

Front cover: The Hill of Crosses near Šiauliai, Lithuania.

Back cover: Morning in Pabitora Wildlife Sanctuary/ In a Ganesha temple near North Lakhimpur, Assam, North-East India.

Photos by Ülo Valk

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## Dear Friends in Folklore Research,

The successful 15<sup>th</sup> Congress of the ISFNR held in Athens from June 21-27, 2009 is still fresh in our memories. Athens as an ancient centre of European civilisation, guarded by the goddess of wisdom and brave endeavours, was an excellent venue to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ISFNR and the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Hellenic Folklore Society. Aikaterini Polymerou-Kamilaki, Marilena Papachristophorou and Evangelos Karamanes together with their hospitable team did a marvellous job in making this excellent meeting happen and deserve the deepest gratitude from all participants. The topic of the congress, "Narratives across Space and Time: Transmissions and Adaptations", linked continents, people, research centres, schools and disciplines. It also transcended time periods by looking back into the history of folk narrative and its research, discussing its contemporary forms, media and practices and by addressing the future of our discipline. Guided by an optimistic spirit, a sense of belonging together and by the joy of sharing knowledge, the meeting in Athens was further proof that "our discipline and research are of crucial and worldwide relevance," as the new ISFNR president Ulrich Marzolph writes in this newsletter.

We are happy to bring to you impressions and memories of the 15<sup>th</sup> congress recorded by several young folklorists born after 1964 when the ISFNR held one of its early congresses in Athens and approved the statutes of the society. Their observations are even more illuminating when compared with the reminiscences of past meetings by some long-term ISFNR members and experienced folk narrative scholars. Carried out before the meeting in Athens, these email interviews provided a valuable addition to the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary exhibition organised as part of the congress program and continue recollections about the society's history started in the previous issue of the newsletter. Vilmos Voigt

(Hungary) jokingly called his response "the secret history of the ISFNR" and though he makes no secret about it and is happy to share it with the rest of us, his reminiscences as well as those of Sue B. Bottigheimer (USA), Rolf W. Brednich (Germany), Toshio Ozawa (Japan) and Erika Taube (Germany) vividly illustrate the crucial role of informal communications and personal contacts in shaping the society as well as changes in organisational culture during the past decades. The latter are obvious when we compare today's membership application procedure with the way in which Rolf W. Brednich became a member of the ISFNR in 1964 in Athens: after he had presented his first paper, Wayland D. Hand took him to the steps of the Academy of Athens, took a picture of him and said: "Now, you are one of ours and you can call me Wayland". Twenty five years later, during the 9<sup>th</sup> ISFNR congress in Budapest, as Sue Bottigheimer tells us, the gender balance in ISFNR governance was shifted on the initiative of a group of female members who talked the men into nominating women for executive committee members. By reaching beyond political dividing lines, informal networks of individual members were able to broaden the society's scope and strengthen the disciplinary identity of those scholars who lived and worked in more closed societies:

Erika Taube writes that at the time of the DDR, her academic contacts were mainly with the East and that she learnt about the ISFNR in Leningrad from Kirill Vasilyevich Chistov, the former vice-president representing Europe; upon being elected the vice-president representing Asia, Toshio Ozawa took the initiative in involving colleagues from China. In the previous issue of the newsletter, Jawaharlal Handoo and Barbro Klein reminisced about crossing borders of a different kind by talking about struggles that took place when holding the first ISFNR meeting outside Europe. Knowledge and experiences of this kind go unrecorded and unnoticed, remain secret and invisible, unless cast into narratives.

Vilmos Voigt and Arvo Krikmann (Estonia), two honorary members of the ISFNR, recently celebrated their 70<sup>th</sup> birthdays. The ISFNR Newsletter conveys to them congratulations and wishes of happiness from both our readers and editors. The prolific work of Arvo Krikmann and Vilmos Voigt has already become a part of the history of world folkloristics, which is also discussed in this issue of the newsletter by Outi Lehtipuro and Jacqueline S. Thursby. Both articles are based on papers delivered in Athens and provide accounts of past decades' trends in folk narrative scholarship from the perspective



Ülo Valk and Elo-Hanna Seljamaa at the closing ceremony of the 15th ISFNR Congress in Athens.  
Photo by Merili Metsvahi.

of Finland and the USA, countries that are of historical importance in shaping the field and inspiring scholars from various parts of the world.

It is with great sadness that we bring to our readers the obituary of another important builder of bridges across continents and countries, that of Ezekiel Alembi, the Vice-President of ISFNR representing Africa who was still with us at the congress in Athens. Many of us also remember the ISNR interim conference organised by him in Nairobi in 2000 as well as his thoughtful plenary lecture dedicated to the children of his country and delivered at the ISFNR interim conference in St Rosa, Argentina in 2007. On the first day of March, we received the sad news about the passing of Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson (1927-2010), the first Icelandic Professor of folkloristics and a long time member of the ISFNR. Both of these great scholars will be missed deeply by countless members of the society and colleagues in the field of folklore studies.

Since the last newsletter published in June 2009 before the Athens congress, the following members have joined the ISFNR: Petja Aarnipuu (Finland), Madis Arukask (Estonia), Alf Arvidsson (Sweden), Anil Baro (India), Willem de Blécourt (UK), Gejin Chao (China), Arumugam Dhananjayan (In-

dia), Vayalkara Jayarajan (India), Dilip Kumar Kalita (India), Emmanouela Katrinaki (Greece), Kaarina Koski (Finland), Anna Lydaki (Greece), Mrinal Medhi (India), Júlíana Thora Magnúsdóttir (Iceland), Yvonne J. Milspaw (USA), Rūta Muktupāvela (Latvia), Stelios Pelasgos Katsaounis (Greece), Nina Stekolnikova (Russia), Rosa Thorsteinsdóttir (Iceland) and Siiri Tomingas-Joandi (Estonia). Christa Tuczay from Austria renewed her membership – something we recommend to everybody who has lost contact with the society and not paid the membership dues for a considerable time. Our new treasurer Marilena Papachristophorou is currently working on making payment of membership dues possible via online banking.

Although regular communication over the Internet has become essential for the daily activities of the ISFNR and its members, we are all looking forward to the next face-to-face meetings. In May 2010 the ISFNR Belief Narratives Network, established at the last congress in Athens, will hold a conference called “Interpreting Belief Narrative” in St Petersburg, Russia. In June 2010 the ISFNR Committee for Charms, Charmers and Charming will organise a conference in Bucharest, Romania. Please also note the call for papers for the next ISFNR interim conference to be held in north-east India in February 2011.

Assam, Meghalaya and the neighbouring states of North East India with their great ethnic diversity are a wonderful destination for international folklorists. The region is also of great importance for Indian scholarship because of the strong academic traditions, which in 1972 led to the establishment of the oldest department of folklore research in India at the University of Gauhati. In 2013 ISFNR will hold its 16<sup>th</sup> congress in Vilnius, Lithuania – another country with strong and lively academic traditions. The current newsletter brings to you memories of a recent international conference on Baltic worldview held near Vilnius.

We send our greetings and best wishes to all the ISFNR members whose active participation in the life of the society has made our discipline stronger. We thank the authors of this issue, our language editor Daniel E. Allen and artist Marat Viires. We wish that the role of the ISFNR in developing international folkloristics will grow and that the society will continue to build bridges between continents, people, research traditions and historical periods. It has been a great pleasure and an immensely enriching experience to work together with our readers in order to move towards these goals.

Elo-Hanna Seljamaa & Ülo Valk, editors

## Celebrating the Growing Discipline of Folk Narrative Research

by Ulrich Marzolph, *Enzyklopädie des Märchens*, Göttingen, Germany

President of the ISFNR

The fifteenth congress of the International Society for Folk Narrative Research, organized in Athens in June 2009, proved beyond any doubt – if such a proof were needed – that our discipline and research are of crucial and world-wide relevance. The Society was conceived in 1959 at the first conference of folk narrative researchers

held in Kiel and Copenhagen. Against the backdrop of international hostility, war and destruction, this new scholarly Society aimed to encourage contact among researchers sharing an interest in the study of folk narrative, regardless of the researchers' regional or national origin as well as their special focus. Long before the world started talk-

ing about globalization, the founding mothers and fathers of the ISFNR recognized the potential of folk narrative as a meaningful transnational mode of expression. Narratives help humanity to assess and shape the world we live in. Folk narrative research, in consequence, contributes to understanding human heritage and relations.

Most of the colleagues that participated in the constitutive meeting of the ISFNR in Antwerp in 1962 have passed away, and we cherish the recollections of the few who are still with us today as they remind us of the historical roots of our Society. Over a period of 50 years, our Society, like the discipline it represents, has been continuously growing both in terms of membership – at present some 700 colleagues from about 80 different countries are enlisted – and in terms of areas of interest. A century after Antti Aarne proposed the classification system for folktales in the Indo-European tradition – in Max Lüthi's words the "Linné of fairy-tale research" – the task of documenting and classifying traditional folktales is the backbone of our discipline. At the same time, our research interests have widened in scope and kind.

Folk narrative research originally focussed on a limited number of traditional genres such as myth, religious and historical legend, folktales and fairy tales, or jokes and anecdotes as represented in oral tradition and literature; and it aimed at documenting, preserving, and studying humanity's narrative heritage. Today, folk narrative research also deals with contemporary legends, everyday narratives, folklore as a source of inspiration for literature and the arts, and the fairly recent phenomenon of the Internet as a platform for the propagation and dissemination of all kinds of narratives. In other words, the current state of our discipline is living proof of its global relevance. To put it more simply, human communication essentially consists of narratives, and folk narrative research studies a key component of human competence and performance. As such, our field faces a tremendous responsibility as our established research methods are challenged and transformed in a manner similar to the way old tales are adapted to address new problems and situations.

Even though folk narrative research is concerned with a pivotal constitu-

ent of human communication, the vanishing of tradition has also been part and parcel of our discipline from its very origins. Yet lamenting the fragile and precarious state of our discipline does hardly do justice to the dozens of regional and national folktale archives, or to the hundreds of colleagues teaching and researching in a variety of disciplines, from folklore and comparative literature to sociology, history, and psychology, or to the thousands of enthusiastic storytellers and artists presenting folk narratives to their audience. Large research and publishing institutions such as the German *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* and a number of shorter folklore encyclopedias in English strive to preserve knowledge of the present state of our discipline in an authoritative manner. Important as they are as reference works and tools for teaching the field of folk narrative to the following generations, these printed texts cannot possibly encompass the vibrancy of a discipline such as ours. Much as any other publication, even these comprehensive assessments of our discipline in print are but a step towards opening up new areas of research, towards developing new approaches, and towards questioning our assumptions. Furthermore, reacting to the changing exigencies of the modern world, it is imperative to strengthen online communication within the Society. While the ISFNR participates in the H-Net Discussion List on Folklore and Ethnology (H-FOLK@H-NET.MSU.EDU), we need to do more to offer a platform for our members to exchange news and opinions beyond the regular meetings.

Our former president, Ülo Valk from Tartu, Estonia, invested considerable energy into the most laudable effort of founding the ISFNR Newsletter in 2006 and publishing it in annual instalments ever since. Considering the limited funds the Society commands, it will prove difficult to continue the newsletter in its printed form. Instead, fully recognizing the value of



Ulrich Marzolph is a leading scholar of narrative traditions of Iran and the Arab world.

Photo: private collection.

the newsletter, we plan to continue producing it on the Society's online platform that has now been permanently installed at <http://www.isfnr.org>. While our secretary will make every effort to keep the news section up-to-date, all members are invited to share with us information on recent and upcoming events as well as important publications in the field to be posted on the website. Besides containing basic information about the ISFNR, our website also links to our membership roster and presents up-to-date information about the activities of the various committees. As the website showcases the current state of the ISFNR, any suggestions for making the Society more visible on an international scale are most welcome.

## The 15<sup>th</sup> Congress of the ISFNR "Narratives Across Time and Space" in Athens, Greece, June 21-27, 2009

### Minutes taken at the General Assembly of the ISFNR on June 26, 2009 Athens, Greece

Prepared by Elo-Hanna Seljamaa (Tartu, Estonia)



Marilena Papachristophorou, one of the main organisers of the 2009 ISFNR Congress in Athens.  
*Photo by Ülo Valk.*

The assembly was attended by 87 members of the ISFNR out of 668 members. The meeting was led by Ülo Valk (Tartu, Estonia).

#### Agenda:

Report by Secretary  
Report by Treasurer  
Changes in Payment of Membership Fee  
Reports by Chairs of Committees  
Nomination of Honorary Members  
Invitations for the next congress and

interim conference

Elections of the President, 2 Vice-Presidents, 1 member of the Executive Committee, Treasurer

#### 1. Report by Secretary

Elo-Hanna Seljamaa (Tartu, Estonia) gave an overview of the society's initiatives between 2005 and 2009: new logo, new web site, updating the membership list and contact addresses, ISFNR Newsletter.

#### 2. Report by Treasurer

Ulf Palmenfelt (Visby, Sweden) presented a report on society's financial situation.

#### 3. Changes in payment of membership fee

The General Assembly (GA) decided not to raise the membership fee or the frequency of collecting dues, but to postpone decisions concerning the membership fee.

#### 4. Reports by chairpersons of committees

Chairpersons of special committees presented reports on the activities of their committees:

Chair of the Membership Committee Cristina Bacchilega (Hawaii, USA) presented the names of new members accepted between 2005-2009 (60) and those accepted during the meeting in Athens (10).

Ulrich Marzolph (Göttingen, Germany) presented a report on the Ethics Committee.

The GA supported the establishment of three new committees:

Committee for "Folktales and the Internet" initiated after the 2005 Tartu Congress; chairperson Theo Meder (Amsterdam, The Netherlands).

Committee on Charms, Charmers, and Charming; chairperson Jonathan Roper (Tartu, Estonia).

Belief Narratives Network initiated in Athens; chairperson Willem de Blécourt (East Sussex, UK).

#### 5. Nomination of Honorary Members

The GA elected the following new honorary members of the ISFNR:

Mehri Bagheri (Tabriz, Iran)  
 Martha Blache (Buenos Aires, Argentina)  
 Rolf W. Brednich (Göttingen, Germany)  
 Manuel Dannemann (Santiago, Chile)  
 Robin Gwyndaf (Cardiff, UK)  
 Galit Hasan-Rokem (Jerusalem, Israel)  
 Stephanos Imellos (Athens, Greece)  
 Annikki Kaivola-Bregenhøj (Kerava, Finland)  
 Michael Meraklis (Athens, Greece)  
 Éva Pócs (Budapest, Hungary)

## 6. Invitations for the next congress and interim conference

Lina Būgienė and Jūratė Šlekonytė from the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore presented the invitation to hold the 16<sup>th</sup> Congress of the ISFNR in Vilnius, Lithuania, in 2013. The GA voted for this proposal.

Kishore Bhattacharjee (Gauhati University, India) and Desmond Khar-mawphlang (Northeastern Hill University, India) presented the invitation to hold the next interim conference in 2011 in North-East India in Guwahati and Shillong.

The invitation was accepted by the General Assembly.

## 7. Elections of the President, Treasurer, Vice-President for Latin America, member of the Executive Committee, Vice-President

The GA elected an Election Committee consisting of Galit Hasan-Rokem (Jerusalem, Israel), Carl Lindahl (Houston, USA), and Robin Gwyndaf (Cardiff, UK).

The GA elected Ulrich Marzolph (Göttingen, Germany) as the new President of the society.

Marilena Papachristophoru (Athens, Greece) was elected as the new Treasurer.

Maria Inés Palleiro (Buenos Aires, Argentina) was elected as the new Vice-President representing Latin America. Ülo Valk (Tartu, Estonia) was elected as Vice-President.

Sadhana Naithani (New Delhi, India) was elected as a new member of the Executive Committee.



Glimpse of the 2009 General Assembly in Athens.

Photo by Risto Järv.



L-R: Elo-Hanna Seljamaa (Estonia), Ezekiel Alembi (Kenya), Mehri Bagheri (Iran), Sabine Wienker-Piepho (Germany), and Lauri Harvilahti (Finland) in Athens.

Photo by Ülo Valk.



At the closing ceremony of the Congress. R-L: Sandis Laime (Latvia) and Desmond Khar-mawphlang (India), secretary of the ISFNR 2011 interim conference, in conversation.

Photo by Merili Metsvahi.

## Across Time and Space: Athens 2009

by Piret Paal, University of Helsinki, Finland

The 15<sup>th</sup> ISFNR conference was organised in Athens, Greece. For me it was the second ISFNR conference after the one held in Tartu, Estonia. However, this was the first time for me as a full member of the society and therefore unforgettable.

After reading the reminiscences of senior members of the ISFNR from the last ISFNR Newsletter, I, as a first-timer, found it particularly difficult to recall the conference held in Athens. Was it different from other conferences, were there any new research trends introduced, was it better than the ones before or perhaps somewhat worse, and were the conference participants satisfied? These questions I leave for other, more experienced, members of ISFNR to discuss. The following recollection of memories contains, above all, personal impressions gained in Athens: bits and pieces that become perhaps more significant as time passes and more experiences are gained.

Apparently, many things happen before a conference of this scale takes place. It makes me think of the organisers, people who from day to day try to figure out how to make a conference with hundreds of participants work. It is not only about putting together the conference program with 10 parallel running sessions, it also means organising the travel, lodging and food concerns of the participants. Many things must be decided beforehand, but multiple questions and requests also arise during the conference and need to be tackled immediately. I wonder what the feelings of the organisers are when the conference is finally over? On the one hand, it certainly requires an enormous effort from a small country, although at the same time there are also certain benefits. Above all, it is a great success and honour for a discipline. The

conference held in Tartu, for example, boosted the self-esteem of Estonian folklorists, and this factor became well evident in Athens. I suppose that never before have Estonian folklorists been represented in ISFNR conferences with more participants than our Finnish fellows. Thus, I sincerely hope that the Athens conference encourages particularly Greek *laographists* to continue with narrative studies from multiple perspectives so that in the future we shall have many talented Greek scholars influencing the field of folk narrative research.

Attending international conferences is always pleasant because of the opportunity to meet colleagues from different countries and regions. These meetings may be brief but where nevertheless filled with the warmth of past experiences. Other meetings are longer, are intensive and particularly significant, and mark the beginnings of new collaborations. I must admit that, due to my Nordic character, I find small talk with people totally unknown to me difficult. Despite exchanging polite smiles with several colleagues multiple times, I still lacked the courage to go and talk with them, which, of course, I deeply regret now. Therefore, please, smile and come and talk to me next time you see me around!

Of course, as a first-timer I feel obliged to recall here the moments of meeting with the "grand-olds" for the first time. This time it was Leander Petzoldt whose writings have influenced folk narrative research for several decades. Unlike many other outstanding European folklorists, Petzoldt's works have also been influential on other continents, which is not as common as one might think. I always find it challenging to put the image based on scientific articles and books, together with the true picture of a person resulting from a face to face encounter.



Piret Paal is a doctoral student at the University of Helsinki. She has published widely on folk beliefs and legends relating to illnesses and is currently finishing her dissertation on cancer patients' narratives in Finland.

*Photo: private collection.*

After having seen Leander Petzoldt in person and having exchanged a few words with him in an elevator I tend to think of him as a very mysterious person.

I believe that finding a common language to interact with different people is not as big an issue as it used to be back in the 1970s. The same applies to theoretical approaches, since the English language is increasingly dominating as the scientific language of Europe. Nevertheless, Germans prefer German, Russians Russian, and the French French in their daily scientific discussions and, therefore, finding a common language is and will be a problem in international conferences. The question is: do we really understand and catch the meaning of the words uttered? I suppose we have drawn closer to each other and thus mutual understanding should not be a problem. At least, it is not a reason to avoid or dislike such international events, and this is definitely something positive.

Unfortunately, to my great surprise, in Athens I heard several presentations presented by our fellows from English-speaking countries that did not appreciate the efforts of non-native speakers at all. I listened to presentations that contained, 'hasty reading of fancy words that only natives master', and this made me a little upset and even angry. I felt really sorry for colleagues who master numerous languages but whose English is perhaps somewhat less advanced. Although the time for presentations was short and the time for discussion even shorter, I believe that people who have a linguistic advantage could allow it to themselves to rethink the aims of their performance in regards of us, the non-natives. We, scholars dealing with narratives, should be particularly aware of the importance of good and balanced performance in order to make meanings graspable.

While the question of Eurocentricism still seems to be an unsolved problem for ISFNR, there was one presentation that made me think of national aspects of narrative research. The performance of Finnish scholar Outi Lehtipuro (University of Joensuu) was given in the section dealing with the past and future of folk narrative research. She used the adjective 'nationalistic' seven



Aikaterini Polymerou-Kamilaki delivering her welcome speech at the opening ceremony of the 15th ISFNR Congress in Athens.

