

# **PRO ETHNOLOGIA 6**

**Publications of Estonian National Museum**

## **PROCEDURAL WORK ON ARTEFACTS**



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## Editorial

The *Pro Ethnologia 6* is in large part a compilation of the reports of the 39th conference of the Estonian National Museum called “Procedural Work On Artefacts”, held on 13–14 April 1998 in Tartu. The conference was attended by museum workers and ethnologists from Lithuania, Latvia, Russia and Estonia. Reports were collated on the exhibition and research of museum items, on the objects reflecting peoples’ cultural and ethnic identity, and other theoretical aspects of researching basic culture. This collection includes only some of the conference reports. Publishing the remaining reports is a task for the future.

Rūta Guzevičiūtė (PhD), an ethnologist in the Lithuanian History Institute, explains in her article “Costumes Through Centuries: A Source of Historical Insight” clothing is a most expressive indication of changing cultural and economic conditions, as well as an historical outline. No other cultural aspect is as sensitive. Clothing is, however, determined by the proportions of the human body, the aspect which places extra requirements for the exhibition of clothes.

Laura Piškinaitė-Kazlauskienė (PhD), also an ethnologist in the Lithuanian History Institute, examines in her article “Beekeeper’s Spiritual World in Museum Objects” the work of the Apiculture Museum founded in Lithuania in 1974 and, first of all, the life of Bronius Kazlas, its founder. The paper also observes various philosophical aspects related to beekeeping.

Vaike Reemann, a senior researcher in the Estonian National Museum discusses in her article “Permanent Exhibition and Artefacts” diverse functions of the objects on display in the definitive exhibition. In a major exhibition surveying the culture or society region, each object is related to the conceptual performance and the real life which the exhibition reflects.

In her article “Vital Things: Objects in Life Histories, Life Histories in Objects” Ene Kõresaar (MA), an ethnologist in Tartu University, provides a truly fascinating survey of the importance of basic objects in the lives of Estonians. Also, the author discusses the aspect of these as affecting people’s lives.

Art Leete's (MA) article on "Komi Objects in the Estonian National Museum" is a survey of notable quotes from fieldwork diaries. The article is based on the material involving the collectors' first-hand impressions and recollections of the nature of the investigating process in three ethnographic fieldwork trips to the Komi Republic, Russia. Also, an aspect of the collector's demonstrative lifestyle has been discussed here.

In his article "The Material Culture and History of the East-European Taiga Peoples", Heno Sarv (MSc) demonstrates some daring and original ideas. The author claims that, in addition to the uniformity of material culture of the Finno-Ugric peoples living in an East-European forest area, all aspects of culture, as well as their worldview are involved. Through history, the cultural background of the North-Eurasian forest belt has been a lot more homogeneous than that of Europe, an idea that, according to H. Sarv, is also supported by material cultural heritage.

In addition to the above conference reports, the present edition also includes some ethnological research articles reflecting the work of ethnologists both in Estonia and elsewhere.

Ene Kõresaar writes about the conference "Masculine. Feminine. The Meaning of Gender Category in Culture" held in Germany, discussing some of the reports presented there. Terje Anepaio (MA), an ethnologist in the History Institute (Estonia), introduces the general ethnological issues posed by Finnish ethnologists, thus providing material for discussion among their Estonian colleagues (in Estonian). At the conclusion, there is a survey of the grant project "Memory as a Cultural Factor in the Biographical Narratives of Estonians" by the Estonian Science Foundation. The grant holders are Elle Vunder (PhD), Professor of Ethnology at Tartu University, Terje Anepaio, and Ene Kõresaar.

The editorial board thanks colleagues in Estonia and elsewhere who have contributed to the publication of this issue. In addition, grateful thanks to the Estonian Science Foundation whose help has been essential in preparing some of the articles for this issue. The editorial board hopes the *Pro Ethnologia 6* provides interesting reading material for ethnologists, as well as people involved in other research areas.

# **Costumes through Centuries: A Source of Historical Insights**

**Rūta Guzevičiūtė**

Costumes are an eloquent example of the material culture of a period, closely surrounding the humans and expressing better than anything else the current condition of culture, economy, and world outlook of the given historical period. On the other hand, each costume is an individual attempt towards self-expression within the framework of the period, one's material resources, tastes and physiological peculiarities. The physique of a person sets objective limits to fashion's possibilities of deforming the plasticity of the figure according to the currently fashionable example. It is this specific feature of fashion which is altogether lost upon the exhibiting of costumes, since the lifeless mannequins, as a rule, cannot communicate the plasticity of human bodies. The static character, alien to clothing yet artificially forced on it upon exhibiting, deprives it of the lion's share of its charm and authenticity. To some extent, such "frozenness" can be evaded through "costume theatre", some scenic action, historical dances, groups of old music and dances which aim at a detailed reconstruction of historical costumes and their dynamic presentation, thus setting forth their full merit.

Each period in history expresses itself through a certain ideal which becomes manifest in various spheres of human activity – but most visibly, most obviously in the costumes.

It can be said that since the time of the Cro-Magnon man, that is, during the last fifteen thousand years, the human race has not changed physically or physiologically. The world around him, however, has undergone basic change, and so has the attitude towards man, the demands made to his soul and body. The kaleidoscopic variety of European fashions alone, from the Middle Ages to the present day, demonstrates that there is no absolute ideal of beauty. There are hundreds of ideas of what is beautiful, and they are all in permanent

alteration, according to the criteria of evaluation of the corresponding period. Each period gives its ideal a different shape, continually re-evaluating the previous ones.

The word “costume”, even if it refers to the costumes of different historical periods or peoples, is a static concept, a given once and for all. It is fashion which renders this notion dynamic, even like a verb standing next to a noun it implies action, a comprehension of the period, changeability in time, always casting light on the contemporary understanding of perfection. Fashion usually becomes manifest not only in the clothing itself, its proportions, colours, the texture of the fabric, the shape of details, the style or pattern, but also, to no lesser extent, in the bearing of the body, the plasticity of movements.

The effect of the costume, the exposition of its characteristic features depend first and foremost on whether the body is held in a corset or left free of artificial constructions. Besides, these constructions themselves are modified over each stylistic period and occasionally undergo complete remodelling several times over just one hundred years, as it happened in the 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries, and in the 20<sup>th</sup> century even more often.

However, the specific plasticity of a period is the least demonstrable feature of historical costumes on exhibition. Yet the plasticity of the Middle Ages is essentially different from that of the Renaissance, developing side by side with the costumes themselves. Heavy materials; the habit of wearing several items of clothing on top of one another, thus weighing the body down to earth; long trains falling from the shoulders; high headgear requiring the lighthness of an acrobat to keep it on top of the head; constantly changing footwear: now flat with prolonged toes, now blunt-nosed, now sporting a heel so high it had to be balanced on – in these features we have the “salt” of historical costume, without which it appears insipid like diet food.

Dealing with remote historical periods we see how adequately costume reflects the attitudes of the corresponding social rank, becomes an emblem of a certain social unity, is part of a certain code of conduct, way of life, which are given to a person beforehand, independently of his personal characteristics. Historically, these social groups and their traditions are rather resistant and do not make for a hasty out-dating and alteration of costume. In a strictly hierarchic society the status

symbols “wear down” only slowly, since “stability in time” is seen as the basic value. In such a system, the costume-symbol expresses to a great extent the aesthetic ideal of the period and of the given social rank, whereas the personal characteristics of the individual remain a matter of secondary importance. Here it is important to regard costume as a sign of acquiescence in the pyramid of hierarchic dependence. Individual and original modifications of costume are acceptable only in case they are introduced by someone occupying the highest rung of the social ladder – it is not the quality of originality which is evaluated, but originality as a quality of the highest social authority. Again, it is fashion which sets down the formula of taste for the society.

For instance in the decorative and sumptuous Renaissance period extremely rich in materials, the fabric ruled and each detail feasted the eye as an outstanding wonder of handicraft. In the Renaissance costumes, the richness of form and colour, the aspirations towards grandeur lead up to the idea of the richness of the world and the interconnectedness of all things: “each object related to the image of man is literally striving for perfection. It bears the stamp of beauty – or at least of the search for it. Even the contrastive lining of clothes appears to be struggling upwards, to come alive, first glaring out through bold slashes – “the devil’s eyes”, then apparently by its sheer force slitting the upper fabric into ribbons in order to occupy the ruling position. Again, the collars turn from unobtrusive strips of cloth into magnificent textile wheels, circular nimbuses or even resemblances of the back of a throne, towering up from the shoulders” (Chernova 1987: 42).

The garment was to be worthy of its owner, and the royalty stood out as first among those “robed in beauty”, “in infinite splendour”. Breathtaking robes, the fruits of hundreds of craftsmen’s monthlong toil, were worn just one or two times. Luxurious ornaments, opulent clothes expressed the general spirit of the period – the desire to enjoy the beauty of the material world, its grandeur and glory. Gold and precious stones signified undying beauty, stood out almost as symbols of immortality. Beauty of form and fabric constituted a source of pleasure for its owner and a means of astounding others. Bulkiness was associated with grandeur, luxury with mightiness, splendour with fame. The fashionable costumes of the aristocracy became examples to be imitated down the length of the hierarchic ladder. Fashion spread



in circular ripples, as if a stone had been thrown into water, immersing the masses in a whole set of new artistic ideas. Fashionable outfits lost their freshness, causing a feverish search for something novel and extraordinary. Yet the fashion of the time never wavered from the position of the absolute equivalent of the perfection of the image of man.

The hero living in harmony with the world and himself was to be fashionable and well-dressed. But times changed, and the heroes changed along with them. Turbulent upheavals of the whole way of life were bound to pass at the beginning of the modern period, in order to refute the fundamental principle of aristocracy – using dress as a means of placing each man according to his proper position.

Capitalism levelled out the hierarchic division of society. Social standing is no longer anything innate, given once and for all; accordingly, it cannot be the absolute criterion of a person. Consequently, clothing also acquires a new set of meanings. Beauty is now understood as the expression of a beautiful personality; therefore, the taste of the period and its prescriptions gradually lose their omnipotence, giving ground to a more immediate interest in a man's personality. A man's ability to express himself through his appearance; the elegance of his attire, the refinement of his manners, his sophistication are now the features which give rise to the sincere admiration of his contemporaries:

“It can be said with certainty that he dressed better than anyone else. That is not to say that his garments were expensive: on the contrary, he was never known to wear any jewelry, any of the trinkets it is customary to call “bijou”. I have seen very many people who wore incomparably richer garments, but never, neither before nor after him, have I seen anyone dressed with greater refinement, anyone capable of rendering his attire so meaningful through the grace and nobility of his character. In that peculiarity of his there was something that can indeed be called elusive. Everything he wore was flawlessly fashionable, yet it was impossible not only to associate any garment of his with a fashionable picture, but even to begin to think of any such likeness” (Zhitarev 1989: 56).

Thus, the clothes covering the body of a person uncovered his soul, expressed his tastes, moods, ideas and, jointly with other arts, helped

to create the style of the period. For what else is attire, if not a manifestation of the social relationships between people.

On the other hand, the breaking down of the centuries-old barriers between estates had created a situation where it became possible to juxtapose oneself as an individual, to the rest of the society. And this is again best accomplished through clothing, with the help of which one works out one's manners and way of conduct. Violation of the traditional and the customary, search for the novel and unheard-of, sets up new idols such as the king of the English dandies, George Brian Brummell:

“... the contemporary and rival of Napoleon – the autocrat of the great world of fashion and cravats – the mighty genius before whom aristocracy had been humbled and ton abashed – at whose nod the haughtiest noblesse of Europe had quailed – who had introduced, by a single example, starch into neckcloths, and had fed the pampered appetite of his boot-tops on champagne – whose coat and whose friend were cut with an equal grace – and whose name was connected with every triumph that the world's great virtue of audacity could achieve...” (Bulwer-Lytton 1842: 127).

The very alteration of the norms of suitability itself became a norm of suitability, a form of existence within the society, a mask the society person developed on the basis of certain of his characteristic features under the influence of the society. One was no longer born into a given set of norms, the norms were acquired, they were studied like a foreign language. One of these norms was fashion – the norm of changing clothes as an expression of the propriety of a person, a yet another way of determining the image of man through his various costumes, the pattern of dress, its silhouette, material, etc.: “... your coat may sit perfectly on you, your hat may be a miracle of legerity and your shirt dazzlingly white, your boots may glisten like blackwood, but if your trousers are ill fit, sagging at the knees or at the back – you are a lost person. Regardless of all you will look like a provincial swain, fit only to be parcelled off in a mail-coach...” (Zaharzhetskaya 1974: 63).

The system of clothing considered proper for a society person was determined by a set of rules determining the interrelationships of different elements. Neckcloths were to be changed three times a day.

Since inventiveness in the field of neckties, cravats and waistcoats constituted the only opportunity for manifesting individual tastes, it acquired amazing proportions. In the year 1828, 32 different ways of tying a neckcloth were counted. The skill of tying a necktie in a different way each time gave rise to well-deserved envy and was regarded as the highest degree of perfection.

In the stead of jewelry, embroideries and tresses, perfection in costume was sought through the perfection of pattern. Opulence and costliness no longer constituted the highest refinement of attire; instead, an infinite variety of forms of dress was developed proper for different times of day, seasons, and occasions. Visiting, promenading, summer, city and evening dress made their appearance. The basic differences here lay in the proportions of the pattern, the system of pleats, the art of ironing, and other technical matters. A code of proper dressing was worked out on the basis of the rules determining the interrelation of different elements of clothing: "... when necessity compelled him to hand up his shirt for washing, he had to go for several days in a frock coat buttoned tightly up to his very throat, so that even a microscope could not have detected the slightest trace of lingerie" (Pecherin 1989: 215).

Within the framework of the passable, costume became relatively more individual, practical, and comfortable. But its owner was still obliged to adjust to his surroundings, conform with the requirements of different occasions, and so forth. The moral and ethical standards were slower to change. Only after the Second World War did they undergo really fundamental change. The sharp change in the outward image drew attention to the young generation and highlighted a new moral attitude within society: total liberation.

But the freedom of dress declared by the young generation remains purely formal: it soon turns into the most autocratic of fashions. Striving for a complete break-off from a society heading towards alienation, the young clamour for a re-evaluation of attitudes in the field of culture, a change of spiritual privileges. The new type of clothing tolerates nothing that squeezes, constricts, suffocates; in it, one can run in the forest and sleep on the ground, but also have a good time in the city.

Regardless of the incredible variety of goods provided by mechanized mass production and prepared to satisfy any whim, a tendency

appears towards the loss of the individual touch. "It is out of no intellectual short-sightedness characteristic of so many of my contemporaries that these young people look all alike to me. Nowadays, the twenty-year-olds resemble one another as closely as though they were relatives. And the fashion, too, merges them into a sexless mass. It isn't that they all dress alike. On the contrary, each dresses according to his own tastes. But in the midst of such abundance, the flights of fantasy and even the most original ideas fade. The fantasies are too numerous and thus, in the end, they become indiscernible: freedom in dress all but becomes uniformity in dress. The same goes for behaviour, manners, speech. The aim of difference is always identical, and that's where the uniformity begins. The reason lies not in coincidence, but rather in unanimity. Life itself requires such levelling down..." (Gascar 1975: 229).

Thus, history has drawn to the close of a peculiar circle. As by the shortages of natural economy, so by the abundance and unprecedented variety of goods, that is by the opportunity to satisfy any whims whatsoever, there arises uniformity, a levelling down, a standard of the time. The freedom of individual choice, both when it is practically nonexistent and when it is prolific, leads up to the limiting off of a certain general example. The ideal of beauty, different on each occasion, nevertheless constitutes a canon, an example to be followed, a convenient way of identifying oneself with a relevant group of others. "It is an individual's independent statement of his own dependence" (Kantor 1973: 197).

The fashionable form develops side by side with the ideas of the period. Therefore, costume as a system is in permanent change. Structural modifications of the form take place gradually and call forth a remodelling of all its component parts. The mechanism of their association is expressed by the mutual aspiration towards one another of all the elements and by their balancing each other by mass, geometrical form, etc. Footwear and headgear add the final touch to the form of the costume; decorations are subordinated to its general effect. The principles of connecting the elements of the costume into one system may differ, but they all follow the general laws of the integrity of form and the principles of the harmonious connection of elements.

“Being a system with certain fixed relationships, costume must always manifest some elementary structure leading up to a change in the state of the system, yet each state of the system is itself a kind of structure. Accordingly, any state of the system of costume constitutes a kind of alteration and shift of structures. This state is characterized by a process of interaction between the elements of the costume, its different forms during their creation and evolution, between the shape of the costume and the moving figure of its wearer, between the costume and the environment” (*Osnovy...* 1988: 109).

Since costume is a system dynamic not only in a prolonged historical sense but also in its immediate plasticity, the latter must not be overlooked in discussing it. The movements of the human body are just as significant as the costume itself. Different historical periods have favoured different bearings of the figure in its surrounding space – that is, different poses. All the diverse poses of a human body in historical costume are formed as a result of the “vacillating” of the torso around four axes: the breast, the waist, the pelvis, and the knees. All these poses are formed relatively to the attitude of the spinal chord. Each forward or backward movement of the spinal chord brings about a change in the position of the pelvis, the neck, and the legs as well as in the peculiarities of the silhouette of a fashionable costume. In order to characterize a fashionable bearing, qualitative descriptions of certain peculiar features are often used: “a slender column”, “a bent bough”, “a rounded-out back”, “an S-shaped silhouette”. Fashionable bearing was achieved with the help of various aids, the most important of which is the corset – a forceful means of deformation “correcting” the figure according to the fashionable example. Each type of fashionable bearing, however, corrected the whole system of cutting out and constructing clothes. If the centre of gravity shifts, i.e. the bearing changes, the whole garment fits differently.

Fashion also dictates specific behaviour, poses of the body in its surrounding space, which enable to meet the demands of a fashionable silhouette. At different times this has been determined in special prescriptions and strictly regulated by etiquette. The bearing of the figure provides a visible axis in the space for the would-be shape. The plastic movements of the body are tightly connected with certain shapes of the costume over a prolonged period, whereas the movements of

hands and legs stress the general tendencies of development and highlight their basic principles.

The costume is an empty shell which, in the course of centuries or decades, as a rule falls into the hands of museum workers without the greater majority of its component elements, since habitually the lower “storeys” of clothing (underwear, petticoats, corset, stockings and so forth) or the upper parts (e.g. a dress is rarely worn without accessories forming an ensemble) are not taken into account when speaking about a garment. But what’s most important – that shell does not take into account the person himself, his soul and body.

Reconstructing historical costumes, one must indeed reconstruct the past, collecting and combining methodically the facts and forms characteristic of each historical period. The more diligently this job is done, the better will be solved the problems of shape and appearance, since “where could we find a better example of a material shell concealing the inner nature of a person; what could symbolize more eloquently the fickleness of fate, the futile hopes and thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to, the richly painted veil of mortal life, if not costume?!” (Sychev & Sychev 1975: 81).

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*Translated by Triinu Pakk-Allmann*

# **Beekeeper's Spiritual World in Museum Objects**

**Laura Piškinaitė-Kazlauskienė**

The aim of the paper is to introduce the audience to the unusual exhibits of the Museum of Ancient Beekeeping, which was founded in 1974 on the territory of a national park in the north-eastern part of Lithuania. This kind of museum could hardly have existed in Lithuania if Bronius Kazlas, an agronomist (born in the village of Yauru, Moletsky district, in 1936), had not started his working career here in the same year. Since his childhood he had been living side by side with bees, as his father had an apiary with 30–40 swarms of bees. He himself started working in the apiary when he was only 15 years old. The teenager's mind and imagination were developed and influenced by books, especially descriptions of geographical discoveries and travels, and no wonder he developed the following idea in his head, "What will there be for me to discover when I grow up, as everything in the world has already been discovered". It was dreams that helped him to understand and see his predestination, and his life creed was formulated as follows, "I will become a dream investigator. Here you can find unknown worlds". B. Kazlas was not satisfied with the materialistic perception of the world. He independently studied philosophy and different religions of the world. The formation of his world view was mostly influenced by the studies of eastern religions directing the spiritual perfection of man, as well as the animalistic theory of E. B. Tylor, a British anthropologist.

B. Kazlas was dreaming of sharing his spiritual cognition with other people and at the age of 38, starting his career as a nature protection official in the national park, he had the idea of establishing a 'Museum of Man's Spiritual Secrets'. In the Soviet period the very thought itself seemed improper enough, not to mention its implementation. So

B. Kazlas suggested the management founding a museum of bee-keeping, sowing honey plants, plant roses and, in beautiful surroundings, show the tourists a 'bee paradise'. The authorities took liking to this innocent idea, and in 1984, 10 hectares of wasteland was placed at the disposal of the museum.

B. Kazlas started to collect exhibits suitable for the museum, i.e., beehives cut out of a tree trunk, movable-frame hives, honey separators, and other bee-keeping supplies, testifying to the status of farm bee-keeping in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He decided to display at the museum the whole history of beekeeping since the time when bees were still living in primeval forests, in tree hollows, from which honeycomb was hanging out and honey was dripping (Photo 1). You just had to go to the forest and cut out the honeycomb (Photo 2). A legend says that when people started to smoke the bees out of tree hollows and cut out honeycomb, the bees turned to their god Praamžis, asking him to give them the power to kill people with a sting. Praamžis answered, "If you sting a human being, you will die yourself" (the morale being, "He who digs a pit for another will fall into it himself"). People started to take care of bees, made flight boards for them (in the 10<sup>th</sup> century nearly 70 per cent of the territory of Lithuania was covered by forests), and this kind of primitive beekeeping became a profitable occupation. Farmers, however, had a serious competitor – the bear (the last bear was shot dead in 1888). The lord of manor – the owner of the forest – also felt a desire for apicultural products. Therefore they were used to pay impost during feudalism (Photo 3), and, as for the export of honey and beeswax, Lithuania ranked first in Europe. However, forests were thinned out as timber was also a valuable export article, and in the 16<sup>th</sup> century a transfer to farm beekeeping took place in Lithuania. Beehives with flight boards moved from the forest nearer to farmhouses. On farmsteads it was easier to catch the swarm; to do this, bells were rung or water was sprinkled (Photo 4).

Beekeepers were usually people of older generation (Photo 5), who had more patience and time to take care of bees. In addition to that, elderly people had more practical and spiritual experience, and, contemplating the circulation of life, they often compared the commune of bees with the commune of people. Obviously it is much more difficult for people to live a harmonious life than it is for bees, because of their



vices – envy, laziness, low morale, and so on. Elderly beekeepers were similar to bees – they were fond of work, exact, had harmonious relationships with family members, neighbours, and friends, did not envy anybody, did not gossip or swear, and therefore served as an example of wisdom for those surrounding them. It was believed that it was only to reasonable people that bees brought honey, but beekeepers had to share this god-sent gift with other people.

Reflecting upon bees and their origin, the aim of their existence might be the religious perception of God. In spiritual folk culture bees have close associations with the transcendental, the holiness. The founder of the Museum of Beekeeping realized it very well and decided to show at the museum that the forefathers of Lithuanians had had the correct spiritual understanding of the divine origin of natural phenomena: earth, water, fire, bees, and man.

The divine origin of the bee is shown in three sculptures in the museum exposition. The first one depicts an Egyptian myth (Photo 6): Ra, the God of Sun, looking down at the Earth, saw that the people had forgotten all about God and were behaving in an undignified manner. Seeing this, tears started running down his cheeks. But the God's kindness to people became manifest in the fact that his tears turned into bees, who brought honey to people.

The second sculpture is dedicated to a myth of American Red Indians (Photo 7). A young Red Indian decided to go to the forest to look for a hollow in the tree with bees in it. He finally found it and started cutting it out with an ax. And then he heard a woman's voice saying from the hollow, "Cut carefully, or else you hurt me". He cut the hollow open and saw a girl of divine beauty under the honeycomb. The young man asked the girl to come and live with him. She agreed, but only on one condition: he had to keep her name secret. It was Maba, the spirit of honey, who had turned into a girl. The young man brought the girl and the honey to his wigwam, and organized a feast for the whole tribe. Maba made honey drink. It did not matter how much the guests drank it, the drink did not diminish anyway. The news of the beautiful girl travelled wide and people gathered to see her, and everybody was treated to honey drink. But suddenly the drink finished. The young man, forgetting his promise, started calming the guests, "Don't worry. Maba will make some more". As soon as he had uttered

the girl's name, she started disappearing and turned into a bee. The myth shows us the connection between the bee and the woman.

The third sculpture depicts God Praamžis (Photo 8) who is looking at the Earth from high above on a hot summer day and sees a ploughman working, sweating all over his face. And Praamžis created the hard-working bee by the example of this hard-working ploughman. Each bead of his sweat turned into a bee. They flew into the forest, settled in tree hollows and started gathering honey.

