

# Folklore Fellows' NETWORK



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The centenary  
of Folklore Fellows'  
Communications

The deck of cards  
and the language  
of tradition

Wandering legends  
about wandering forests

# Folklore Fellows' NETWORK

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FF Network 40 | June 2011

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## CONTENTS

### PEKKA HAKAMIES

Oral and written folklore .....3

### LOTTE TARKKA

The deck of cards and the language of tradition .....4

The Types of International Folktales reprinted .....8

### BENGT AF KLINTBERG

Wandering legends about wandering forests .....10

Publications of the Finnish Literature Society .....14

Reviews .....19

Cover: *Little Red Riding Hood* by Warwick Goble (1862–1943). In: *The Fairy Book* (London 1913).



# Oral and written folklore

Folkloristics has by definition been the research of oral tradition, and the written form has from the beginning been primarily a research medium. An oral presentation has had to be rendered into written form to enable its archiving and use as research material. Oral-based materials, reduced to written form, have consisted of the records of field-workers, texts sent to archives by networks of respondents and transcriptions of audio-recordings. The medium of literary transmission, on the other hand, has been frowned upon from a source-critical perspective, since the central characteristic of folklore has been considered orality and the resources of memory.

Gradually, various essentially literary texts have become materials for folkloristic research, through writings produced by individuals or groups and intended for reading by others. Diaries, songsheets and hand-written newspapers are written materials but at the same time in some sense to be compared with oral folklore as a phenomenon and object of research. The increasingly literary nature of culture, the gradual spread of written communication in place of the oral and the influence of the oral and written one upon the other has brought about a significant object for interdisciplinary research. At the same time researchers have begun to focus systematic attention on what happens when a literary text is produced on the basis of oral presentations. Textualisation has become an important research topic and a fundamental methodological concept.

Using new methodologies, the analysis of literary transmission has become easier, and in folkloristics directed at the phenomena of our own time we increasingly come to observe that the texts being researched are literary in nature. The chatrooms of the internet, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and text messages are a froth of texts which are written but communicate in the same way as oral folklore. Some, usually anonymous, person produces a text from materials in use for the purposes of his own messaging. He wishes to tell something, presents his opinion or comment or amuses his audience, just like a folklore performer. The recipients are not in a face-to-face contact with the sender, but they can present their own comments in such a way that the sender of the message as well as other recipients receive it. Similarities and differences from traditional folklore challenge researchers to investigate how, in such a situ-

ation, they should define their own object of research, folklore.

Although it is easy to send out a fixed text on the internet, every link in the chain of intermediaries can alter it as he or she wishes. In new media, a typically spoken form of language is used, as in folklore, nor is the form of language polished in the way of a traditional written communication. Aiming at a tight and effective form of presentation, the texts often use some very traditional rhetorical formulae. Proverbs are one such means of ‘talking with a bigger mouth’, or appealing to a collective concept, and proverbs are found for example in text messages sent to newspaper editors and in internet discussions.

Research published in the FF Communications series have so far been based quite clearly on the documentation of traditional oral folklore and on ancient written sources. The older source materials include for example Scandinavian sagas and ancient poetry. They have passed on important messages from the past, whose chronological distance from the researchers has formed a topic of scientific investigation. Folklore can indeed be described as messages which are so important that they are passed on. People nowadays generally send each other, often with a wider readership in mind too, messages about their important experiences by some form of digital communication. The task for folklorists is to grasp this flow of messages passing by and to pick out from it that which is most important for research and which best suits our current aims and challenges our scientific ideas.

The choice of research materials and objectives may be a generation-linked matter: the research into messages communicated via modern methods is natural to folklorists who have themselves grown up within this culture—although personal contact with living tradition may not be a prerequisite for example for saga research. At present, research into materials produced through modern media is engaging many students, apart from mature researchers. As the younger generation progresses in its studies and gradually proceeds into research work, the scientific output may increase in depth. After masters come doctorates. We may hope not to have to wait many years for the first FF Communications volume covering the living folklore of the internet and other modern media. ■

# The deck of cards and the language of tradition

LOTTE TARKKA

In 1976, one of the Finnish national icons, the 1948 Olympic champion in javelin, world champion of 1958 in archery, singer-songwriter and film star Tapio Rautavaara (1915–79) recorded an unlikely hit. The performance was a recital accompanied by a distant sound of hymn-singing and a harmonium. For most Finns, the opening chords evoke a vivid aural experience. The unmistakable voice belongs to the working-class athlete who made it to the national hall of fame, and the regular Finnish guy with a charisma fit for Hollywood—indeed, this epitome of Finnishness was supposedly a candidate for the part of Tarzan after Johnny Weismuller.<sup>1</sup> In his cross-over hit *Korttipakka* ('Deck of Cards') the singer, loved for his down-to-earth *Schlagers* and sentimental ditties, made a subtle and ambiguous political gesture. The story goes like this:

This is an old story. It happened one time during the war. The company had been on a long march and arrived at a small town. The next day was Sunday, and the sergeant-major ordered the boys to the church. When the parson read the prayer those who had a prayer book opened it. But one soldier had nothing else but a deck of cards, which he spread out in front of him on the church bench. The sergeant-major noticed the cards and said: 'Soldier, drop the cards!'

After the service the soldier was caught and taken to the field court-martial. The judge asked 'Explain your deed or I will punish you harder than anyone ever.' The soldier answered: 'Sir! I have marched almost all week, and I have no Bible or a prayer book, but I hope that you will understand my honest explanation.' With these words, the soldier started his story.<sup>2</sup>

In his defence the soldier deciphered the spiritual meanings attached to the suits, numbers and picture cards. The whole deck was a mnemonic device and, supposedly, a testimony to the conviction shared by the accused and the judge: it was an allegory of the Christian articles of faith.

The tale ends with two codas. The first, uttered within the tale world by the soldier, sums up the allegory: 'As you see, sir, the deck of cards is my Bible, almanac and prayer book.' The other coda is directed emphatically at the listeners, and it highlights the truth-value of the tale: 'Dear listeners, this tale is true.' The tale claims to be true and old, and thus authenticated and made traditional. Addressing the audience bears traces of oral transmission, and renders every play of the recording a representation of a tale performance.

Finnish listeners associate the episode with the Finnish–Soviet frontier during the Winter War (1939–40) and the Continuation War (1941–4). The tale of the Finnish soldier adds mythical and political meanings to the public discussion of 'the wartime', a taboo topic until the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The close resemblance to oral tradition and the sensitive topic repressed questions concerning the song's originality. The lyrics in Rautavaara's performance are, however, a faithful adoption of a hit by the American country singer T. Texas Tyler, *Deck of Cards* (1948), in which the setting is the North African Campaign of the Second World War.<sup>3</sup> In most recorded and literary versions, the coda has a metanarrative point: the truth of the tale is proven by the performer's claim to have been the soldier in the tale himself or to have known him. With this rhetorical gesture the tale world is brought near to the setting of the performance. Rautavaara insisted on adding this testimony to his version, but the producers rejected the idea (Hyttinen 2008: 129).

The way back from popular culture to oral delivery was short. In the 1960s, a Californian Baptist minister, the Reverend Lacy, used to perform an adaptation of the *Deck of Cards* as his favourite sermon—the congregation joined in with 'exclamations of joy and piety.' (Wilgus & Rosenberg 1970: 291–2.) The congregation and the minister himself held the topic to be his invention, until a member, Sister Olison, recounted that she had heard the sermon long ago, from the 'Reverend' T.

1 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tapio\\_Rautavaara](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tapio_Rautavaara).

