

# Folklore Fellows' NETWORK



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Cover: Student of Estonian philology, Anita Riis (1927–1995) is standing at the supposed-to-be Kalevipoeg's boulder in Porkuni, northern Estonia in 1951. (Photo by Ülo Tedre. EKM KKI, Foto 1045)



## The Two Faces of Nationalism

Pekka Hakamies

This year many European nations celebrate their centenaries; this is not mere chance. The First World War destroyed, on top of everything else, many old regimes where peoples that had lived as minorities had for some time been striving for the right to national self-determination. When the imperial structures which held this process up disappeared, the way to independence opened up. Finland celebrated its centenary in 2017, although the nation became independent in a real sense only towards the end of 1918, after freeing itself of its vassal relationship with imperial Germany.

The notion that people united sufficiently by similar language, culture, historical tradition and perhaps belief belong together and form a community developed gradually in Europe in the nineteenth century. The idea of belonging together on the basis of nationality complemented or even gradually replaced the idea that regimes and identities are based on traditional ruling dynasties.

In the negotiations following the First World War, the victors wished in principle to give to all Europe's peoples the right to their own nation states. In practice this did not always succeed, as peoples were intermixed in the same areas, which led to conflict over which people each area belonged to. For example, the Ukrainians remained without their own nation state; the Soviet Republic of Ukraine came to belong to the Soviet Union, founded in 1922, in which Ukrainians had the (unreliable) means of developing their own identity and culture, but the western parts of the area inhabited by Ukrainians remained part of Poland until the Second World War, and Ukrainians lived in the same area together with Poles and Jews. Outside Europe, in the ruins of the Ottoman Empire the Kurds have remained for a century without their own nation state.

During the twentieth century, nationalism almost became a dirty word, given the experiences gained in Europe. In new national regimes there was a need to strengthen national identity, and unfortunately this was often done by excluding other identities from the structures of the state and society. At its worst, the result was inflammatory nationalist propaganda and repression, by which minorities could end up as scapegoats when society could not fulfil its promises to the ruling populace.

However, nationalism also has a brighter side, linked to the development of society from another perspective than national identity. The notion that all the inhabitants of a land belong to one people and are entitled to take part in its development and to enjoy the resultant benefits made possible the modern welfare state, especially in northern Europe. Nationalism was an intellectual and moral responsibility, by which the social upper classes were to renounce their privileges and participate in producing the central structures of society, such as universal education and the foundations of social security. At the same time it created some sort of basis for democracy, in which each citizen had the same right to suffrage.

In many countries nationalism also gave rise to social organisation and created the conditions for a civil society in which its members promote their efforts and develop their lives together by working together and sorting things out. Part of this development, for example, has been the gathering of folklore and the development of archives.

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The Janus-like nature of nationalism has not lost its significance, but after the Second World War many have reckoned that there is no longer a place for an enthusiastic nationalist mentality in Europe. Through globalisation and migration it has acquired a new content, with the aim being to stem the flow of the hordes of people intent on making their way to Europe, even before they arrive within the area of any given nation. International cooperation and responsibility are at present not much in vogue, although they are needed in order to solve the world's problems, more than ever before. A solution is sought in various quarters for how to accommodate and integrate those who arrive from other cultures into the receiving culture and society.

Folklorists in many nations both in Europe and elsewhere have been involved in the construction of national identity by producing its ideological foundations. There is plenty of indication that when this work is taken far enough, and there is no longer any need for the nation or other national constructs to be concerned about their existence, folklorists can move on to reflect critically on what has been achieved.

The construction of nationality and cultural identity is not the sole right of Europeans. With the collapse of imperialism, corresponding processes have been set in motion in various parts of the world, and examples can be found of both good and bad experiences of nationalism. It would be a great mercy if earlier mistakes could act as warnings of what to avoid, rather than being repeated in the course of this activity.

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## Editorial Secretary's Note

# An Update to the Folklore Fellows' Network Bulletin

Petja Kauppi

**D**ear Readers, starting from the current issue, the *Folklore Fellows' Network* bulletin will be published in digital form only. It continues as an open access publication, available in PDF format for all Internet users, at the Folklore Fellows' Society's homepage [www.folklorefellows.fi](http://www.folklorefellows.fi). There it can be read on-screen, downloaded, or printed, whichever way suits you best. The FFN's printed size is the European standard A4.

Designing the layout, I have sought to make the digital publication easy to read online. If you have further ideas of making it even more visually accessible, please email me at [secretary@folklorefellows.fi](mailto:secretary@folklorefellows.fi).

At the webpage, you can also subscribe to the news email and stay informed about the Folklore Fellows' latest publications: books in the [Folklore Fellows' Communications](#) series, and the biannual [Folklore Fellows' Network bulletin](#). The information email will be posted for you (via Mailchimp) two or three times per year.



## National Identity and Folklore: the Case of Ireland<sup>1</sup>

Mícheál Briody

In an article published recently in the *Irish Times*, speaking of Brexit vis à vis English Nationalism (as distinct from British nationalism), the columnist and author Fintan O'Toole noted: 'Nationalistic fervour is like having a sore tooth. The tooth is a very small part of the body, and a sense of national identity is actually a very small part of most people's lives' (O'Toole 2017). That is certainly true of most countries, except where something occurs to make people stress their national identity more, for instance, if they feel threatened in some way. The extent to which 'folklore' or 'oral tradition' constitute part of any national identity obviously varies from country to country.

Speaking at the opening of the Irish Folklore Commission on April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1935 the Minister for Education, Tomás Ó Deirg (Thomas Derrig), is reported as saying:

... the establishment of this Commission marked a very important moment in the cultural history of Ireland. It was a public act of homage to our own people, the fulfilment of a filial duty towards the unknown Irish dead. It was a mighty monument to the poor nameless country people who had preserved the stories of the joys and sorrows of Ireland, who had passed on to us the whisperings of the centuries during which our country lay under the blanket of the dark.' (*Irish Times*, Wed. April 3, 1935 p. 6).

He then referred to the ethnographic section of the Ordnance Survey of Ireland (1824–1846) and to the decision by the British government to discontinue its work (after the publication of the first volume of research) 'because it was calculated in the eyes of the authorities to make the Irish restive, to arouse race-consciousness, to awaken nationalism' (ibid.) The Minister then added:

Now a hundred years later, the Commission had the honour of resuming the interrupted labours of the Ordnance Survey under a native Government, and for the very reason for which it was then abandoned – to make the Irish people realise who they are – to establish a linguistic, social and cultural history of our own people, not of the wealthy and influential among them, but of the poor and forgotten ones, who have preserved the lore and spirit and faith of our forefathers for us (ibid).

Much of what Ó Deirg had to say in his speech to the Commission finds echoes in the writings of the Commission's Honorary Director, Séamus Ó Duilearga (James Hamilton Delargy), and it is likely that the latter directly or indirectly had input into the Minister's speech. Moreover, not only is it quite nationalistic in tone, it reiterates a nationalist claim that the ethnographic section of the Survey was discontinued purely for political reasons, which we now know to be an over-simplification of what actually happened (see Andrews 2001, 157 ff.). Ó Deirg also implies that the Ordnance Survey intended to collect folklore as well as ethnographic data. This again is an over-simplification of the case. Despite the good intentions of certain of the Ordnance Survey's senior staff, Thomas Larcom and George Petrie, to have the Survey's officers collect oral tradition, relatively little folklore as such was collected, though much ethnographic data was documented for the counties of the province of Ulster in particular (See Doherty 2004, 118–128 and Day 1984). It would appear, however, that many of the officers entrusted with recording the habits and traditions of the people had little sympathy for such habits and traditions (Doherty 2004, 115). They were also, for the most part, singularly unqualified to record the rich seams of oral tradition they encountered as most of them knew no Irish, which was still spoken extensively.

<sup>1</sup> Although this article mainly covers the Republic of Ireland (earlier, The Irish Free State), in dealing with the nineteenth century the whole island of Ireland is being referred to.

The Irish Folklore Commission, initially established for five years, was to operate for over thirty five years, on a temporary basis, as a government commission, before being disbanded and incorporated into University College Dublin from 1<sup>st</sup> April, 1971. During its three and a half decades of operations it amassed one of the largest collections of folklore in the world. Though an independent state-funded commission, it had links with University College Dublin from its inception and down the years that college fought hard to gain possession of these internationally-renowned collections for itself. These efforts were fraught with great difficulties, deriving in part from the residue of bitterness left in the wake of the Irish Civil War (1922–23) as well as ideological opposition to University College Dublin from within the ranks of the Irish-language movement. In the late 1960s, when the bitterness generated by the Civil War had waned, a permanent home was found for the Commission's collections and staff when it was reconstituted as the Department of Irish Folklore in University College Dublin.<sup>2</sup> Shortly after the terms for the transfer of the Commission from state ownership to University College Dublin were finalised, the Governing Board of the College issued a statement to the press saying that '[t]he transfer represents one of the most important acquisitions to University College Dublin since its foundation'<sup>3</sup> (quoted in Briody 2007, 214).