*Photo by courtesy of the Hellenic Folklore Research Centre.*

ral times to point out the importance of Finnish scholars studying Finnish materials in order to gain the most accurate results. First of all, this was a striking statement for me personally as my doctoral thesis concerns Finnish cancer patients' narratives and I am not an indigenous Finnish scholar. Is it possible that I would not read my materials correctly? However, on the other hand, I recalled an endless list of scholars who have studied and are still studying foreign cultures without even knowing the language (think for example of Albert Lord or Lauri Honko). As I understood from the later discussion with Outi Lehtipuro, her idea was that researchers, in order to be able to study and interpret their materials correctly, should have a very good knowledge of the culture and language they are dealing with. Here, I totally agree, although, at the same time, I also recall the enthusiasm of Lauri Honko as in 2000 we worked together on the Setu epic presented by Anne Vabarna.<sup>1</sup> Honko did not understand Setu but was really pleased with every word and syllable interpreted because he saw the big picture: the short epic from Setu in the context of world epics. I am quite convinced that Honko's enthusiasm and passion were the same when working on the Siri epic or interpreting the Kalevala. Honko's passion and daring has left more than one landmark in the history of folklore studies, and these footprints may be researched by other scholars in the future. Although narrative research has always carried some nationalistic value (and here I probably understand what Outi Lehtipuro meant with the nationalistic adjective), it should not stop scholars from other countries studying texts from cultures different from their own. In my opinion, having various perspectives is more than beneficial in terms of finding new meanings and presenting different aspects of a subject, even if they do occur as untraditional in the context of nationalistic discourse. In terms of an overall viewpoint, it is even more important to try to overcome the still ongoing Eurocentricism at ISFNR

meetings; following on from this we should stop thinking that there are only counted narrative researchers in the other regions of world.

For me, the most memorable presentation on narrative interpretation was the paper presented by young scholar Kristiana Willsey from Bloomington, the United States. Her study focused on women recalling their favourite, and therefore intimate, fairytales from childhood. As the examples given demonstrated, recorded narrative events were rather unsuccessful, lacking the qualities of a good performance. In many places it also seemed that the whole storyline or plot was absent. It was difficult to figure out what emotions occurred during these performances but according to Kristiana Willsey, they were present. This reminded me of a recent study by the Swedish sociologist Lars-Christer Hydén<sup>2</sup> who has examined the storytelling of women with Alzheimer disease. In Hydén's materials the story never comes to an end, lacking equally a beginning as well as content. However, storytelling creates a good atmosphere (see Hydén 2008). Dealing with similar materials raises the question of what to do with such narratives? Kristiana Willsey offered a most elegant solution for the investigation of intimate narratives that lack performative values. Namely, she proposed interpreting the collected stories as 'broken baskets' lacking the roots or branches required to become wholes. In my opinion, the image of a broken basket allows the intimate narratives to be imagined as wholes, and thus to interpret their meaning to storytellers, as well as the importance of intimate storytelling in general.

Naturally, numerous other papers that could be discussed for one reason or another were presented in Athens. While writing the current overview I went through the conference abstracts once more and I felt really sad that it was impossible to attend more than one session at a time. This means that while listening to one paper I missed the nine parallel ones and this is a



shame. The only hope is that soon the materials will be published and thus made accessible for both those who attended the ISFNR conference in Athens, and for those who, for some reason, did not make it this time.

The time in Athens was for me an interesting experience. By saying that, I do not mean only the conference and the venues involved, but also the possibility to experience Athens, its cultural significance, its values, and its controversial sides. I shall never forget the wonderful landscapes I enjoyed on our day trip. Here, I would like to send my most kind regards to Vilmos Voigt – I shall keep in mind

your expert opinion about the things we discussed, and I pardon myself for not using Finnish while talking to you! My very last impressions of Greece derive from the island of Aegina, which I explored together with four kind 'charmners' from all over the world and with some lovely Finnish colleagues after the conference was officially over. This, once more, was something interesting and beautiful. However, in case I miss a scene, I have not a long way to go. In a local Glyptothek in Munich I can find a full collection of figures from the temple of Aphaea, brought here by prince Ludwig in 1812. Keeping Athens 2009 in my mind I shall wait for forthcoming

events and meetings dealing with narratives, hoping that one day I will see the big picture as well.

<sup>1</sup> Honko, Lauri in collaboration with Anneli Honko and Paul Hagu. *The Maiden's Death Song & The Great Wedding. Anne Vabarna's Oral Twin Epic written down by A. O. Väisänen*. FF Communications 281. Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Hydén, Lars-Christer & Jens Brockmeier 2008. *Health, Illness and Culture. Broken Narratives*. New York, London: Routledge, 2008.

## Multiple Voices from Various Corners of the World

by Kati Kallio, Finnish Literature Society, Helsinki, Finland



Kati Kallio is writing her dissertation on the singing of Kalevala-metric poetry in western Ingria, focussing on the issues of genre, performance and intertextuality.

Photo: private collection.

There is still a polyphonic choir of intertwining, discussing, encouraging voices in my mind when thinking back to the ISFNR Congress *Narratives Across Space and Time: Transmissions and Adaptations* in Athens last summer. Visiting the Congress for the first time, I was overwhelmed by the diversity the scholarly traditions, point of views, and ways of speaking of scholars gathering

from all over the world. We, the participants, do share a deep gratitude to our hosts at the Hellenic Folklore Research Centre of the Academy of Athens for the lively atmosphere, elegant practicalities, and grandiose physical setting.

There are several good strategies to participate in this kind of congress with seven plenary lectures, six sub-topics and two symposia, producing altogether over 200 papers. I chose to listen to some sessions that were essential for my own specific research questions, but for most of the time I roamed around, trying to listen to the variety of voices that were gathering around. For me, that was probably the best part of it: listening and talking to various people, trying also to understand scholarly traditions far from those with which I am most familiar.

For a postgraduate student concentrating primarily on oral poetry, the seminar was a thorough introduction to the diverse lines of narrative research. The themes and interpretive frameworks of the various disciplines within our field overlap continuously. In addition, similar problematics are to be solved whether studying tales, oral

history, jokes, belief stories, charms, songs or some other cultural phenomena: Would it be fruitful to concentrate on one good narrator or singer, one small community or some large geographical area, on what level should the scope be set, how should meaningful contexts be framed, which questions should be asked? I enjoyed what I interpreted as the generally inclusive atmosphere of the event: various starting points and theoretical approaches do complete each other, even though in harsh academic life they sometimes compete for the very same resources.

The theme of the Congress, *Narratives Across Space and Time*, invited us not only to ponder our own relationships to the theoretical frameworks of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and the very beginnings of the folklore studies, but, likewise, to discuss future visions of the disciplines involved with the study of narrative traditions. This was particularly the target of a series of sessions under the title *The History and Future of Folk Narrative Research*, consisting of nearly 40 papers. The themes ranged from critical perspectives on scholarly history, to the variety

of contemporary theoretical currents and the possibilities of taking advantage of the modern technologies of digitised materials and databases. As shown, for example, in the symposium on *Belief Stories*, narrative research gives the possibility to focus on the layers of both history and the present.

Under the six subtopics and two symposia of the Congress, many papers highlighted the complexity not only of narrative traditions and theories, but also of historical situations. The last of the plenary lectures posed questions that may be relevant in various historical contexts. How to make what you feel scientifically or personally important, when the actual ideological, political or social conditions are not favourable? The lecture by Gabriela Kiliánová (Slovak Academy of Sciences) gave the audience a glimpse of the complex and varying scholarly settings of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Eastern Europe, concentrating on the situation in Slovakia. She showed how much we should know of the various political and ideological backgrounds and constraints when reading the works of past decades and when trying to understand what scholars actually wanted to say. Without knowledge of both contemporary overall rhetorics and local situations which, in this case, varied both according to the country in question and the historical moment, misinterpretations are a constant risk.

“To be joked about is to be politically relevant,” stated Gary Alan Fine (Northwestern University) in his plenary lecture when talking about various interpretive frameworks and the politics of joking. He saw jokes both as “markers of belonging and excluding,” although he gave no easy-to-apply-everywhere guidelines for the situational interpretations of joking. Similar themes of both the complexities of interpretation and of constructing others and ourselves through narration were to be found in many speeches. Ulrich Marzolph (*Enzyklopädie des Märchens*) lectured on *Intellectual Property and the Power of Interpretation*, concentrating on the situation in Iran. Chao Gejin (Institute

of Ethnic Literature, Chinese Academy of Sciences) compared the same Gesar epic in two cultures, Tibetan and Mongolian. Here, the practices of epic singing and the roles of the singers are strikingly different, although the story pattern remains similar. Michael Meraklis (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens) drew attention to the multiple aspects of variation, while Stephanos Imellos (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens) demonstrated the use of the gods and heroes of antiquity in modern Greek folk legend, and raised the difficult and complex questions of oral continuities in history.

In some discussions during the symposium on *Charms and Charming*, the scholars made explicit the necessity and purpose of international collaboration. In addition to common indices as a shared tool, the knowledge of and research into various language areas, with material that is published and commented upon, is essential not only to create a global view of the phenomena, but also to achieve a deeper understanding on the micro-perspective of local and small-scale matters. On the other hand, the indices remain partly silent if we do not have other means of approaching the processes, dynamics and meanings of particular cases, in particular historical situations. In the various sessions of the Congress I was, at first, somewhat surprised by the abundance of ATU numbers around me, as I am not studying prose narratives. Evidently, the Congress made apparent the usefulness and economy of communication of this kind of established, well-developed tradition, which also makes it easier to acquire wider perspective on folktales in time and space.

The very first session I attended, under the subtopic of *Storytelling and Storyteller*, already demonstrated how very diverse topics may resonate with each other, and how fruitful it is to bring together concrete cases and broader perspectives. Manuel Teodoro Danneman (Universidad de Chile) gave a thorough theoretical analysis of performance with lively video demonstrations. Rachel Zoran

(Haifa University) set a Hasidic story within the theoretical frame of Bibliotherapy, discussing the silences and the gaps of indeterminacy in the story. Finally, Miranda Terzopoulou (Hellenic Folklore Research Centre, Academy of Athens) gave voice to a Greek man singing his life story from the Civil war onwards. He had begun to compose autobiographical oral poems, using traditional verses and formulae, on a tape-recorder, erasing and re-recording until he felt the song to be complete. These poems were a way to speak of events which, decades later, were still taboo in spoken language.

Many of the various sessions during the week were tied together with multiple intertextual and interthematic links, far as the subjects seemed, at the beginning, to be from each other. Listening to Congress papers that were both geographically and theoretically distant, I was thrilled by the possibilities the narratives, in various forms and studied within various interpretive frameworks, give us to make sense of our lives and of the world we live in.

Just before leaving Athens, I took a solitary walk to the Acropolis by a small sideway. The air was bright, with a light wind blowing from the sea. All the discussions of the past week were still going on silently in my mind, and I needed some peace to give all these voices some more space. Olive trees, hills, the city below: Athens gazing far to the sea. On the way back, as I was descending to the Roman Agora, I met with two musicians from Congo jamming with guitar, djembe and human voice: African, Western, popular, jazz, traditional, modern, mixing it all tenderly together. Like all good storytellers, musicians and scholars, they were making it their own sound, fitting their performance to the place, to the audience, to the moment. With their music, they were evoking a draught of pure water and wind and happiness under the glaring afternoon sun, a sound that is echoing in my mind still, giving me a synthesis of the whole week.

## ISFNR 2009: Athens, Greece

by Kristiana Willsey, Indiana University, Bloomington, USA



Kristiana Willsey is a doctoral student at Indiana University. Her research interests include narrative and oral performance (particularly as it relates to memory, embodiment and the senses); children's material culture, fairytales and feminism; and theories of collection and consumption.

*Photo by Jeana Jorgensen.*

Almost the first thing I did upon registering for my first ISFNR meeting, in the impressive, pillared Academy of Athens, was to drop my bottle of complimentary olive oil on the polished marble floor. The noise rolled around the vaulted ceilings like an oenophile tasting a particularly fine wine, and conversations between various respected and thus terrifying scholars broke apart, but the bottle miraculously remained intact. I righted it hastily, intensely grateful to have made my entrance into the international Folklore scene with a bang, rather than a splash.

The terrifyingly respectable scholars were not, of course, ogres. On the contrary they were largely kind, encouraging people who went out of their way to make me feel like I was one of them. I was introduced to people whose work I had read and admired, like Ulrich Marzholph, and to people whose work I did not yet realize I admired, like Ülo Valk. I had a long conversation with Sue Bottigheimer, who listened with flat-

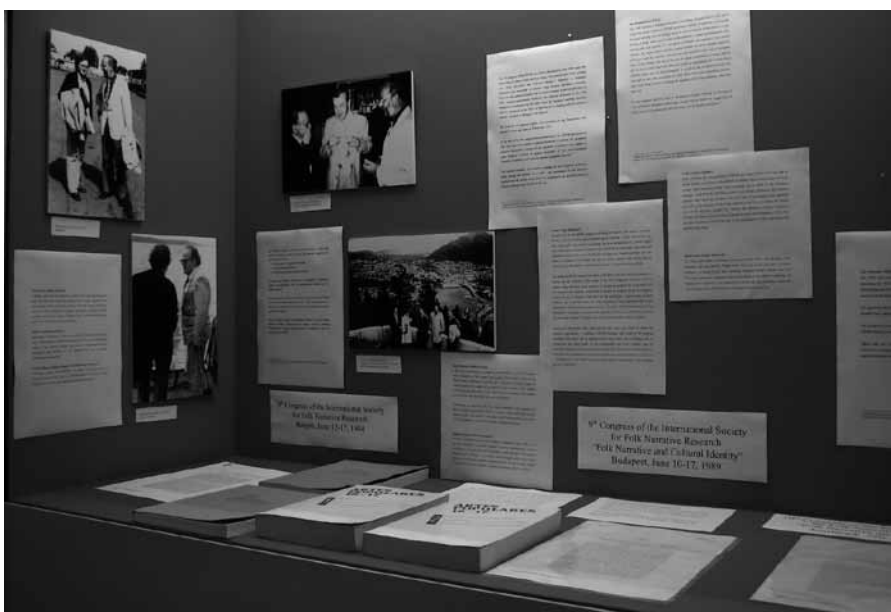
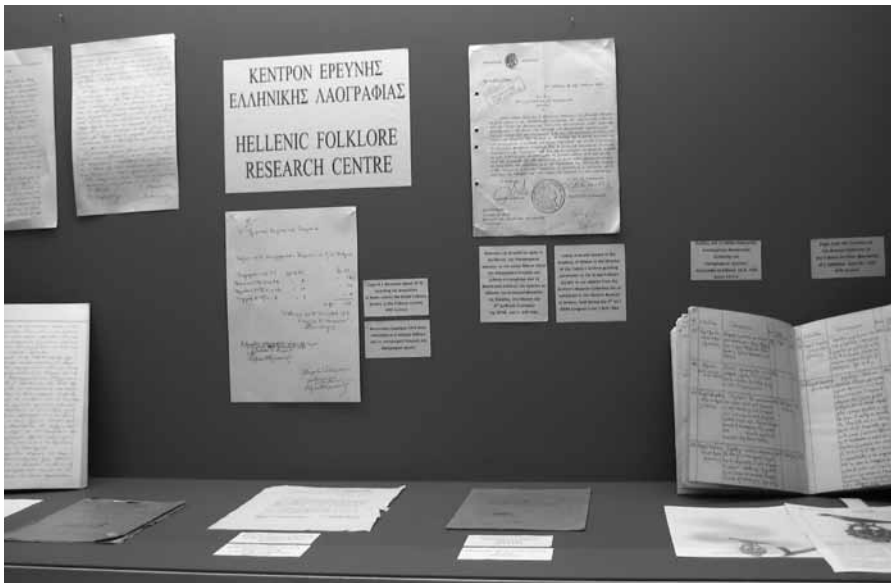
tering patience to my description of my dissertation topic. The hallways between panels were crowded with overlapping conversations on the nature of orality and literacy, the place of traditional storytelling in the increasingly mediated world, fairy tales and pedagogy, narrative and dreams, a hundred voices in a handful of languages constantly at the periphery of my attention.

In short, the whole thing was kind of idyllic. At the American Folklore Society meetings or smaller regional Folklore meetings, I typically spend hours poring over the program, carefully marking the papers on storytelling or narrative. I quickly realized, looking through the dauntingly fat book of abstracts for ISFNR, that this process of elimination was utterly useless to me here. The usual dismay at how much I would inevitably miss was multiplied tenfold. I regretfully passed up an intriguing panel that promised Icelandic legends, werewolves and changelings in favor of a panel on folk narrative in modern media. Highlights of that panel were Cristina Bacchilega's (University of Hawai'i at Mānoa) paper on generic complexity and hybridity in film adaptations of classic tales, and Anne Duggan's (Wayne State University) analysis of the camping of Perrault's "Donkey Skin" in French cinema. The panel was followed by an involved discussion of the dubious applicability of the motif index to film studies, which already has its own well-developed conventions and genres. I made painful choices between Vilmos Voigt's (Eötvös Loránd University) take on new theories that had emerged in past ISFNR meetings, and conflicting papers on performance and embodiment. I came perilously close to missing my flight home, because I lingered at Gary Alan Fine's (Northwestern University) Friday morning lecture on politics and humor.

Naturally there were aspects of the conference that were less idyllic. For one thing, the far-flung nature of the conference venues meant that one often had to structure the morning or afternoon around one or two key, unmissable talks—ducking into a room down the hall to catch a paper mid-panel is somewhat more complicated when “down the hall” becomes five or six blocks of blindingly hot Mediterranean summer. But this unlooked-for commitment to a venue ended up surprising me. I heard papers I would not have heard otherwise. I came for Harold Neemann's (University of Wyoming) paper on Madame d'Aulnoy, but I stayed for Maria Cortez's (University of Aveiro) paper on 19<sup>th</sup> century Portuguese fairy tales, and found that her presentation on the relationship between folklorists and children's educators at that time was one of the papers that stayed with me long after the closing ceremonies.

Another memorable panel was the excellent, cohesive group of papers given by my friends and colleagues Linda Lee (University of Pennsylvania) and Jeana Jorgensen (Indiana University) with the always thought-provoking Kimberly Lau (University of California, Santa Cruz). Their subject was transformation: of bodies, of tales over time, of audiences' generic expectations, and of the use to which tales of transformation have been put. Lau's paper served as an especially apt anchor, speaking to transformation as a kind of stability, and the persistent appeal of the fairy tale genre. Appealing enough, indeed, that this panel drew more listeners than chairs, and the audience crowded the doorway and spilled out into the hall.

Initially I tried to use the three-hour-long afternoon breaks in program scheduling to see the sites and visit museums or exhibits. It took several



failed ventures for me to realize that it was not simply the conference that rested afternoons, it was the entire city of Athens. The only exceptions were the nodes of tourist activity—sidewalk cafes and busy souvenir shops where I mysteriously found myself on a daily basis with no conscious effort to visit. But while it would clearly take a far longer (and less preoccupied) visit to Athens to do that ancient and beautiful city justice, the schedule did permit a visit to the newly opened Acropolis Museum, a graceful building with clear glass floors to show off the archeological layers beneath this most recent construction, and views of the Parthenon from the tall windows. We trekked up the steps to the Acropolis itself shortly after, and though it was not a crucial moment in the study of Folklore, I will always remember watching a clutch of clumsy, half-grown falcons learning to fly off the cliffs overlooking the Odeon. I can't imagine a better place for a meeting of ISFNR: to leave a complex, wide-ranging discussion of folk narrative in a darkened auditorium and stumble out into millennia of human history and mythology under an overturned blue bowl of light and heat. The 16<sup>th</sup> Congress has a lot to live up to.

Exhibition dedicated to the history of the Hellenic Folklore Research Centre, Greek Folklore Society, and the ISFNR.

Photos by Veikko Anttonen.

## Impressions of the ISFNR Congress in Athens

by Jeana Jorgensen, Indiana University, Bloomington, USA

My impressions of the 2009 Congress in Athens were framed by both intellectual and cultural components of the conference. This was my second time attending an ISFNR Congress and it was also my second time visiting Greece, so without having to deal with the initial anxieties that often accompany rites of passage – the excitement and fears of presenting a paper at my first international conference; the apprehensions of navigating public transportation in Athens and spoken greetings in Greek – I was able to focus on the more enjoyable aspects of the conference. Several themes in the papers, addresses, and discussions emerged in my experience of the conference, ranging from the interactions of humans with culture, nature, and context, to the variety of approaches to narrative folklore, from textual to theoretical emphases. In this reflective piece, I mention many of the papers that for me exemplify important trends in current folk narrative research.

In the very first session I attended, I noticed these themes in the papers presented and the resulting discussion. Aggeliki Kompoholi (University of Athens) presented on her research with a storyteller in a hospital setting. This woman retold folktales from her childhood while in a therapy group for fellow patients, and yet the narrator's relationship to contemporary culture and the hospital setting prevented her from telling her favorite folktale, ATU 310 (Rapunzel), as it would have been insensitive to dwell on the motif of long hair in a context where many female patients had undergone chemotherapy. This first paper, with its lively yet heart-breaking depiction of folk narrative in the modern world, demonstrated the ongoing relevance of folk narrative research and the significance of cultural context in our scholarship.