2 DoCA; melody Jaakko Salo, lyrics Seppo Virtanen, arrangement Paul Fagerlund, recorded by Finnlevy 1976.

3 DoCG. After Tyler, the recitation has been recorded by many American artists; for a review of the recordings and copyright issues, see Cray 1961–2; Wilgus & Rosenberg 1970: 293–5, 298.

Texas Tyler. The sister thought that Tyler had become a minister by 'convincing his superiors that the common deck of cards had religious significance'. The interpretation is a reasonable understanding of the ending lines of Tyler's performance: 'And friends, this story's true. I know 'cause I was that soldier.' (Wilgus & Rosenberg 1970: 293, 298; cf. DoCG.) Here, the metafictional truth-claim of the tale is converted into a mythical account of religious initiation.

One of the oldest written versions known was printed in a newspaper on 10 August 1766 in Newcastle. A soldier called Richard Middleton was accused of playing cards in a church in Glasgow, with the well-known consequences. The version is picaresque. Middleton plays both with his cards and with his words and the mayor rewards him with bread, cheese, beer and money, and encourages him to 'go about his business' because 'he was the cleverest man he had ever seen'.<sup>4</sup> Similar contests of mastery over knowledge and understanding between those in power and the subjects of this power are a common topic in folktales and anecdotes. In neck riddles, a series of riddles or corresponding intellectual and lingual challenges are set within a frame tale, and those in power are ridiculed for their lack of understanding. This generic undercurrent questions the overall interpretation of the tale. Was the soldier a devout Christian or a witty gambler?

The tale represents the international tale type, 'Playing Cards are my Calendar and Prayer Book' (ATU 1613), known widely in Europe and traceable to eighteenth-century chapbooks.<sup>5</sup> A Finnish version performed in 1896 by the 36-year-old F. O. Koskinen in western Finland introduces a servant named Janne, who surprisingly serves a gentleman in London. As his fellow servants betray Janne and snitch on him to the master, he readily admits: 'I always keep one deck of cards in my pocket as my almanac and prayer book.' When Janne explains the calendric and biblical meanings encoded in the cards, the other servants strike again, yelling, 'Master, he left the knave out, that's for sure.' Janne explains his omission by identifying the knave with Judas and his fellow servants—all these scoundrels had betrayed their masters, and deserved no mention. The master sacks the telltales and promotes Janne to be his trusted man. (Rausmaa 2000: 256–7.)

Since the days of Middleton and Janne, the events have been adapted to the harsh life of cowboys, the various fronts of the Second World War, the Korean War

and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.<sup>6</sup> In these contexts, new political interpretations have been adopted, but all the versions are characterized by a certain seriousness and understated heroism. With its encrypted ideological meanings the tale is used whenever and wherever men's mettle is tested.

### The persistence of form and content

What makes this particular tale persistent? What makes certain ideas, representations and performances worth remembering and reiterating? Answers to these central questions of folklore research can be found on three levels: in the form of the tale, its content, and the potential cultural uses of the two.

The content of the tale is built on a tension between the sacred and the profane. The plot portrays a negotiation over the right to determine what is sacred, and how and where the sacred can be expressed in symbols and actions. The central values are assessed by the folk, represented by the soldier, and the elite, represented by officers, judges and masters. Two contrasting interpretations are obvious. The picaresque stance justifies a reading in which the soldier fools his interrogators, and successfully defends his right to entertain himself with the playing cards. An alternative reading rests on the generic and religious undercurrent of a legend. An apparently sinful act is deciphered as extreme piety, a conviction that is not silenced by the lack of resources available, but expresses sacred values and ideas in its own terms, by creating a new, allegorical language.

Both interpretations witness the contestive potential of folklore: the subordinate outwit the masters, or invent alternative modes of expression beyond the control of the powers that be. As performed and recorded by Rautavaara, the tale's transgressive power is muted yet discernible. In the cultural and political climate in Finland during the the Agreement of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance (YYA Treaty, 1948–92) that was the basis for Finno-Soviet relations, the expression of experiences and emotions related to the wartime was a sensitive issue. A tribute to the common Finnish soldier in the politically radicalized 1970s aired the repressed emotions of the generation who had fought the war—and simultaneously distanced itself from nationalistic heroization.<sup>7</sup> The working-class writer Väinö

4 DoCH.

5 Brednich (1993: 1008) mentions a Welsh chapbook from 1766 as the oldest written source available; see also Uther 2004: 330–1; Voigt 1999.

6 Cowboys, Korea and Vietnam: Wilgus & Rosenberg 1970: 298–301; Afghanistan: DoCB; Iraq: DoCC. The two last mentioned versions are based on a rumour according to which troops are not allowed to take Bibles with them to Muslim countries; instead, they should take playing cards with quotations from the Bible (<http://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20080101162011AAyhvbG> (read 30.3.2011).

7 Ethnomusicologist Vesa Kurkela has interpreted Rautavaara's song *Vanhan jermun purnaas* ('An old vet's grumble' 1966) in a similar manner (Kurkela 2003: 503).

Linna had already cleared the way for debunking the myth of the obedient and noble Finnish soldier in his novel *Tuntematon sotilas* (*The Unknown Soldier*). Published in 1954, this realistic novel, depicting the war through the experiences of one machine-gun company, was condemned by ‘officers and gentleman literary critics’ but cherished by a popular, anti-elitistic movement. (Bagh 2007: 306–7.) As a late representative of post-war popular culture Rautavaara’s performance was a gesture of consensus, a truce in a culture war between the elitist establishment and the ‘masses’ with their bad taste and appetite for entertainment.<sup>8</sup>

In its versatility and complexity, the form of the tale attracts and encourages variation. The frame tale is an anecdote claimed to be true, and the embedded text, the decipherment of the deck of cards, is a schematic list that draws upon the formal and symbolic allure of the cards. The suits, numbers and picture cards provide a matrix for ever-new contents. The serial structure is simple enough: each card corresponds to a certain essential message or dogma.

### The Scorecard

With its formal and substantial elements the tale is productive even today. In Finland the tune—if perceivable—is used as a ringtone for mobile phones.<sup>9</sup> Internet chats present a number of alternative decks of cards. They refer to struggles over cultural values that are fought on new fields of honour, the working life. In contrast to the Rautavaara-version, the incident described takes place here and now: ‘This is not such an old story’ (DoCD). Yet the mere mention of the old stories points at the tale’s traditionality: it recounts an eternal, typical story. Instead of the eucharist, the holy ceremony disturbed by the cards is a training session in quality-control, a briefing concerning staff management, or a ‘CV-drill’ for a job applicant (DoCE, DoCD, DoCF).

In the versions that circulate on the internet and as email attachments,<sup>10</sup> the structure of the frame is faithful to tradition. This version, named *Tuloskorttipakka* (‘The Deck of Scorecards’), was posted in April 2005 to a Finnish chatline:

... It happened once in a company. The staff had attended a long briefing on staff policy, and were getting tired. It was

time for a pause, but the consultant just kept on talking. The staff manager told the employees to pull themselves together. When the consultant mentioned the scorecard, those who had a quality manual opened it without being asked to. But one employee had nothing else but a deck of cards which he spread out in front of him on the table. The staff manager noticed the cards and said: ‘You there, drop the cards!’ (DoCD.)

In a version for the unemployed, the truth value of the tale is asserted with an edge: ‘This is no joke but the raw everyday reality for tens of thousands of slave workers in a “democracy” called Finland’ (DoCF). The knave may be an outsourcing consultant or auditor, and number three refers to ‘the strategy, mission and vision of our firm’ unintelligible to the employee. For its holder the deck of cards is ‘the quality manual, scorecard and curriculum vitae’ in one. The defects of post-industrial managerialism are listed generously and equated with the cards: the absurd innovations and bureaucracy, the weakening unemployment benefits, the long working hours and insufficient salaries, hierarchical structures, challenges of career management and part-time contracts as well as the politicians get their share. (DoCF, DoCD.)

