalan linguistic and cultural territories in their entirety.

## **2. SOCIAL IMPACT: LA CIUTAT A CAU D'ORELLA**

The challenge from this point on will be to analyse how the Archive can make an impact on society and how it can help improve it. One way it can do this is to increase the relation between the academic world and the environment, as can be seen in the project *La ciutat a cau d'orella* (The Whispering City). This project is designed for knowledge transfer, but it could have a social impact if there is enough effort and resources. It is also a good example of the relation between the academic world and the general public.

*The Whispering City* is a series of activities structured around urban legends. It was initiated in 2012 and put into practice by the will to cooperate of the Tarragona Public Library and the Town Council's Service for Young People. Other participants are the Tarragona School of Arts and other groups and organizations, such as the Folklore Archive.

## 2.1. The project

The project can be traced back to 2011 when Imma Pujol, who works at the Public Library of Tarragona and is also a storyteller, designed an activity on urban legends for a secondary school. From this starting point, a project was set up on urban legends, targeted at young people, and the Town Council's Municipal Service for Young People was contacted. The Service offered to give the project a place as part of a programme on leisure and consumption alternatives. In this way the urban legend cycle titled "The Whispering City" was born. The programme was introduced in the following way:

*Everybody knows Tarragona's written history: its glorious Roman past, ... the Peninsular War... But what do we know about those stories that have not been put down on paper? Rumours that are spread from person to person and which become just one more part of our everyday life, experiences that go beyond the limits of time and space and grow in the collective imagination as points of reference in the day-to-day life of the city. This project summarizes oral history in a variety of leisure activities, at once participatory and nocturnal, or technical and reflexive. The aim is to give shape and expression to Tarragona, the city we all belong to, the city we all build every day. (Projecte 2016)*

And the aims of the programme are the following:

*To provide young people with a leisure alternative in the city and encourage youth organizations and institutions in Tarragona to work together on urban legends and rumours.*

*To carry out educational, informational, and leisure activities in order to encourage young people to meet and to link community networks that visualize and share resources.*

*To visualize the strengths of young people by creating a programme that brings the associations in the city together. (Projecte 2016)*

So far, there have been eleven versions of the project. The initial proposal – to work on the basis of urban legends – has been extended, for example, with work on folktales and other sorts of legends.

The Folklore Archive's current role in this project is to make academic knowledge available to the general public, particularly young people. On the one hand, they are introduced to knowledge that is generally perceived to be dry and, on

the other, they are made aware of the revitalizing and cohesive potential of oral heritage and history.

The Folklore Archive's involvement goes back to its first edition in 2012 and Carme Oriol's lecture "El món de les llegendes urbanes" (The World of Urban Legends; 20/11/2012), which was included as an activity and gave the public audience the theoretical basis of the genre and was also the first point of contact between the Folklore Archive and the entities that organized the programme. In 2014, in the third edition of the project, it was Emili Samper who gave a talk entitled "Un amic m'ha explicat que... L'apassionant món dels rumors" (A Friend Has Told Me That... The Fascinating World of Rumours; 24/11/2014). From this point on, the Folklore Archive, in the person of Emili Samper, started to take part in the design and organization of the programme.

This can be seen in the following edition (the fourth) in 2015, which focused on a different genre of folklore – the folktale – and designed all its activities to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the death of folklorist Cels Gomis Mestre (1841–1915). As a full member of the team and a specialist in the life and work of this folklorist, Emili Samper took an active part in designing the activities. With Imma Pujol, from the Public Library of Tarragona, he was responsible for a workshop entitled "Rondalla ve, rondalla va. De l'escola a l'institut" (A Tale Comes, a Tale Goes. From Primary to Secondary School; 25/11/2015). It was an activity aimed at secondary school students creating their own folktales. The participants, students aged 13 and 14, had to work together to create their own version of one of the folktales collected by Cels Gomis by using all the clues at their disposal to suggest how the plot develops.

The project was a success: many young people took part, local youth organizations of different sorts joined in the subsequent versions of the project, and in 2016 it was awarded a prize by the Catalan Association of Professionals of Youth Policies (ACPPJ) for good practices.<sup>17</sup> "La Ciutat a cau d'orella, cinc anys de llegendes urbanes a Tarragona" (The Whispering City, Five Years of Urban Legends in Tarragona; 28/09/2016) was an event that celebrated and shared this distinction with the general public. In the ceremony, presented by the journalist Ricard Lahoz, various experts discussed the project and its features. The roundtable consisted of Pep Montes (who works in youth policies), Rosa M. Codines (education) and Carme Oriol (university).

The same ceremony presented the fifth version of the project (2016), dedicated to "Llegendes i misteris" (Legends and Mysteries). Legends were once again the main focus but were given new life by their links to the city of Tarragona.

## 2.2. The route: Legendary places in Tarragona

One of the new activities in the fifth edition was a tour of places associated with legends entitled “Espais llegendaris de Tarragona” (Legendary Places in Tarragona). It was the closing event of the edition focused on legends and mysteries and it took place on 14 January 2017, with numerous participants.

*We invite you to come on a tour of the most legendary places in Tarragona. Some unexpected guests will come and tell us what happened in some of the best-known corners of the city. We are sure you will see them in a different light after this visit! (La ciutat a cau d'orella 2016)*

The tour was designed on the basis of the book *Llegendes de Tarragona* (Legends of Tarragona) by Emili Samper (2014), a collection of fifty-six legends that are connected with the city of Tarragona and other nearby places and was also led by Emili Samper.

The tour visits the following places where five different legends are recounted, linking the place with the events narrated and the different narrators. In each place, a different legend was told or performed. The project team took an active part, as we shall see below.

1. Pla de la Seu (Cathedral): “The apostles of the Cathedral” was explained by Emili Samper, who led the tour.
2. The Cloister of the Cathedral: “The procession of rats” was represented by Siscu Guirro, who disguised himself as the king’s servant to explain the legend.
3. The Seminary of Tarragona: “Saint Thecla’s arm” was explained by Imma Pujol, in the form of a storyteller.
4. The Praetorium: “The dark chamber and Pilate’s punishment” was represented by Marc Mestre, a young member of the youth theatre group, who disguised himself as the emperor’s servant to explain the story.
5. The Castellarnau House: “The phantom of the Castellarnau House” was represented by Toni Garcia and Diana Avilés, also members of the youth theatre group, who dressed up, respectively, as a house guide and as a ghost.

The legends are of different sorts, ranging from stories that have left physical traces to legends about saints or urban legends. Every story is told or performed in a different way, more or less theatrically, and the versions of the legends used are the ones that a contemporary audience finds the easiest to identify with.<sup>18</sup> The audience – teenagers, children and families – are given a commemorative

leaflet with the map of the five places on the tour and a list of recommended texts so that they can learn more. The success of the tour's first edition was reported in the local press.<sup>19</sup>

The high participation rate and interest shown in this tour prompted the project team to consider new editions. The next edition was a shorter tour for local secondary schools that visited only three places (Pla de la Seu, the Cloister and Casa Castellarnau). Three secondary schools took part in a total of six sessions (03/05/2017, 05/05/2017, 14/06/2017). The students had to play an active role: they had to answer two questions for every legend and point out on a city map the places where the action of the legends took place. In the second edition of the tour (25/09/2017), one of the places was changed and some of the narratives or performances were modified.

### **3. CONCLUSIONS**

Since the Folklore Archive was founded, its activity as a university research unit has evolved in parallel with the changes in the information and communication society. So far most effort has been put into publicizing its activity in a wide range of media (Internet, social networks, radio, television, lectures, etc.) and transferring the results of its research, which has generated new knowledge (mainly citations in books and scientific articles). The aim now is to analyse the activities done and assess whether they can have any impact on society: in other words, can they achieve better social results? Participation in the project *La ciutat a cau d'orella* (The Whispering City) can be regarded as a way of improving relations between the academic world and the general public.

## **APPENDIXES**

### **APPENDIX 1: Symposiums**

- On 25 November 2005, as part of the symposium “The Folk Biography: From Hagiography to Gossip”, the Archive hosted the formation of the Group of Ethnopoetic Studies within the Society of Catalan Language and Literature (subsidiary of the Institute of Catalan Studies).
- On 23–25 October 2008, the Archive organized the 3rd course on folk culture, “King James I of Aragon in the Folk Collective Imagination and Literature” in commemoration of the 800th anniversary of his birth.

- On 28 May 2009, the symposium “The Presentation of the Project RondCat: Catalan Folktales” was organized to present the book titled *Index of Catalan Folktales* by Carme Oriol and Josep M. Pujol (2008) and the multilingual website RondCat: Catalan Folktales Search Engine, available in Catalan, English, Spanish and French.
- On 24 October 2012, the symposium “The Brothers Grimm: Their Lives and Works” was organized in commemoration of the bicentenary of the publication of the first volume of *Kinder-und Hausmärchen* (1812).
- On 25–26 October 2012, the 7th meeting of the European Research Group on Oral Narrative (GRENO) was held on the topic “The Folktales: Short Forms of Oral Narrative”.
- On 20–21 June 2013, an international congress was organized in honour of Professor Josep M. Pujol (1947–2012), entitled “The Study of Folklore: Theory, History, Archives”, focusing on the three thematic areas in which he specialized.
- On 23–24 March 2021, the Archive co-hosted with Josep Anton Baixeras Chair of Catalan Literary Heritage the symposium “Palmira Jaquetti”.
- On 28 June to 2 July 2021, the Archive organized the 38th International Conference of the International Society for Contemporary Legend Research (ISCLR), “Perspectives on Contemporary Legend”, which took place online due to the health situation at that time caused by the COVID 19 pandemic.
- On 13 October 2021, the Archive co-hosted with Josep Anton Baixeras Chair of Catalan Literary Heritage the symposium “Interdisciplinary Views on Legend and Myth”.
- On 9–10 November 2021, the Archive co-hosted with Josep Anton Baixeras Chair of Catalan Literary Heritage the symposium “Legend and Myth in Catalan Literature”.

## APPENDIX 2: Seminars

- On 9 October 2014, the international seminar “Works, Authors, and Topics of Folk Literature in the 20th Century” was held.
- On 9–10 June 2016, the international seminar “History of Catalan Folk Literature: New Perspectives” was held.
- On 28 April 2017, the international seminar “The Study of Catalan Folk Literature Today” was held in Palma.
- On 19–20 October 2017, the 7th course on folk culture, “Identity, Folklore, and Education”, was held in Tortosa.

- On 4 November 2021, the Archive organized a lecture under the heading “A History of Folklore Studies in the British Isles, c. 1750 – c. 1970” by David Hopkin (Oxford University).
- On 16–17 December 2021, a seminar under the heading “Folk Literature and Author’s Literature: Genres and Recreations” was held in Tarragona.
- On 15 February 2022, the Archive organized a lecture under the heading “Folk Magic, Local and International” by Jonathan Roper (Institute of Cultural Research, University of Tartu).

### APPENDIX 3: Presence in the media

- Radio interviews and participation in programmes: Carme Oriol was interviewed for the 3rd course on folk culture (08/10/2008); she took part in the programme “Tarragona, de ben a prop” (Tarragona, from up Close) (31/10/2013); Emili Samper appeared on the show “Lletres” (Letters) to talk about his book *De l’anarquisme al folklore. Cels Gomis i Mestre (1841–1915)* (From Anarchism to Folklore. Cels Gomis Mestre (1841–1915)) (30/01/2014); he took part in the special programme “Especial Santa Tecla” (Special Programme on Santa Tecla) to present his book *Llegendes de Tarragona* (Legends of Tarragona; 17/09/2014) and he was interviewed in “Carrer Major” (Major Street) in Ràdio Ciutat de Tarragona to present the book *Història de la literatura popular catalana* (History of Catalan Folk Literature; 18/12/2018).
- Reports in the press: presentation of the book *Literatura oral a Faió, Favara, Maella i Nonasp* (Oral Literature in Faió, Favara, Maella and Nonasp) by Carme Oriol, Pere Navarro and Mònica Sales in the journal *Temps de Franja*, issue number 5 (09/10/2012); publication of the report on the lecture by Laura Villalba on folklorist Adelaida Ferré Gomis in the newspaper *El Punt-Avui* (10/02/2015); publication of the report on the route “Espais llegendaris de Tarragona” (Legendary Places in Tarragona) in the newspaper *Diari de Tarragona* (17/01/2017).
- Interviews and articles in the press: article in the newspaper *Diari Més* on the book *El rei Jaume I en l’imaginari popular i en la literatura* (King James I of Aragon in the Popular Collective Imagination and in Literature) with Emili Samper (06/10/2010); an article “Un folklorista a la batcova” (A Folklorist in the Bat Cave) about Emili Samper in the supplement “Ens agrada llegir” (We Like Reading) in the magazine *Fet a Tarragona*, issue number 10 (03/04/2015); interview with Carme Oriol



for the newspaper *Diari d'Andorra* (23/11/2015); Carme Oriol published “Les llegendes urbanes, una forma de literatura de la vida quotidiana” (Urban Legends, a form of Literature of Everyday Life; 11/01/2020) and “L'Any Palmira Jaquetti, un homenatge necessari” (The Palmira Jaquetti Year, a Necessary Tribute; 20/10/2020) in the newspaper *Diari de Tarragona*; Emili Samper published “Els mems seran sempre nostres” (Memes Will Always Be Ours; 20/11/2018) in *Diari de Tarragona*.