In folk beliefs bees had their patrons: God Bubilas and Goddess Austēja. Bubilas (Photo 9) was a fat man with a sweet tooth, and he symbolized the spirit of the drone, the fertilizer of bees. Honey was sacrificed to Bubilas by breaking a jug with it, and this rite was accompanied by loud cries.

Goddess Austēja is known from the times of gatherers and hunters. This goddess was the patron of bees and also flowers, from which bees collected nectar. The cult of this goddess flourished up to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The name Austēja originates from the words *austi*, *audēja* (weave, weaver), i.e., to fly quickly, collect nectar, make honeycomb. It is thought that in people's minds Goddess Austēja had the shape of a bee. The festivities dedicated to Austēja were arranged in the middle of August (Dundulienė 1989: 30–32). In the museum there are two sculptures of the goddess (Photos 10, 11) and a small chapel with an altar. Beekeepers were supposed to sacrifice honey and beeswax to her to keep the bees alive and multiply successfully. The honey sacrificed was tasted by Krivis (the chief priest of the ancient Balts, the protector of the sacred fire, the performer of religious rites and funerals) and distributed to people.

The newly-weds will not miss the chance to visit the Museum of Beekeeping in their wedding route. Here the suite is met by Krivis (B. Kazlas) and Goddess Austēja (his wife Birutė). Krivis has the symbol of his spiritual power – *krivulė*. During the festive rite celebrating the beginning of the common life of the spouses, Krivis uses the product of the bees' work blessed by God – honey – and also fire and water as symbols for the perception of holiness. Krivis and Goddess Austēja perform their sacramental rites in the open air.

By tradition, when a daughter-in-law comes into the family of a beekeeper, she is given a bunch of flowers and honeycomb with honey

in it. If bees sit on the honey and honeycomb, it means they accept her. But they accept only good and kind people. Krivis smears the lips of the young couple with honey and they kiss. Then they are given a barrel of honey as a remembrance of the day and also for the future, in case something goes wrong in their life. Then they can smear their lips with honey, kiss each other, recall the happy beginning of their life together, and love, tenderness, and sweetness will return to them.

Goddess Austėja gives the young man flowers and lights a candle, which both of them hold as a symbol of unanimity and the fire of their hearts.

Krivis surrounds the young couple with the smoke of the sacred pagan fire. There are girls – vestals – standing at the sacrificial place and keeping the sacred fire burning. Young girls consider it as a great honour to be asked to act as vestals.

A jug of holy water is brought from the spring. The young couple drinks the water sweetened with honey. Barefoot, the young man has to carry his would-be wife through the river. Judging by the behavior of the girl, the audience is trying to guess what kind of wife she will make.

A lot of space in the museum has been saved for the symbolics of the Sun (Photo 12). The visitors are explained that the Sun in the form of light penetrates into the ground; its light, producing warmth, makes seeds develop into trees, and wood, when burning in flames (Photo 13) again turns into light and returns into space. This is a phenomenon, but the core point is that the origin of both light and fire in the universe is divine. Fire is the god of light in the lower meaning.

Inside the museum buildings beekeeping supplies have been displayed, but not only these. Here we can see a grand oak worshipped in the ancient times, the rite of sacrificing honey for a postmortal journey, a beekeeper with his mates feasting at beehives.

When rumours reached the ears of the party leaders about the island of spirituality in the middle of the forest, where visitors were told about God and spiritual things (that was quite equal to the propaganda of idealistic philosophy), and that the slogan “We appeal to you, God Praamžis, to stand up for us and to protect us from the evil princes” (Photo 14) could have been understood as anti-Soviet propaganda, KGB took interest in the founder of the museum and on the initiative

of the Communist Party, B. Kazlas was suggested a transfer to a “safer” job, i.e., to become a meteorologist. B. Kazlas was forced to give up working at the museum, and, at his personal request, left the national park.

At the beginning of *perestroika* B. Kazlas was asked to return to the museum, first as a worker and later on as director. It was then that a beehive with an inscription ‘Here lives the spirit of giants’ appeared at the museum. It testifies that the basis for man’s endurance and his creative work is the SPIRIT, and that THE SPIRIT IS THE CORE OF THE UNIVERSE, that each object and custom, and actually the whole life on the Earth is the manifestation of the SPIRIT. And the bard lauds the God and sings his praises (Photo 15).

Nowadays the museum has seven bee swarms. They live in different beehives (Photo 16). The staff of the museum consists of three people: its founder, the cashier (and guide), and a worker. The museum works from May 1 to October 15. Each year about 10,000 people visit the museum.

On behalf of Bronius Kazlas, Head of the museum, I would like to invite all the participants of the conference to the museum so that you could see everything with your own eyes. The sculptures in the museum designed by B. Kazlas are created by Teofilis Poteinas and Ipolitas Užkurnis.

It would be interesting to know how museum workers evaluate the untraditional exhibits of the Museum of Ancient Beekeeping and if they can be considered as exhibits in the accepted meaning of the word.

