

# Foreword

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Has contemporary folklore research been attentive to its history? What circumstances have led the discipline to pay more heed to its past? What approaches have been used to evaluate disciplinary history? A short look at the historiography of international folkloristics will disclose some of the scholarly context that was substantial for designing this monograph about Latvian folklore studies in the period between the two world wars.

Disciplinary history has persistently been in folklorists' focus for at least several decades. Various reasons have contributed to this interest—the anniversaries of influential scholars, institutions, important publications and even particular terms. For instance, the 150<sup>th</sup> birthday (1996) of the term *folklore* prompted folklorists to reconsider the discipline's nominal legacy by examining the relationships between the field of study and its central term whose validity—both as a name for the discipline and its research object—was disputed.<sup>1</sup>

Likewise, historical reflection intensifies at turning points and during periods of transition that heighten concern with contemporary identities. In folkloristics, such reflection increased in the 1980s and 1990s, prompted by the emerging reflexive paradigm in the context of an epistemological crisis in the humanities. Critical self-scrutiny—most outspoken in North American folklore studies—revised the disciplinary inventory (name, subject matter, theory and methodology), starting with its history.<sup>2</sup> In the aftermath of this reflexive turn, historical reflection became inseparably entangled with critical reasoning about the essence of scholarly inquiry. Working along those lines, folklorists have produced work on the history of the field that is not limited to the inventory of facts and the listing of events. Instead, scholars have

1 For example, the American Folklore Society devoted a special panel during its annual conference in 1996 to the anniversary of the term *folklore*. The presentations of this forum later appeared in an issue of the *Journal of American Folklore* 111 (441); see Ben Amos 1998; Bendix 1998; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998; Oring 1998.

2 In addition to the issue of *Journal of American Folklore* mentioned above, see also Bauman 1996; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1996, etc.

illuminated the range of conditions and contexts that have determined the origin and development of the discipline, as well as its theoretical positioning, methodological basis, and production of knowledge.

One of the recurrent topics, in this respect, has been the embeddedness of folklore studies in the discourse of modernity, with particular emphasis on the relationship between the conceptualisation of folklore and the processes of nation building (whose second wave washed over Europe after World War I). Examples of this focus include Pertti Anttonen's monograph, *Tradition through Modernity: Postmodernism and the Nation-State in Folklore Scholarship* (2005), and Diarmuid Ó Giolláin's research on the history of Irish folkloristics, *Locating Irish Folklore: Tradition, Modernity, Identity* (2000). The link between human values, heightened by modern transformations, and the origins of the discipline is in focus in Regina Bendix's monograph, *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies* (1997). Discussing the concept of authenticity as one that has shaped the discipline and has been consistently influential, Bendix examines history of German and American folkloristics.

Among the political and ideological contexts that affected folklore research during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, most scholarly attention has been paid to the use of folklore within authoritarian nationalistic regimes, particularly, in Nazi Germany. Hannjost Lixfeld's monograph, *Folklore and Fascism: The Reich Institute for German Volkskunde* (1994) reveals suitability of folklore for the Third Reich and its consequences for the politics of scholarship and institutionalisation of the discipline. The anthology *The Nazification of an Academic Discipline: Folklore in the Third Reich* (Dow and Lixfeld 1994) adds more perspectives to this debate and raises questions about moral and scholarly responsibility under conditions of politically regulated knowledge production.

Most historic studies in 20<sup>th</sup> century folkloristics, however, have been devoted to individuals and their contribution to the institutionalisation of the discipline. Monographs describe such pioneers of the field as Carl von Sydow (Bringéus 2009) and Arnold van Gennep (Zumwalt 1988a). Several volumes highlight scholars from specific geographical regions or countries, such as *Leading Folklorists of the North* (Strömbäck 1971), which contains biographies and reviews of northern Europe's leading folklorists. Some of the individuals mentioned in this collection (such as von Sydow, Axel Olrik, father and son Krohn) are also considered in Alan Dundes's *International Folkloristics: Classic Contributions by the Founders of Folklore* (1999). Dundes's book is structured as both a history and a reader that includes fragments from the described authors' research and publications. The Estonian edition, *Studies in Estonian*

*Folkloristics and Ethnology: A Reader and Reflexive History* (Kuutma and Jaago 2005), is organised in a similar manner.