Compared with the wartime versions, the critical stance is outspoken. The new tales never end with reconciliation between the interrogator and the employee. Working—or being employed—replaces the one and only God represented by the ace, but the social and managerial organization of working life is fraught with tension. The intertextual allusion to the eucharist underlines the core values in a secularized and materialistic society. The working classes have few outlets for their frustration in the face of the new gods: ‘When I see the ten, I think of the ten minutes that it takes to empty a bottle of cheap brandy. When I see the king, I think of no-one. Just feel pissed off.’ (DoCD.) The new tales are cast in an old mould, but the experiences expressed do not meet those of former generations. In the new hierarchical order, the common man, represented by the employee or the unemployed, negotiate over their power for self-determination and self-expression with bosses, consultants and auditors. Nevertheless the ridicule of managerialism resonates with the experiences of former generations and traditional language. It is a dark and ancient laughter.

8 On the Finnish post-war culture war and the so-called *rillumarei*-trend associated with artists such as Rautavaara, Reino Helismaa and Toivo Kärki, see e.g. Kurkela 2003: 434, Niiniluoto 2004; the only member of the elite that spoke in behalf of vulgar entertainment was Matti Kuusi, professor-to-be in folklore studies (Niiniluoto 2004: 174).

9 [http://www.polyfoninen.com/soittoaani/Tapio\\_Rautavaara/7519](http://www.polyfoninen.com/soittoaani/Tapio_Rautavaara/7519) (read 30.3.2011).

10 <http://www.pinseri.com/2005/12/29/korttipakka-nykyaikaisina-versioina/> (posted 29.12.2005, read 30.3.2011).

A Newcastle newspaper, 10 August 1776, recounted ‘A Strange a Fare’: a soldier called Richard Middleton was caught playing cards in a church at Glasgow. The handwritten copy is included in the memoranda book of Thomas Wilkinson (d. 1792), chief constable of Chester Ward, Co. Durham. Durham University Library Additional Manuscripts 1474. Reproduced by permission of Durham University Library.

A variation of the *Deck of Cards* takes place in social media, in which each receiver of the message can take part in reshaping the tradition. In written form, the schematic structure of the listing is easily altered and simultaneously kept recognizable. After some centuries of predominantly post-oral culture, the creation of and responsibility for texts is shifting back from commercial distributors and the sphere of copyright holders to the receivers of the messages. Such processes revolutionize the notions of authorship and the subjects of cultural practices. The essential feature of oral tradition, the synthesis of continuity and change, is realized as ‘tuning’ (*tuunaus*), a conscious strategy of working up products of the culture industry. The end product expresses something about the creator, outside the limits of institutional and commercial conditions—provided that one has access to the internet and is able to use it.

### Mnemonic rhyming

As a whole the tale has already been identified with an international tale type whose antiquity is indicated by its wide geographical distribution. The embedded text providing the explanation of the cards is even older. (Brednich 1993: 1009; Wilgus & Rosenberg 1970: 291.) Let us assume for a while that Richard Middleton was a real person living in eighteenth-century Scotland. He employed an old and widespread genre well known in his community: the core embedded in the frame tale is a mnemonic rhyme. Such poetic or otherwise structurally marked performances ensured the transmission of important information. Specifically, Middleton’s performance represents serial catechism songs that were used to inculcate the folk with the essentials of religious tradition: the numbers from one to twelve each corresponds to a phenomenon or personage of religious import. The tradition flourished also in the form of cumulative tales and as Christmas carols.<sup>11</sup> In seventeenth-century Germany a similar list was performed in Jewish pass-over rituals and as Latin drinking songs (Haavio 1955: 350–1). When playing cards became a popular entertainment in Europe, the mnemonic series of numbers could be amplified with the more complex system of suits and pictures.<sup>12</sup>

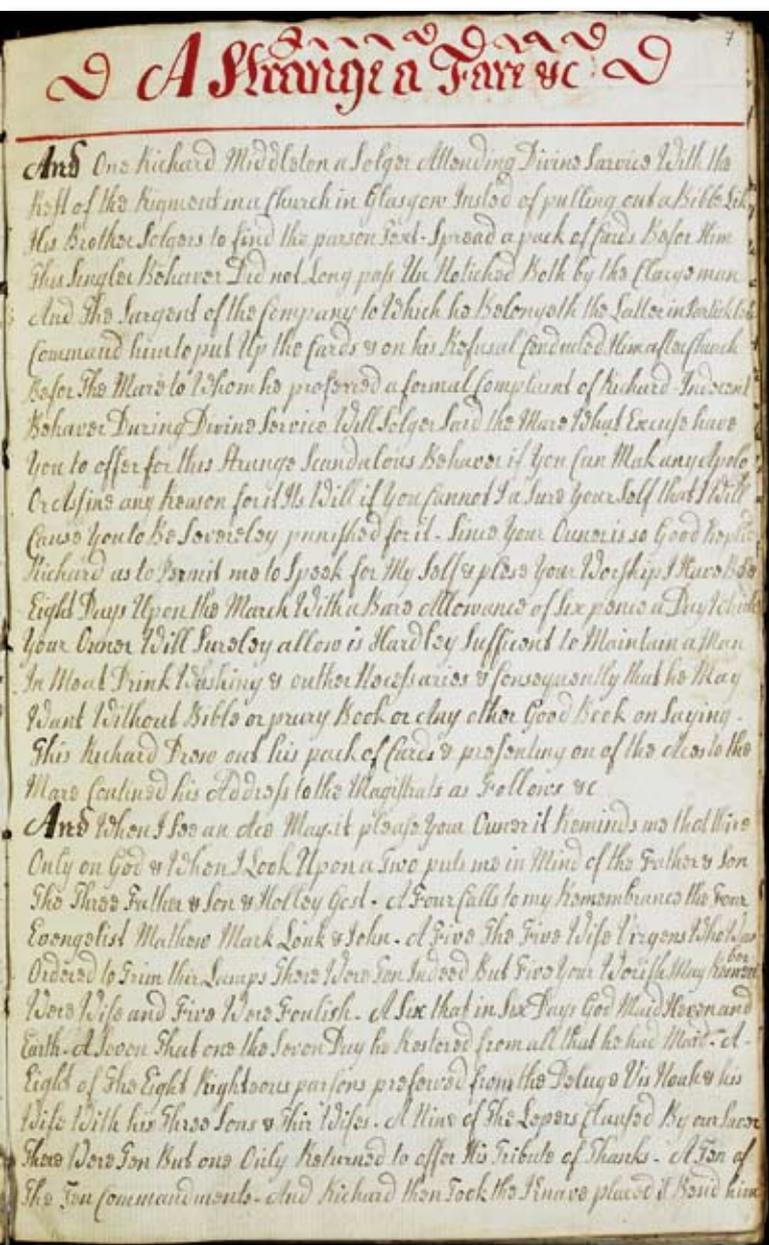
In Finland the serial mnemonic rhymes were popular, too. In 1885, Professor Kaarle Krohn met a tailor named Kuosmanen, who performed the following catechism song:

Tell me, tell, what is one?  
 One, the Lord Jesus Christ,  
 who governs the earth and the heaven.  
 Tell me, tell, what is two?  
 Two tables of Moses,  
 one is the Lord, God Almighty.  
 Tell me, tell, what is three?  
 Three patriarchs,  
 two tables of Moses,  
 four evangelists,  
 five holy books,  
 six jars of stone,  
 seven choirs of angels,  
 eight gifts of beatitude,  
 nine powers of the Holy Spirit,  
 ten commandments in the law.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the poem was sung in turns, by framing the questions and answers

11 See e.g. Uther 2004: taetype ATU 2010 (a cumulative tale and/or song); Voigt 1999: 238–9.

12 In the seventeenth-century printing houses in Europe, the picture cards and playing instructions were often accompanied with religious and moral remarks—see Voigt 1999: 243.