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*Translated by Tiina Mällo*



Photo 1

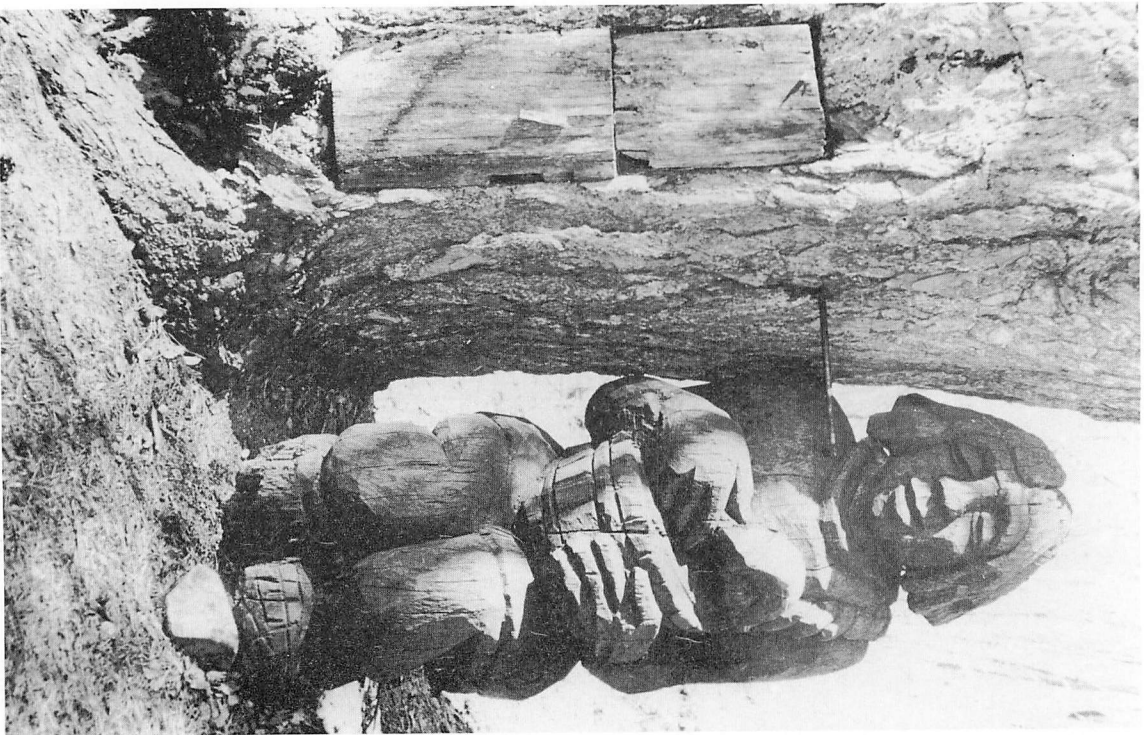


Photo 2

*Laura Piškinaitė-Kazlauskienė: Beekeeper's Spiritual World...*



Photo 3

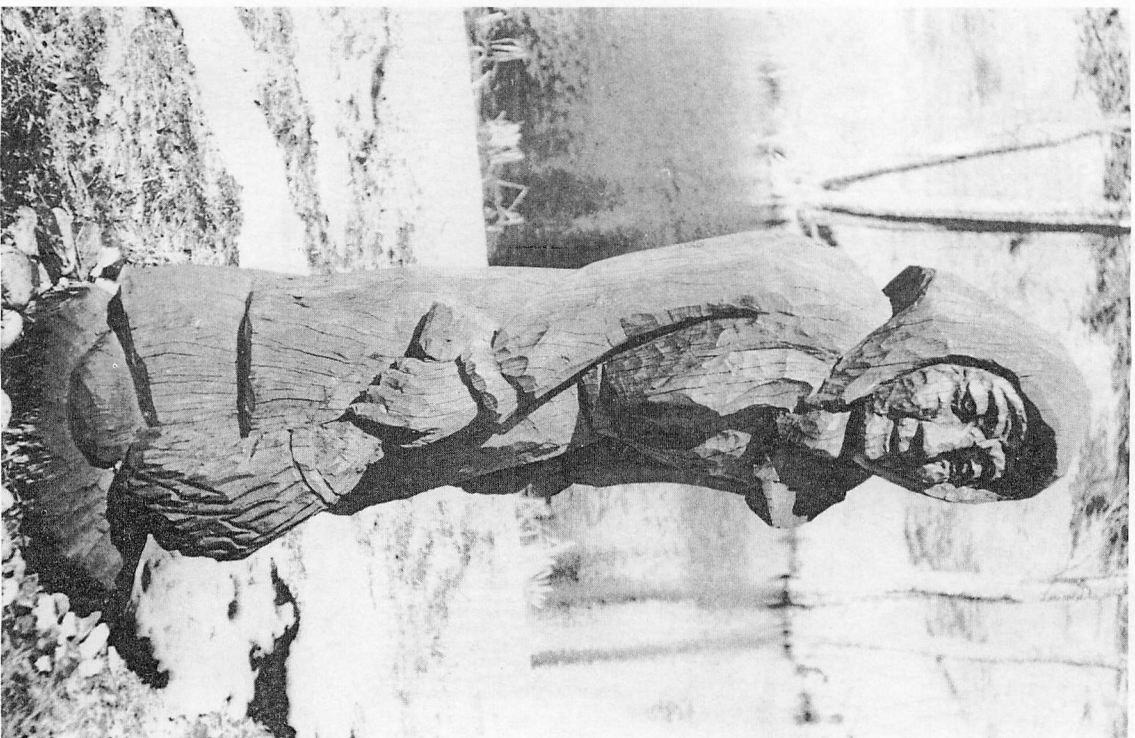


Photo 4



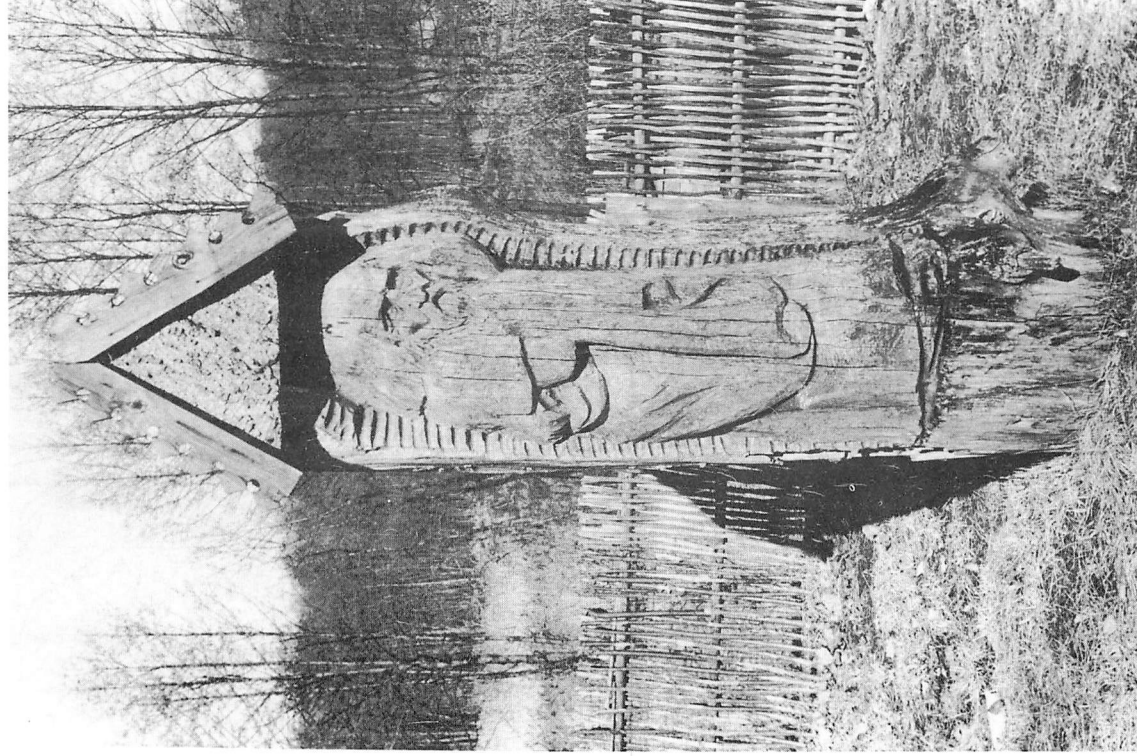


Photo 5

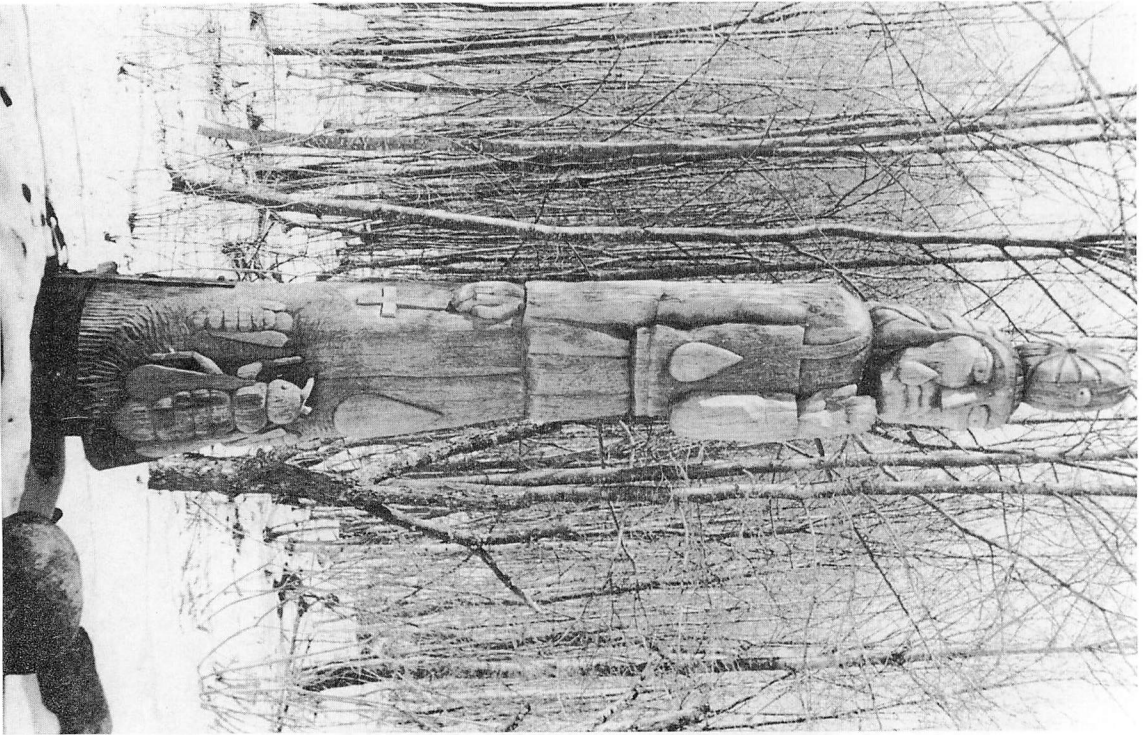


Photo 6

*Laura Piškinaitė-Kazlauskienė: Beekeeper's Spiritual World...*

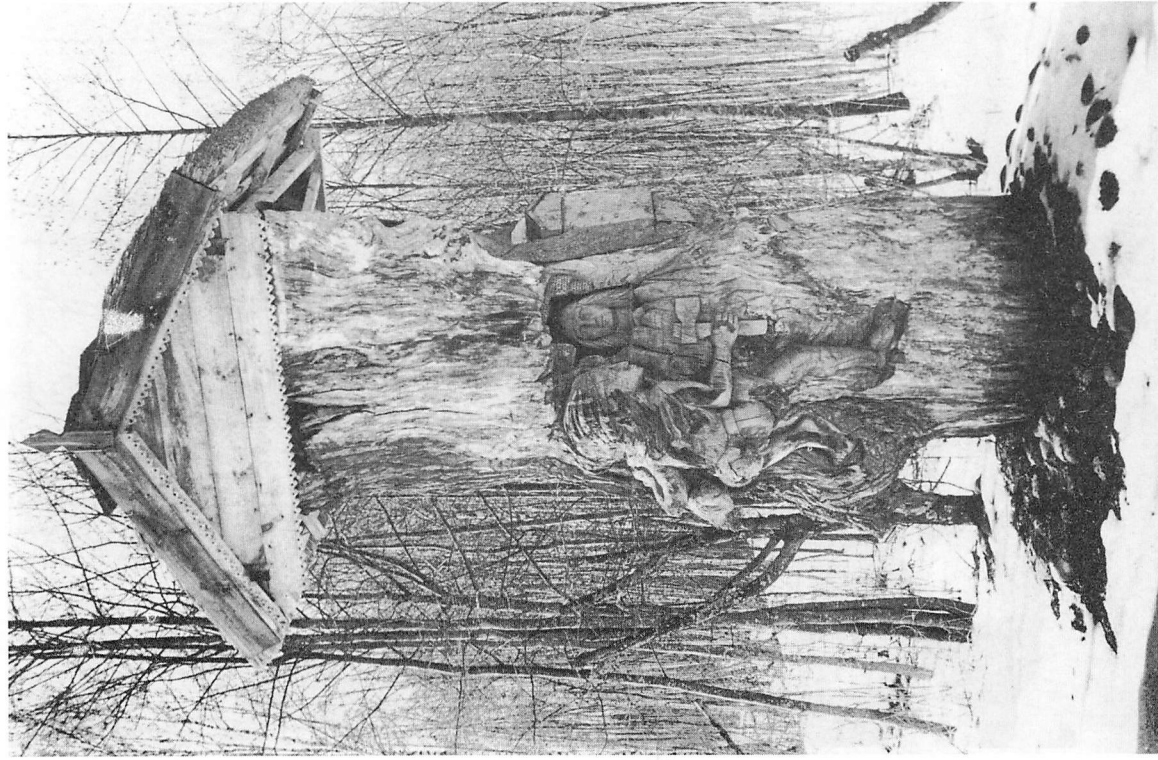


Photo 7

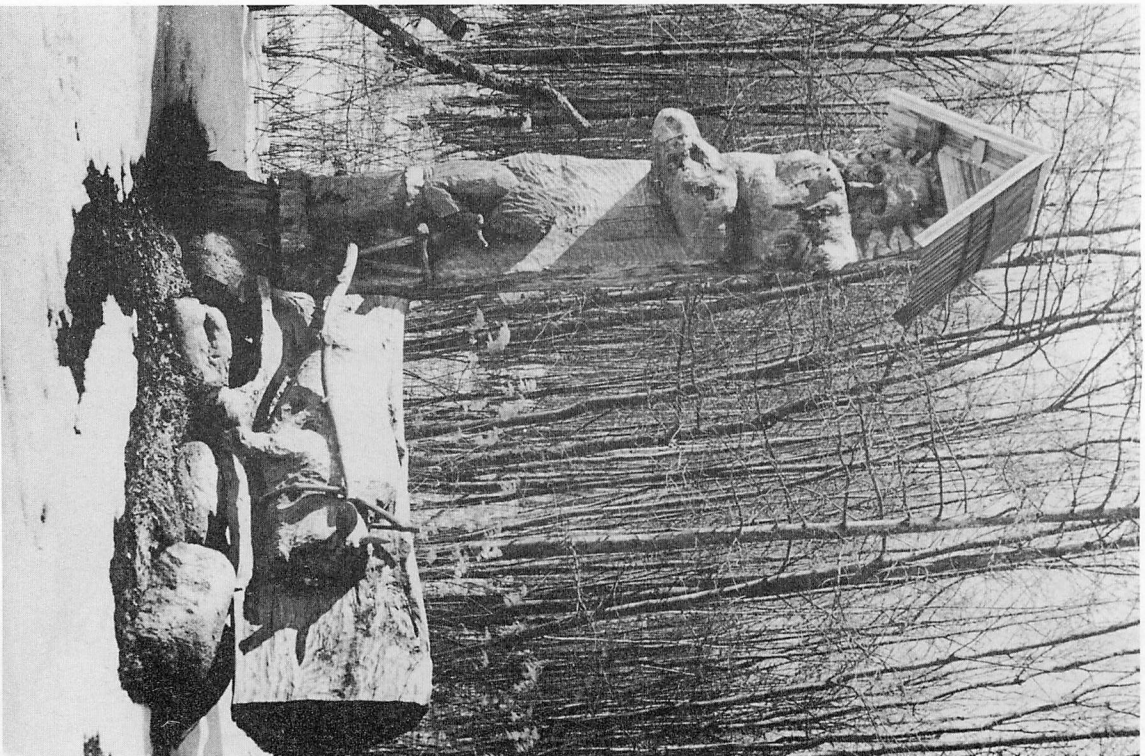


Photo 8

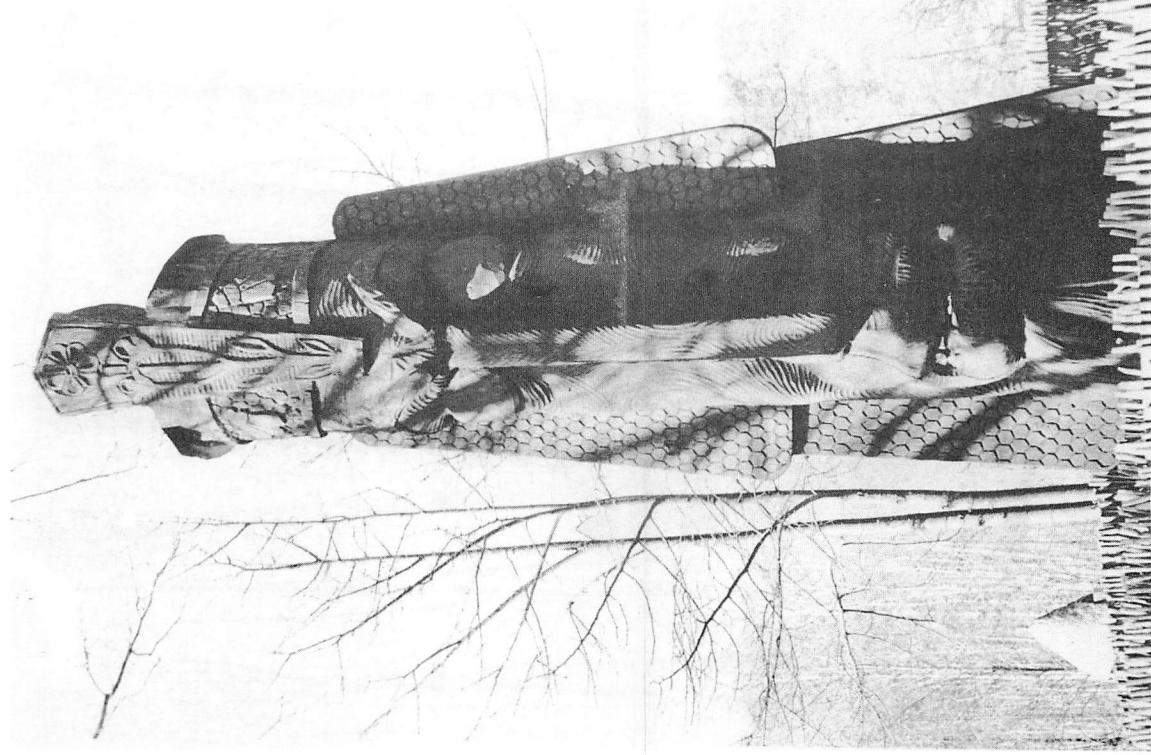


Photo 9

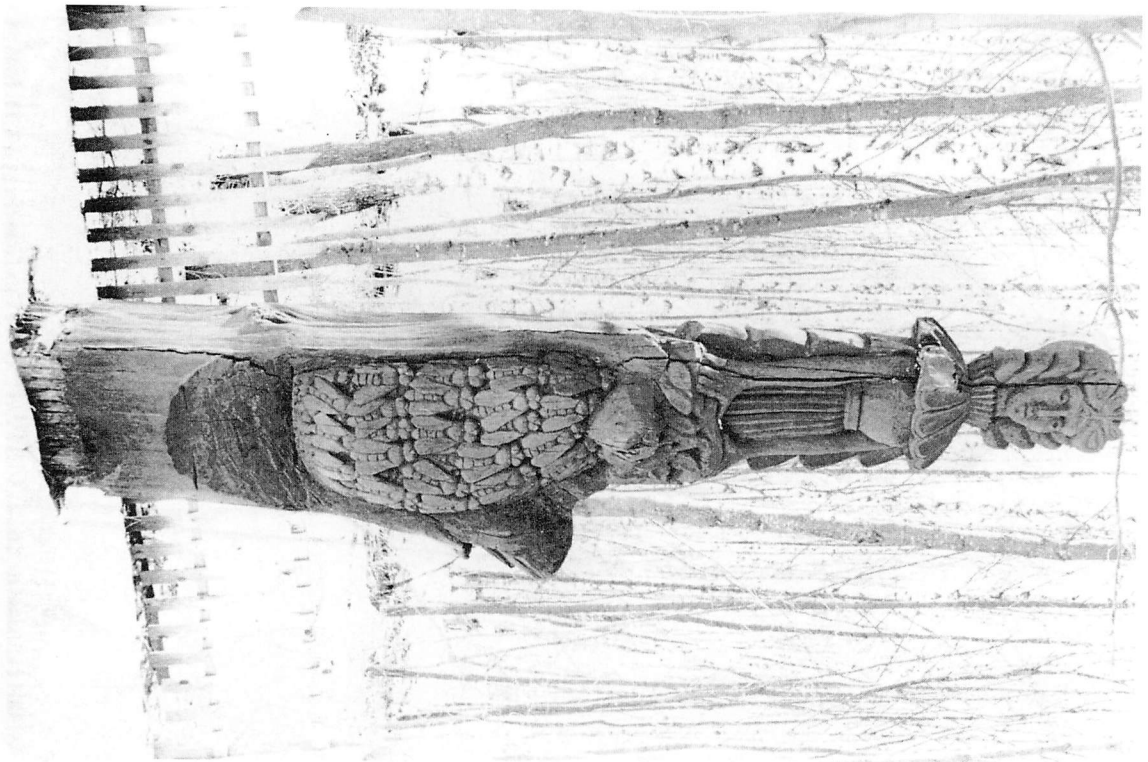


Photo 10

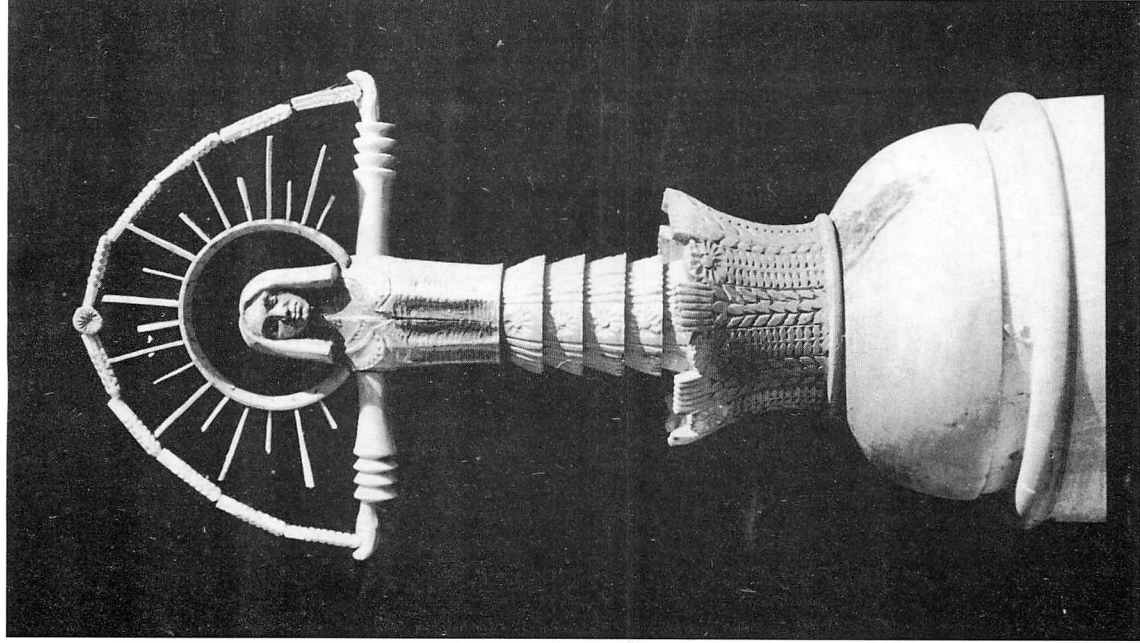


Photo 11

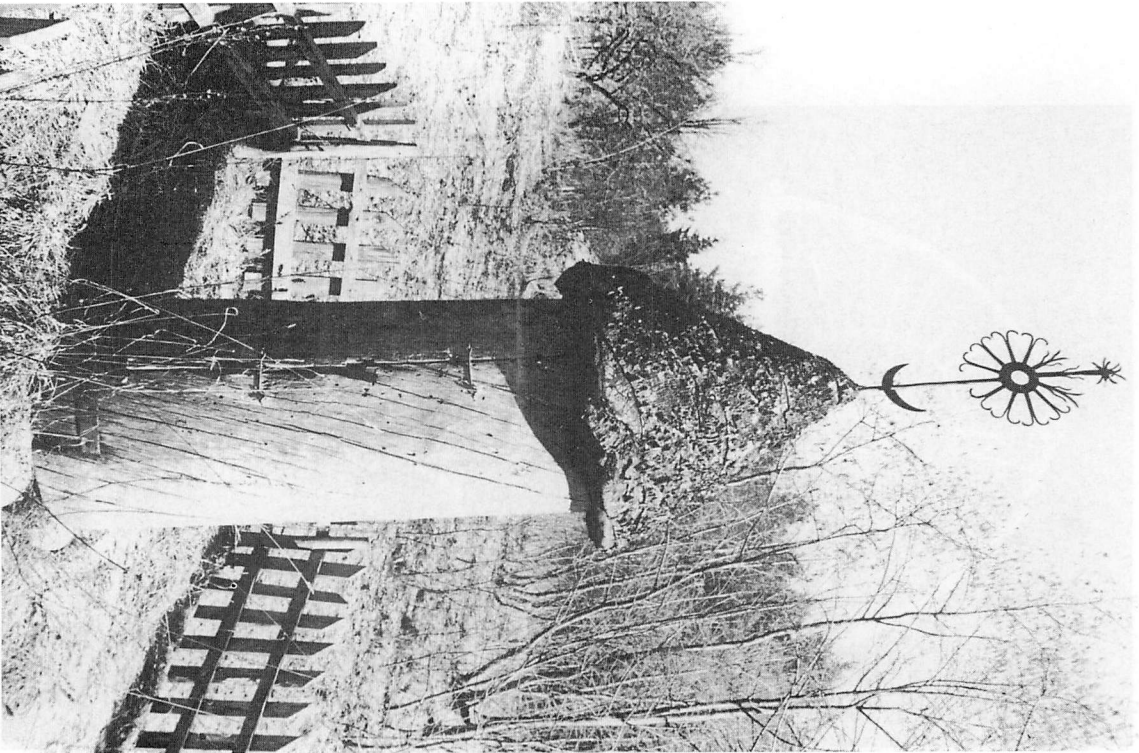


Photo 12



*Laura Piškinaitė-Kazlauskienė: Beekeeper's Spiritual World...*

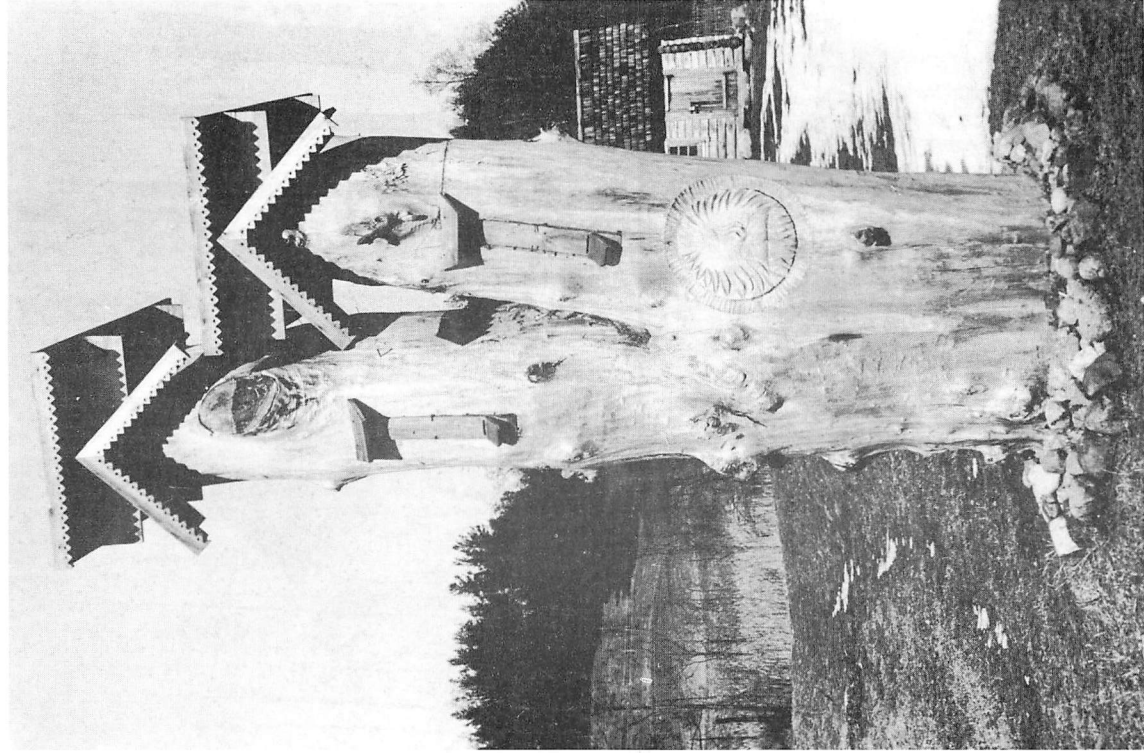


Photo 13

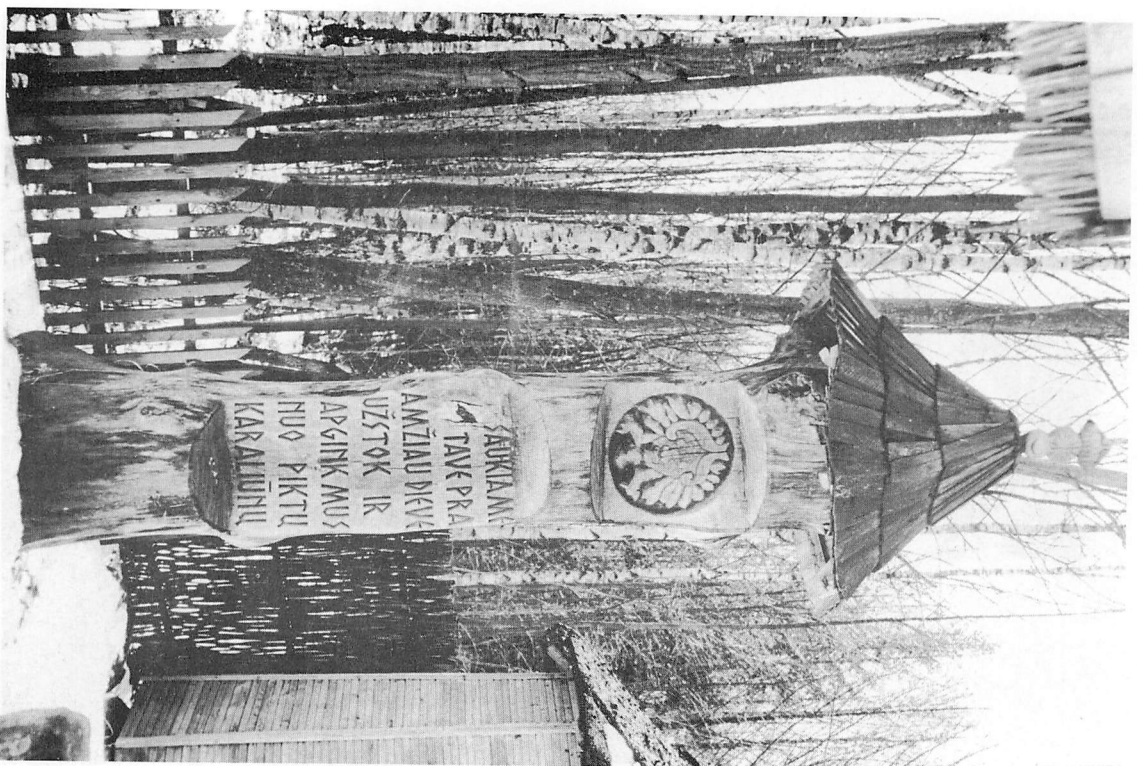


Photo 14

*Laura Piškinaite-Kazlauskienė: Beekeeper's Spiritual World...*

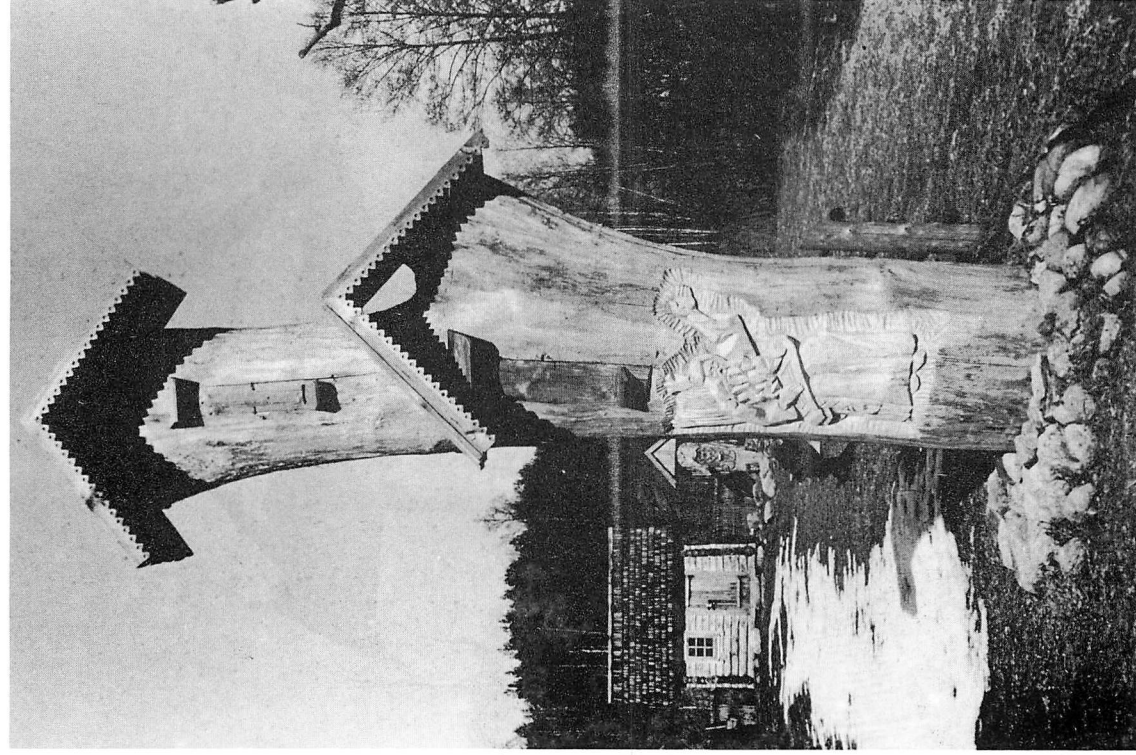


Photo 15

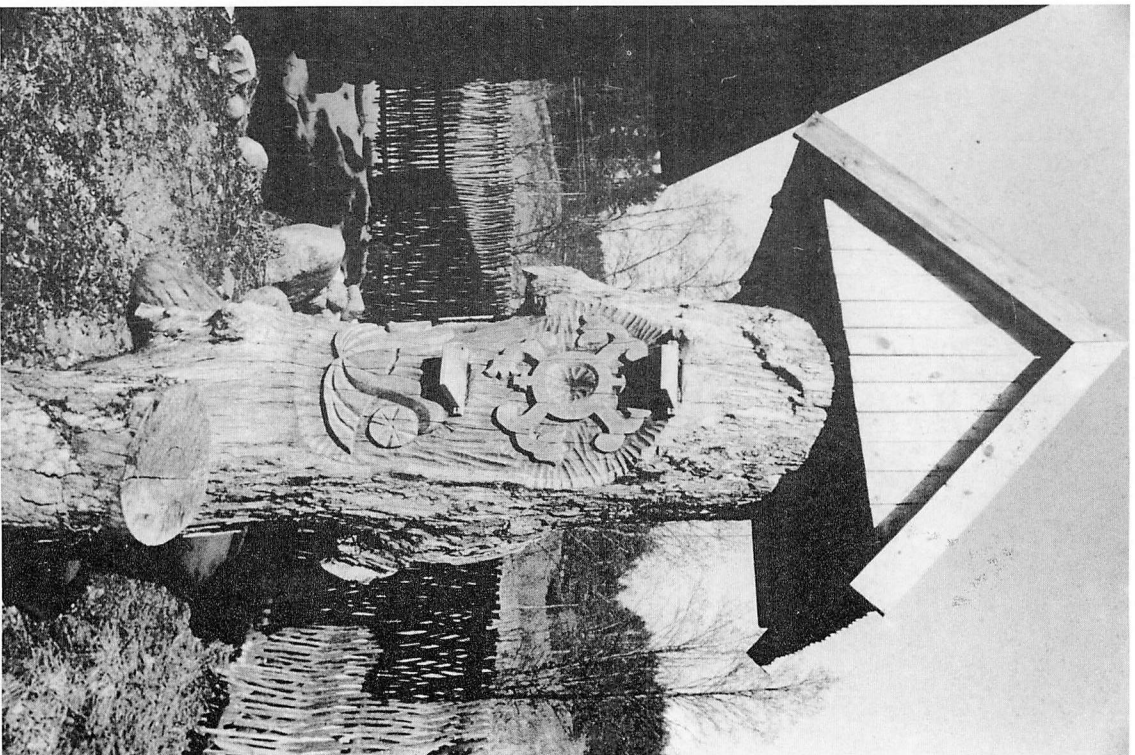


Photo 16

# **Permanent Exhibition and Artefacts**

## **Vaike Reemann**

Exhibitions can be classified according to the following principles e.g.:

1. Subject area – sciences, arts, history, cultural studies.
2. Method of presentation – for research, study or entertainment purposes.
3. Formal aspect of an exhibition – the layout of the objects, the set-up and the use of the display.
4. Purpose – to outline the content and prove the hypothesis, the display of the concept.
5. Duration – temporary, permanent.

In an exhibition the above criteria are in a certain combination. Considering the exhibition type or making an analysis of it, however, one or other criteria are only discussed. Different sequences of priorities and trends can be noticed during different periods of time, with underlying reasons, either subjective or objective. The main factors result from the trends in museum theory and the subject area of a particular exhibition. Secondary factors, which also tend to be more difficult to understand, are related to changes in society (both in global and regional areas). In addition, the preferences set by the group of people putting on an exhibition (involving the subject aspect and level of preparation) are important factors affecting the exhibition.

Very often it transpires that, when planning a display, the objectives are not discussed. In addition to identifying “what and how”, also the aspect “why and to whom” should be clarified. As a result, exhibitions for mass consumption are produced, which only satisfy the people involved. In Estonia, it seems there is a lack of awareness involving the method of presentation to achieve the desired results. Recently, the Estonian Museum Society has undertaken the task of filling that gap,

organizing seminars and workshops. In Estonia, there is a great amount of work to do in order to develop museum theory. This does not imply that exhibitions put on so far have not been successful.

This paper examines different issues involving the display of objects in a definitive or major exhibition surveying a cultural or regional society. In addition, a range of agendas related to artefacts as message-bearing entities reconstructing the past are highlighted. This is an important part of the process of exhibitions, which should be further examined. Curators are accustomed to working on information as written texts and museum guidelines. Very often, however, visitors are unable to accept excessive amounts of information collated by museum staff. Curators may also be obsessed by the ambition to create a really scientific approach to exhibitions. For museum visitors, however, the outcome is too intricate and difficult to understand. Especially with a definitive exhibition, a curator, together with a designer and museum lecturer, considering the reaction of visitors should consciously plan the process of generating museum interpretations for the objects on display. Considering the objectives, then the way and method of exhibition are chosen. Important issues related to the storage of the artefacts displayed on the permanent exhibition are not addressed in the present paper.

The term 'permanent exhibition' is difficult to define, especially considering the duration aspect – whether 2, 5, 10, or 25 years or more. I would, then, prefer the word definitive exhibition for permanent exhibitions of historical and cultural studies surveying culture as a whole with its most characteristic phenomena and important events presented there. The main purpose of the permanent exhibition on cultural items is then to provide a context-associated and open-minded information about (every day) phenomena, traditions and lifestyles that might not be understood by today's visitors, either culturally or historically. Such an exhibition is a success when providing an overview for visitors from both within and without the culture. Also, it might add some extra information concerning background circumstances for any topic-based temporary display, or else for the visitors' first experience of the topic.

Permanent exhibitions tend to be more responsibility-loaded, as compared with temporary displays. Yet more important is the

orientation of the exhibition considering aspects of ethics, besides the best arrangement of costs. According to Carl G. Jung, "... the purpose and task of the museum is to affect people's consciousness, sub-consciousness and unconsciousness". Zbyńk Strińskz has also claimed that "the museum should serve as a memory for culture and nature. Besides storing things, the museum should also actively affect social processes" (1996: 424–425).

How should they do that? The answer is in the right direction. In most cases, the correct methodology and ideology are those that are currently used.

Times have been different, however. Cunning and severe theories have served to prove nonsensical hypotheses and create models that should have been impossible considering both human thought and the law of nature. These theories have even worked and relied upon.

If input is distorted, then putting on a permanent exhibition, a thorough and well-prepared conception with its exact description is among the main tasks of the museum staff. These factors would then determine the adequate choice of objects and method of exhibition.

For museums, original objects are the main sources to be worked upon. Only clearly displayed and easily perceived museum material influences and informs visitors about the life in the past. The range and effectiveness of cognition are correlated with the curator's expectations about visitors' knowledge and experience on the subject. This, in turn, would determine the proportions between "recognition – so do we", "discovering new and interesting", and "boring and dull". Also, an important aspect is the exhibition's correspondence to visitor expectations. Considering the first permanent exhibition of the Estonian National Museum in the 1920s–30s, displayed in the Raadi manor house, it was highly appreciated by ethnologists and museum theorists, as well as by people in general. In creating the exhibition, no doubt the rules of theory and practice of exhibitions were applied, and enabled nationalist-minded socially active people to perform "the Estonian ethic". The display also included a number of artefacts that evoked recognition in casual visitors, e.g. "my grandmother used it", or "even my parents had it". Even nowadays, the exhibition is remembered for its typological and regionalizing of artefacts, with its highlights – a

Seto farmhouse in its natural setting, the “red room”, “the hall in the rococo style”, and some other.

Hermann Glaser, in his report “Exhibitions: To Whom and Why?” in the Berlin Museum Theory Symposium held in 1980, has provided the following example pertaining to the Cologne major exhibition, e.g. “Two teenage girls are chatting in front of the king Tutankhamen’s graceful golden torso. One asks another: When do you think he lived? –About the year 0 – the other says. There must have been far more visitors out of the 8–12 thousand people who visit it every day, who do not care about mistaking it by some 15 centuries” (1981: 25). Historically remote events need additional information to insure real understanding on the part of museum visitors.

An important aspect is to create the way of exhibiting that is adequate for the communication of the curator’s ideas to visitors. In addition to textual material, this can be produced through a range of methods, for example:

- Display of artefacts in their natural environment, e.g. in open-air and memorial museums. In addition, real life activity can be used.
- Display of artefacts as symbols, so gaps are filled, the method that helps to create an image of completeness for visitors. Here, good examples are the exhibitions “Memories” and “Time” displayed in the Helsinki City Museum. Through the recollection of personnel memories, the history of Helsinki and peoples’ lives are reconstructed. I would highlight the school setting with dried leaves on a desk and on a window-sill which recall innumerable memories from past school-years.
- Artefacts that carry a special meaning, can be emphasized or placed in prominent positions, or even are glorified, using certain methods of exhibition, such as “glory in loneliness”, “a highlighted environment” or in an extra-special display. This method, however, may be pursued by the risk to evoke misconception, caused by the inadequate choice of artefacts. Horia Bernea, when discussing the (incompetent) exhibition of Christian symbols in Romania, reveals a number of inconsistencies (1997: 62–63).