One might think from the content and tone of the Minister's speech at the opening of the Irish Folklore Commission, but also from the above words of welcome of the Governing Board of University College Dublin (UCD henceforth), that folklore and national identity were intrinsically intertwined in Ireland, or at least that folklore was highly esteemed, but the situation is more complex than that.

A sense of national identity is generally linked to the emergence of nationalism and efforts to create nation states. Irish nationalism (along with Irish Republicanism) derives from the United Irishmen movement of the late eighteenth century, a movement that was inspired by the French Revolution and which culminated in the rebellion of 1798. Though unsuccessful, this rebellion inspired other rebellions as well as political agitation that eventually culminated in some three quarters of the land area of the island of Ireland gaining independence from Britain in 1922.<sup>4</sup>

In contrast to many other emerging European nation states, the growth of nationalistic sentiment in Ireland did not coincide with efforts to buttress the native language. The reasons for this are complex. To put it simply, even though the Irish language was most likely still the language of a majority of the population at the time of the 1798 rebellion, it was already in decline over much of the country (particularly the east of the country).<sup>5</sup> Ironically, the use of English was to spread with the growth of nationalism and the concomitant growth of a print culture (and literacy) in English. A print culture in Irish did not emerge in time to reverse the declining fortunes of the language (see Ó Ciosáin 1990). But if the Irish people were abandoning their language most of them did not abandon their Catholic faith despite incentives to do so (the rights of the Catholic majority were infringed by various laws for much of the eighteenth century). The Catholic bourgeoisie were the first to abandon the Irish language. This class, as Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh notes: 'saw the shift to English as a prerequisite for and a measure of social, civic and economic progress'. Their experiences during the Penal Days<sup>6</sup> had strengthened their 'religious and communal identity' and they now

2 For the history and activities of the Irish Folklore Commission, see Briody 2007. This work is also available online.

3 University College Dublin, (the largest constituent college of the National University of Ireland) was established in 1909, but its roots can be traced back to the Catholic University of Ireland, est. 1851.

4 For a general discussion of the origins of Irish nationalism, see Comerford 2003, 51–84; for a more detailed treatment of the roots of Irish Republicanism and the 1798 rebellion, see McBride 2009, 345–433. For political (and agrarian) agitation in nineteenth-century Ireland, see Boyce, 2005, *passim*.

5 For a discussion of the decline of the Irish language, see Wolf 2014 and Doyle 2015, 107–141.

6 The Penal Days refers to the period, particularly the eighteenth century, when many laws were enacted, though not always

'bent their energies towards constructing a strong national identity' for themselves. Emerging triumphantly out of the Penal era, they saw themselves as the "Irish people" and despite abandoning Irish for English, 'they were happy to appropriate the ancient glories of the Gaelic literary estate [in English translations]' which antiquarians and others were elucidating (Ó Tuathaigh, 72). Although throughout the nineteenth century various efforts were made to staunch the decline of the native vernacular, cultural nationalism did not take root until the late nineteenth century with the founding of the Gaelic League (1893), by which time the Irish language was threatened with extinction. That century saw the decimation of the Irish language and the rich oral traditions enshrined in it go unrecorded for the most part.

Throughout his career, Séamus Ó Duilearga would lament the neglect of folklore collecting in nineteenth-century Ireland. In a newspaper article he published approximately a year after his return to Ireland from a six-month study trip to northern Europe (spring–autumn 1928), he spoke of this neglect:

Had we in Ireland at any time during the first half of the nineteenth century cultured and patriotic Irish gentlemen with the learning and zeal of the Brothers Grimm, the Dane Grundtvig, or the Norwegian Asbjørnsen, to gather the rich harvest of song and story then available to an extent unparalleled elsewhere, what a treasure-house would be ours to-day!

Folklore collecting in Ireland during most of the nineteenth century was piecemeal, in his opinion. He went on to say:

When one considers the material available to the student of Irish Folklore, published or contained in MSS, compiled during the period ending in or about 1880, one realises how negligible and unsatisfactory it all is, both as regards extent and scientific value. How different it would have been had our learned societies realised their duties both to their own country and to scholarship and we had a native government to foster and to endow the work of the collection and investigation of the native popular traditions! (ibid.)

Although what Ó Duilearga says above in respect of folklore collecting in the nineteenth century in general holds true, it needs to be qualified somewhat. A great deal of folksong and folk tunes were collected throughout the nineteenth century, very many of the songs being in the Irish language.<sup>8</sup> In addition, much folklore in English was contributed to popular magazines and also published in book-form for popular consumption from the 1820s onwards. This latter material does not cover the full range of folklore genres, consisting mainly of legends, with a predilection for legends concerning fairies and other supernatural beings. Much, if indeed not most, of this material was recollected rather than collected, in many cases by people who had been exposed to oral tradition in their formative years, but also by tourists (both domestic and British). Brian Earls, who has been one of the few to study this extensive body of English-language material, comments: 'Legends committed to writing in the nineteenth-century, although of great interest, are of uneven merit, with a surprisingly large amount of fabricated lore.' Though in many cases purporting to be authentic representations of narrated lore, according to Earls, they involve distortion in respect 'of tone and style', which was common practice when preparing folklore material for print at the time. Alterations to dialogue were often done for comic effect, thus exaggerating linguistic features of the (often newly acquired) Hiberno English of the 'peasants' in order to enhance their quaintness and picturesqueness, and at times to make fun of them (Earls 1992/93, 99–105).

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implemented in full, to restrict lay Catholics and proscribe the activities of Catholic priests and bishops. It would be 1829 before all such legal restrictions were repealed.

7 'A Venerable Heritage', *The Star* (23 November 1929). Article reproduced in Ó Catháin 2008, 351–358.

8 See, for instance, Maloney 2000 and Cooper 2002.

One reason Séamus Ó Duilearga lamented the neglect of folklore collecting in Ireland in the nineteenth century, despite the nationalistic sentiment of that century, was that apart from song texts in Irish relatively few folktales and other 'prose' genres were collected in Irish in a century which saw the Irish language wither away from most of the country, leaving in many areas hardly a trace apart from place names and a scattering of Irish words in the English of the common people. It was the loss of vernacular Irish as much as the loss of oral traditions that coloured his views and drove him to downplay what was actually collected (in the case of folk song and folk music, as well as material in English). However, it was this very neglect that also inspired him, in large part, to endeavour to assemble one of the great folklore collections of the world to compensate for this loss, mainly from the much depleted Irish-speaking areas that survived into the twentieth century, which were deemed to contain the richest seams of oral tradition.

One could argue that much of the energy that might in different circumstances have gone into the collecting of oral traditions, particularly traditions in the Irish language, in Ireland in the nineteenth century went into collecting and having copied the literary remains of Gaelic Ireland which were in danger of being lost, to a large extent because of the rapid decay of the Irish language. Despite the English conquest of Ireland<sup>9</sup> and the destruction and loss of many Irish-language (and Latin) manuscripts during the wars of the seventeenth century, as well as the demise of the native schools of learning patronised by the Gaelic élite resulting from that conquest, a vigorous Irish-language manuscript tradition survived until the Famine of the 1840s and in places beyond, particularly in Munster, south and north-east Leinster and south-east Ulster, as well as Dublin.<sup>10</sup> Even though very few books were printed in Irish in the eighteenth century, a good deal of the learning of Medieval Ireland was preserved and many newer literary compositions, both in prose and verse, composed, copied and disseminated. Though some of this scribal activity might be described as antiquarian, not all of it can. Manuscripts were not just written and copied for the learned they were also read out aloud in farmhouses and cabins and in this way a good deal of the literature of Gaelic Ireland (Medieval and Early-Modern) passed into oral tradition. Much literary lore was also transmitted orally and in turn oral recitation often influenced the manuscript tradition. Thus, Irish-language literary tradition, to a quite an extent, was intertwined with the oral tradition (see Henigan 2012). Collectors and copiers of such manuscripts knew that they were in a race against time. Indeed the nineteenth century witnessed widespread destruction of hundreds of Irish-language manuscripts, as the language receded and died out in one area after another. Some of this destruction was wilful (due to ignorance) and some purely accidental. The destruction of these manuscripts echoes the 'destruction' of the Irish language itself as well as much of the tradition enshrines in it that did not pass over into English.