- Digital media: presentation of the books *Això era i no era. Obra folklòrica de Josep M. Pujol* (Once upon a Time. Folkloric Work by Josep M. Pujol) and *Three Selected Papers on Catalan Folklore* by Carme Oriol (25/04/2014);<sup>20</sup> an article and an interview with Emili Samper in the blog “Tarragona Cultura” on the publication of the book *Llegendes de Tarragona* (Legends of Tarragona; 09/04/2014).<sup>21</sup>
- Television programmes: Carme Oriol was interviewed for the programme “Cicles” of TAC12 (27/05/2015); Emili Samper took part in the TV3 mid-day news programme on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the death of Cels Gomis i Mestre (14/10/2015); Carme Oriol took part in the programme Tria33 on legends (21/06/2016) and in the programme “Quan arribin els marciàns” (When the Martians Arrive; 8/02/2021), talking about the folklorist, writer and composer Palmira Jaquetti.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See <http://arxiufolk.arxiudefolklore.cat/>, last accessed on 16 October 2023.

<sup>2</sup> See <http://rumorfolk.arxiudefolklore.cat/>, last accessed on 16 October 2023.

<sup>3</sup> See a few examples in Oriol & Samper (2016: 76–77).

<sup>4</sup> See Oriol (2015: 338–344) for details and examples about these databases.

<sup>5</sup> See <http://rondcat.arxiudefolklore.cat/>, last accessed on 16 October 2023.

<sup>6</sup> See <http://bibliofolk.arxiudefolklore.cat/>, last accessed on 16 October 2023.

<sup>7</sup> See <http://www.arxiudefolklore.cat/>, last accessed on 16 October 2023.

- <sup>8</sup> See <https://revistes.urv.cat/index.php/elop>, last accessed on 16 October 2023.
- <sup>9</sup> See <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/613202/reporting/it>, last accessed on 23 October 2023. See also Flecha 2016.
- <sup>10</sup> Impact-EV: Evaluating the Impact and Outcomes of European SSH Research (2014–2017) (Pla estratègic de recerca i innovació de la URV. Impacte social de la recerca. Jornada estratègica. 7 de juliol de 2016. Informe de desenvolupament i resultats de la jornada).
- <sup>11</sup> Available at <https://www.facebook.com/ArxiudeFolklore> and <https://twitter.com/ArxiudeFolklore>, both last accessed on 17 October 2023.
- <sup>12</sup> On 30 September 2022.
- <sup>13</sup> All the Rovira i Virgili University's official social networks can be found at <https://www.urv.cat/ca/universitat/comunicacio/xarxes-socials/>, last accessed on 17 October 2023.
- <sup>14</sup> Available at <https://twitter.com/PublicacionsURV>, last accessed on 16 October 2023.
- <sup>15</sup> Available at <https://twitter.com/letnomuseu>, last accessed on 16 October 2023.
- <sup>16</sup> For example, the *Catálogo tipológico del cuento folclórico en Murcia* (Typological Catalogue on the Folkloric Tale in Murcia) by Ángel Hernández Fernández (2013).
- <sup>17</sup> The project is available at <http://www.joventut.info/bonespractiques/projecte/la-ciutat-a-cau-dorella/>, last accessed on 17 October 2023.
- <sup>18</sup> The texts that were used as a basis for the representation of each legend can be consulted in Samper 2020.
- <sup>19</sup> For example, *Diari de Tarragona*, available at <https://www.diaridetarragona.com/naltros/La-catedral-de-Tarragona-esconde-el-fin-del-mundo-20170116-0024.html>, last accessed on 17 October 2023.
- <sup>20</sup> Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2lD7V2ALGqM>, last accessed on 17 October 2023.
- <sup>21</sup> Available at <http://tblog.tarragona.cat/entre-la-veritat-la-imaginacio-i-la-ficcio/3802>, last accessed on 17 October 2023.

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## PRACTICAL VIEWPOINT

# COMBINING ARCHIVAL AND ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN DISSIDENT MANUSCRIPTS: THE OSTROBOTHNIAN MYSTICS PROJECT (FINLAND)

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**Abstract:** This article describes an interdisciplinary project set up for the collection of manuscripts produced during the period of ca. 1780–1830 by craftsmen and peasants along the coast of the Gulf of Bothnia in Finland (Ostrobothnian Mystics, literature and cultural history collection, the Finnish Literature Society). We briefly describe the nature of the material, discuss the specific aspects of the manuscript project which connected two fields of expertise – that of an archive researcher and a user of the particular collection – and conclude by arguing for the urgency of finding new ways and resources to preserve fragile items – both texts and material artefacts – in a specific field.

**Keywords:** archives, craftsmen, Jacob Böhme, manuscripts

Around the period of ca. 1780–1830, communities of literate craftsmen and peasants along the coast of the Gulf of Bothnia in Finland translated, disseminated and read a variety of popular genres (e.g., legends, apocrypha) not available in print – but also something quite different: works of protestant mysticism based on the legacy of a German nature philosopher and shoemaker Jacob Böhme (1575–1624). His cosmology, supported by the notion of the subject's inner freedom, had easily transcended national, linguistic and social borders in war-ridden Europe since the seventeenth century. The Finnish scribes of the so-called Ostrobothnian mysticism in the eastern province of Sweden and,

after the Finnish War in 1808–1809, the autonomous Grand Duchy of Finland within the Russian Empire, left remarkable textual traces of the local reception of transnational literature, as well as the practical and professional pursuits of themselves in their local communities. Due to suppressive Lutheran state censorship, the early Finnish translations of Boehmenist tracts were never published.

In this article we describe a manuscript project in the largest of these collections: about 17,000 unique manuscript pages and hundreds of titles, preserved in the literature and cultural history collections of the Finnish Literature Society (est. in 1831). The unforeseen opportunities of the digital age have not eliminated the arduous part of archival work, namely the manpower for arranging, identifying and describing the contents before they can be digitized in a meaningful and permanent way. At the same time, funding for basic research has been reduced both in the archives and in academia. Thus, old and new forms of interdisciplinary collaboration are needed in knowledge production, including reliable metadata and the facilitation of access to underexplored collections. It goes without saying that providing a historical context for the manuscripts, such as information relating to their production, reception and provenance, is a key requirement.

In order to chart, identify and describe properly the vast collection of Ostrobothnian mysticism, a research-driven research squad was planned, funded by Kone Foundation (two researchers for six months), and launched in 2017. The basic idea was to connect two fields of expertise and different angles for a single collection: a researcher and user of the particular collection (Mehtonen) and an archive researcher (Soiniola). Issues of archives management of the older Finnish literature shook hands with probing the contexts and contents of a particular collection.

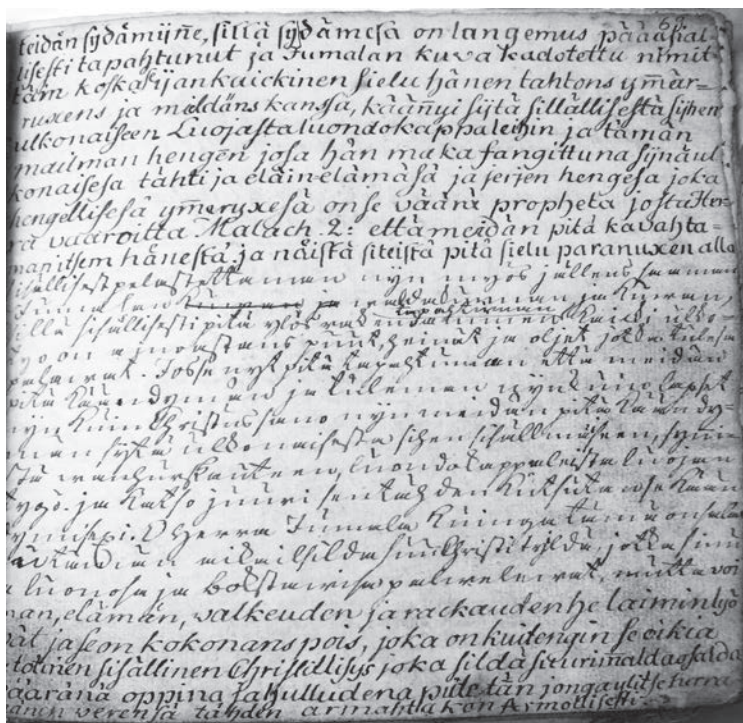
What kind of knowledge hub was this collaboration? In what follows, we briefly describe the nature of the material, discuss the specific aspects of the manuscript project, and conclude by arguing for the benefits of interdisciplinary exploration and double-checking the processes of documenting work.

## **EXPLORING POST-PRINT SCRIBAL CULTURE**

No easily defined Ostrobothnian Mystics collection existed at any single point in time. The movement itself consisted of loosely structured scribal networks in different areas and over a long period of time. The mainly Finnish manuscripts from the Vaasa-Kokkola area near the west coast of Finland were later dispersed

to several private and national memory institutions (archives, libraries, museums, also private owners), each with its own curatorial traditions and practices.

In the present-day collection preserved at the Finnish Literature Society, three notable names emerge among the tens of Ostrobothnian hands. Jacob Norrgård (1750–1822) was a peasant and a scribe, who is mentioned in the extant correspondence between Anders Collin (1754–1830), one of the best-known mystics and Böhme readers in late eighteenth-century Stockholm, and distributor of literature to like-minded networks, and Beata Herrman (1753–1834), the leader of a mystics' network in Vaasa. Among younger important scribes were craftsmen: Samuel Rinta-Nikkola (1763–1818), a tailor from Ilmajoki, and Mikki Sauso (1793–1853), a carpenter and village scribe from Merikaarto (Vähäkyrö). Rinta-Nikkola and Sauso worked semi-professionally as scribes and wrote lists of the manuscripts they copied.



**Figure 1.** The manuscripts of the Ostrobothnian Mystics were produced at a turning point of the Finnish language (old book Finnish and early modern Finnish) and different scribal styles. The vocabulary and style varied from one scribe to another and even within one text.

It is not a coincidence that craftsmen were well represented among the early scribes of the works of Jacob Böhme in Sweden and Finland. Not only was their respected teacher Böhme a shoemaker, but also the mentor of the Ostrobothnian Mystics, Anders Collin in Stockholm, was originally a journeyman weaver and factory worker. Later he became the court librarian by the freemasonic circles of King Gustav III and his brother Duke Carl, in which Böhme's works were studied. Compared to the rest of Europe and the amazing extension of Böhme's influence (Kühlmann & Vollhardt 2012; Hessayon & Apetrei 2014; Brink & Martin 2017; Martin & Muratori & Brink forthcoming),<sup>1</sup> the greater awakening to Böhme's texts in Finland occurred later. The numbers of translations only peaked ca. 1780–1830. The scribes were very self-conscious regarding the suppressed nature of the material. This makes the Ostrobothnian Mystics collection a rich source of the vernacular popular forms in which international and inter-confessional European thoughts were received and modified in particular communities on the northernmost margins of Europe.