## The Types of International Folktales reprinted

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into a dialogue, as a counting rhyme, or embedded within a neck-riddle (SKVR VI<sub>1</sub> 2041, SKVR X<sub>1</sub> 1503, SKVR XII<sub>2</sub> 8252). The serial structure offered endless opportunities for variation. The list could include farmers' practical know-how ('eight hoops in a tun', 'six stakes in a sled'), calendric or measure-unit mnemonics ('eight nights between Christmas and New Year', 'ten gallons in a *karpio*',<sup>13</sup> 'eight öres in a mark'), folk astronomy ('five stars in Väinöinen's Scythe',<sup>14</sup> 'Seven stars in the Plough') or anatomical fundamentals ('What is four? Teats on a cow', 'What is nine? Holes in a human') (SKVR VII<sub>3</sub> 3994–5, SKVR X<sub>1</sub> 1507, SKVR XII<sub>1</sub> 1237). Informational and mnemonic functions could give way to word-play based on end rhyme and assonance: 'What is one? The crone is ripe. What is two? A hen's brat.'<sup>15</sup> Most of these simple rhymes echoed a subliminal poignancy: they ended with the question 'What is ten? Commandments in the law' (SKVR XII<sub>1</sub> 1216). The rhyme recontextualizes the ten commandments in a way that may be deemed blasphemous. Even those versions that end with nonsensical answers allude, through the well-known scheme, to the religious frame of interpretation and thus ridicule Christian dogma (SKVR XII<sub>1</sub> 1223, SKVR VIII 3775).

### Tradition and the confusion of languages

The tale of a soldier's cards and the mnemonic list attached to them illustrates the movement of tale motifs and ideas from one media and historical context to another, the interchange of oral and written traditions, and the tension between change and continuity in living traditions. To conclude, I would like to take the soldier's closing statement literally: for him, the deck of cards was indeed the Bible, almanac and prayer book. It is this very versatility and communicative economy that makes traditional languages or semiotic systems enduring.

Instead of several genres, the hero had only one means for memorizing and reflecting upon central messages. In the course of the history of means of communication, a tale built on such a totalizing language has persisted partly because of its metafolkloric aspects. The *Deck of Cards* is a traditional text portraying the terms of communication in a traditional medium, the usage and interpretation of a supposedly shared code. The tale is an allegory of the traditional idiom.

Professor Matti Kuusi suggested that the most obvious and nationally esteemed Finnish traditional idiom, Kalevala-metre poetry, 'served our forefathers in the

13 *Karpio* (Rus. *korobja*, Lithuanian *karbija*) is an old Finnish measure of volume, of appr. 45.8 litres.

14 A group of stars in Orion.

15 In Finnish, 'Mikä yksi? Ämmä kypsi. Mikä kaksi? Kanan lapsi.' SKVR XII<sub>1</sub> 1216.

same way as the Bible, the hymn book, the law book, the medical book, the guides to etiquette and the art of living serve people of the modern era' (Kuusi 1994: 41). A few genres of literature may be added to the list: Kalevala-metre poetry was the book of jokes, practical manual, the almanac and a mirror showing every move, piece of gossip and scandal in the community—in a word, a true deck of cards. All similar multi-function idioms are enriched by generic intertextuality; references from one system of knowledge and expression is easy because the number of the cards is limited and everybody knows the rules – at least in principle. Sharing the communal idiom gives pleasure and a feeling of belonging, even if there is seldom a consensus on the things actually said. The common ground provided by tradition enables negotiation, and everyone has the right to remain silent or interpret the messages against the mainstream—or switch the code.

A shared language is not monological or static, even if nationalistic readings would like to have it so. The heterology of tradition is partly due to its historical strata. The forms and contents recognized as tradition are an invitation to subtle and radical variation, inversion and tuning, irony as well as adherence, contestation and consensus. Furthermore, even a shared language is not shared by everyone: access to expressive means and performance arenas is never equally distributed. Still, even in the profusion of symbols and the confusion of languages of diversified culture today, the capacity of tradition to generate meanings in an economical and heterological way resists time and continues to provide an elemental resource of communication.

A folkloristic excursion into the background of one recurrent Finnish tale has illuminated two truisms of folklore research. In any national context, most myths and symbols that we consider our possession and reflection of our values are international. National selfhood is not that which distinguishes us from others, but that which binds us to the world. Only comparative research can outline the interplay of tradition in the singular, and traditions in the plural, or communality and diversity. The other truism has to do with innovations. The language of tradition is creative variation, recycling and tuning, not preservation and adherence to the norm. Innovation rests on tradition. An attempt at bracketing tradition and historical consciousness—or an experience of actually doing so—is a tradition in itself, but nevertheless, a contradiction in terms. As we cannot escape the language of tradition, analysing its strategies is essential to the understanding of society and humanity. ■

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*The text is based on a popular inauguration lecture for the professorship in folklore studies at the University of Helsinki, 26.5.2010.*

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# Wandering legends about wandering forests

BENGT AF KLINTBERG

More than a century has passed since the birth of the series FF Communications, and the number of publications has now reached three hundred. From the very beginning the method applied by the folklorists was comparative, and the greater part of the FFC volumes consists of catalogues and indices, created with the aim of facilitating comparative studies of folklore, especially its narrative genres. The goal of the so-called Finnish method was primarily to elucidate the diffusion paths of individual tale types and establish a hypothetic origin.

As time went on the volumes of FFC came to reflect a more diversified scholarship. Impulses from anthropology led to the abandonment of a comparative perspective in favour of local studies. But still, after a century, catalogues of tale and legend types in various countries form a substantial portion of the books published in the series; indeed, three of the last ten volumes belong to this category. This may be explained by the fact that the comparative study of folklore can be used to answer many more questions than those about origin and diffusion paths. Alan Dundes, who was professor at an anthropological department, warned against misinterpretations which may arise with the study of an isolated text divorced from a knowledge of which traits are local and which are international. In his article 'The Anthropologist and the Comparative Method in Folklore' he writes: 'It is always an error to analyze a folk-tale (or any other folkloristic item) as if it were unique to a given cultural context, when it is obviously not so' (Dundes 1989: 63). The comparative perspective hence is an important form of source criticism.

A comparison between the various texts belonging to a given tale type may provide information of widely different kinds. It explains valuations, world view and stylistic levels in the texts under scrutiny, as well as the relationship between oral and written sources. It shows what is individual and what is traditional in a performance. An interesting approach is to focus on the attitudes for and against the dramatis personae presented by the storytellers. The common plot of a tale type may be compared to the script of a theatre play. It is a semi-product which comes to life in front of an audience. The storyteller may be compared to the director of a play

who decides to interpret the course of action in a certain way.

If we limit ourselves to historic legends, then we can easily establish that the different versions of a given legend show different attitudes towards historical reality. The comparative perspective permits us to see how the storytellers have interpreted a historic course of events and taken a stand for or against the persons involved. In this article I will exemplify this by examining a handful of variants of a legend type known as 'the wandering forest'.