Jeana Jorgensen, PhD candidate at Indiana University, during the closing ceremony of the 15th congress with Willem de Blécourt (UK) and Adam Zolkover (USA).

Photo by Merili Metsvahi.

The other papers on that panel by Piret Paal (University of Helsinki) and Tatiana Minniyakhmetova (Institute of Strategy for Region Development, Udmurtia) focused on dream experiences, the former on dreams relating to cancer narratives and the latter on dreams in Udmurtian culture. The entire panel led to a stimulating discussion of the relationships between folklore, culture, and other learned behaviors, and biological constants, such as sickness, sleep, and health.

The themes of human relationships to nature continued to draw my attention throughout the conference. Scholars from various regions of the world contributed diverse perspectives on the geographic foundations of many folk narrative genres. Aado Lintrop's (Estonian Literary Museum) work on shamanic stories, which incorporate aspects of legend and memorate, displayed the regional concerns of shamans in caring for specific communities and the illnesses they might encounter in those environments. The spiritual and spatial dimensions of the shamanic experience narratives were especially striking, and provided another good example of how folk

narrative can help us to understand spiritual and mental topographies. Desmond L. Kharmawphlang (North-eastern Hill University, Shillong) lectured on the rice myths of north-east India, demonstrating the interweaving of man and nature made manifest in narrative and ritual. The texts and contexts of the rice myth and ritual cycles reinforce the significance of tradition as a resource in negotiating the interdependencies of culture and environment.

Context played an important role in many of the papers and discussions I saw, ranging from conversations about broad cultural contexts to data about specific storytelling contexts. Ulrich Marzolph (*Enzyklopädie des Märchens*) lectured illuminatingly about intellectual property and folk narrative research in Iran, illustrating his points with information about archives and historical attitudes about informants and collaborators. Maria Kaliambou (Yale University) discussed the reception of folktales in nineteenth century Greece, differentiating between scholarly and folk publications, and how the marketing of booklets reflected educational norms.

Outstanding examples of folk narrative scholarship appeared on a spectrum, some privileging theoretical questions and others relying on close readings of texts. In the instance of the former, the papers delivered by Sadhana Naithani (Centre of German Studies, New Delhi), Lee Haring (Brooklyn College of CUNY), and Pertti Anttonen (University of Helsinki) raised important and intriguing questions about the relationship of folktale (and all genres) to reality; the appropriateness of using metalanguage to elicit oral-literary criticism from narrators who may or may not be interested in analysis; and the advantages of using intertextuality to create agent-centered accounts of tradition and transmission of folk narrative. Other papers employed or investigated specific theories, such as Kimberly Lau's (University of California, Santa Cruz) ruminations on the application of Lacanian psychoanalysis to fairy tales, and Lauri Harvilahti's (Finnish Literature Society) analysis of ideologies that dominated folkloristic practices in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Europe, from Romanticism onward.

Those papers that approached important questions in folk narrative research from a textual perspective were also fascinating. Linda Lee's (University of Pennsylvania) paper

on monstrosity and (dis)enchantment in contemporary fairy tales, Cristina Bacchilega's (University of Hawai'i at Mānoa) paper on generic complexity in recent fairy-tale films, and Anne E. Duggan's (Wayne State University) paper on camp and agency in the French film "Donkey Skin" all exemplify the highly nuanced types of analysis that folk narrative scholars perform upon rich and complex texts. Donald Haase (Wayne State University) discussed texts about texts, criticizing the colonizing rhetoric of scholars who know nothing about folk narrative scholarship yet insist that folktales contain universal, general truths and are simple, direct expressions of some ideal folk worldview. The importance of research that historicizes and contextualizes folk narrative cannot be underestimated, returning us to the very basic – and yet still very pertinent – idea of the interdependence of the texts and contexts of folk narrative.

In closing, the major themes that I noticed at the Congress – culture, nature, context, theory, and text – were evident in the papers I mentioned in this brief reflection, as well as in many others I did not. I think it indicates the strength of our field that there were so many sessions scheduled simultaneously that I couldn't possibly attend

all of the papers I wanted to hear! The informal opportunities to converse with other scholars, at dinners and receptions and the like, were also valuable. Meeting so many international colleagues and participating in so many lively discussions contributed to my sense of being part of a thriving and worthwhile intellectual community. I am especially grateful to our Greek colleagues for working so hard to make us feel welcome as visitors and fellow scholars. I found the trip to be personally gratifying as well, as I was able to go on marathon training runs around the Acropolis. The interweaving of my personal narrative – the quest for fitness – with historical narratives – the origin of the marathon in Greece – made the travel experience meaningful on multiple levels for me. And as my reflections on the Congress hopefully convey, folk narrative research as well as the venues in which we gather to discuss our research are vibrant and exciting, inviting participation from a broad and knowledgeable scholarly community of which I am happy to consider myself a member.



L-r: Thomas Geider (Germany) and Jonathan Roper (Estonia) at the closing ceremony of the Congress.

Photo by Merili Metsvahi.

## 15<sup>th</sup> Congress of the ISFNR in Athens, the Belief Tales Session

by Tiina Sepp and Siiri Tomingas-Joandi, University of Tartu, Estonia



Tiina Sepp is a doctoral student in folkloristics at the University of Tartu. She is doing research on the narratives of pilgrims on the road to Santiago de Compostela.

Photo by Ülo Valk.

In June 2009, under the blazing hot Greek sun, the cradle of Western civilization and the birthplace of democracy welcomed scholars of folklore from all over the world to take part in the 15<sup>th</sup> Congress of the International Society for Folk Narrative Research. The congress, organized by the Hellenic Folklore Research Centre of the Academy of Athens, was titled *Narratives Across Space and Time: Transmissions and Adaptations*.

During the seven congress days, scholars from all four corners of the world presented their papers on different subjects – mythologies, charms, storytelling, belief tales etc, divided into nine parallel sessions. The Belief Tales Symposium was held between June 23-26 as part of the 15<sup>th</sup> Congress on the ISFNR.

### The Papers

There were 32 registered participants from 20 countries. The Belief Tales symposium had five subtopics: *History, Change, Development; Figures; Genres and Sub-Genres; Tale Types; and Patterns*.

Several papers were dealing with the social role of folklore, both in ancient and contemporary society. This seems to be one of the current trends in the discipline. The other trend could be related to the development of the discipline. The first speaker in the *History, Change, Development* session was Ülo Valk (University of Tartu) who talked about christianisation and folklorisation as discursive shifts in genre formation. Toward the end of the symposium the papers concentrated on the subject of folklore research more generally, starting with Timothy Tangherlini (UCLA), who talked about approaches from machine learning and historical geographic information system to belief tale research. Heda Jason (Jerusalem), who did a great job preparing the program of the symposium and establishing the Belief Tales Network, was unfortunately not able to go to Athens. Her paper “The Legend of the Miraculous and Its Subgroups” was read out by Michele Simonsen. Pekka Hakamies (University of Turku) shared with the participants his views on narratives and reality, followed by Christine Shojaei-Kawan (*Enzyklopädie des Märchens*), who discussed the issues of genre classification in her “A Closer Look at Contemporary Legend as a Cross-generic Genre”. The final paper of the symposium was by Magdalena Elchinova (New Bulgarian University), who discussed legends and ethnic boundaries.

Although there are still many nationally-oriented researchers, i.e. scholars studying their own culture, many are interested in completely different cultures. A good example of the latter is Maria Palleiro (Buenos Aires University), whose paper “The Lady Ghost and the Black Devil. Colors of Memory in Argentinian and Estonian Folk Narrative” compared the presentation of



Siiri Tomingas-Joandi is a doctoral student of Scandinavian studies at the University of Tartu. She is writing her dissertation on Scandinavian and Estonian legends about changelings.

Photo by Alar Madisson.

supernatural figures in Estonian and Argentinian folk narratives.

As the Devil plays a central role in many aspects of folklore and especially belief tales, many of the papers presented were dealing with different views of the Devil – in addition to Maria Palleiro’s paper also Paulo Correia (University of Algarve) from Portugal (“From Christ as a Child to the Devil as a Goat: Carrying a Supernatural Being who Becomes Heavier and Heavier (AT 768)”) and Özkul Çobanoğlu (Hacettepe University) from Turkey (“The Concept of Saytan in Turkish Folklore”).

When dealing with folklore of the North-European, especially the Nordic countries, the continental Scandinavia tends to be left in the shadow of the rich Icelandic heritage of magical beings and valiant kings described in the sagas. Although Iceland was represented with Terry Gunnell (University of Iceland) speaking about modern legends in Iceland, it was also possible to hear about Danish

werewolves and Swedish changelings: Michèle Simonsen (Copenhagen) spoke on “Danish Werewolves between Beliefs and Narratives” and Siiri Tomingas-Joandi (University of Tartu) on “Legends of Changelings in Estonia and Sweden: How to Explain the Regional Differences?”.

Quite a few papers were dealing with stories about saints. Kishore Bhattacharjee (Gauhati University) gave an interpretative account of the stories about two saints – Shankardeva from Assam and Ramakrishna from West Bengal. He emphasised that these stories address important social issues. Zoja Karanovic (University Novi Sad) described and analysed the stories about two figures – a saint (St. Sava) and a secular character (Marko, son of Serbian king). She suggested that sacred legends and demonic legends about these two amount to a biography. Tiina Sepp (University of Tartu) analysed legends and memorates about St. James – the patron saint of Santiago de Compostela pilgrims.

There were many very interesting and very inspiring papers presented during the symposium, but unfortunately our space is limited and it is impossible to discuss them all here.

### Belief Narrative Network

Towards the end of the conference, on the 25<sup>th</sup> of June a meeting was held to discuss the matters of the Belief Tales Network and elect its executive committee. The committee was elected as follows (names in order of suggestion): Terry Gunnell (Iceland), Mare Kõiva (Estonia), Timothy Tangherlini (USA), Ülo Valk (Estonia), Heda Jason (Israel), Ezekiel Alembi (Kenya), Desmond Khar-mawphlang (India), Maria Ines Palheiro (Argentina), Willem de Blécourt (Netherlands/UK) with Willem de Blécourt as the committee’s chairman. Irma-Riitta Järvinen (Helsinki) was suggested as a member of the executive committee later. After a suggestion from Robin Gwyndaf (Cardiff, Wales), the name of the network was almost unanimously changed from Belief Tales Network

to *Belief Narratives Network* (BNN), to better match the ISFNR name, which refers to narrative. Also, “narrative” is a neutral and clear term, but “tale” has many interpretations and can therefore cause confusion. During the meeting the statute of the BNN was formulated, and Alexander Panchenko, who unfortunately couldn’t participate in the conference himself, invited all the (new) members of the BNN to join in a Belief Narrative Network Conference in St. Petersburg, in May 2010.

### Social program

Wednesday was reserved for extra curricular activities and for that purpose our hosts had prepared for us a variety of trips to different sights nearby, all of great historic importance. One could visit the site of Delphi, take a day tour to Corinth and the ancient city of Mycenae, or enjoy a full day cruise in the Saronic Gulf islands.

The Hellenic Folklore Research Centre had organised events presenting theatrical and musical narrations as well as dance performances that were inspired by Greek traditions. In addition to all that, the guests were both welcomed and bidden farewell with a small cocktail party.

Many thanks to the entire organising team for a well-organised and memorable congress. The wonderful antique city of Athens was the perfect venue to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ISFNR – scholars of folklore from all over the world exchanging ideas of different subjects, all under the watchful eye of the patron of the city, the goddess of wisdom Athena. The overall inspiring ambience of the congress left us with many interesting ideas for future research and hopes of meeting again soon.



L-R: Guntis Pakalns (Latvia), Timothy Tangherlini (USA), Ulf Palmenfelt (Sweden), and Marju Kõivupuu (Estonia) with her son Martin enjoying the Mythos bear and other treats during the excursion to Hydra Island on June 24, 2009.

Photo by Ülo Valk.



## ISFNR Committee for Charms, Charmers and Charming

by Jonathan Roper, University of Tartu, Estonia

The committee has had an active year – at the Athens ISFNR, we hosted 5 sessions: one on charms in the Greek-speaking world (Kompoholi, Passalis, Ionas), one on picturing charms (Kapalo, Roper, Arukask), one on charms texts (Olsan, Timotin, Naiditch), one on the **Bone to bone** charm-type (Pócs, Toporkov, Roper), as well as a round table on the state of charms studies led by Andrei Toporkov.

Online, our annotated bibliography of charms collections and studies from a variety of languages and nations continues to grow. It is intended to provide information on reliable source materials and studies internationally, and we would welcome any additions.

And we are due to have another conference midsummer this year:

### Charms, Charmers and Charming

International conference at the Romanian Academy, Bucharest, Romania June 24-25<sup>th</sup>, 2010

Organised by:

International Society for Folk Narrative

Research –

Committee on Charms, Charmers and Charming;

Institute of Linguistics “Iorgu Iordan – Al. Rosetti” of the Romanian Academy;

Institute of Ethnography and Folklore “C. Brăiloiu” of the Romanian Academy.

The conference will focus on the following topics:

- the relationships between charms and apocrypha
- ethnographic approaches to charm-ers and their clients
- philological approaches on the historical variation of charms
- the **Flum Jordan** charm-type
- the practice of charming in contemporary communities.
- charms as one genre among others (prayers, legends, sayings, etc.)
- how a typology of charms might be constructed (for this topic it is desirable that speakers take into account the proposals made by Agapkina and Toporkov in “Charm

Indexes: Problems and Perspectives, see <http://www.isfnr.org/files/toptransl7.pdf>)

- and related topics

Some practical details:

The official languages of the conference are English and French. The length of each paper must not exceed 20 minutes. All the costs (travel, accommodation, food, health insurance) are to be paid by the participants. On Saturday, the 26<sup>th</sup> of June, we intend to organise a trip outside Bucharest, to Sinaia, to visit the Peleş Royal Castle, the Sinaia Monastery and George Enescu Museum.

For further information please contact the organisers:

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Emanuela Timotin (organiser of the forthcoming Bucharest conference) and James Kapalo (specialist on Gagauz charms) in conversation.

Photo by Jonathan Roper.



Lea Olsan discussing the connections between classical and Anglo-Saxon charms.

Photo by Jonathan Roper.

## The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the ISFNR: Some Recollections and Points of View (2)

Email interviews by Elo-Hanna Seljamaa

### Rolf W. Brednich

Göttingen, Germany/ Wellington, New Zealand

Honorary Member of the ISFNR, founding member of the ISFNR Committee on Folktales and the Internet

#### How did you become a member of the ISFNR?

When I was a student at the University of Mainz, I received the invitation of Prof. Kurt Ranke to come to the Kiel and Copenhagen conference in 1959. I had met Prof. Ranke a year before at the German Volkskunde Congress in Nürnberg and had expressed my interest in participating. He even provided me with a travel grant from the funds of the German Endowment for Humanities. The conference was particularly memorable for me because I was able to meet the leading authorities on folk narrative research, including Walter Anderson, Harald von Sicard, Archer Taylor, Stith Thompson, Maja Bošković-Stulli, Linda Dégh, and others. And I received great support for my doctoral dissertation about the fates, which was under way during this time and was later published as FFC 193.<sup>1</sup>

#### Are there any ISFNR meetings that have been particularly memorable and why?

I do not think that the Kiel/Copenhagen conference of 1959 was an ISFNR event, because this organisation did not exist at this time. It definitely existed when the next conference in Athens took place in 1964. This was another remarkable event for me, because I could present my first paper. After my lecture, Prof. Wayland D. Hand took me out to the steps of the Athens Academy. He took a picture of me and said to me: "Now, you are one of ours and you can call me Wayland". I think I became an ISFNR member during the first business meeting in Athens. The next ISFNR conference was held in Bucharest in 1969. Again,

I remember it very vividly for a number of incidents. One was caused by my 'Doktorvater' Prof. Lutz Röhrich during his paper about political jokes. He told the audience a joke about the Russian cosmonaut Gagarin, which led to a formal protest from the Russian delegation and a threat to leave the conference. Prof. Mihai Pop was able to soften the situation. I gave a paper about 16th century broadsheets as a source for folk narrative research. It was the first ISFNR conference paper ever with a slide presentation and it caused the organisers a big problem to find a slide projector and have it installed at the venue. Prof. Ranke was my chairman and he invited me to contribute the article, titled "Flugblatt", to his planned encyclopaedia, *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* (EM), which I later did.

My personal contribution to the next ISFNR conference in Helsinki 1974 was a paper about "Comics and Folk Narrative Research" which raised some eyebrows (Folklore research was then still strictly bound in its traditional canon) but again brought me an invitation of Prof. Ranke to write the article called "Comics" for his EM.

The Bergen conference in 1984 was particularly memorable for me and many others because it dealt with fundamental theoretical and methodological issues of folk narrative research and marked a breakthrough into new dimensions and directions of our discipline from text to context, performance and meanings. Everybody who attended the Budapest conference in 1989 will remember the event of the re-embedding ceremony of the corpse



Hans-Jörg Uther (left) and Rolf W. Brednich (right) at the 8th Congress of the ISFNR in Bergen in 1984.

Photo by courtesy of Rolf W. Brednich.

of Imre Nagy, which marked the beginning of the big political changes of 1989. With the exception of Mysore, I have attended all ISFNR conferences in the past, and published congress reports and keynote papers in *Fabula*, which was made the official journal of the ISFNR in Göttingen in 1998.

#### What is, in your view, the role of the ISFNR and what are your expectations regarding the 2009 Congress in Athens?

The ISFNR has an important role in the development of folk narrative research worldwide and has been successful in integrating researchers from countries other than European/ American. It now offers a worldwide network for comparative research and is crucial for the future of the discipline. But as we can see from the recent programme of the Athens conference, this change from



The Bergen congress of 1984. L-r: Hans-Jörg Uther, Dorota Simonides, Giovanni B. Bronzini, Rolf W. Brednich and Willi Höfig.

Photo by courtesy of Rolf W. Brednich.

European/American to a worldwide perspective has negative impacts on the conference agenda. 300 papers during a six-day conference in 10

parallel sessions is a monster of a conference. "Narratives Across Time and Space" is obviously a topic that covers all and everything and leads

to the neglect of basic theoretical and methodological problems. I also regret the absence of papers about the role of the media and the Internet. Theo Meder has invited the contribution of papers for a special workshop of the Internet working group but has only received three entries. It may be useful for further ISFNR conferences to consider actively asking researchers to deliver papers which address fundamental questions of narrative research; I am aware that restricting the number of accepted papers is not practical for many reasons, but maybe this should be counterbalanced by innovative sessions to avoid an overload of the prevailing detailed regional type and motive studies.

<sup>1</sup> Brednich, Rolf Wilhelm 1964. *Volkserzählungen und Volksglaube von den Schicksalsfrauen*. *FF Communications* 193. Helsinki: Suomalainen tiedeakatemia. (Eds.)

## Vilmos Voigt

*Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary*

*Honorary Member of the ISFNR, founding member of the ISFNR Theoretical Committee*

### 0. Not asked, but important.

The ISFNR started to exist and then flourish at the time when international comparative philology was being reshaped worldwide and having successful and regular international conferences. It is true for Finno-Ugric Studies (from the 1960s onward), for the International Comparative Literature Association (also from the 1960s), for comparative religion and the International Association for the History of Religions, the International Association of South East European Studies (AISEE), international congresses of Slavists, scholars of Altaic languages – I could name dozens of similar societies. All of them made a new 'international' start in the early 1960s. As far as I know, all of them still exist today, but their importance has definitely decreased. Until about 1985 they represented a forum for the most important topics, for new trends, and their leaders were acknow-

ledged scholars both at home and on the international stage. Now this time is over. Regular conferences of these international associations bring nothing important and new – they function as a meeting place for old and new generations who have no common topic to study or to discuss. The ever increasing number of parallel sessions and strictly limited time for papers made most of the congress sessions automatically simply a waste of time. Today, most of the participants at home have a minor position and have no impact upon cultural politics in their own country. The opposite was the case during the first ISFNR years, i.e. the years of Kurt Ranke, K. C. Peeters, Mihai Pop, Gyula Ortutay and many others.

In addition, around the same time 'international associations and congresses' became really worldwide. For example, congresses for teaching folk

dances run today subsequently in Norway, South Africa, Philippines and the Czech Republic, etc. The safeguarding of peasant houses congress convened in South Korea. The ISFNR is a fairly good example of the same development. However, the ISFNR has two distinctive features. First, the ISFNR was first based in Germany and ruled by the methods of German philology: from Walter Anderson to Kurt Ranke, then from Lutz Röhrich to Rolf Brednich, from Max Lüthi to Rudolf Schenda, from Archer Taylor to Wolfgang Mieder. And, as long as the *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* is published in German, and the ATU was made in Göttingen, the situation remains the same. It is a considerable difference, compared, for example, to the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, which has always been a US-dominated phenomenon, in spite of its truly world wide distribution.



L-r: Giovanni B. Bronzini, Vilmos Voigt and Rolf W. Brednich at the Bergen congress.