A less represented angle in the historiography of the field is the history of institutions. Mícheál Briody's hefty monograph, *The Irish Folklore Commission 1935-1970: History, Ideology, Methodology* (2007), is one of few works in this trend.

*Du folklore à l'ethnologie* (Christophe et al. 2009), written by a team of French ethnologists, combines several of the aforementioned perspectives and attempts to create a panoramic view of French studies in folk culture between 1936 and 1945. Aimed at discovering why France abandoned the field called *folklore* in favour of *ethnologie*, it contains chapters about research objects and methodology, regional differences, influential people, the work of institutions, and political and ideological contexts of the discipline in Europe. To a certain extent, the structure of this book served as a model for planning the study of Latvian folkloristics during the interwar period presented here.

The necessity for a thorough history of interwar folkloristics had long been felt in Latvian scholarship, even though contemporary researchers have not ignored the past of the field. A number of publications illuminate the contribution of key personalities, belonging to the cohort of the national awakening of the 19th century, including Krišjānis Barons (Arājs 1959; 1962; 1985), Anss Lerhis-Puškaitis (Pakalns 1986; 2000; 2001) and Fricis Brīvzemnieks (Rozenbergs 1997). The life and work of several interwar personalities have also been discussed (Rozenbergs 1991; 1995; 1998) as has the development of the Archives of Latvian Folklore, its collections (Vīksna 1990; 2004; 2005; 2008) and the folklore fieldwork carried out in different parts of Latvia (Vīksna 1996a; 2001; 2007a; 2010).

While an entire monograph has been dedicated to the history of Latvian folkloristics (Ambainis 1989), it was precisely the limitations of its approach that urged additional attention to the interwar period. *Latviešu folkloristikas vēsture* (History of Latvian folkloristics) was published shortly before the collapse of socialism, and the retreating political and ideological regime still left its mark on the book's content, particularly its treatment of the so-called bourgeois folkloristics of the 1920s-40s. The book silenced information about exiled folklorists, a characteristic also displayed by encyclopaedias published during the Soviet era. Only six pages were allotted to the interwar period, altogether remarkably disproportionate considering the significance of that time and the amount of text dedicated to earlier history.

Precisely during the interwar period, the patriotic duty of collecting and publishing folklore was transformed into a full-fledged, institutionalised academic discipline: the Archives of Latvian Folklore was established;

the University of Latvia began offering courses in folkloristics and ethnography, and Latvian folklorists sought a place in the networks of international cooperation flourishing in Europe at that time. The newly established (1918) Latvian nation state owed its independence to the cultural nationalism of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with its strong interest in folklore. Largely, it was the collection of folklore instigated by the *Jaunlatvieši* (Young Latvians) movement that awakened national consciousness and consolidated people scattered in the borderlands of Tsarist Russia in a joint patriotic effort. As a result, the most important cultural capital of independent Latvia (along with the emerging national literature and art) were three fundamental editions of folklore: *Latvju dainas* (Latvian folksongs), compiled by Krišjānis Barons (1894—1915), *Latviešu tautas teikas un pasakas* (Latvian folk legends and tales), collected and published by Anss Lerhis-Puškaitis (1891—1903), and *Latvju tautas mūzikas materiāli* (Materials of Latvian folk music), edited by Andrejs Jurjāns (1894—1926). These volumes formed the foundation for the development of folklore studies and provided a weighty argument for the respectful place assigned to folklore in the cultural and educational politics of interwar Latvia.

