

# Folklore Fellows' NETWORK



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The centenary  
of Folklore Fellows'  
Communications

Tale of two journals

Story and reality  
in folkloristics

After the new  
folkloristics?

# Folklore Fellows' NETWORK

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FF Network 39 | December 2010

FF Network is a newsletter, published twice a year, related to FF Communications. It provides information on new FFC volumes and on articles related to cultural studies by internationally recognised authors.

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Cover photo: Tver Karelian winter landscape in 1977. Photo by Lauri Honko.  
Photo by courtesy of the Archives of Cultural Studies, University of Turku.



# The centenary of Folklore Fellows' Communications

**K**aarle Krohn, professor of Finnish and comparative folk-poetry research at Helsinki University, met Axel Olrik in 1910 in Copenhagen. Perhaps the most long-lasting outcome of the meeting was the decision to co-found, along with the Swede C. W. von Sydow, the Folklore Fellows organisation as an international link for folklorists. The most significant practical consequence of the decision was the establishment of the Folklore Fellows' Communications publication series. The Finnish Academy of Science and Letters undertook the publication of the series and Helsinki became its base, with Kaarle Krohn as editor-in-chief. The beginnings were undemanding: the first issues were catalogues a couple of dozen pages long of collected materials. It was only with the third issue that pointers to the future appeared, when Antti Aarne published the first version of his catalogue of tale types.

During the first decade, Folklore Fellows' editorials also appeared in the FFC series, the fifth and last in 1919. In the first *Bericht*, Kaarle Krohn outlined the content of the publications thus: FFC was to give an account of the organisation's activity, to illustrate folklore collections in different countries, to publish collections and catalogues of material, and investigations carried out by comparative methods. Already in the first editorials the network's geographical extent is apparent: within a few years, Krohn and his colleagues gained an entourage of researchers from Scandinavia, German-speaking central Europe, Russia, various parts of Austro-Hungary (such as Galicia and Bukovina), as well as the USA. Fairly rapidly, the types of publication narrowed down, apart from type catalogues, to comparative investigations.

Thereafter, the activities of Folklore Fellows was documented only sparingly, and only sporadic information is to be found on the stages of development of the FF Communications series. Kaarle Krohn worked as the series editor until his death in 1933. Uno Harva was chosen by the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters as his successor; he was professor of sociology at Turku University, but in fact was a well-known researcher in comparative religion and a folklorist. He gave up the role in 1943 to V. J. Mansikka, a scholar specialising in Russian charms and folk belief. It appears that after him, from 1948 Martti Haavio worked as editor until 1970, and thereafter followed Lauri Honko's long period

as editor. Anna-Leena Siikala became editor in 2002, and since the beginning of 2010 the present editor has acted in this role.

In the beginning the FFC was a firmly Nordic/Finnish publication forum; it was only in the 1920s that the publications of Central European scholars began to appear. It is notable that the October Revolution did not interrupt the scientific links between the newly founded Soviet Union and the West. Works by Russian scholars were published in the 1920s, the best-known being Mark Azadovski's classic narrator investigation, *Eine sibirische Märchenzählerin* (FFC 68, 1926). Archer Taylor's *The Black Ox. A Study in the History of a Folk-Tale* from 1927 was the first American contribution. Fairly soon thereafter appeared Stith Thompson's revised version of Aarne's tale type catalogue, and for a long time the AT-NNN code became a special kind of concept in the folkloristics.

Almost all FFC editors have as folklorists been scholars of folk belief. This has not, however, been evident in the corresponding publications in the FFC list. Investigations of charms and magic have appeared, but not as many as might be supposed. Since the 1930s the publications were almost always solely text-based folkloristics, with a few mainly Finnish exceptions, until new perspectives appeared in the 1970s. Comparative religious research has returned to FFC since the 1970s, when for example Anna-Leena Siikala's *The Rite Technique of the Siberian Shaman* appeared (FFC 220, 1978), and Juha Pentikäinen's *Oral Repertoire and World View. An Anthropological Study of Marina Takalo's Life History* (FFC 219, 1978).

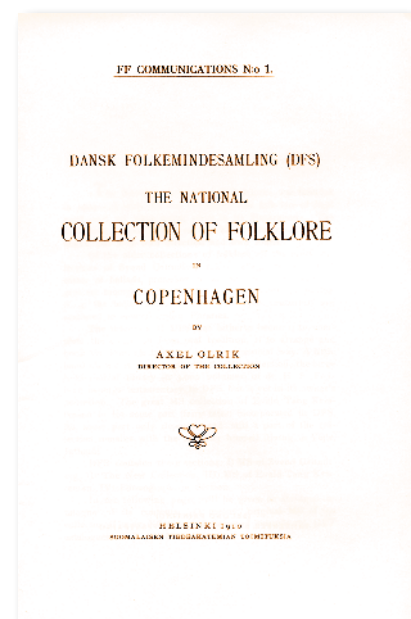
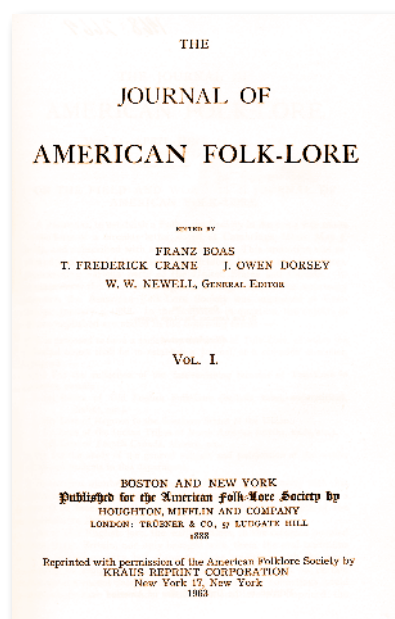
The last few decades have been a time of multifaceted and high-level publications. Type indexes are still a significant part of FFC's publication schedule, and their success shows there is a continuing need for them within international folkloristics. In addition, FFC has published some fine studies of epic, anthropology-centred investigations on the meaning of folklore in culture, as well as discussions of research ethics. It is to be hoped that the beginning of the series' second century will be marked with equal promise. ■

The year 1888 saw the publication of two works important to the emerging field of folklore studies. In Finland, the first explicitly historical-geographic examination of a folktale (Märchen) type appeared: Kaarle Krohn's *Bär (Wolf) und Fuchs. Eine nordische Tiermärchenkette*. Adapting the methods that his father Julius Krohn had developed for the study of Finnish epic and lyric songs, Krohn offered a model for theorizing the origin and development of a widespread folktale. The study was published in German, a signal to Krohn's intended scholarly audience, although he also published a Finnish version of the same study that same year (Hautala 1954: 216–19). In the following decades, Krohn would eventually team with fellow Märchen scholars Johannes Bolte, Axel Olrik, and C. W. von Sydow in 1907 to create a publication specifically devoted to facilitating historical-geographic research, a journal or monograph series whose first issues appeared in 1910 under the title *FF Communications*, and thus celebrates its one-hundredth anniversary this year.

Also during the year 1888, however, and far to the west, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, a group of American folklorists, well aware of European developments but also sensitive to the diversity of folklore materials flourishing in the United States, created their own publication, *The Journal of American Folklore*. At the outset of the twenty-first century, a hundred years after the first appearance of FFC, and 122 years after the first appearance of JAF, it is valuable to look back at these two ambitious publication projects and the disciplinary ground they broke. What were the concerns and aims of folklorists at the time and how did these become reflected in the materials published in each journal? To what extent do their goals and findings remain a part of the motivations, if

not also the methodologies, of folklorists today? In the following, I examine the early issues of each journal to look at some of these questions and offer a few observations of where each journal has moved today.

The FFC in its first ten years of publication—from 1910 to 1920—was both an idealistic and a pragmatic endeavor. The founders of the series, as well as its first members and writers, had all experienced the difficulties of accessing and recognizing variants of the same tale type in different areas of Europe. Their aim was to reach across linguistic and cultural lines to explore the ways in which folk narrative spreads across time and space. But to do that, they needed access to tales that were recorded and published in national collections and national idioms. Much of what FFC presented as a solution to this predicament was what we nowadays call *metadata*: information that would allow the reader to access or sort other information, in this case, the recording or publication of folktales with particular plotlines and characters in various collections across Europe. FFC became a prime venue for the publication of tale type catalogues designed to facilitate cross-cultural analysis of familiar tales. In its first year of activity, FFC published an overview of tale collections in Denmark (FFC 1 and 2; Olrik 1910, Lunding 1910) as well as Antti Aarne's seminal *Verzeichnis der Märchen-*



(Left) *Journal of American Folklore*, title page of the first issue from 1888 (as reprinted in 1963). (Right) *FF Communications* series, title page of the first publication from 1910 (as reprinted in 1959).

typen (FFC 3; Aarne 1910), a catalogue designed to help scholars recognize and locate variants within the collections of the world.

While Krohn is clearly the organizing force behind the FFC in its early years, it is Aarne who most uses its pages as a platform for his expanding research program. Of the more than six hundred pages published from 1910 to 1914, fully five hundred are penned by him (1910, 1911, 1912, 1913a, 1913b). Aarne leads the way toward a classificatory system for extant folktale collections and offers the journal's first detailed comparative study in his *Die Tiere auf der Wanderschaft* (FFC 11; Aarne 1913a), an examination of tale type 210.

Despite the lack of variation in the authorship of the early issues of FFC, the periodic reports of the organization show a steady increase in members and affiliated local societies. The journal's second report (FFC 7; Krohn 1911), lists member organizations devoted to the folklore of various European nations. The report includes a long list of projected works expected to come out in coming issues. In practice, many of these studies (such as the monumental catalogue of German Märchen produced by Johannes Bolte and George Polivka 1913) eventually came out in other venues, while FFC remained the primary publication outlet for Nordic scholars. The listing itself, however, attests to the strong international awareness of the scholars involved in the enterprise and their interest in learning about the folk narratives of as broad a geographic area as possible.

The journal's third report (FFC 12; Krohn 1913) is accompanied by an overview of German, Austrian, and Swiss member organizations contributed by John Meier (1913), as well as a similar overview of the Hungarian network by Aladár Bán (1913). Krohn includes notes concerning affiliated scholars or organizations in Uppsala, Lund, St Petersburg, Moscow, Kazan, Dorpat (Tallinn), Budapest, Athens, Basel, Munich, and Prague. A terse fourth report (FFC 21; Krohn 1914) consists of a mere listing of works that have come out in the journal thus far, and some additional eulogizing for the late Moltke Moe, whose obituary appeared in FFC 17 in an article by Axel Olrik (1915).

When Krohn writes his fifth report (FFC 29; Krohn 1919b) four years later, however, the world and its wars have hindered in substantial ways the intellectual pursuits of the FF scholars. Krohn begins the report tersely: 'Die wirksamkeit des FF bundes ist wie alle internationale arbeit vom weltkriege gehemmt worden' (p. 1). Axel Olrik has passed away, commemorated in an obituary in FFC 29 (Krohn 1919a), as has Oskar Dähnhardt. Writes E. Mogk (1919) of the latter: 'Der männermordende Krieg, den die schlimmsten Leidenschaften, Geldgier und Rachsucht entfacht haben, hat auch in den Reihen volkskundlicher Forscher unersetzliche Lücken gerissen. Auch Oskar Dähnhardt hat sein Leben dem



Antti Aarne (1867–1925). Photo by courtesy of the Finnish Literature Society, Literary Archives.