The more unusual the artefact on display, whether historically or culturally, the more context-associated information it requires. Nowadays there are innumerable means for this, various media



channels being among them. An adequate method should be developed, however, that would not be so motional, coloured, as well as far too active and aggressive, for it did not destroy the original museum material. Z. Stránský has stated that “the present-day overproduction of information would alienate people from authentic reality. The hyper-realistic world makes it increasingly difficult to differentiate between reality and pseudo-reality. This has also dimmed the distinction between the existent and unreal. Authentic museum artefacts are part of reality, and then a source of information and energy, with an immense mental, cultural and moral significance” (1996: 424). In the permanent exhibition, however, there are the cases when a copy must be used instead of the original message bearing entity. Very often the original object and its imitation are almost indistinguishable. Visitors should certainly be informed about that, for they should not consider a stuffed bird to be real.

In conclusion, the accumulation of artefacts, and first of all additional textual material, should be avoided. Collecting too many beautiful and important objects produces excess material or requires storage. Too much information becomes a distraction that may also destroy the professional aspects of the exhibition.

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*Translated by Epp Uustalu*

# **Vital Things: Objects in Life Histories, Life Histories in Objects<sup>1</sup>**

**Ene Kõresaar**

## **Vital things**

All sorts of things can be important in life, some things for some people, other things for others. According to the memory potential of things, they have been systemized by different researchers. The purpose of these typologies is to stimulate questions about objects as memory carriers.

Ruth E. Mohrmann (1991) divides objects generally into three main groups on the basis of their memory potential. The first (and the most studied) of the three are things that are directly connected with some recollections, created or preserved for this purpose (Mohrmann 1991: 213). This is an extremely heterogenous group, it includes innumerable souvenirs, but also, for example, a tooth-spoon and a bride's veil. Some researchers, e.g. Christine Burckhardt-Seebass (1983), have systemized things according to their life history. Barbara Kirchenblatt-Gimblett (1989a; 1989b: 146) differentiates souvenirs and mementos (things that are kept voluntarily in order to remember the present moment in the future) from the so-called material memory or memory objects – things that are created directly to remember some events/associations (paintings, drawings, statuettes, photos etc.). Some things belonging to this group are like material companions of a human being, getting older together with their owner and user and accumulating their meaning in this process. This group does not include single things only but collections of things that could be either a photo album or, for example, the design and

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<sup>1</sup>This article has been prepared by support of the Estonian Science Foundation.

furnishing of a flat. These collectibles convey in themselves a story about how and why they were obtained, under what circumstances, what were the motives. Systematic collection of things is a way in which to structure memory (Kirchenblatt-Gimblett 1989a: 146). How and what we remember is “objectified in material forms which are sometimes arranged to embody categories and thereby mark out the object’s significance” (Radley 1990: 47).

### **Objects and life histories**

Modern ethnological study of material culture proceeds from a standpoint that both things and their users are the active culture-creating factors (Kannike 1996: 108). In order to understand the meaning of an object to its user, it is not enough to state the fact that the thing does exist or to analyse its shape. Life history interviews are of great help, opening the symbolic aspect of the object and widening the source potential of it. Students of both material culture and biographies have pointed to close empiric relationships between things in people’s lives and people’s stories. It seems, however, that the main interest of their research has been on what possessions mean to us and the source material often consists of answers to questionnaires, documentation, and (life history) interviews (Ljungström 1997; Kuntz 1990; Rogan 1992; Csikszentmihalyi, Rochberg-Halton 1994).

My main interest is not in the stories of things that are told for things’ sake (compare Ljungström 1997; Thorsen 1996), but things that become topical only when the question is about a person’s life. They can be dead/lost things or alive things but they are definitely vital. I am interested in what connection these things turn up in people’s biographies, what function do they have and what conclusions can be drawn from the standpoint of cultural research.

This analysis is based on the biographies of 25 Estonian women born between 1910–1934. 11 out of these are life history interviews with Estonian women who emigrated to Switzerland in 1940–1950s, recorded in the autumn of 1996 to the spring of 1997. 14 biographies have been collected by the Estonian Literary Museum and the Estonian

Biography-Researchers' Society *Estonian Life Histories* as a result of advertisements in the press and have been published in the collection "Estonian Life Histories. Women talking" (1997).

### **Objects in life histories, life histories in objects**

Material objects make up the story, help to create the framework and "carry the story to its objective". Things that are lost/wasted or material environment can still exist in the owner's head, organizing his/her memory and determining the possible variants of the story. Things and collectibles are mentioned in life histories in very different ways.

In the simplest way things function in life history stories just like mnemotechnical means: a person "hooks into" a certain detail (a big tree, red house, white dress etc.) in order to restore an important situation in his/her mind.

Often there are detailed descriptions of the environment in life histories. The location and furnishing of a flat have been described. The description of living conditions helps the story-teller to formulate the situation he/she was in at certain moments, and therefore make it more understandable for the audience. Thus, things have an explanatory function.

Especially prestigious things have a kind of structuring function in life histories. A car, a TV set, a corner divan and other things in shortage at certain periods denote the beginning of a new life phase in some life histories.

### **Example. A magic escape. An explaining function of a thing**

Hilda<sup>2</sup> gives her life history as an adventure story in which the motive of "magic escape" dominates. There are several escapes like that, but on one occasion the exact description of the room is vitally important in order to understand the situation. An accident with a mirror, to which Hilda attaches a succession of dangerous situations, precedes the story.

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<sup>2</sup> Doctor, poet, born in 1912. Interviewed on 16/Sept/1996.

Hilda had ordered a new mirror from a cabinet-maker who, depending upon the war circumstances, wanted ether as his pay. It is 1943, Hilda is in bed at home with diphtheria. One night the cabinet-maker, dizzy with ether, breaks her window. Hilda tells:

*... and he did not, and did not, bring the mirror. And just the very window, what was the first window... (to her daughter:) You know that window, it was the window in my room. I also had the photo, with my writing-desk and everything... And then it was... I was already recovering from diphtheria, the infirmary doctor used to come and see me at home. And then... my bed was still in the back corner and here in the front... I mean, my room was divided so that my bed was back there and here in the middle I had a wardrobe. So. And then... One night this very... I came out of my bed for a minute or how it was, and went straight back to bed again. All of a sudden a terrible crash! comes in through the window and against this wardrobe! I just was near the wardrobe before!*

### **Example. Life on hire purchase. The structuring function of a thing**

The relationship with her husbands is the essential feature in Selma's<sup>3</sup> life history. She has been married twice, both times the relationship has been unsuccessful. Both men have had drinking problems and easy-going characters, they waste their money and buying things is left to the wife:

*My daughters wedding was coming and I had already decided to move out after my daughter's wedding, as the director of the bread factory had given me a nine-square metre room for two, with cooking facilities. So, a week after my daughter's wedding I moved in, taking a bed, mirror, table and an armchair with me. Nothing else could fit into this room. I hung my clothes in zipped waxcloth bags on a peg. And again, hardship. I bought a bed, mirror and a cupboard on hire purchase. Later when the first debt was paid, hire purchase again – first, a small black-and-white TV set and the radio "Okean". [---] I paid those*

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<sup>3</sup> Civil servant with secondary vocational education, born in 1934 (Annuk 1997: 93–120).

*installments for a couple of years, after that it was a bit easier. Then the time came when I thought that it was my obligation to support my son's family, too, because my grandson was going to be born soon. I had to buy the perambulator and everything else that a baby needed. I asked my husband, we were still legally married, whether he would support me in buying those things. He said that he did not have any money, said that we could buy them later on. Although prams were in short supply at those times, I could still buy one, using my acquaintances. I borrowed and paid back later.*

Marrying again, she had to start obtaining new things. The second husband could neither appreciate the ability of his wife nor the value of things: during his wife's stay at the hospital he broke the radio "Okean" while drunk. Again it was necessary to start collecting money... The woman had provided well for her retirement. At times, when going to work did not lose your pension, she had worked hard for kitchen furniture. She finishes her story in the hope that the fridge and the TV set would last a long time.

During the biographical interview, people often show things that are important in their lives, things that are connected with an important person or event, things that "support" that biographical conception or simply reinforce the life story. These things are photos most often, as it comes out in Hilda's story, in the first example, but they can also be real things, connected with an important event or period of life. These things embody both symbolic and functional proof.

### **Example. A dress story**

The "Dress story" is another of Hilda's stories about her "magic escape" in 1943. She has told this story repeatedly. 'Dress' has become a key word that brings the events back into active memory. Hilda's daughter who prompted some key words for her mother every so often, was also present at the interview. The dress story is preceded by a story about bombing from which Hilda was one of the few who survived.

D<sup>4</sup>: *Once you washed your dress and put it in the garden, well, you hung it up...*

H: *Ah, that's what you mean! It was at that time, before that bombing, it was then. It was like that then. When I said that I would go to my room and fall asleep...*

I: *Hmm.*

H: *And then I looked, the weather was so fine and calm. There wasn't anything anywhere and... Not a single plane anywhere or anything and then I thought OK, I will now... As we had slept with our clothes on all the time, then... That dress, I still had it quite recently. I kept it as a memory but I don't have it any more, I don't know where it is. And then I went and washed my stockings... and that dress... It was a white dress and I had it embroidered...(points at her chest:) All embroidered like that in here. And then... I was just hanging them up and they started shooting all of a sudden! It means, I don't know, whether with a revolver or a pistol or what with... As if... as if... where did it come from, I don't remember. Anyway, all my stockings and my dress were full of holes! And I still kept that dress, sewed those holes and showed them to you (the daughter) even in Italy and said: "Look! Here are the places where the bullets went through!"*

*But I remained untouched. And then I went inside and then I fell asleep and then the bomb came.*

### **Example. Professional certificate as a symbol**

Helgi<sup>5</sup> was born in Rāpina in 1910. She finished a primary and secondary school near Rāpina and graduated from Tartu University as a biologist. Helgi wanted to continue her education in doctoral studies but her father, a farmer, did not agree to support her studies any more. That is why Helgi decided to become a teacher and completed pedagogical courses. After that she worked in Pärnu Poeglaste Gümnaasium (Pärnu Boys High School).

In addition, Helgi worked as a biology teacher in two other secondary schools in Pärnu. In Helgi's life history (like in many life histories of

<sup>4</sup> D – Hilda's daughter; I – Interviewer.

<sup>5</sup> Teacher, shop assistant, born in 1910. Interviewed on 3/Oct/1996.

educated people), the central theme is her path to education and self-improvement. 1943 was the changing point for her, too, and the only “distraction” from the topic of self-improvement. Together with her children, she escapes to Germany where she meets her husband who is an officer. With the help of their acquaintances, they go to Switzerland together. In Switzerland Helgi did not succeed in finding a job as a teacher, and she had to earn her living as a shop assistant until she retired. During the interview, Helgi showed her university diploma and teacher’s certificate (almost the only documents that she had taken with her from Estonia), that were framed and hung on the dining-room wall. During the conversation she mentioned several times that the job as a shop assistant was a drudge but necessary to earn money to live on and that actually she was educated to be a teacher. In the society of Estonian immigrants in Switzerland, Helgi is appreciated in her pre-war status, there are ex-students of hers among the fellow immigrants. Helgi is honoured and respected as a teacher and one of the leading members of the Estonian Society. She has to explain her position, including the fact that she has worked as a shop assistant for half of her life, to the young researcher from Estonia and she relies on her documents, showing her educational and professional activities. These are not only the proof of evidence, as they are hung up on the wall of the most important room.

Dealing with the life story of an individual, and also another human being, event etc. as a text, we can observe the thing between the human being and his/her story as a code-text (Lotman 1990: 284). The function of a thing as a code-text becomes evident during a biographical interview, when it stimulates the memory of the narrator, generates some connections. The function of a thing as a code-text enables the use of a thing as a method in studying their users’ life opinions, valuations and history consciousness.

Åsa Ljungström (1997) noticed during her field work that when things were taken out from cupboards and boxes to be photographed, people saw their things in a new light.

Old and very often forgotten things (the aim of the field work was to take inventory of old handicrafts and techniques) arouse different associations in their users, inspired them to tell about their life experiences. “Stories about handicrafts” brought out the topics that would



have been indiscreet when discussed directly – class differences, gender roles, identity questions, death. Andreas Kuntz (1991) used the same method when studying the history consciousness of Hamburg working-class families.

### **Things, biographies and culture**

With biographies, we have to differentiate between a life story, expressing personal identity, and life history – social facts, existing outside the individual's own biography. Individual biographies are cultural constructions. In these constructions there are two sides: the personal side, having individuality as its object and the social or cultural side, having morality as its object (Svensson 1995: 31). In case of a life story, the intimate importance of a thing to its user is essential, but in a wider context – on the level of life history, things express special relations that rule between life and society, different social and cultural practices in the community.

Material objects have an important regulative function in social relations. At the same time, the way of these regulations is not only conditioned by these objects. Objects occur more like meaning-carriers, signs (Slongo 1992: 123). In Selma's biography, obtaining things means feeling responsible and safe, getting on in life, strong family ties and caring for each other; breaking things is a sign of carelessness and immorality. Indicating the teacher's certificate, Helgi changes the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee into an intellectual conversation between two educated people. Previously it was mentioned that in biographical stories, people try to give a very exact account of their living conditions. Changing living places is an important factor that structures biographies, indicating also the changes in social relationships. However, there are some stories that take a shape of "flat biographies".

**Example. “A flat biography”**

Leida<sup>6</sup> describes very exactly the living conditions of her and her children’s families during different periods of life in a 15-page biography. Since her childhood until the birth of her second child she lived in very difficult circumstances. Her father came to live in his wife’s parents’ farm. The family lived in the attic, where the father had built a small room. There were many children and they lacked space; when they were all present, quarrels were usual.

In 1930, father started to build a new living-place for the family. Leida gives a long description of the construction work and mentions that her father ruined his health with hard work. Her father started to run a shop and rented rooms out for parties: *at parties the shop was open, the cloak-room was in the sitting-room and bicycles were kept in the kitchen*. The whole family lived in a big room, separated by cupboards. The girl got her own bed only after her brother and sister were born. All the time she was dreaming about her own room.

After the war, the family moved back into their grandfather’s house. Father built a kitchen and a hallway next to the room, *then it was like a little flat*.

In 1950 Leida went to gardening school. There she had her first private living place – above a gymnasium’s archway, equipped with old furniture from the school. But the school principal allowed the warehouse supervisor also to live there and so the woman had to share the room with her friend. When Leida married, all three of them lived together in the same room for some time. After the birth of their first child, the young couple moved into his mother’s place; when the second child was born, they obtained a house of their own. Whether they bought it or built it themselves, Leida does not mention.

With the movement into their own house “normal life” begins – a period which is usually not normally much narrated in life histories. Thus Leida’s life history continues mainly with the description of her children’s welfare.

Leida has two sons and a daughter. The elder son has two sons and they live *in a tiny flat*. Her daughter was appointed to a small town after

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<sup>6</sup> Worker, born in 1929 (Annuk 1977: 55–69).

graduation from the university. *She got her flat in an old house, she was really unhappy because of that, but after wallpapering and furnishing the flat, it looked like home.*

When her daughter married, the couple lived in the husband's hostel flat. *Later they got a two-room flat on the fifth floor, and the second son was born. Next year they moved elsewhere, and obtained a two-room flat with a balcony. The youngest son found his dream person from Tallinn. The daughter-in-law had a small flat of her own. It is nice and cosy at their place, only a little confined.*

The mentioning and description of flats has a symbolic function. An expression "we had a three-room flat" symbolizes social status. Andreas Lehmann who has studied life histories of Hamburg workers regards the emergence of flat biographies to be a specific phenomenon inside some age and social groupings (1983: 180). The Norwegian ethnologist Liv Emma Thorsen also mentions in her comparative analysis that "generally, recollections of working-class people more often have things as the stories' associative center than what is found in the upper middle-class recollections" (1996: 69). Things that are status symbols, or connected with unusual experiences in a person's life or that express a dream of something unobtainable, function in life stories as metaphors referring to sensitive and ideological conditions in the narrator's life and as cultural markers (Thorsen 1996: 71–74). Working-class life histories express a greater consciousness of status which is indicated through material things, in the private as well as public spheres. Middle-class life histories, on the other hand, tend to be more reserved about private matters and as a rule they do not narrate how well other people are getting on in life. Personal aspects are played down in middle-class life histories, narratives are more general, avoiding certain events (where material objects are mentioned most often) (Thorsen 1996: 83; Radley 1990: 49). Thus, it does not mean that some things are more important than others or that a middle-class person would not in any way value the material world. The references to material things when telling his/her life history is more an indication of certain class-specific values rather than an indication of the real importance of things (Thorsen 1996: 83).

These conclusions by European ethnologists tempt us to draw parallels with the material from Estonia. Unfortunately, the character of

present research does not enable the drawing of extensive conclusions, that is why I am going to limit myself to preliminary thoughts and hypotheses that have emerged during work with life histories. While in childhood recollections, there are clearer tendencies to more specific differences of social ranks than in the narratives concerning the Soviet period, many things remain unclear. A car, fridge, TV set and radio “Okean” are mentioned in the narratives of both workers and engineers, farmers and teachers, together with holiday trips (tourist vouchers) and exchanging flats. Desire and need for these things, difficulties in obtaining them, anxiety because of poor living conditions, joy and relief when some problems are solved, all these themes are covered in life histories. The forming of a life history as a narrative is influenced by previous and current difficulties in managing everyday life. Under the circumstances of a nationwide shortage of goods and regulated supply system, in order to succeed within this network, a person had to master a special social competence and all this has an indisputable influence on what is important and how an individual evaluates his/her life in retrospect. The influence of a social system cannot be underestimated, on the contrary, more research should be carried out as to how, in the framework of the system, “little distinctions” reveal themselves in life histories.

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*Translated by Mall Leman*

# Komi Objects at the Estonian National Museum

Art Leete

*“And today things accumulated”*  
From Aleksei Peterson’s<sup>1</sup> fieldwork diary  
with the Sysola Komi in 1976.

## Collection of Komi Objects

In the Estonian National Museum (ENM) there are 498 Komi exhibits (including the Northern Komi and the Komi-Permyaks), collected in the fieldwork trips by the ENM in 1967 (among the Komi-Permyaks), 1969 (among the Izhma Komi, *izvatas*), 1976 (among the Sysola Komi and Luza Komi, *syktylsajjas*, *luzsajjas*), 1981 (among the Izhma Komi), 1989 (among the Upper-Ezhva, or Upper-Vychegda Komi, *vylysezhvasajjas*), 1996 (among the Upper-Vychegda Komi), in 1997 (among the Lower-Ezhva, or Lower Vychegda Komi, *ezhvatas*) and 1998 (among Udor Komi, *udorasajjas*). Most of the above fieldwork trips<sup>2</sup> have been organized in cooperation with the National Museum of the Komi Republic. Also, there are a few objects from fieldwork trips to some other regions where the Komi (*izvatas*) live, such as the Kola Peninsula and Western Siberia. Some of the objects have been donated or given as gifts. In the ENM, basic material culture of the two ethnographic groups of the Northern Komi (e.g. the Pechora Komi (*pechorasa*) and the Vym Komi (*yemvatas*)) are not represented.

The Komi collection at the ENM is not representative if both geographical and cultural aspects are considered. There are relatively

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<sup>1</sup> Director of the Estonian National Museum, 1958–1992.

<sup>2</sup> Joint expeditions of the ENM and the National Museum of the Komi Republic were the trips in 1976, 1989, 1996, 1997 and 1998.

fewer objects related to men's clothes and activities, especially those performed for a living (e.g. agriculture, cattle breeding, game hunting, fishing, reindeer rearing). There are relatively more items involving women's clothes (especially shirts (*döröm*), skirts (*sarapan*, *shushun*), small tools (e.g. spindles (*chörs*), parts of a weaving loom, distaffs (*pechkan*), and various birch-bark vessels. In the future, more attention should be paid to these fields of activities with little information known about them. Yet, in order to provide a better geographical representation of objects, there would be much overlapping material. Many objects, however, that are not present in the ENM, are there as photographs, figures or manuscripts describing them.

Information about the collected Komi objects is not complete. The Komi names of objects suggested by the museum catalogue are being linguistically examined<sup>3</sup> at the National Museum of the Komi Republic. There are a great number of mistakes estimated (about one quarter to one third of all cases with any Komi equivalent).

In addition, the attitude of people towards their heritage is not focused either: how to use and keep it, in what circumstances the object is handed over, thrown away or destroyed. In a few cases, even the field of use is not specified (at the ENM, there is a section of artefacts, some scoops, etc., that could be used for several purposes, and might have been).

### **From Fieldwork Diaries**

Information reporting the collection of the Komi objects in diaries available at the ENM does not provide much information about the objects, but rather describes the factual detail of collection. At the ENM, there are no established requirements as regards the form or content of the fieldwork diary. So are the expedition diaries with the Komi: days have been reported one by one, sometimes the most impressive events have been highlighted. In most cases the dates and names of villages have been provided, as well as names of the people

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<sup>3</sup> At the time of writing this paper, April–May 1998.

who were interviewed. Also, their age, or at least an approximate age has been provided.

I do not consider state censorship, organization or the author evident in the soviet-period fieldwork diaries, the aspect highlighted by Heiki Pärdi (1995: 82), to be so overwhelming in the Komi diaries examined in this paper. I did not include Kalju Kõnsin's diary with the Izhma Komi in 1969 (TAp 576) in this paper, as it had been textually minimized even further than suggested by H. Pärdi, to the form of a "boringly formal and dull accounts of "what I ate this morning, how many households I visited, what kind of things I collected / did not collect, and what the weather was like"" (Pärdi 1995: 82).

Pärdi suggests that "If the aim of the research is not only factography and the external description of the facts ("how it was"), the subjective opinions, trains of thought and the whole presentation of material in the diary become a very important source. They should not be read only word for word to find out what happened, what the author saw or heard. Through diaries we can also get information about things not directly mentioned there. The things the author wanted to inform us about need not be the same as we are interested in most of all" (1995: 83). According to Marc Bloch, Pärdi considers diaries to be reporting ""unwilling evidence" of history" (1995: 83). Also, he has regarded fieldwork diaries as "unique intimate documents reflecting their time and including personal aspect", and "stylistically pure representatives of direct (and open) observation" (1995: 83).

It could be that the issue is not as straightforward as Pärdi sees it. In most cases, collectors are professional ethnologists (as with all Komi diaries), and thus one should be wary of examining the "unwillingness" of message. Also, the conception of "stylistically pure and direct observation", suggested by Pärdi, should be further discussed. Supposedly, examination by an ethnologist tends to be charged with theories, attitudes, or else pre-suppositions. A researcher can also construct "direct experience" and thus expose the brightest possible sides of his or her personality.

Paul Atkinson has also discussed the aspects of textual composition of the collector's experience (1994). Without going more deeply into Atkinson's work, I will quote the following section from his monograph:



“The retrospective account of failures resolved and troubles survived thus vouched for the authenticity of the author’s experience. He or she claims uniquely to have gone through the baptism of fire in order to achieve the close acquaintance that is the foundation of ethnographic knowledge. The ‘discovery’ of social relationships and cultural forms is thus paralleled by the *personal* narrative of exploration and survival” (Atkinson 1994: 110).

In the case of the extracts from diaries examined in this paper, both are correct. There is evidence that can be considered as “unwillingness of message”, and thus analysed according to M. Bloch. Also, there are narratives with evident “ethnographic construction” in them.

On the other hand, there are some ethical issues to be settled when examining these relatively subjective and uncorrected writings. The authors’ self-ironical attitude detectable in the Komi diaries should also be considered when analysing them. The collectors have not prepared their diaries for publishing, and thus the requirements set by current fieldwork methodology cannot be applied to these narratives.

### **Material involving Komi objects in diaries**

In this section I will survey how the diary of the joint expedition of the ENM and the National Museum of the Komi Republic in 1989 interpret the Komi objects (every Estonian member has contributed to its compilation). All the evidence about the objects can be subdivided into four broad categories:

#### **1. How did ethnologists work, e.g.:**

“Being a fieldwork novice, it amazed me how indifferently Mrs. Nadezhda<sup>4</sup>, a researcher at the Komi museum, started to demand things without much preliminary explanation. Well, this must be the way things go” (Tap 858: 13, Ust-Kulom, Eve Randoja 1989).

“Yeah, as with any other country, it is pitiful to visit the Komi when you do not understand the native language. Especially being an

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<sup>4</sup> Nadezhda Titova.

ethnologist. Anyway, we were doing well at Shahsikt: we obtained 15 items” (TAp 858: 32, Ust-Kulom region, Heiki Pärdi 1989).