The legend is number W<sub>31</sub> in my catalogue *The Types of the Swedish Folk Legend*, which was recently published as no. 300 in FF Communications. In this catalogue more than 1800 legend types are described; a rough estimate is that a quarter of them have an international diffusion. Most of these international migratory legends exemplify traditional beliefs about demonic beings, sorcery and witchcraft, but a small number tell about alleged historical events without any supernatural elements. The legend about a stratagem known as 'the wandering forest' belongs here. It had a wide distribution in Europe already in the Middle Ages and has been documented in an array of different forms. The source material is of such proportions that it is impossible to account for it in its entirety in a brief article. The following presentation should therefore be seen as a sketch containing some suggestions for issues which could be taken up in more detail in a future study.

A first overview of the sources can, as is often the case, be obtained by consulting Stith Thompson's *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature*. There one reads under motif K1872.1: 'Army appears like forest. Surprises enemy. Each soldier carries branches'. This description is followed by references to H. F. Feilberg's *Bidrag til en ordbog over jyske almuesmål* ('Skov'), Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Jacob Grimm's *Kleinere Schriften* and investigations of respectively the classical Greek novel, Saxo's *Gesta Danorum* and Merovingian chronicles.

Thompson does not refer to any detailed study of the legend. There is, however, such a study in existence: Ernst Kröger's *Die Sage von Macbeth bis zu Shakespeare*, which fills a whole volume of the German journal *Palaestra* (1904). Under the title 'Rückblick und

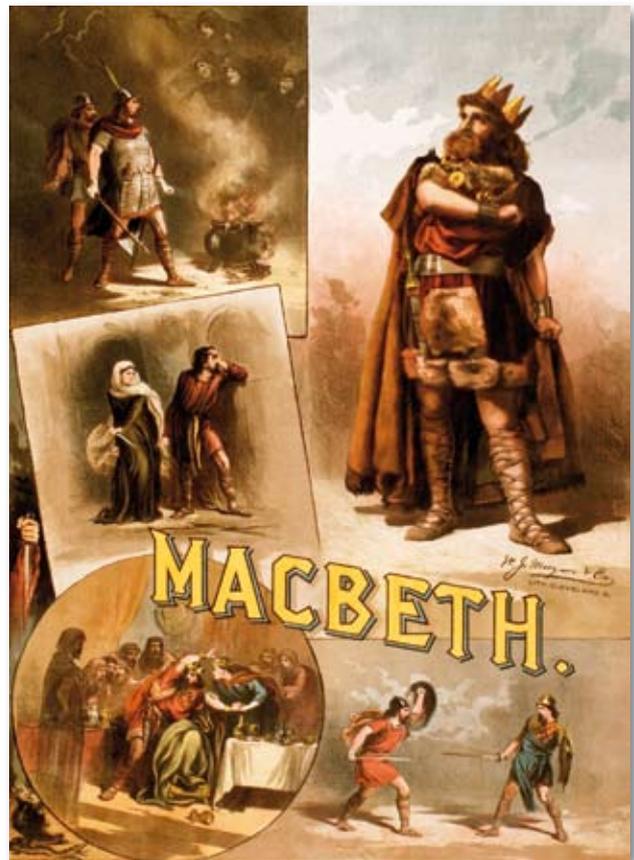
Sagenvergleichung' Kröger accounts for chronicles, ballads and folk legends containing the motif of the wandering forest. It seems to have been especially widespread in German and Scandinavian territory and in the British Isles, but it has also been known in France, Greece and the Balkans. An Arabic version is attached to a historical personality, Hassan ben Tobba, who lived around AD 300 (Kröger 1904: 60–90). Kröger considers it likely that the origin of the motif is to be found in oriental literature. My own opinion is that it is futile to try to pinpoint a geographic origin. The idea of an army advancing hidden behind green branches seems to have had a vast distribution both as a practised stratagem and as a legendary motif.

Of course, the best-known version of the legend is that found in Shakespeare's tragedy *Macbeth*, written around 1605. At the beginning of the play Macbeth meets, as we know, three witches, 'three weird sisters', who prophesy that he will be crowned a king. After having murdered the ruling king, his own cousin Duncan, and hired assassins to remove a competitor to the throne, Macbeth again goes to see the witches in order to know what fate has in store for him. The witches stir their cauldron filled with snakes, toads and cadaver parts until three apparitions enter the stage, foretelling that none born by woman shall be able to hurt him, and that he 'Shall never vanquished be until / Great Birnam Wood to high Dunsinane hill / Shall come against him' (IV, 1: 91–3).

The prophecy moderates Macbeth's anxiety that Duncan's son Malcolm and the clan chieftain Macduff will succeed in taking vengeance for his crimes. All men are, after all, born of a woman, and it is impossible for a wood with its trees firmly rooted in the ground to march towards his castle. Nonetheless a sentinel is able, a little later in the play, to deliver the message that he has seen Birnam Wood approaching Dunsinane. Malcolm has ordered all men in his army to cut a branch and carry it in front of them during the advance.

In the finale of the play a life-and-death struggle breaks out between Macbeth and Macduff. The latter reveals that he was not born the usual way but prematurely cut out of his mother's womb. Not until then does Macbeth realise that the prophecies which earlier calmed his fears actually described how he would perish.

The model for Shakespeare's *Macbeth* is a Scottish king who in 1040 overthrew his predecessor Duncan but who seventeen years later himself was killed in a struggle against Duncan's son Malcolm. The bloody events lining his path to power had been rendered in print following medieval chronicles only a few years before Shakespeare composed his play. A contemporary writer, Raphael Holinshed, had in 1577 published his *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, in which the fifth volume was devoted to the Scottish chronicles.



The American actor Thomas Keene as Macbeth c. 1884.

His work appeared in a second edition in 1587, and it was here that Shakespeare found the plot for the tragedy of *Macbeth*.

In Holinshed's chronicle it is to be read that 'a certeine witch' had told Macbeth that he could not be slain by any man born of woman, nor be vanquished until 'the wood of Bernane came to the castell of Dunsinane' (Holinshed 1808: 274). With these legendary motifs as a basic structure Shakespeare created an immortal portrait of a tragic character who, driven by his own and his wife's ambitions, turns into a murderer. Likewise the three witches around the cauldron are principally a creation of Shakespeare's inventive imagination, even if he has made use of the folk beliefs of his time about witches. However, when it comes to the central scenes involving the wandering forest, here combined with another legend motif of a predestined manner of death, he has, as we can see, been faithful to his source.

Kröger accounts in his above mentioned study for those medieval Scottish chroniclers who have provided information about the historical Macbeth: John of Fordun, Walter Bower, Andrew Wyntoun. The last-mentioned was an abbot who at the beginning of the fifteenth century wrote a versified chronicle about the Scottish kings. He was the first to weave the motif of the wandering forest into a description of the life of Macbeth.

When the Brothers Grimm published their *Deutsche Sagen* in 1816–18, they made use of legends which were recorded from contemporary oral tradition but also of legends which they retold after old chronicles. The motif of the wandering forest is included in two of the legends. ‘König Grünewald’ (Grimm 1993: no. 92) represents the first category; it was told to the brothers by an acquaintance, who had heard it in 1805 from a farmer. The legend is about a king in Upper Hesse who lives in his castle together with his daughter, who has wondrous gifts. His enemy, König Grünewald (King Green Forest), besieges the castle for years without any success. However, one day his daughter sees the enemy army approaching with green trees. She has a premonition that the enemy will take the castle, and she says to her father: ‘Vater, gebt Euch gefangen, / der grüne Wald kommt gegangen!’ The verse has been given the following wording in an English translation: ‘Give up, O Father dear, / the green forest is near!’ (Ward 1981). The king sends his daughter to King Green Forest, who agrees to grant free passage from the castle for herself and all the belongings she can load on a single jackass. She takes her father with her on the animal when she leaves. The legend ends with two episodes told as explanations of place names. The daughter wants to rest and says: ‘Hier wollemer ruhen’ (‘Let us rest here!’) This is the origin of the place-name Wollmar. A little later she says: ‘Hier hat’s Feld!’ (‘Here is a field!’), which is how the castle of Hatzfeld got its name.