Vaterlande geopfert' (p. 19). Amidst such expressions of sorrow and frustration, Krohn reviews the accomplishments of the journal thus far and proposes some modifications of policy. Member organizations, which now include satellite members in Madrid, Munich, Kristiania (Oslo), New York state, and Argentina, are urged to find their own financial means of publishing catalogues, as Reidar Th. Christiansen was doing for his Norwegian catalogue (Christiansen 1921; also eventually included in the FFC as Christiansen 1922). Krohn urges all such publications, however, to use Aarne's type numbers in order to facilitate international comparisons (1919b: 43). Krohn opines that catalogues that contain more detailed overviews of recorded or published tale variants—such as V. Tille's forthcoming *Verzeichnis der bömischen Märchen* (FFC 23; Tille 1921)—are of greater use to scholars than ones that limit coverage to simple listings of extant tale types by number alone. And he lauds the comparative studies that the journal had published by Aarne (1913a, 1914a, 1914b, 1916a, 1916b) as well as Christiansen (1916) as helping establish a rigorous scientific basis for the comparative study of folklore in general.

Although the early issues of FFC focused primarily on folktales, other genres received attention as well. FFC 18 and 19 examine charm formulas (Christiansen 1914, Hästesko 1914), while Aarne used two issues of the journal to explore riddles (Aarne 1918, 1919; FFC 26, 27). It is clear from all reports, as well as the texts of the published studies themselves, that the historical-geographic method is seen as the ideal approach to



Kaarle Krohn (1863–1933). Photo by courtesy of the Finnish Literature Society, Literary Archives.

folklore of any kind, regardless of genre: a rigorous and thorough means of examination that allows a researcher to determine the place and time or composition of a piece of folklore and the paths it took in its subsequent migrations. As Jouko Hautala put it in his history of the field from 1954, Aarne's *Verzeichnis* and the methods connected with it were 'niin tärkeä apuneuvo, että yksikään tutkija ei enää tule toimeen ilman sitä' ('such an important aid that no research could manage without it thereafter', Hautala 1954: 291–2). Such is not the sole end of folkloristic research, however, as Krohn makes clear in his fifth FFC report (1918: 44): once the *Urform* has been determined it becomes possible for the scholar to undertake the 'most important work', i.e., the examination of the culture which the original item represents.

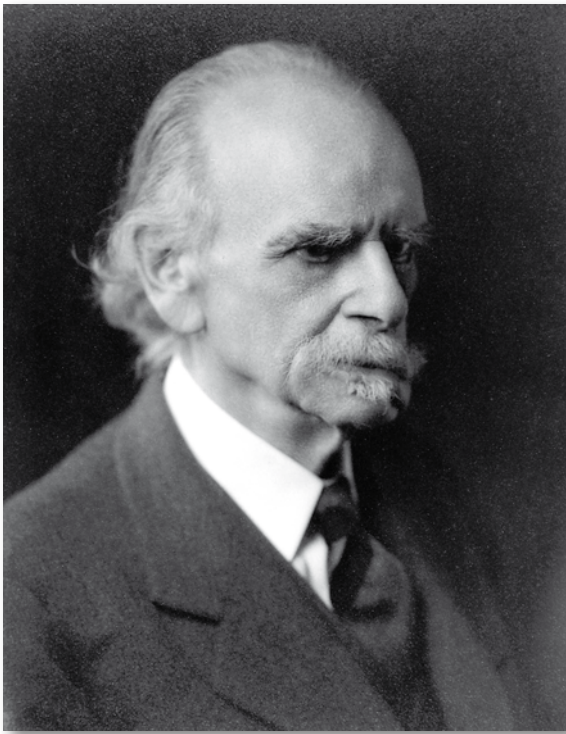
An irony of the FFC's original methodological and theoretical bent was its focus on the mobility of tales alongside a fairly static theory regarding the mobility of raconteurs. Briefly stated: tales moved, not people. Such was ironic, of course, because Krohn's own family history illustrated the often striking mobility that one could find in families when looking over the course of generations, a movement from Germany to the Russian Empire, and then to Finland over a few generations. The theory was also ironic, however, because it was proposed in the face of one of the largest mass-migrations

in world history: the wholesale movement of millions of Europeans from their homelands in Europe to North and South America as well as Australia. Tales might move without people, perhaps, but in reality, both tales and people were on the move together, and such was the finding and riveting interest of the folklorists behind the JAF.

The first issue of FFC appeared in 1910, after many of the field's methodological and theoretical foundations had been formulated and, as we have seen, with the explicit purpose of facilitating and refining one particular theoretical approach in particular. The *Journal of American Folklore*, in contrast, first appeared while the field was still in its formative stages, and focused most intently on the importance of collecting and preserving as much lore as possible from the diverse populations of the United States. The journal's first article 'On the Field and Work of a Journal of American Folk-lore' presented marching orders for American folklorists (Anon. 1888). They were to collect materials in each of four 'departments': 'relics of Old English Folk-Lore', lore from 'Negroes in the Southern States of the Union', lore from 'Indian Tribes of North America (myths, tales, etc.)', and lore of immigrant groups. While the first two departments were regarded as valuable for reconstructing past lore from source cultures, and the fourth is rather summarily passed over as 'consist[ing] of fields too many and various to be here particularized' (p. 6) the third department—that of Native American folklore—was singled out as especially valuable:

The collection of the third kind of American folk-lore—the traditions of the Indian tribes—will be generally regarded as the most promising and important part of the work to be accomplished. Here the investigator has to deal with whole nations, scattered over a continent, widely separated in language, custom, and belief. The harvest does not consist of scattered gleanings, the relics of a crop once plentiful, but unhappily, allowed to perish ungarnered; on the contrary, it remains to be gathered, if not in the original abundance, still in ample measure. (Anon 1888: 5)

The journal's focus on collection reflects in large measure the rapid disappearance of Native ways of life in a country dominated by a policy of Manifest Destiny: the belief that European-derived populations would eventually come to control every square inch of the vast territory encompassed by the United States. At the same time, written in 1888, the journal's call to action can be seen as a clear response to the tardiness of American collecting activities: where European folklorists had been diligently collecting songs and tales for the better part of a century, American scholars had only just begun, and the discoveries of collectors like Francis J. Child and Joel Chandler Harris filled American intel-



Franz Boas (1858–1942). Photo by Norman F. Boas ([www.franz-boas.de](http://www.franz-boas.de)).

lectuals with both wonder and excitement about the treasures of the folk imagination awaiting collection in the quiet villages and rural settings of the new country.

Where the early issues of FFC focus concertedly on only a handful of genres, the pages of JAF bristled from the outset with diverse topics. In the first issue alone, readers were offered examinations of Haitian voodoo, children's counting-out rhymes, and narratives and songs from Lenapé, Onondaga, Kwakiutl, Huckucka, Teton Dakota, Ponka, Abenaki, and Arkansas African Americans. Often the items of folklore are presented with minimal theoretical accompaniment but great ethnographic detail. Franz Boas's (1888) piece on Kwakiutl song and dance includes not only verbatim transcriptions of songs, but also musical notation. George Bushotter and J. Owen Dorsey (1888) present a Teton Dakota narrative carefully transcribed with meticulous interlinear translation. T. F. Crane (1888) presents an overview of folkloristic theories regarding the diffusion of tales, treating all such investigations as interesting but not crucial. Quips Crane, 'Fortunately the subject to which this journal is to be devoted does not depend on its interest upon any [single] theory of origin or diffusion' (p. 15). As Rosemary Lévy Zumwalt (1988) shows in her history of American folklore research, this American skepticism regarding the grand theories of European folklorists would recur over the following century, even after the rise of the historical-geographic method in FFC. Zumwalt quotes Alan Lomax in 1953 confront-

ing Stith Thompson and Archer Taylor (both American adherents to the historical-geographic school) with the question: 'What so far. . . are the achievements of the historic-geographic method? From what has gone so far I can't make out what the method has brought forth in terms of scientific conclusions' (p. 110). Lomax was a collector first and foremost. His theories may have been thin, but one can argue that the musical heritage of the world has been vastly enhanced by the voices he recorded and brought to national (and international) fame: where would popular music today be without the likes of Lead Belly, Muddy Waters, or Jelly Roll Martin?

Part of the initial emphasis of the JAF on Native American materials derived not only from their fast and troubling disappearance, but also on the prodigious work and tireless advocacy of Franz Boas. Indeed, Boas was to the American field of folklore studies what Krohn was to the Finnish: he set the terms and emphases of the emerging discipline, and he did so, like Krohn, by controlling the one of the field's main publication outlets. Boas took over the editorship of JAF in 1908, a post he held until 1924, when he turned the editorship over to his protégé Ruth Benedict. And, as with the initial volumes of the journal, Boas ensured that primary materials were the prominent, if not sole, content of its pages.

It is noteworthy that Boas, although instrumental in the formation of both American folklore studies and American anthropology, was not a particularly theoretically inclined scholar. As Rosemary Zumwalt puts it: 'Boas's primary emphasis was on collection, or what he would term the complete description of a culture, which had to precede the formulation of general theories' (1988: 112). These priorities are evident in the 1910 winter issue of JAF, a work that came into print in the same year as the first issue of FFC. Issue 87 presents a short article by the outgoing president of the American Folklore Society, John R. Swanton (1910) entitled, indicatively, 'Some Practical Aspects of the Study of Myths.' Alongside this address, the issue featured a set of Shasta myths transcribed and translated by Roland Dixon (1910), and a shorter collection of Catalonian folk songs presented by A. T. Sinclair (1910). A bibliography of recent publications and a short financial report of the society completed the issue. By the end of that decade, JAF's commitment to the publication of primary materials was still clear: issue 123 of 1919 presents French Canadian folk songs, folktales, legends, and healing traditions, recorded entirely verbatim, with all discussions and annotations of the materials presented in French (Barbeau 1919, Boldue 1919, Massicotte 1919a, Massicotte 1919b, Massicotte and Barbeau 1919). JAF was a journal to turn to for accurate transcriptions of folklore, presented in its original language or in close translation.