In 1893 an organisation known as the Gaelic League was founded in Dublin. Initially the League's aim was to preserve Irish where still spoken, but before long it also sought to revive Irish throughout the rest of the country as well as modernise the language and develop a modern literature.<sup>11</sup> The census of 1891 had recorded just 680,174 native speakers of Irish (14.5%), down from 1,524,286 (23.3%) in 1851 (Mac Giolla Chríost 2005, 102). In fact, the drop was greater than these figures record as it is generally agreed that the 1851 census underestimated the number of Irish speakers to quite a degree. By 1893 most people in Ireland who had Irish as a mother tongue had little or no education and were often very poor, and if they had enough English were very often not passing Irish on to their children. This fact greatly limited the League's long-term chances of succeeding in

9 For more on the English conquest of Ireland, see Connolly 2009.

10 For this manuscript tradition, see Ó Cuív 1984.

11 For the activities of the early Gaelic League, see, McMahon 2008.



all its aims, in particular of stabilising the language in those areas where it was still strong. Nevertheless, the League became a vibrant cultural force in the first decade of the twentieth century. Its philosophy, namely that language was crucial to nationality, was to influence a whole generation of Irish nationalists and helped to inspire many to seek complete separation from Britain. Many of those who fought and won independence for Southern Ireland were schooled in the League and espoused its ideals (Garvin 1987, 78).

The Gaelic League encouraged the collection of folklore, but folklore was never a major priority for most of its activists, rather it was an easy way to produce texts containing good vernacular Irish for an expanding reading public for Irish-language works. Nevertheless, there were some in the League who placed a high value on folklore, a few for its scientific interest, but many more as an expression of Irish identity, believing that literature in Irish should be based on folklore (see O'Leary 1994, 91 ff.). The League as well as encouraging people to collect folklore and forward texts to them for publication, organised various local and national events where folk song and folktales could be performed. Referring (mainly but not solely) to this latter activity, Vincent Comerford has said: 'Despite the folkloric aspects of the revival, the folk and popular cultural inheritance never achieved as central a role in Irish nationalism as was the case in other small European states, in particular the Nordic countries' (Comerford 2003, 245). This is most evident in respect of material culture and the failure to establish a folk museum for decades in the Irish Republic (ibid).

The establishment of a native Government in 1922, committed to the restoration of the Irish language and to fostering Ireland's Gaelic inheritance, was eventually to lead to state-funded efforts to collect folklore. For a number of reasons, however, this was not to happen in the short term. The rebuilding of much of the infrastructure of the state after the destruction of the

Civil War meant that money was in short supply for cultural pursuits in the first decade or so of independence. While the new native Government sought to foster Ireland's cultural inheritance, particularly its Gaelic inheritance, folklore had to compete with Irish literary (manuscript) tradition, and may have been seen in some circles as somewhat of a poor relation. It is significant that the remit of a Committee of Seanad Éireann (the Upper House of the Irish Parliament) set up in April 1923 'to submit to the Government a scheme for the editing, indexing, and publishing of manuscripts in the Irish language, now lying in the Royal Irish Academy, Trinity College, and elsewhere; for the scientific investigation of the living dialects; for the compiling and publishing of an adequate dictionary of the older language' did not include folklore as such, although the Committee's report, published the following year, does give some recognition to the richness of Ireland's oral tradition (Briody 2007, 75).

In Ireland, state-funded support for collecting folklore when first initiated (on a small scale) in the late 1920s was intimately bound up with efforts to revive Irish as the main vernacular via the school system. Government officials, particularly those of the Department of Finance, had little appreciation of the intrinsic value of folklore. Folklore was a means to an end, not an end in itself for them. The Irish Folklore Institute (1930-1935), the predecessor of the Irish Folklore Commission, was greatly hindered by the stipulation in its constitution that it devote a substantial proportion of its resources to publishing material in Irish. Much of the time of its Director, Séamus Ó Duilearga, was taken up haggling with officials about the extent it was fulfilling its duties in respect of publishing. This was hugely frustrating for Ó Duilearga as he realised with each passing year, the older generation were bringing unrecorded oral traditions with them to their graves (see Briody 2005). However, in 1933 he had a fruitful interview with the Prime-Minister of the Irish Free State, Éamon de Valera, and as a result of this interview in 1935 a government commission devoted solely to the collection and elucidation of Irish folklore was established (Briody 2007, 107 ff.).

While Ó Duilearga in time might have succeeded in loosening the crippling conditions applying to the Irish Folklore Institute's state grant, it is quite probable that nothing like the intensive collecting of folklore that was to take place through the agency of the Irish Folklore Commission would have taken place without the good will and understanding of Éamon de Valera, who understood not only the national importance of Irish folklore but also its international importance. Vincent Comerford has called Séamus Ó Duilearga 'a nation inventor of gigantic energy and vision', seeing as one of his prime motives a 'desire to edify the nation' (Comerford 2003, 246). It is certain that Éamon de Valera was motivated by a similar desire when he listened attentively to Ó Duilearga's appeal to save the folklore of Ireland for posterity. The collections of the Irish Folklore Commission are largely the result of the vision of these two men. But without the spread of literacy in Irish via the school system, initiated by the Gaelic League and continued by the Irish Free State after independence, it would not have been possible to collect folklore in Irish on the scale undertaken by the Commission, as there would not have been sufficient people literate in Irish. Both Ó Duilearga and de Valera were products of the cultural revolution set in motion by the Gaelic League. Without the League, and the interest in the Irish language it inspired in a whole generation, both these men would have followed very different paths in life to those they trod, and the collections of the Irish Folklore Commission (or anything closely resembling them in extent and quality) would most likely never have been compiled.

While many of the generation of Irish academics and other intelligentsia (who were contemporaries of Ó Duilearga's) in general were aware and proud of the achievements of the Irish Folklore Commission, and by implication cognisant of the importance of these collections, not just as a source for elucidating Ireland's past, but also vis à vis international science, there is not a great deal of evidence that Irish folklore as such constituted a significant part of their national identity. It is more likely that the Irish language (along with its rich literary inheritance) for many, even for some who did not know the language very well or only imperfectly, constituted an important part of their national identity, rather than folklore. But it could be further argued that for many of the intelligentsia, Catholicism became a surrogate for national identity in the early years of the independent state. This was, moreover, truer of the populace in general (see Briody 2007, 55–56). Folklore had a lot of competitors in people's hearts and minds.

Although the primary school syllabus did allow for the teaching of folklore,<sup>12</sup> little appears to have been done in this respect. It was more important to teach pupils Irish, and often many or all of their school subjects through the medium of Irish, than to give them a flavour of the rich treasures enshrined in the Irish language, both literary and oral. Consequently, some fifteen years after the establishment of the Irish Folklore Commission, Séamus Ó Duilearga found it necessary to make the following appeal:

May I make an appeal here for the *pétite patrie* – for the little fatherland – for the spot of Irish earth which is the patrimony of the heart of us all, to which our mind wanders no matter where we may roam? It was, I think, for the *pétite patrie*, and for the old ways of life, familiar and beloved from childhood that our forefathers fought and died, more than for kings, principalities and powers.

In countries familiar to me, such as Sweden and Germany, the cult of the home-district is one of the most characteristic features of the national culture. Hundreds of local associations have grown up in Scandinavia and in Germany in the past half-century, counting among their thousands of members, prince and peasant, employer and employed, every class of the community, rural and urban. Every aspect of traditional lore and culture of the *hembygd* (the home district) is the subject of study by these societies. In Ireland we have nothing comparable, the closest being our local antiquarian societies – but the interest of these Scandinavian and German bodies is much wider, including archaeology, geology, local history,

12 See *Report of the Department of Education 1928–29*, 43.

folklore, botany, forestry, agriculture, trades, crafts, dialects, placenames. And in the schools of these and many other European countries as well, “local history” – *hembygd forskning* – is and has been for long a subject side by side with the Three R’s. I need hardly emphasise to this audience the importance of this subject, and I suggest that it is advisable that something practical be done to interest the students, not only of the primary but also of the vocational schools, in the commonplace which is the background of their lives, and because its origin and significance is misunderstood or unappreciated, the commonplace has grown to be irksome, and the lights of the towns seem brighter (Ó Duilearga 1950, 47–48).

He goes on to propose that ‘something be done to interest the students not only of rural but also of urban schools, in the study of the local history (in the Scandinavian sense) not only of the countryside, but of the town and city as well’, adding that what he meant by local history was ‘the interpretation to the student of the local culture-landscape, a geographical, a cultural and a social – as well as political – historical interpretation’ (ibid, 48).

This appeal, made at the Congress of the Irish Vocational Association (1950), though published in the proceedings of the Congress, fell for the most part on deaf ears. The time was not very opportune: the Republic of Ireland being on the cusp of a decade that was to see its population bled through emigration; a dispirited nation, in many respects, with the eyes of the young focused not only on the bright lights of Dublin, but on those of London and New York. The 1950s is generally seen as a period of stagnation in Ireland, both economically and culturally, a period when many came to question the core values which had underpinned the independent Irish state.<sup>13</sup>

While political/ideological considerations played a large part in the delay in placing the Irish Folklore Commission on a more permanent footing, by the end of the 1960s when the Commission on Higher Education recommended reincorporating the Irish Folklore Commission within University College Dublin, and initiating the teaching of folklore as a degree subject in that college, there was no political opposition to the idea (Briody 2007, 201 ff.). In hindsight, a cynic might say the state disposed of the Commission, a ‘troublesome child’ which had long been a bone of contention between various vested interests, by transferring its staff and collections to UCD. While the conditions of the transfer were most favourable to the staff of the Commission, little was put on paper in respect of future staffing and funding of the new Department of Irish Folklore. The Commission on Higher Education (Report 1967) had recommended that the Irish Folklore Commission be reconstituted as an ‘institute’ with ‘special standing within the College’ and that it should preserve ‘the characteristic, which has belonged to the Folklore Commission, of a national institution’. Instead it was reconstituted as a university department, which differed in structure from other university departments only to the extent that it had a large archive and reference library appended to it. This was not, in the long run, a very satisfactory solution, but far more satisfactory than the present position of the archive (see below).