“On our way back to the bus I was entrusted with a specific Komi manure fork, which I then tried to use to the full. Unfortunately, an eager museum worker, Terje [Alop] could not use the dung fork as a walking stick” (TAp 858: 37–38, Ust-Kulom region, Vylgort village, Eve Randoja 1989).

## 2. What was collected, e.g.:

“We found one woman who agreed to let the ‘crowd’<sup>5</sup> into her house. From her<sup>6</sup> we obtained a basket of birch bark, a belt, and a rigid heddle. I stayed there longer to make a sketch of a stocking. We also got a fur coat, a birch bark vessel, a wooden sledge. It was raining all the time” (TAp 858: 15, Ust-Kulom region, Don village, Anneli Säre 1989).

“At this village we got an iron, *sarafan* (skirt), a *peshter*<sup>7</sup>, a board-shaped distaff, a cloth with a weaver’s reed and heddlers, and 2 shuttlers. [---] The Komi museum obtained a reindeer sledge. Otherwise in a good condition, but fastened with wire” (TAp 858: 18, Ust-Kulom region, Dzhezdzhim village, Heiki Pärdi 1989).

“The afternoon also began successfully: with the first embroidered towel, somewhat later another was obtained” (TAp 858: 36, Ust-Kulom region, Vylgort village, Eve Randoja 1989).

Thus, much of the narrative reflects the collector’s attitude towards the objects and collecting. In some cases the detail of collection has been reported. Heiki Pärdi even calls the collectors “hawkers-pedlars” (TAp 858: 31). It is of no doubt that such information is of great importance in the reconstruction of the collector’s attitude. Such evidence occurs at random, however, as there are no formal requirements for compiling a diary. Thus, this information can be used for examining collectors.

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<sup>5</sup> Members of the expedition – five Estonians and two Komi ethnologists.

<sup>6</sup> As it comes out of the diary, it was the Komi Olga Nikolayevna Napalkina.

<sup>7</sup> *Peshter* – a birch-bark carrier, held on the back (in the Komi lng.).

### 3. What was the owner's attitude towards giving things away:

Only a few accounts of the local people's attitude to collecting have slipped in – two women disagreed about giving their things away – in the case of the first, the things were mementos of her parents, and no motive could be found for the other Komi woman's action.

“We must be going again. We visited quite a number of women, while one of them could retain her obstinate regard. Without result we, as well as her daughter and neighbour's wife, tried to persuade her (both in Russian and Komi) to give us an interesting rectangular holder. The woman was resolute. She even rummaged around in her storehouse and gave us an old *sarafan* and bric-a-brac instead (so that we left her in peace). However, she refused to give us the birch-bark item. We just gave up...” (TAP 858: 23–24, Ust-Kulom region, Don village, Terje Alop 1989).

“We went to Mödlapöv village, and Terje was able to dress in the exquisite shirt of a Komi bride and a light pink *sarafan*. Of course, she had a picture taken of her with these clothes on. Also, the woman had her father's embroidered shirt made by her mother for their wedding. However, she refused to give the above things away. Without much encouragement, the woman gave Terje a magnificent silk scarf for 15 roubles. This village also provided children's footwear. Actually, we were no longer passionate about collecting” (TAP 858: 41–42, Ust-Kulom region, Anneli Säre 1989).

One time high spirits of the Komi women about collectors have been reported. It does not appear, however, whether the old biddies are highly pleased that they can sell their things, or at they can receive the guests and entertain them, e.g.:

“In the first household women were very kind and eager to rummage around for things. [---] Both the Syktyvkar museum and the ENM obtained this and that from them” (TAP 858: 21–22, Ust-Kulom region, Don village, Terje Alop 1989).

4. One time local authorities intervention in the collection process has been reported, e.g.:

“At our destination Pomözdin village things started badly (men's lodging at militia station, women's lodging at council office, not recommended to collect things, local museum was going to be established,

Russian heard in streets)” (TAp 858: 34, Ust-Kulom region, Heiki Pärdi 1989).

Here it is important to note that the Komi living at Pomözdin are regarded as very patriotic. Also the other Komi people (and probably the Pomözdin Komi themselves) regard the Komi living there to be somewhat short-tempered. Thus, the expedition members could have been victims of the local characteristic attitude.

In the diary of the **1981 expedition to the Inta region Izhma Komi**, made by the Estonian Art Academy<sup>8</sup>, Edgar Saar, researcher of the ENM, has provided several accounts about these subjects. Information will be classified according to the outline of the 1989 expedition.

1. The diary does not include any account of the **ethnologist’s** (i.e. Edgar Saar’s) **attitude towards the work**.

2. Edgar Saar has provided a lot of information about **the things he was able to get**, e.g.:

“Elderly and middle-aged women still wear folk costume. This includes a *sarafan*, *kofta* (jacket), apron, *kokoshnik* (cloth cap), and kerchief. For the museum collection, I got a cloth cap and a spindle” (TAp 760: 9–10, Abez village, 15 July).

“I got three traps as a gift, and bought a mitten for the museum” (TAp 760: 13, Jepa village, 17 July).

“For the museum I was able to buy a pair of socks” (TAp 760: 16, Jepa village, 19 July).

“I bought some things for the students to make sketches of” (TAp 760: 16, Jepa village, 20 July).

“Katrin<sup>9</sup> and Maarja<sup>10</sup> bought caps of reindeer hide. In the daytime they had heard that a Komi has a duck-shaped vessel. We wanted to take a photograph of it, but its owner was not home” (TAp 760: 17–18, Abez village, 21 July).

“I was at Harsaim. I bought things for the students to make sketches of” (TAp 760: 26, Harsaim village, 25 July).

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<sup>8</sup> That time: the Estonian State Art Institute.

<sup>9</sup> Katrin Pere, teacher of the Estonian State Art Institute.

<sup>10</sup> Maarja Kross, student of the Estonian State Art Institute.

“For the museum, I was able to obtain the Komi woman’s costume: a *sarafan*, apron, cloth cap and a jacket. I was also offered a child’s *maalitsa*<sup>11</sup>, but as its fur was coming off, I did not buy it” (TAp 760: 45–46, Pitlor village, 7 August).

3. Also, Edgar Saar has never commented on **the local people’s attitude towards their things**, as well as their willingness or reluctance to give their things away.

4. Members of this expedition also visited the Izhma Komi in Western Siberia. There, again they faced **intervention of the authorities regarding collecting**, e.g.: \*

“With K. Põllu<sup>12</sup>, we went to the executive committee of the autonomous okrug. We were received by Njats, Vice-Head of the committee. This spring, the art institute sent a letter to the executive committee of the okrug, asking for permission for the students to have their practical drawing experience at Harsaim. In reply to the letter the committee claimed it was not possible, as there were no objects of folk art or architecture. The letter was signed by Njats. Today it turns out he did not know where Harsaim was. He asked us about that. Njats is ethnic Nenets. However, he allowed us to go there” (TAp 760: 20–21, Salehard, 23 July).

**In the 1976 joint expedition of the ENM and National Museum of the Komi Republic**, Aleksei Peterson, director of the ENM, has provided a lot of information about objects. Once again a similar classification has been applied, although it is provisional, as A. Peterson has merged various aspects in his accounts.

### 1. How ethnologists worked, e.g.:

A. Peterson has a number of reports on the subject.

“But we are doing a good job, as Nadja I<sup>13</sup> – as we call our boss – tends to be drowsy. Yet spotting an aged crone bucks her up, and

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<sup>11</sup> *Maalitsa* – a shirt-like coat of reindeer hide with the fur inside in the style of Nenets, Komi, Khanty, Mansi and other arctic peoples.

<sup>12</sup> Kaljo Põllu, professor of Estonian State Art Institute, head of the expedition.

<sup>13</sup> Nadezhda Mitjusheva from the Komi State’s Research Museum of Regional Studies (KSRMRS) (present National Museum of the Komi Republic). Nadja II is Nadezhda Titova from KSRMRS, who also participated in the expedition.

Nadja starts asking questions about whether she has this or that, demanding the same objects all the time. In general, we are received well, though the booty may not be remarkable. As it is here. In one household there is a whole chest full of all kinds of socks and stockings, and the Syktyvkar women bought a lot. We have spent a lot. I had 150 roubles with me, in 2 days 50 roubles is gone. Soon we will be in bankruptcy. [...] One of the last households is clean and tidy. There we get some floor covering for the museum” (TAp 679: 14–15, the Sysola Komi, 8 July).

“It is getting towards 6 o’clock, and thus we take the things with us and stump back. We had obtained a heavy load. Nothing to do: when back, we are tired” (TAp 679: 16, the Sysola Komi, 8 July).

“We called into some houses, and got some objects. First of all, both Nadjas trade in textiles” (TAp 679: 36, the Sysola Komi, 12 July).

“In two hours we are in the city and unload the cargo (TAp 679: 77, Syktyvkar, 20 July).

It is remarkable that A. Peterson has paid attention to documenting the facts about the objects, e.g.:

“Everybody is very helpful, and lots of things accumulate. But who in Heaven’s name is able to document them all! Nadja keeps trying, however. Here we obtain plenty of wooden objects, and within a little time their names can hardly be fixed. Thus, lots of things are obtained, but they should be more precisely documented” (TAp 679: 32–33, the Sysola Komi, 11 July).

## 2. What was obtained, e.g.:

In A. Peterson’s diary, this section is greatly represented.

“From one household we obtain a chest, where *sarafans*, *jupkas*<sup>14</sup>, etc were kept. This is not like ours, but a round aspen vessel, height about 1 m, diameter about 70 cm. For 5 roubles we buy a smaller one, about the size of our dowry chest, and some pieces of cloth” (TAp 679: 10–11, the Sysola Komi, 7 July).

“We visit one more house, where we are able to get some things, and then come back to our “station”” (TAp 679: 35, the Sysola Komi, 11 July).

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<sup>14</sup> i.e. skirts.

“So, we are in the first household, and here we get some wire and things. [---] We also drop into the next household, and there we get a steelyard, the third one already” (TAp 679: 38–39, the Sysola Komi, 12 July).

“There are enough things in this village, yet there are no woollen stockings with beautiful patterns like in previous Kuratovo villages. Not even simple patterns. Instead, we can get overcoats, tools and clothes almost free” (TAp 679: 65–66, the Luza Komi, 18 July).

“Someone brought a nice board-shaped distaff with abundant carving. Great!” (TAp 679: 66, the Luza Komi, 18 July).

“There are things to settle. First, at Jakib village, we ordered old-style trousers. These should be fetched... [---] With Tolja<sup>15</sup>, Vello<sup>16</sup> and the old man, we set out to Jakib village to get the trousers, and the old man also promised us to give some things” (TAp 679: 74–75, the Sysola Komi, 20 July).

“We arrive at the village. The old man agrees to show us his household. We take photographs of the basement, dwelling house and other objects. We get a netting and tools for making it. We could get a lot more things if we had more time, but we had decided to leave soon to visit one more village. A woman brings a couple of shirts and a *sarafan* – we are successful. Also, we get the trousers – that is perfect” (TAp 679: 76, the Sysola Komi, 20 July).

“And today things accumulated” (TAp 679: 40, the Sysola Komi, 13 July).

“What we can get here? Mostly stockings and mittens. First of all women’s stockings with beautiful patterns – just give 20 roubles, and the pair is yours! Too expensive, actually the work is worth this, all they ask is the same price (even 25 roubles per pair, and 5 roubles per mittens), as if they had agreed about it. You can buy or not if you do not want to. Bargaining would not help much. Also, there are shirts and *sarafans* available. The lower parts of the shirts have been removed, and the tops are sold for 3–5 roubles. So are the belts, not valuable. And this is all for textiles, represented by things. There are very few towels and other items. Towels tend to be new and bought, and some-

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<sup>15</sup> Driver of the expedition.

<sup>16</sup> Vello Kutsar, photographer of the expedition.

times embroidery is on the bought cloth. There are lots of wooden things, and often you can get them free. Birch-bark vessels are exquisite, tools are rare. For instance, you would not spot agricultural implements (e.g. forked plough, harrow). I have not seen any. There are some kind of iron implements for furrowing, dragged behind the worker. There are more wooden kitchen vessels, and as in use, they could not be obtained so easily. We could get weaving looms, but where shall we put them, and how to take them away. So today. Things accumulate, not ‘wonderful things’” (TAp 679: 23–25, the Sysola Komi, 10 July).

“We go on, but we are not doing so well any more. Whether nobody is at home or has nothing to give. What can we do about it! We move around, and finally get about 10 things, a spinning wheel for the Syktyvkar museum. Our boxes are all full and secured for posting. One of them is not, in which to place other items. We cannot get large things” (TAp 679: 71, the Luza Komi, 19 July).

“We unload and pack our things. There is some more space. The numbers go up to 180. We cannot get 200, this is quite clear” (TAp 679: 73, Kuratovo village community, 19 July).

“Collections for the museum were supplemented by 180 objects, about 400 photographs + 10 hours of material on the tape. A good yield!” (TAp 679: 82, 27 July).

### **3. The owner’s attitude towards giving things away, e.g.:**

Peterson has provided some facts about this aspect (see also category 1).

“Women are very willing to show us their things. We get this and that. A beer vessel, a very beautiful one, the farmer’s wife would not give it to us. Finally the farmer will” (TAp 679: 18, the Sysola Komi, 9 July).

“Then we got the skis, but there was some argument involved, as mother gave them, but her son disagreed. Actually, he demanded his skis (already registered) back, as his mother was drunk” (TAp 679: 23, the Sysola Komi, 10 July).

“The old man is really home. Can hardly keep his legs, hearing is normal and speaks Russian. Nothing will come out of our talk. For me, his Russian and good hearing would not suffice. His wife is younger, but hearing has also deteriorated. Instead, she nags at us all, and keeps an eye on us so that “we did not lift anything”. And when



we went to the shed unbeknown to her, and drew out a basket-trap, she became angry and said ‘*abu*’ – have not got – and also something more intense in Komi which I am lucky, I do not understand. Just before we left, their daughter from Syktyvkar came to see them. And she is kindness personified, says that she would give us all the lumber, but cannot, as the old ones would not let her do that. She could only persuade them, so that the basket-trap and many other things would find their way into the collections of the ENM and Syktyvkar museum” (TAp 679: 33–35, the Sysola Komi, 11 July).

“First of all, we started to bring together the things scattered in two places. First we go to Möm village. There, some more things have been added. Unfortunately, my beautiful board-shaped distaff has been replaced. At first I did not notice that, but later when at the schoolhouse – it was too late. Also, we fetch our things from Zarechye village community. Thus, things were amassed” (TAp 679: 36–37, the Sysola Komi, 12 July).

“Now, we set out to a longer trip about 15 km from the schoolhouse along the asphalt. Some old crone takes us there, saying that there is all kinds of bric-a-brac available” (TAp 679: 37, the Sysola Komi, 12 July).

“At first we were not lucky, but then all kinds of things were laid out. As we did not have any money, we could not do any shopping. We were not struck by anything worth buying. All textile goods were already known to us” (TAp 679: 46, the Sysola Komi, 14 July).

“We went into an empty house in hope of finding something of ethnographic value. Vain hopes! One cannot see anything but timber, some tiles and rags. The place looked as if humanity had run over it, not wars or plague, which would not destroy houses, while people burn them to ashes” (TAp 679: 47, the Sysola Komi, 14 July).

“Here we get a number of things free” (TAp 679: 50, the Sysola Komi, 15 July).

“She also gives a *sarafan* for the museum free, although her pension is 32 roubles (for losing her son and probably because of being widowed in war)” (TAp 679: 60, the Sysola Komi, 16 July).

“We met an old crone who kindly gave us her milking pail, and who would give us more things if she had had any. She did not have anything else to give away” (TAp 679: 70, the Luza Komi, 19 July).

4. Again, **intervention of the authorities into collecting things** has been reported, e.g.:

“Then, we go to the Cabinet Council of the Komi Republic<sup>17</sup>, as recommended by Kachalova<sup>18</sup>. There, we hand in the letter for our joint expedition. The person who reviews it emphasizes that we are not allowed to take cultural, valuable items out of the republic. I cannot comment on this, it is news to me that ethnographic objects are not allowed to be taken to other Soviet republics. Kachalova calms us down, saying that this is just a formality, and we need not bother” (TAp 679: 6, Syktyvkar, 5 July).

## Conclusions

When consulting the Ethnographic Archives (EA) of the ENM, it appears that information about the objects in diaries (TAp) and the MS ethnographic notes (EA) do not correspond with each other, as the latter does not provide any information about the Komi objects at the ENM. Also, diaries and MS ethnographic notes cannot be compared – Konsin has provided many ethnographic descriptions and practically no diaries. Peterson has provided a long and comprehensive diary, but not a single specific ethnographic description. Materials from the 1989 expedition at the EA are not in any way related to the object collected. Since the year 1981 there is no information at the EA about the Komi, as regards objects. Thus, diaries are the most completely integrated source, referring to actual situations, objects, people. Also, the diary adds some extra information about the collected objects, a main catalogue, collections of photographs (Fk), and groupings of ethnographic sketches (EJ). EA stands somewhat apart from it.

The information involving Komi objects in the diaries by the researchers of the ENM tends to be subjective and immediate, as also noted in the above statements by H. Pärdi. However, it also is inevitably fragmentary (systematic information is recorded in the collected books

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<sup>17</sup> Cabinet Council of the Komi Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic.

<sup>18</sup> Alice Dmitriyevna Kachalova, director of the Komi State's Research Museum of Regional Studies (presently National Museum of the Komi Republic).

and catalogues of the ENM). The Komi fieldwork diaries are collated diaries, and thus information there mostly includes the following issues: how things were given or were not given to collectors. They include no information about the use of things (should be recorded at the EA, but only few are there, except for somewhat extended ethnographic descriptions by K. Konsin (EA 118: 366–409; 124: 417–467).

Thus, the Komi diaries at the ENM should be examined with caution, and jumping to conclusions avoided. The absence of any requirements for completing a diary makes the task even more complicated (as well as interesting). Despite that, diaries are similar in some intuitive way (as far as the Komi objects are concerned). Thus the main points at issue can be highlighted: ethnologists' and local people's attitudes towards collecting things, as well as evaluation of the collected things and the intervention of the authorities in the collecting process. It is natural that the diaries include information other than that only related to collecting things. These issues, however, should be treated in a separate article.

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- EA – Ethnographical Archives of the Estonian National Museum  
 EJ – collections of ethnographical drawings of the Estonian National Museum  
 Fk – collections of photographs of the Estonian National Museum  
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*Translated by Epp Uustalu*

## The Material Culture and History of the East-European Taiga Peoples

Heno Sarv

Through history, the cultural background of the North-Eurasian forest belt has been a lot more homogeneous than that of Europe, an idea which is also supported by material cultural heritage. A two-volume monograph by Gustav Ränk, a famous Estonian ethnologist, called “*Das System der Raumeinteilung in den Behausungen der nord-eurasischen Völker*” (1949–51), also contributes to the above concept.

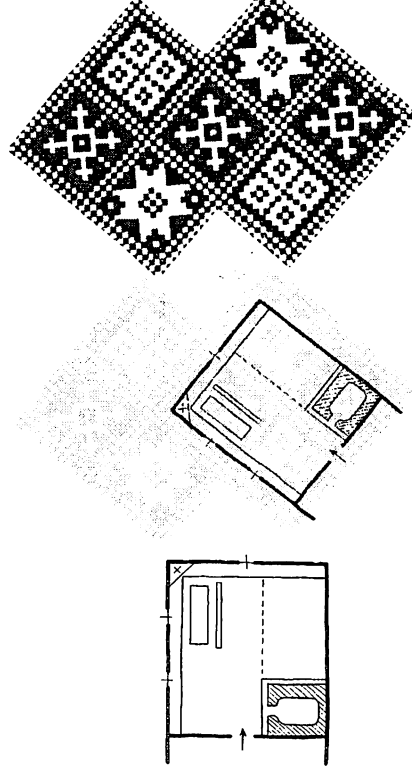


Figure. Division of rooms into the men's half on the left and women's on the right of the entrance in the Votian farmhouse, with a holy shrine in the left back corner (after G. Ränk). Mitten patterns from Paistu parish, Viljandi County.

Professor Uku Masing's views about the subject (1989) also confirm the intuition of this author claiming that in addition to the uniformity of material culture of the indigenous peoples living in an East-European forest area, all aspects of culture, as well as their worldview are involved.

The present paper attempts to inter-relate different research areas, e.g.:

**Geography:** *Eastern Europe* is, first of all, a geographical term, while it has also political and cultural connotations. The latter two have dimmed the contemporary geographical meaning of Eastern Europe, so that the paper might be expected to address Czech, Slovakian and Polish, rather than Vepsian, Komi, Mari, Udmurt and Mordvin cultures. Because of cultural and political aspects, the Eastern border of Europe has become a geographical nonsense: the longest border along the land between two continents, while it would be impossible to fix the agreed 60'E latitude on land amid human settlements. The Southern border of Eastern Europe is even more nonsensical, for according to the school geography programme should go along the Caucasus Mountains, while the European Union considers it to coincide with the Southern border of the former Soviet Union. *Material culture, however, has a circulation which is different.*

**Cultural Heritage:** Ancient Greek culture around the Aegean Basin divided the world into the Orient and Occident, while human settlements in the Taiga belt were unknown and inaccessible to them. Contemporary West-European culture has its elements as literacy from ancient Mediterranean cultures and sagas and myths from the Vikings on the Western coast of the Taiga belt. Yet the 'Standard Average European' (SAE, the term comes from the above-mentioned work by Uku Masing) has not been able to successfully relate the two components of his cultural identity. *Material culture would not originate in ancient Mediterranean culture or saga.*

Estonian ethnologists are very eager to relate every phenomenon of Estonian peasant culture to that of Western Europe or even ancient Mediterranean cultural heritage, as if otherwise the research was not scientific enough. For example: "Pieces of cloth that are worn round the shoulders or are wrapped about the person are archaic garments and thus belong to the universal layer of material heritage shared by

many peoples. In addition, these garments were worn by people in Ancient Greece and Rome. In Ancient Rome, a toga, a male ceremonial robe should be highlighted. In Estonia, archaeological findings confirm the use of a long piece of cloth around the shoulders since the beginning of the 2nd millennium BC. This continued as a piece of female clothing for centuries” (Voolmaa 1984: 70).

Professor Elle Vunder has written a series of research papers indicating that a large amount of Estonian traditional embroidery ornaments come from German handicraft books (1992: 37). According to Lauri Vahtre, the majority of the festivals in the Estonian folk calendar originate in the West-European medieval church calendar. Yet, not a single research paper discusses whether the 19<sup>th</sup>-century German pattern books also included some traditional artefacts of Baltic Finns, or why do the cloth pieces with geometric patterns, which are stored in the Viking Ship Museum in Oslo, remind one of Mordvin folk art.

**Politics:** Since World War II, it was convenient to settle the Eastern Border of Europe along the “iron curtain”. “For communists who believed in Human superiority over Nature, regarded highly the brick wall in Berlin, because they themselves had built it. The Finno-Ugric wall marking the differences of human cultures in North-Eastern Europe, however, was not so significant. The Berlin Wall separated the people living in a market economy from those who were able to survive in a planned economy of the communist society. The Finno-Ugric wall, marked as a forest border, separates the society of isolated settlements of sustainable and settled farmers from nomadic and closely settled cattle herders. The farmers living in Southern areas, in places with no means of self-preservation provided by Nature (e.g. high mountain chains), in order to protect themselves against the nomads travelling in the steppe, built the Great Wall of China, the greatest building for protection in the world. In Eastern Europe, in northernmost areas of flat grassland there was no need for such a building: for farmers the forest served as shelter against nomads, as with high mountain chains and the Chinese wall in the South” (Sarv 1998). Now that the European Union is actively enlarging its borders in the East, it should be recognized that the impact – circulation area of North-European traditional culture might have extended East of the present Western border of the

Russian Federation (and probably even East of the Urals). *Sometimes material culture may remain in the way of politics*, yet nowadays the lifetime of political views tends to be shorter compared to material culture.

**Cultural Ecology:** The forest is able to restore itself within two generations. Traditional forest area people do not use stone in building which pollutes their environment and the ruins would then provoke forthcoming generations to put their heroic acts down in written chronicles. The history of peoples inhabiting forest areas is not recorded in chronicles. *Within a uniform environment, a piece of material culture, which is of vital importance in one culture, may be totally useless in some others.* In the 1st millennium AD, the Southern border of the Taiga belt of continental Eurasia became a border between different civilization types. Economic activities and population density rates in the regions South of it were increasingly exceeding Nature's ability to support it, which then caused extensive migration and conquests in the steppe. In slash-and-burn cultivation the forest would restore its fertility in a few generations, while also protecting its inhabitants from outsiders who sought a quick profit. Because of Nature's ability to quickly restore itself, all traces of human action are removed within two generations after deserting a settlement, as most things and buildings were made of organic materials (e.g. lumber, hide etc.) which decompose naturally. Considering this, the forest area peoples have developed totally different lifestyles where history is not recorded in written chronicles, but rather is handed over in epic songs and beliefs in oral tradition, and with accessories and ornaments from the material cultural heritage. This is a long and uninterrupted flow of traditions over the thousands of years which would not involve stories about odd victorious battles and brave warriors. As compared with the established approach of history, cultural ecology is able to provide a better treatment of the subject.