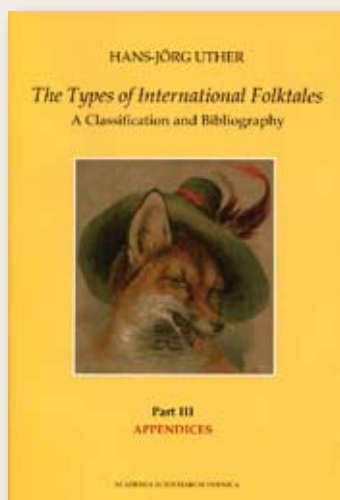
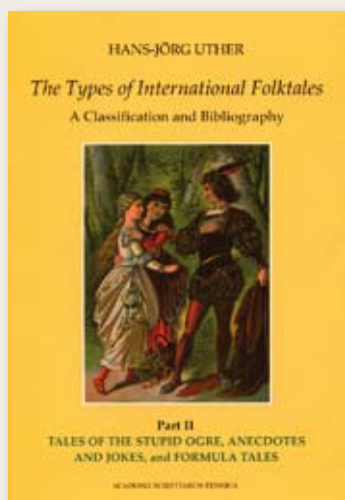
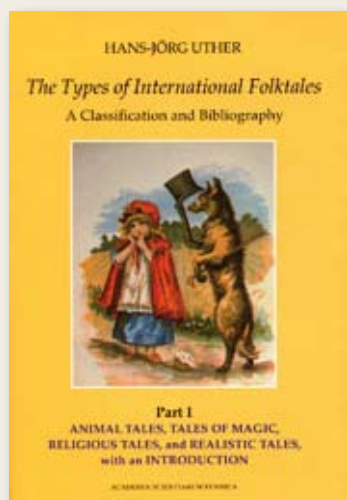
The 'practical' aspects of the study of myth to which Swanton referred in his presidential address point to a clear difference between the American folklorists of the day and the folklorists behind FFC. Where Aarne's study of Type 210 surveys the tale's distribution and migration without any regard to mode of transmission (apart from confirming that the transmission cannot have occurred through literary channels, 1913a: 103–5), Swanton focuses particular attention in his essay on the possible discontinuities of exchange that would result in uneven diffusion of a myth over time and space:

On the average, it may be said that these myths vary in proportion to the distance, the forms of any myth possessed by contiguous tribes being most alike, and those in tribes farthest away from each other being most unlike. At the same time, so many other factors have to be reckoned with, that the distribution is never a perfectly mathematical one. One such factor is environment, since it is plain that a myth will spread most readily along trade-routes, or through areas in which the environment is similar to that in which the story started. . . A second factor is linguistic or racial difference, especially where recent movements of population have taken place. (pp. 2–3).

In contemporary terms, one might be tempted to say that the JAF of the early twentieth century was data-driven, while FFC was theory-driven. But in fact, both theory and data were important to both enterprises. In the case of FFC, the favored theory focused on the particular data set regarding the distribution and textual

variation of narratives as texts in and of themselves. In the case of JAF, the theory focused on the data set regarding discontinuities of distribution as indicators of varying patterns of cultural exchange. Both journals reflected an interest in places of original composition and pathways of diffusion, but with decidedly different emphases. As Swanton put it in the closing statement of his address: 'I am aware that back of these questions of transmission, accretion, and ritualization, looms the problem of ultimate origin' (1910: 7). For Swanton, however, questions of origin would have to wait until the characteristics of the present were understood. It is perhaps not surprising in this light that American researchers would eventually develop approaches to folklore that allowed for ever closer attention to the details of performer and performance, turning away from the more diachronic questions that occupied the early contributors to FFC.

What became of these journals in the century plus that followed their debuts? Did they stay true to their original trajectories? In many ways, the answer is an emphatic yes, although the trajectories—and often the scholars—somehow merged. The FFC remains a key venue for comparative folk narrative research, and type and motif catalogues are still a significant part of the material published in its pages. Aarne's 1910 *Verzeichnis* received a revision and expansion in the American Stith Thompson's 1927 *The Types of the Folk-Tale* (FFC 74) and his later second edition (1961; FFC 184). That it was an American that undertook this labor reflects a bridging of the scholarly divide that once separated folklorists on



Hans-Jörg Uther's three-part *The Types of International Folktales* (2004) will be reprinted in 2011: this bestseller in the FFC series will be available again in the spring!

More detailed publication details will be announced on the FFC webpages at [www.folklore-fellows.fi](http://www.folklore-fellows.fi).



the two continents. The combined work of Aarne and Thompson received in turn a thorough updating and revision in Hans-Jörg Uther's 2004 *The Types of International Folktales*, a three-volume work that comprises FFC 284, 285, and 286 (Uther 2004). Nor have historical-geographic considerations remained outside of the JAF. The most recent issue of JAF, in fact, (issue 490) presents a stirring debate regarding Ruth Bottigheimer's (2002) recent revisionist theories regarding the origin and spread of folktales (Ben Amos 2010).

Theory is still at home in FFC. When in 1964 Alan Dundes wanted to present a theoretical breakthrough in the structuralist analysis of Native American myths, he chose to do so in the pages of FFC, despite its Americanist content (Dundes 1964). Yet the pages of today's JAF are also often saturated with theory, and as one of the JAF's co-editors (along with my colleague at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Jim Leary), I hope to find ways to restore some of the inclusiveness of primary materials that formerly distinguished the journal. It is probably accurate to say that many American folklorists today are just as interested in quoting theorists and theories as are their European counterparts. But with roughly half of the members of the American Folklore Society describing themselves as public folklorists, it is also true that the longstanding American folkloristic commitment to ethnographic documentation and presentation of primary materials continues as a healthy tendency within our field, albeit perhaps not as often within the pages of the society's journal as one might expect.

In the meantime, the 'data-driven' and Native Americanist tendencies of the American field found their way into the FFC in Arthur T. Hatto's *The Mohave Epic of Inyo-kutavère* (FFC 269; 1999), a work which appeared in the FFC only a year after Lauri Honko's careful performance presentation of an Indian narrative designated the 'Siri Epic' (FFC 264–6; Honko 1998, Honko *et al.* 1998). Both projects helped stimulate Honko, Honko, and Hagu's 2003 presentation of the Setu singer Anna Vabarna's epic singing (FFC 281; Honko *et al.* 2003). Most recently in the pages of FFC, data-driven presentation of performance has found expert realization the works of John Miles Foley (2004) and Karl Reichl (2007). Of course, all of these projects evince a tremendous amount of theory in addition to presenting primary materials. But the fact that primary materials find representation in the FFC at all is a measure of the ways in which the two publications, and their underlying approaches to folklore, have grown toward each other in the last decades.

Folklorists from both sides of the Atlantic have learned from each other, grown toward each other in some respects, and yet also retained a useful diversity of approaches and interests that ensure a varied and re-

sponsive field. JAF and FFC are part of the field's long legacy and are certain to remain shapers of its evolving future. ■

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The starting point of my paper is the centrality of the text in folkloristics: texts have been related or compared to each other, and their relation to external reality has not been regarded as of much significance. This has recently been the case, in particular, in the increasing popularity of the relativistic view of folklore—and reality in general—based on social constructionism, when texts are not seen as reflecting any external reality but instead as constructing the reality. This is the main characteristic of the way discourse analysis is often implemented. This orientation has clear connections with linguistic, narrative or discursive methods in general cultural research.

I make a short survey of the way different genres of prose folklore have been related to reality and finally comment on the usefulness of strong constructionism in folkloristics. What is the importance of the relationship of folklore to external reality and for what purpose do we need it? How have folklorists seen the relationship of different prose genres to reality? What has been the role of reality in the interpretation of stories? In particular, it is important to know what has 'really' happened when we study stories recounting some event. I pay attention also to different ways tellers of stories and researchers relate stories to reality.

The relationship of narratives to reality was not particularly important in classic folkloristic studies such as comparative fairy-tale studies. Texts were related to other texts by comparing their content, structure and stylistic traits, aiming to discover their relative age and genealogy. Permanent monuments of this area of knowledge are, for instance, national and international type indexes of fairy tales and legends. This research tradition coincides on occasion with the constructionist, post-modern viewpoint, which sees reality just in texts.

Another view of stories, in particular legends, has been held in Finnish folkloristics by Lauri Honko and Leea Virtanen, who may be regarded as the leading functionalists in Finland, although they had a scientific profile quite different from each other. They were interested in the psychological and socio-ecological bases of folklore: what kind of structures and conditions and individual psychological qualities generate legends, and how the existence of legends can be understood in the situational and cultural context.

## Fairy tales

Fiction has been considered to be the central property of fairy tales and as a rule it has been included in the definition of the genre. Both tellers and audience know that the narrative is not a true story—it does not strive for realistic, accurate and trustworthy description of the external reality in which people live, because it is not necessary. The world of fairy tales is imaginary and has its own rules. But although fairy tales as such are not related to the real life of the tellers and hearers, they are not quite innocent in this sense. They have been seen to reflect in an indirect way the reality of the tradition-bearers.

Michèle Simonsen (1993) has studied the relationship of fairy tales to reality from the perspective of reflection theory. She argues that fairy tales mirror social reality and social institutions. Simonsen discerns three different levels of reality: the fictive reality of the text, the living world of tellers and hearers as known from the social history, and the reality of the equivalents of persons of the fairy tale, from the king to the swineherd. Simonsen criticizes representatives of reflection theory for mixing the two latter levels of reality; but she also points out that in the narration these levels can be purposefully mixed with each other. Therefore it is possible to argue that fairy tales do not reflect reality truthfully either from the point of view of the teller or the persons of the tale. As a conclusion Simonsen states that the starting point of tales is the reality experienced by the teller and the listeners, distorted both unintentionally and intentionally by illusionary thinking and ridiculing the topic of the tale.

Another researcher of tales, Satu Apo, has studied the social critique contained in fairy tales, which she assumes to have accumulated over centuries (Apo 1995: 206–24). Thus, tales do not reflect solely the conditions of the time of their performance and collection in the nineteenth century, although the controversies between land-owning peasants and landless rural people are also reflected in the content of tales. Other top echelons of society from the king down to basic landlords receive their portion of the criticism. According to Apo, the socially stratified society of the turn of the twentieth century with its class boundaries has offered a sounding board for social comments. (Apo 1995: 218–19) So, the tales, full of fiction, nevertheless reflect reality but

do not describe it directly. The materials available do not reveal the opinion of the tradition-bearers about the relationship of the tales to reality.

Linda Dégh, basing her work on that of the Hungarian researcher, János Honti, writes that the world view of Märchen existed already before fairy tales and continues its life also outside fairy tales, alongside logical reality and practical life. Dégh sees the interplay of the worldviews of fairy tales and of tellers of fairy tales as crucial for the actual performances of fairy tales (Dégh 1995: 134–5).

### Legends

Legends differ from fairy tales by definition, in that they are told as reports of real events, and therefore they aim to describe truthfully and correctly the reality they refer to. This difference is visible also in the close connection of legends to place and time. According to Lutz Röhrich (1991: 10–12), historical legends tend to be history as much as fairy tales are stories. Therefore legends strive to describe reality as realistically as possible, and the narrated single event is referred to as if it really took place.

On the basis just of the legend text and of the genre definition it is usually not possible to decide to what extent the teller and audience have believed in the truthfulness of the content of the legend. According to Röhrich (1991: 26), tale and legend bring forth different emotions. The legend is associated with astonishment and fear, whereas the fairy tale is associated with indifference towards pain and lack of emotionality.

The matters described above concern the viewpoint of the tradition-bearers of legend. Folklorists, in turn, have seen legends as closer to fairy tales in the sense that they too do not reflect truthfully particular real events. They are not real reports of the past but certain fixed types of stories that can be connected time and again with new places and people. For folklorists legends are not the true descriptions of reality as presented by tellers to the audience. They are reflections and representations of a general historical and societal reality in a similar way to fairy tales. Nevertheless, Linda Dégh, following Hermann Bausinger, sees the origin of a historical legend in a significant historical event and of a mythological legend in a frightening personal experience (Dégh 2001: 38). According to Dégh, folklorists have avoided the question of the truth-value of legends and formulated their interpretations without reference to the ideas of the tellers (2001: 317).