In 2014, the Archives of Latvian Folklore (ALF) celebrated its 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary using this occasion to reflect upon the history of the field from an institutional, national and international perspective. This reflection has already materialised in a set of publications. *The History of Folklore Collection in Photographs* (Lielbārdis 2014) presents a visual story: drawing on the ALF's photo materials, it chronologically displays field situations of folklore collecting as captured by the camera (1920s—90s). *Mapping the History of Folklore Studies: Centres, Borderlands and Shared Spaces* (Bula and Laime 2017) is the result of an international conference convened in October 2014 in Riga on the history and international nature of folklore scholarship. In the same year, a collective monograph *Latviešu folkloristika starpkaru periodā* (Bula 2014) was published discussing Latvian folklore studies in the interwar period. It was released in the series *Folkloristikas bibliotēka*, dedicated to the history and theory of the discipline.<sup>3</sup> That book served as a basis for this revised and shortened volume, addressed to an international audience in the hope that it will contribute to recent efforts to broaden the geographical scope of disciplinary history beyond the emblematic examples of Finland, Ireland, Germany and the United States (see Bendix and Hasan-Rokem 2012).

3 So far, four books have been published in the Folkloristics' library series, see Bērziņš 2007; Jansons 2010; Bula 2011; Bula 2014.

*Latvian Folkloristics in the Interwar Period* has a wide-ranging perspective. Its first part deals with relevant contexts of folklore research, such as international cooperation, national cultural policies, the process of institutionalisation and the integration of the discipline into higher education. The second part is devoted to dominant research paradigms in Latvian interwar folkloristics, namely, the historic-geographic school; the literary approach to folklore texts; and the use of folklore for historic and ethnographic explorations. The folklore-based studies of Latvian mythology, covered in the Latvian version of the book, have been excluded here since they have been exhaustively discussed in a separate monograph (Kencis 2012). The third part of *Latvian Folkloristics in the Interwar Period* presents the biographies and works of Latvian folklorists who were active in the 1920s–40s and whose fates after the World War II differed dramatically (apart from Pēteris Šmits who passed away in 1938). Those who stayed in Latvia—Anna Bērzkalne, Pēteris Birkerts, Jānis Alberts Jansons, and Emīlis Melngailis—had to find a middle ground between their past scholarly endeavours and the realities of the Soviet present. Those who fled—Kārlis Straubergs, Ludis Bērziņš, and Arveds Švābe—sought to continue their scholarly careers in exile, despite being disconnected from their academic milieus and source materials.

Political changes do not always produce immediate modifications in scholarly thought. Although the early 1940s, with the first Soviet occupation in 1940 and Nazi military rule between 1941 and 1945, were politically destructive and ideologically traumatic in Latvia, they did not introduce a new intellectual direction. A new era in Latvian folkloristics began only after the establishment of Soviet regime in 1945 and therefore *Latvian Folkloristics in the Interwar Period* includes the years leading up to the end of the World War II.

This book is the product of the joint work of a group of folklorists from the Archives of Latvian Folklore (Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art at the University of Latvia), financed by the Latvian Council of Science in the project ‘Institutionalisation of Folklore Studies in Latvia: Disciplinary History in a European Context’, as well as by the Ministry of Education and Science in the programme ‘Krišjānis Barons’s Cabinet of Folksongs’. The group consisted both of experienced scholars (such as Baiba Krogzeme-Mosgorda, Gatis Ozoliņš, Guntis Pakalns, Māra Vīksna, and musicologist Ilze Šarkovska-Liepiņa) and of their younger colleagues (such as Sandis Laime and Sanita Reinsone). For some authors—Toms Kencis, Rita Treija, and Anita Vaivade—the topics covered here were turned into successfully defended doctoral dissertations in the course of the work on the book.

The years spent together exploring the achievements of our disciplinary and institutional predecessors were exiting; they turned us into a good team

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