The expansion of minor literatures under censorship with alternative ideologies relied on scribal activity. An established manuscript culture continued to flourish in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe, including Finland. Print and script served different purposes. In the case of suppressed literature, script as a medium spurred on resistance, “creating chains of communication, and fostering inner fraternalism” (Walsham 2004: 215). Important genres of antagonistic opinion formation among the laypeople were handwritten tracts, plays, pamphlets, circular letters, devotional manuals and songs (including hymns).<sup>2</sup> The networks of the Ostrobothnian scribes also belonged to such a realm of post-print scribal culture.

The collection of the Ostrobothnian Mystics thus witnesses a turning point in Finnish literature where also early literate and mobile social groups such as craftsmen and lower merchants were, from the second half of the eighteenth century onwards, increasingly involved in the production and distribution of extra-organizational texts. Instead of the ambiguous term of individual ‘auto-didacts’, the Ostrobothnian Mystics collection testifies to the mobile activity of professional groups as well as spiritual networks (e.g., radical Pietism, the Moravian Brethren, masonic and journeyman circles) as long-established institutions of literacy, lay teaching and book production.

The Ostrobothnian Mystics collection today preserved at the Finnish Literature Society cumulated in several waves since the mid-nineteenth century. The work of the early collectors was inspired by the streams of national awakening promoting vernacular folklore and other popular literature. Among the early names who advanced the collection and the study of the mystics' manuscripts



was Matthias Akiander (1802–1871), a pioneer of folk education, teacher and professor of Russian. A younger important collector was J. Oskar I. Rancken (1824–1895), a lector of German in Vaasa Lyceum and the father of collecting the folklore of Swedish-speaking Ostrobothnia.<sup>3</sup> Both Akiander and Rancken had wide networks across the borders and were active in the emerging literary societies. Akiander was one of the founding members of the Finnish Literature Society in 1831 and Rancken was its member since 1845 as well as among the founders of the Swedish Literature Society in Finland (est. in 1885). In an article published in 1855, Rancken stressed the importance of the literature used by the Ostrobothnian Mystics. At a time that in general was “so disadvantageous to Finnish literature”, ordinary people translated and disseminated this important material. Rancken characterized the forbidden Boehmenist literature as a reaction against “the shallow, distant and egoistic” view of religion, which prevailed among the educated classes in the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth century (Rancken 1855: 226).<sup>4</sup> Among the later collectors was Kustaa Hallio (former Sjöroos, 1868–1936), a priest who had worked in Ostrobothnia in his youth. According to his own words, he knew some later mystics through personal contacts and their books (Hallio 1901: 347). The history of the Ostrobothnian Mystics collection is thus rich in manifesting both the transnational and national aspects of the early literary pursuits in Finnish.

## **THE COLLECTION, CATALOGUES AND METADATA**

In order to protect the original manuscripts preserved in the Finnish Literature Society, they were microfilmed (microfiched) in 1995 and 2000. However, the quality of the copies is often vague or unreadable, due to the fragile or soiled condition of the originals. The manuscripts were in heavy use already in the original networks of scribes and readers. The paratexts preserved in the manuscripts show that they were re-read and borrowed, often in order to make further copies. A large part of the scribal texts were thus user publications: interested readers copied a text and offered other readers the opportunity to make their own copy.<sup>5</sup>

Material evaluation of the manuscripts revealed an urgent need for conservation. Some of the bindings were so fragile that they could not be opened for the purposes of describing. In rescuing data from vanishing into dust, our digital age is slow to recognize the need for resources required at all levels of data gathering. The memory institutions often rely on the political will of the society in building its future on existing knowledge and data.

By using both archival and research literature, the focus of the project was on:

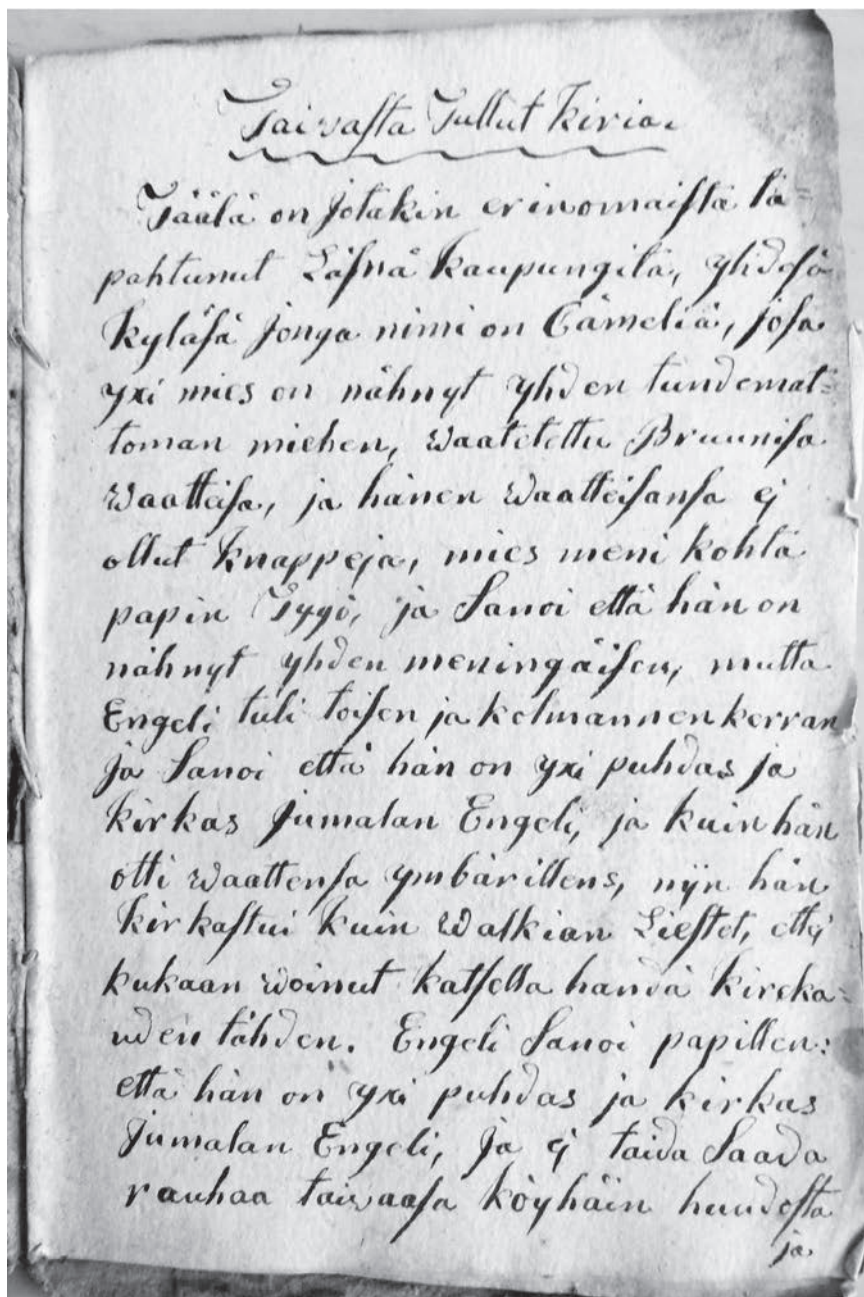
- *Texts and pictures* (the contents, authors, scribes).
- *Material evidence*: paratexts, the owners' markings, the collectors' remarks, bindings and materials of the physical items, decoration.
- *Other documents*: lists of acquisitions, old lists of copied texts by the scribes, etc.
- *Research*: a proper updated bibliography was produced.

In the manuscript project, six months were spent identifying, re-cataloguing, describing the contents, and inspecting the current condition of these unique manuscripts. According to our project diary, the pace was on average three manuscripts per working day. The range was broad: an exploration of the slowest cases of hybrid bindings (often without pagination) of formerly unidentified material could take several days, whereas with 'fast' material we speeded to six to eight manuscripts per day. Many question marks were left for future research to supplement.

A quick way to take a closer look at the contents of the collection is to introduce the new order in which the items were organized in the catalogue. The pre-existing catalogue was divided according to the collection creators (Rancken, Hallio) and based mainly on the older catalogues and cards. As a consequence, even closely related manuscripts were dispersed in different sections. Moreover, lacunae in identifications and even mistakes tended to recur from one document to another. During the project, we identified over 40 items, which did not exist in the former catalogues.

The manuscript project went *ad fontes*, using the manuscript evidence as the basis of description. The material was arranged in the following terms:

- Anonymous manuscripts (e.g., Finnish translations of popular forms of medieval legends, narrative apocryphal 'novels', prophecy and vision literature).
- Authored texts of mysticism (e.g., Finnish translations of Jacob Böhme and later readers of Böhme: Jean de Bernières-Louvigny, Melchior Douzetemps, Johann Georg Gichtel, Jeanne Guyon, John Pordage. The collection also contains medieval mystics' texts – Angela of Foligny, John of the Cross, etc. – as edited by radical pietistic authors).
- Letters (e.g., Jacob Böhme, Anders Collin, Eric Tolstadius).
- Secular texts (Finnish translations of eighteenth-century Swedish travel literature and schoolbooks; wedding songs; also local receipts and documents written by the same scribes).
- Printed pictures.
- Other religious material (i.e., not directly related to, or copied among, the Ostrobothnian Mystics).



**Figure 2.** In addition to the Bohmenist literature, the collection contains a rich variety of genres popular among lay readers. “Taivaankirje” (Angel’s letter) represented magical-religious literature, which became popular in the Nordic countries after the Protestant reformation. The cult of angels merged with mystical movements. A late copy by Mikki Sauso (1823).

Within such a general frame, new searchable elements were added to the descriptions, including distinctive bindings as well as paratexts, such as old labels, numbers, and owners' marks, which often reveal several successive owners or borrowers. They may serve as a special type of provenance evidence in the further research of the collection, local text communities and later reception history. Also, relevant external data such as bibliographic information was added.

A new running signum system, based on alphabetical and chronological order, was allocated to the items divided in these sections. The data was saved in an Excel file, which contains a table of nearly 250 items and new searchable descriptions and identifiers. Already during the project, the cumulating electronic file became a handy configurable tool of identification.

In the long term, the metadata will be available in Finna, the national web service for Finnish archives, libraries, and museums.<sup>6</sup>

## **THE PAST AND FUTURE OF THE MYSTICS**

The significance of old archival materials is not limited to the walls or even open databases of a memory organization. An exchange of information and updated facts means working with the past as well as present communities as hubs of knowledge. During the six-month project, we made two trips to the home turfs of the manuscripts in the Vaasa-Vähäkyrö area of Ostrobothnia, charting material outside the Finnish Literature Society. It was interesting to learn also of the intellectual and emotional legacy left by the Ostrobothnian Mystics on site. When exchanging information with local historians, genealogists, and families who had old manuscripts in their ownership, we learned from many sources that some early collectors of the manuscripts were not held in very high esteem by the locals familiar with the tradition. At least one collector of the manuscripts had apparently used questionable means to "borrow", without never returning, material that later became part of the Ostrobothnian Mystics' collection. Even with old material, it may still be a delicate issue today to negotiate the place and means of preservation of cultural inheritance of local as well as global importance.

Collections and archives transit through changing political regimes. It is important to communicate the latest research to the public, regarding also the changing societal and ideological conditions of documents. This is particularly topical for the material that was banned practically for centuries with no other reason than suppressive legislation in the matters of the freedom of consciousness and tolerance.<sup>7</sup> This project approached for the first time the Ostrobothnian Mystics' collection in the context of literary history, as a unique resource of early

popular literature in Finland and the currents of the early Romantic era. These included the Boehmenist mysticism which influenced German Romanticism and idealism from Hegel to Schelling as well as lay religious literature. Many of these currents were suppressed by the conservative Lutheran theology and censorship. With this context in mind, Mehtonen produced a separate narrative document of the authors and texts, to supplement the detailed archive catalogue.

## CONCLUSION

We would argue that there is an intrinsic value in identifying this material and perhaps one day recombining it in a collaborative effort between the memory institutions by using available information and technology. Such large organizational issues, however, lay beyond the immediate reach of our research squad. In addition to solutions to problems, the project left some questions unanswered. How could co-operation between archives, museums, and libraries be developed when the items (in this case, original manuscripts) are both texts and material artefacts in a specific field? How can items and the best relevant experts be brought together – before even dreaming of any easy digital access by anybody?