Photo by courtesy of Rolf W. Brednich.

Second, with a few exceptions among international societies, the ISFNR has one 'central' journal: *Fabula*. (Today this is a stark exception. Perhaps the International Association for Semiotic Studies and the journal *Semiotica* is another one breaking the rule.) Unfortunately the book series of the ISFNR died out quickly.

### 1. How and when did you become a member of the ISFNR?

I was a university student when my teachers received 'questionnaires' from their colleagues in the fresh-made ISFNR. Being a folklorist, I can tell a "true narrative" about collecting Hungarian data for the monographs of these scholars. This is how it went. Full professor Ortutay received the letter and gave it to the associate professor Linda Dégh, who gave it to the assistant professor Tekla Dömötör, and finally the young student Ákos Dömötör or myself collected the materials and mailed them to the now-famous ISFNR colleagues. We thus became automatically members of the network. Everybody who received a letter from Kurt Ranke (or, better to say, from Fritz Harkort [*secretary of the ISFNR – ed.*]) received thereafter information about the ISFNR as well. In the very beginning, I received a tentative list of entries for the *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* (EM) and

lists of "free" items waiting to be written. It was a very democratic – but high level – initiation. We were asked to write book reviews, or we could simply initiate some publications of our own. Nobody ever asked us about degrees. However, once the pieces were printed, suddenly all of us became "Dr". Some of us protested, mostly in vain. Bengt Holbek, victim of the Danish "doctoral" system, was named a PhD a hundred times before he actually completed his dissertation – afterwards less often... Since folklore research always was a common basin for curious scholars, there was only one thing that was important for the ISFNR: the quality of production. Since not many members ever paid their fees and the ISFNR offered only information about forthcoming congresses, everybody could become *de facto* a member.

### 2. You were one of the main organisers of the 1989 Congress in Budapest. What was this process like?

Budapest was the last ISFNR congress that embraced all kinds of folk narrative research. We also had an institutionalised paremiological meeting. Paremiology had been well represented at previous congresses as well, but in a less organised, à la Matti Kuusi, style. After some troubles, we could accept all applications for participation, even from the Apartheid

country, though this person finally did not show up. We also had problems with a lecture titled "About the Folklore of the Intifada". We did not want to merge with politics, but as soon as we saw the scholar – Monim Haddad, a wonderfully nice man – all problems were over.

We had in fact no money for the congress – only free rooms for the meetings, flowers on the table, and our young colleagues. Not very many participants paid the congress fees and Lauri Honko asked that we transfer the sum we did collect to Turku. Thanks to Juha Pentikäinen we did not do it. Instead, we tried to publish the conference papers. But with the printing costs increasing constantly, we always ran out of publishing money. After a while we said to a publisher's assistant who had just been fired that we have so much money: if she could make the publication happen, she would get the whole sum (without tax). Knowing all the three congress languages, she did it. So *Artes Populares* 16-17 appeared.<sup>1</sup> It brings together *all* the papers we received (without the papers published elsewhere, e.g. in *Fabula* and ARV). Only the programme of the folk-dance event was left out from the two volumes due to the lack of money. We tried to send the volumes to participants, but soon ran out of mailing money. Then a miracle happened. One day Reimund Kvideland (then the President of the ISFNR and since 1991 director of the Nordic Institute of Folklore in Turku) asked me whether this misery was true? And how much money we needed for mailing the rest of the copies? I told him a moderate sum. He gave it to me in cash, directly out of his pocket. It happened in the famous cafe at the Senate's Square in Helsinki... (Even today, I can only guess who had told Reimund about our troubles.)

The Budapest ISFNR congress took place in the days of the Tien An Men massacre in Beijing and the "reburial" of the heroes of the 1956 Hungarian revolution (not to mention other im-

portant events in Hungarian political life at the time). All of this happened very suddenly and we had to make changes in the programme during the congress in order to make the reburial day a 'free day' for the participants. I know that many of them witnessed the event. However, from the very beginning it was planned that at the inauguration meeting Zoltán Kodály's music to Dániel Berzsenyi's poem "To the Hungarians" was going to be performed with repeating of the key words "Lélek s szabad nép tesz csuda dolgokat" (The Spirit and the Free People make wondrous things).

Among the participants were poor persons too who could not afford to attend the expensive gala-dinner – a tradition of ISFNR meetings and forced by the then outgoing presidium. There was therefore an alternative folk music event, free of charge, with an exceptional folk music band. It was unforgettable and more valuable than the otherwise sumptuous gala-dinner at Hotel Gellért. Only days later did I notice that Hans-Jörg Uther had organised another nice evening for the not-so-rich which took place at the same time. Yes – in Budapest too the ISFNR was more than a scholarly association; it was a friendly group of folklorists.

One should also mention that we had two "preparatory" meetings for the Budapest ISFNR. More precisely, two scholarly meetings with some business negotiations. One in Visegrád (Hungary)<sup>2</sup>, a scholarly and friendly one, and one more business-like in Paris (thanks to Madame Veronika Görög-Karády – who, in fact, is Hungarian). At this latter meeting, simply impossible expectations were uttered: what and how much we should do in Budapest. It was simple to realise that the aim was to paralyse the Budapest congress. Together with Ilona Nagy we tried, however, to fulfill all the tasks. And after the congress we had to admit that most of the criticism concerned the very issues that we had fought against in Paris, although without much success. I know

that all of the ISFNR congresses (and in general, all congresses) have the same backstage stories. Here I can but say how happy we were when Leander Petzoldt (against the voting in Budapest) could still organise the exceptionally nice ISFNR congress in Innsbruck.

### 3. How do you see the role of the ISFNR today and also in the past, for example during the Cold War era?

Today the ISFNR is the only international association of folklorists; folk music and folk dance scholars have their own associations and conferences. Among the experts of folk literature only folk ballad scholars held regular meetings. However, some members of the above mentioned groups also visit ISFNR meetings. The ISFNR is now really worldwide. We have to thank the two last presidents Galit Hasan-Rokem and Ülo Valk for this, as well as some earlier initiatives. This must also be the direction in the future. And folklore too is worldwide indeed.

As regards the Cold War era, the ISFNR emerged after that time, in the strict sense of the word. And I never found any discrimination there. Kurt Ranke was forcing contacts with East European and Israeli scholars. The ISFNR and *Fabula*, later the EM, worked on the principle of equal opportunity. I only ever heard anti-Soviet biased comments from one (then Soviet) member. Looking down on East-Europeans disappeared pretty soon. Colleagues understood quickly that there are good folklorists behind the Iron Curtain too. Another anecdote. At the Bucharest meeting in 1969 I met Alan Dundes (and introduced him to Eleazar Meletinsky as well). Dundes pointed at me and told the following story. "My Dean did not want to give me travel money for the Bucharest congress. Then I presented him with a copy of some pages from *Acta Ethnographica* (from Hungary), showing Vilmos Voigt's long review of my book, and said: 'I must meet him!'" So, in California it was a positive sign



Vilmos Voigt at the 14th ISFNR congress in Tartu, summer 2005.

Photo by Alar Madisson.

that somebody writes about Dundes in a "Communist" country. In Hungary the fact that there were excellent folklorists in the United States was only welcomed.

Perhaps we in Hungary had a more liberal attitude toward international folklore than other socialist countries... However, I have often admired Polish and Romanian folklore research possibilities, although I could tell about contrary cases too. When in 1966 we published a Hungarian anthology of Korean folktales, the first translations were made from editions published in Pyongyang, but the second half of the book came from collections published in Seoul, Tokyo and Bloomington. The ISFNR is worldwide folklore research in a nutshell. And it is a true mirror of worldwide folklore. Let it remain so.

<sup>1</sup> *Folk narrative and cultural identity: 9th Congress of the International Society for Folk-Narrative Research = Narration populaire et identité culturelle : 9e Congrès de la Société Internationale pour l'investigation des narratives populaires = Volkserzählung und kulturelle Identität : 9 Kongress der Internationalen Gesellschaft für Volkserzählforschung Volkserzählung und kulturelle Identität. Volume 1-2. Artes Populares 16/17. Budapest. 1995. (Ed.)*

<sup>2</sup> Wehse, Rainer 1980. "Tagung der Theoretischen Kommission der International Society for Folk Narrative Research. Visegrad/Ungarn 28.-31. März 1979." In *Fabula* 21(1980): 94-95. (Ed.)

## Toshio Ozawa

Kawasaki, Japan

Honorary Member of the ISFNR, former Vice-President representing Asia

### How and when did you become a member of the ISFNR?

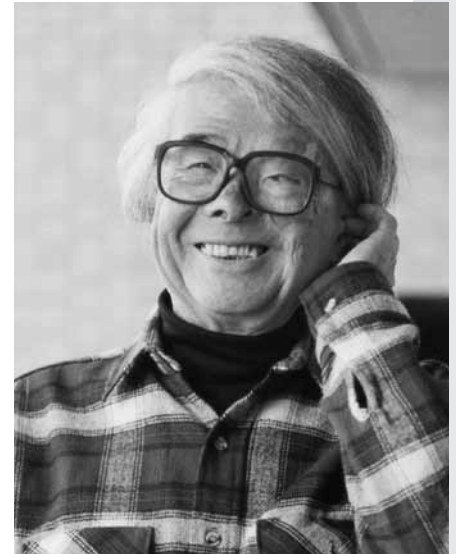
I stayed in Göttingen in 1966-67 and worked for the *Enzyklopädie des Märchens*, translating Japanese folktales into German and studying under Prof. Kurt Ranke. Prof. Ranke told me about the ISFNR and invited me to the Helsinki congress in 1974.

At this meeting I became a member of the ISFNR.

### Are there any ISFNR meetings that have been particularly memorable and why?

One of my most memorable ISFNR meetings is my first Congress in Helsinki in 1974. Precisely because it was “my first” meeting and gave me the opportunity to meet many researchers from around the world; and because I was elected the vice-president of the ISFNR for Asia. Next comes the 1989 meeting in Budapest. Since I became the vice-president of

ISFNR, I felt it to be my task to invite Chinese scholars to the ISFNR. I visited China several times and made contact with researchers there. They promised me they would come to the Budapest meeting. I told this to the ISFNR president Lauri Honko. But they didn't appear. At last, on the third day of the meeting they appeared and told us that because of the brutal incident in Tien An Mien square the border was closed and they couldn't fly out. During the meeting Hungarian colleges described to us the Soviet army's invasion of Budapest in 1956. The last day of the meeting was the day of the rehabilitation and reburial of the executed Prime Minister Nagy. Next comes the meeting in Edinburgh that Max Lüthi attended as well. By that time I had already translated his theoretical book *Das europäische Volksmärchen – Form und Wesen* into Japanese. I told him that the Japanese folktales correspond to his characterization European folktales.

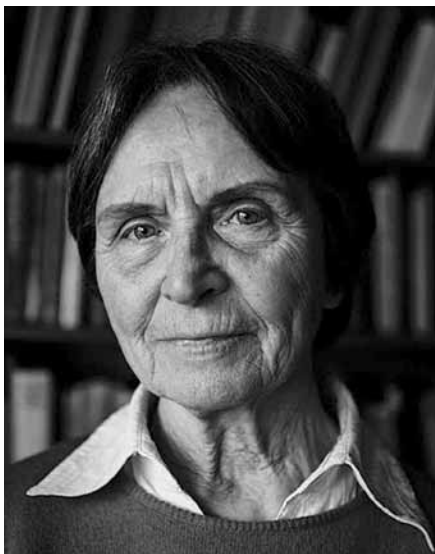


Toshio Ozawa is an Honorary Member of the ISFNR and winner of the 2007 European Fairy Tale Prize awarded by the *Märchen-Stiftung Walter Kahn* in Munich, Germany.

Photo: private collection.

## Erika Taube

Markkleeberg, Germany



Erika Taube is a specialist on Mongolian and Tuvan folk narratives.

Photo © Jan Seifert.

I have liked folk narratives and folklore of various kinds since my early years. It is because our father would read a fairytale to us in the evening, while our mother sang with us every day in the twilight hour. And so I did later with our children. We used to spend vacations in the native places of our parents in the Saxonian Erzgebirge, where I very much liked to listen to the grown-ups talking about former times and strange things that had happened. Father's older brother was a good storyteller and liked to make us children shudder by telling stories about strange events that had happened to him or other people from the village. And so he did later too, not only in former but still in socialist times. But the thought never came to

my mind that folk narratives might be an academic subject. So I studied Sinology with Eduard Erkes, who didn't once refer to the fairytale motifs well known from our German tradition, and Tibetology at the Leipzig University; I graduated with a study about fables by a modern Chinese author.

Fortunately just at that time Gerhard Kahlo taught Indonesian at our institute, and so I heard his – first of all for me – very interesting “Introduction into Indonesian folklore”, and from this followed a private lecture, “Volkskunde”. He encouraged me to continue my academic way with studies in Chinese oral traditions and my professor of Sinology agreed to this. But during an additional one-year of

studies at Peking University our professor died, and when I returned the situation at the institute had changed seriously. So I started working in a Tibetan geographic project. However, I was soon asked to initiate myself into spoken Mongolian, and, to quote the tale *The Coral from Australasia*: "This was the head/beginning of the island". Step by step I took the path of Mongolian folktales, dedicated my dissertation to Mongolian fairytales<sup>1</sup> and soon came across a small Tuvan group in the uttermost west of Mongolia who speak a Turkic language and are related to Tuvans in southern Siberia, although they have no written script of their own still they have many storytellers and some famous rhapsodists. It was the proverbial last minute to document some of their fairy- and hero-tales. So I returned to my beloved fairy tales, and experienced the truth in the German proverb *Der Mensch denkt, und Gott lenkt*.

### How did you become involved in the ISFNR?

When I was preparing the second edition of *Tuvan Fairytales*,<sup>2</sup> I became acquainted with Gisela Burde-Schneidewind and Friedmar Geißler, editors of the well known Berlin Academic series "Volksmärchen - eine internationale Reihe". Later – inspired by Gisela – I translated and compiled "Mongolische Volksmärchen" a second edition for this series to be published in 1991. However, with the reunion of Germany serious changes took place in the sphere of publishing and the Berlin Akademie-Verlag was affected too. I decided not to trouble Gisela, for she tried to keep the folktale series alive – unfortunately in vain. The whole process of destroying something like a life's work, all the endeavours and – sometimes offending – disappointments, must have been very hard for Gisela. And then I heard that she had passed away. When I tried to get my manuscript back, there was another publisher, the old editor was no longer there and my manuscript had disappeared. Thanks to Siegfried Neumann

one copy was found in the archive of the former Academy of Sciences of the former GDR – it was the one from Gisela's writing desk.

Being no folklorist and living in the former GDR, most of my scientific contacts were to the East. When I was preparing *Tuvan Fairytales*, I had to work in the then Leningrad's libraries in order to become acquainted with editions from Tuva, and Gisela had established a contact with Kirill Vasilyevich Chistov [*former Vice-President of the ISFNR representing Europe – ed.*] by writing him a letter. When I arrived in Leningrad, Kirill Vasilyevich was so kind to meet me at the station together with his wife Bella Yefimovna and brought me to an aspirant's guest-house just close to their own dwelling. This acquaintance very soon changed into a deep and lasting friendship between our families. In Leningrad's public library, the department with south Siberian editions was under reconstruction and closed. But Kirill Vasilyevich ensured that I was able to work with catalogues and every needed edition there as well as in the Academy of Sciences and the Kunst-kamera, where he himself had his sanctum and where he acquainted me with ethnologists working on Tuva and south Siberia in general. Later, when I had compiled the edition of Altai Tuvan fairytales and (other) traditions,<sup>3</sup> I stayed in the Chistov's home for about five or six weeks where I proof-read dear Bella's translation into Russian and together we settled every open question. It was a very inspiring time there, when I learned a lot about the ISFNR and its congresses, and full of cultural events in the evening and good talks at the family's table. I miss them so much.

Some time later the Göttingen Congress took place, where I had the pleasure of becoming acquainted – among other dear colleagues, for instance from the *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* – with Kirill Vasilyevich's former student Bronislava Kerbelytė, whose name I heard more than once

in the Chistov's home. It was my first ISFNR Congress and I felt happy among so many people with the same interest in and love for folklore in all its aspects. I remember having felt in high spirits, because in my very academic surrounding at Leipzig University influential colleagues had considered my engagement with the folk-narratives and folklore in general and – more besides – of an at that time almost unknown people like Tuvans, to be not a serious scientific subject compared with linguistics, history or political economy, and smirked at it a little. So it was wonderful and encouraging to experience such a great community of scholars engaged in studying folk traditions and lore, which were so close to my heart from early childhood.

So I am glad to be here at the Athens Congress in your capital rich in historical and cultural tradition. Now I am looking forward to the congress and the meeting with old and – so I hope – new friends.

<sup>1</sup> Folkloristischer und sachlicher Gehalt mongolischer Märchenstoffe (1964 - not published).

<sup>2</sup> Tuwinische Volksmärchen, Berlin 1978; (1977 appeared: *Das Leopardenscheckige Pferd*, Berlin; 1980 *Tuwinische Lieder*, Leipzig; 2004 *Volksmärchen der Mongolen*, München).

<sup>3</sup> Skazki i predaniya altayskikh tuvincev (Moscou 1994) in the academic series "Skazki i mify narodov Vostoka."

## Sue (Ruth B.) Bottigheimer

Stony Brook University, New York, USA

### How and when did you become a member of the ISFNR?

It was 1984, and I was talking with Alan Dundes at Princeton, where I had organized a conference on fairy tales. He said I should be a member of the ISFNR, and put me up for membership. But that was just the first step. That fall I was giving a talk on the Grimms' tales in Kassel, and also finishing up research on my book about the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* by visiting several libraries and archives in Switzerland and Germany. Through reviewing a book by Jack Zipes for *Fabula*, I had come into contact with Elfriede Moser-Rath. Not only did Elfriede invite me to stay with her, she also introduced me to everyone at the *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* and then made arrangements for me to meet Rudolf Schenda in Zürich and Herman Bausinger in Tübingen. The warm welcome that she and the whole team at the *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* gave me made me feel embraced in a wonderful way, a sense that has continued to this day.

### Are there any ISFNR meetings that have been particularly memorable and why?

The 1989 meeting in Budapest was quite interesting, because that was the one in which the gender balance in ISFNR governance shifted. I remember coming into the great meeting room and being struck by the fact that all of the officers except for one, I think, were men, but that in the audience, women predominated. That seemed odd, and a group of us set about to rebalance the makeup of the elected officers. We went around sounding several women out about whether they'd be willing to stand for election, and then we went around to find men to nominate them. Bengt Holbek was one of the men we asked to nominate a woman, and he did so, but he didn't hear very well and ended up nominating one woman for a different office than we had envisaged! It would be fun to ask everybody who took part in that little revolution to write down what they remember, because there were many people, including for instance, Galit Hasan-Rokem, who took part in it.



Sue (Ruth B.) Bottigheimer is the author of several books, including *Fairy Tales: A New History*, published in 2009 by SUNY Press.

Photo: private collection.

For me personally I suppose the Tartu meeting will remain more vivid than any other, because of the reaction to the talk I gave there. The uproar was so at odds with the calm beauty of the 18th-century lecture hall. People stood up and shouted, or stormed out of the room. I'd never seen anything like it.



R-L: Jūratė Šlekonytė and Lina Būgienė, organizers of the 2013 ISFNR Congress in Vilnius, Lithuania. Next to them Irma-Riitta Järvinen (Finland) and Isabel Cardigos (Portugal).

Photo by Ülo Valk.



## CALL FOR PAPERS

### ISFNR Interim Conference in North-East India

February 22-25, 2011

### Telling Identities: Individuals and Communities in Folk Narratives

Preparations have started for the next ISFNR interim conference to be held February 22-25, 2011 in North East India. This easternmost part of India is a homeland for many peoples and languages; it is a wonderful destination for visitors because of its beautiful landscape, historical monuments and rich variety of folk cultures. The first Indian Department of Folkloristics was founded here in 1972 at the University of Gauhati, the oldest university in the region. The interim conference will be organized by the Department of Folklore Research, University of Gauhati, and the Department of Cultural & Creative Studies of the North-Eastern Hill University (NEHU) in Shillong, the capital city of the state of Meghalaya in North-East India.

#### Conference Venue:

Multi-Purpose Convention Centre,  
North-Eastern Hill University,  
Mawkynroh-Umshing,  
Shillong – 793 022, Meghalaya, India

The main topic of the conference will be:

#### Telling Identities: Individuals and Communities in Folk Narratives

We invite you to contribute a paper on one of the following subtopics:

1. Ethnicity and Cultural Identity
2. Identity and Belonging in a Transnational Setting
3. Identity in the History of Folkloristics
4. Places and Borders
5. Belief Narratives and Social Realities
6. Revisiting Colonial Constructs of Folklore
7. The Making and Mapping of Urban Folklore

8. North-East India and South-East Asia: Inter-Cultural Dialogue

9. Critiquing the Paradigm of "Folklorists' Paradise": A North-East India Perspective

A Book Exhibition will be scheduled in the context of the ISFNR Interim Conference in North-East India. Authors-participants are earnestly requested to donate a copy of books exhibited to the Departmental Library of the Department of Cultural and Creative Studies, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong.