Folklorists have regarded legends as basically fiction, which has been explained and interpreted in similar ways to fairy tales. Legends in general reflect reality, the real world in which people live, but individual legends are not true reports of that reality and do not reflect it in the way they are presented as doing by the teller. Good

examples of this are the study of Ingrian spirit tradition by Lauri Honko (1962) and the cultural ecological studies of Matti Sarmela (1974, 2009: 419–505), based on belief legends.

In exceptional cases folklorists have been able to find legends which have preserved information from the past over centuries or even millennia, but more typical is the disappearance of the particular event behind general legend motifs in a relatively short time. Brynjulf Alver in his study of historical legends (1973), originally published in the 1960s, has divided his material into two groups according to their historical background information—whether it is possible to verify their content using other sources or not. In both groups it is evident that legends have been transformed in a similar manner to that found in prose tradition in general.

One example in Alver's writing is legends and documentary information concerning a strong man called Sâve, who was a real person. Despite all the connections with reality Alver even in this case came to the conclusion that there is no historical 'truth' to be found in the legends; this has to be sought in historical documents. Legends have their own logic, which gives rise to the form of description of Sâve found in legends. The core of legends is often historical, but they present first of all the views of tradition-bearers about the narrated issues, reactions, reflections and judgements of the event. (Alver 1973: 127, 134.) Thus, legends present quite different information about reality to their audience and to folklorists who have studied them.

### Oral history

The third genre I present here is oral history and personal narration related to it. It has been studied from different perspectives and with different research questions. Its value as historical source material has been disputed, and nowadays the general view is that oral history does not describe the past objectively; rather, popular opinions, thinking and ideas about the past can be revealed through oral history. It is subjective in this sense, but, as Alessandro Portelli points out (1991: 50–1), the existence of subjective ideas is an objective fact worth studying. Typical too is the opinion of Annikki Kaivola-Bregenhøj (2001): A folklore researcher does not look for the one and only truth in personality stories, but tries to find out what is the importance of memory for the narrator and what the narrator wants to say with his story. Folklorists are inclined to have a suspicious, constructivistic viewpoint on personal recollections. These are not considered to consist of realistic, factual information about reality. (Pöysä 2006: 225–6.)

For some researchers, this tension between the real past and narratives related to it, is an interesting topic of study. Alessandro Portelli has in many studies compared oral history with documentary materials related

to the same event and found interesting discrepancies between them, for instance, in his study of the labour riots in post-war Italy (Portelli 1991) and the massacre conducted by Nazi German forces in Rome during the Second World War (Portelli 2003). In both cases he presents a logical explanation for the emergence of an incorrect idea and narrative of the past event. In this juxtaposition historical documentary information provides the necessary comparative background which reveals the deficiency of the popular memory. This 'incorrect' memory is the topic of his study and historical and political sources serve as the cultural context used in the interpretation of the formation of the incorrect narrative and in the explanation of its existence.

Although oral history is closer to reality than historical legends, not to mention fairy tales, it is not an immediate description of the factual past but must be interpreted in a somewhat analogous way to legends. For the 'folk', fairy tales have a remote relationship to reality, and legends and oral history have a similar, close connection to it. There have probably always been different attitudes towards particular legends, but they have been told as true reports of reality. Folklorists, in turn, see fairy tales and legends as close to each other in relation to reality, and oral history is only able to some extent to refer to particular historical events.

I have met this problem during my field work in the former Finnish Karelia, ceded to the Soviet Union in the Second World War. The Soviet settlers living on the new territory since the end of the war have told various

stories to explain what they found after the Finns had gone, and what has happened since then. As examples I have two kinds of stories related to this area. In one of them we know that the stories are purely fictional, in the second there was a factual event behind it.

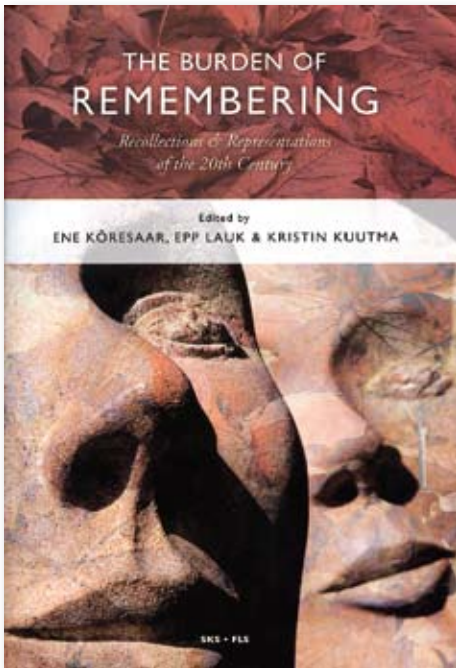
1. There exists a cycle of narratives explaining that there are subterranean passages in the ruins of the old fortifications of the Mannerheim line on the Karelian Isthmus and, similarly, under Finnish Lutheran churches in the former Finnish territory. According to some stories told by local Russians, it would be possible to find on the Mannerheim line a subterranean passage leading across the border to present-day Finland. In two places where our research group did fieldwork in 2001–3 (Melnikovo on the Karelian Isthmus and Lahdenpohja on the west coast of Lake Ladoga) we were told about secret subterranean passages leading from the church to some other place nearby.

We know that there never existed any subterranean passages as described in the narratives. The stories derive, apparently, from basic explanation models known to Russians: Russian folklore about secret subterranean passages, for instance, between the palaces of St Petersburg. The reason for the emergence of these particular stories using basic models, the function of the stories, has been to provide an explanation for strange constructions like hot-air heating tubes under the floor of the church in Melnikovo and the assumed desire of Russians to cross the Russian–Finnish border freely and unnoticed.

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The ruins of Jaakkima's Lutheran church, used for storage before its conflagration. Amongst locals the story was that the fire was a deliberate act of vandalism to cover up theft. Photo by Pekka Hakamies 2002.

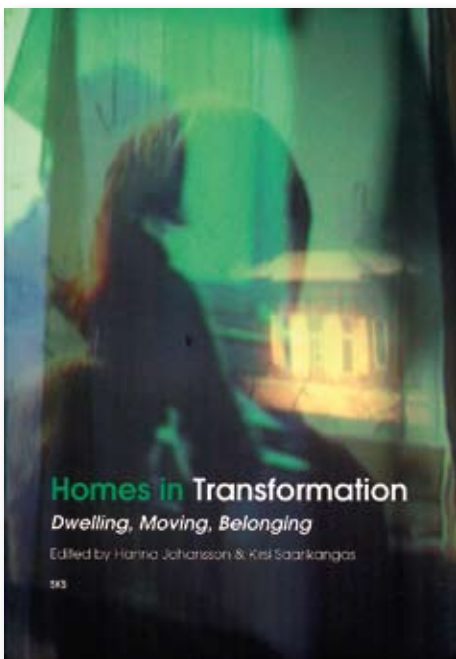




**The Burden of Remembering:  
Recollections & Representations of the 20th Century**

Edited by Ene Kõresaar, Epp Lauk & Kristin Kuutma.  
2009. 252 pp. 29 euros.  
ISBN 978-952-222-102-5

The *Burden of Remembering* is a book that focuses on two major turning points in the twentieth century history that determine the formation of that century as a realm of memory—the Second World War and the collapse of Communist regimes and ideology in Europe. These two events are revisited from the point of view of transdisciplinary memory studies to demonstrate the interplay of continuance and discontinuance of political and cultural regimes of memory of these ruptures as well as their interconnections in present day discourses and practices of remembering and forgetting. The memory practices and models of Second World War are comparatively interrelated with the practices of remembering and interpreting the realities of the period after the fall of Communism in Europe.



**Homes in Transformation:  
Dwelling, Moving, Belonging**

Edited by Hanna Johansson & Kirsi Saarikangas.  
2009. 386 pp. 32 euros.  
ISBN 978-951-222-088-2

Home is simultaneously both a place-bounded anchor and a spatially open structure that changes over time. It is a meeting place of inhabitants, culture, past and present—a multidimensional spatial and temporal intersection. Within the domestic space private and public, personal histories and shared cultural meanings overlap. This original and timely book moves in the tense area between home as a dynamic space with leaking boundaries and a stable, intimate, and secure shelter of one's own. Instead of trying to define what home is, the book explores home both as an idea and location in a variety of contexts. It examines the questions of home, inhabiting and belonging by focusing on home as historical, cultural, material, emotional, technological, gendered, and sexualized space.

*Homes in Transformation* challenges the prevalent notion of home as a static shelter and emphasizes home as a dynamic process. Home and its meanings are formed in the movement and daily use of space. As a dynamic process, home is not a container of social processes; it is a social process. By analyzing a variety of phenomena from art to the Internet and everyday spaces from the late nineteenth-century to the early twenty-first-century the authors offer tools for the re-conceptualization of home.

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Leea Virtanen & Thomas DuBois

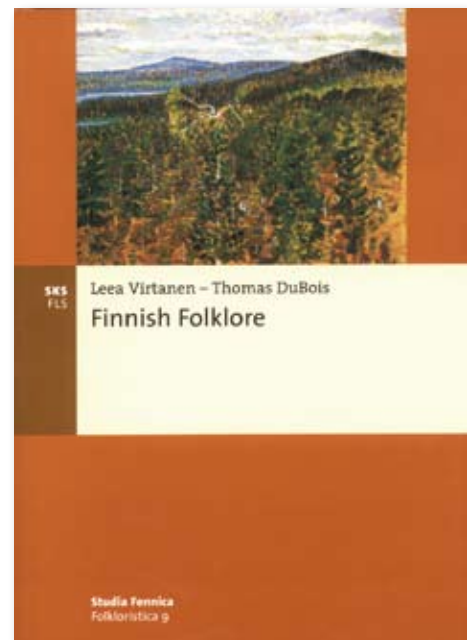
**Finnish Folklore**

Studia Fennica Folkloristica 9. 2000. 297 pp. 32 euros.

ISBN 951-717-938-3

Guided by *Finnish Folklore*, readers may learn about how folklore has been collected and researched in Finland, what regional distinctions exist in the country's traditions, and how traditions have changed in the process of modernization. An extensive anthology section features ancient alliterative poetry, such as formed the basis of the Finnish national epic Kalevala. Readers unskilled in Finnish can also find translated examples of rhymed folk songs, folktales, legends, and other narratives, proverbs, riddles, jokes, and contemporary genres like children's folklore, urban legends, and anecdotes.

Tradition continues to live on in communications from person to person, sometimes travelling thousands of miles and over many national borders in the process. The same item of folklore may acquire new meanings in new contexts. What is the linking thread of tradition? Humor, sexuality, fear, or laughter? Is it our eternal longing for happiness or just the endless need of human beings to pass the time with each other?



**Moving the USSR:**

**Western anomalies and Northern wilderness**

Edited by Pekka Hakamies.