It is one of the paradoxes of the digital age that open access to manuscript material naturally channels research into the digitized materials (still the top of an iceberg), while at the same time the resources for the basic work of arranging the material and producing metadata, and even the costs of digitization, become scarcer and scarcer.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Blank spaces still persist on the map of the international Böhme study. According to the introduction of Hessayon & Apetrei (2014: 11), “[t]here are also eighteenth-century Swedish translations from the German as well as Danish *and perhaps also Finnish versions* extant in manuscript” (italics added). The vast collection has not been properly charted. For recent studies of the reception of Böhme’s works in Finland, see, e.g., Kvist 1997; Luukkanen 2005; Mansikka 2016; Mehtonen 2016, 2017, 2022. The pioneer in the study of the Ostrobothnian manuscripts preserved in the National Library of Finland was librarian Henrik Grönroos, who published a series of short papers on the topic in *Bibliophilos* between 1971–1974.

<sup>2</sup> For Sweden, see Carlsson 1967 and Mattsson 2011, and for a more general European view McKitterick 2011: 12–15.

<sup>3</sup> See the contributions in Bregenhøj 2001.

<sup>4</sup> In 1858 Rancken visited, perhaps urged by Matthias Akiander, Kokkola in Ostrobothnia to interview an old mystic. His report gives valuable information of the leading women in

the former circles of the mystics (e.g., Beata Herrman, Margareta Skog): see, for example, a letter from Rancken to Akiander dated 2 August 1858, printed in Akiander 1858, vol. 2, pp. 119–121. For Rancken’s life and work, see Bregenhøj 2001; Andersson 2009.

<sup>5</sup> In addition to ‘user publications’, Love names two modes of scribal publications: author publication (where the original author is in charge of the duplication of his or her text) and entrepreneurial publication (where copies were made to be sold; Love 1993: 47, 73–79). Part of the manuscripts preserved in the Ostrobothnian Mystics collection were combinations of these. For instance, in some later manuscripts there are prices scribbled on the covers.

<sup>6</sup> Available at <https://www.finna.fi>, last accessed on 26 July 2023.

<sup>7</sup> During the project we kept a project blog, available at <https://pohjanmaanmystiikka.blog/> (in Finnish; last accessed on 19 September 2023) and presented the results of the project in Helsinki and Ostrobothnia to both academic and general audiences.

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## PRACTICAL VIEWPOINT

# UDMURT FOLKLORE MATERIAL IN THE FOLKLORE ARCHIVES OF THE ESTONIAN LITERARY MUSEUM AND ITS COLLECTORS: A BRIEF REVIEW

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**Abstract:** The digitisation and preservation of language and folklore sound collections are highly relevant issues for many archival institutions in the Russian Federation. The folklore archive of the Udmurt Institute of History, Language and Literature in Izhevsk has not been an exception to this. The first folklore and language recordings on analogue magnetic tapes appeared in the early 1960s. In subsequent years, local folklorists and linguists made numerous expeditions to survey all areas of Udmurtia and the neighbouring regions where the Udmurts lived. Estonian researchers also participated in the recording of the Udmurt language and folklore during expeditions both in Estonia and outside. The article covers the joint efforts of Estonian and Udmurt scholars in collecting Udmurt folklore and language materials, which are currently stored at the Estonian Folklore Archives.

**Keywords:** Estonian Folklore Archives, Udmurt folklore, Uralic peoples, folklore, ethnography, disciplinary history

The Estonian Folklore Archives (EFA) of the Estonian Literary Museum, which celebrated the 90th anniversary in September 2017, has a long tradition of collecting oral folk art. Its collections store folklore materials of various peoples inhabiting not only the Republic of Estonia but also other regions.

The analysis of the catalogues of the Estonian Folklore Archives and available literary sources showed that the EFA collections contain also extensive folklore recordings of the Uralic peoples (Finno-Ugric and Samoyedic), collected from the late 1950s to the present. In the total volume of the EFA sound collections these recordings make up about 10% or 16,914 recordings – 1,224

storage units (Oras & Tamm & Västriik 2009a: 234). Among these collections the recordings of the Mordvins (Erzyas) (2,513 recordings – 328 storage units) and Ingrian Finns (6,158 recordings – 233 storage units) are most fully represented. The Udmurt materials are presented somewhat more modestly – 730 recordings or 44 storage units.

The first recordings of the Udmurt folklore, dating from the years 1957–1959, were made by Irina Travina, a researcher of the People's Music Cabinet of the Moscow Conservatory. These recordings were carried out on the territories of the Yukamensky, Alnashsky, Balezinsky, Seltinsky and Karsovaysky (nowadays Balezinsky) districts of the Udmurt ASSR during expeditions organised by the Folklore Commission of the Composers' Union of the RSFSR. Apparently at that time there was an agreement on the exchange of Finno-Ugric folklore materials between this organisation and the Estonian Academy of Sciences or the Estonian Composers' Union.

In 1964, Sándor Kallós (Sandor Kallosh), a Soviet composer of Hungarian origin, visited Sizner village in the Mari-Turek district of the Mari ASSR. There he recorded an Udmurt rural choir headed by Semyon Romanov. Since these materials were collected by Kallós as a member of the Folklore Commission of the Composers' Union of the USSR, later they were also transferred to the EFA.

A famous Hungarian musicologist, folklorist and ethnographer László Vikár (1966–1968) actively conducted recordings of the Udmurts in the Mari-Turek district of the Mari ASSR as well as in the Baltasinsky and Kukmorsky districts of the Tatar ASSR. As a rule, he worked together with his colleague Gábor Berecki (1928–2012), also a well-known Hungarian linguist and collector of singing folklore. Their recorded materials also ended up in the EFA.

In 1970 and 1973, I. Sviridova, a fellow worker of the People's Music Cabinet of the Moscow Conservatory, on the instructions of the Folklore Commission of the Composers' Union of the USSR, conducted recordings in the Debessky and Sharkansky districts of the Udmurt ASSR. The materials were also transferred to the EFA.

In 1973, joint folklore and ethnographic expedition of the Udmurt State University and the Udmurt Scientific Research Institute of History, Language and Literature (UdNII)<sup>1</sup> conducted recordings among the Udmurts in the Mari-Turek district of the Mari ASSR and in the Baltasinsky district of the Tatar ASSR. The recordings collected by this expedition are also stored at the EFA.

The first joint Estonian-Udmurt expeditions were organised at the very beginning of the 1970s. Initially, these expeditions were mainly of a museum nature. For the first time Kalju Kõnsin, a researcher from the Estonian National Museum, came to Udmurtia in 1970 and then in 1973 (Rüütel 1989: 80). During

the 1970s–1990s Estonian research expeditions visited various regions where local Udmurt groups lived (Udmurtia, Tatarstan, Mari Republic, Bashkortostan, Kirovsky, Permsky oblasts and Krasnoyarsk Krai). Scientists, photographers, artists, cameramen, students of the University of Tartu and the Estonian Academy of Art participated in the work of those expeditions. From the Udmurt side researchers from the National Museum of the Udmurt Republic named after Kuzebay Gerd, scientists and students of the Udmurt State University and the Udmurt Scientific Research Institute were involved in the field studies. Materials of the Estonian-Udmurt expeditions of 1971–1993 are now stored at the Estonian National Museum, and the video data shot by Aado Lintrop in 2002 and 2003 – at the Estonian Folklore Archives (Rüütel 1989: 85).

Folklore and folk music of the Udmurts, as also of other kindred Finno-Ugric peoples, have always been of interest to Estonian researchers (Boiarkin 2006; Karm 2013). But recordings of the Udmurt folklore began in the middle of the 1970s. In 1975, a well-known folklorist and musicologist Ingrid Rüütel and an archive sound engineer Olav Kiis recorded Mikhail Atamanov, a native of the Grakhovsky district of the Udmurt ASSR, who came to study in the postgraduate courses at the University of Tartu.

Aleksei Peterson, who for a long time had been working as the director of the Estonian National Museum, was keenly interested in traditional folk culture of kindred Finno-Ugric peoples as well as of the Udmurts. During the years 1977–1980 he visited several districts of the Udmurt ASSR: the Zavyalovsky, Alnashsky and also the Vyatsko-Polansky and Malmyzhsky districts. In addition to collecting materials for documentary films on the ethnography of the Udmurts, he also conducted folklore recordings.

Margarita Khrushcheva, a musicologist and researcher of musical folklore of the peoples of the Volga region (today professor at the Astrakhan Conservatory), recorded folk songs in the village of Uzey-Tuklya of the Uvinsky district in Udmurtia in 1982. These recordings were transferred to the EFA via the Folklore Commission of the Composers' Union of the USSR, where she had been working from 1980 to 1992. It was on her recommendation in 1985 that Ingrid Rüütel and Jaan Sarv, a musicologist from the Estonian Radio, visited the same Uzey-Tuklya village where they recorded folklore of the Udmurts. In the same year in Yoshkar-Ola, I. Rüütel, together with A. Tammik, recorded performances of a popular student ensemble Chipchirgan and other folklore groups from Udmurtia.

Academician Paul Ariste, an outstanding Estonian scientist, was also interested in the language and folklore of the Udmurts. In 1983 in Tartu, together with his colleagues, well-known Estonian folklorists Otilie Kõiva, Kristi Salve,

and Einar Sinijärv, they recorded Udmurt informants Svetlana Denisova (from the Malopurginsky district) and Valentin Kelmakov (from the Kukmorsky district of the Tatar ASSR).

In 1987, Marina Khodyreva and Tatiana Vladykina, researchers of the Udmurt Scientific-Research Institute, were on an expedition to the Udmurt villages of the Zuyevsky and Uninsky districts of the Kirov Oblast. Copies of the collected recordings were transferred to the EFA, and the originals are kept in the collections of the Udmurt Institute.

In 1990, Urmas Oras, a folklorist, and Janika Oras, an ethnomusicologist and teacher of the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre, recorded in Tartu Tatiana Minniyakhmetova, born in Bashkortostan.

Aado Lintrop, a well-known Estonian ethnographer, repeatedly visited Udmurtia. For the first time in 1970, as a cameraman, he participated in the filming of the Udmurt ethnographic material. Later, during joint Estonian-Udmurt expeditions, he also recorded folklore material. For example, in 1992 he conducted folklore recordings in Izhevsk, in the Yarsky, Alnashsky and Kiyasovsky districts of the Udmurt ASSR. In June 2002, together with the Udmurt researchers Galina Glukhova, Irina Nuriyeva and Lidia Dolganova, he visited the Agryzsky district of Tatarstan and the Krasnogorsky district of the Udmurt Republic. During the same period, Aado Lintrop and Irina Nurieva recorded several Udmurt folklore groups at the festival of Finno-Ugric peoples of the Urals and the Volga region in Izhevsk.

Thus, from 1957 to 2003, through the joint efforts of Estonian and Udmurt scientists, significant amounts of Udmurt folklore and linguistic recordings were collected, which are now stored in the collections of the Estonian Folklore Archives together with the recordings of other Uralic peoples. According to the EFA staff, by 2009 only about 10% of these recordings had been digitized (Oras & Tamm & Västriik 2009b: 418). The small number of sound engineers and the large volume of Estonian folklore recordings that need to be translated into digital format do not physically allow to fully process the sound materials of other Finno-Ugric languages stored in these archives. In that situation, it would be better if Udmurt scientists, together with doctoral students studying at the University of Tartu, and with the help of Estonian colleagues, made efforts to digitize, describe and compile a catalogue of the Udmurt folklore and linguistic materials stored at the Folklore Archives of the Estonian Literary Museum.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Later the Institute was renamed as the Udmurt Institute of History, Language and Literature of the Ural Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, and now it has lost its legal independence and joined the newly established Udmurt Federal Research Center of the Ural Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences as a structural unit.