Please submit your **registration:**

by E-mail: [isfnrshillong@gmail.com](mailto:isfnrshillong@gmail.com)  
by fax: + 91 364 272 1010/2551634  
by mail: ISFNR Interim Conference in North-East India, Department of Cultural and Creative Studies, North-Eastern Hill University, Umshingawkyroh, Shillong – 793 022, Meghalaya, India  
Phone: +91 364 272 3371/72/74/79

**Registration Fee (Last date for Regular Registration October 1, 2010)**  
Full Registration: \$200  
Accompanying person: \$150

**Late Registration** until December 1, 2010  
Full Registration: \$250  
Accompanying person: \$200

**No request for registration will be entertained after this date**

**Submission of Abstracts** (Deadline: September 1, 2010)  
Sessions and panels will be structured according to topics (with a maximum of three participants).  
Participants are kindly asked to indi-

cate the sub-topics for their papers while submitting the abstracts.

Format: RTF, Rich Text Format

Font: Times New Roman, 12 point.

Length: up to 300 words.

Space: single (double space between title/subtopic/author/address and the body of the abstract)

You will be notified about the acceptance or proposed modification (if any) of your abstract by November 1, 2010.

Please note that presentations should not exceed 20 minutes followed by 10 minutes of discussion.

**Secretary of the conference** is Prof. Desmond L. Kharmawphlang  
[desmondkharmawphlang@gmail.com](mailto:desmondkharmawphlang@gmail.com)

Email correspondence should be addressed to Dr. Rabindranath Sarma / Mr. Macdonald Lyngdoh Ryntathieng/ Ms. Margaret Lyngdoh with a cc to [rsfolk@gmail.com](mailto:rsfolk@gmail.com)  
[mac50@rediffmail.com](mailto:mac50@rediffmail.com)  
[ninilyngdoh@gmail.com](mailto:ninilyngdoh@gmail.com)

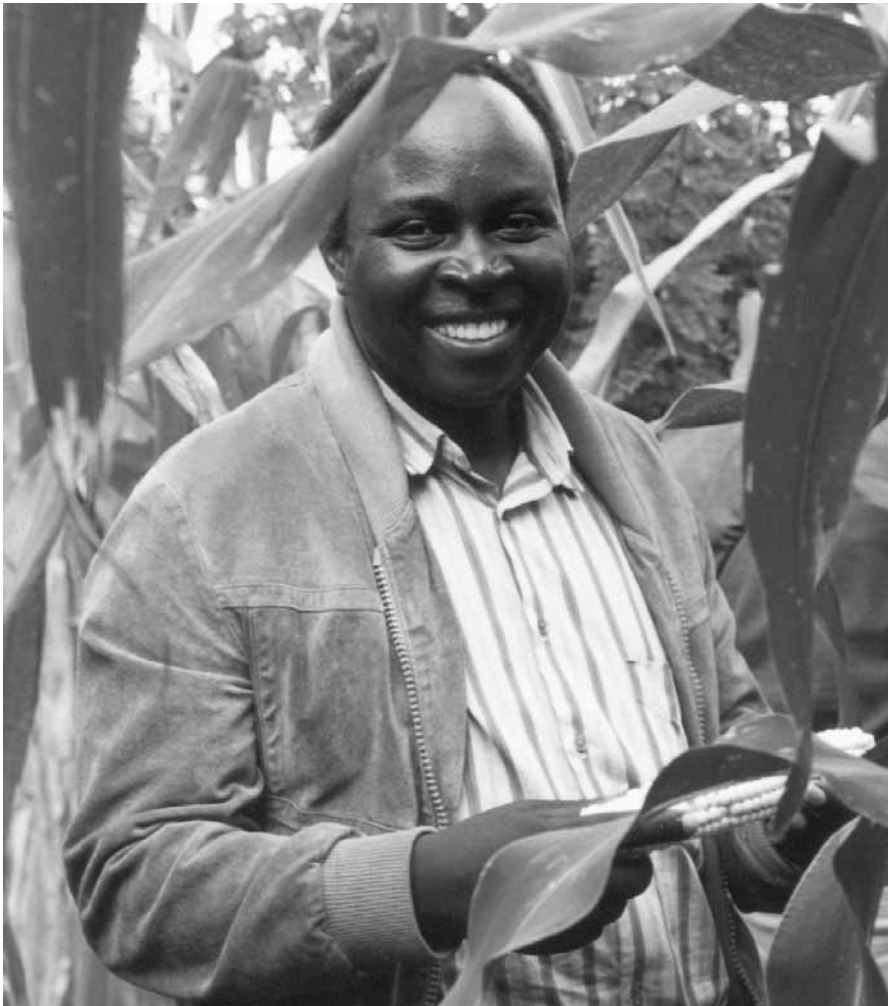
#### Further Information

A second circular including further information will be issued in July, 2010. A third circular including the congress programme will be issued shortly before the congress dates.

For updates please check the ISFNR website at <http://isfnr.org/files/nextinterimconference.html>

Welcome to North-East India!

## Ezekiel Alembi (12.12.1960 – 17.01.2010)



Ezekiel Alembi served for over ten years as the ISFNR Vice-President representing Africa and was an accomplished children's author in his native Kenya.

*Photo by Andres Kuperjanov.*

In the middle of January, the unexpected news of the death of Ezekiel Alembi shocked folklorists all over the world. A young man, scholar, a pillar of support for his family and kin, the tribe, neighbourhood children and young Kenyan playwrights, colleague, companion, friend, poet, actor, speaker for his culture and African languages. Death has no heart, wrote an anonymous Kenyan web commentator in conclusion of an article in memoriam of Ezekiel Alembi. Yes, that is so! Death has no heart.

Ezekiel began his education in 1971 in the Ziواني primary school in Taita Tavesta, graduated the local Ebwirany school in Kakamega, and went on to secondary education in Kakamega

and Kangaru Embu high schools. His studies next took him to Nairobi's Kenyatta University where he defended his MA on local children's songs in 1991. His further education was tightly interconnected with the Finnish Folklore Fellows' summer schools. It was in Helsinki that he wrote his doctoral thesis entitled "The Construction of the Abanyole Perceptions on Death through Oral Funeral Poetry", on Abanyole death culture. Ezekiel used to reminisce about how the village people gathered to give their opinion on the study written about them and gave their approval. As a scholar, Ezekiel became a member of the ISFNR, taking part in the Society's congresses and conferences from 1995. Since 1998, he was Africa's representative

on the ISFNR board. The year 2000 interim conference gave the Society a chance to, in turn, get acquainted with the work of Kenyan folklorists and philologists. He belonged to the editorial boards of several American folklore journals. He was a long-time member of the editorial board of the journal "Folklore. EJF", published in Tartu, and also a valued reviewer and publishing author.

Ezekiel had a most contagious laughter, which helped him overcome every difficult problem and he never tired of repeatedly saying that happiness and luck do not go hand in hand with riches. "Look at the people of my home country, they are happy despite being poor and the earth being overworked." There were only a few times that I ever saw Ezekiel look worried. In November 1999, he came to my office, looking disturbed, and said that he needed to phone Patricia in Nairobi right away. He had dreamed that the graves of his parents in their home garden were disorderly. "It is a bad sign, it needs to be looked into at once, even though it is far from the capital." His home village and the folklore of the region, his tight connections with the local people and their heritage were very much an integral part of his life, the source and support from which he drew his work as a lecturer on literature at the Nairobi Kenyatta University. "One day I will be writing on entirely different topics that I do not have a blood tie to," he used to dream. Years later, we travelled from Nairobi to Abanyole through the open spaces of Kenya: past the houses of cattle breeders, through the lands of the Lous and other tribes. The bountiful trees, tea and coffee plantations, cornfields, national parks, the shores of Lake Victoria pink with flamingos, roadside churches with a black-skinned Jesus and apostles, the fire-red soil clashing with the green of the grass so that it hurt the eyes. Every square inch of arable earth seemed to be in use.

Ezekiel was, as anyone can attest, a most enchanting narrator and a wonderful dancer. It was difficult to tell where fantasy and international story motives ended and where personal belief experiences began, so well were they mixed into stories. Good narrators, dancers, local healers, good local drummers, gifted students – those were his interest and care. His mission was to record the rich panoply of human knowledge before international flights and tourism erase them to oblivion.

Ezekiel's interests and community work were bound up with children's literature published in African languages. "School textbooks and children's books must be in the mother tongue. We have reason to be proud of our rich culture and not just copy the

example of American commercial culture." He considered it his mission to provide African children with literature and education in the mother tongue. Egara Kabaji reminds us that "His first publication, 'Don't be Long John', was a hit. It was followed by yet another puller, 'High Adventure'. These two publications launched Alembi as a writer with great promise." By 2003, when he was awarded a literary prize, he was already author of more than 40 children's books and a published poet.

Already as early as 1988, he had attended a short course on creative writing in Sydney, Australia. He was for years also the National Chairman, Kenya Schools and Colleges Drama Festival, as well as during last years director of Kenyatta University Radio Services. One of the last things

he did in support of his home village children's quest for education was to set up a library. It is a worthy addition to the house where once his father used to teach children how to read.

There is a mighty fig tree, a symbol of vitality, growing near Ezekiel's village house. The thousand-year-old tree is a silent witness to the flow of village people: children going to school, parents going to market or work. A few meters from the tree, in the yard of the farmstead, people of the Alembi family lie in their final resting place. Now Ezekiel has joined them, under the beautifully blooming trees and cicadas singing at night, being mourned by thousands of Kenyans.

Mare Kõiva  
Tartu, Estonia

## Locating Folk Narrative in the Scheme of Contemporary Folklore Scholarship

by Jacqueline S. Thursby, Brigham Young University, Provo, USA



Jacqueline S. Thursby is the author of *Funeral Festivals in America: Rituals for the Living* (The University Press of Kentucky, 2009) and several other books.

Photo: private collection.

When I entered my last stage of graduate work for a PhD in American Culture Studies, I was told that ethnographic research was a waning prac-

tice, and that if I wanted to do that type of work for my dissertation, I would be on my own. My Master's training at Utah State University carried a strong ethnographic and vernacular focus combined with traditional academic scholarship, and that was my foundational training in folkloristics. I was finally given permission to work along the same methods for the doctoral dissertation. Since that time, my scholarship has broadened, but as a folklorist, ethnography and collaboration with informants have remained a central part of my work.

In 1993, Elaine J. Lawless, the Past President of the American Folklore Society, published *Holy Women, Wholly Women: Sharing Ministries of Wholeness Through Life Stories and Reciprocal Ethnography*. The concept of reciprocal ethnography intrigued me. I was working with Basque American women, wives and daughters of sheep herders who had migrated to

the United States from the Basque Country in Northern Spain. I liked the idea of sending my informants what I had gleaned from their tape-recorded interviews to be certain that I wrote what they felt was accurate. It was a long process, there were over one hundred women, but it was collaborative and ultimately proved pleasing to the women I was representing, and my work was well received when it was published.

There are more texts available now discussing the concept of collaboration and reciprocal ethnography. These texts, including Luke Eric Lassiter's *The Chicago Guide to Collaborative Ethnography* (2005), help folklorists and anthropologists (and journalists) understand the relationship between the ethnographer and subject, as well as the writing process. Careful ethnography goes well beyond a common folklore collection filed in a university archive and seldom remem-

bered. It is an applied service of public scholarship, and a valuable record of expressed human culture.

Contemporary academic folklore scholarship is an amalgam – a mixture of diverse methods, elements, and voices. It is both ethnographic and scholarly. It is both carefully synthesized scholarship and puppeteering. It is Bakhtin's continuing dialogic. George Marcus wrote that Bakhtin "undermines monologic authority to be sure, while not subverting ethnographic knowing" (1998: 37). Robert Georges and Michael Owens Jones stated in their introduction to *Folkloristics* (1995) that Lévi-Strauss characterized in *The Savage Mind* (1966) "myths [or folklore] as having as their source a heterogenous but limited corpus of components (1) that are 'remains and debris of events' or 'fossilized evidence of the history of an individual or a society,' and (2) that are continuously ordered and reordered by a particular mode of thought (called 'mythical thinking' by Lévi-Strauss)" (Georges and Jones 1995: 258-259). Folklore is bricolage, a multi-faceted effort created from many edited and reedited components and sources. It is interdisciplinary, synchronic and diachronic, and like the rising waters of a tide inundates every molecule on a coastal beach, folklore inundates the human condition.

It is constructed, consciously or not, revived and reinvented, and has been so since humans first began to discover the meanings of one another and attempted to communicate. It is cultural, not biological, and includes vernacular traditions, material creations, customary behaviors, folk and deep religious beliefs, and thousands of motifs. As William A. Wilson, emeritus Folklore professor from Brigham Young University stated by the title of one of his books, it is *The Marrow of Human Experience* (2006).

In the following discussion, variant perspectives about folklore and folk narrative, historical and contemporary,

will be presented. I teach introductory and graduate classes in folklore and literature, and my primary objective in those classes is to help students prepare for their own life experience by catching a glimpse of folklore, and how it can enhance their own life journey. I begin with many definitions: "Artistic communication in small groups (Ben-Amos 1971); "expressive culture" (Feintuch 2003); "dynamic variation" (Toelken 1996), and perspectives: ideological, functional, structural, psychological, feminist, mass culture, and others, but to help students new to folklore understand, I find it effective to reach far back in time to the bards and lays, griots (griou) and ancient tellers.

Most students new to folklore have a misunderstanding of what folklore is. They assume that we will read and discuss familiar childhood tales. We do that, but they soon understand that folkloristics is a much broader study. Some literary scholars wave folklorists away as simple story collectors and suggest that folklore could not survive without literature, but I know that literature could not survive without folklore. Folklore transmitted culture long before writing was invented; it is a complex vessel through which expressed human behaviors have flowed abundantly since humanity began.

In the last several years there has been an ongoing debate about "orality" and "literacy" specifically of Old English verse. How has it come down to us? Has it been through oral composition or primarily written? After all, it has been transmitted only by manuscript for centuries? Well-known scholars, names familiar to many of you such as Albert B. Lord (1965) and John Miles Foley (2002) have expertly studied and theorized ancient oral and written poetry. Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe has used the term "residual orality" to suggest that the scribes were apparently "familiar with a system of oral formulaic composition which led them to substitute

metrically and lexically acceptable variants into the text as they were writing it" (O'Brien O'Keeffe 1990: back cover). In her text, *Visible Song: Transitional Literacy in Old English Verse* (1990), she takes us to a new level of understanding about ancient bardic lore, and how it was embedded into manuscripts.

### Uses for the Tales

In his essay "Folklore, Nationalism, and the Challenge of the Future," William Wilson wrote that "It may be true that folklore captures the soul of a people, but it is equally true that the image of that soul reflected in folklore is also a constructed image, a reflection not necessarily of an objective reality but rather of the ideological predisposition of the individual holding the mirror" (Wilson 2006: 147). As is well known among folklorists, Johann Gottfried von Herder believed that a folk poetry revival would move German literature away from the rationalism and the Enlightenment. His *mirror* reflected a desire to revive the voices of the fathers, the "heroic customs, of noble virtues and language" (Herder, 1967-68, 9: 530-31).

Jack Zipes wrote in *Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk and Fairy Tales* (2002: 31) that: "Herder borrowed heavily from folklore and used it in order to try to forge a sense of unity among the German people. A second wave of German bourgeois writers, the romantics, went a step further at the end of the 1790s by radically utilizing the folk tradition in heavily symbolical literature to criticize the restraints and hypocrisy of bourgeois codes which were gradually being instituted in public spheres of interest. It should be stressed that, while the romantics assumed a positive attitude toward the folk tale and its tradition, these writers represented a minority position". Zipes explains that the most popular tales among the middle class Germans were rationalistic and moralistic stories and novels, and traditional folk tales were dismissed "as nonsensical, irrational, and trivial" (2002: 31).

The folktale often expresses hope through struggle for a better fortune; the fairy tale, also incorporating struggle, is a contrived literary form that uses folklore mostly to entertain and teach. These folk narratives, folk tales and fairy tales, edited into thousands of variants and diligently gathered and classified by the Finnish School, were largely what Ruth Bottigheimer would call rise tales or restoration tales, meaning stories in which the “plots traced the rise of humbly born heroes and heroines from poverty to wealth” (2002: 5), or tales where wealth or position was lost and eventually restored. Bottigheimer suggested that tales of social rise followed the same pattern: rags-magic-marriage-riches, and after intense scholarly research in the social history of the Renaissance, she found that Zoan Francesco Straparola (1480/1490–1557) may have been the first to use this formula in literary folk tales.

I do not know the specific origin of the rise tale, but I do know that in “Baucis and Philemon,” one of the stories in Ovid’s *Metamorphosis* (1955: 200–204), there are magical or supernatural elements. They were a poor, hard working couple who married young and lived contentedly in a lowly thatched cottage near a marsh, and they had grown old together. Jupiter (Zeus in Greece) and Mercury (Hermes in Greece) were visiting the land of Phrygia to discover if people were observing the dictates of hospitality. They had been turned away with harsh words and severe disrespect from several homes, and had become discouraged. When they came upon the humble cottage of the elderly couple, they were welcomed with a warm fire, simple food such as the couple had, and safe lodging for the night. As the strangers reached for the simple food, it transformed into a succulent feast. The gods revealed themselves and rewarded the couple with a never-failing wine pitcher for libation to the gods, and in addition, their home was transformed into a golden temple, and they were entrusted with the care of it

for the rest of their days. Their selfish neighbors in Phrygia were suddenly lost in a lake that appeared out of nowhere. Their wish to die at the same time was granted, and long after, when that occurred, they were transformed into an intertwined oak tree and a linden tree, long-time symbols of hospitality. I see the elements of the rise tale in this ancient narrative, though the couple was married when the magic took place. An interesting footnote to this tale is that later Biblical tales seemed to emerge from it including the story of St. Paul and St. Barnabas when they cured a cripple at Lystra, a small town of Lycaonia. The villagers hailed them, much to their embarrassment, as Zeus and Hermes.

Franz Boas, anthropologist and early editor of the *Journal of American Folklore*, noted in 1927 that “All human activities may assume forms that give them esthetic values” ([1927] 1955: 8). Humans obviously create language, texts, and cultural history to find and express meaning and beauty in the present, and Henry Glassie suggested that folklore scholars must “Accept, to begin, that tradition is the creation of the future out of the past” (2003: 176). He continued, “Our understanding begins as we refine tradition in conjunction with history and culture:” (*ibid.*).

Today’s quest for folk narrative has gone in myriad directions: tradition, context, performance, identity, genre, and more labels for vast, complex concepts continue to attempt to explain the slippery rocks of folkloristics. We capture the tales now electronically, and as Deborah A. Kapchan wrote, “We become taxidermists, mounting, naming, and numbering it. Some would even like to breathe new life into the beast. But once a performance has been turned into a text, the original is, in fact, dead, its simulacrum fit only for a museum or book” (2003: 122).

As contemporary ethnographers become more reflexive, the writing can easily become more about the author

than the subject. One recent text that demonstrates that trend in contemporary folk narrative scholarship is Deborah E. Reed-Danahay’s edited volume, *Auto/Ethnography: Rewriting the Self and the Social* (1997). In this anthology, Reed-Danahay discusses Mary Louise Pratt as describing auto/ethnology as linked to “relations between colonized and colonizer, and to modes of resistance to dominant discourses offered by the native account. For her, however, auto/ethnography is a form of ethnography of one’s own culture, rather than a piece of autobiography” (Reed-Danahay 1997: 7). Pratt defines auto/ethnography as “a text in which people undertake to describe themselves in ways that engage with representations others have made of them” (Pratt 1994: 8). Is this not representative, again, of the ancient tales of resistance to the dominant discourse told from a contemporary perspective?

Over the last ten years, two books with very similar titles have been released; *Being There: The Necessity of Fieldwork* (1998) by Daniel Bradburd, and *Being There: The Fieldwork Encounter and the Making of Truth* (2009) by John Borneman and Abdellah Hammoudi. Bradburd (1998), denying post-modernist arguments against authentic understanding of others, contends “that the knowledge achieved through field experience holds the potential for bridging the world’s increasing – and increasingly destructive – cultural divisions” (back cover).

Borneman and Hammoudi (2009) continue the defense of fieldwork suggesting that strategies of theoretical puppeteering (building on former theories), textual analysis, and surrogate ethnography slur over relative truth gained through fieldwork. They laud encounter, fieldwork, gathering the folk narratives from the subjects, and laying aside fear of the so-called ethnographers “gaze” (2009: 2). Collaboration as a way of understanding fieldwork with new openness and truth

and less risk for the participants is the key to both of these texts.