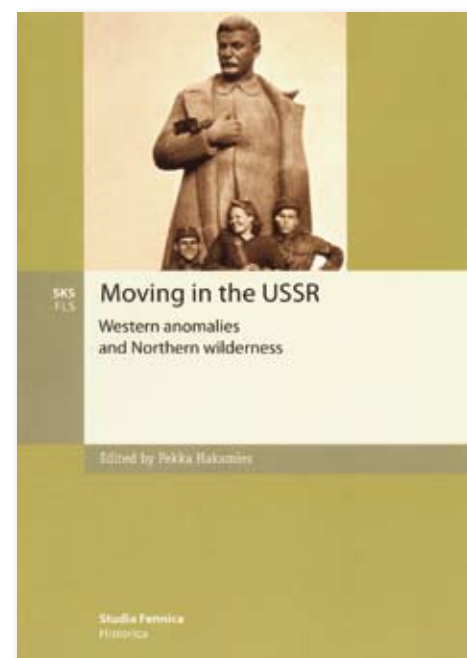
Studia Fennica Historica 11. 2005. 161 pp. 29 euros.

ISBN 951-746-695-1

This book deals with 20th century resettlements in the western areas of the former USSR, in particular with the territory of Karelia that was ceded by Finland in the WWII, Podolia in the Ukraine, and the North-West periphery of Russia in the Kola peninsula. Finns from Karelia emigrated to Finland, most of the Jews of Podolia were exterminated by Nazi Germany but the survivors later emigrated to Israel, and the sparsely populated territory beyond the Polar circle received the Soviet conquerors of nature which they began to exploit. The empty areas were usually settled by planned state recruitment of relocated Soviet citizens, but in some cases also by spontaneous movement. Thus, a Ukrainian took over a Jewish house, a Chuvash kolkhos was dispersed along Finnish khutor houses, and youth in the town of Apatity began to prefer their home town in relation to the cities of Russia.

Everywhere the settlers met new and strange surroundings, and they had to construct places and meanings for themselves in their new home and restructure their local identity in relation to their places of origin and current abodes. They also had to create images of the former inhabitants and explanations for various strange details they perceived around themselves.

All articles within this volume are based on extensive field or archive work. This research project was funded by the Academy of Finland.



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2. In Lahdenpohja we recorded several times a story telling about the fire that destroyed the Jaakkima church close to the town of Lahdenpohja. Here is a translation of one of the records:

There was a store house of the trading office. There was a store. And when it [the church] burned, everything that they [the workers] had drunk they could say had been in that store. In general, so. They happened to have three hundred tons of granulated sugar. I say, if that three hundred tons did burn, so there would have been a sweet river down to Lake Ladoga. Can you imagine how three hundred tons of granulated sugar would burn! So it was burned there deliberately. All they had consumed for drinking, it was no more possible, it was uncountable. So they put fire to it. That was the whole story.

The teller of this record is convinced that the devastating fire was an intentional misdeed by the workers of the store located in the former church, and the aim was to eliminate the evidence of the large-scale stealing of food products. As a concrete argument the teller points to the amount of sugar supposed to be in storage and how it should have flowed down the streets of the town.

We know that the church burned but the point is whether it was just an accident or a conscious misdeed as many local people thought. An investigation into the reason for the fire must have been carried out by the local authorities but its result is not known to us.

Does it make any sense whether we know about the real event? A constructionist viewpoint would rely on the fact that there are many narratives in Russian folklore about a church used as a store house during the Soviet period being burned intentionally in order to hide traces of stealing, and it is quite possible that there is no real basis to the story; in any case the real, extra-textual background is irrelevant. But is it relevant to know what actually happened?

There are two alternatives. In the first the investigation revealed that the fire was set on purpose and stealing had taken place. In this case the story reflects real facts but perhaps adds some narrative colour to them.

The second alternative is more fictive. The real cause of the fire could not be revealed, and it was officially categorized as an accident. Therefore the story is based on explanation models known generally to Russians and it fills a lack of information: local people's desire to find an explanation for the apparent loss of a lot of valuable food and a nice building and to find out who was guilty of it. Without knowing the details of the case this latter alternative seems more probable.

As a conclusion I would like to state that it is natural that the more realistic the genre of folklore we have, the

more relevant is the relationship of reality to the narrative. A constructionist perspective, like discourse analysis, can have its advantages, but often in the study of oral history and personal recollections the study of narratives in relation to external factual information brings additional value and a possibility for deeper understanding and interpretation of the stories and popular ideas behind the narration. The extra-textual contextual information is necessary also for correct understanding of the function of the story in the community in which it is told. It is clear that stories are constructions, but they do not solely produce (narrative) reality but also reflect external reality—there is reality outside the text. ■

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# After the New Folkloristics? The desire to question

NIINA HÄMÄLÄINEN

## The eighth FF Summer School in Lammi

Values and authenticity, contexts, performances—these are some of the main themes to appear in the lectures and presentations at the Folklore Fellows' Summer School in 2010. The eighth FF Summer School 'After the New Folkloristics' was held on 2–8 August 2010 at the Lammi Biological Station (University of Helsinki). Over thirty teachers and participants from eleven different countries in Europe, Asia, the Middle East and USA spent an intensive week together discussing folklore, and its research and challenges. The daily schedule of the week consisted of lectures in the mornings and group work in the afternoons. The first FF Summer School was held in 1991 in Turku, Finland, and since then, the idea of the FF Summer School has been the same: not only international but global, not only folkloristic but interdisciplinary.

The 8th Summer School began with a question: 'After the New Folkloristics?' In his welcoming speech, the chairman of the Summer School, Prof. Seppo Knuutila, brought up this main theme of the course and persuaded us to question and doubt. What does 'New Folkloristics' really mean? How have things fared for new folkloristics over the decades, and what has changed or persisted? Academician Anna-Leena Siikala gave an answer in her overview of the twenty years of the FF Summer School in Finland. The same core topics have persisted, but theoretical fields have changed. As Siikala pointed out, in the beginning the fellows were not important, but ourselves: we were seeking ourselves and reflecting the first wave of globalisation.

What makes folklore research interesting and above all significant today is the discussion of modernity, the



Kati Kallio (centre, standing) performing Kalevala-metric poetry at the welcoming party of the FF Summer School. (Seated, from left) Ulf Palmenfelt, Regina Bendix, Laura Stark, Amy Shuman, Aili Nenola, Lotte Tarkka and Anna-Leena Siikala. (Left, standing) Pekka Hakamies, Eija Stark, Kati Kallio, Taina Kaarlenkaski and Niina Hämäläinen. Photo by Tuomas Hovi.

relationship between tradition and the modern, the past and the present—the same discussions which have been the focus of the research field since the nineteenth century. The difference with the new folkloristics lies in methodological and theoretical problems and new questions. This came out concretely in Professor Emerita Aili Nenola's lecture on Ingrian laments. Nenola has a long research history in laments and women's tradition. Among other issues, she reflected on her research interests and herself as a researcher: How does a folklorist see herself when studying traditional material? What has changed in her framing of questions? How does the material relate to modern concerns, while being considered as a traditional, old, archaic folklore? What do we study when we study laments?

### How to make tradition visible

Professor Regina Bendix presented analogies and differences between inheritance and heritage. She questioned how to represent tradition and how to inherit it and take responsibility of it. UNESCO has taken a wide view on folklore by not only helping folklore institutions in developing countries but also defining and representing tradition. UNESCO's catchphrase emphasizes saving, preserving and owning tradition. From this perspective, as Bendix clarified, tradition is seen as an old, static object to be guarded. Consequently, becoming a safeguarded tradition in UNESCO regulations might actually freeze up and conserve the tradition instead of keeping it living and vital.

Professor Amy Shuman continued and broadened the discussion of values with concrete examples. Research material Shuman referred to consisted of interviews and narrations of asylum seekers in the United States. Shuman has assessed problems of prejudice in



relation to asylum stories, which have been used as a stigma, as fake, in judgements by government authorities. The lecture questioned a process of stigmatisation and visibility in the process of asylum-seeking. Visibility and invisibility were also addressed in the lecture of Professor Aone van Engelenhoven. Van Engelenhoven's presentation dealt with East Timorian story-telling as a never-ending story. The never-ending has compounded the idea of how tradition becomes real and alive over and over again through the presence of the audience.



(Above) Opening the FF Summer School, the chair of the Organising Committee, Prof. Seppo Knuutila, welcomes participants. Thereafter the participants start work by listening to lectures on materials related to the Summer School themes, and discussing them (left). Photos by Tuomas Hovi.



At the FF Summer School dinner party a book lottery was organised. Making their choices (from the left): Andreas McKeough, Margaret Lyngdoh, Lene Andersen and Zhu Gang. Photos by Tuomas Hovi.

Professor Timo Kaartinen also took us to Indonesia, to Kei Islands in eastern Indonesia. Challenges posed by tradition in the process of its persistence, its recording, and its weakening were the main topics of Kaartinen's discussion. He dealt with many facets of oral tradition on the island, where the young generation uses tradition for its own purposes while at the same time old texts have started to live a separate life among people. The lecture also debated problems of textualisation within living tradition.

Textualisation and the representation of tradition were addressed in the lecture of Professor Vladimir Napol'skih as well. Napol'skih presented traditional epics among the Udmurts, discussing the meaning of the epic for the audience and its identity. The textualised and reconstructed epic material was targeted at the same problems of visibility and representation as were discussed in previous lectures: who owns the tradition and who has right to represent it? Although it was not widely stated, the Romantic view of tradition, 'longing for history and the past', was nonetheless implicit in lectures, and it clearly affects folklore research even today.

### Stories to be experienced and to be shared

Narration research is one of the main fields in contemporary folklore research. Many lectures and presentations concerned narration and narrative problems and gave rise to discussion on the research and the concept. Narrative research is also a good example of interdisciplinary research interests in folklore studies, and the reason for rehearsing topics in this area appeared in lectures and discussions. Professor Ulf Palmenfelt spoke of the social creation of grand narratives. He addressed the relation between individual life histories and collective, shared narratives. How do we carry and represent great

narrative in our own life histories? Palmenfelt concluded his lecture by emphasizing the importance of unfinished narratives and stories told and experienced repeatedly. His research material showed that using grand narratives and their fragments and parts in an individual's own narration makes great narrative effectively small, fractured, unfinished and only partly shared.

Narration conventions, contexts and performances were evident in the lecture of Professor Maarten Kossmann. Kossmann showed how situational, narrative or stylistic conventions are re-organised and represented every time a story is told. The most fascinating argument that stood out in discussion concerned narrative gaps, emotions and breaks which the audience as well as researcher have to fill. Similar arguments to those of Palmenfelt and Kossmann were presented by Professor Laura Stark, who spoke broadly of connections of fact and fiction in narrative stories in nineteenth-century Finland. In individual narration, perspectives on fact and reality are relative and ever-changing. The lecture linked into an ongoing puzzle of what is 'true' in folklore, how it is defined, articulated and made sense of in cases when tradition is used.