The name of the enemy king, Grünewald, obviously does not designate any historical person but seems to have been constructed by a storyteller who was familiar with the legend motif of the wandering forest. Here, this motif has lost much of its dramatic power since the King’s daughter at once understands that it is the approaching enemy army. The reason why King Grünewald succeeds in taking the castle after having failed for many years remains obscure. It is no coincidence that the narrative ends with two legend-like explanations of place-names; as we will soon see the motif ‘the wandering forest’ has often become integrated in place-name legends.

The other legend is entitled ‘Der kommende Wald und die klingende Schellen’ (‘The moving forest and the ringing bells’). It retells an episode which allegedly took place in the sixth century AD when the Merovingian king Childebert had invaded the kingdom of the Franks. Their queen Fredegund then came up with a stratagem which resulted in her army defeating the intruder. All her soldiers hung a bell around the necks of their horses and held a branch in their hands while approaching the enemy camp at dawn. One of the sentries said to his companion that the forest in front of them was not there before. ‘You have drunk too much wine’, answered the other, adding that the sound of the bells

must come from their own grazing horses (which were let free to graze with bells around their necks). At the same moment the Franks dropped their tree branches and rushed forward to attack, and Childebert’s army was annihilated (Grimm 1993: no. 434).

The Brothers Grimm found the legend in the *Historia Francorum*, written at the beginning of the eleventh century by the French chronicler Aimoin, who is also the source of the following two entries in *Deutsche Sagen*. Aimoin in turn took the narrative from an older chronicle from around 720, known as *Liber Historiae Francorum* or *Gesta Regum Francorum*. Two medievalists (Herrmann 1922, Taylor 1924) consider this chronicle to be the ultimate source of not only the legend in the Brothers Grimm collection but also of the motif in Macbeth. The Latinist Pauline Taylor gives a detailed account of the literary connections which may have existed in both cases. The weakness of the argument is that both completely disregard the fact that already in the Middle Ages the legend was so widespread, not least in oral tradition, that one must reckon with more likely sources than the chronicles to which they refer.

The *Deutsche Sagen* of the Brothers Grimm came to inspire similar legendary editions in several countries, among them Denmark, Norway and Sweden. The Dane Just Matthias Thiele published the collection *Danske folkesagn* (1818–23), which was later printed in an extended and more systematised edition as *Danmarks folkesagn* (1843–60). In Norway Andreas Faye put together *Norske sagn* (1833), likewise published in an extended second edition, *Norske folke-sagn* (1844). The Swede Herman Hofberg’s *Svenska folksägner* appeared as late as 1882. It is noteworthy that legends containing the motif of the wandering forest can be found in all three Scandinavian collections. When it comes to further details, the differences are as many as the similarities.

The Danish legend in Thiele’s collection is entitled ‘Kong Ran i Randbøl’, and the main character is one of those petty kings who are abundant in Scandinavian place-name legends (Schön 1993: 55 ff.). Having reached a great age, Ran becomes enemy to another king who attacks him with his army early one morning. All his warriors hide behind green branches, and through this stratagem they surprise King Ran in a valley, still called Kongsdalen (King’s Valley), where he gets his death-wound. The tomb of King Ran is still there, and the village takes its name from him (Thiele 1968: 145).

A comparison between ‘Kong Ran i Randbøl’ and the two legends in *Deutsche Sagen* shows that it is most reminiscent of ‘König Grünewald’. The Danish legend too tells of a king of dubious historicity, and here too we read of an act of war which has given rise to place-names, Kongsdalen and Randbøl. Further similarities are that both legends represent oral tradition and have the same perspective: it is the enemy king who uses the

stratagem of the green branches.

The Norwegian legend in Faye's collection also seems to have been created to explain the origin of a place-name. It is called 'Ridderspranget' ('The Knight's Leap'). The main character is a knight in the county of Valdres whose name is not given. He is driven away from a fishing water by another similarly anonymous knight, living on the farm of Sandbo in the neighbouring county. The knight in Valdres takes revenge by gathering his men and riding to his neighbour's farm and burning it down. The other knight collects his men and goes to pursue the arsonist. After the men from Valdres have pitched camp, the knight of Sandbo and his men ride closer, holding little birches in front of their horses. The knight of Valdres takes flight but is pursued by his enemy. When he comes to a steep precipice, he takes a leap with his horse over the abyss and saves himself. The place has ever since been called 'Ridderspranget'. (Faye 1948: 211.)

Faye concludes by relating that royal letters are still kept at the farm of Sandbo, in which Sandbo is awarded fishing waters that had earlier belonged to Valdres. This seems to be the historical core of the legend, whereas the wandering forest as well as the leap over the abyss have the character of legendary motifs added at a later stage.

As opposed to the Danish and the Norwegian legends the action in the Swedish legend takes place during a well-documented war, fought in the fourteenth century between the Danish union queen Margareta and Albrekt of Mecklenburg. The legend was recorded by Herman Hofberg in the former Danish province of Halland and has the title 'Elestorp skog' ('The Elestorp Wood'). Queen Margareta is, true to her habit, deep in prayer in a church, when a messenger warns her of advancing enemies. Another messenger announces that they have come closer, but the Queen remains calm. A third time she is told that the entire wood of Elestorp seems to be on the move towards the Queen's camp. Only then does she rise from her kneeling position, invoke God and set out for the battle, which is won by her army (Hofberg 1882: 71 f.).

Here the storyteller has primarily wanted to use the motif to exemplify the Queen's piety. Its dramatic potential is not very well employed, since the element of surprise is missing: the hostile army hides behind the green branches of the Elestorp wood only after two earlier messengers have warned about its advance.

The legend in the Brothers Grimm collection about Queen Fredegund's successful stratagem is the only one of the above legends where the motif of the wandering forest is tied to a protagonist who has the sympathies of the narrator. In 'König Grünwald', as well as in the three Scandinavian legends, it is the enemy who hides its advance behind green branches. It goes without say-

ing that the motif is coloured by who the user of the stratagem is. If the listener is sympathetic towards the protagonist and can identify with him, then it will be judged as an expression of astuteness and inventiveness. If it is the enemy who hides behind branches, it may instead be seen as a manifestation of wily treachery: the enemy avoids an open, honest fight.

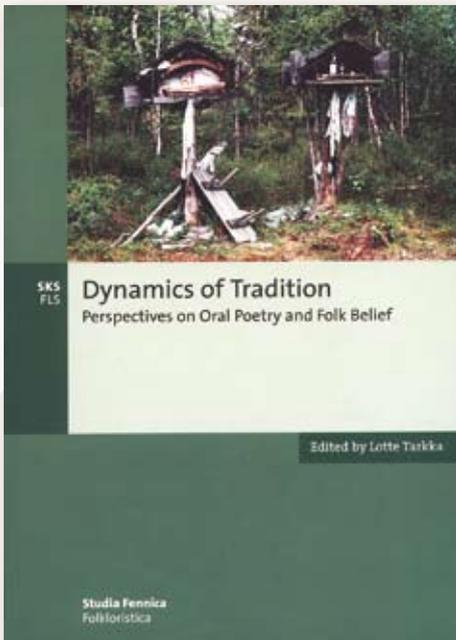
It is very likely that all three editors as well as the Brothers Grimm were aware of the presence of the motif in Macbeth and that they wanted to make a connection with the wandering Birnam Wood. Two of them, Thiele and Hofberg, refer explicitly to Shakespeare's play. There is good reason to remember the revival of Shakespeare's plays during the Romantic era. After being out of fashion during the eighteenth century, they aroused enthusiasm among the Romantics, that is among the same people who wanted to awaken the old legends into new life. It is also noticeable that none of the three Scandinavian texts can compete with Shakespeare's version from a dramatic perspective. They are, quite frankly, not very well told, which strengthens the impression that they have been included in the collections chiefly because of the motif of the wandering forest with its associations with Macbeth.