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## PRACTICAL VIEWPOINT

# THE COLLECTION OF HUNGARIAN TRADITIONAL GAMES

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**Abstract:** In the first half of the twentieth century, the collection of Hungarian traditional games was housed in the archives of the department of folk music of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Folk music researchers published the first volume of the *Corpus Musicae Popularis Hungaricae I*, with the title *Children's Games*, containing 1,162 songs from traditional games. As Zoltán Kodály, world-famous folk musicologist, wrote in the preface of the volume, the publication of the volume marked the beginning of the work, not the end of it. Further work has verified this. The type system of traditional games was completed in the 1980s, and contained all kinds of games. It was developed on the basis of Hungarian traditional games although it is also suitable for systematising the traditional games of other European peoples. The article exemplifies a decades-long journey of a collection from an analogue format to a database.

**Keywords:** folk music, games, game melodies, Hungarian folklore

Different branches of science and education take an interest in traditional games. In the nineteenth century linguists collected Hungarian traditional games, with the help of which they could study, on the one hand, language dialects, and on the other hand, various linguistic phenomena. Among the experts of the movement, the teachers of physical education, there were also some who collected and taught traditional games in the twentieth century. In kindergartens nurses have also taught traditional games by making objects (rag dolls, figures of animals, etc.) to develop children's manual skills. At the beginning of the twentieth century folk music researchers were interested in traditional games, to be more exact, their melodies, as the twin-bar melodies of the games are different from the strophic melodies of songs of the grown-ups, being more archaic.

This is partly the reason why the collection of traditional games at the Institute for Musicology (Hungarian Research Network, Research Centre for the Humanities) increased up to 13,000 descriptions, which was the result of collecting traditional games by teachers of physical education and of students of the kindergarten teachers' training-school. These descriptions reached the Institute for Musicology, independently from whether they had melodies or not.

In 1951 the melodies of traditional games were published as the first volume of *Corpus Musicae Popularis Hungaricae* (Treasury of Hungarian Folk Music): the system of the melodies was created by Pál Járdányi. In the second half of the volume the system of György Kerényi is presented, created on the basis of the actions of the games.

After György Kerényi, Ilona Borsai became the researcher of the collection of traditional games at the Institute for Musicology, and she regarded not only researching but also publishing and popularisation of traditional games as very important. This is proven by her studies and publications on traditional games:<sup>1</sup> the latter ones she compiled from the material of the collection together with other researchers.

In 1971 the Institute and the youth section of Hungarian Radio announced a competition, to which more than 140 works were submitted. The works of certain senders contained only a few games known to them; however, some other senders collected more than a hundred games and sent those, so the collection increased by more than 2,500 descriptions.

From 1980, my task at the Institute was to systematise and study traditional games, after Ilona Borsai, who was a tireless enricher and excellent researcher of the collection. However, she was not interested in systematisation, and collected certain kinds of games and lyrics of games for the sake of research and comparison. I considered the systematisation of the material of the whole collection to be my first task.

The material of traditional games is highly complex, so its systematisation is possible from many perspectives. A game may have a melody, lyrics, form, action, and other systems. However, none of these is suitable for keeping all the highly mixed material in one system. It was my task to create a system suitable for this: this was made in the 1980s. This is the type system of traditional games, similar to the one based on action, but much more exact. As the actions of traditional games are sometimes very ramifying, it was more useful to base the system on the game seed, the most important element, without which the game cannot be played, or without which it would be another game.

Types were created on the basis of the game seed: games with the same game seed are variants of a game type. There are levels above and below the level



of the types. Types being similar to each other from some kind of aspect form a type group, and type groups having a common characteristic form a block. The uppermost level of the type system is that of the blocks, containing 6 of them; under that comes the level of the type groups – 24 of them; under that there is the level of the types – more than 1,000 of them. There are 3 levels under the level of types, created on the basis of other elements of action besides the game seed, or just on the basis of lyrics, or even melodies. These are the levels of subtypes, under them the level of inner distributions and under them the further distributions of those. There are a number of types having all the three levels under the type level, but there are also a number of those having no levels under the type level.

When an opportunity presented itself for the material of the collection of traditional games to get on computer, a method of numbering had to be created as well. The numbers are separated by dots, on one place by a virgule. The first number (4) shows that this is a collection of traditional games at the Institute for Musicology. The second number shows one of the 6 blocks. The third number contains 3 figures: the first one shows the type group of the block, the other two – the place of the type in the type group. The fourth number was originally 0 everywhere: the function of this number is to make it possible to insert new types. This is necessary as the system is open, and when new data are added, new types may be created, as it happened in the past 20–25 years. After that there is a virgule followed by the numbers of the levels under the level of the type, also separated by dots. If there are no such levels, the virgule is followed by 00; if there is/are such level(s), there is a number consisting of two figures, the second figure being originally 0 everywhere (0/10, 0/20, 0/30, etc.). The second figure is necessary for making it possible to insert new subtypes, inner distributions or further distributions between two others.

The blocks and type groups with the numbering are shown in the following table.

<b>BLOCKS</b>	<b>TYPE GROUPS</b>
<b>Games using implements</b> 4.1.xxx.x/xx	Games making objects (4.1.1xx.x/xx) Games of skill using implements (4.1.2xx.x/xx) Ball games (4.1.3xx.x/xx)
<b>Games of movement</b> 4.2.xxx.x/xx	Games of infants (4.2.1xx.x/xx) Various games of skill and strength (4.2.2xx.x/xx) Tag games (4.2.3xx.x/xx) Games of procession (4.2.4xx.x/xx)

<b>Games of the intellect</b> 4.3.xxx.x/xx	Games of mental skills (4.3.1xx.x/xx) Tricks (4.3.2xx.x/xx) Guessing games (4.3.3xx.x/xx & 4.3.3xx.xx/xx) Hiding and seeking games (4.3.4xx.x/xx) Games of taboo (4.3.5xx.x/xx)
<b>Games of pair selection</b> 4.4.xxx.x/xx	Pair selection ring games (4.4.1xx.x/xx) Games asking for the girl's hand (4.4.2xx.x/xx) Pair selection parlour games (4.4.3xx.x/xx)
<b>Rhymes</b> 4.5.xxx.x/xx	Nature rhymes (4.5.1xx.x/xx) Plant rhymes (4.5.2xx.x/xx) Animal rhymes (4.5.3xx.x/xx) Rhymes for infants (4.5.4xx.x/xx) Taunts (4.5.5xx.x/xx – 4.5.6xx.x/xx) Others (4.5.7xx.x/xx) Moral songs (4.5.8xx.x/xx)
<b>Drawing lots, counting out</b> 4.6.xxx.x/xx	Drawing lots (4.6.1xx.x/xx) Counting out (4.6.2xx.x/xx)

In the 1990s László Dobszay, the creator of the type system of Hungarian traditional music and professor of the Musical Academy, received financial support for making students of the Musical Academy enter the data of the parts of the type system in the computer. When this work was finished, there was still some money left, and I could ask them to enter the data of the type system of the traditional games in the computer as well. The collection was entered in the Isis database management programme, every description with four indicators: type number, locality, county, and identification number. The identification number could be an inventory number of those data without sound recording, or the number of Academic Pyral disc in the sound archive of the Institute, or the reference of publication and the number of pages or the game.

The problem with the database management programme was that it needed plenty of time to insert between two descriptions a third one: in every single case it took more minutes for the programme to make place for the new one. This does not seem to be a great problem if you want to insert one description, but back then there was too much data to insert, and when I wanted to insert 30 descriptions, and in all the 30 cases I had to wait some more minutes (altogether more than an hour), it was very annoying. I was pleased when a colleague of mine solved the problem: he transferred the whole material into an excel file.

The type number, the location, the county and the identification number each got a column, and it was very easy to insert new data.

During the past years I developed the database significantly: instead of 4 indicators, all descriptions have 14 ones now: the type number, location, information about the location, county, primary identification number, further identification numbers, primary publication, further publications, the name of the collector, the date of collecting, the name of the informant, the date of birth of the informant, the beginning of the lyrics, the beginning of the melody, and the number of the Type System of Traditional Melodies. There are descriptions for all the 14 indicators, but generally there are 10 indicators: there is a ~ where we do not know the data (e.g., the name and the date of birth of the informant); there is a – where there are no data (e.g., the game has no melody). The localities beyond the frontier have Slovakian, Romanian, German, and Serbian names as well: these are written in the column of information about the location. Descriptions published several times are written in the column of primary and further publications, but there are also unpublished descriptions with no information written in the columns of publications, and there are games having no melodies and no lyrics (e.g., hopscotch or hobbyhorse), having nothing written in the last 3 columns. The table demonstrates a small part of a sheet, containing games with melody and lyrics. The complete file shows that the collection contained 35,434 descriptions as of 25 August 2017, but as at present there are more than 1,000 games that are not yet included in the collection and not entered in the computer, this number changes weekly.

This file is one of the most important ones in the collection, but not at all the only one. There is a list of types, showing what the type numbers mean. From that we can see that, for example, the type 4.2.115.0 contains clapping games with 4 subtypes, in the second and third subtypes there are 5 and 6 inner distributions respectively, created on the basis of lyrics. The number of types, inner and further distributions also increases because new descriptions are added into the collection: mainly new subtypes, inner and further distributions are created, but it also happens that new types are created. On 25 August 2017 the collection contained altogether 4,685 types, subtypes, inner and further distributions.

Besides this I considered making the database of informants and that of collectors also worthy. Especially the database of informants proved to be useful in certain cases, when, for example, it helped to find out the date of birth, which did not always become evident from the age of the informant. The database of the informants contains the location, the name and date of birth of the informant, the date of collection, his/her age at that time and the name of the

collector. The database of the collectors contains the name of the collector, the location, and the date of collecting.

In 2016 I began to compile a volume of traditional games of Germans living in Hungary with the help of a colleague speaking excellent German. In the course of this work it came to light that German traditional games can be easily systematised according to the system created on the basis of Hungarian traditional games. I had suspected it earlier, since the majority of traditional games are known internationally: there are no people the children of which traditionally did not play tag games, hide-and-seek games, did not tell rhymes about natural phenomena and animals, so it is possible to enumerate all type groups. This was verified in the course of compiling the volume of German traditional games.

The system created and working for more than 20 years could be usable for foreign researchers as well. For this it is necessary to translate it, for example, into English. First I thought about translating the list of types, but I realised that the translation “unpaired game” or “pure tag game” does not make their meaning quite clear, especially if neither the translator nor the foreign researcher is English.

Finally, I came to the conclusion that it was necessary to write down how unpaired games, pure tag games and all the others are played. I completed the recording of the type system of Hungarian traditional games. In this all blocks, type groups, types, subtypes, inner and further distributions are written down: how these are played, and why they are where they are. At the end of every distribution there is a table showing territorial division: how much data is found in the type/subtype/inner distribution / further distribution and from where. In addition to this, the significant variants of lyrics, and, if there are melodies, the significant variants of those are also written down. In 2023 the text, transcriptions of melodies and necessary drawings were ready, the Hungarian variant was completed and, with a positive opinion of a proofreader, it was given to a publisher.

I planned to translate it into English, but my English is not good enough for that. I made a variant for translation. There are many things in the Hungarian variant which would be left out: the territorial division, transcriptions and Hungarian lyrics are not necessary in the English translation. The subtypes, inner and further distributions created on the basis of lyrics or melodies were also left out, only a mention was made that they exist in the Hungarian type system. Other peoples' lyrics and melodies are evidently different, so these are not worth the trouble of translating.

Unfortunately, the type system was not translated by anyone speaking English as the mother tongue or speaking better English than me. The Hungarian text for translation is ready, and the drawings in the Hungarian variant can be used; hopefully there will be someone to translate it into English.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Without the demand of completeness: Borsai 1980, 1981, 1984; Borsai et al. 1954; Borsai & Haider & Kovács 1976, 1977; Borsai & Hajdu & Igaz 1980; Borsai & Kovács 1976.

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## DISCUSSION

# THE ESTONIAN FOLKLORE ARCHIVES AS A KNOWLEDGE HUB

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**Abstract:** The article focuses on matters both in Estonia and abroad that have influenced the establishment of the folklore archives in Estonia, ideological trends within the work of the archives, material coverage, and the development of the archives from an institution preserving collections into a research institution.