### Group work—the basis in the Summer School

Group work has been an important method of working and sharing research ideas from the very beginning of the Summer School. This time group work was conducted by dividing participants and teachers into four different workshops: 'Documenting and safeguarding of oral tradition', 'Textual practices—permanence and performance', 'Narration and social storytelling' and 'Legitimacy, authenticity, and value'. Workshops gathered in the afternoons and participants' presentations took place only within the groups. Instead of being in

front of a massive group of people, all participants had a chance to present their research subjects and interests within their own group. Lively discussion and sharing of ideas took place readily in small groups. Groups dealt productively with subjects and presentations while discussions also related to the lectures of the Summer School.

### **A bridge between worlds**

The Lammi station hosted us well with delicious and abundant meals, reasonable rooms and other facilities not forgetting the most attractive of places, the sauna and the lake. The intensive and multifaceted research week had its highlight in the traditional Summer School dinner party, where everybody had a chance to win a book in a lottery as well as receiving a diploma as an associate member of Folklore Fellows.

After seven days of discussions, inspiration, shared and transmitted ideas and long nights around the camp fire, singing and talking, many sympathised strongly with Anna-Leena Siikala, who called the FF Summer School a bridge between worlds and people.

What comes after the 'New Folkloristics'? Folklore research searching for the interdisciplinary, for ideologies and values? What is essential and important can be found in Amy Shuman's crystallizing words from her final lecture: being a folklorist and ethnographer is to deal with the real and familiar things of everyday life.

Instead of longing for the past and the sense of loss, we should long and reach for the present and self-evident, questioning our sense of the past and ourselves.

The 8th Folklore Fellows' Summer School was organised by the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, five Finnish folklore departments, the Graduate School of Cultural Interpretations, the Folklore Archives of the Finnish Literature Society and the Kalevala Institute. The Kalevala Society was a main partner of the 8th FFSS. ■

Niina Hämäläinen is a post graduate student at the University of Turku.

Participants of the 8th FF Summer School. (Front row, kneeling, from left) Doortje Kossmann, Anna Hynninen, Júlíana Magnúsdóttir, Andreas McKeough, Pietu Harvilahti, Pauliina Latvala, Amy Shuman, Lotte Tarkka, Elena Monakhova. (Middle row, from left) Getie Gelaye, Li He, Niina Hämäläinen, Eerika Koskinen-Koivisto, Redina Bendix, Margaret Lyngdoh, Linda Lee, Adil Zhumaturdu, Faguna Barmahalia, Ulf Palmenfelt, Lauri Harvilahti, Taija Kaarlenkaski, Laura Salmi, Natasha Komelina, Ulla Savolainen. (Back row, from left) Maarten Kossmann, Yael Zilberman, Laura Stark, Lene Andersen, Maria Vasenkari, Tuomas Hovi, Kati Kallio, Seppo Knuuttila, Jef van der Aa, Zhu Gang, Aone van Engelenhoven, Jukka Saarinen, Timo Kaartinen, Pekka Hakamies and Vladimir Napoliskih. Photo by Susanna Jurvanen.



# Reviews

FFC 298. Nils-Arvid Bringéus,  
**Carl Wilhelm von Sydow. A Swedish Pioneer in  
Folklore**

Translated by John Irons. 272 pp. ISBN 978-951-41-1050-4 (hard), 1051-1 (soft). Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 2009.

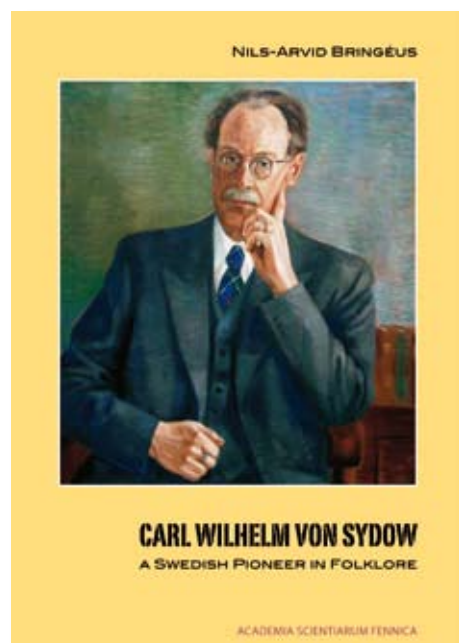
## A portrait of the perfect Nordic folklorist

Can a biography of a scholar who lived from 1878 to 1952 be a highly relevant book? Yes, it can.

The best proof is the name *Folkminnen och folktankar*, i.e. folklore (lit. folk memory) and popular thought, of the periodical founded by C. W. von Sydow in 1914: today it would be a more adequate description of the folkloristic interest than ever.

By taking us a hundred years back to the formative era of the Folklore Fellows and of Nordic folkloristics, the distinguished ethnology professor emeritus of the University of Lund (Sweden), Nils-Arvid Bringéus has prepared an intellectual treat to dwell on for three kinds of readers: 1. anyone who wants to understand the birth of folklore research from an interest in age-old cultural contacts, close to philology; 2. those seeking to draw conclusions about the essence of folkloristics and its place in academia; and 3. folklorists striving to expand their discipline into new territories, outside the domain of the oral, and/or to take their expertise outside academia. The author's strategy of providing a close and broad context effectively invites the reader to reflect: where am I as a folklorist at this time?

The book as a whole is a rich ethnography of an essentially familiar academic life in the era of the two World Wars, with its intrigues and alliances, deep friendships and rivalries—sometimes spanning decades. A dynamic touch of real life is achieved through a mix of published and official documents with an abundance of personal letters to family and colleagues. The hub of this world is the University of Lund in southern Sweden, and it expands to Denmark and Germany as well as to the newly independent Ireland of the twenties and thirties. It also includes Norway and, somewhat on the margins, Finland, and the other old Swedish university, of Uppsala, and more broadly all of Sweden, which von Sydow wanted to comprehend both mentally (by organising the collection of folklore) and physically by train and by sledge as a popular lecturer. It is a pity there are no maps in the book to show the area of the activities of a folklorist who was keen on showing things on a map.



The focus is on one actor, Carl Wilhelm von Sydow, the only Swedish folklorist of his generation, but the perspective is not solely his. We get to know his family and early years, his ideological outlook and interest in biology, his mentors as well as his opponents, his professional networks and publications, and of course his dramatic career, which at times acquires the trappings of a suspense-thriller: when and where and in what subject would the energetic and internationally recognised scholar get his professor's chair? And when, at last, in the dramatic spring of 1940 in the middle of the war, at the age of 62, he got it at his home university, the subject was not folkloristics (*folkminnesforskning*) for which he had fought all his life, but comparative folk-culture research, which also covers the material side of culture. Wilhelm von Sydow had the firm conviction that the domain of mental and verbal culture (*folkdikt, folktro, folksed*) would demand its own expertise, even its own faculty.

### The Nordic folklorist

The book can also be read as a portrait of the breathtakingly perfect Scandinavian and Nordic *primus motor* in folklore, who uses all his resources—even risking his health and welfare—to do what he wants to have done. The roles included being an academic teacher and mentor, a designer of a folklore curriculum, the founder and organiser of a folklore archive and collection, an editor of periodicals, and a writer and popular speaker at various venues, including daily papers and Swedish encyclopaedias: he wanted to give something back to the people. Typical of the pioneer situation and out of the necessity to earn a living, he wrote not a single major scholarly work with a comprehensive foundation, but a number of book reviews and articles, to educate and inspire others in the mission of folklore. When he thought he was right he was not afraid of feisty polemics, not even with the best of friends. His selected articles appeared in English in 1948 to celebrate his seventieth birthday.

A vital part of an academic community of the era were the scholars' wives as helpers (not supernatural, as in fairytales), entertainers and even messengers. This led von Sydow to doubts about any viable career prospects of even his most talented female students, including Anna Birgitta Rooth, later a professor in Uppsala, who became one of the most important developers of his scholarly heritage.

### The author's agenda

Knowing Nils-Arvid Bringéus as the skilful advocate of a unified academic subject (*helhetsetnologi*) in mainstream ethnology in Sweden, which, unlike the other Nordic countries, did not accept folkloristics as an independent discipline, one cannot avoid the question of the author's agenda. Does he blame von Sydow for losing the battle himself with his undiplomatic feisty attitude? What does Bringéus himself—who as a schoolboy listened to von Sydow and had his portrait hanging on the wall in his office—now think of the matter: what was gained and what was lost in the Swedish solution not to accept folkloristics as an independent discipline?

In his preface to the Swedish original of 2006, Bringéus asks 'how many know who Carl Wilhelm von Sydow was?'—the most famous von Sydow being his son Max, the actor, who ends the book sketching 'my father the storyteller'. The work seems to be translated as such, without corrections or editing for foreign readers. The solution works well for a reader who is accustomed to interpreting cultural texts. The original formulations do not always translate well, though: a *docent* in the Nordic universities is more than a 'senior lecturer', 'popular' feels an often anachronistic translation of the dominant concept *folk*, and *religionsforskare*—an important aspect of von Sydow's interest—is something other than 'religious scholar'.

The author's approach reveals that he is not a folklorist himself. Still, knowingly or not, through his skilful and initiated presentation—as also through the omissions—

he does a great service to a discussion of principles in folklore research. The inclusion of von Sydow's bibliography, compiled by one of his last students, Jan-Öjvind Swahn, is a real temptation and a challenge. If I read all of it, would I understand how von Sydow thought and what really drove him? The scholarly thought of a humanist in another *Lebenswelt* is probably no less difficult to grasp than popular thought. It may well be, though, that we never catch the very essence of Carl Wilhelm von Sydow, who did most of his thinking aloud, without papers, in the seminars and lecture halls.

### The intellectual base, the paradise island and the tumbled-down hero

For a folklorist who knows the basics of von Sydow's thinking, the chapters dealing with Ireland and Germany are most rewarding in revealing new, even unexpected sides of von Sydow as a man and a scholar. While for the young Wilhelm the progressive Danish folklore scene right across Öresund was a formative experience and a model for being a folklorist, it was Ireland which in many ways came to be his professional paradise, a promised land in which he could both act and be appreciated as the folklorist he was. Within a few months in 1920 he learned Gaelic, and over subsequent visits became a true ethnographer, participant observer, interviewer and photographer, and obviously had a great time on the green island with its ancient links to Scandinavia. Later he would mentor the young Séamus Ó Duilearga and foster the emerging Irish folklore scholarship; it feels right that von Sydow's personal library ended up in Dublin.

Von Sydow's letters to trusted friends are an incomparable source in showing how one single, traditionally German-minded Scandinavian humanist met with Adolf Hitler's advance: as something that was inevitable and basically positive, missing the great plan that lay behind it, in which the German academic community was deeply involved. Until the spring of 1940, when it all collapsed, when Hitler's army invaded Denmark and Norway. This passage more than anything invites a more general question about the possible quality of serious scholarly work in the historical period in which von Sydow's generation lived their lives. It is no wonder that Bringéus, who entered the University of Lund as a student in 1947, saw in him a tired old man—in his late sixties. New folklorists in the post-war world were to tend to full blossom the seedlings he planted. Categories of folklore suggested by him may be outdated, but not the idea itself; there are socially recognised modes/genres/indexes of spoken language for different contexts and purposes.