**Ethnology and folklore science:** Pieces of material culture and folklore placed in museum collections belong to the period of 150 past years. Each object or a piece of text is the brainchild of its author or the one who performs it. Ethnologists, in order to realize how similar ideas emerge in geographically distant cultures, examine their material, consulting the outcome provided by archaeology, linguistics, cultural

ecology and other research areas. *Pieces of material culture (as with folklore texts) can be analysed within a variety of contexts.* Although the available textual material may be recorded for only a few generations ago, relating their content to paleo-astronomy, their age might be some unapproachable millennium in European cultural context. Also, exceptionally long cultural continuity can be traced when comparing archaeological and ethnographic accessories of the forest area peoples. This is the case of Mordvins only, as in Maris' and Udmurts', in the tradition of the making of accessories, was interrupted by the pressure of Tsarist Russia.

**History:** Every witness provides a personal description of an event. Similarly, every national group should develop a special view of history. From the Renaissance onwards, the Standard Average European tries to associate the sagas of their past with ancient culture. When Peter the Great's reforms started, Tsarist Russia aimed to unite the despotic tradition of the Orient Empire with the Enlightenment of Western Europe. North-Europeans are not affected by either of them. They could, then, develop their own history, focused on their heritage. *Pieces of the North-European forest area peoples' material culture should enter the world of research.* During Christian millenniums, Europeans who have claimed to represent world culture have had relatively little knowledge about the cultures of other continents. In the 1st millennium AD, they were not aware of American cultures, as cultural communication and trade exchange with Eurasian inland peoples were carried out via inland waterways. In the 2nd millennium, however, when trade and cultural communication moved to the sea, inland cultures became unfamiliar to West-Europeans, as with America in the 1st millennium. The settled area of the forest peoples, as being within despotic Russia, was inaccessible to Europeans. Russia was regarded a threat to civilized world in that time already, and this was actually the case in World War II. History indicates, however, that none of the great powers has persisted through centuries, while most traditional cultures have developed and continued over the thousands of years.



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*Translated by Epp Uustalu*

## **New Old Themes. Masculine. Feminine. The Meaning of Gender Category in Culture**

**Ene Kõresaar**

The 31st congress of *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Volkskunde* took place in Marburg 22 to 26 September 1997. DGV congresses take place every two years and in recent years they have exceeded the boundaries of German *Volkskunde*. That is why the present congress was not called *Deutscher Volkskundekongress* but *Kongress der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Volkskunde* instead, pointing at the international quality of the event.

Participation in the congress was exceptional – over 500 participants, including people from Hungary, Poland, Sweden, Norway, Russia, USA and Canada. The circle of reporters was as usual international and distinguished, including Linda Dégh (Bloomington), Ruth B. Bottingheimer (New York), Peter Tokofsky (Los Angeles), Ina-Maria Grevérus (Frankfurt/Main), Barbara A. Babcock (Tucson), Bjarne Rogan (Oslo) and many more. A total of 45 reports were listened to in four days. The fifth and the last day is traditionally an excursion day.

The current theme of the congress “Masculine. Feminine. The Meaning of Gender Category in Culture” (*Männlich. Weiblich. Zur Bedeutung der Kategorie Geschlecht in der Kultur*) as represented by the DGV commission on research on women. This does not mean that the objective of the congress was only to deal with matters concerning ethnological research on women (there was a lot of (mis)understanding about that before the congress). The purpose of the congress was much broader. Following the changes of paradigms in the 1980s, from the research of biological sexes to the research of socio-culturally constructed genders, the aim was to deepen the *gender*-specific thinking

in ethnology science, to make people conscious of the presence of these categories in culture and to become acquainted with actual research.

The scale of the themes under discussion at the congress stretched from the traditional canon (clothing, language, tradition, rite and customs) to the so-called “modern” topics (body symbolics, politics and ideology, sexual identity, computer communication). To make things clearer, it is easier to observe the theme workshops as they took place.

The 23 and 25 September were long days. There were plenary sessions in the mornings and in the afternoon (till late night), work was carried out in workshops. The 22 September was the opening day in the best meaning of the word and on 24 September, DGV had its annual meeting.

### **Gender Categories, History and Today**

In her opening report “Geschlechterforschung und historische Volkskultur. Zur Re-Konstruktion frühneuzeitlicher Lebenswelten von Männern und Frauen”, **Silke Götttsch** (Kiel) gave a short overview of the history of research on women in Germany. Moreover, she stressed that social gender research should not only be based on the female aspect but it should cover both sexes in their mutual relationships in a certain historical context. As an example, she dealt with different male/female behavioural strategies during divorce processes on the basis of early modern times court documents

The first of the many reports on the next day was introduced by **Christine Burckhardt-Seebass** (Basle). Her topic of research was the biggest annual event, the *Fastnacht*, taking place at the end of February and the research of it from the gender-specific viewpoint throughout time. Until now, *Fastnacht* has been mainly studied by men. They have created the picture of male games, based on the men and boys unions. According to Burckhardt-Seebass, the custom could be understood more thoroughly only when questions are also asked about the other sex : was the strict prohibition of sex change at *Fastnacht* only concerning men? Does it mean that the present participation of women in the masked parade can be the fruit of the relatively recent

(hidden, in the true sense of the word – disguised) emancipation? Or is it more the confirmation of the current hierarchy? Maybe the participation of women is not such a recent phenomenon and the contrary picture is the result of the male-centred selective research?

The historian **Jan Peters** (Potsdam) also discussed the gender-specific behavioural strategies on the basis of 17<sup>th</sup> century court documents. Acknowledging the importance of feminist ideology in “discovering” and studying the gender category, he linked his report with the criticism against modern research on women: the borders between sexes and also between sexes and society should not be handled unambiguously, the potential of harmony between these cultural categories should be taken into account (i.e. the category of gender is also connected with other cultural categories and inside the category of gender itself, there exist many other categories like age, profession etc.). Peters criticized the ethnologists for a lack of historical perspective and prejudices (“men – violence”). All this caused furious protests among ethnologists. The audience recalled that it had been female research that had revived the historical perspective in German *Volkskunde* and that the history of genders is not understood as the history of differences and conflicts (which Peters was accused of) but as the history of relationships.

Bloomington folklore specialist of Hungarian origin, Dr. **Linda Dégh** delivered a report about the spirituality of women on the basis of her research. According to the standard opinion (e.g. mass media), females are more spiritual than men, because women are more sensitive, they use their imagination more than men etc. Linda Dégh interpreted the choice of a so-called “traditional woman” (housewife) to join a religion sect as an attempt to change her social status, to “become somebody”.

‘Feminine’ and ‘masculine’ are not constant categories in time and space, and the relations between them are not determined and unchangeable. **Ruth B. Bottingheimer** (Stony Brook / New York) analysed the status of women and the meaning in changes of gender categories throughout time, on the basis of German fairy-tale collections. In the 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century French *fabriolos*, women are socially, economically and sexually active and independent, the same attitude is reflected in the 16<sup>th</sup> century story collections. A remarkable breakthrough is noticeable in the 17<sup>th</sup> century story collections where

the ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ categories obtain the same meaning that they have generally maintained up till now: masculine is connected with public space, man is active, mentally of higher level, behaves rationally, the opposite of a woman who belongs to the spheres of nature and whose behaviour is passive and irrational. In 19<sup>th</sup> century fairy tales women are associated with certain activities, but more in the sense of weakness: active and strong women embody evil. Bottingheimer presumes that the genre of fairy tales can be considered to be the reflection of social practice and she asks what could cause such abrupt changes within one genre, or why has the meaning of femininity changed in this direction in the course of time? Bottingheimer links it to the control of fertility and claims that in the post-Reformation world women lost this control (dissolution of the monasteries etc.).

The broad spectre of gender categories is limited by public expressions of physical differences on one side and psychic differences on the other. How these differences are built at the public level, how the first ones are created through the others, how ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ reveal themselves in certain social practices – all these questions were dealt with by ethnologists of different fields in corresponding workshops.

In the section *Körpersymbolik, Körperbilder*, problems dealing with the construction and re-construction of masculinity and femininity in science and everyday life were discussed under the supervision of Wolfgang Kaschuba. **Ueli Gyr** (Zurich) talked about gender-specific typology of non-verbal communication (gestures, glances, body posture etc.). **Walter Kienitz** (Tübingen) showed, with the example of the World War I invalids, how, at a public level, masculinity is re-constructed if the “circumstances” demand it.

The workshop *Sprache und Tradierung* centered on the traditional so-called “oral sources” as the 18<sup>th</sup> century calendars (**Heidrun Alzheimer**, Würzburg) and the autobiographical stories of the 20<sup>th</sup> century lower classes (**Siegfried A. Neumann**, Rostock) and these “oral sources” were analysed as the mediators of gender roles. The traditions of collecting, systemizing and research of ethnological sources were discussed and the gender-specific aspects of them – the gender of the researcher and his/her valuations and choice principles (**Christoph Schmitt**, Rostock).

In the workshop *Ritual, Brauch*, the basic topic of the reports was woman, woman in society, woman in a man's world. As oral tradition, customs and rituals also belong to the canon of ethnology, and it is characteristic that they are approached in a "genderless" (male-centred) way (compare Burckhardt-Seebass). That is why, in the framework of much-studied Elzach *Fastnacht*, the local female *Fastnacht* (*Maschkele*) from more than a hundred years of tradition, has not been researched at all (**Peter Tokofsky**, Los Angeles). So far, the research tradition of ethnology has produced *nolens volens* certain generic stereotypes which, in present media society, are fabricated and "instrumentalized" in case of some decorative customs (e.g. choosing of the May Queen) (**Hans-Willy Wey**, Bonn). We have strict stereotypes as to how man and woman should behave, our social practice is based on it. How these stereotypes have come into being, or, whether they have any ground to rely on, has become the main research object of ethnologists, working with gender-perspectives. **Barbara Krug-Richter** (Münster) analysed the male and female communication spaces and methods, men and women, feminine and masculine behaviour in conflicts and the ways of solving conflicts in the farmer society, on the basis of 17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> century court documents **Gunther Hirschfelder** (Bonn) compared the consumption of alcohol among the middle and lower class 19<sup>th</sup> century women in Germany and England.

The phenomena and processes in contemporary society were the centre of attention in the workshop *Religion, Politik, Ideologie*. **Ingrid Tomkowiak** (Göttingen) and **Dietmar Sedlaczek** (Wernigerode) analysed the esoteric literature of spiritual-feminist origin, influenced by *New age* ideology and female mythology at the centre of it. The so-called feminine characteristics (non-aggressiveness, traditionality, intuitiveness, emotionality) is the future means for solving social and ecological problems, the "feminine way" to the new era. For that, everyone has to discover a goddess inside his/herself, but women, as they are birth-giving and menstruating creatures, are more preconditioned to do this. That is how the practical esoteric *New Age* literature legitimates social differences through biological differences.

**Anne Claire Groffmann** (Mannheim) dealt with ultra right wing youth groups – a problem concerning Germany very much, and the

role of girls in these. There are about 20% of girls in these groups, and they are very active. Using the ultra right wing (masculine) symbolism, girls consciously try to cross the borders of sex roles, prescribed by society. So the ultra right wing girls are marginalized as the creators of (sub)culture both by the group itself as well by publicity.

**Elisabeth Fend** (Marktrewitz) and **Svetlana Tshervonnaya** (Moscow) also dealt with the role of an active culture creator/carrier from the gender-specific aspect.

### Gender and Scientific Culture

On Wednesday, 24 September there were only three plenary reports, due to the DGV general meeting. **Barbara Duden** (Hannover), a technological historian attracted the attention of the participants by the fact that the conceptions of men and women and the relationships between them as a dichotomic and complementary system came into being during the 19<sup>th</sup> century due to the influence of biology and medicine and that these conceptions differed principally from the imaginations and practice of the Middle and Early Modern Ages.

**Ina-Maria Grevérus** (Frankfurt/Main) talked about her field work and life in Sicily and linked her report to the discussion about the gender-specificity of field work. Grevérus' presentation as "*performing culture*" (perception with all one's senses) is opposed to representation as "*writing culture*". In other words – on the contrary to the writing culture (masculine) thesis "to be is to be spoken of", Grevérus departs from field work as a dialogue process (feminine?) – "to be is to be spoken with". "Field poetry" was at the centre of the discussion and also questions as to whether it did not disappear in "text poetry". Perhaps the much-respondered othering-debate is nothing else but a new – masculine strategy to put the dialogue principle (listening, understanding, feminine) of field work under suspicion. The report was very personal and aroused a lot of questions. No answers were given. Think of the answer yourself.

**Klara Löffler** (Vienna) also talked about 'text poetry' and scientific culture. She set a question how ethnologists, men and women organize (textually) their field work experience and their attitude to their

research. What kind of story-telling and argumentative strategies are used when “translating” their biographical experience into a scientific text? How much does it depend on the gender of the research worker? Löffler analysed the introductions to monographies and divided them into different types starting from a passionless description to an autobiographical novel with a therapeutic effect. These description patterns seem to have a little to do with the sex of their authors. The exaggerated self-reflexivity has emerged in the framework of feminist female research, but currently, men use it as much (little?) as women do. A recommendation came from the audience: the comparison of introductions with the results of research work would enable the drawing of more differentiated conclusions, as the congress itself has shown how differently men and women approach their matters of research and how differently they interpret their standpoints.

## **Gender and Identity**

The final day for reporting was the 25 September. The opening lectures were the most interesting during the congress, but the audience was the smallest – the use of English and the preceding party night had scared away almost all the German ethnologists. The first report of the day was delivered by **Barbara A. Babcock** (Tucson, Arizona). She centred on the traditions, reproduction policies and their connections with gender in pueblo women. The image of pueblo women as the carriers of ceramic traditions, created by ethnologists, folklorists and collectors, has reached and fixed itself in the tourism business through art books. In the USA, the fetishism of pueblo women and their home industry has a history of more than a hundred years. The Indian primitivism and closeness to nature is stressed in postcards and travel guides, a magic imagination of mechanical reproduction is created; a pueblo woman, dressed in a national costume, holding a pot, has been changed into a selling symbol (depicted on the Statue of Liberty on postcards). Woman as the custodian of traditions has become a genealogical imperative for the pueblo community. Babcock asks what and whose tradition are we dealing with? And she answers: traditions have nothing to do with forms, it is important how things are put



together, and what is the position of objects in the structure. Babcock treats tradition as a means of power and is suspicious about the statement that tradition is a voluntary maintenance of lifestyle. Giving examples of how pueblo women play with the created beauty narrative, Babcock points how important is the reproduction policy, inherent in the term 'tradition' and how ambivalent is the term 'tradition'.

**Bjarne Rogan** (Oslo) continued with the topic "Gender. Material Culture and Collecting". Rogan dealt with the different practices of male and female collectors in Norway, Sweden and France from the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century – 1990s. Sexual differences reveal themselves in the male-centred collecting tradition which excluded 'feminine' things. The 'scientific' taxonomic principle of collecting becomes prevailing since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. For example, in the 1940s–1950s, collecting matchboxes was fashionable in Sweden, it was regarded as a suitable hobby for men. Collecting matchboxes was a scientific activity – it was possible to classify them in many different ways. Things collected by women were of lower prestige, the so-called 'aesthetic' objects (for decorating homes). Today, the definition of collecting has changed; fun, creativity and passion are more stressed. Women have also made their way into collectors' clubs, their percentage varies from 1–95%. In addition, the majority of things collected by women make up the so-called hidden collections – cookery books, family photos etc. In general discussion, the part of social origin and education in collecting practice was underlined and also the fact that a so-called individual type has to be taken into account, because both men and women overcome the borders of gender in certain practices. Home was highlighted as the phenomenon of hidden collection and a question was asked how much do men and women co-operate there.

**Sabine Wienker-Piepk**o (Freiburg) centred on contextuality, studying fairy tales from the aspect of social gender. The central term of the report was *genderlect*, i.e. the thesis that the contents and form of a story change according to the story-teller's and/or listeners gender.

**Carola Lipp** (Göttingen) made the Volkskundlers feel how precious is a lunchbreak. The basis of her report was man as a citizen: social networks and reproduction in the context of local politics. The hyper-active citizens of Vormärz and their personal activities were under observation: their behaviour at elections and demonstrations, public

functions, participation in unions etc. With the help of graphic models, C. Lipp analysed the social and political activity of every single person, and the density of their socio-political relationships. The report was illustrated by ten 'networks' and charts, which made the Volkskundlers shiver, as they were used to much 'softer' methods. For many participants, lunchbreak began a lot earlier than it should have.

... but when all this was over, the workshops started. The largest number of reports and listeners were in the workshop *Geschlecht und Identitäten*.

**Burkhard Fuchs** (Cölbe) concentrated on childhood in today's city and in the country. The child-related topic was continued by **Ute Bechdolf** (Tübingen) with a question as to how the young accept and reproduce the generic identities produced by modern mass media. On the basis of musical video clips, he showed the different strategies of performing generic identity (e.g. irritation, androgyny, cross-dressing), united by a tendency to make the borders between 'masculine' and 'feminine' more ambiguous. As an experiment, these videos were shown to teenagers and their attitudes and reactions were 'measured'. The result – although mass media has done a lot to disperse the two-gender system, in 'real life', the system is reconstructed and media deconstructions lose their validity. In search of their identity, boys and girls use the strategies offered by media in order to develop their behaviour with the opposite sex, but, on the other hand, they reconstruct the current social generic differences to make it easier for themselves to find their place in life.

The ambiguity of generic differences in western society was also the topic of **Gabriele Hofmann** (Frankfurt/Main). The topic of her report were the women who had accepted Islam and their search for identity. In the first place, Hofmann attributed these women with the desire for femininity. Islam presents a very clearly structured picture of what is masculine and what is feminine. It seems desirable in a society where generic differences and identity seem to be ambiguous and unclear. The unequivocal generic conception of Islam opposes itself to the diffusion of generic differences and the fears connected with this. Accepting Islam, women draw double borders: between genders and societies.

In today's world, tourism is a type of cultural contacts, in which cultural differences and social inequality are constantly (re)produced, handled and transformed between tourists and local residents. Many researchers have drawn attention to the fact that tourism is an area where cultural contacts are systematically sexualized. **Gisela Welz** (Tübingen) showed in her report how social asymmetry is often transferred into the relationships between sexes, illustrated the behaviour of German female tourists and Cyprian and Greek men.

Clothing and dressing is a traditional research sphere of ethnology, always discussed at DGV congresses. In a workshop *Kleidung, Lebensstile*, the main topic was how categories 'masculine' and 'feminine' express themselves in clothing, fashion, tastes and other 'ideologies' connected to these fields. **Karen Ellwanger** (Oldenburg) and **Gudrun M. König** (Tübingen) concentrated on the clothes fashions and sexual politics of taste of the 19<sup>th</sup> and century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. **Claudia Schöning-Kalender** (Mannheim) showed how national, religious and generic identity can be united in fashion designs on a state level, illustrating it with the strongly ideological Turkish clothing policy of 1920s. **Gitta Böth** (Hagen) talked about cross-dressing on the basis of clothing strategies of transsexuals.

For the first time in the history of DGV, technical topics were discussed in the workshop *Technik und Geschlecht*.

Technology has been and still is mainly men's business. Technology is a cultural construction which can be taken as a symbol of masculinity. **Katarina Ek-Nilsson** (Uppsala) says that the way graduate engineers comprehend technology is a means to analyse the terms 'masculinity' and 'modernism'. Ek-Nilsson underlined an idea that the term 'modernism' is a construction of a white middle-class male: man = human being = mind = technology. It is difficult to discover masculinity. Man is symbolically invisible because he is a synonym of normality. Only when femininity comes into being, masculinity becomes visible. For instance, at the turn of the century when women also began to ride bicycles. **Petra Naumann-Winter** (Lahntal) analysed the plentiful illustrative material about women riding bicycles, from the men's point of view, dating from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (caricature, cartoons, drawings, photos, newspaper illustrations etc.) The category of gender is an important differentiating criterion,

enabling to formulate the 'other' cultural category. Pictures about 'ladies on bikes' explain about male culture, of what it lacks and what it proud of. Or in other words, socio-politically, the creators of these pictures expressed their desire for alternative social forms, but, on the other hand, they convinced themselves and others their lifestyle was right and the only one that was possible .

Nowadays, the general symbol of masculinity is a car, and computer has also found its place as one. **Katharina Eisch** (Tübingen) report was about auto-fetishism and auto-folklore. **Beatrice Tobler** (Basle) centred on the generic specificity of computer communication, giving examples of feminist Internet projects and mailboxes.

In the last, eight workshop of the congress, *Innerräume, Ausser-räume*, the choice of 'rooms' was really big, from a soul life of a female up to Mother Nature. **Leonie Koch-Schwarzer** (Hamburg) reported on a diary of Katharina Garve, a handcrafts worker from 1785, viewing it as a rare historical source from the aspect of self-construction and role-conflict. **Christiane Keim** (Berlin) analysed one side of housing politics in the Weimar republic – new types of flats for women who live alone. In 1920s, a new type of woman was created in German media. This *Neue Frau* shakes herself free of traditional generic hierarchy and lives an independent life. On the basis of building projects and flat plans, Keim studied the ideological conceptions of relationships between sexes and the forms of interaction. **Anja Schöne** (Schallstadt) dealt with the female town planning ideas and projects which have become popular in Switzerland recently. Current house-building (flat and house plans, infrastructure etc.) is based on the traditional generic roles. *Frauenstadt*-projects offer flats, adapted to different life situations of women (single, married, widower) and it is hoped that it is possible to change the current relationships between sexes, especially concerning women. **Sabine Kühler** (Bad Neuheim) dedicated her report to the imaginary picture of woman, talking about the ideology of the 19<sup>th</sup> century florists who regarded the rose as the 'queen' of flowers and the symbol of femininity. 'Natural femininity', which 'was lost' in the period of intensive industrialization, is found again in the rose at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is remarkable that the birth of 'rose ideology' is connected with changes in the world of

science: rose cultivation is rated higher than the 'feminine' kitchen-garden-circle and it becomes a 'masculine' popular science.

### **Conclusions: Congress from the Perspective of Gender**

It was surprising that the gender topic still arouses some extra-discipline emotions in the ethnology of today's Europe. Obviously it is a topic where the person (and gender) of the researcher is more involved than we would like to admit. Anyway, it took time until the lecturers could read their reports in 'scientific' cold blood. By Thursday, the congress was in a normal working mood. The words 'woman' and 'man' did not make the respectable scientists tell sexist anecdotes or quote the Bible or stress the aspect of oppressing female colleagues any more. The principle of gender applies also in a scientific gathering: of 45 presenters, 13 were men (two of them visiting lecturers). The difference between generations was obvious, at least what concerns men: younger ones felt more free in the topic-development, using the category of gender as a means in order to analyse the problem, whereas older men described only the differences between sexes and interpreted them in a simple way. The reason is that the studies of gender are connected with the feminist tradition of research on women, carried out mainly by female scientists. In Germany, research on women has had a troubled history. In the framework of *Volkskunde*, research on women was acknowledged in 1983, when a commission of research on women was created at DGV. But it was only in 1997 that the above mentioned topic was officially included in the agenda of the congress. Part of the resorts were the so-called 'typical research on women' where both the object and the subject of the report are female. There were also really primitive reports about the so-called extraordinary women (*Ausnahmefrauen*), of women who are 'more men than other women'. The sporadic style of female research was criticized at the congress. It was stressed that the categories 'masculine' and 'feminine' should not be taken separately, isolated from each other. Man and woman are attributed their social meaning mainly in mutual relationships, in a certain historical-social context. The majority of the 45 reports showed

that in the reasearch of culture, the category of gender is as important and unavoidable as the terms 'class', 'ethnical group' or 'identity'.

*Translated by Mall Leman*

## Soome etnoloogid identiteeti otsimas

Terje Anepaio

**Nina Säaskilahti**, *Kansa ja tiede. Suomalainen kansatiede ja sen kohde 1800-luvulta 1980-luvulle*. (Jyväskylän yliopisto, etnologian laitos. Tutkimuksia 31). Jyväskylä 1997.