**Keywords:** Estonian Folklore Archives, disciplinary history, folklore archives, folklore collections, folkloric texts

The 90th anniversary of the Estonian Folklore Archives (EFA) once again brings to mind national romantic ideas and views of the spiritual awakening of eighteenth-century Europe. The forming of national identity is a powerful force that is always accompanied by the intellectuals' endeavour to treasure their nation's past and, by valuing its culture, helping to determine what their national identity really is. It is noteworthy that Herbert Tampere (1909–1975) considered it necessary to introduce Enlightenment era theorist Johann Gottfried Herder's (1744–1803) opinions about folklore in his speeches at the Estonian Folklore Archives in the climate of World War II, and at the Tallinn Conservatoire<sup>1</sup> in his lecture cycle "Research Methods and Problems of Musical Ethnology" in 1946–1947. Herbert Tampere's speeches for the 30th and 40th anniversaries of the EFA have been published, helping us understand the Archive's role and capacity as a knowledge hub from the second half of the twentieth century onward.

In nineteenth-century Estonia, folklore collections were owned by both scholars and amateurs and mainly served the interests of their owners. Tampere estimated that none of these collections was ever large enough to offer a satisfactory overview of all types of folklore, or to represent every region of Estonia. In

fact, what exactly to collect seems to be the main issue within folkloristics. The general term *vanavara* (old treasures, material heritage) was considered suitable by F. R. Kreutzwald, the compiler of the national epic *Kalevipoeg* (Kalev's Son). For a more systematic collection, mentors were needed who were found from both near and far: Jakob Hurt (1839–1906) in Estonia, Krišjānis Barons (1835–1923) in Latvia and Kaarle Krohn (1863–1933) in Finland.

In the last decade of the nineteenth century, Jakob Hurt, the main organiser of the Estonian folklore collection, gave a speech about the collection of old treasures at the Congress of the Ancient Times Researchers in Riga. The speech did not refer to the Herderian pre-Romantic approach but focused on the history of the collected material and on its historicity as a treasure in and of itself. Hurt also emphasised that people's collective memories were a "large and living chronicle" which taught us "to know the old times". Some of these attitudes from two centuries ago are still relevant today. Even though we can find a place to discuss the necessity of the archive in today's economic wealth-oriented society, the main function of a memory institution is still considered to be conservation of the past.

In 1891, Jakob Hurt notified Kaarle Krohn that he had created an organisation system for the folklore items (49 volumes) that had been sent to him thus far. He had organised the items topographically by parish and format. Items received from the same correspondent in one year were placed together. These principles of assembly are still valid today. What has turned out to be even more important, however, are Hurt's collection principles, which shaped and guided the discipline of folklore on a wider scale. Even though he was also planning to start with a compilation of folk songs in his book *The Chronicles of the Estonian Nation*, published in 1876, he was already carried away with the idea of covering the whole of Estonian oral tradition. In *The Chronicles*, Hurt suggested five divisions: I – The Old Harp, II – The Old Wisdom, III – The Old Beliefs, IV – The Old Tales, V – The Old Customs (runo songs, proverbs, beliefs, folktales, and descriptions of customs, respectively) (Hurt 1989: 33–34).

Hurt's appeal "Paar palvid eesti ärksamatele poegadele ja tütardele" (A Couple of Requests to Estonia's Most Active Sons and Daughters), sent from St. Petersburg in 1888, incorporates many topics under the sub-theme Old Customs and Observances, including surveys of the different phases of a man's life – birth, marriage, and funeral, folk calendar holidays, day-to-day life, folk medicine, games, professions, garments, buildings, supernatural beings, folk astronomy, meteorology, nature, many plant names with their Latin equivalents, minerals, and tools. So, what then has happened to the statement that folklore is the intangible oral **artistic** creation of a nation? It should be added that Hurt was not one of those office clerks who did not have any contact with other people;



he was rather the opposite – he knew life in the countryside well. He worked as a private teacher for the family of the nature explorer A. T. von Middendorff and was well versed in folklore collection and publishing practice. Thus, it is understandable that Hurt's 'chronicles' had to reflect the people's way of life.

In addition to Hurt it is worth mentioning the other initiator of folklore collection in the nineteenth century, Matthias Johann Eisen (1857–1934). Eisen played a remarkable role in shaping and completing the treasury of Estonian folklore. Both Hurt and Eisen had completed studies in theology, although neither let his education influence his research and collection principles. Compared to Hurt, Eisen's collection initiatives were nevertheless more inclined towards folk belief and were more motivated by his will to publish rather than his desire simply to archive the collected material. He preferred to collect such genres as riddles, folktales, proverbs, anecdotes, representations of supernatural beings and folk calendar holidays. The fact that some local folklore correspondents had sent the same texts to Hurt and Eisen was revealed in the 1960s when a workgroup was putting together an academic publication of the Estonian proverb corpus. This was a good lesson in the methodology of archive work, in the application of statistical methods in research, for example. Eisen's numerous popular editions clearly demonstrate the effect that publications had on the material that was later submitted to the archives. Eisen's collection – which was at that time used as a practical tool by the folklore students of Tartu University – remained an exemplary teaching tool for subsequent folklorists. It should also be added that folklore collection, which was known by the code EVR (Estonian Republic Folklore Collection) received a new code during the Soviet era that did not contain the name of the Estonian Republic; it was renamed E, St K, which stands for the Collection of Eisen's Scholars.

The Herderian understanding of folklore as something that is the result of an artistic creation (see Jaago 1999) is slow to recede, especially since it outlasted the Soviet era definitions of folklore, which always refer to an *oral poetic creation* or *traditional intangible artistic creation*. In fact, the everyday research material collected through Hurt's initiative was considered to belong to the research field of ethnographers during the Soviet period. Even though in the 1980s new aspects of the concept of folklore were emphasised in its international definitions, reports on customs still consider so-called classical folklore to be more valuable than anything else. The collection (125,000 pages, the result of the work of approximately 1,400 correspondents) that was handed over to the Finnish Literature Society for deposition after Hurt's death in 1907 was actually planned as a donation to the Estonian National Museum, an institution that was supposed to have both intangible and tangible material (Tampere 2009 [1957]: 212 ff). Since the EFA did not have a proper depository room,

they did not become part of the museum. The Estonian National Museum's fireproof depository, however, was well suited and so the material rests there; to this day it is called Hurt's Room or Hurt's Cellar. The very same room hosts M. J. Eisen's collection, amongst others. (At the end of summer 2017, collections were transferred to a new repository, and a folklore collecting exhibition has remained in this room.) In parallel with the development of various archives, the specifics of the institutions managing the archives evolved: the Estonian National Museum, with its tangible culture collections, became the State Ethnographic Museum of Estonia, while intangible culture was preserved at the Estonian Literary Museum. The idea of combining the two and establishing one institution, called the Estonian Culture Institute, was thoroughly discussed at the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s.

By the time the EFA was founded in 1927, Antti Aarne had already put together a tale type index in Finland (based on Hurt's collection), which remains important in international folkloristics. Hella Wuolijoki's runo song typology, which was given to the Estonian Folklore Archives as a gift in 1927, also remains usable today. A general organisation system for text copies of the entire corpus had to be created quickly. Among the research base's collections compiled 90 years ago, Hurt's collection is the most extensive one, having influenced the development of Estonian folkloristics as well as research preferences.

Herbert Tampere stated that he considered the start of Estonian folkloristics as a scientific discipline to have been in the 1920s, when Professor Walter Anderson, who had visited several folklore archives in other countries, started teaching archive work at Tartu University. Study under Anderson included the practical work of copying and organising Professor Eisen's collection. However, the 27-year-old innovative archive head Oskar Loorits had probably more influence on methodology than Professor Anderson, who followed the historic-geographic approach. The creation of organisation systems for the collected material also helped determine the general research directions for the archive workers. Card indexes were organised according to the principle that everyone did everything, and everyone developed their own personal fields of research: Herbert Tampere studied the different layers of folk music, Richard Viidalepp customs and storytelling traditions, Selma Lätt family customs, professions and the folk calendar. Gaps in previous collection activities were discovered and efforts were made to fill them on field trips. A network of local correspondents was created, collection expeditions were guided and children's participation in the collection of bogeyman tales, folk games and local lore was organised. The archives also initiated the collection of the folklore of other nationalities living in Estonia, volumes of which were organised by nationality (Russian, Latvian, German, Jewish, etc.).

The main objective of the research conducted by the archives was participation in international folkloristics – the historic-geographic method was smoothly replaced by the comparative-historical method. According to the guestbook of the Estonian Folklore Archives, over 350 people visited the archives between 1927 and 1940, mainly from Austria, Bulgaria, China, Holland, Ireland, the UK, Israel, Lithuania, Latvia, Norway, Poland, France, Sweden, Romania, Germany, Finland, Switzerland, Denmark, Czechoslovakia, Ukraine, Hungary, the USA, and Russia (Tampere 2009 [1957]: 227). The Estonian Folklore Archives declared their principles at the first folktale researcher's congress, held in Lund in 1935, which were adopted in the final session of the congress. Three principles are particularly noteworthy: 1) every nation should have one central all-inclusive folklore archive; 2) the accessibility of material has to be ensured for both national and international users; 3) copies rather than originals should be used for research purposes. Before the war, materials were exchanged internationally via typewriter copies and the archives were mainly visited by folklore specialists. The staff of the knowledge hub, which dealt with a wide range of subjects, started conducting independent research and issuing publications only at the beginning of the 1930s. Before World War II, the archives as a service institution had been oriented towards international contacts – the institution had evolved into an institute.

If there is something positive to say about World War II, it could be the fact that the collections that were saved from the war were not damaged and were returned to Tartu in the spring of 1945. Professional international relations, however, were hindered by the Iron Curtain. All archive materials were inspected by the authorities. While in Latvia and Lithuania the folklore archives retained their right to conduct research, in Estonia the institutes were transferred to Tallinn, although their research base (folklore collections) remained in Tartu. The statutes of the Literary Museum stated that the folklore department's main tasks were to collect, organise and copy folklore, assist researchers and publish folklore texts. The question of how the archive material reflected societal processes could be answered by using such ideological key phrases as class struggle, social conflict, exploitation, revolution, and opposition to religion, as preferred by the Soviet regime. All of these subjects were represented at the archives – from slave songs to reminiscences of the revolution in 1905. The archives worked in a flexible way – publications suitable for the regime were compiled following the principle of the Estonian proverb “wolves are fed and sheep are safe”. The archives did not, however, include any material related to contemporary ideology, such as dekulakisation, formation of collective farms, the accomplishments of communism, etc. Despite the fact that the inclusion of these subjects was required by the authorities, informants would have refused

to reveal what people were really saying about these subjects. The time for gathering this material through field trips and collection appeals came much later.

Herbert Tampere, who had been working at the EFA since 1928 (as head of the folklore department in 1952–1966), continued the previous work ethos following the ethnological direction of research. The future of the EFA was close to his heart until his death in 1975. Tampere recalls that “they were able to increase the number of staff in the folklore department in 1955, which is when they started taking up more extensive research projects. Many of the main issues of our folkloristics have been researched thanks to the material collection and organisation activities and the scientific publications that were prepared at that time” (Tampere 1971: 185). This was the argument, or rather even the excuse, for the folklore department not following the statutes and working on theoretical issues. Some problems had arisen regarding the collected material of the archives. In the process of recording folklore texts, for example, folklore carriers had not received sufficient attention. As a result, the need to research transmission as a vital component of the folklore process arose. According to archive records, ‘tracing’ local storytellers, singers and musicians was part of all annual collection expeditions in which direct questioning methods were used.

The old customs and observances that were recorded on Jakob Hurt’s initiative became increasingly popular among the public during the Soviet era. At that time, this knowledge was not needed so much for its artistic value or the need to be memorised, but rather it was an effort to retain the national identity and to feel united with the cultural heritage of one’s ancestors. In the 1960s the folk calendar card indexes were widely used, and the first volume of a folk calendar anthology based on the archive material was in the making. The folkloric movement gained momentum in the 1970s with the main focus being on folk music. The archives had prepared audio tapes with examples and these were introduced to museum excursion groups during their visits to the archives. Even though the archives did not have sufficient equipment or audio tapes, recording songs and tunes was still considered a priority during fieldwork.