The accommodation provided in 1971 for the Commission’s collections and staff was temporary, but more than forty years later the collections still occupy the same cramped space, and the staff has atrophied. The generation of UCD administrators who welcomed the Irish Folklore Commission into the bosom of the College in 1971 were certainly sincere. Many of these men (and they were all men) had come of age in the early decades of the state, and some even before the foundation of the state, and were imbued with nationalistic ideals, to a lesser or greater extent. But the next generations of College administrators probably came to see these world-renowned collections more as a burden for the College than as a prized possession. It would be wrong to put all the vicissitudes these collections have encountered since 1971 in their new home down to the wiles and indifference of College administrators. It is most certainly the case that the hopes of some of the staff for

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13 For more on the Ireland of the 1950s, see Keogh et al (eds) 2004.

the new Department of Irish Folklore were too high and quite unrealistic, and that over the years these hopes (and also certain demands made) may have weakened the Department's bargaining power vis à vis the College authorities. But the state can also be faulted.

The collections of the Irish Folklore Commission were amassed by means of state grants. University College Dublin without extra state funding could not really afford this new Department of Irish Folklore, especially a department which had needs above and beyond conventional university departments. While state funding was provided for the new Department, it was never sufficient. Over time the College failed to fill various staff vacancies, breaking the spirit if not the letter of the agreement it had forged with government officials in the early 1970s. Moreover, over the years there have been many proposals to rehouse these collections in more suitable accommodation within the college, but these proposals have come to naught. There have always been other priorities for the College.

In September 2005, as a result of the reorganisation (abolishment) of departments and faculties in UCD, the Department of Irish Folklore ceased to exist and, along with its archive, became part of the School of Irish, Celtic Studies, Irish Folklore and Linguistics. Such a root and branch reorganisation was certainly not foreseen by the College authorities who more than thirty years earlier had recommended that the Irish Folklore Commission be reconstituted within UCD as a university department. If in 1971, the Irish Folklore Commission had been re-established as an independent institute within UCD (as the Commission on Higher Education recommended), it would have had far more protection when the College decided to abolish its departments and faculties. The fact that the Department of Irish Folklore housed collections with a national dimension, and that its profile was being lowered as a result of these changes, does not seem to have figured at all in this restructuring. Recently, the archive of the former Department of Irish Folklore (now known as the National Folklore Collection), though still in the same temporary setting, was removed from the care of the School of Irish, Celtic Studies, Irish Folklore and Linguistics and placed under the care of the James Joyce Library, the College's main library. It is too early to say what the long-term consequences of this move will be, but it is ominous that this decision would appear to have been taken without consulting the interested parties, both within and outside the College.

The decision to abolish the Department of Irish Folklore and later to place its collections (much expanded since 1971) under the care of the James Joyce Library, could not have been taken without wider consultation if these collections had some sort of statutory protection. Only the goodwill of the College authorities down the years have protected these collections. Indeed, it would appear the College is under no real obligation to care for the collections bequeathed to it by the state in 1971. Very little documentation seems to have been drawn up when the Irish Folklore Commission was transferred to UCD, and no actual legislation was involved. It seems for the most part to have been a gentlemen's agreement between government and College officials, and the gentlemen in question are now all dead.

This is in stark contrast to the carefully-drawn-up partnership – 'UCD-OFM (Order of Friars Minor) Partnership' – forged in 2000 between the Franciscan Order and UCD for the acquisition by the College of the Franciscan Archive, at the time housed in the Franciscan House of Studies in Killiney, Co. Dublin. Under the terms of this partnership, these collections were transferred to the carefully controlled atmospheric conditions of the College's then Archives Department, and the agreement with the Franciscan Order also led to the creation of the vibrant Mícheál Ó Cléirigh Institute for the Study of Irish History and Civilisation in UCD, in order to further research into these collections. This mainly medieval and early-modern collection of manuscripts/documents, covering some nine centuries, many of them salvaged from war-stricken seventeenth-century Ireland,



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has a chequered history. Once housed in the St. Anthony's College, Louvain, it was transferred to St. Isidore's College in Rome for safety at the time of the French Revolution. In Rome it again came under threat during the French occupation of the city, 1798-99. In 1872, after the unification of Italy the collection was moved to Dublin as 'there was reason to apprehend that the Italian Government would suppress the Irish Franciscan Convent of St. Isidoro's in Rome, and seize its literary treasures' (see Dillon et al 1969, ix-xix).

The collections of the Irish Folklore Commission have a far less colourful history. They survived no revolutions, although they spent much of the Second World War in safe-keeping in a bog in Co. Mayo. Nor are they as old or as fragile as the Franciscan collections, but perishable they are nonetheless. No 'carefully controlled atmospheric conditions' awaited them on their arrival in UCD, and they are still kept in unsafe, unsuitable and inappropriate conditions. Unlike the Franciscan archive they do not constitute a window on ancient and medieval Ireland, the renowned 'island of saints and scholars'. Instead they are a record of a far less glorious period of Ireland's history: to a large extent, a record of the remnants of Gaelic (Irish-speaking) Ireland that survived the Great Famine of the 1840s and into the twentieth century. Though utilised by many scholars and members of the public, these folklore collections are still under-appreciated and under-used by Irish historians (see Daly 2010), which can probably be partly attributed to the fact that few Irish historians know the Irish language.

In December 2017 the Irish Folklore Collection achieved further international recognition when it was added to the 'Unesco Memory of the World Register.' Obviously this recognition did not go unnoticed in UCD, and it is to be hoped that the College authorities will in time come to view this great store-house of oral traditions as an asset for the College, rather than an unnecessary burden, bequeathed to them by a previous generation of College officials, now long dead.

In down playing the significance of folklore in respect of national identity in Ireland, I am not suggesting that folklore did not, or does not, have importance in people's lives as a dynamic force, or that folklore does not play a part in many people's local identity. Moreover, for many people Irish folk music and song, which experienced a revival in the 1950s, (though commercialised to a large extent) constitutes an important part of their identity, be it national or otherwise. While Séamus Ó Duilearga could lament the neglect of local studies in his above 1950s' lecture, the situation has changed since then, although folklore and folk life do not yet figure as a significant element of primary or secondary education. For the past few decades local studies have been very vibrant, and much folklore is also collected at a local level, both by individuals and groups of people seeking to deepen knowledge of their localities (Gillespie, 1998). Moreover, folklore since the nineteenth century has been drawn on by many creative writers (see Markey 2006).

It has also to be admitted that folklore (often in the sense of myths) is intimately bound up with Irish nationalism. The nineteenth-century nationalist movements, while for the most part oblivious of, or indifferent to, the rich folklore enshrined in the Irish language spawned its own folklore and could harness the folklore of the general populace to its own ends when it suited its purposes. Space does not allow me to treat of this matter in the detail it deserves, so it is best to leave it for another day.

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## Folk and Nation in Estonian Folkloristics

Liina Saarlo

The topic of nation and nationality has been revisited yet again in speeches and discussions during the centennial celebrations of Estonian independence. Recent conferences on Estonian studies (and other humanities) as well as special editions of philological journals are centred on the topics of nationalism, with titles such as “We are Europeans, but let’s become Estonians too! Dialogues with Estonia”, “To all Estonian peoples!”, “Humanities and nation”.<sup>1</sup>

The reason for the rise in interest in the subject is not only the centenary, but also societal developments in Estonia and on a larger scale in Europe. Among the driving forces behind this may be mentioned globalisation, the European immigration crisis and extreme nationalism and xenophobia that feeds on it. Thus there is a growing need to discuss and (re)interpret the concepts and categories of Estonian nation and citizenship.

The second reason – connected to the first – is the pressure from the major trend of internationalisation of research on Estonian studies and humanities in general. Estonian humanitarians, (forcedly) oriented to the international audience, feel as the connection to their people, nation and their field of study, is seeping through their fingers.

The Estonian term *rahvus* (nation) denotes the community with a common language and culture rather than a political or territorial entity. The term “nationalism” has gained its negative meaning only recently, since the fight for the nation’s right to exist and survive had to be fought from the time of the National Awakening in the 1850’s until the end of the Soviet period.