**Anna Kirveennummi**, Kulttuuri, kansatiede ja kriitikki. Murtoimia 1900-luvun tiedonintresseissä ja kulttuurikäsitteissä. – Teppo Korhonen & Pekka Leimu (toim.), *Näkökulmia kulttuurin tutkimukseen*. Turun yliopiston täydennyskoulutuskeskus, Turku 1997.

**Hanna Snellman**, Kansatiede – kansallisuus – kansainvälisyys. – *Tiedepolitiikka*, 4, 1997.

Kaudse idee selle kirjutise jaoks sain ma *Centre for International Mobility* stipendiaadina oktoobrist 1997 kuni märtsini 1998 Turu ülikooli etnoloogide juures olles. Sealne kolleeg Anna Kirveennummi sõnas värskes “Tiedepolitiikka” ajakirjas ühte siin refereeritavat artiklit näidates: “Nüüd saad võrrelda kolme keskuse – Turu, Jyväskylä ja Helsingi – vaatenurka ja ideid.” Tagasi Eestis, tekkis mõte sellesse rohkem enesetäiendusena mõeldud soovitusse tõsisemalt suhtuda ja kolme keskuse esindajate kirjutisi ka kirjasõnas tutvustada.

Soome rahvateadus/etnoloogia on juba Mannineni ajast meie suhtes teatud mõttes suurema venna rolli täitnud. Ikka nemad ees ja meie järel. Seda suhet ei lõpetanud ka “ametliku uue suure venna” väljakuulutamine. Nõukogude võimu aastakümneil oli soome etnoloogial lisaks eeskujule täita ka vahendajaroll Läänega. Ja enim väliskontakte oligi eesti etnoloogidel just soome kolleegidega. Kuigi 1990. aastatel on olukord oluliselt muutunud, st eestlaste välissidemete geograafia on tunduvalt laienenud, peaks pilguheit soome etnoloogiale (vanade heade aegade meenutuseks) huvi pakkuma.

Niisiis kolm värsket, aastanumbrit 1997 kandvat käsitlust senisest soome etnoloogiateadusest. Sissejuhatuseks pean kohe ütleva, et esitletavad kirjutised on üpris erinevad nii mahult kui ka suunitluselt. Jyväskylä esindab etnoloogia instituudi uurija, doktorant Nina Sääskilahti meie mõistes peaseminaritöö (pro-gradu), mille Soome etnoloogide ühendus "Ethnos" tunnistas aasta parimaks lõputööks. Helsingit esindab sealse etnoloogia õppetooli assistendi, aasta tagasi doktorikraadi kaitsnud Hanna Snellmani suundumuselt populaarteaduslik artikkel (8 lk). Nende kahe vahele jääb Turu etnoloogia instituudis uurijana töötava ja litsentsiaaditööd tegeva Anna Kirveennummi artikkel (20 lk) kogumikus, mis on õppematerjalina kasutusel näiteks Turu Avatud Ülikoolis. Juba ette võib oletada, et "radikaalses eas" noore esimene ulatuslikum teadustöö on kriitilisema lähenemisega kui ülevaatlik lühiaartikkel teadusalast laiemale lugejateringile suunatud populaarteaduslikus ajakirjas. Erinevustele vaatamata haakuvad kõik kolm omavahel, ühiseks nimetajaks oma identiteedi otsimine teadusala mineviku analüüsi abil.

### Mis on (soome) etnoloogia?

Nina Sääskilahti põhjendab oma uurimisteema "**Soome etnoloogia/rahvateadus ja selle objekt 19. sajandi algusest kuni 1980. aastateni**" valikut sooviga otsida vastust teda kogu õpinguaja vaevanud küsimusele, mis on õigupoolest rahvateadus/etnoloogia (*kansatiede*). Ta lisab enda kohta: "Ise tahtsin vältida ahtaid piire ja valisin ulatuslikumana ning kaasaegsemana tundunud kultuuriantropoloogia suuna soome ja võrdleva etnoloogia asemel." Järelikult tundus etnoloogia talle piiratuma ning traditsioonilisema teadusalana.

Sääskilahti ei sea aga oma eesmärgiks leida ühest vastust püstitatud küsimusele, vaid tema sihiks on peegeldada teadusala ajalugu ühest vaatenurgast, iseloomustades seda kui vahelduvatest diskursustest koosnevat tervikut, uurida teadusharu keelekasutusviisi ja tüüpilisi mõisteid. Eesmärk pole seega tervikliku ajaloolise ülevaate andmine soome etnoloogiast, pigem selle lahutamine osadeks.

Teoreetiliseks lähtekohaks on valitud antipositivistlikku teadusfilosoofiat esindava prantslase Michel Foucault' "teadmistearheo-



loogia” õpetus, mis käsitleb objekti kui diskursiivset moodustist<sup>1</sup>. Teadmistearheoloogia peatähelepanu on teadmise ajaloolistel tingimustel: uuritakse neid tingimusi, mis tegid võimalikuks diskursuse ja selle koordinaatide (objektid, mõisted, strateegiad, väljendusviisid) sünni, ning nendevahelisi suhteid ja seaduspärasusi.

Sääskilahti esitab oma argumentatsiooni, miks just teadmistearheoloogia on sobiv lähtekoht etnoloogiateaduse ajaloo käsitlemiseks. Ta rõhutab, et teadmistearheoloogias

- 1) ei nähta teaduse ajalugu katkematuna, progressina ega ühtse valdkonnana;
- 2) püütakse avada seda süsteemi, mis määratleb, milline on lubatud konversatsiooniviis teatud objektist: mida, mil viisil ja kes võivad sellest objektist rääkida;
- 3) ei peeta teadust tingimusteta tõepäraseks ja objektiivseks, muust tõelisusest eraldi seisvaks valdkonnaks, vaid teadus on paratamatult ühiskondlik ja kultuuriline nähtus.

Eriti viimast seisukohta peab autor etnoloogiateaduse ajaloo käsitlemisel väga tähtsaks (lk 29–30). Oluline on ka, et teadmistearheoloogia ei tähenda ainult uurimuste ega uurijate ajalugu, vaid ka seda, mida teadusala kohta on öeldud, kuidas seda on piiritletud ja määratletud eri aegadel ning millest seal on räägitud. Minule sümpatiseerib, et Sääskilahti ei piirdu ainult teadmistearheoloogia võimaluste ja positiivse rolli väljatoomisega, vaid tunnistab, et tegemist pole probleemitu lähenemisviisiga ning esitab ühtlasi selle teooria kriitikat, edasiarendusi ja tõlgendusvõimalusi.

Autor iseloomustab oma lähenemist uuritavale ainesele julgelt kui subjektiivset (nii see tõesti on!), kinnitades seejuures, et subjektiivsus pole eesmärk omaette, pigem paratamatus, sest see sisaldub igas tõlgenduses. Ta kasutab uurimisainesena teadusala määravaid teoreetilisi tekste peamiselt Soome etnoloogiaprofessoritelt (U. T. Sirelius, A. Hämäläinen, K. Vilkuna, N. Valonen, J. U. E. Lehtonen, I. Talve, V. Anttila, M. Räsänen, M. Sarmela) läbi aegade. Sääskilahti rõhutab,

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<sup>1</sup> Sääskilahti esitab Stuart Halli diskursuse mõiste määratluse, mis mugandab ja selgendab Foucault’ definitsiooni: “Diskursus on hulk väiteid, mis teevad võimalikuks rääkimise teatud, mingit ideed sisaldavast teadmisest, teiste sõnadega, selle teadmise representeerimise.”

et need on n-õ kesksed tekstid, kuna nendes väljendatakse, milline uurimistöö peaks olema. Nendes artiklites on otseselt või kaudselt kontsentreeritud teadusala põhilähtekohad, eesmärgid ja valdkond, mille ta katab.

Sissejuhatava osa Sääskilahti uurimuses moodustab soome etnoloogia-teaduse senise ajaloo ja selle kirjutamise viiside analüüs. Ta näitab, kuivõrd problemaatiline on teadusala ajaloo kirjutamine, tuues seejuures välja mitmeid seaduspärasusi. Tõlgendused teadusala ajaloost on seotud nende kirjutamise ajaga, kuna ajahetkest sõltub osaliselt, milliseid isikuid valitakse kirjutatavasse ülevaatesse; samuti on teadusala nimetus, sisu ja tähendus ning piirid teiste teadusaladega ajalises sõltuvuses. Oma osa on teadusala ajaloo kujunemisel ka teaduskollektiivide otsustel ja huvidel ning individuaalsete teaduslike suundumuste ja uurimuslike huvide lõikumisel. Näiteks 1921. aastal asutatud Helsingi ülikooli rahvateaduse õppetooli uurimisala määratlemist mõjutab juba varem (1908) loodud rahvaluule õppetool.

Sääskilahti peab senist konventsionaalset soome etnoloogiateaduse ajalugu olemuselt positivistlik-empiriiliseks. Ta tõdeb, et selles kujutatakse etnoloogiateaduse arengut katkematult ja ühtsena kaasaega kulgevana, tähelepanuta jäetakse võimalikud eri pooltesse suundunud huvid ja eksisteerinud vastuolud. Valitseb teadusala ajaloo käsitlemine isikute, st nende elulugude kaudu.

## **Diskursused: soomeugrilusest linnaetnoloogiani**

Uurimuse põhiosa moodustab diskursuste kaudu antud ülevaade soome etnoloogiast alates 19. sajandi lõpust kuni 1970. aastatesse.

Käsitluse juhatab sisse teadusala nimetuse “*kansatiede, etnologia ja etnografia*” (eesti k ‘rahvateadus, etnoloogia ja etnograafia’) kujunemise esitus. Teadusalade nimetusi võib pidada “võtmesõnadeks”, need on mõisted, mis liituvad teatud viisiga kultuuri käsitlemisel. Kui teadusala tähistamiseks võetakse kasutusele mingi mõiste, tekitatakse samaaegselt ka teatud diskursiivne valdkond. Mõistete valikul on taustaks teiste maade uurimistraditsioonid oma nimetustega. Soomes sai nimetuste kasutuselevõtul eeskujuks Saksamaa traditsioon, näiteks

*kansatiede* on vaste *Volkskunde*'st (nagu meiegi "rahvateadus"); mõiste tuli kasutusele 1870.–80. aastatel. Nende kolme mõiste täpsema (ja aastakümneid püsinud) määratluse andis Soomes keeleteadlane E. N. Setälä 1915. aastal. Ta võrdsustas etnoloogia ja rahvateaduse, mis püüavad uurida inimkultuuri algupära ja arengut, keskendudes eriti ainelisele kultuurile ning esemeuurimisele (lk 40–42). Soomeugriluse diskursusel on keskne osa soome etnoloogia ajaloos. Teadusala esimene professuuri nimetati soome-ugri rahvateaduse professoriks. Seda diskursust analüüsid tõdeb Sääskilahti, et erinevaid soome-ugri rahvaid ei uuritud mitte nende eneste pärast, vaid selleks, et saada teadmisi soome-ugri rahvaste, sealtkaudu ka soomlaste endi algupärast – eesmärgiks oli seega kultuuri arenguga liituvate asjaolude selgitamine. Soomeugriluse diskursuse keskne määrav väide on keele- ja kultuuri-suguluse ühtsuse tunnistamine. Oletatakse, et soome-ugri kultuure ei saa uurida eraldi asetsevatena soomeugrilusest kui tervikust, soome sugu rahvaste kultuuri väljendusi pole võimalik lahendada ilma suguluse käsitlemiseta. Diskursuse peamine lähtekoht on kultuuride identsus – erinevus on kas mahajäämus või vastupidi edasiarengu tunnus (soomlasi peeti "lääneeuroopa täiskultuuri omaks võtnud rahvaks"). Abstraktse algrahva idee nimel jäetakse kõrvale kultuuride erinevus: püütakse leida just kultuuri ühisosa.

Soome etnoloogia ei erinenud teadusteoreetilise mõtteviisi poolest rahvusvahelisest antropoloogiatega selle algetapil – juhtiv mõttemall oli evolutsionism. Evolutsionistlikud ideed ja argumendid iseloomustavad kogu soomeugriluse diskursust (*à la* ostjakke ja voguleid uurides saab selgitada, kuidas elasid muistsed soomlased). Soome sugu rahvaid uuriti reisidel vahetu vaatluse kaudu, kuid esmajärguline ei olnud kultuuri vaatlus, vaid evolutsionistliku uurimisviisi keskne objekt oli esemed. Nende abil arvati võivat välja selgitada kultuuri arenguetappe, sest tsivilisatsioon tähendas eelkõige esemekultuurilist arengut. Uurimismeetoditeks olid nn tüpoloogiline meetod (esemeliikide ja -tüüpide järjestamine arengusarjadesse), mis laenati arheoloogiast, ning võrdlev uurimus, st eri rahvaste esemete ja esemetüüpide omavaheline võrdlemine eesmärgiga välja selgitada eseme algupära. Autor juhib seejuures tähelepanu selektsiooniprintsiibile: etnoloogide huviorbiiti kuulus ainult teatud osa uuritava kultuuri esemetest (nn algupärased esemed). Edasi näitab Sääskilahti, kuidas soome rahvateadus kui

eelkõige esemeuurimisele keskendunud teadusala liitus tihedasti muuseumiinstituutiooniga. Oli iseloomulik, et näiteks Helsingi ülikooli soome-ugri rahvateaduse professori töökohaks oli määratud Rahvusmuuseum (*Kansallismuseo*), alles 1959. aastal professoriks saanud Niilo Valonen kolis ülikooli ruumidesse.

Soomeugriluse diskursuse valitsemine soome rahvateaduses vaibus, kui selle sajandi alguskümnenditel Venemaal valitsenud ebakindla olukorra tõttu muutus raskeks teha uurimisreise sealsete soome sugu rahvaste juurde. Sääskilahti tõdeb, et soomeugriluse diskursus säilis siiski osaliselt ning ka teadusala nimetusest (*suomalais-ugrilainen kansatiede*) loobumist ei peetud vajalikuks. Kõrvaltvaatajana olen seisukohal, et “soomeugriluse värk on soome etnoloogide jaoks ikka eriliseks jäänud”. Näiteks N. Liidu piiride avanemisega käivitunud Ingeri projekt, milles Eesti poolt osalesin, tundus Soome jaoks olevat “oma objekti juurde naasmine”.

Senise soome-ugri diskursuse kriitika kaudu tõuseb soome etnoloogia uueks keskseks diskursuseks “rahvapärane/rahvalik kultuur”, “rahvakultuur”, “talurahvakultuur”, mis kõik on sama tähendusega, paralleelsed mõisted. Neist “talurahvakultuur” esines harvem teadusala määratlevates artiklites, kuid oli valdav populaarteaduslikes kirjutistes. Autor märgib seda diskursust iseloomustades, et “rahvapärast kultuuri” määratleb ühel tasandil aeg: see kuulub minevikku, see on olnud. Teisalt toimib eesliide “rahva-” eraldava täiendina, tehes sellest kultuurist midagi erilist, tavapärasest erinevat. Sääskilahti leiab, et “rahvapärasega” seoses on etnoloogia(s) keskne väide just “rahvakultuuri” ja “rahvaelu” eripära, need pole sama tähendusega kui rahva kultuur ja rahva elu. Eksisteerib kaks kategooriat, vastanditepaar “rahvas” ja “mitte-rahvas” ning rahvateadus on huvitunud “rahva” juurde kuuluvast. Rahvaelu ei olnud mitte rahva elu, vaid midagi sellist, millele oli lisatud tähendusi ning sellega muudetud millekski eriliseks. “Rahvakultuuri” oli vaja rahvale õpetada (nt Seurasaari vabaõhumuuseumis).

Rahvakultuuri uurimises ei otsitud kultuuri algjuuri, vaid valitsevaks sai difusionistlik idee kultuuri “laenamisest”. Iseloomulik oli kultuurikontaktide ja -kihistuste väljaselgitamine ning kultuurinähtuste levikuteede ja geograafilise leviku kujutamine kaartidel.

Rahvakultuuri diskursuse uurimisobjektina näeb Sääskilahti muuseumieset. Nimelt piirdus kultuuriuurimine jätkuvalt materiaalse kultuuriga ja selle objekt – kultuur – arvati säilivat muuseumides. Sinna kogutud esemed muutusid sümboliteks, milles sisaldus kogu uuritav, hävinud kultuuriviis. Nii oli rahvateadus juba lahutamatu seotud muuseumiinstituutiooniga.

Nii soomeugriluse uurimist kui ka “rahvale” suundunud huvi võib pidada soome rahvusliku identiteedi ehitamise osadeks, nad liituvad sooviga leida Soomele tema ajalooline taust ja luua talle omane kultuur (lk 61). “Talurahvakultuuri” tõsteti esile kahe maailmasõja vahelisel perioodil, sellega seoti nii natsiooni iseseisvus, ühtsus kui ka elujõud.

Viimaseks suuremaks alajaotuseks Nina Sääskilahti soome etnoloogia-teaduse diskursuseanalüüsis on linnaetnoloogia. Ka siin hakkas uus diskursus kujunema senise uurimistraditsiooni kriitika kaudu. 1960. aastatel märgati, et lisaks vanale maarahvakultuurile leidub uuritavat ka linnades ning kõigis rahvakihtides. Eesmärgiks oli laiendada uurimisvaldkonda selle objekti – rahva (tema klassipositsiooni, elukoha ja ajajärgu) – uuestimääratlemise kaudu.

Uues diskursuses ei hüljatud “rahvaelu” mõistet, kuid selle kõrvale kerkis “traditsioon”. Etnoloogia määratleti nüüd põhimõistete “rahvaelu” ja “traditsioon” abil. Just “traditsioon” annab “rahvaelu” mõistele tähenduse. Traditsioon on midagi, mis muutub ajas, liitub tihedalt rahva eluga ega takista muutusi. Etnoloogi ülesandeks sai nüüd eristada, mis on traditsioon, seega uurimiseks sobiv ja vääriline.

Sääskilahti arvates sooviti etnoloogia uurimisvaldkonda laiendada aeglaselt ja vähehaaval nii ajalisel (kaasajale lähemale) kui ka geograafiliselt. Oma kaasaja kultuuri aga ei nähtud veel etnoloogiale sobiva uurimisobjektina. Kaasajal iseenesest ei olnud väärtust, see oli vaid lähtekoht, et vaadata minevikku (Sääskilahti nimetab seda tabavalt imperfektseks kaasajaks). Nähtuste uurimisel vajati võrdlust kaasajaga, et näha muutust või arengut. Autor rõhutab, et etnoloogia on endiselt kinni historiseerivas mõtteviisis. Viimane on etnoloogiateaduse loomulik osa, seda peetakse vältimatuks arengu, muutuste ja kaasaegse traditsiooni paremaks mõistmiseks. Ka linnu ei uuritud linnadena siin ja praegu, vaid nende kaudu vaadati minevikku (nt maalt linna siirdumist). Lõpphinnang linnaetnoloogiale konstateerib isegi, et “linnaetnoloogia

diskursus ei muutnud mitte midagi olulist teadusala metateoreetilistes struktuurides” (lk 83).

Samaaegselt linnaetnoloogia tulekuga soome rahvateadusse levisid “novatsiooni- ja innovatsiooniuurimused”. Needki on osaks püüdest leida uusi vaatenurki soome etnoloogiateaduse kindlaks kujunenud uurimisobjektile “rahvakultuurile”, mida ei soovitud enam näha muutumatuks. Juba varem uuritud objekte, esemeid vaadeldakse nüüd uuest vaatenurgast, “novatsioonidena” või “innovatsioonidena”.

Kultuuri muutuse idee rõhutamine tõi 1960.–70. aastate soome etnoloogiasse uue uurimisobjektina tööliskultuuri. Siinjuures rõhutab Sääskilahti, et hilisem kriitika on sellele suunale ette heitnud talurahvakultuuri kategooriate otsest sobitamist: tööliskultuurist loodi talurahvakultuuri laadne ühtne ja jäik tervik.

Sääskilahti lõpetab oma uurimuse kokkuvõtliku analüüsiga teadusalast ja selle uurimisobjektist. Lõppkokkuvõttest summeerisin välja järgmist. Diskursusanalüüsi abil etnoloogiateadust lahates ilmneb, et kultuuri uurimisel on motiivid eri aegadel olnud erinevad. Sellepärast pole etnoloogia arenenud ühtsena ja selgesuunalisena, nii nagu seda varasemates teadusala ajaloo käsitlustes on nähtud, vaid on aegade jooksul muutunud. Oma selget uurimisvaldkonda ei ole etnoloogial olemas (sic!). Samuti on etnoloogiateaduses teooria, meetod ja objekt omavahel lahutamatult seotud ning sünnivad samaaegselt mingi diskursuse raames. Etnoloogia/rahvateadus on põimunud soome kultuuriajaloo, seetõttu on raske eristada teaduse piire muust kultuurist, aga ka kõiki teadusala mõjutanud tingimusi. Kultuuri uuriva teaduse saatuseks on olla ise osa kultuurist.

Keskseks Sääskilahti kriitikas jääb etnoloogia/rahvateaduse võimukasutus oma uurimisobjekti suhtes: “Ühed on “rahvas”, seega objekt, teised aga uurijad, kes “rahvast” representeerivad ja räägivad “rahvale”, millest nad temas on huvitunud, teiste sõnadega määratlevad “rahvast” ja seda, mis selles on väärtuslikku ning tähelepanu vääri” (lk 78).

Teadusala ajaloo kohta hoopis teistlaadset lähenemist pro-gradus esitada on Nina Sääskilahti poolt kahtlemata julge ettevõtmine, mis vaevalt oleks võimalik ilma uut ja ootamatut soosiva keskkonnata! Autori probleemiasetus intrigeerib ning raamatut oli algusest lõpuni

põnev lugeda. Jään huviga ootama tema edaspidiseid loovaid tekste – loetu oli ju teatud mõttes lammutav. Näib, et Sääskilahti on end võimalikult palju taandanud minevikust, kriitilise käsitluse puhul peab ta seda ehk ainuvõimalikuks, ega taha mingil juhul end sellega seotuks lugeda. Ei saa aga märkimata jätta, et kohati tundus Sääskilahti kindlameelselt deklareeritud subjektiivsus, st kriitilisus liigagi (naljakalt) kaugele minevat. Kirjutades *Talonoikaikulttuurisäätiö* tegevusest, lisab ta lausele “Fond jagas ressursse uurimis- ja publitseerimistoetusteks...” täienduseks “... eelkõige fondi liikmetele enestele” (lk 73). Siin tekkis tahtmine õlgu kehitada ja küsida: “Ennäe mul imet! Ja mis siis?”

Lugemist lõpetades tuli kartus, et nii väljakutsuvalt kriitiline esitus võib karastamatu lugeja (mõtlen siinjuures tudengitele) lausa masendusse viia või koguni eemale peletada, sest etnoloogiateadusele ei leidu oma selget uurimisvaldkonda ning mulje teadusalal senitehtust jääb nukker. Tekib ehk identiteedikriis. Loodetavasti nii siiski ei lähe, vaid loetu õhutab uusi ideid ja vaatenurki otsima.

### Paradigma muutused soome etnoloogias

Anna Kirveennummi kirjutis liitub kenasti Sääskilahti uurimuse lõpuosaga, viimast laiendades ning täiendades. Ta on oma artikli pealkirjastanud “**Kultuur, etnoloogia/rahvateadus ja kriitika. Murdumisi 20. sajandi lõpu teadushuvides ja kultuurimõistmises**”. Sissejuhatavalt märgib autor, et kultuur on kultuuriuurimise, sealhulgas etnoloogia võtmetermiin, mille sisu on viimase kahe sajandi jooksul määratletud väga mitmeti. Samas on kultuuriuurimine ja kultuuri mõistetele antud määratlused aga kultuurisõltuvuses ning kultuuri mõistete eri aegadel antud määratlused on mõjutanud seda uurivate teadusalade ajaloo tõlgendusi.

Kirjutise eesmärgiks on möödunud lähiaastakümnete soome etnoloogiateaduse käsitlemine paradigmaatiliste muutuste kaudu. Autor jälgib neid muutusi etnoloogia uurimisobjekti ning uurimistööks püstitatud küsimuste abil, sest nendes võib eri viisil ning tähendustes väljenduda “kultuur”.

Keskne osa A. Kirveennummi artiklis on 1950.–60. aastatel soome etnoloogias toimunud muutuste analüüsil, mis on esitatud Turu ülikooli esimese ja väga pikaajase etnoloogiaprofessori Ilmar Talve tollaegsete programmiliste kirjutiste põhjal. Kirveennummi meelest ilmneb just Talve kirjutistes kõige selgemalt vastandumine senise uurimistraditsiooni ning uute taotluste vahel. Talve eristumine senisest uurimistraditsioonist ja kriitika on välja toodud neljas olulisemas punktis. Lühidalt esitatuna oleksid need järgmised.