In the second half of the twentieth century, the folklore archives found more interdisciplinary uses, for example, to determine species names as part of entomological research or find traces of ancient human activity in archaeology. Many scientists, including botanist Gustav Vilbaste, psychiatrist Ilmar Soomere and sign language researcher Liina Paales, handed their collected material over to the archives. Several artists, such as graphic artist Ott Kangilaski and composer Veljo Tormis, to name just two, have used archive materials in their creative work. The fact that folklore archive materials have been collected in the most part by amateurs has both positive and negative sides. The collection of the Estonian Students Society (1895–1917), for example, is a representative

collection of older folk songs, while there is only one detailed paper regarding the names of the constellations, written by an astronomy-educated correspondent. Tens of different diseases have been described by the same symptoms and tens of different names attributed to the same plants. On the other hand, local collectors have contributed lots of stories about their community, people, places, and events, which together make up a valuable collection of reference material in the cultural-anthropological direction of research.

In earlier times all records were written down in the impersonal mode, whereas in the 1960s, when fear of repressions receded, more writing in the first person started to appear. The change in religious worldview in the second half of the nineteenth century – when some still believed in witchcraft and magic and others did not – marked the beginning of a delicate personal data era for folklorists. Many narratives from this period contain people's real names. It is an unwritten law that folkloric texts in which people are recognisable are not introduced to the public. The cultural-anthropological direction of research, which is topical today, requires a more active communication with the individual. Even though, depending on the subject, I consider it necessary to discuss this topic with my informants, it seems to me that the current practice of confirming usage restrictions with the informant's signature inculcates a sense of danger in them and indicates that they are now responsible for the further fate of the collected material.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Today the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre.

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## NEWS IN BRIEF

### INTERPRETATION, TRUTH, AND FEELINGS: LEGENDS AND RUMORS IN CULTURE: CONFERENCE AT THE ESTONIAN LITERARY MUSEUM, TARTU, ON SEPTEMBER 18, 2023

The conference organized by the Department of Folkloristics under the heading *Interpretation, Truth, and Feelings: Legends and Rumors in Culture*, focusing on the study of modern traditions, was held at the Estonian Literary Museum in Tartu. This one-day conference was dedicated to the 65th birthday of Eda Kalmre, the most recognized expert in contemporary folklore research in Estonia.

Eda Kalmre's main area of research is legends and rumors and their functioning in society. She is equally familiar with traditional legends and contemporary folklore. Therefore, in her analyses, the knowledge of old beliefs and legends creates a bridge between the traditional world and modern people. She has analyzed the ghost story about the Lilac Lady in the modern office, the old heroic myths juxtaposed with narratives about outlaws in the recent past, similar and different stories in connection with the sinking of the Titanic and the ferry Estonia, the dynamics of fact and fiction in popular ballads or in tales about an Afghanistan soldier, as well as in stories about food fraud. Eda's excellent monograph on post-war rumors, *The Human Sausage Factory: A Study of Post-War Rumour in Tartu* (2013), is based on interviews and historical archive documents and photographs. The collection of articles, *What a Wonderful World of Legends! Articles on Rumours and Legends* (2018), includes a selection of interesting approaches. The methods used by Kalmre are characterized by adherence to three principles: the dynamics of the text and context of folkloric phenomena, the rhetoric of truth, and the reliance on the discourse of social history. She regards the legend genre as relevant today, and believes that the source of its vitality lies in its ability to change and express itself in many different forms in culture.

The conference presentations were made by researchers whose topics were related to the aspects of folk culture of interest to Eda.

Semioticians Mari-Liis Madisson and Andreas Ventsel (University of Tartu) addressed the media panic in their short lecture titled "Who is afraid of conspiracy theories?", which in the circumstances of COVID-19, as well as energy and security crises, dealt with the fear of conspiracy that engulfed society. Using media criticism, the speakers found that conspiracy theories are not so pervasive that we could talk about mass psychosis. Based on academic studies, the picture is not so uniform, the popularity of conspiracy narratives on social media does not necessarily mean an epidemic of belief

in them. As social scientists, Madisson and Ventsel presented the descriptive term ‘phobophobia’ – a feeling that the collective fear and helplessness might have a dangerous effect on what is happening in society, as the created fear limits people’s ability to comprehend and makes them manipulable.

Liisi Laineste (Estonian Literary Museum, Tartu) and Anastasiya Fiadotava (Estonian Literary Museum, Tartu; Jagiellonian University, Kraków) analyzed the layers of political humor in their presentation “Opposite, but similar: Russian and Belarusian anti-government and pro-government political humor”. The experienced humor researchers, who in their articles observe the action mechanisms of humor in society, showed how jokes are used to comment on the views of strangers, thereby indicating opinion gaps in public space. The presentation was based on humorous reactions on polarizing conflicts (2020 protests in Belarus and 2022–... war in Ukraine), expressed in different forms. There were overlapping elements in anti-government and pro-government jokes. Pro-government humor had fewer hidden layers, but anti-government humor was more multi-layered and spread more globally.

Mare Kõiva’s (Estonian Literary Museum, Tartu) presentation titled “The Devil in Noah’s Ark (ATU 825): About variation and the search for truth” addressed the diversity of the episode of the villain entering the ship in different cultures and in different eras. The speaker, who is very familiar with the huge variety of legends, etiologies and myths, discussed the stories of the rescue of people and animals and referred to the attempts made at different times to prove the existence of Noah’s ark as a historical fact. At least 18 versions of the story of the devil entering the ship are known in Estonia. The tales have unraveled and interwoven with other motifs – keeping the ship’s construction a secret, the devil’s resourcefulness to enter the ship (e.g., by turning into a mouse), with various insect, fish, bird and animal etiologies unraveling around them. It became evident that in the Estonian tradition, the story of Noah’s ark and the flood myth are expressed in various types of folklore – in riddles, proverbs, legends, spells, humorous stories and in modern forms of folklore.

Alexander Panchenko (University of Tartu) studied a singular demonological legend in his presentation titled “The devil baby legend: Between ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’”. Panchenko, who is a long-term cooperation partner of Tartu folklorists in the field of contemporary legend studies, had already discovered the article “A devil is born (contemporary legend)” by the Russian ethnologist Vasili Smirnov, published in 1923. Smirnov relied on a specific alleged case of the birth of a devil baby but showed the background of the story in European folk tales and legends about the birth of Antichrist. The story about the devil baby circulated internationally already at the beginning of the 20th century and was related to medieval and early modern tales about blasphemy and contextualized in religious polemics of various kinds. The legend is presented in more entertaining contexts in modern times, and so it becomes possible to find both similarities and differences between traditional and contemporary legends.



On the basis of written stories sent to the Estonian Folklore Archives of the Estonian Literary Museum, Astrid Tuisk (Estonian Literary Museum, Tartu) addressed the question of how films shown in cinemas in the middle of the 20th century influenced children at that time and how watching films and games inspired by them were reflected in their later memories. Part of the title of the presentation was a quote from a reminiscent story, “An utterly brighter world’: Foreign films in the childhood memories of those who grew up in the 1950s”. The 1950s appeared to be an unusual time in the Soviet reality, as the so-called trophy films from the United States, Germany and other countries, released in the 1930s, were shown. They were totally different from Soviet films – in terms of topics, portrayal, ideals, characters, and sound. From the films, young viewers found inspiration for their games. Acting in this manner, they both consumed adult culture and shaped their own subculture.

Mare Kalda

## **TRADITIONAL CULTURE THROUGH A CAMERA LENS 2**

The second Estonian-Udmurt webinar titled “Traditional culture through a camera lens” was conducted in cooperation between the folklorists and anthropologists of the Estonian Literary Museum and Udmurt research centres over Microsoft Teams on 21–22 September 2023. The participants continued discussions about visual recording from the perspective of folkloristics and ethnology. Whereas the first seminar brought to the audience, in the course of two days, Udmurt films, video clips and video blogs, the second one started with the introduction of Estonian production; in addition, films about the Udmurt and Forest Nenets customs were also presented. The second seminar focused on small islands with their cultural richness, unique remote areas, viability of customs, sacral rituals, calendric customs, and spokespersons and other interesting personalities of local communities.

Recording of the visual side brings to the fore different aspects of culture, and we gain further information about what is happening around us. Since the cheap video cameras and recording mobile phones were taken into use, the number of recordings has increased considerably and possibilities for producing documentaries have widened, which has opened up new perspectives for research, yet has had rather little influence on folkloristic montages. The reason might be that visual opportunities imply special skills and different ways of visualisation, the existence of a message, yet a scientific system oriented to a specific type of articles is also a possible influencer. Filming helps folklorists to fulfil their tasks and also seek “intimate knowledge: knowledge behind the scenes, behind the masks and roles, behind the generalities and abstractions” (Cohen & Rapport 1995: 9).

Folkloric recordings are important in terms of giving a voice to vernacular views and the observation of the behavioural side, symbolic signs and rituals, which result in an in-depth view of local life. Due to the multiplicity of phenomena and processes worth recording – the core of culture, intersubjective circumstances, dynamics of cultures (different cultures evolving in the same place), smaller and endangered cultural regions and groupings –, it is appropriate to discuss the selection principles of the filmed events, the ideal relation between the objective and non-judgemental documentation and author’s views, and whether it is ever possible to gain objectivity. The roundtable discussion highlighted some issues that have repeatedly been in the centre of attention during decades, yet their revision under new circumstances seems to be relevant – for example, whether and how good a script an anthropological film needs and what is the difference between an anthropological film and a film based on fieldwork. Discussions on both days also focused on involving the film-maker in a ritual activity as a temporary member of the community, which would somehow allow them to be part of intimate events. However, there are situations in which gender issues restrict access (men’s participation in women’s inner circle activities and vice versa, which could be an unsurpassable obstacle,

for instance, in the case of religious events). The issues discussed included rules in sacred places and for filming rituals, access to events prohibited to strangers, camera as a means of making one unnoticeable and justifying participation in inner-circle events, as well as issues related to the sides of life which must not be recorded.

Visual recording of Kihnu culture has a long history, starting with the documental reconstruction *Kihnu pulmad* (Kihnu wedding, 1956), led by Eduard Laugaste and completed in cooperation with the University of Tartu film laboratory. The author wanted to record, as an educational film, the chronology and plot of the traditional wedding, in which the wedding is staged and reconstructed on the basis of older descriptions, whereas the action takes place within the framework of the 1950s' everyday life. The recording creates an illusion of a real ceremony. This visual language is in contrast to Mark Soosaar's film *Kihnu naine* (Kihnu woman, 1974), which was a turning point in Estonian visual anthropology and documentary film. Mark Soosaar's films recording life on Kihnu and other small inlands are definitely gems of our culture, although the philosophical and theoretical interpretation of his work and the Kihnu series still lies ahead. The seminar participants also discussed Mark Soosaar's film *Kihnu mees* (Kihnu man, 1986), which raised acute problems and received critical reception (about ethics and other problems in filming see Rütitel 2000). The film focuses on life on Kihnu Island after the liquidation of a millionaire collective farm and its coercive merger with Pärnu collective farm at the time when sea fishing restrictions slacken, red tape thrives, and the loss of jobs causes emigration. Lack of perspective leads us to ask whether it is possible to preserve our own language and culture amid interventions and coercive changes in the way of life. These issues are topical in Estonia also today, as administrative changes occur, schools and libraries are closed down, and loss of jobs has actualised the survival of remote and less-protected areas. Soosaar's films produced during half a century show to us changes in nearly all the permanent elements: the sea, occupations, folk costumes, singing culture, physical living space (houses, streets, objects), the relationship between nature and humans, and children as the symbol of bright future. The film *Kihnu lapsed* (Kihnu children) produced in 2018 completes the series with optimistic messages. Mark Soosaar's films are characterised by a strong vision, aesthetic language, acute problems, and interesting cinematic narration, on which he also willingly shared his personal views.