### We, the Sydowians

I did not realise how Sydowian it was to write that it takes a folklorist to understand the life of oral tradition, as I did in *Perinteentutkimuksen perusteita* (Foundations of folkloristics, 1980, which was discussed in *FF Network* 38). Our generation of Finnish folklore students in the early sixties learned to see von Sydow—with his ideas

about genres, tradition areas and ecotypes and active vs. passive tradition-bearers etc.—as one of us; an important critic and generator of ideas in developing the outdated Finnish method in more fruitful directions. Only now, after a few weeks in the company of a much more real Wilhelm von Sydow, guided by Bringéus, do I realise how deeply Sydowian the development of post-Krohnian Finnish folkloristics has been, in its growing understanding of the appearances of folkloric expression on the level of individuals and groups, and over larger areas, from the classic folklore settings of White Sea Karelia and Ingria to agrarian Häme and urban backyards, from India to the southern Cook Islands.

The Finnish academic structure and the existence of a nationally appreciated epos, the *Kalevala*, has allowed us to pursue the dream of an independent discipline, folkloristics, which von Sydow was not allowed to have, for reasons which an outsider—especially after reading this book—cannot easily understand. Neither can Bringéus grasp von Sydow's Finland through eloquent letters and by his own cultural and linguistic competence, as he can Denmark, Germany or Ireland. Are there no letters from von Sydow's visit to Finland in 1913? Why did he not attack Kaarle Krohn's *Die folkloristische Arbeitsmethode* in 1926? What did he think of Martti Haavio, an important folkloristic actor from the mid-thirties, inspired by Sydowian thinking? He is not included in the network of colleagues; from the published letters of Haavio and his wife Elsa Enäjärvi-Haavio, who also was a folklorist, we know of Haavio's visit to Uppsala and Lund in 1935 as well as of their close contacts with other Swedish colleagues, and even of von Sydow's offer of a safe haven in his home to the whole Haavio family, in 1940, during the Winter War between Russia and Finland.

The asymmetric relation between Finland and Scandinavia, even Sweden, with which we share six hundred years of common history, gives us an edge: we read Swedish (Norwegian and Danish as well, with a little effort) and have been—until now when English is taking over—able to build on the whole Nordic scholarly tradition, while very few Scandinavians are at home with Finnish. In folklore it may be more important than has been thought. It is more fruitful to argue theories and methods if you are at home with the verbal material that gave rise to those theories. This kind of intuition, not only the need to find material for comparative research, may have been one reason for foreign folklorists like Ó Duilearga, while the Finnish Method was new and attractive, to learn Finnish.

### The enigma

When I now read von Sydow's doctoral dissertation on AT500 (The tale of the girl who was to spin gold), which he defended on 26 May 1909, as the first in Sweden to utilise Kaarle Krohn's geographic-historical method, it is difficult to grasp the intellectual atmosphere in which comparative folktale research aroused such great enthusiasm that the new science of folklore was seen at the

philosophical faculty in Lund as 'one of the most interesting and inventive subjects of modern research'. Here Bringéus, the ethnologist, offers no answer.

Still, looking around now—for instance at the meeting of American Folklore Society at Nashville, Tennessee in October 2010—at the many people who are drawn to the research of folkloric expression, and thinking of the many fine pieces of work produced during the past century, I feel tempted to think of the early enthusiasm as a kind of weak signal, which modern research has strengthened, of grasping something humanly important. It may be right, as has been suggested, to think of 22 January 1811—two centuries ago this winter—as the birthday of modern folkloristics: on that day Jacob Grimm wrote a letter to Clemens Brentano instructing folklore collectors to write down everything just as it was said (*buchstabentreu*)—which in fact has not been technically possible until now. And still there is an odd attraction in reading handwritten abstracts of tales and seeing 'the same' story existing in far-away places, separated by centuries; the local and global simultaneously in one text. The old age of the fairytales of his childhood made von Sydow a folklorist.

Von Sydow turned away from international textual comparison, in favour of the local, the tradition-bearer and the life of folklore. Still, both aspects are there, in the core of folkloristics, and what goes around comes around, as in a hermeneutic spiral: a new appearance of comparative research in the age of the internet was heard when the new holder of Kaarle Krohn's professorial chair, Lotte Tarkka, on 26 May this year—101 years from von Sydow's Krohnian dissertation—delivered her inaugural lecture at the University of Helsinki.

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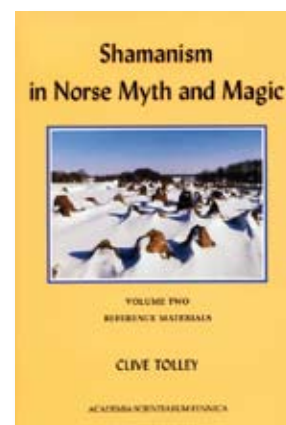
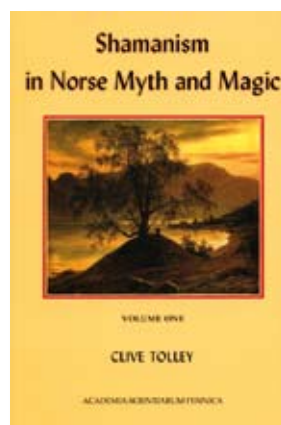
FFC 296–7. Clive Tolley,  
**Shamanism in Norse Myth and Magic.** 2 vols.

Vol. I, xxv + 589 pp. ISBN 978-951-41-1027-6 (hard), 1028-3 (soft).  
Vol. II, Reference materials, xii + 286 pp + 5 maps and 13 plates.  
ISBN 978-951-41-1029-0 (hard), 1030-6 (soft). Helsinki: Academia  
Scientiarum Fennica, 2009.

Clive Tolley's *Shamanism in Norse Myth and Magic* is a work of remarkable scope which will become an invaluable resource to scholars in Germanic studies and other fields. The study is primarily typological and philological in nature. It is a product of a century of discourse on the relationship between the Norse magical practice known as *seiðr* and traditions of Eurasian shamanism. The study responds to inclinations to treat *seiðr* as 'shamanism' and to treat certain mythological narratives about the god Odin as representing initiation rituals. This book offers important insights into early Norse sources and it really helps to clear the air of argumentations, laying foundations for future investigation in a number of directions.

The study is essentially a typological study of shamanic features in accounts of Old Norse magic, ritual and mythology, with a strong linguistic component. The strategy of the work is to analyze potentially shamanic features associated with *seiðr* and assess the degree to which they can be reasonably said to fall into a broader paradigm of 'classic' Eurasian shamanism. The focus is on what sources actually present and attempts to avoid the circularity of interpreting the Norse traditions through comparisons with other cultures before those comparisons are shown to be valid or relevant. Tolley approaches the sources with a critical eye, and very importantly he places comparisons of *seiðr* and shamanism in the broader contexts of shamanic features in other European traditions, historical perspectives on population movements in early Europe, and discussions of potential historical continuities with Indo-European traditions.

Tolley's magnum opus is a useful resource for the scope of information which it provides in the establishment of an extended context in which to approach *seiðr*. In addition to summaries of histories of cultures and cultural contacts in Northern Europe, it offers an extended introduction to shamanism, as well traditions from Classical Greece and later European witchcraft as additional points of reference in approaching the significance of shamanic features in Norse traditions. Tolley shows his best colours in linguistic analyses; his chapters on the nomenclature of the mind/soul of the individual and of the inhabitants/forces in the unseen world has already earned a place on my reference shelf. The collection of relevant primary sources in original languages with accompanying translations insures the book's continued value as a resource. Norse scholars may be surprised by a few of the examples which Tolley has uncovered, and they will certainly appreciate the range of sources made available from other languages.



One of the most valuable aspects of the study is its criticism of individual medieval manuscript sources which ostensibly present the most accurate or realistic accounts of the performance of *seiðr* and shamanism. Tolley offers particularly insightful discussions of the account of Saami shamanistic performance in *Historia Norwegie*, the performance of *seiðr* by a female ritual specialist called a *völva* in *Eiriks saga rauða*. Tolley reveals the deceptive nature of verisimilitude that has led so many earlier scholars to invest arguments in these fragments of fictional worlds.

The tremendous quantities of information presented in the nearly 900 pages of this work turn out to be remarkably easy to navigate. The first volume of the work is devoted to analysis. It is divided into seven large sections containing twenty-one thematically organized chapters. The chapters are divided into short, clearly marked sections and subsections which are easy to browse, a feature I quickly came to appreciate in the pleasant task of writing this review. The second volume is intended as a reference work. It opens with summaries of ethnographic information on the Eurasian cultures discussed, followed by a thematically organized presentation of primary sources not incorporated into the body text of the analysis. The second volume contains both a source index and also a detailed general index. Scholars of Norse studies will be grateful that poems and sagas in this index are subdivided according to stanza/chapter. The general index is wonderfully detailed, and some 36 pages in length. This is indeed a volume to be used.

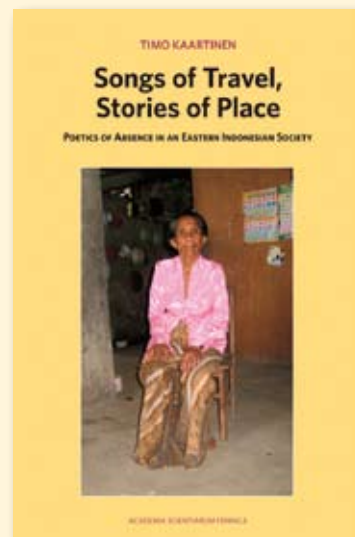
The first section of the volume on analysis is devoted to developing extended contexts. The presentation of the Finno-Karelian *tietäjä* traditions as a form of 'classic' shamanism appears to be a practical concession based on



the evolution of the *tietäjä* both out of and in relation to a form of Eurasian 'shamanism'. The classification of the *tietäjä* as a shaman is not conventional; it is a tradition based on ecstatic incantation performance without a soul-journeys or soul loss. Although this in no way compromises Tolley's argument, it seems inconsistent with the degree to which he demands meeting the standards of 'classic' shamanism in the discussion of Norse and other European traditions. The second section offers a brief overview of the role of shamanism in society with a discussion on gender. The organizational strategy of the work rapidly emerges as each chapter presents relevant shamanic features in selected traditions considered 'classic' shamanism followed by potential Norse analogues. The third section is on metaphysical entities and is heavily linguistic. The fourth addresses potentially shamanic aspects of the cosmology. It focuses on images of the *axis mundi* and presents a fascinating discussion of Heimdall's relationship to the world tree. The fifth section addresses evidence of shamanic features in actual social practice. The critical approach to specific sources in this section is very strong, but the threshold between social practice and representations in mythological narratives occasionally blurs. The criticism of specific texts is extremely useful, yet the heavy concentration of what is explicitly presented in the sources is not accompanied by considerations of, for example, what features are likely to be omitted or assumed implicit in the medieval sources; what types of discontinuities we might anticipate between narratives about magical performances in contrast to the subjective experiences and songs or narratives of ritual specialists themselves (as we have for the shamanic traditions). Uses of mythological narrative as evidence of social practice also raises questions of how such continuities in representation should be addressed and interpreted. The sixth section is an appendix addressing two specific arguments. One of these argues against associations of smithing with shamanism in Norse culture, and the other is against evidence of Eurasian bear cults in Norse culture due to the association of such cults with shamanic practices. The final section offers an overview of the findings.