Estonian folkloristics was born with the Estonian nation, becoming one of its cornerstones, and was closely intertwined with Estonian nationalism. Estonian folkloristics is national, it could be said.

In what follows, I would like to give a brief overview of the development of Estonian folkloristics in parallel with the larger turning points in the development of the Estonian nation. The National Awakening, larger collection initiatives and the birth of Estonian folkloristics as a discipline have been described relatively well and on many occasions, so I would like to concentrate on the correlation between the folkloristics and the Estonian nation in Soviet times.



Eduard Laugaste (1909–94), docent of folklore at Tartu University, the folklorist Otilie Niinemägi (b. 1932) and a student of philology Veera Pino (1925–2015) taking ethnographical notes on the island of Kihnu, south-western Estonia, in 1955. (Photo by Johannes Mikk. EKM ERA, DF 4510).

<sup>1</sup> The first title is that of the annual conference of the Estonian Centre of Excellence (held 27–8 April in 2018), paraphrasing the clarion call of the literary society “Young Estonia” from the early twentieth century: “More European culture! We are Estonians, but let us become Europeans too!” The second is a citation from the Manifesto of Estonian Independence (1918), acting as the title of an issue of the Estonian Writers’ Union’s journal dedicated to national minorities. The third is the title of an issue of a philological journal dedicated to Estonian studies.



Left: One of the most productive respondents of Jakob Hurt, the tailor Jaan Sandra (1858–1932) with his family in Tartu. (EKM ERA, Foto 65). Middle: Journalist and amateur historian Hindrik Prants (1858–1932), also an active respondent, with his family in Võru, southern Estonia. (Photo by G. Oskar. EKM ERA, Foto 8949). Right: One of the few female respondents of Jakob Hurt, Marie Kasikov (1905–62), a student at Tartu University (EKM ERA, Foto 5028)

## Integrating peasants into the nation by means of folk song

Reflecting the uniqueness of the Estonian language (and history), the terms “folk” (Estonian *rahvas*) and “nation” (Estonian *rahvus*) are markedly similar in spelling and can at times be of similar meaning. *Rahvas* (“folk, people”) is a social category, relating to a socially, economically and culturally marginalised community, “others”, mostly country folk, who, as a result of Estonian colonial history, were mostly ethnic Estonians – *undeutsch*, *нерусские* – (“non-German”, “non-Russian”).<sup>2</sup> Various colonists had filled the higher strata of society for the last millennium – the aristocracy and bourgeoisie of Swedish, Danish, German and Russian origin. As pointed out by Estonian historians (e.g. Jansen 1994; Leppik 2013), until the middle of the nineteenth century, the social status of a person was set from birth, with no opportunity to change it. However, the basic education, administered according to Lutheran canons, laid the ground for social mobility by achieving general literacy and the wish for further education. The country people changed their status from being the “folk” by becoming burgers, artisans, rural intellectuals and clergymen, and with this they also left behind their “nation” – in other words, their language and culture.

The rise in the levels of literacy and the long process of abolishing serfdom and buying out farming land during the nineteenth century created the premise for the modernisation of society, followed by the creation of the Estonian nation. The major task of the spiritual leaders of the national awakening was to convince the intellectuals of Estonian origin to remain Estonians. For this to happen, the concept of Estonian nationality had to be appreciated.

The pastor and linguist Jakob Hurt (1839–1907) chose the collection of folklore as his tool for national awakening, aiming to create a past for the people that had not yet been represented in historical writing (see e.g. Jaago 2005; Saarlo 2008). Folklore – based conceptually on J. G. Herder’s ideology and Hurt’s personal preference for the older, alliterative folksong, *regilaul*<sup>3</sup> – was the

<sup>2</sup> On Estonian history, see e.g. Zetterberg 2007; Kasekamp 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Estonian *regilaul*, Finnish *runolaulu* or *Kalevala-laulu* (in English *runosong*, *runic song*, *Kalevala-metric song*, in German *Runenlied*) is the common song tradition of the Baltic Finnic peoples, presumed to date back to the first century AD. The common



spirit of the people, “the old treasure”, the most precious evidence of the nation’s former greatness. Estonian folklore had been previously collected by estophiles of Baltic German origin, as a literary hobby or amateur linguistic activity. Collecting their own “old treasure” and helping to create their own history joined and uplifted people from the Estonian nation from all over the country and from all layers of society.

For the nationwide folklore collection initiative to succeed, Hurt had first to change the perception of folklore as something obsolete and immoral through speeches and publications (Kikas 2014). With the clarion call “To all enlightened sons and daughters of Estonia” (published in the newspapers in March of 1888), and through a skilful PR campaign (publishing reports on collected materials and inspired correspondents’ letters etc., along with a personal approach) Hurt managed to engage Estonians from all over the country to collect folklore – 1400 people responded to the call, almost 115,000 written pages were sent in over the years. The nationwide collection campaign became an inspiring example – thus Matthias Johann Eisen and others collected materials on other folklore genres for various purposes (see Kuutma 2005a).

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

## Maintaining the nation and the creation of Estonian professional culture through folklore

While the figures of the national awakening used folklore mainly as a way to construct the national identity, the aim of the following collectors was, on one hand, to collect (and rescue) valuable data for research and on the other – to provide sources for creation of Estonian professional culture. The same can be said about the largest folk music collection campaign of the twentieth century, organised by Oskar Kallas (1868–1946), the first Estonian to receive a doctoral degree in folkloristics (see Kuutma 2005b).

The archaic genre of the runosong is considered the basis for Estonian national poetry and music. Melodies and lyrics of runosongs were often recorded separately, and contemporary (re) uses of runosongs in literature and music have gone their separate ways. Estonian literary poetry in runic verse form deals with the areas of conflict between authenticity, plagiarism and original art. It works mostly in the epic form, beginning with the national epic, *Kalevipoeg*. Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald, following the lead of the Finnish-Karelian epic, the *Kalevala*, compiled the Estonian national epic and published it in 1857. Although it claims to be “from the mouth of the people”, it is, with some reservations, a literary composition in runosong form.<sup>4</sup> National epics inspired a number of *literati*, who created very different poetic texts taking runosong as a model. These creations were of varying artistic quality, sometimes declaring themselves to be literary, sometimes folk poetry (and were even sent to folklore collectors). A modern use of runosong elements in poetry was realised only in the 1960s (see Mirov 2002).

The tradition of using runic melodies as a source for professional musical pieces is as old as the Estonian music tradition itself. It was already clear during the first singing festival in the middle of the nineteenth century that the base for the nation’s music had to be folk song. The first Estonian

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formal characteristics of runosongs are octosyllabic trochaic tetrameter, alliteration and parallelism; similar formulae, motives and song types can be found in the traditions of different tribes. It is characterised by a melody of relatively narrow ambitus and contour close to that of speech. The songs are usually related to customs.

4 The plots of epics came from heroic legends, the main character (not always positive) of which was Kalevipoeg. In Estonian runosong tradition, there were no heroic songs.



Richard Viidalepp (1904–86), a folklorist at the Estonian Folklore Archives, interviews a local storyteller, Ann Junts, in Kirbla, western Estonia, in 1936. (Photo by Richard Viidalepp. EKM ERA, Foto 258)

composers (such as Karl August Hermann and Miina Härma) had within their [œuvre](#) choir songs based on folk melodies. It is important to note that runosong melodies were considered to be the authentic Estonian folk music, while the melodies of newer, for example end-rhymed, folk songs were mostly borrowed from the German culture and were thus taken to be foreign.<sup>5</sup> The Estonian tradition of composition, based on archaic runic melodies, has lasted to this day, encompassing Mart Saar, Cyrillus Kreek, Veljo Tormis and Pärt Uusberg, to name but a few.

The institutionalisation of Estonian folkloristics happened alongside the establishment of the Estonian Republic. In 1919, the University of Tartu became Estonia's National University (with courses taught in Estonian), and in the same year the Chair of Estonian and Comparative Folklore was created, and was occupied by Walter Anderson. In 1927, the Estonian Folklore Archives were created, headed by Oskar Loorits, where earlier folklore collections of various societies and private owners were brought together. The archivists concentrated on the processing of materials gathered earlier, making them available for research, and also started to collect folklore and compile publications. Since Estonians had established themselves politically and culturally as a nation, the folklorists changed the direction of their research, extending beyond the borders of archaic peasant folk heritage.

The folklore of neighbouring peoples and minorities was not the mainstream research topic of pre-war Estonia, but at the same time it was not completely ignored. The personal research interests of folklorists were mirrored in the collection policy of the archive. For example, Russian students were sent to collect Russian folklore. One of the Estonian Folklore Archive's Russian collections

5 For the collection and use of folk melodies see Särg 2007.

consists of an impressive seventeen volumes, extending to more than 10,000 pages (Salve 2000: 34–8). Later, smaller collections from other peoples were added, and the gathering of the folklore of related peoples also began (Västriik 2010). However, the collection and research into the Baltic German heritage had not been started,<sup>6</sup> and the same can be said, *inter alia*, of urban folklore. Walter Anderson was obviously an exception, since he collected anecdotes, chain letters, graffiti and other marginal genres, in addition to childlore (see Seljamaa 2005).