Varasemale uurimistraditsioonile omane talurahvakultuuri ja mineviku ihalemine ning kõikvõimalik idealiseerimine oli Talvele võõras, ta kritiseeris senisele rahvateadusele omast lähtumist hõimuromantikast. Varasema esemeuurimuse asemel keskendus ta materiaalsete tingimuste uurimisele suulise traditsiooni kaudu. Edaspidine esemeuurimus peaks rareiteetsuse asemel lähtuma artefaktide argisuse põhimõttest.

Talve kritiseeris senivalitsenud primitiivse kultuuri järkjärgulise taandarengu (jäänuste e rudimentide) teooriat rõhutavaid uurimismetodoloogiaid – ajaloolis-geneetilist ja esemetüpoloogilist. Endiselt keskseks peetavat ajalist jätkuvust tähistas tal traditsiooni mõiste, mille hiljem tõrjus kõrvale (kultuuri) muutus, muutusprotsess. Rahvakultuuri muutusprotsessis olid keskseks traditsioon, kaasaeg ja viimasega kaasnenud “uuedused”, mis pakkusid huvi juhul, kui neil oli olemas oma ajalugu.

Senise uurimisobjekti, kaugel mineviku asemel tõstis Talve esile 19. sajandi lõpu tööstusliku murrangu ajajärgu ning siis tekkinud uute rahvarühmade uurimise. Siiski keskendus etnoloogiline uurimistöö ka uue uurimisobjekti juures jätkuvalt kaduva agraarse eluviisi uurimisele.

Funktsionalismi mõjul muutus oluliseks holistiline uurimisviis ning sotsiaalse mõõtme lisanduv rõhutamine. Kirveennummi näitab, et Talve pidas taolist paradigma muutust positiivseks, hinnates seda kui lähemist sotsiaalteadusele ning märkimisväärset sammu etnoloogia iseiseisvumises. Tegelikult aga keskendus sotsiaalse kultuuri uurimine erinevate sotsiaalsete ja ametirühmade materiaalsetele töö- ja elamis-tingimustele ning tavakultuurile. Kuna uurimisteemasid ja -objekte nähti osana tervikust (soome rahvakultuurist), siis peeti eesmärgiks sünteesi, mis Talve arvates sai võimalikuks vaid siis, kui ainest erinevatest perioodidest ning sotsiaalsetest rühmadest oli kogutud



võimalikult täielikult. Seega oli 1950., 1960. ja ka veel 1970. aastate soome etnoloogiale jätkuvalt iseloomulik kumuleeruv materjali kasv.

1970.–80. aastate etnoloogia arengu käsitle on Kirveennummi pealkirjastanud “uus etnoloogia ja tõlgendav kultuuriuurimus”. Ta märgib, et kogu 20. sajandi jooksul võib näha filosoofiliste, antropoloogiliste, ajalooliste, geograafiliste ja sotsioloogiliste teooriate ümber töötamist ning arendamist teatud rahvateadusliku/etnoloogilise traditsioonina (lk 41). Viimastel aastakümnetel on aga uute teooriate ja vaatenurkade osa ja neile omistatud tähtsus märgatavalt kasvanud. Soome etnoloogiateadusesse on tulnud mõjusid kultuuriökoloogiast, strukturalismist, sümbolianthropoloogiast, kognitiivsest antropoloogiast, semiootikast, briti kultuuriuurimisest, kvalitatiivsest sotsioloogiast ja ajaloolisest materialismistki.

Kirveennummi näeb 1970. aastatel (vähemalt kümnendi lõpus) tekkimas “ uut etnoloogiat ” – indiviidi ja sotsiaalsust rõhutavat uurimisuunda, mille objektiks olid modernse ühiskonna osa- ja subkultuurid ning nende suhe terviku, soome kultuuriga. Selle suuna taotluste ning eesmärkide esitamisel viitab autor Ilmar Talve järel Turu ülikooli etnoloogiaprofessoriks valitud Matti Räsänenile. (Niisiis kaks Turu professorit – märkab erapooletu lugeja.)

Uus etnoloogia arenes Soomes tõlgendavaks kultuuriuurimuseks, milles huviorbiiti tõusevad kõrge tähendussisuga kultuurinähtused nagu etnilisus ja rahvus. Nüüd keskendutakse kogu kultuuri uurimiselt subkultuuridele või vaadeldakse ühe teatud kultuurielemendi kaudu suuremat kultuuritervikut. Kirveennummi tõdeb siinjuures, et suur osa sellesuunalistest uurimustest on jäänud seni trükis ilmutamata, nende seas palju etnoloogiaüliõpilaste peaseminaritöid. Rahvakultuuri uurimine asendub kultuuri, argielu ja eluviiside uurimisega.

Muutuste laiemaks taustaks on antipositivistliku teadusfilosoofia levik. Kirjutaja väidabki, et viimastel aastakümnetel vastanduvad Soomes selgesti “traditsiooniline”, kultuuriajalooline ning tõlgendav etnoloogiateadus. Ta kinnitab ühtlasi, et kohaliku omapärana (erinevalt näiteks Rootsist) eristuvad selles vastasseisus just erinevate ülikoolide etnoloogid. Otsesõnu ei öelda, kus on nii ja kus naa, kuid esitatud J. U. E. Lehtoneni tsitaadikatke (lk 42) annab lugejale märku, et Helsingi ülikoolis pooldatakse traditsioonilist rahvateadust.

Anna Kirveennummi artikli lõpuosast (lk 43–44) leidsin mitmeid lõike, mida lihtsalt ei saa tsiteerimata jätta, sest need on aktuaalsed ka Eesti kontekstis.

“Paralleelsus ja üksteist täiendavad vaatenurgad on positiivne nähtus. Teaduse seisukohast võivad lisanduv diskussioon ning erinevad avalikud konfliktidki olla kasulikumad kui pidev – vaiksena ehk näilik – konsensus.”

“Uurimustest ja uurimistulemustest tuleks senisest enam diskuteerida lähemate teadusharudega. Etnoloogia peaks olema ajalugu ja kultuuri ning nende uurimist kriitiliselt käsitlev teadus.”

“Kultuuri mõistele antud erinevad tähendused on muutnud arusaama tegelikkusest ja ajaloost. Valmis, puhaste ning homogeensete produktide asemel on kultuur just nagu etnoloogiagi mitmepalgeline, vastastikku mõjuv, vastuoluline ning lõppematu protsess.”

Kui N. Sääskilahti käsitlesest õhkub eelkõige radikalismi, siis A. Kirveennummi analüüs püüab välja tuua nii positiivset kui ka negatiivset, olles seega võrdlemisi tasakaalustatud. A. Kirveennummi leiab senitehtus rohkem arengut, ta on endki sinna ära paigutanud. Näiteks Ilmar Talve vaadetes toob ta välja rohkem edasiminekut ja eristumist kui N. Sääskilahti, kuigi tekstid, mida nad loevad, on samad.

Kirjutise lõpus rõhutab ta tõlgendusvõimaluste mitmekesisust ning mineviku, kaasaja ja tuleviku omavahelist seotust etnoloogias. Seda sorti lõpp jättis hinge positiivsele lainele ning sisendas etnoloogile (eriti muidugi soome omale) optimismi tulevikku vaatamiseks.

## Rahvateadus – rahvusteadus

Helsingi esindaja Hanna Snellmani lühiülevaates “**Rahvateadus – rahvus – rahvusvahelisus**” on keskne soome rahvateaduse funktsioon eri aegadel. Snellmani kasutuses on *kansatiede* vaste ühetähenduslikult “rahvateadus”, mitte etnoloogia, sest artikkel käsitleb seda teadusala ühena rahvusteadustest.

Kirjutise sissejuhatav osa toob lugeja kiirülevaate korras päris algusest (“Teadusala juuri võib otsida alates antiigist.”) 20. sajandi algusesse, millal “Soome koht natsioonina maailma rahvaste hulgas

määratleti rahvateaduse abil”. Eriti aktuaalseks muutus Soome teadvustamine pärast iseseisvuse saavutamist.

Autori sõnul osutus rahvateadus nüüd eriti sobivaks enesemääratluse vahendiks, kuna selle uurimisobjekt oli just talurahvas, kes arvati kõige paremini säilitavat muinasaegade pärandit. Talupoegkonnal oli iseseisvunud kodanlikus Soomes suur poliitiline tähtsus: nimelt neid peeti riigi tuumaks, talurahvakultuuri aga natsiooni hingejõu allikaks. Kuid talurahva moodustasid maaga talupojad, need, kes olid kodusõjas valgete toetajad. Snellman rõhutab, et mitte kunagi ei ole rahvateadus olnud Soomele ideoloogiliselt nii tähtis kui 1930. aastatel, mil see oli lausa moeteadus. Rahvateadlased, kes ise enamasti olid pärit maalt talupoeglikest oludest, kirjutasid ka ajakirjanduses arvukalt populaarteaduslikke artikleid, millele leidis innukas ja huvitunud lugejaskond nii maapäritolu linnaintelligentsi kui ka maarahva harituma osa hulgas.

Oluliseks jäi rahvateadus ka Teisest maailmasõjast toibuvast Soomes. Ülesehitusel peeti taas sobivaks otsida tuge just talurahvast esiisade pagasist. Snellman peab siin märkimisväärseks Kustaa Vilkunat kui ideoloogi, leides aga, et tema suure mõju tagas eelkõige sotsiaalne tellimus, vähem ehk teadlasetalent. Ühe toiminud tegurina esitab Snellman ka sõjajärgse Soome kiire industrialiseerimise ning linnastumise, mille käigus tekkinud esimese põlve linlastele oli omane nostalgiline huvi oma “juurtega” seonduva vastu. Sama nostalgia ja oma “juurte” otsimise väljenduseks kohalikul tasandil said arvukad 1950. aastatel rajatud lokaalmuuseumid. Nende sotsiaalne funktsioon oli kohaliku identiteedi tugevdamine.

Prof J. U. E. Lehtonenile viidates nimetab autor ajavahemikku 1930. aastatest 1960. aastateni soome rahvateaduse kuldseks ajaks (lk 27). Kuuekümnendad aastad aga tähendasid suurt murrangut nii Soome ühiskonnas kui ka rahvateaduses. Kirjutaja sõnutas tuli “talupoja kriitikata imetluse asemele... multikultuursuse imetus ja rahvusliku põlastamine”. Vastamaks aja nõuetele tuli rahvateaduses laiendada rahva mõistet. Rääkides soome rahvateaduse uuendajast Ilmar Talvest, mainib Snellman, et Talve oli saanud koolitust Rootsis, kus rahva mõistele oli juba antud suurem ulatus. Autor rõhutab taas ka sotsiaalset tellimust – 1960.–70. aastatel levinud tööliklassi populaarsust, mida Talve ise vaevalt et teadvustas. Snellmani arvates oli aga uus sotsiaalne

tellimus eelnevast nõrgem, seda väidet põhjendab ta vastavateemaliste doktoriväitekirjade vähesusega.

Snellmann leiab oma artikli lõpuosas, et soome rahvateaduse tööpõld on alati järginud ühiskonna muutumist (lk 30). Tänapäeva rahvusvahelises rahvateaduses on tema meelest märgatavad kaks suunda: rahvateadus kui ühiskonna südametunnistus ja rahvateadus kui rahvuse mälu. Esimest neist näeb ta valitsemas Rootsis, kus pagulased ja miinoriteedid on olnud aktiivse uurimise objekt alates 1970. aastatest. Seda suunda iseloomustab ühiskonnakriitilisus, ühiskonna võimustruktuuride küsitavuse tõstatamine.

Teine suund, milles rahvateadus toimib rahvuse kollektiivse mäluna, areneb eelkõige saksa uurimistraditsiooni mõjul ning selles on tähtis koht historistlikul vaatenurgal. Tervikuna on kaasaja rahvateadus autori meelest mitmehäälses ja ideoloogiliselt vabam kui kunagi varem, kajastades ühiskonnale iseloomulikku väärtuste ja normide mitmekesisust.

Jättes kõrvale stiili, mis laiemale publikule kirjutamisel peab paratamatult emotsionaalsem olema, mõõnan, et H. Snellmani artikkel on kantud teatud imetlusest ja igatsusest “rahvateaduse kuldse aja” järele. Retooriline küsimus “Kas rahvateadus(e) oleks pidanud lõpetama 1970. aastatesse jõudes?” (seega pärast “kuldse aja” lõppu – T.A.) (lk 30), millele ta ise küll eitavalt vastab, annab juba oma esitamiselega märku kirjutaja suhtumisest. Tundub ka, et paljuski jagab?/edastab? autor Helsingi professori J. U. E. Lehtoneni arvamust, sest teda on üpris rohkesti nii viidatud kui ka otse tsiteeritud.

Rahvateaduse tuleviku osas pakub Snellman välja, et Ühinenud Euroopa üksikkodanik ammutab taas sellest teadusalast tuge oma identiteedi loomisel. Ilus see ju oleks, sest nii saaks ka rahvateadus(e) (ehk euroopa etnoloogia) enda identiteediprobleemi lahendada.

Küsimust “Kes me oleme? Kust me tuleme?” on aeg-ajalt vaja esitada. Kolmest autorist kaks rõhutavadki, et teadusala ajalukku süvenemine on hea vahend leidmaks nii oma erialast identiteeti kui ka eriala identiteeti. Kiiresti muutuv ühiskond ning sellega koos ka kultuur sunnivad etnolooge ehk rohkem kui kunagi varem juurdlema teadusala rolli ja võimaluste ning tuleviku üle. Murrab siinkirjutajagi oma pead küsimu-

sega, millises vormis ja kas üldse vajatakse kultuuriuurimist tuleviku Eestis.

Ma ei tõmmanud paralleele – neid võib igaüks enda jaoks ise leida. Üritades teatud spekulatsioonina järeltada nende kolme erilaadse kirjutise põhjal midagi üldisemat, esitaksin selle järgnevalt: Jyväskylä on end lahti rebimas kõigest senisest, Turu otsib uusi teid, kuid tunnustab ka minevikus tehtut, Helsingi on tugevalt kinni minevikus.

Loetu tegi mind heas mõttes kadedaks: ka meil Eestis võiksid erinevad seisukohad rohkem ilmavalgust näha. Selles mõttes oli värskendav näiteks Heiki Pärdi ja Ants Viirese väitlus 1998. aasta veebruari- ja juunikuu “Akadeemia” lehekülgedel. Muidu näib eesti etnoloogia pealtvaates liigagi ühtne. Ehk on siin oma mõju meile loomumomasil vaoshoitusel, mida tänapäeva Eestis võimendab kartus niigi kitsaks jäänud erialainimeste ametlikus ringis ebameeldivatesse konfliktidesse sattuda, sest paraku kiputakse erialast vastandumist või kriitikat ikka isiklikule tasapinnale üle kandma.

## **Research project**

### ***Memory as a Cultural Factor***

### ***in the Biographical Narratives of the Estonians***

**Elle Vunder, Terje Anepaio, Ene Kõresaar**

**The Estonian Science Foundation Grant**

**Duration of the project: 1998–2001**

## **General theoretical background**

Memory is not a personal possession of an individual but is “given” by the social context. Memory is a structure of knowledge; social and cultural life (statehood, law, moral, everyday life, art, etc.) is based on it. It expresses itself through such central principles as will, justice, justification, creativity, etc.

In the modern empirical and theoretical studies of memory the term of “collective memory” occupies a key position. This term has been understood broader as a way of thinking, a form of mentality. Modern studies are focused on the treatment of the past by the contemporary society. They deal with the cultural aspects of that treatment in time, space and social context and not so much on the historical past itself. Therefore, the empirical and methodological results provided by the modern studies on migration, identity and gender as well as on the reception of contemporary history serve as an useful comparative material for this project (L. Passerini, S. Leyesdorff, P. Thompson, D. Bertaux, A. v. Plato, L. Niethammer, H. Bausinger, A. Lehmann, J. Frykman, U. Neisser, S. A. Taylor, E. Tonkin, etc.).

Ethnologists are concerned with the mechanisms of memory that are essential for the social and cultural identity by individual or group; on this basis they draw conclusions on culture itself. Considering

“culture” as a system of signs, knowledge, and rules, one can assume that the “cultural knowledge”, growing up from this understanding, provides a basis to (re)construct, by the carriers of a certain culture, the realities of the past from the present point of view. Social interrelations are forming the memory. Without those interrelations the memory can not find its output. “Collective memory” is understood heuristically as a communicative as well as a creative production of the collective time-experience. It preserves in the form of social and cultural inheritance (tradition) the materialized and symbolic points for the construction of the common pasts.

In this way the social memories receive a collective meaning. On the one hand, the common (re)constructions of the past have a reproductive character, i.e. the cultural components of the social and individual practice are maintained by them and have stabilizing influence on the orientations, rules and norms of cultural practices. On the other hand, they can be innovative, i.e. destructing the continuity of cultural life, and creating new expectations to the past, present and future.

“Collective memory” reveals itself through objectivations. An important characteristic of the collective memory is also its actualisation on the level of individuals. Each individual memory is formed in communication with others, and, in fact, is a part of multiple collective memories. Writing up and narrating one’s own experiences and life-stories is a way of objectivation of memory on the individual level. It is not possible, speaking about your own life, to neglect changes taken place in the society and culture. Human life has been shaped by different dimensions: time, space, social milieu. Those dimensions create categories that help to understand the basic forces having impact upon a course of the life. Transitional moments signify the great changes that an individual faces. Moreover, those moments mark the limits of different periods (structures) of life. Through them diverge social, cultural and historical situations are expressed. In this way, life of an individual becomes a social fact that allows to interpret the hidden levels of life. It also allows to comprehend the structures of thinking and meaning of the particular carriers of culture as well as the social, cultural and historical factors that have exercised impact upon them.

The contemporary Estonian society is in transition, a situation of deepening social differences and manifold conflicts is present there. There are apparent controversies of values, orientations and norms between different social groups, generations, and also Estonians living in Estonia and in diaspora. Ethnological science, therefore, makes efforts to analyse and explain the occurrences and processes present in the society. Quite a lot of facts, attitudes etc., have to be explained taking into consideration that their roots lay in the near past, in the personal experiences. The process of forming attitudes and activities is taking place through the interpretation of the past. The emphasis is put on the analysis of the results of the historical events with the enormous and long lasting influence (the Soviet occupation, the Second World War). As a result of those events, Estonians were separated into the two different social and political systems. Those events have an especially strong impact upon a generation which grew up and was educated in the Republic of Estonia (1918–40). A large number of them escaped to the West, another part remained in Estonia and suffered considerably due to the Soviet repressions. The difference in the social and political context of the following decades has influenced a selective aspect of their memory in divergent directions, certain episodes have crystallized, others have transformed. Nowadays we face the situation of re-establishment of communication between individuals with deeply dissimilar ideological, social and political background. In this light, it is becoming clear that there are significant diversities in the attitudes and values even among the representatives of the above-mentioned generation. These realities have provoked a discussion in the mass media and have led to the polemical question – can we consider the culture of the Estonian emigrants as “Estonian” at all, or how to define the common part of the Estonian cultures in homeland and abroad. It is necessary, in our opinion, to take this problem under comprehensive scientific investigation. Our approach is to focus on the level of individuals, the “memory” is used as an analytical tool. The groups of individuals under consideration include two communities in exile (Sweden and Switzerland) and the representatives of the victims of Soviet repressions (1941–53) from the beforementioned generation.

The problem and approach described above can be considered as quite unique, there are no fully relevant researches available. Needless



to say, because of the isolation and ideological pressure there are almost no research made on the post-war Estonian society in Estonian ethnology and anthropology. Some work has been done by the historians (e.g. Romuald J. Misiunas, Rein Taagepera, "The Baltic States: Years of Dependence 1940–1990", London: Hurst 1983; updat. ed. London: Hurst 1993) which has a supporting value for this research. Till today Soviet Estonian society has been treated as an homogeneous one, a significant part of the society (the victims of the repressions) has been neglected. Historian A. Rahi has started to deal with that topic more profoundly in the last few years.

Estonian communities abroad have been studied mainly from the statistical, historical-geographical or organisational aspects (V. Raag, R. Piirvee, P. Lindsaar, I. Jürjo, E. Soom, A. Kurlents, H. Kulu, I. Arens, etc.). These works are used as secondary literature. Written data published by the emigrants can be used as comparative material.

The Estonian Biography-Researchers' Society *Estonian Life Stories* (ÜEE, Estonia) has done considerable work in collecting and publishing the biographical narratives of Estonians; close co-operation with the Society is proposed by the authors. In addition, the authors are participating in the work of the Centre of the Soviet Studies in Estonia which co-ordinates the relevant studies in social sciences and humanities.

### **Main goals of the research**

The main goal of this project is to research the role of memory in the Estonian culture in the second half of the 20th century. For that reason we compare "cultural baggage" of different groups of the Estonians on the level of individuals with the help of their biographical narratives. There is an attempt to determine, on the one hand, the common components of culture that bind an individual with a certain group and serve as a basis for the forming of identity; on the other hand, the task is to find out differences that appear in the case of confrontation with the other groups.

Using the term of “memory” as an analytical means provides a possibility to study the temporal dimensions of identity-forming, and furthermore, their connections with a space and social context.

Our study is concerned with the following problems:

How far back to the past the informants are looking in order to explain and interpret their choices, attitudes and crucial moments of personal life;

which place do the historical events occupy in the personal biographies; how to characterize the reception of these events in the circle of persons close to the informant, and in which circumstances does it take shape; what kind of memories have a collective role, in which variants do they occur, and in which conditions do they form;

how do the social and political contradictions of the contemporary history transform into the cultural ones in the biographies.

Taking into account the retrospective character of the memory, one task of the analysis is to determine the role of memories, both individual and collective ones, in the forming of attitudes and opinions towards the present Estonian society, the decision-making process of certain individuals, and the dependence of that process on the (non-)achieved social status and gender.

Working out the relevant methodology and basic principles of the source critique for the further research is a significant aim of that project as well.

## **Methodology and preparatory work completed by now**

The following methods of data gathering have to be exploited in this research: the structured and non-structured interviews (biographies), participating observation, visual recording. The biographical narratives from the Estonian museums (Estonian National Museum, Estonian Literary Museum) and public organisations and societies (“Memento”, the Memory-Centre of Pirgu) provide the additional sources and comparative data. The documents from the archives are important in investigating a social and political context (Estonian State Archive, county archives, the archives of the Estonian societies in Switzerland and Sweden).

The object of the formal and content analysis is the (written) text which will be the result of the interviews. The main method applied is qualitative text analysis. Particular attention is paid to the social situation that appears in the course of the interviews and on the recording of that. The written and oral forms of the same biographies are treated comparatively, if it is possible, in order to specify the features of the mechanisms of memory on the individual level.

As a primary source, the research team has at its possession the biographical interviews with Estonians in Switzerland (from 1988/89, 1996/97) and the proposed selection of informants based on the documents of the Supreme Court of Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic (on the victims of Soviet repressions).

### **People and institutions participating in the project**

The project is carried on at the Chair of Ethnology of the Tartu University.

Project leader: Prof. Elle Vunder, PhD, the Chair of Ethnology.

Senior personnel: Terje Anepaio, MA, researcher of the Institute of History, PhD student at the University of Tartu; Ene Kõresaar, MA, lecturer at the Chair of Ethnology, PhD student at the University of Tartu.

Assistant staff: students and MA students of ethnology at the University of Tartu; Aive Zirk (literation), student.

### **Publications and use of the study results**

The current results will be presented in the seminars of the Estonian Biography-Researchers' Society *Estonian Life Stories* and the S-Centre. The articles written in the course of the study are planned to publish in the Estonian and international journals. Conference on relevant topics is in schedule, with consequent publications which would be based on the presented reports and discussions, in order to reveal the present state of research in this field. The results of the

surveys as well as the sources supplied with annotations and commentaries will be published.

The database, put together in the course of the project, will be given to the Estonian Literary Museum and joined with particular fonds of the Estonian Biography-Researchers' Society *Estonian Life Stories*. As a result, the researches of different fields will have access to this database. The current and final results will be used in the process of teaching at the Chair of Ethnology (preparation of courses, supervision of undergraduate seminars).

### **Novelty and significance of the research**

In the perspective of the Estonian ethnology science, the approach that focuses on the individual, exercising the biographical narratives as a source and method, and making use of the term of "memory" as an active cultural factor have to be considered as novelties. The methodological aspects as well as critical approach to the sources make this project useful for wider circle of scholars.

It has to be underlined that this research provides a scientific analysis of the problems under deep interest of the Estonian society. The project has its role in gathering and preserving data about the late history of the Estonians in the world.

In the international context of science, the project leads to more profound understanding of common and specific features of the cultural processes in the Estonian society.

In the long term this project has great potential providing good opportunities for the research and study of the undergraduate students.

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