The motif in Scandinavia is, however, considerably older than Shakespeare's play. It has already been mentioned that it appears in Saxo Grammaticus' chronicle from the thirteenth century, *Gesta Danorum*. There one finds it in two accounts of ancient military actions. The main character in one of the episodes is the Danish king Erik the Eloquent. A fleet of Slavs invades Danish waters, and Erik is commissioned to fight against them with his eight ships. All of these except his own are camouflaged with the lopped branches of trees. He then sails with his ship close to the enemy as if to make a fuller reconnaissance and dupes them into pursuing him into a bay, where the enemy ships are surrounded by his own camouflaged ships and defeated. Only forty Slavs survive the sea battle, and they are taken as prisoners (Saxo Grammaticus 1979: 141).

The other episode describes a fight between Haki, the son of a petty king named Hamund, and his enemy King Sigar. Haki gives orders to his men to cut off branches and carry them in front of themselves. In addition he instructs them to throw away some items of clothing together with their scabbards, and wear naked swords, so that they should not be overburdened in their rapid progress:

By advancing at night they slipped through two guard posts, but when they had come across a third, a sentinel who had watched the extraordinary sight lost no time in reaching

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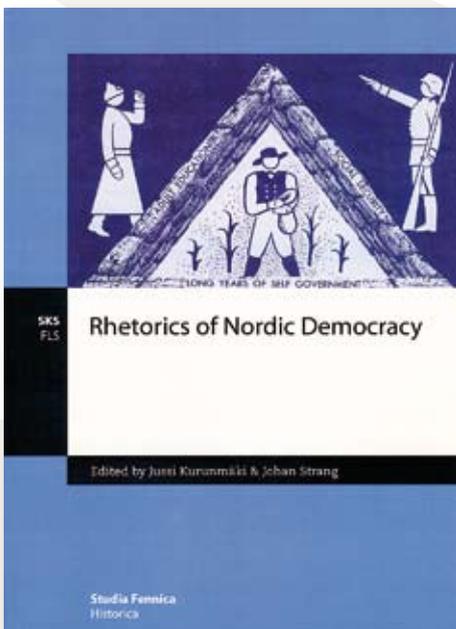


**Dynamics of Tradition:  
Perspectives on Oral Poetry and Folk Belief**

Edited by Lotte Tarkka.  
Studia Fennica Folkloristica 13. 2003. 390 pp. 35 euros.  
ISBN 951-746-429-0

The contributors of *Dynamics of Tradition*—a festschrift dedicated to the Finnish folklorist, Professor Anna-Leena Siikala—include distinguished folklorists from around the world. The range of their topics reflects her multifaceted research interests: mythology, tradition processes in ethnic and national contexts, epic studies, shamanism and the study of narration to name a few.

*Dynamics of Tradition* shows clearly the reflexive nature of the study of folklore. The dynamics of creating histories, nations, ideologies and identities are treated in various cultural arenas and historical contexts, ranging from academic, national and literate cultures to oral traditions. The reader is invited to witness the very creation of ethnographic data in topical studies based on fieldwork. From the ethnographic encounter with folk religion, the focus shifts to mythological traditions and the study of mythology. The section dedicated to epic studies offers a comparative view on epic poetry in various cultural settings. The genre of oral or oral-derived epic is a textual arena in which various cultural and historical agents, ideologies and traditions meet in dialogue or in conflict. The volume concludes with four texts inspired by Siikala's studies in the cognitive and affective processes involved in narration and systems of belief.



**Rhetorics of Nordic Democracy**

Edited by Jussi Kurunmäki & Johan Strang.  
Studia Fennica Historica 17. 2010. 297 pp. 32 euros.  
ISBN 978-952-222-228-2

Democracy is today a concept that is overwhelmingly positively evaluated almost everywhere. A lot has been written about socio-economic and cultural backgrounds of democratic regimes as well as their institutional settings. By contrast, not much is known about the political manouvres and speech acts by which 'democracy' has been tied to particular regions and cultures in concrete historical situations.

This book discusses a series of efforts to rhetorically produce a particular Nordic version of democracy. It shows that the rhetorical figure 'Nordic democracy' was a product of the age of totalitarianism and the Cold War. It explores the ways in which 'Nordic democracy' was used, mainly by the social democrats, to provide welfare politics with cultural and historical legitimacy and foundations. Thus, it also acknowledges the ideological and geopolitical context in which the 'Nordic welfare state' was conceptualised and canonised.

The contributors of the book are specialists on Nordic politics and history, who share a particular interest in political rhetoric and conceptual history.

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**Northern Revolts:  
Medieval and Early Modern Peasant Unrest  
in the Nordic Countries**

Edited by Kimmo Katajala.

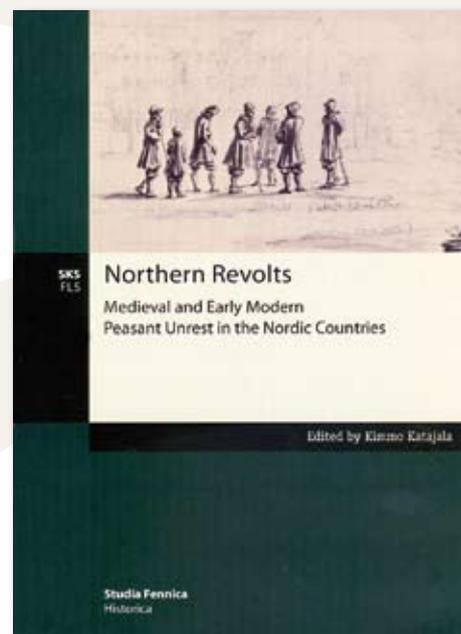
Studia Fennica Historica 8. 2004. 299 pp. 31 euros.

ISBN 951-746-643-9

Peasant revolts are permanent topic of keen interest and discussion in the historical and social sciences. This book presents a real-time picture of medieval and early modern Nordic peasant movements. The Nordic patterns of peasant contention differ greatly from those of Continental Europe and are little-known outside the Nordic countries.

Revolt and unrest in all five present-day Nordic countries—Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Sweden—are presented here. The great peasant wars of Sweden and Denmark are compared and contrasted with the usually more modest disturbances of peripheral Norway and Finland. Pre-modern Icelandic history is interpreted from the perspective of social conflict for the first time.

The emphasis is on analysing the patterns of contentious peasant politics. The key words are 'political culture', 'forms of protest' and the 'organising principles of peasant contention'. The book describes how changes in society affected the forms of peasant resistance. Studying grass roots peasant movements brings the Nordic peasant of days gone into the centre stage of historical analysis.