However, philosophers and ideologists had not stopped thinking about and discussing the nation's identity, uniqueness and *élan vital*. Here the head of the Estonian Folklore Archives, Oskar Loorits, was the prime mover; he used his knowledge of comparative folkloristics in his disquisition on Estonianness (see Västriik 2005). In this area, Estonian folklorists followed the same direction as other European countries.

### The Sovietisation of folkloristics – adaptation and resistance

After the Second World War, Estonia underwent systematic changes in political life and structures of societal management in the course of Sovietisation.<sup>7</sup> Reforms, brought about by the application of the unifying model for republics of the Soviet Union, changed institutional and personal networks, as well as the standpoint of folkloristics and other Estonian studies. With the need to constantly oppose the previous socio-political order, previous research efforts were declared to be tendentious and even detrimental, thus discursively discontinuing the development of Estonian studies.

Soviet folkloristics was modernised during the Stalinist era. The term “folklore” was replaced by “folk creations”. The focus was on contemporary Soviet folklore, which included workers’ folklore about the struggle between the social classes, heritage connected to the Second World War and folklore of collective farms. At the same time, the tone and orientation of the new folklore was determined from above: the “working masses” were to praise the new social order and the Soviet leaders, and bourgeois Estonian and German occupation figures, and “retrogrades”, were presented in feverish and satirical depictions (see e.g. Panchenko 2005).

Estonian folklorists were brought into the fold of the Soviet paradigm during the union-wide conferences in Moscow, Kiev or other centres of the former empire by the “experienced” Soviet folklorists. During those summits, researchers were “given a helping hand” in the application of Soviet folkloristic methodology and were given instructions on research and fieldwork organisation.

At a first glance, the constant emphasis on the importance of folksiness and folk creations might allow folklore collection and research to rise to the top of the research hierarchy in humanities. However, the question here is what was considered as folk culture? Was there any intersection with folklore? In addition, how did the collection and research into folklore coexist with the campaign to uproot “bourgeois nationalism” during the Stalinist era? According to studies on the subject of Estonia’s political or cultural life during this period, the accusation of “bourgeois nationalism” was not associated with nationality or ethnicity, but was simply an antithesis of everything “Soviet” (see e.g. Zubkova 2009).

6 In this case, the non-existent interest could have been mutual. Could the Baltic German community, which lost its social position, agree to be a research subject of folkloristics?

7 The Estonian Republic was occupied and annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940 as a result of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (1939). After the Nazi German occupation (1941–4), Estonia was reoccupied by the Soviet Union and became a Soviet Republic, like other Baltic States. In addition to political and socio-economic changes, Estonia was hit by the peak of the Stalinist terror in the post-war decade. Repressions threatened all strata of society and arose from illogical and sycophantic accusations.





Folklorists of the Institute of Estonian Language and Literature make recordings on a reel-to-reel magnetic tape recorder in Tudulinna, north-eastern Estonia, in 1956. On the left, the head of the team, Richard Viidalepp (1904–86); on the right, the folklorist Loreida Raudsep (1922–2004) and the music student Vivian Jüris (b. 1932). (Photo by Richard Viidalepp. EKM KKI, Foto 144).

Estonian folklorists were saved from the stigma of nationalism by the linguistic and conceptual difference between the words “nation” (*rahvus*) and “people” (*rahvas*). The definition of “folklore” that was in use in Estonian folkloristics was directed to the past, denoting the oral tradition of common people, culturally and economically marginalised in pre-modern, agricultural society. The materials primarily about the older tradition and archaic folklore were still being collected from the country folk during the twentieth century. In contrast, the research object of Soviet folkloristics reflected a modern model of culture, where cultural self-expression had already separated from everyday life and was channelled into professional or amateur cultural activities. Soviet “folk creations” were the product of modern thinking that, in addition to folklore and “folklorism” (amateur performances in folksy style) included literary pieces and individual creative works (see Oinas 1985). The publications, directed to the masses, showed Estonian folklorists as researchers who had taken to the new trends and the usage of the new term and new fields of research with enthusiasm. However, collection and research into “folk creations” had never taken off properly.

There is a stereotypical opinion that during the Soviet times, the folk culture blossomed as a result of the working class being in a privileged position in society and of Soviet cultural policy favouring creative self-expression. In reality, not every kind of folk culture was in a favoured position. The Soviet folklore mentioned above was of limited subject matter, often representing a parallel reality. The real folklore of the time that could be critical of the societal order or related to folk beliefs was proscribed: it was forbidden to share it with strangers, to collect or to archive it.

Many researchers referenced in their papers how, even if official Soviet ideology declared all peoples living in the territory of the Soviet Union to be equal, in reality the country was governed with the imperialistic chauvinism of Great Russia (see Annus 2015). The nation was again defined in



terms of social concepts, and the Soviet nation was based on social class, citizenship and territory, and was highly ideologised and idealised. Ethnic minorities were tolerated only in as much as they remained peasants and workers.

The political pressure to become one big Soviet nation was followed by adaptive resistance; for folklorists this meant the return to the archaic folklore of agricultural society and a certain level of ethnic restraint.

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

Relations between the Estonian and Russian peoples were brought into the focus right away. Ethnologists adapted very successfully and started researching the ethnogenesis of Estonians; archaeological, ethnographic, folkloristic and dialectological field work was conducted in eastern Estonia, with its ethnically mixed population (e.g. Moora 1956). At the end of the 1940s, folklorists sent Russian philology students to the areas around Lake Peipus to collect Russian folklore. Despite the efforts to collect Russian folklore, the material was of no primary importance, and it was archived separately, without any special research being based on it.

When the Chair of Russian Language of University of Tartu began to organise its own field works in the 1960s, the efforts of Estonian folklorists to collect Russian folklore ended. The prejudicial feelings towards the collection of Russian folklore are clearly represented in the post-war manuscript series 'RKM, Vene' that consists of only four volumes. It is highly probable that Estonian folklorists were interested in the Russian influences on Estonian heritage. However, the constant dominant



Folklorists of the Institute of Estonian Language and Literature interview a local storyteller in Tudulinna, north-eastern Estonia, in 1956. On the left, Richard Viidalepp (1904–86); on the right, Ülo Tedre (1928–2015). (Photo by Richard Viidalepp. EKM KKI, Foto 191).

presence of Russian culture as a domain for comparison succeeded in nipping the potential of such research in the bud, and folklorists directed their steps back to ethnocentrism. Instead of researching neighbouring peoples, the folklorists' interest was turned to related peoples, since they felt greater solidarity with them because of the similar political background. Hence, organised folkloristic and ethnographical expeditions to Finno-Ugric peoples began, for which being a member of the Soviet Union gave hitherto non-existent opportunities (Salve 2002; Västriik 2010).

Estonian folklorists managed rather successfully to adapt to Soviet regulations, finding opportunity to avoid unwanted topics (such as Soviet and Russian folklore) and turning to other topics which were favoured within Soviet humanities and were amenable to Soviet rhetoric, such as heroic epics. The reception of the national epic, *Kalevipoeg* had been fraught with controversy since its first publication in 1857. The folkloristic interest in it had subsided by the 1930s (see Annist 2005). At the same time, its importance in pre-war nationalist discourse was indisputable. With some irony, it was *Kalevipoeg* who was elevated to be an official symbol of patriotism and heroism after the political changes. *Kalevipoeg* was called "the hero of the working people, the ideal for Estonian working man".

Right at the start of the Soviet occupation in 1940, the translation of *Kalevipoeg* began anew, followed by its popularisation in Soviet Russia. After the war, the work on translation and editing continued (supervised by Eduard Laugaste). Humanities of the Stalinist era were characterised by oversimplification, denial or ignorance of the facts, thus the interpretation of the epic was extremely one-sided, and research into the work's artistic value was completely neglected. One of the reasons for the prominence of the epic genre was its folksiness. It was in the folk epics that "folk genius" was seen to shine most prominently, and Soviet "singers of tales" were invited to writers' unions, and their creative works were paid special attention by folklorists. Raised onto the pedestal, *Kalevipoeg* gave Estonian folklorists an opportunity for a new wave of collecting and research into heroic legends and runosongs (e.g. Saarlo 2017).<sup>8</sup> In this way the pre-war collection and publication policy continued – rescue collection and philological editing and publishing of topographically centred archaic folklore.

During Soviet times the academic publication of runo songs was undertaken, and the publication took place of the compilation *Vana Kannel* ("The Old Kantele") by Otilie Kõiva, Eduard Laugaste, Herbert Tampere and Ülo Tedre, and heroic legend compilations appeared by E. Laugaste, Ellen Liiv and Erna Normann.