On collaboration, George Marcus stated:

“the vision of a collaborative relationship between anthropologist [folklorist] and informant as authors of ethnography in the field has provided a strong reimagining of the regulative ideal of rapport in the ideology of anthropological [folkloric] practice. (...) (112). The collaborative ideal entails the notions that knowledge creation in fieldwork always involves negotiating a boundary between cultures and that the result is never reducible to a form of knowledge that can be packaged in the monologic voice of the ethnographer alone” (Marcus 1998: 112, 113). Marcus also recalled the particular influence Mikhail Bakhtin, mentioned earlier, has had on Anglo-American ethnographers by exposing and approving of:

“The craft and technique of polyphonic representation. (...) This strategy of experimentation in ethnography, which has already been well-labelled as dialogic, has generated a literature of collaborative works, confessional texts reflecting on the conditions of fieldwork discourses, and works with the heightened attention to the character and content of the multitude of distinct discourses (voices?) that compose any project of ethnographic research” (1998: 37).

Marcus wisely cautions as he describes collaborative methodology, but it is the direction of the field. Human performances of personal narratives and lived stories, simply narrated occurrences in human interaction and experience, continue to be the primary source for the “study of the present” as Linda Dégh stated in her book *Legend and Belief* (2001). Barbara Myerhoff, in *Number Our Days* (1978), on her own voyage of meaning, wrote: “The tale is told to tame the chaos of the world, to give it meaning” (1978, n.p.). The work continues and feeds new generations of cultural researchers.

Examples of recent ethnographic related publications in well-known and respected folklore journals include an excellent, in-depth book review of *Folklore: An Emerging Discipline: Selected Essays of Herbert Halpert*, edited by Martin Lovelace, Paul Smith, and J. D. A. Widdoson (2002) by Margaret Bennet (2006). Halpert was a professor at Memorial University of Newfoundland, and the reviewed book speaks of Halpert’s fieldwork methods, and the continued relevance of his scholarship. Dating back to 1946, his essays on “Issues and Approaches” are as relevant today as then, as Halpert tackles basic questions – fieldwork methods, classification, interpretation, the occurrence of obscene or sensitive material, or (in today’s terms) the absence of political correctness, copyright, and the questionable “right to publish” (2006: 347). His “greatest legacy, however, must be in the realm of the folk tale” (Bennet 2006: 348). According to the editors, his research superceded in scope and rarity collections made by Stith Thompson (his PhD chair), and Richard Dorson, past chair of the Folklore Department at Indiana University at Bloomington. Halpert fervently believed that the folk narrative traditions of the British Isles and Ireland must be mastered before the English-language-folk-narrative of Canada and the United States could be studied properly.

A recent issue of *Western Folklore* included an article by Timothy Corrigan Correll, called “You Know About Needle-Boy, Right?: Variation in Rumors and Legends About Attacks with HIV-Infected Needles” (Correll 2008). In addition to broad historical and academic research, Correll included a long list of UCLA Folklore and Mythology Archive materials (18 entries) gathered from narrative performances. Most were less than ten years old, and the information presented in the up-to-date article will be useful in the public sector. These are frightening stories meant to give form to disturbing realities of today’s world. Correll

(2008: 60) states:

“The main group of narratives I consider include: (1) a victim in a public place who (2) feels a mysterious prick, and (3) shortly thereafter, learns that he or she has been purposefully wounded with an HIV-tainted needle. (...) In one version (...) the culprit pokes the victim then whispers, “Welcome to the world of AIDS,” laughs, and runs off. In many of the stories it is (4) related that the message is later confirmed when the wounded party is tested positive for the virus.”

Coralynn V. Davis reveals in her ethnography called “Pond-Women Revelations: The Subaltern Registers in Maithil Women’s Expressive Forms” (2008) the women’s knowledge and influence in shaping their society through the dialogic nature of their expressive practices:

“Maithil women (...) tell folk stories. By attending to these women’s stories, one of my aims is to bring these narratives and the lives, perspectives, and insights of the women who tell them to the attention of those for whom their existence, and the value of that existence, is unacknowledged” (Davis 2008: 297).

Ülo Valk (2006: 4) wrote that “Theory does not require universal technical terms with fixed meanings, but needs open and flexible concepts that enable creative thinking. Different opinions, disagreements, and ongoing discussion are all signs of the healthy state of folkloristics”. The point, as I tell my undergraduate and graduate students, is no longer a search for the *Ur-form*, the original, but rather it is an acceptance of the many forms that present themselves – the dynamic variation. Henry Glassie stated that “Ethnography is interaction, collaboration. What it demands is not hypothesis, which may unnaturally close the study down, obscuring the integrity of the other, but the ability to converse intimately” (1982, n.p.).

In closing, we are all folklorists, anthropologists, ethnographers and hu-

man beings concerned about the state of world culture. Some focus on orality; i.e., vernacular transmission, and others on literary evidence of record. Are we all not seeking links to the meaning of the human condition? Do we not all recognize residual orality in literary works? Do we not all recognize the bricolage of the folks? And did not Alan Dundes remind us that we are all folks? Quoting Francisco Vaz da Silva's notes on the 14<sup>th</sup> Congress of the ISFNR, "Wolfgang Mieder, in his moving homage to Dundes in Tartu, recalled what Dundes "preached throughout his productive and fruitful life, namely that folkloristics is the key to a better understanding of the human condition and that its practitioners should conduct their work on a comparative and international basis" (Vaz da Silva 2006: 13).

I feel greatly privileged to be permitted to participate in the 2009 ISFNR Congress. Thank you, and I hope this paper has contributed in some way to our mutual dedication to the dynamic and vital discipline of folkloristics.

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## The Mind of a Discipline – Toward a Finnish Theory of Folklore

by Outi Lehtipuro, University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu



Outi Lehtipuro during the 14th ISFNR congress in Tartu in summer 2005.

Photo by Alar Madisson.

Regina Bendix' work on the formation of German and American folklore studies (*In Search of Authenticity*, 1997) is a perplexing experience for a reader to whom Finland is the homeland of folkloristics. This is not quite the same discipline, the same path of thinking with which we are familiar. The enthusiasm aroused by Johann Gottfried Herder met a prepared soil in Finland: we already had an understanding of Finnish oral tradition. And while the authenticity of folk poetry publications had been argued in the big countries, Finnish scholars would with all their senses meet with a world behind the *Kalevala* where various aesthetic registers of the spoken word were a reality. More of those were collected up to the 1960s, when our generation of folklore students – born in the 1940s – entered the scene.

The 'Finnish' method along with the national fervour had lost its potential; scholarly ambition was targeted at understanding folklore in general. The 1974 ISFNR meeting in Helsinki (cf. Folk Narrative Research. *Studia Fennica* 20. 1976) was a watershed. It gave us the chance both to define the agenda and to measure up the leading international scholars in the field. One thing was clear. The new American concept of folklore as artistic communication in small groups did not meet our needs: a Finnish theory of folklore should also cover the variation in time and space offered by large archive collections.

Now again we have a new generation of scholars. Doubts have been voiced whether such a thing as folklore really exists. Then, suddenly, an outline of a new almost Herderian theory of folklore appears from a multitude of current approaches and from the development of our old allies linguistics and aesthetics. This development, this outline, I will discuss in my paper.

I have a strong feeling of owning the ISFNR congresses of the seventies as I reported them journalistically in real time and wrote the scholarly reports of both Helsinki and Edinburgh, and am the only person who really did read every single paper that the congress organisations received from the speakers. I took these jobs to clear my mind about this discipline after having changed my object of study from kalevalametric songs to narratives in a village<sup>1</sup> and in many ways these two meetings, very different from each other as they were,<sup>2</sup> have shaped my idea about the scope of folkloristics.

During the eighties, after the Bergen meeting in 1984, I stopped participating in the congresses as I thought I had nothing important to say to an international audience and I was tired of the tough job of reporting, which effectively prevented me enjoying the social life at the congresses. When Rolf Brednich assured me of an existing interest in the Finnish way of thinking before the Göttingen meeting in 1998, I picked up my old writings and began updating my understanding.<sup>3</sup> Now I think that Brednich, who participated in the Helsinki congress and probably had read what I had written about trends in Finnish folkloristics (1974) for the congress audience, already knew about *In Search for Authenticity* by Regina Bendix, which I mention in my abstract.

I picked up Regina Bendix' inspiring book (1997) after listening to her paper at the 2005 Tartu congress, and

her title word "Authenticity" immediately rang a bell in my head. Still I will not discuss her ideas here, but try to deliver a kind of inside view of a brand of folkloristic thinking, the greater part of which exists in a language that most of you do not read. Much of it is part of the international dialogue as well, but I will try – without adding names – to sketch a way of thinking that in the end is very much my own, based on the solid classics and an understanding of my own generation of folklorists<sup>4</sup> and some of the younger, whose work I know. Among the Finnish colleagues I always include Elli-Kaija Kõngäs-Maranda and Galit Hasan-Rokem as I am a firm believer in the importance of the formative years in shaping a scholar.<sup>5</sup> I do not constantly repeat the word Finnish. In this half-hour folkloristics<sup>6</sup> is Finnish. Don't be surprised to recognise familiar things: folklorists have been an international crew from the very beginning.

I will conclude by sharing with you my current understanding of the value of the multiplied national in our discipline.

Two textual concepts have been at the core of folkloristic thinking: genre and Folklore. As long as Finnish folklorists practically and symbolically were working at and on the Folklore archive<sup>7</sup> our attitude to genre was more practical than theoretical or philosophical.<sup>8</sup> Names, which are mainly based on vernacular practice, were needed in instructions for collectors, in order to arrange the incoming material and to describe forms of folk poetry (fi. *kansanrunous*) for various audiences.

The Finnish Method<sup>9</sup> – sometimes claimed to be a method without a theory – was not ignited by genre, but by the origin, distribution and essential meaning (fi. *sanottava*, what it has to say) of items of oral tradi-



tion, which could be recognised as variants of a 'same'; the same story, same song, same proverb. Inspiring heights in this research were reached by Martti Haavio (1899-1973), scholar and a poet, not much translated.<sup>10</sup> It was only when this line of research had reached its potential that genre<sup>11</sup> became interesting. Large folklore collections provided a solid empirical base for scholarly genre descriptions<sup>12</sup> and genre analysis, which then came to be a central theme at the Helsinki congress,<sup>13</sup> began to appear<sup>14</sup> as a universal tool in a discipline for which folklore was the *target* of the research. For other disciplines – like history or comparative religion – for which folklore was a possible source, genre consciousness would serve as a tool of source-criticism. Over time this approach has become ours too. What used to be a tool of categorisation has become a key to interpretation.

The possibility to easily record speech to be listened to and analysed over and over again is an important agent of progress, and was at first underrated.<sup>15</sup> It has taken decades to understand how much can be said that was left out when writing with pencil or pen.<sup>16</sup> While the new technique has given us tools for virtually total coverage of folklore performances<sup>17</sup> it has also provided possibilities to theoretically update earlier primary findings and interpretations.<sup>18</sup>

What has been needed for the contemporary understanding is both a scholarly turn of aesthetics and linguistics and a new democratic concept of people that turns "tradition bearers" into subjects, active agents like us, capable of mastering various registers of language. At the time when aesthetics only dealt with high art, and linguists avoided forms larger than words and sounds, genre discourse pursued metaphors (cf. note 11) that did not recognise forms of folklore as aesthetic registers of spoken language, which have a rhetoric distribution of labour in dealing with socially important issues or express-

ing cultural consciousness.

In spite of a few early openings<sup>19</sup> it was only from the sixties when the emergent scholarly turn in the humanities and the advance of the social sciences, along with the widening of folkloristic interest brought along by general cultural change,<sup>20</sup> led to problematising the concept of folklore: what it is, what are the functions of folklore in society,<sup>21</sup> and not least what in this perplexing concept with many uses, both academic and popular, delivers disciplinary identity and the basis of expertise when the focus is on our contemporary multimedial situation? An early sign of this interest was the fiercely Finnish article on the concept of folklore in *Midwest Folklore* by the fresh immigrant Elli-Kaija Kögäs-Maranda (Kögäs 1963).<sup>22</sup>

The word folklore appeared in scholarly use without much theoretical concern. Still effort has been invested in attempts to theoretically define the concept, and by so doing establish the academic status of folkloristics as an independent, theoretically and methodologically sound discipline.<sup>23</sup>

The problem appears in Finland in a different light compared for instance with the United States: for us it is not enough to define folklore as artistic communication in small groups. Our concept has to provide for the continuation in time and space offered by large archive collections. It seems to me now that we have, over the last few decades, succeeded in a way that fits with the development of other relevant disciplines<sup>24</sup> and updates the old idea of the special Finnishness of folkloristic thinking and research practice.

There are four factors behind this new understanding: (1) the operational five criteria definition of folklore, formulated in the dialogue between the archive and the field,<sup>25</sup> (2) the kalevalametric song as the paradigmatic example of this definition, (3) the dualistic idea of folklore, generated by the Finnish geographic-historical

school, and (4) the old Fennistic ethos of scholars' attachment to their own language, resulting in, among other things, being experientially and emotionally at home as interpreters as well.

## 1. Folklore

The international concept of *folklore*, the Finnish *kansanrunous* (folk poetry) and (*suullinen perinne*) ((oral) tradition) have since the early days of the academic discipline in the 1890s been synonyms in our scholarly jargon. When the main concept came to be folklore during the sociological sixties,<sup>26</sup> with no automatic connotations to either tradition (fi. *perinne*) or heritage (fi. *perintö*), traditionality (fi. *perinteellisyys*) came more and more to mean nothing more than repetition (something that is not unique). By the gradual loosening of the synonymic relationship between folklore and tradition, folklore began to look like a mind and language power of nature while – as we learned from Eric Hobsbawm, Benedict Anderson and others – tradition is something that must be accepted as such, a more political thing. The change has been very gradual, but the result at least for myself is obvious: I can no more write as I did in the seventies and eighties, using *folklore* and *perinne* as synonyms.<sup>27</sup>

Lack of strong focus on authenticity or tradition<sup>28</sup> has had consequences. Ever since folklore – instead of national or ethnic heritage (fi. *esi-isien hengenperintö*, literally "heritage of the ancestors") – came to be studied as a universal mental resource of all peoples and every individual,<sup>29</sup> the largest folklore archive in the world and the field research capacity, which grew out from the old Lönnrotian collecting practice, has yielded many things in the search for a new Finnish folkloristics. It has made it possible to present well founded large scale generalisations of various forms of folklore to demonstrate how the tiniest textual changes create new meanings, and how folklore works as the verbal mani-

festation<sup>30</sup> of the surrounding social order, economic structure and *Lebenswelt*, providing for both the social and individual need of expression, without either of which folklore would neither be born nor survive.

## 2. The Kalevala factor.

The birth of scientific (methodological) folkloristics as comparative research, which gave our national epic the *Kalevala* a glorious history and humble Finnish items of folklore a place in global and European stream of culture,<sup>31</sup> furnished Finnish folklorists with a status as researchers of *important*<sup>32</sup> matters. This ethos can be maintained when (1) research proves that important matters can be expressed by everyday, even seemingly trivial, forms of folklore,<sup>33</sup> and (2) when the turn in aesthetics makes us understand how aesthetic expression, while maintaining emotional continuity, is universally linked to matters of social value.<sup>34</sup> If folklore is a system, as has been suggested, it is useful to see it as an aesthetic system (Lehtipuro 2008a).

The Balto-Finnic and Finno-Ugric (cf. Honko et al. 1993) and even a Darwinistic element<sup>35</sup> in the research of kalevalametric song tradition has over the decades with sociological dominance reminded us of the original linguistic and philological interest in the study of folklore, and of the basic fact that as an aesthetic register, bestowed with the simultaneous capacity to create new and store ancient things, folklore belongs to the realm of natural spoken language and in the development of man has had important functions, not yet fully understood. The need to express mythical meanings and common social understanding<sup>36</sup> still exists and it is met even in new venues of communication.<sup>37</sup>

## 3. The Finnish method

...and the text-critical tradition before it<sup>38</sup> equipped us from the very beginning with a perplexing dualistic view of folklore as something very tangi-

ble, with variants to be studied by scholars, and at the same time as an abstraction like original form, tale- or proverb *type*, mentifact or invariant looming behind it. This abstraction can be discussed<sup>39</sup> and have a name, like Cinderella, and it used to be the very object of scholarly interest.

### And now comes the news:

## 4. The language factor

The fairly recent linguistic idea of *units* of variable size offered by language to its speakers, so that every speaker need not formulate everything from scratch<sup>40</sup> inevitably calls for a redefinition of this dualism embedded in classical folkloristic research practice, and to combine the new idea with the Aristotelian discussion on topics, the proper use of which belongs to common linguistic competence.<sup>41</sup> Many folklorists have over the past twenty years in their research practice taken this sense of topics to new domains,<sup>42</sup> but this kind of connection with the older folkloristic practice has not been explicitly stated – as far as I can see.<sup>43</sup>

In this context the old folkloristic virtue, love of the language and deep appreciation of the people who use it better than most<sup>44</sup> becomes important. This very sentiment inspired meetings with singers and storytellers and made fieldworkers – often students who did not belong to the same world with their informants<sup>45</sup> – invest much effort in grasping the essential formulations as they came out of the mouths of their informants – even if no-one on the spot understood what it meant.<sup>46</sup> It is no wonder, that tape recorders were eagerly accepted in use, even when doubts were raised about where the beef in the new technology might be.

Without this strongly felt experiential relationship with language many important findings over the last few decades would not have been made; and the more folklorists turn to contemporary culture, the more important their own linguistic competence as a tool of interpretation will be.

I promised not to bombard you with difficult Finnish names, but I must mention one. Pentti Leino, professor of Finnish language at the University of Helsinki, who at the time of the ISFNR Helsinki meeting in 1974 still had one foot in folkloristics, and who brought new linguistic ideas to the folklore discussions of the seventies. He left folkloristics – so he used to claim – partly because it is not a real discipline like linguistics. However, when I now read his old, and at the time very inspiring, folkloristic writings<sup>47</sup> I can easily see that he almost came to where we in my opinion now are. He was on the right track, but did not follow it through. Cognitive linguistics with the idea of *units* of language had not yet entered the scene.

Another piece of the puzzle was missing too, and the same piece was lost by the whole group of Scandinavian and Finnish folklorists that surrounds Lauri Honko, and also in the intellectual sphere of the Nordic Institute of Folklore, where I was a participant and a public scribe.<sup>48</sup>

We did not think of folklore in general as poetry but as cultural communication and it has taken me a quarter of a century of life with an aesthetician<sup>49</sup> and participation in various conferences in aesthetics and philosophy to understand how deeply aesthetic a matter folklore is, not only a 'how to do things with words' resource (cf. Austin 1976) as we learned in the sixties.<sup>50</sup> The updated understanding of folklore gives old metaphors like 'another sacred language' (by Elias Lönnrot), or 'eine besondere Form des Schaffens' (by Roman Jakobson & Pyotr Bogatyrev) new meaning and fits in with the 'how to do things with words' idea as well. It covers equally both the kalevalametric song which derives authority from tradition or its cultural partner the Balto-Finnic lament, and from the various forms of narratives and minor genres, jokes and children's lore that live their lives hidden from adult eyes and ears.

Combining the idea of aesthetic expression as a universal tool for enhancing matters of social value (cf. note 34) with the idea of units of language derived from cognitive linguistics plus the philosophical idea of the *we-mode* of sociality (Tuomela 2007, see note 36) makes it perfectly clear why various forms of folklore exist. Proper forms are needed when things must be expressed and everyday language is not enough. These intertextual aesthetic registers of spoken language grow from the environment, religion and the *Lebenswelt*<sup>51</sup> as well as from the everyday language of the speakers, just as Johann Gottfried Herder understood over two hundred years ago.<sup>52</sup> In these natural contexts folklore can also be interpreted as has been done over the last decades.

What still needs a theoretical update is the classical observations of the astonishing tenacity of folklore and its ability to cross cultural and linguistic borders. I think we may need some updated Darwinism here.

To conclude as I promised:

As folklorists are folk too, I think that every national<sup>53</sup> academic scene and group of scholars with a common language is a homeland of folkloristics, with its own unique contribution to make. This insight began to grow in me early when I spent the spring term 1967 at *Københavns Universitet* (University of Copenhagen) and met Iørn Piø, the archivist, Laurits Bødker, the lecturer, Brynjulf Alver, the leader of *Nordisk Institutt for Folkedigtning* (the Nordic Institute of Folklore), Bengt Holbek, the continental scholar, and went to the field with Carsten Bregenhøj. I started to understand that Nordic folkloristics, with much in common, is not as I had thought the same in Finland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark. Later, living in the United States, seeing Alan Dundes in his office in Berkeley surrounded by his students, and attending the yearly meetings of American Folklore Society, I under-



The 7th ISFNR Congress in Edinburgh in 1979. Rolf W. Brednich (left) and Lauri Honko (right) at the University reception.