The orientation of Tolley's presentation has been impacted by the history of discourse to which it is responding. The long history of arguments surrounding the identification of *seiðr* with Saami shamanism lead *seiðr* to be very much the focus of the study. Tolley's acumen in linguistics inclines away from using this term in a general sense of 'magic' to focus on contexts where the term is used. As a consequence, there are magical performances which fall outside of the scope of his considerations. One example which is prominently discussed in the scholarship is found in the earliest vernacular history of Iceland, when the *goði* (chieftain/ritual specialist) Thorgeirr, who was the high authority (law-speaker) at the national assembly of Iceland, appears to perform a rite of some sort before deciding the legal conversion of the commonwealth. The account very briefly (and ambiguously) describes Thorgeirr laying under his cloak for

## A new publication in the FF Communications



### Songs of Travel, Stories of Place Poetics of Absence in an Eastern Indonesian Society

by  
Timo Kaartinen

This book explores the narratives of people who trace their origin to Banda, the famous Nutmeg Islands of Eastern Indonesia. They were displaced from their ancient homeland by the Dutch colonization of Banda in 1621 and carry on their language and traditions in the village described in this study. The Bandanese continue traveling to distant places in pursuit of recognition by their ancestral allies. They bring their past into life through rituals and verbal arts which commemorate absent travelers and anticipate their return.

The expressive genres of the Bandanese force us to ask what counts as history and how people's own interpretations of world-scale political events shape their predicaments and possibilities of action. This book argues that ethno-history can be a source of exemplary acts which inform collective responses to new circumstances. The folk poetry of the Bandanese is neither a subaltern reaction to colonial contacts and state interventions nor evidence of their hegemonic effects. It places real, historical events in several chronotopic frameworks in which they are relived as memory and given a total meaning as history. By analyzing poetic expressions and their effects on society this book contributes to the efforts of anthropologists to historicize the ethnographic realities they study.

Folklore Fellows' Communications No. 299  
207 pp. 2010. ISBN 978-951-41-1052-8

25 euros (hardback)

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Shop online at [www.tsv.fi/tiedekirja](http://www.tsv.fi/tiedekirja)

## A new publication in the FF Communications



### The Types of the Swedish Folk Legend

by

Bengt af Klintberg

The documentation of folk legends in Sweden was begun already in the sixteenth century by Olaus Magnus, the last catholic archbishop, and reached its peak as late as in the first half of the twentieth century. This rich material has hitherto been accessible to international study only to a limited degree. The over 1800 legend types listed in the present catalogue give a vivid picture of the Swedish peasant society with its trolls, ghosts and witches and illustrates its concept of history. The index is based on unprinted records in the four largest folklore archives of Sweden and about 150 printed sources, covering all provinces in Sweden and the Swedish-speaking parts of Finland. Each section of the catalogue contains an introduction, in which the general background of the legends is described.

Folklore Fellows' Communications No. 300  
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a day and a night before announcing the new law. Tolley presents this as an example of the use of a cloth covering in typological comparisons with Saami and Samoyed shamanic performance, and he suggests that the cloth covering may be an areal motif (vol. 1, p. 260). However, he never returns to this account presumably because it stands outside of the focus of his study: it is not specifically associated with *seiðr* and indeed it does not accord with accounts in which *seiðr* occurs as a term. Tolley's emphasis on what the sources express without ambiguity make the absence of discussion surrounding this account easily understandable: it would involve entering into a potentially circular argument of inferences which could cloud our assessment of other sources in an overview. However, the example also presents the possibility of additional practices not termed *seiðr* exhibit shamanic features, and Tolley's study of what the sources do present offers a foundation for returning to these less explicit accounts.

The study covers such a vast amount of material that it certainly was not possible to address the minutiae of every point. Arguments are oriented to points of contention within the history of academic discourse surrounding *seiðr*. Tolley often defers to Ursula Dronke's work in Norse mythology when outside of these points of contention. He treats *seiðr* as originating among the Vanir and places great emphasis on the goddess Freyja as the patron of this magical art. This position is fairly conventional, although Tolley observes that the sources are remarkably limited and not unequivocal. I would have liked to see the same sort of critical acumen, which Tolley levels at examples of *seiðr*, turned to assess this assertion of Freyja as the patron of *seiðr*. This emphasis marginalizes Odin's relationship to the practice. It stands at the foundation of Tolley's emphasis on *seiðr* as women's magic and his focus on the female practitioner referred to as a *völva*, a wandering diviner who is documented primarily as a narrative trope in extant sources.

Tolley's assessment of *seiðr* and the *völva*'s interaction with spirits is both astute and fascinating. Tolley finds that practitioners of *seiðr* were not positively accepted in the social community and that the *völva* is more similar to representations of the 'witch' in later European traditions than to a shaman in terms of her relationship to society and functions of *seiðr* as a magical practice. He opposes this to the shaman as 'an embodiment of his community' (vol. 1, pp. 145, 150), emphasizing more extreme examples for the sake of contrast. This contrast, along with the lack of associations between *seiðr* and healing, and the lack of evidence for soul journeys to the otherworld by the practitioner or a spirit proxy, are essential points which Tolley found did not accord with 'classic' shamanism. These findings invite more extensive comparisons with traditions of European witchcraft and its process of development.

As is common in Old Norse studies, the period for which the typological comparisons are relevant is rather vaguely defined. It is loosely the centuries close to the legal conversion of Iceland in the year 999/1000, with dis-

cussions of how traditions were understood when documented some two or more centuries later. Tolley observes that Christian influences began impacting Norse traditions very early, and that these attitudes to the *völva* may be the result of such influence (vol. 1, p. 423). There is no comment on whether attitudes toward *seiðr* as a practice may have also changed in this process, nor when or where the institution of the *völva* may have shifted from a feature of living communities to a narrative trope.

Tolley's typological approach emphasizes how different shamanic features appear to have functioned in the sources and the degree of correspondence to parallels to 'classic' shamanism, while acknowledging that these features may have had a long history and their significance may have changed over time. Etymological aspects of the study inevitably incorporate historical perspectives into the development of the words concerned. Comparisons of motifs may include the observation of isoglosses discussed in terms of historical contact and exchange but does not investigate the background or development of these shamanic features in any depth which limits the period to which his findings are relevant. Tolley's typological survey lays the foundation for investigations into the history of motifs and mythic images, and explorations of why, as he found concerning the world tree image, 'the Norse focus, at least as it has survived, was divorced from ritual and devoted to artistry' (vol. 1, p. 413). This work has paved the way for investigations into the history of contact and exchange across Northern Europe and Eurasia, for example to explore why shamanic features in Norse traditions are generally associated with more distant shamanic cultures rather than neighbouring Saami and Finno-Karelian cultures, while the Saami and Finno-Karelian traditions each exhibit a number of stronger associations with the Norse traditions than they do to each other.

The value of this work for future research is incontestable. The synchronic emphasis of Tolley's study breaks down many of the preconceptions which have been constructed over the last century. The study makes it possible to move past the question of whether the Norse were practitioners of 'shamanism' to questions surrounding the history and significance of particular shamanic features within a broader frame of reference. Tolley's focus on terms and their use also offers a point of departure into the exploration of representations of magical performance and magical practitioners, and the degree to which the priorities of Christian authors have significantly impacted our perspectives on their pagan forebears. The accessibility of the work and the tremendous number of primary sources which it presents make it a practical resource for scholars of Norse culture and mythology, scholars of Germanic linguistics and also scholars of shamanism. Tolley's *Shamanism in Norse Myth and Magic* will prove to be an essential and enduring work.

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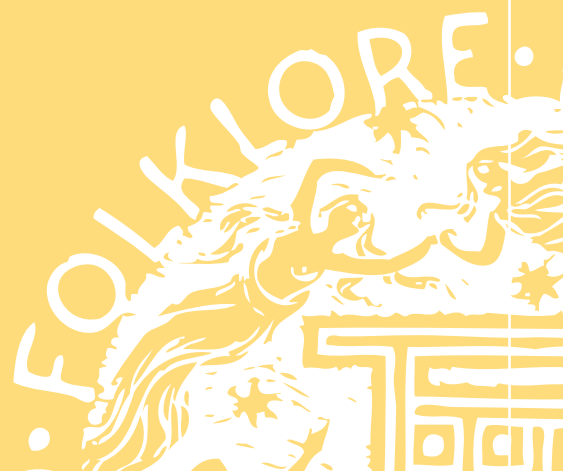
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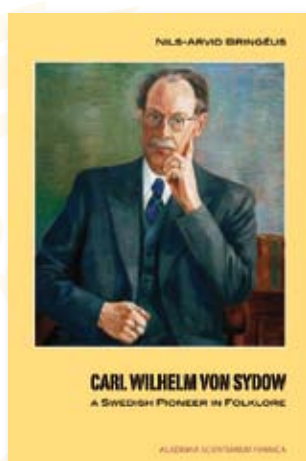
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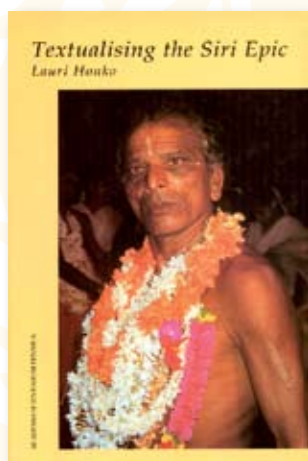
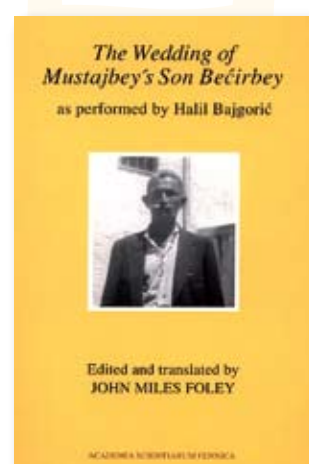
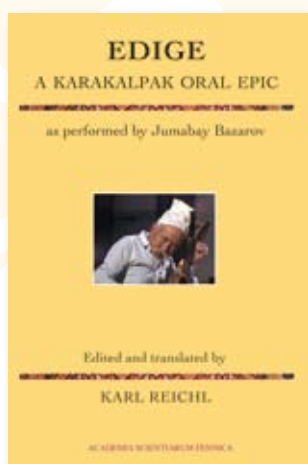
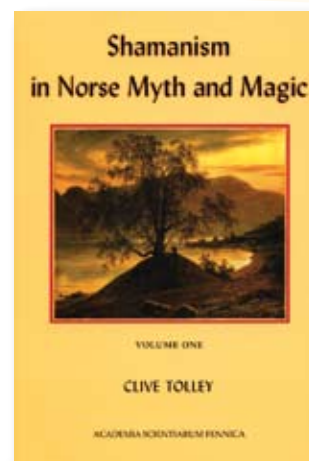
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