## Standing their ground and drifting until the next upheaval

The Soviet period cannot be categorised as equitable. The direction of Estonian science depended on changes in the Soviet political arena and subsequent repercussions. The Stalinist repressions were followed by Krushchev's "Thaw" (from 1953), which was succeeded by Brezhnev's stagnation (from 1964). In the 1960s, the interests of folklorists returned to contemporary matters, and questionnaires were issued on songs about historical events and social struggles, on contemporary traditions etc. Following the example of Finnish colleagues, who formed the only accessible connection with Western folkloristics, childlore became the new collection and research topic in the 1970s. Despite the new trends, the main collection strategy up to the end of the 1990s was expeditions into rural areas, where an attempt was made to record all existing folklore material (songs and narratives) of particular regions. Archaic folklore was still preferred to urban and contemporary lore.

<sup>8</sup> Because the basis of the epic was heroic legends, the Estonian folklorists' goal was to collect folk legends and uncover any parallels to the epics. Folklorists were striving to find "authentic" verses and motifs of runosongs in the corpus of the epic and to find any hints about heroic characters in the Estonian runosong corpus.



Herbert Tampere (1909–75), the head of the Folklore Department of the Literary Museum, interviews the local singer, Hilda Aken, in Kanepi, southern Estonia, in 1967. (Photo by Regina Praakli. EKM ERA, Foto 8359)

Research papers and academic publications continued to centre on the older tradition and its variations and performers. Only a few researchers, such as Ingrid Rüütel, Mall Hiimäe and Mare Kõiva, discussed newer folk traditions.

Although folklorists stepped back from research into folklorism, their research and popular publications maintained the nation's awareness of itself. The anthology *Eesti rahvalaule viisidega I–V* "Estonian Folk Songs with Melodies" (1956–65) compiled by Herbert Tampere, and, even more so, the vinyl records of *Eesti rahvalaule ja pillilugusid* "Estonian Folk Songs and Instrumental Pieces" (1970) were a highly respected source of repertoire for folk groups and an inspiration for professional composers.

The folklore movement in tandem with local history research and the conservation of historical sites gave a strong impetus to the processes that culminated in Estonia regaining its independence. It is important to note that all these movements were directed at the preservation of the heritage of the past and were to a degree against modernisation, still mirroring contemporary tendencies in the world.



Did the regaining of independence in 1991 change Estonian folkloristics? On the one hand, interest in roots and origins increased, in the form of the publication and use of folklore, and the popularity of music with folk influences. On the other, there was an outburst of new topics that had had to remain under wraps during the Soviet period: folk beliefs and their contemporary forms, with truth and “alternative truth” mixed together, and with mainstream and marginal beliefs published in periodicals, and now the internet, and social media, which folklorists cannot manage to even collect.

Nowadays, the geographical area covered by Estonian folklorists’ research interests has widened considerably. Even if interest in Finno-Ugric peoples has waned and remains the focus only of a limited number of dedicated specialists, exotic peoples and modern topics attract young folklorists. Indian studies has become a prominent part of Estonian folkloristics, with Ülo Valk’s supervision, and some have found their way to Africa and various exotic northern peoples. Over the last few years, the interest in ethnic minorities living in Estonia has been rejuvenated (for example by Elo Hanna Seljamaa). Estonian folkloristics has most definitely spread its wings since Estonia regained independence, looking beyond its borders and not being focused on one ethnos any more. We can only hope that we will be not overcome by the tsunami of internationalism and can remain ourselves.

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## Finnish Literature Society (SKS) Archives

Risto Blomster, Outi Hupaniittu, Marja-Leena Jalava, Katri Kivilaakso, Juha Nirikko, Maiju Putkonen & Jukka Saarinen

The Finnish Literature Society (SKS) was founded in 1831 for supporting and advancing the Finnish language and creating literature in Finnish. Throughout the years, documenting folklore has been in focus of its activities. Originally, this was connected to the works of Elias Lönnrot, the compiler of the Finnish national epic Kalevala (published 1835). Since Lönnrot's era, collecting and archiving of folklore and oral history has been conducted and supported by SKS, and its collection has grown to be one of the largest of its kind in the world. The folklore collection, or "folk poetry collection" as it was called, was organized into separate Folklore Archives of the SKS in 1935, with enhanced possibilities to improve systems of archiving, and to serve folklore researchers.

Publishing of folk poetry significantly contributed to the growth of literature written in Finnish. SKS also started to collect publications and manuscripts and to publish both scholarly and popular works. This resulted in founding of the Literature Archives in 1971 as an independent department. The collections consist of private archives donated by writers, cultural figures, researchers in the field, self-taught writers, and literary societies. Also, the documents associated with the founding of SKS are a part of the collections. The literature collections serve as a significant source for research on literature, art and many other fields of study.



SKS's main building in Hallituskatu 1. SKS. Image: Pirjo Mäkilä.

In 2016, the Folklore Archives and Literature Archives were joined as the SKS Archives was formed. The Folklore Archives is now known as the Collection of Traditional and Contemporary Culture, the Literature Archives as the Collection of Literature and Cultural History. The archived material, premises and reading rooms remain the same, so for a customer the change might seem diminutive. Yet, the SKS Archives is the largest of the publicly funded private archives in Finland. It is one of the most important organizations for Finnish cultural heritage with long traditions and strong expertise. The organizational reform has made the Archives even more capable for cooperation with researchers and cultural heritage institutions. This article focuses on current issues in the Archives.

## Making the metadata and collections available

Though the Archives forms one organizational body, the collections remain distinct. Due to the nature of the materials, the two archiving systems are separate and quite different and the collections have their own catalogues and databases. Currently, these systems are being combined into one, which is fundamental and time-consuming process. The target is not only to have one unified system in the SKS archives, but to join together with other archives in developing common and compatible rules for archival description and building a shared service.

The process is implemented by project led by the National Archives of Finland and participated by six private archives. The participating archives will be provided with a tool for organizing, indexing, describing and managing their holdings. The system will also have a connection to Finna (<https://www.finna.fi/>), a national search service providing access to materials from museums, libraries and archives. In Finna, users can browse and read metadata and material available on the web.

Unfortunately, Finna is designed for free access, and archives contain material with restrictions. Data protection and privacy may prevent the access to the metadata and digitized material may be under the copyright. Thus the preliminary planning is underway for a controlled user interface with possibilities for user identification in order to cope with the situation.

At the moment, only small parts of the collections are available online: the database of Kalevalaic poetry (SKVR, <http://skvr.fi>) and the correspondence of Elias Lönnrot (1802–1884) (<http://lonnrot.finlit.fi/>) are the biggest services. Nevertheless, during the last two decades digitizing has been an integral function of operations. At present, there are over half a million files, both digitized and born-digital, of text, images and sound and video recordings. For example, the majority of video recordings are in digital format. So far these digital materials have been available only at archive premises. With introduction of the aforementioned new services in 2019, the metadata without legislative restrictions can be made available online. It will also forward the same process for the free digitized material.

## Acquisition policy

Currently, the Archives is establishing a new collection and acquisition policy that aims to support cooperation and collaboration with other publicly founded private archives in Finland. The Literature and Cultural History Collections remains responsible of collecting materials of authors, critics and researches who work professionally in the literary or cultural field. While the archive has previously collected material also from amateur and grassroots writers, nowadays the emphasis is on professional literary people and institutions. Life stories written by ordinary people continue

to belong to the Tradition and Contemporary Culture Collections. It also houses a great number of texts sent to thematic writing competitions and collecting campaigns.

One of the topical questions in the acquisition policy is the reflection of Finnish and Finnishness. In 2012–2015, the Literature Archives organized a project in which altogether 63 contemporary Finnish authors were interviewed. Only two of these authors, Yousif Abu al Fawz and Hassan Blasim, do not write in Finnish (both in Arabic). After the project, the Archives has received interviews of some ten authors who live and work mostly in Finland, but write in some other language than Finnish or Swedish. This year, the Archives are also co-operating with Dr Mehdi Ghasemi, who works to find and contact both immigrant writers and poets residing in Finland, as well as authors working outside the Finnish borders.

Collecting personal archival material from immigrant authors and those affected by Finnish culture, history and society, will be an integral part the future acquisition policy. Multilingual authors may have more difficulties in getting their work published, and archiving their materials is one way of including them to Finnish literature and its history and research in the twenty-first century. The ideas of fixed entities such as nation-states as well as homogeneous national histories and cultures have been widely challenged in various disciplines across the humanities and social sciences, and literary scholars have increasingly focused on different kinds of boundary or cross-border relations between nations, their histories, languages and traditions, too.

Apparently, the Archives could be perceived as an institution advancing monolingualism. On the other hand, its archives have proved useful material for research that seeks to dismantle the ideals on which the national Finnish project once was based. It has been pointed out that multilingualism, transnationalism and border crossing are by no means any new phenomena in Finnish literature and tradition. These notions as well as transnational contacts of Finnish authors can be studied through their manuscripts and correspondence.