The first insight into Aado Lintrop's films was given through *Maarjapäev Petseris* (Assumption Day in Pechory), completed in 2018. Lintrop has made 29 filming expeditions to Finno-Ugrians and Estonians, and he is one of the most productive film-makers-researchers. The presented film is a rare document of the renovated and restored Petseri (Pechersky) Monastery and Setos' relationship with their religious centre. During the recorded celebrations of the Feast of Dormition of the Mother of God, we can see, through the camera lens, the monastery's preparations for the holiday: making a path of flowers on the eve, followed by carrying the icon from the Church of Dormition of the Mother of God to St Michael's Church, and the procession led by a cross around the Pechersky

Monastery. The camera observes how Setos participate in the church holiday, how they meet the new archimandrite Tikhon (Georgi Shevkunov), which is followed by the Setos' festival *Perride kokkotulõk* (Family reunion, Rus. Semeinye vstrechi) in Radaja village. The film ends with visits to the fading centres of Seto culture in Petseri County: Kulye Church, graveyard, and Jatsmani school, which back in the day was an important educational centre in the neighbourhood.

The introduction to the documentary trend was followed by Eva Toulouze and Liivo Niglas's film *Jumala tegemine Pariisis* (Making of God in Paris, 2013), which records Forest Nenets reindeer breeder, poet and activist Juri Vella's (1948–2013) journey to Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris and an order given to him in his dream to return there. Vella performs a ritual with the icon bought to his wife from Notre Dame, wishing to turn the icon into God. The film is special due to Vella's visit to Notre Dame and the following ritual, in which he also involves the filmmaker Liivo Niglas.

The tandem's second film from 2013 demonstrates the common prayer *Элен вöсь* of Trans-Kama Udmurts in Kirga village, Kueda region, Perm Krai. The prayer was restored in 2008 and today Trans-Kama Udmurts from many villages gather there. The film has recorded the cooking of sacrificial food, dressing of priests and preparations for the prayer, the prayer itself and other stages of the crowded ritual connecting generations. This is a documentary striving for ethnographic precision.

Anastasia Shumilova introduced some films made by the Izhevsk video school Tamga and by the Udmurt clip design lab PUS. These are modern innovative short films from 2022 and 2023, emphasising the aesthetic side. Novel techniques are used to introduce tradition – customs, folk costumes, jewellery, singing culture – and the target group of the films is the city youth.

Mare Kõiva and Andres Kuperjanov spoke about how folklorists used the simple VHS-camera in everyday fieldwork in the 1980s and at the beginning of the 1990s and what kind of films they produced. Despite poor technical opportunities, the camera enabled folklorists to speed-record both the current situation of older customs and new phenomena, including new-religion practices. The first of the amateur films – *Sügisloits* (Autumn spell) – introduces the main features of the solstice ritual performed by the followers of *maausk* (faith of the earth) and the well-known healer Vigala Sass, which took place in the ritual place in Triigi village, Kaarma municipality, Saaremaa Island.

*Kadripäev Tartus* (St Catherine's Day in Tartu) follows the preparations of sixth-grade girls for St Catherine's Day, their visits to homes in different districts of the city and their dialogues with the members of the households. In November darkness of the then closed city with a military airfield, the mummers and their singing are accompanied by the noise of military aircraft. Both films were produced by Mare Kõiva and Paul Vesik.

The film *Täheonu* (Uncle Starman, 1997) by Andres Kuperjanov and Mare Kõiva follows the everyday life of Hugo Raudsaar, whose 100th birth anniversary was in January 2023. The legendary populariser of astronomy, who carried out astronomical

observations, continued this work in Petzval Tower in Tartu even 20 years after the Tartu Observatory had moved to Tõravere. As an enthusiastic populariser, he built a village observatory next to his home farm in Võru County and a model of the universe in its vicinity.

Based on films and clips of different genres, problems were studied both from the inside and outside. The filming and observation experience of the webinar participants opened up and explained nuances of the cultural context, helped to find answers to controversial issues and/or identify new ones, illustrate the current state of heritage culture, and determine the limits and resources of visual recording.

It is planned to publish the discussions of roundtables and overviews of the history of anthropological films as articles.

The seminar was prepared by Nikolai Anisimov and Mare Kõiva, with the help of Sergey Troitskiy, Maris Kuperjanov, Diana Kahre, Asta Niinemets, and Andres Kuperjanov. The webinar was supported by the Cultural Endowment of Estonia and the research project of the Estonian Literary Museum, *Folkloori narratiivsed ja uskumuslikud aspektid* (Narrative and religious aspects of folklore).

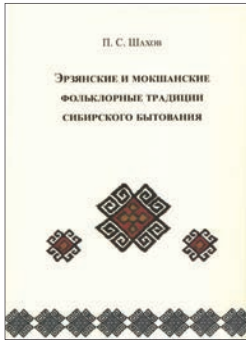
Mare Kõiva

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# BOOK REVIEW

## SIBERIAN MORDVIN FOLKLORE TRADITIONS



**Pavel S. Shakhov. *Erzianskie i mokshanskije fol'klornye traditsii sibirskogo bytovaniia*. Novosibirsk: Akademizdat-sentr RAN, 2020. 388 pp. In Russian.**

In recent years, there has been an increase in the studies of traditional settler cultures in Siberia, particularly those carried out by researchers from Novosibirsk, both due to Novosibirsk's geographical closeness to native Siberian settlements and the work done by ethnic music researchers from the Novosibirsk State Conservatory. P. S. Shakhov's monograph *Erzianskie i mokshanskije fol'klornye traditsii sibirskogo bytovaniia* (Erzya

and Moksha Folklore Traditions in Siberia: Weddings, Calendar, Round Dance Songs) on Siberian Mordvin folklore is an interesting new study done in this particular field.

Moksha Mordvins and Erzya Mordvins live dispersedly, and a major part of their population (around 66,000 people) reside in Siberia. Unlike the 'mainland' tradition described extensively in the works by T. M. Ananicheva, N. I. Boyarkin, L. B. Boyarkina, L. N. Shamova, and others, Siberian Mordvin musical folklore remained understudied for a long time, and only in the 1970s–1980s the first audio recordings were made. To this day, only some of these materials are widely available. Currently, organized accumulation and description of Siberian Mordvin musical folklore is carried out by P. S. Shakhov and his colleagues from the Novosibirsk State Conservatory; research trips are taken on a regular basis (starting in 2007). The great significance of this research is determined by the fact that traditional rituals are gradually fading away, audio and video records of authentic folklore remain unavailable, and the Mordvins themselves are actively striving to resurrect their native culture.

P. S. Shakhov's monograph is the first major work in ethnic music studies dedicated to Mordvin settler folklore in Siberia. He offers a profound analysis of Siberian Mordvin wedding rites, folk calendar, and round dance songs. Each folklore system is described in one of the three chapters of the book. I shall now review each of them.

In the first chapter, Shakhov analyzes the Siberian Mordvin weddings from the ritual-ethnographic and musical-folkloristic points of view. Using various records, he describes two local variations of Erzya weddings: the Altai one and the Kemerovo one. Shakhov employs the structural-typological method to define the genre composition of the Erzya weddings and to determine the musical styles of lamentations and ritual songs. In this chapter, he offers a detailed description of various stages of traditional

weddings and their musical elements, namely songs, lamentations, ditties, and prayers. He shows that the Altai variant and the Kemerovo variant are similar; on the other hand, the Siberian variations of the Mordvin weddings and the 'mainland' ones differ significantly in rites related to the groom's place. Shakhov defines the Siberian Erzya wedding type as the song type with a prominent communicative function.

Shakhov's description of the Moksha wedding, which is not as fully preserved as the Erzya one, is essentially a reconstruction based on available materials, including those collected by Shakhov himself. The Altai-based Moksha wedding involves two ritual phases caused by the bride's move to the groom's house after the engagement and once again on the wedding day. Shakhov's study shows the importance of erotic symbolism, the use of profanities, as well as a large number of rebuking songs and obscene ditties. Musically, Moksha weddings differ from Erzya weddings as well. Two Moksha polytextual melodies are shown to be related to two types of ritual transition (territorial and initiatory).

Shakhov also compares the Siberian Erzya variations of weddings with traditional weddings in the Bolshebereznykovsky District (Republic of Mordovia), Buinsky County of the Simbirsk Province (now known as the Ibresinsky District, Chuvash Republic), and the Klyavlin'sky District of the Kuybyshev (now Samara) Oblast.

In the second chapter, we find a description of the Siberian Mordvin folk calendar based on extensive oral folklore materials. Shakhov analyzes various rituals of the winter-spring and summer-fall cycles at least partially related to the Eastern Orthodox church calendar. By comparing the publicly available materials and his own records, Shakhov concludes that calendar folklore is primarily represented by Christmas and Koliada carols, Shrovetide songs, spring 'fasting' songs with erotic motifs (*Pozyara!*), Russian round dance songs and lyrical songs, Eastern Orthodox troparia, spell songs, and various verbal formulae. Shakhov analyzes the musical styles of calendar songs and distinguishes their typical rhythmic and melodic structures, types of lyrics and intonation. He shows that Siberian Mordvin musical folklore is generally similar to 'mainland' tradition in its ethnographic, musical, and folklore aspects.

The third chapter is dedicated to round dance songs analyzed in the context of the autochthonous musical-ethnographic traditions. Here, Shakhov describes the round dance songs recorded in Siberian Mordvin communities and studies the 'walking' and 'dancing' types of these songs. He shows that hybrid types of round dance songs are typical both for the Siberian Mordvin tradition and the 'mainland' one, characterized by their borrowed melodies and syllable-rhythmic formulae, as well as two-part verse structures with contrasting opening parts and refrains.

I shall now summarize Shakhov's main conclusions. The uniqueness of each Siberian Mordvin sub-ethnic group is represented particularly strongly by wedding rituals. Calendar and seasonal folklore-ethnographic systems are generally similar in Erzya and Moksha cultures. Siberian Mordvin round dance songs preserve the typological traits of the autochthonous tradition.

Shakhov's monograph comprises 33.8 printer sheets, more than half of which is taken up by appendixes including lyrics, translations, notations, photographs, tables, and diagrams with the results of Shakhov's analysis. For music researchers, notations are particularly valuable. These include 81 samples with commentary recorded by P. S. Shakhov, and 24 samples by M. A. Lobanov (2008), 105 samples in total. Such a number of samples may be considered representative enough for a disappearing tradition. Notations, transcribed folklore texts, oral stories of festivals, rituals, and everyday life, and photographs serve as highly important documents recording the native Siberian Mordvin culture.

Footnotes containing transcriptions of informant commentary, Shakhov's own commentary on ethnography and folklore, and parallels found in 'mainland' sources further contribute to the monograph's informational denseness. Footnotes explain and deepen the main text. Shakhov's profound understanding of Mordvin ethnography and folklore and great interest in Mordvin culture ensure that he is trusted and respected by Mordvins themselves, enough for them to share their culturally significant knowledge.

I must also add that this monograph is a successful experiment in describing Siberian settler culture, which may be useful for further research of other cultures. To this day, many folklore systems of Siberian re-settler nations remain understudied, including several Finno-Ugric ones (Udmurts, Mari, Karelians, Finns, Komi-Zyryans, Estonians, Veps).

One may see certain similarities between Mordvin rituals and the culture of the indigenous Siberian Finno-Ugric peoples. Birchbark masks, 'horse cakes', the rite of seeing the relatives out with burning brooms, the counting of ditties with marks on the ceiling resemble the Khanty and Mansi Bear-Feast. During this ritual, actors put on birchbark masks and bake deer-shaped bread for symbolic sacrifice; at the end of the festival, a 'fox' with a tail made of burning straw scares the bear away, and each song, performance or dance is marked on a special counting stick. This proves the archaic nature of acts included in various rituals.

This monograph may be of interest to ethnic music researchers, ethnographers, and philologists; it may also be used in comparative studies. I also believe that such a profound and reliable source of materials on Siberian Mordvin folklore, ethnography, and music will attract the interest of the Siberian Mordvin diaspora and assist the resurrection of Siberian Mordvin folk traditions.

It is regrettable that Shakhov's monograph does not include an audio appendix similar to those commonly found in major folklore studies. However, certain materials, including audio records and photographs, may be found in the electronic resource titled *Mordovskie fol'klorno-etnograficheskie traditsii sibirskogo bytovaniia* (Siberian Mordvin Folklore and Ethnographic Traditions) (see <https://www.philology.nsc.ru/resources/mordva.php>), via the QR code offered at the back of the title page.

Galina Soldatova



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