Photo by courtesy of Rolf W. Brednich.

stood that the thing which makes a flourishing scholarly atmosphere is the lively exchange of ideas within a circle of students and scholars who share a common language, who can say exactly what they mean and deeply understand each other and know the folklore they are talking of.<sup>54</sup> Only when common understanding is achieved within these kinds of scholarly circles can it – our teachers Matti Kuusi and Lauri Honko would say that it must – be brought out to the world. I think we are getting there now. International congresses are just the tip of the iceberg. The spirit of the seventies, relying on rapid universal scholarly progress led by chosen theory committees of the kind that was working between the Helsinki and Edinburgh congresses (Bauman et al. 1982) – and which Vilmos Voigt just reminded us of – does not work.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I was among the last folklore students working on a rune-monograph and the leap (in 1970) was in many ways huge from a classical comparative theme, legend cycle *The Messiah* (see Kuusi, Bosley & Branch 1977, p. 283) to field research in a contemporary mainstream village, where no such grand folklore creations were to be expected.

<sup>2</sup> For the congress reports see Lehtipuro & Saessalo 1976 and Lehtipuro 1982. In the later report I compared the general atmosphere of the congresses and the differences and continuities between them: "In Helsinki the principal topics of discussion were genre theory, the future of structural analysis, problems associated with the transmission of tradition, and the individual and tradition. The main theme in Edinburgh, "Narrator and community", can be seen as continuing the discussion on the last two of these topics.

As a barometer of the international folkloristic climate the two congresses, Helsinki and Edinburgh, differ from each other. In Helsinki the principal topics were allotted a plenary session each, with papers from invited speakers and prepared comments. The official tone of the congress was marked by serious attempts to bring about a general discussion of principles and theory. This feeling of a general discussion was missing in Edinburgh. Not a single paper was accorded the importance of being presented at a plenary session of the whole congress. In a spirit of democratic individualism each paper, regardless of the status of the speaker, had to compete for attention with some two or four other papers given at the same time, so that each participant had to draw up his own congress programme according to personal taste" (1982: 7).

<sup>3</sup> I had started building my understanding of contemporary Finnish folkloristics in 1970 when I together with four colleagues of my own generation in neighbouring disciplines outlined the sixties for a domestic audience of scholars in the 'national' sciences (Finnish and Finno-Ugric languages, Finnish literature, Finno-Ugric ethnology, Finnish and comparative folklore research). Discussions around guest lectures in Bloomington (1993, 1998) and papers at the ISFNR congresses in Göttingen (1998) and Tartu (2005) left me with the uneasy feeling that there is something missing when getting through to those audiences, and when a suitable occasion ap-

peared I decided to take a closer look at the groundbreaking thinking of young Lauri Honko (Lehtipuro 2006 and 2008b), for a session about the classics at the 30th Nordic conference for ethnology and folkloristics in Stockholm 2006. It is obvious now – looking back at these experiences over almost 40 years later – that advance in a science like folkloristics is a slow and meandering process with various undercurrents: it is often necessary to go back for decades, sometimes even longer, to understand what has happened.

<sup>4</sup> “My generation” was born from some years before, to a couple of years after, WW II and came of age as folklorists in the sixties and seventies in the electrifying atmosphere around two inspiring professors, Matti Kuusi (1914-1998, occupant of the Helsinki chair 1959-1977) and Lauri Honko (1932-2002, founder and holder of the Turku chair 1963-1996). Each of us gathered his/her own plate at the academic *smörgåsbord* offered by these two very different scholars, in an atmosphere of increasing internationalisation, lure of sociology and disintegration of the so-called national sciences. Many of us were tempted to folklore studies by books of Kuusi’s predecessor Martti Haavio.

A constant reminder of the Finnishness of the folkloristics and of our responsibility in developing the discipline was Jouko Hautala (1910-1983), archivist, esteemed Nordic theorist (Hautala 1971(1962); *Biographica* 1971) and early mentor to Lauri Honko, personal professor by the side of Kuusi and the author of the history of Finnish and comparative folklore research (fi. *suomalainen ja vertaileva kansanrunoudentutkimus*) (Hautala 1954, abridged version in English 1969). Students of Martti Haavio (cf. note 5) seem to form a middle generation between us and those who experienced the war (see note 29) as adults.

<sup>5</sup> Before settling abroad both studied in Helsinki, Elli-Kaija Köngäs with Martti Haavio (along with Lauri Honko and Leea Virtanen) and Galit Hasan with Matti Kuusi, as one of our generation, learning from both Kuusi and Honko. Köngäs is still remembered, by those who started their studies in 1957, as the energetic and inspiring assistant who introduced the world of folklore to the newcomers under the vaults of the “biggest in the world” folklore archive of Finnish Literature Society (SKS).

<sup>6</sup> To systematically separate *folklore* (mate-

rial, object of study) and *folkloristics* (science) has been a long standing Finnish pursuit both in our dealings with US colleagues and in all international contexts.

<sup>7</sup> The bond between academic teaching and the Folklore archive was gradually loosening during the sixties when the Department of Folklore was formed and first got its own rooms at SKS, and then moved away from the house, where the discipline has had its home base together with Finnish language and literature from the time of Kaarle Krohn. Still at the time of the Helsinki congress it felt natural to begin a review of trends in Finnish folkloristics (Lehtipuro 1974) from this building. SKS was in many ways the hub of congress arrangements, with Pirkko-Liisa Rausmaa from the Folklore archive as the secretary general.

<sup>8</sup> First Honko (1967) and at the Helsinki congress Roger Abrahams and Dan Ben-Amos (Pentikäinen & Juurikka 1976) told us of other approaches.

<sup>9</sup> First defined by (Julius and) Kaarle Krohn (1926/1971), set in a wider historical continuum by Jouko Hautala (1954/1969), updated and presented “in action” (as the tool in the research of a kalevalametric poem) for the ISFNR 1974 congress audience by Matti Kuusi (1974).

<sup>10</sup> Some articles plus bibliography in *Essais folkloriques* (1959), and only two books, *Väinämöinen, Eternal Sage* (1952) and *Heilige Heine in Ingermanland* (1963). A symposium might be in place with our colleagues in Athens about Haavio’s (1963) northern view of Dionysos and Greek mythology in general.

<sup>11</sup> The word used for *Gattung*/genre was first mainly *perinteenlaji* or *perinnelaji* (a species of tradition). From the eighties onwards the word genre has gained terrain even in Finnish contexts as a move toward art talk. More research is needed to understand the subtle relationship in our folklore discourse between art and science, Linné and Darwin.

<sup>12</sup> As folklorists along with the Finnish method had achieved an eagerly accepted reputation of being more rigorously scientific than many other humanists, it was natural that proverbs, riddles and the measurable formal characteristics of kalevalametric poetry drew attention in the post-war time when quantification was the hallmark of science. From the sixties interest grew in the long neglected genres lament and joke, and fairytale (*Märchen*) in a more emic than comparative setting (Apo

1986, 1995).

<sup>13</sup> In the more ambitious form ‘genre theory’.

<sup>14</sup> Since Lauri Honko’s *Perinnejäljien tehtävistä* (On the tasks of genre analysis), 1967 – in English 1968, as a contribution to the highly actual Nordic interdisciplinary dialogue between folkloristics and comparative religion, which soon led, as intended, to the formation of a new academic discipline (comparative religion) in Finland. This move seemed at the time to change the place of folkloristics by splitting the old unity poetry & belief. Recent development has in a way contributed to a re-establishment of the old bond, suggesting that the law of self-correction, which the Estonian Walter Anderson found in folklore, also works in folkloristics.

<sup>15</sup> In hindsight it is easy to understand why many scholars at first did not think tape recordings add much value to folkloristic research: the interesting thing is that the topic was there already in the handwritten manuscripts and few saw the value of situational information.

<sup>16</sup> A breakthrough was under way from the seventies until Anna-Leena Siikala (1984, in English 1990) and Annikki Kaivola Bregenhøj (1988, in English 1996) in two parallel studies inspired by new linguistic and cognitive ideas, presented a line of research, which accurately shows *how* meanings are expressed in narratives.

<sup>17</sup> A grand realisation of an old dream – to present an oral epic of the length of the Kalevala – was in the nineties the documentation of the Indian Siri-epos, sung by Gopala Naika (Honko et al. 1998).

<sup>18</sup> The whole interdisciplinary repertoire of new insight, theory and methodology within the humaniora and the behavioural sciences is available, when the long gone informants who left us their proverbs, songs and stories are seen as people like us.

<sup>19</sup> Folklore was discussed in Kaarle Krohn’s *Folkloristische Arbeitsmethode* (1926/1971) and the ideas of Roman Jakobson and Pyotr Bogatyrev (1929) were known – but rejected – in Finland in the early thirties.

<sup>20</sup> The urbanisation and modernisation, the loosening of local ties and the diminishing domain of oral communication, seemed to mean the end of folklore. Matti Kuusi addressed the issue in his provocative inaugural lecture *Kansanperinteen metamorfoosi* (On the metamorphosis of folk tradition) in 1959 and still in 1968 I finished an illustrated ma-

gazine article about the good storytellers in Kauhajoki parish (see Siikala 1990) with a question ("Will there still be storytellers in 2000?") which implied a strong disbelief in the vitality of folklore – and I was not alone in this. Two years later I set out to 'my village' to find out more: if folklore is universal, it must exist everywhere.

<sup>21</sup> It was the interest in the institutional & ritual functions of folklore that launched Lauri Honko's academic career and through his strong personal influence inspired the Finnish and Nordic scholarly community around him. The change of paradigm that he started was a slow process and as often is the case with breakthroughs, he was obviously not fully aware of all the consequences, of what the change really was about (Lehtipuro 2006, 2008b). It took some time and a new generation of scholars to understand that the power of the word exists in expressive forms of folklore as well.

<sup>22</sup> Jouko Hautala's (1957) writings on history and theory of folkloristics loom behind the article and its approach is European and very Nordic (cf. Boberg 1953), with some influence from David Bidney's teaching at Harvard. The article has not been (as far as I have noticed) discussed in Finland: at first it may have been too self evident and then it was forgotten.

<sup>23</sup> Without such a core there is a danger that in hard academic competition the discipline will disappear among various directions of cultural studies. For many reasons the status of folkloristics in Finland seems to be stronger now than at the turn of the century. An active crowd of scholars in search of new domains meet new openings in the classic areas in an emerging common understanding.

<sup>24</sup> Among the latest 'what goes around comes around' appearances from a neighbouring discipline is the 13.2.2009 *Lectio praecursoria*, "The social of social sciences" by Olli Pyyhtinen (2009) at the University of Turku in which he introduces his doctoral dissertation (*Bringing the Social Alive. Essays on Georg Simmel's Social Theory*) reminding us of the importance of the social behind society. This is the reality of which folklorists possess much subtle first hand knowledge, in the words of the people who live in it.

<sup>25</sup> The dialogue in a way started in the 17th century with the king's order to the clergy to collect information on folk tradition (for the build-up of a glorious past for the emerging

European power, Sweden) and even before, when the church wanted information on pagan belief. We do not know how much of this information was lost in the Turku fire of 1827, but this cumulative (even silent) knowledge was available to the early scholars and students (among them Elias Lönnrot) who wrote about Finnish folklore and folk belief at the old university *Turun Akatemia* (founded in 1640), which after the fire was moved to Helsinki. Finland had in 1809 lost its 600-year-old status as the eastern part (*östra rikshalvan*) of Sweden, and got its own government as a Grand Duchy of Russia. By this turn, along with Herderian influence, interest in folklore got new meanings.

<sup>26</sup> Around the Folklore archive the object of research, *kansanrunous* (folklore) had been self evident and unquestionable to the late sixties and students were guided to specialise in a genre. The five criteria definition – *oral, anonymic, communal/folk, stereotypical* – was adopted to use in the new discipline folkloristics in the early seventies at the University of Turku to make a distinction with Helsinki (where popular culture was included in folklore studies) and to emphasise the face-to-face, community and field aspect of folkloristics. It was in line with Lönnrotian field practice and with the old instructions by SKS Folklore archive concerning the material which could be collected/sent to the archive: kalevalametric poetry fills all the criteria. Over the years the definition has increasingly assumed the quality of family resemblance (Lehtipuro 2003). See also note 28.

<sup>27</sup> I could in principle go back to *kansanrunous*. If only the word didn't have so strong a connotation to a poetic metre. It feels good that the Folklore Archive has kept its old name, *Kansanrunousarkisto*, and so recognises the creativity of the people who send in their contributions.

<sup>28</sup> The notion of traditionality – as well as stereotypicality – is the result of comparative research, so it cannot be given as an instruction of collectable items. Orality is empirical fact: no personal stories, nothing copied from written sources nor directly adopted from the authorities of great society. There must be an individual who has heard from others: a 'natural' oral conduit (which does not prevent the existence of influence from other media in addition) must exist. In that way orality was the central thing.

<sup>29</sup> As formulated by Jouko Hautala in 1957;

the same ethos was strongly present in the paremiological interest of Matti Kuusi. The turn in approach happened after WW II when the dream of a greater Finland (including the land of the Kalevala, the greater part of which had never been part of Finland) was lost in the trenches on the Carelian Isthmus in the summer of 1944.

An outsiders' view (Wilson 1976) was needed for our generation to start thinking about the role of folklorists as national ideologists. What Wilson seems to miss, though, is the constant tension between strict scholarship and national interest, which has had its consequences.

<sup>30</sup> The grandest, and to a degree collective, achievement in this line, drawing on the expertise of many scholars, may be the *Perinneatlas* (Folklore Atlas) by Matti Sarmela, which was started again in the early sixties after a long break (from the thirties through the post war years) and after many turns was published in 1994.

<sup>31</sup> From Julius Krohn (1885) to Martti Haavio this was the central – and controversial – pursuit. It was reassuring to know that we are not alone far in the north but share a cultural heritage with other peoples. On the other hand, how can oral tradition, which is full of international loans, be the building block of something national. The answer was often found in aesthetics, in the high quality of Finnish folk poetry, which only a Finn can duly appreciate. An early (1789) advocate of this view was Henrik Gabriel Porthan, who understood the importance of a proper fit between a poetic form and the natural resources of a language: poems in the old vernacular meter (kalevala-meter, as it later became called) were more pleasing to the ear than those using imported European metrical systems.

<sup>32</sup> If authenticity is the key word in discussing German and American folkloristic pursuit, importance could be the keyword for us. In Finland – unlike the US (cf. Briggs 1988: 5; Dundes 2005) – folklorists have from the very beginning seen themselves in a pursuit of serious and important things and the Finnish society at large has over more than a hundred years – thanks to the *Kalevala* – understood us as such. The search for new importances has been going on in various directions since the demise of the Finnish method, in changing cultural situations (cf. notes 20 and 37)

<sup>33</sup> In the preface to his dissertation on jokes – the first of its kind as an attempt to grasp the human core of a genre – Seppo Knuuttila (1992) could not avoid joking about the disreputable status of jokes as research object, but ended up proving that essential cultural matters are expressed by this undignified genre.

<sup>34</sup> This insight was in 2000 embedded in the very personal book *Estetiikka* (aesthetics) from the aesthetician, *professor emeritus* Aarne Kinnunen, but similar understanding seems to be hiding in the key word *social value* by A. R. Radcliffe-Brown in *The Andaman Islanders* (1922; cf. Lehtipuro 1971: 83).

<sup>35</sup> The development of the Finnish method was influenced by the Darwinistic ideas of the time. The Finnish-minded folklorists at the University of Helsinki may have missed something important when they did not discuss (so it seems) the ideas of the Swedish-speaking Darwin-inspired aesthetician Yrjö Hirn, who had made an international breakthrough with *The Origin of Art* (1900) and who sat in the same little faculty with Kaarle Krohn and the linguist E. N. Setälä, two leading thinkers of folklore.

<sup>36</sup> An interesting concept, *we-mode* was introduced by Raimo Tuomela (2007) in his *Philosophy of Sociality: The Shared Point of View*. We all may have our opinions, however, in societies there are matters in which we need to have a common understanding. This philosopher's approach is in a tempting way compatible with both my findings in the village and those of Anna-Leena and Jukka Siikala in their major work (2005) about oral tradition and society in the Southern Cook Islands.

<sup>37</sup> It is obvious by now that the power of folklore can be transformed and be used in modern media (including the Internet) as well as for political and commercial purposes and in the creation of new communalities and animosities. Among the most obvious cases to demonstrate this seems to be the development of Serbia (cf. Čolović 2002) in the nineties, but we only need to turn on the news to get fresh examples.

<sup>38</sup> Described by Matti Kuusi (1974; 1980).

<sup>39</sup> Not only by scholars. It is a common human skill to discern which story or proverb is the same as another and which is different. These discussions about proverbs were hot stuff among Helsinki folklorists around Matti Kuusi at the time (1962) I started my studies.

<sup>40</sup> I have so far – advised by an old friend Fred Karlsson, professor of linguistics at the University of Helsinki, whom I thank for the clue – only consulted a single author, Ronald Langacker (1990) on this, simultaneously recalling formative talks of the sixties, mainly about proverbs.

<sup>41</sup> It is tempting to explain my own and some others' post-Sydowian (cf. von Sydow 1948) interest (at the Helsinki and Edinburgh congresses) in not-so-good storytellers with the not yet fully formulated insight that if folklore has important tasks in communities, it is not enough to consult the few talented: others must have some competence in the domain of folklore as well (as we have in everyday language). Without a common understanding topicality does not work and metaphors remain inaccessible. This insight led me to choose the informants in the village by random sample (cf. Lehtipuro 1980) but the value of this – at the time – very controversial decision has become obvious much later and after many turns: when interest in distribution was gone, I simply put v. Sydow's observations about *active* and *passive* tradition bearers, which I had learned as a comment on the Finnish method, into a social context, just as Abrahams (1964) did with von Sydow's *oicotype*.

<sup>42</sup> Leaving the verbal as the sole object of interest and presenting a remarkable skill in discovering the topicality of everyday behaviour, at schools and in working environments as well as in the media, the topical/rhetorical potential of folklore seems to attract various cultural researchers, historians and ethnologists as well. A spontaneous, instinctive understanding of this potential comes through in utterances like *kertoivat mielellään osin tarinoitunutta versiota siitä miten...* (...they liked to dwell on a partly legendised version of how...) by Kaija Heikkinen, ethnologist, about a field experience, in the Joensuu daily paper *Karjalainen* 13.7.2009.

<sup>43</sup> The Athens congress offers ample evidence of these connections, in the great interest in belief stories as well as in papers like, "Narratives and reality" by Pekka Hakamies: the truth value (true/possible/imagined) has always played an important role in our – scholars' and peoples' alike – evaluation of folklore, especially narratives (cf. af Klintberg 1973).

<sup>44</sup> Interest in those people, *kielimestari* (master of language) or *mestarikertoja* (master

narrator) was shared by folklorists and linguists alike, who still in the sixties were often the same people, doing fieldwork both for the Folklore Archive and dialect collections. This sentiment took Juha Pentikäinen to the singer, lamenter and storyteller Marina Takalo, providing for one of the important works (Pentikäinen 1978 – in Finnish 1971) in contemporary folkloristics.

<sup>45</sup> The important thing was not the dialogue but offering the narrator-informant a chance, an attentive audience, if only one person, and making the recording as accurate as possible. For various reasons collectors' possible competencies as insiders in the communities they worked within came to be appreciated much later.

<sup>46</sup> Without this ethos many old expressions had not been recorded for scholars to interpret and the inner logic of Sami environmental narratives had remained a secret (Huuskonen 2001, 2004).

<sup>47</sup> Many of the writings were reprinted in his *Festschrift* in 2002 (Leino 2002).

<sup>48</sup> On many forums, including the *NIF Newsletter* and the article "Trends in Nordic folkloristics" (1983), which once again demonstrated both the differences on the common Nordic scene and the fact that to grasp the Nordic you must be able to read both Finnish and the Scandinavian languages.

<sup>49</sup> Yrjö Sepänmaa (1986/1993, 2002) belongs to the founders of environmental aesthetics. On this sphere of interest, see Knuuttila, Sevänen & Turunen 2005.

<sup>50</sup> Honko approached the issue in the context of healing (1959) and folk belief (1962, 1964) bringing psychology and sociology to the interpretation of old archive material (Lehtipuro 2006). The same lesson about folklore as the verbal means of expressing social relations was learned in the US in a contemporary field setting (Abrahams 1964, cf. Lehtipuro 1971, 95).

<sup>51</sup> The Habermas-inspired Danish folklorist Birgitte Rørbye (1982) suggested *folkelige erfaringsverden* as a general frame for folkloristics, but she did not include in her discussion empirical material to substantiate her thinking.

<sup>52</sup> A collection of articles (Ollitervo & Immonen 2006) from a Turku symposium on Herder offered a totally new perspective on the global and in a contemporary way inspiring thinking of the often misused German scholar.

<sup>53</sup> In this context the word is stripped of poli-

tical content and means just living in a common world, in the same *Lebenswelt*. Here our Swedish speaking folkloristic community offers an interesting case for comparisons: our country and history are the same, but there seem to be differences in the *Lebenswelt* and in the order of folkloristic importances, in the same way as between the various Nordic countries.