## Collections campaigns

Collection campaigns of the Archives keep producing valuable material of cultural heritage by commenting and reflecting time, society, and the deepest thoughts of the contributors. Themes around current events and phenomena and matters with social significance continue being the most popular collection campaign themes, life-story features still being strongly present.

Currently the Archives collects memories and experiences of highly topical themes such as sustainable living and mining industry. Experiences of book clubs will tell the future researcher about popular communal activities of the 2010's and a campaign collecting experiences of unemployment offers a channel for the unemployed to be heard, to tell their stories.



SKS KIA. Photo: Milla Eräsaari.

Themes concerning highly subjective and timeless matters draw interest too: Just recently was gathered material from around 120 contributors describing their favorite and most meaningful landscape. Themes of the upcoming campaigns are versatile as well. This fall the contributors are invited to write about swamps, visiting habits and volunteering experiences with refugees. Nowadays approximately 2/3 of the material is received in digital format.

In honor of Finland's centenary 2017, cultural heritage was collected via Muistikko, a platform not only making it possible to write about one's life but also tag oneself to places, add pictures and links and read stories of other users.

Although the Archives position in collecting and representing the *versatility* of Finnish culture remain indisputable, it needs to be challenged every now and then in order to ask whether the campaigns themes are responding to the changes in the society. The future research paradigms cannot be predicted – archival institution don't necessarily even know which topics people find interesting today - but could it be possible to define more accurately what should be collected? To improve the collection practices the Archives has already opened the discussion with the representatives of the universities. In the core of the development of the collection campaigns are co-operation practices with the researchers. The Archives has an important role bringing together experts: on one hand the contributors as experts of their own lives and on the other the academics and other customers, who in their part use the material to reach for further audiences.

## Cooperation projects on Roma people and Ingrians

There are two ongoing cooperation projects. The first one – *The Cultural Heritage of the Roma people: Archiving, Valuation and Research* (2016–2018) – is on its final stretch and the other one – *Ingria and Ingrians – recording histories, preserving memories* (2018–2020) – has just started.

*The Cultural Heritage of the Roma people project* is a joint effort carried out by SKS, the National Advisory Board on Romani Affairs and the National Archives of Finland. It aims to build contacts with the Romani language and culture research community and promote research into the subject area. In 2017, the approximately eight shelf meters of Roma-related materials donated by a total of seven private individuals and Roma NGOs during the project were catalogued.

Under the project, a number of academic articles on the history of collecting Romani materials will be published, with the aim of popularizing the findings through news articles in the mainstream media and blogs. From the point of view of the Roma, the most important result is the cherishing of their own cultural heritage and increasing its appreciation. The outcome of the project is the permanent collections of the Roma Archive of Finland – *Finitiko kaalengo arkiivos*, which will be the combined collection of the Romani materials at archives the SKS archives and the National Archives.

*The Ingria and Ingrians – recording histories, preserving memories project* is an archiving and cultural memory organisation project which promotes the acquisition, availability and usability of materials. The cooperation project is implemented by SKS, the cultural foundation *Inkeriläisten sivistyssäätiö* and the National Archives of Finland.

The aim is to record archival materials related to the activities of Ingrian associations in addition to personal archives. The project will include interviews with Ingrian returnees and their descendants. The interviews are already partly urgent, given that even the descendants of Ingrians who returned to Finland in the 1920s and 1940s are getting very advanced in years. On the other hand, the memories and experiences of Ingrians who returned in the 1990s have not been collected as extensively before as they are being now, in the context of this project.



The objective is to collect more original materials regarding Ingrian Finns – such as diaries, letters and photographs – so as to preserve as much of Ingrian history as possible for future generations and researchers. Other objectives include the creation of a virtual archive on Ingrians, as the project will also include a survey aiming to find the Finnish cultural memory organizations which have archived materials on Ingrians.

## Civil War 1918

The interest in the Finnish Civil War year 1918 has kept the staff busy at every three service counters of Archives. During this and last year more than one hundred customers have come with Civil War enquiries. They have researched letters and diaries in private archives, as well as later writings concerning the topic, collected by oral history campaigns. The most popular material has been so called “1918” collection from years 1966-1968, containing nearly 600 writers, 22 000 pages plus sound recordings and photographs.

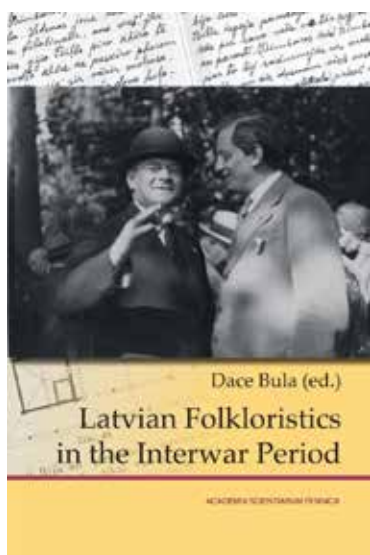
In addition to researchers and local historians, several museums, journalists, artists and private persons have been served. The sound recordings can be heard in “The Hundred-Year Night” radio composition, in a TV documentary “When Finland came to be Finland” and on guided Helsinki walks. The customers have also studied the background or searched for inspiration in creating 1918-related fiction, drama, music or dance performances or even a mobile game. Some lucky ones have finally found the story of their grandparents – and some persons have donated that story to the archive, now that the time seemed to be right.

The Archives’ own effort in the remembrance of the Civil War was a joint project with the sister organization the Archives of the Swedish Literature Society in Finland (SLS). Bilingual learning material *1918 – Minä olin siellä – Jag var där* (“1918 – I was there”) is assembled of material from both archives with archive pedagogical questions, in order to introduce pupils to archived material and give them tools to source criticism, interpretation of sources and historical empathy. The archival material depicts people in the middle of the war or recollecting the events decades later, which makes perspective different when compared with the school books. Instead of learning about the political history or mere facts, the pupils empathize with both the reds and the whites in the everyday reality of life of for example occupied city, battlefield or prison camp.

25 copies of the printed book were sent to every upper comprehensive school (grades 7-9) and high school (grades 10-12), and a copy to each public library. The publication is also available online (<https://www.1918.finlit.fi/>), with supplementary archival material – of the letters, diaries and recollections utilized in the publication only short extract are used, but in the online version full versions are available. In May 2018, *1918 – Minä olin siellä* won the competition for the best online publication at the Nordic Archive Days in Reykjavik.

## Latest FFC Publications

FFC 313: *Latvian Folkloristics in the Interwar Period*. Ed. Dace Bula. Porvoo 2017, 281 pp.

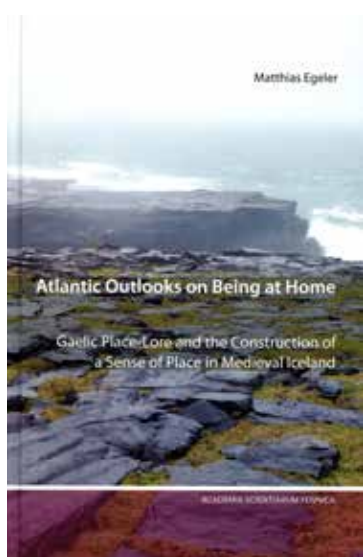


*Latvian Folkloristics in the Interwar Period* is a contribution by Latvian scholars to the current reflexive trend of folklore studies toward an intense focus on the discipline's past. It also joins the recent efforts to broaden the geographical scope of folklore history by concentrating on internationally less represented research traditions.

The interwar period in Latvia, as in most European countries, was a formative era during which 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.

By offering a broad perspective on Latvian interwar folkloristics, this book covers relevant national and international contexts of folklore research, dominant research paradigms and key personalities in the field.

FFC 314: Matthias Egeler, *Atlantic Outlooks on Being at Home*. Porvoo 2018, 324 pp.



Much of both Icelandic and medieval Irish literature is, in one way or another, storytelling about places, reflecting a deep engagement with the concept of 'place' and the creation of a 'sense of place'. This book takes as its starting point the shared interest that Icelandic and Irish storytelling have in 'place' and asks whether the medieval Icelandic sense of place, as reflected in Icelandic narrative culture, has been influenced by the close contacts that existed during the Viking Age between Iceland and the Gaelic-speaking world of Ireland and Scotland. In attempting to answer this question, the book contributes to the long-standing debate about Gaelic influences in Icelandic culture, the much more recent discourse on the spatiality of medieval Icelandic literature and storytelling, and the cultural history of the Icelandic settlement Period. obliquely, the findings of the book may even shed light on the origins of Icelandic saga literature. Along the way, it also offers insights on a number of general points of spatial theory as well as, in particular, on two medieval Icelandic texts that are especially place-focused: *Landnámabók*, the 'Book of settlements' and *Eyrbyggja saga*, the 'Saga of the Inhabitants of Eyr'.

Both books now available at the Bookstore Tiedekirja at [www.tiedekirja.fi](http://www.tiedekirja.fi)