<sup>54</sup> In our talks in the organising committee of the Helsinki congress we often jokingly hoped for a situation in which every speaker would say exactly what kind of texts he/she has in mind when using the word *folktale*. I do not know if we are there yet, the development seems to have gone in another direction. Along with the widening concept of folk narrative, much of the folkloristic expertise on *satu* (*Märchen*, folktale) and *tarina* (*Sage*, legend) is about to disappear and *myytti* (*Mythe*, myth) is increasingly becoming a synonym of lie, untruth – quite the contrary to the understanding of myth as a fundamental truth: poetry is more truth than history, said Aristotle.

<sup>55</sup> Why is it so? For a proper theory of folklore an understanding is needed of the existing network of meanings and connections embedded in the natural, linguistic & cultural, religious, historical and social environment in which it exists. It is more than the *arki* (everyday, *Alltag*) which since the seventies has appeared as a possible frame for understanding folklore. The 'everydayness' would here mean a quality of taken-for-grantedness: as we very well know, the most cherished and most studied appearances of folklore have to do with occasions other than the everyday. This kind of understanding, which draws on the resources of many disciplines, scholarly traditions and areas and experiences of life can only be achieved as a slow process, through the empirical research of many scholars. When a tentative theory is suggested within one such *Lebenswelt*, as I have done here, other linguistic & cultural environments can be used as testing grounds.

My early Nordic experience showed how Norwegians were much ahead of us in discussing historical legends and how the Swedish *helhetsetnologi*, which brought the verbal, the social and the material together in one academic discipline, changed the place of folkloristics. Neither is Estonian folkloristics (cf. Kuutma & Jaago 2005) as close to us as I had thought, considering our common kalevalametric heritage and close scholarly

contacts. Every vital folkloristic community, in its own society and in its historical and changing position, seems to have its own ways of speaking and its own importances and relationships to various intellectual and academic traditions. There is no reason to spoil this strength embedded in the very core of our humanistic discipline, but be conscious and explicit about it and use it for the advancement of the whole discipline.

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## Proverbs in my suggested Finnish theory of folklore<sup>1</sup>

A first draft, written in Tartu, the city of good thoughts

for ARVO KRIKMANN THE PAREMIOLOGIST on the occasion of the conference

*From Language to Mind* (September 10-11, 2009) to celebrate his 70th birthday

by Outi Lehtipuro, University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu

In the abundance of folklore materials Kaarle Krohn saw the strength of Finnish folkloristics and its Method. Proverbs have been collected more than any other forms of folklore – millions. Would it be so? That the key to a general theory of folklore should lie just here, in the study of minor forms? Precisely to this direction our thought was wandering in the sixties in the folklore archives, just a few meters away from a wall full covered with proverbs, and in the seminar of Matti Kuusi: structural analytic terminology was polished, basic questions formulated. What sets proverb (folklore) apart from the ordinary sentence (speech) and what does it take to make two texts variants of the same thing, a proverb type?

The Matti Kuusi concept of formula (unlike the one developed by Albert Lord) gave a tool with which to grasp the creativity of folklore formation by pointing to the fact that the art of abstraction is in no way the privilege of the educated. It was also easy to see how those who speak using proverbs move along a scale from the concrete to the abstract: a proverb may depend on a distinct environment and *Lebenswelt*, as well as flying away to become a generalised metaphor.

It may well be that the well-researched proverb is a better choice for a paradigmatic case of “oral, anonymous, communal, folk and stereotypical” folklore than the historically important kalevalametric song. The proverb is living and universal and is not specialised but covers the whole of life. The proverb is easy to set apart and discuss as an entity, look at from all sides and see the changing surface and the identifiable core when so much intriguing variation can be presented on a single A4 sheet.

Proverbs as compact constructions represent real vernacular speech before there were tape recorders. Scholarly descriptions of *kölli*, *kieltosutkaus* and other minor forms, as well as making a distinction between *sananlasku* (proverb) and *puheenparsi* (saying) played with the idea of folklore as a vital element of spoken language, while comparative research put the global-and-local essence of folklore in a nutshell: the number of important matters is smaller than the number of ways of expressing them.

Studies of phraseology between the oral and the written remind us of the unity of the aesthetic register of language: the power of folklore is in between the mind-and-language environment and it has not vanished since we left the dominance of the oral.

At the time of the ISFNR Congress in Helsinki in 1974 the avant-garde of the textual tradition of Finnish folkloristics seemed to be paremiology. What happened then?

When the folklore archive came to be seen as the cemetery of folklore, small forms were left behind in the rush for the living narrative in the field, and for context. This development went on somewhat ominously at the same time that students and professors moved away first from the domain of the archive and then from the building of the Finnish Literature Society. It is obvious now, though, that the context – even of the kalevalametric song – can be built in a scholar’s mind by utilising the resources of various humanistic and behavioural sciences and even archival materials other than the one and same genre file.

In the process toward a new Finnish folkloristics the strong Balto-Finnic



Arvo Krikmann, Honorary Member of the ISFNR, giving a plenary lecture at the 14th Congress of the ISFNR in Tartu in summer 2005.

Photo by Alar Madisson.

strain of paremiology emphasised the embedded linguistic and even philological interest of folklore research, which in the sociology boom was about to be forgotten. Now these things can be brought together.

At the core of the geographic-historical method as the foundation of Finnish folkloristics is the embedded idea of its applicability to the study of all folklore. While the Method proved to be problematic, the idea that folklore is a special domain of mind and language, separate from other kinds of texts and deserving its own specialists and its own theory, prevailed. Elli-Kaija Kõngäs-Maranda formulated this idea very clearly after moving to the U.S. and creating a nostalgic and clear-sighted distance to her academic home base.<sup>2</sup> One reason behind Matti Kuusi’s attraction to the proverb, after a heroic and somewhat frustrated battle with the verse masses of the *Sampo* cycle, may well have been that the minor form is the easiest way to make the case, to show how the tiniest textual changes create new meanings and to build representative scholarly generalisations.

In the end it may be the proverb that is the purest representation of the es-

sence of folklore as a shared rhetoric repertoire, belonging to the aesthetic register of language, for the expression of important things when the ordinary speech is not enough. Various intellectual cultures publicly recognise this rhetoric role of proverbs, a proof of which is that the first published item (1544) of Finnish folklore was a proverb, and the first folklore publication (1702) a collection of proverbs.

<sup>1</sup> An amendment to the paper "The mind of a discipline – toward a Finnish theory of folklore at the 15<sup>th</sup> Congress of the International Society for Folk Narrative Research, Athens, Greece, June 21-27 2009."

<sup>2</sup> Kõngäs-Maranda, Elli-Kaija. „The Concept of Folklore“ in *Midwest Folklore*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (Summer, 1963), pp. 69-88.

## Baltic Worldview: from Mythology to Folklore in Vilnius, Lithuania, July 8<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup>, 2009

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In the heart of the summer of 2009, the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore, in collaboration with the Centre for Research in Imagination at Grenoble's Stendhal University (Centre de Recherches sur l'Imaginaire, Université Stendhal Grenoble 3), organised an international conference entitled, "Baltic Worldview: From Mythology to Folklore". The conference was held in the conference hall of Europos Parkas, the beautiful Open Air Museum of the (geographic) Centre of Europe, located about 20 kilometres from Vilnius. The language of the conference was Eng-

lish, with the program of the conference and abstracts published in both English and Lithuanian.

The focus of the conference was the Baltic worldview as cultural content, which manifests itself through a multitude of linguistic, religious, mythological and other spiritual and material forms of culture. The aims of the conference were to emphasise the Baltic worldview's role in the historical and geographic context of the Circum-Baltic region while demonstrating the worldview's continuity from prehistoric times

to the present. Special emphasis was given to Baltic religion and mythology.

The conference was organised over three days. It brought together a variety of interdisciplinary perspectives which presented and highlighted the urgent issues in the study of Baltic religion and mythology. The researchers came from eleven countries (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Finland, USA, UK, Poland, France, Czech Republic, Slovenia, and Russia). They represented a wide range of disciplines and offered over thirty papers in the nine plenary sessions. Plenary sessions were organised around few central themes: Baltic Mythology from an Indo-European perspective, the functioning of myths in the Baltic region, the reconstruction of worldview and its elements, sources and methods, the sacred landscape, belief legends in time and space, the symbolism of plants and folklore aesthetics, pre-Christian religion in the Baltic region, and approaches to living indigenous traditions. In addition, one plenary session was devoted to poster presentations.

The first day of the conference was primarily concerned with the different aspects of myths, mythology and methodology. Emily Lyle (University of Edinburgh) opened the first session with her paper,



Frog and Eila Stepanova at the Baltic Worldview conference in Lithuania.

Photo by Jūratė Šlekonytė.

"The Indo-European Pantheon and the Cultic Cluster in Grunau's Chronicle". The Chronicle describes a banner with images of three gods as well as an oak tree with images of the same gods. Emily Lyle related these images and the cultic cluster surrounding them to the Indo-European pantheon, and more specifically considering the semiotic significance of the oak in relation to the approach to the Indo-European pantheon which she has developed across her career. Lyle set a brisk and exciting pace for the first day. Philippe Walter (Centre de Recherches sur l'Imaginaire, Université Stendhal Grenoble 3) followed suit in spotlighting a central medieval text, and then Daiva Vaitkevičienė (Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore) kept up the pace of Lyle's strong opening with a fascinating examination of Indo-European parallels to Baltic libation rituals, the most commonly encountered Baltic ritual practice.

Vykintas Vaitkevičius (Klaipėda University) turned our attention from the rituals to the background of the Lithuanian term *stabas*, 'pagan idol', examining its occurrences in relation to cognates used in place names distributed around the southern half of the Baltic Sea region. Vaitkevičius's study shifted our focus from continuities in mythology and ritual practices stretching back to common Indo-European roots, to phenomena concentrated around the Baltic Sea which appear to be related to more recent contact and interaction among Indo-European linguistic-cultural populations. Frog (University College London/University of Helsinki) followed in this new direction, turning from ritual and sacred sites back to mythology, addressing the myth of the Theft of the Thunder-Instrument (ATU 1148B) as a common mythological narrative found across Saamic, Finnic, Baltic, and Germanic linguistic-cultural groups. He argued that this is a consequence of the history of intercultural contact around the Baltic Sea, and that it is more appropriate to approach the narrative and its evolution as a Circum-Baltic myth. Frog stressed the importance of developing a Circum-Baltic perspective in the treatment of mythologies and



Excursion to sacred places in the Vilnius region.

*Photo by Jūratė Šlekonytė.*

belief traditions, concluding his presentation by proposing the development of a large-scale Circum-Baltic project to make sources in the many and diverse languages accessible to researchers. Jūratė Šlekonytė (Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore) addressed the issue of cultural contact and exchange in the example of the Wild Hunt tradition in Lithuanian material and its relationship to the Germanic tradition. Leszek Słupecki (Rzeszów University) then turned our gaze from contacts with the west to contacts with the east, discussing werewolves in Baltic and Slavic beliefs. These papers emphasised the dynamic and stratified nature of Baltic traditions and their evolution through a long history of interaction with other cultures.

Our attention was carried from myths and mythic conceptions to mythologies in Rolandas Kregždys' (Institute of Culture, Philosophy and Art, Vilnius) discussion of the value of linguistic data for insights into the worldview of the ancient Balts. Eila Stepanova (University of Helsinki) then took us from etymologies to the poetics, motifs and reflections of the otherworld emerging in Lithuanian and Karelian lament traditions. Teuvo Laitila (University of Joensuu) discussed the activities of healers in Border Karelia focusing on ethnic conceptions of well-being and the idea of the 'limited good'. Musicolo-

gist Aušra Žičkienė (Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore) offered an excellent account of the musical code of Pre-Christian culture in Lithuanian ritual songs. Žičkienė revealed six historical strata of Lithuanian folksongs, beginning with the most archaic melodies near the border between music and speech, through Pre-Christian ritual music including Lithuanian laments, and on through the music of the Christian culture with examples of funeral chanting, building up to contemporary folk music. Žičkienė pointed out that the melodies of the oldest layer quite remarkably formed new derivatives and even started appearing in the most recent entertaining melodies in archetypal forms. She observed that melodies associated with non-Christian ritual were otherwise not used outside of their conservative performance contexts and suspects that the essential changes in this layer which appears to have existed for thousands of years, are very slow, as slow as the changes in landscape.

The session devoted to methods and the sources for mythology studies was extremely useful and interesting. Aldis Pūtelis (University of Latvia) displayed his acumen in his paper on historical written sources used in the research of Latvian mythology. Pūtelis stressed that there are no reliable sources that were written by individuals from within

the culture. Instead, researchers have, for example, chronicles by foreign authors describing local inhabitants that approach vernacular religion from a heavily biased Christian perspective. Pūtelis drew attention to the fact that later authors who attempted to explain the history or culture of a land used the written documents available to them. Through the example of Latvian, he showed that they combined these sources with materials describing neighbouring or related peoples. These early studies on mythology were heavily influenced by political and ideological interests. When dealing with mythology, it is essential that scholars keep these factors in mind: having sources is not enough; we must also understand what those sources signify, and recognise that fictions, errors and confusions could be reduplicated through the sources, echoing through history as a tradition – not of Latvian culture – but a tradition of academics who never reached for realities beyond the smoky haze of candlelight in their labyrinthine libraries. The torch was then passed to Toms Ķencis (University of Tartu/ Archives of Latvian Folklore), who led us on through the corridors of history with his paper, “Latvian Mythological Space in Scholarly Time”, turning from the sources and what they reflect to the history of research practices in Latvian mythology. This was followed by David Šimeček’s (Charles University

in Prague) more focused address of the article “Baltic Mythology” written by one of the leading Czech folklorists Jan Hanuš Machal (1855-1939).

The first day of the conference concluded with the discussion session *Studies of Myths Today* at the French Cultural Centre. This was an evening session. It was conducted in French and Lithuanian without English translation, and was not attended by all of the participants.

The second day of the conference opened with panoramic displays of the sacred landscape. Andra Simniškytė (Lithuanian Institute of History) focused on barrows in the landscape of the Iron Age in relationship to ‘ancestors’ and ancestor worship. Simniškytė addressed how barrows were used and reused, pointing out that the place names associated with the barrows from different eras have maintained continuities and distinctions even through their transformations: the typologies of barrow are reflected in the onomastics up to the present day. Andrej Pleterski (Scientific Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts) drew attention to Baltic parallels in Slovenian old beliefs, presenting a series of photos arguing that the mythic female of a local tradition is expressed in the contours of the landscape itself. Janis Cepitis (University of Latvia) and Lilija Jakubenoka

(Museum of History and Art, Aizkraukle) offered a discussion of the symbolic meaning of materials and tools used in making clothing, presenting their connections with deities, mythical beings and the sacral landscape, augmenting their discussion with a number of photographs of the landmarks connected to those sacred places.

Turning from the landscape to the mythic beings encountered there, Christian Abry (Centre Alpin et Rhodanien d’Ethnologie, Grenoble) offered a very enthusiastic presentation with an Indo-Europeanist bent which attempted to connect experience-narratives about *naroves* in Savoy, France, with Lithuanian *nérovė* and the *nerėides* of ancient Greece. Lina Būgienė (Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore) returned to the traditions around the Baltic Sea which spread beyond the Indo-European cultures, addressing the image of the supernatural milk stealer ‘*aitvaras/kaukas*’ in Lithuanian folklore. This being has close counterparts, for example, in Finnish (‘*para*’), Estonian (‘*puuk*’) and Latvian (‘*pūkis*’) traditions. Ūlo Valk (University of Tartu) carried the mounting discussion surrounding belief legends to a climax with his insightful paper, “Ghosts and Social Change in Contemporary Estonian Folklore”. Legends and memorates about ghosts are widespread in contemporary Estonia. Valk revealed that these narratives are mediated by tour guides, Internet websites, newspapers, TV and radio broadcasts, presenting us with a cascade of stimulating examples. He emphasised that in periods of social and historical change, populations propagate narratives in a manner symptomatic of a new need for ghosts. Within Valk’s paper, ghost legends emerge as a metaphor for a rapidly changing society, and he lays out a foundation for approaching legends as a collective phenomenon related to tensions on the level of individuals in society which can be applied by analogy to offer insights into many different traditions in their specific cultural contexts.

Valk left us with an abundance of food for thought as the conference moved



Participants of the Baltic Worldview conference.  
Photo by courtesy of Daiva Vaitkevičienė.

upstairs for lunch. Following the session devoted to poster presentations, Jurga Sadauskienė (Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore) analysed the symbolism and aesthetics of the 'flower garden' as a predominant motif in traditional Lithuanian folksongs, and Daiva Šeškauskaitė (Vilnius University Kaunas Faculty of Humanities) addressed the folklore surrounding plants associated with Lithuanian belief legends and mythology.

The focus then returned to considerations of Pre-Christian religion in the Baltic Sea region. Valdis Rūsiņš (Riga) offered a discerning look at relationships between Baltic and Finnic mythological traditions in his paper, "Influence of Contacts between Balts and Baltic-Finns on Development of Deities in the Territory of the Present Latvia in Prehistory". An excellent illustration of the complexities and subtleties in the exploration of belief traditions was offered by Ergo-Hart Västriik (University of Tartu) through his examination of Pre-Christian features in Seto vernacular religion by revisiting the Peko-cult in a Baltic context. The cult of the fertility god Peko is one of the most celebrated examples of Seto vernacular religion and championed representations of archaic mythology. A statue of Peko in the form of a robust man-shaped wooden doll was used during the communal secret celebrations held twice a year for worshipping this deity. Västriik discussed interpretations of Peko, parallels from neighbouring regions, and presented considerations of the dynamics of the tradition in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when Peko was, on the one hand, demonised, and on the other, was turned into a fictional character in the Seto national epic.

The final session of the conference was dedicated to the well known Lithuanian religious community *Romuva*. It offered insights into the modern revivals and interpretations of the indigenous belief systems and how those belief systems, with their emerging ideologies, are interacting with modern political and governmental systems.

Throughout the days of the conference, discussions surrounding the papers continued over coffee breaks and lunches, and they were carried from the rich and bountiful sessions into the pleasant evening receptions. The Embassy of the French Republic hosted a reception for the conference participants on the first evening, where the pleasure and nourishment which discussion offered the intellect was augmented by delectable French delicacies. On the second evening, the hospitality of our hosts, which we enjoyed throughout the conference, came to a climax at the beautiful Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore with its magnificent Baroque architecture. The evening opened with a marvellous concert of Lithuanian folksongs, *sutartinės*. The performance group *Trys keturiose* was led by Dr. Daiva Račiūnaitė-Vyčinienė, who bears the honourable title 'the queen of *sutartinės*'. Račiūnaitė-Vyčinienė has been perfecting the performance of the old polyphonic songs, *sutartinės*, for twenty years, reconstructing the melodies that have been preserved in archives and also those which have been published. Following this performance in song, the famous Lithuanian jazz musician Skirmantas Sasnauskas offered a performance on various folk instruments.

For the third day of the conference, all of the participants had the opportunity to experience the sacred places and see various holy stones and barrows on the full-day excursion. Vykintas Vaitkevičius was an excellent guide, as we travelled the countryside of the Vilnius region.

This interdisciplinary and international conference incited deep discussions on issues associated with Circum-Baltic mythology. Comparative research and the development of contexts for approaching traditions and their sources stood at the heart of this conference. Perspectives associated with an Indo-European heritage were augmented by the complexities of the long history of cultural contact between Balts, Slavs, Finnic populations, Germanic popula-

tions – and even more distantly Saami cultures were shown to be relevant. This conference revealed that an understanding of a tradition is tied up in the history of that tradition, and in the Circum-Baltic region, understanding that history requires the development of an appropriate contextual framework, not just a contextual framework of one performer among performers or of one genre among genres, but of one culture among cultures.

This revelation highlighted the tremendous problem of the diversity of languages involved in developing such a context, and that researchers simply do not have sources available in accessible languages. However, the conference opened up possibilities for collaboration between scholars of different countries and different cultures – possibilities to make traditions and sources available to one another for comparative research. It is essential for us to be able to develop a Circum-Baltic context for approaching any one culture among these diverse cultures. This meeting was itself a very important step along that road.

In the end we would like to extend our thanks to the organising committee of the conference for the wonderful job they did in coordinating such a large and complicated gathering. We would also like to thank the Council for the Commemoration of the Millennium of Lithuania at the Administration of the Office of the President of the Republic of Lithuania, *Ambassade de France en Lituanie et Le Centre Culturel Français*, Lithuanian State Science and Studies Foundation, for supporting the conference which benefited the participants so greatly.

We are pleased to report that the conference organisers have determined to persist with their labours above and beyond the scope of the original event. They are orchestrating the publication of a volume of papers selected from the conference presentations, which will offer the benefit of the fruits of this conference to those who were unable to attend.

The International Society for Folk Narrative Research is a scientific society whose objectives are to develop scholarly work in the field of folk narrative research and to stimulate contacts and the exchange of views among its members.

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The opening ceremony of the 15th ISFNR Congress in the Ceremony Hall of the University of Athens.

Photo by courtesy of Hellenic Folklore Research Centre.