**Narrating, Doing, Experiencing:  
Nordic Folkloristic Perspectives**

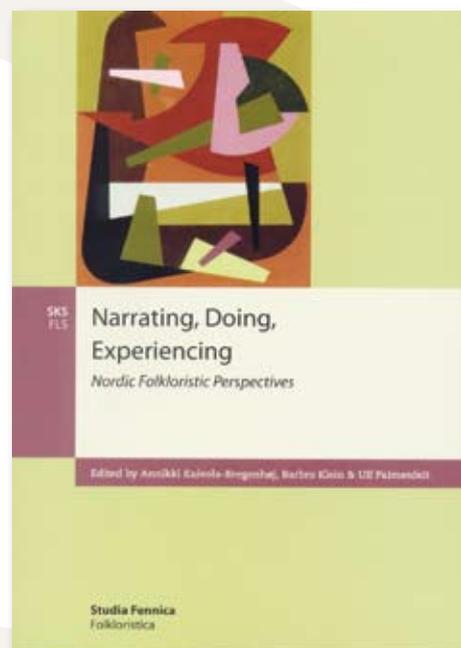
Edited by Annikki Kaivola-Bregenhøj, Barbro Klein & Ulf Palmenfelt.

Studia Fennica Folkloristica 16. 2006. 186 pp. 29 euros.

ISBN 951-746-726-5

How are experiences and stories linked to one another? How is story-telling a kind of doing? In this volume eight Nordic folklorists attempt to address these difficult questions in their examinations of orally communicated stories and other forms of verbal art in which people give life to unforgettable or unbearable memories. All the articles are based on interviews in which narrators and researchers collaborate closely and the stories tell us about birth, sickness, war, miraculous cures, the long dead, intergenerational relations and matters that are so difficult to express that they are nearly kept in silence. The articles were preceded by a series of workshops and the analyses complement one another.

This anthology ought to interest anybody who is fascinated by how we as human beings shape the worlds in which we live with the help of stories and story-telling. The book may also be used in university courses.



continued from p. 13

Sigar's chamber where he announced that he had something baffling to report: he had seen leaves and bushes walking along like human beings. The king inquired how far off the approaching wood was, and, being told it was close, commented that this freak of nature portended his own death. A result of this was that the bog where the bushes had been cut down was known in popular speech as Death Swamp. Afraid of being caught in the narrow streets, Sigar left the town to look for more open and level ground where he could essay the enemy in battle. At a point which is called Valbrunna in the vernacular and the Spring of Corpses or Slaughter in Latin, he was mown down after a sorry struggle and annihilated. (Saxo Grammaticus 1979: 218–19.)

A commentator of *Gesta Danorum* has noted the striking similarity between the story of King Sigar's death and the dramatic climax in *Macbeth* (Saxo Grammaticus 1980: 80, 115). In both cases a messenger enters the king's chamber to tell him about the forest which seems to come closer. In both cases the king conceives this apparently impossible event as a portent of his own death, which becomes a reality in the ensuing battle. Saxo's version also resembles many other legends discussed above in that it contains an explanation of a place-name. Space does not permit me to discuss in detail whether there is a direct connection between the Danish chronicle and the Scottish one by Wyntour; this question requires a more thorough investigation.

The two episodes in Saxo's chronicle are rendered relatively faithfully by Olaus Magnus in his *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus*, printed in Rome in 1555. The latter, in the Swedish translation carrying the caption 'Om konung Hakes krigslist med löfruskor' ('About King Hake's stratagem with branches'), has a woodprint illustration of 'the wandering forest'. King Haki and his men are portrayed riding all in a body, each with a branch in front of him. A similar picture accompanies the first narrative about King Erik's men; they are seen on the lower part of the illustration, sitting in their rowing boats, resting on their oars (Olaus Magnus 1976: 7:20 and 10:7).

Narratives where the stratagem is located to a sea battle are less common than those where the military operations take place on land. One may think that the motif becomes less realistic when the legend is about boats hidden by branches, but the suggestive power is properly speaking the same: instead of imagining a wandering forest the listener can see tree-covered float-



A woodprint 'About King Hake's stratagem with branches' in Olaus Magnus' *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus* (1555: 7:20).

ing islets before his inner eye. A Swedish source contains an example reminiscent of Saxo's story about King Erik's victory over the Slavs. It was written down by Jesper Swedberg in his autobiography *Lefwernes beskrifning* from 1729. Jesper Swedberg was an important man in Swedish religious life during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. He was one of two authors of a widely used hymnbook of 1695, a bishop in the diocese of Skara and himself the main character in many legends (Klintberg 2010: no. L154). He had a son who became an even more famous religious personality than himself, Emanuel Swedenborg. Swedberg's autobiography contains a couple of interesting legends which he heard in his childhood in the province of Dalarna. They describe events during the fights in the sixteenth century between Danes and Dalecarlians, the latter conducted by Gustav Eriksson, later a Swedish king and in our time known as Gustav Vasa (Ahnlund 1926: 358).

One of the legends rendered by Swedberg was told to him by his maternal grandmother, the daughter of a clergyman in the parish of Svärdsjö. Gustav is in a farm kitchen when Danish scouts enter. The farmer's wife gives him a blow on his behind with a bread peel and orders him to go out and chop wood. The Danes mistake him for a farmhand, and Gustav escapes being caught. Another legend is about a battle between the Dalecarlians and the Danes that took place in 1521 at the ferry of Brunnbäck:

Jag må ock beretta, at när Dahlkarlen folgde Konungen emot fiendan Juten then gången, och foro Dahlælfwen vtföre hafwande löfruskor såsom segel, och kommo emot Brundbeck, ther thet Danska krigsfolcket til stor myckenhet lågo och solade sig, sade the Danske: *jeg tror skogen gaar*. När the wåre kommo så när, at the kunde få skott på them, spende the sina dahlbogor vp, och låto pilarna gå löst på them, och ther nederlade the them. Ännu skal man finna i jorden dahlpilar, när the gräfwa i jorden, them jag hafwer sedt. (Swedberg 1941: 21.)

I should also tell that when the Dalecarlians, following the king towards the Danish enemy, and going down the River Dalälven, having leafy branches as sails, came close to Brunnbäck where the Danish warriors were lying in a great multitude sunning themselves, the Danes said: *I think the forest is walking*. When our people came close enough to aim a shot at them, they tautened their Dalecarlian bows and let their arrows fly at them, and there they defeated them. When digging, one can still find in the earth Dalecarlian arrows, which I have seen.

Another clergyman, Peder Swart, was already in the sixteenth century given the mission by Gustav to write a chronicle of the dramatic events in Dalarna. He relates the episode in Svärdsjö but not the legend about the boats, covered with branches, which surprised the Danes at the ferry of Brunnbäck. It seems as if Jesper Swedberg here remembers a local oral tradition from his childhood. The legend about the stratagem of the Dalecarlians on the River Dalälven was of widespread occurrence; it was recorded in the nineteenth century both on Gotland (Säve 1961: no. 700) and in a Swedish-speaking part of Finland (Allardt & Perklén 1896: no. 308), and it was alive in the locality still in the twentieth century (Ljusnars-Kopparberg 1960: 504).

A question that has especially engaged scholars studying historical legends concerns the value of the legends as historical sources (Ahnlund 1926). A widespread opinion among folklorists is that one should not expect to find exact information in the legends; however, they are a valuable source if we want to study people's subjective apprehension of their history (Alver 1962). When it comes to the motif of the wandering forest the question is: is this a stratagem which has been practised, or should we see it as a poetic motif showing how people have perceived the strategies of war in old times?

It is indeed true that the source material above all consists of chronicles and legends from a time long after the actions of war described. Eyewitness-reports from battles where the stratagem has been used are extremely sparse. The classical literature about stratagems, for instance Frontinus' *Strategemata* from the first century AD, have no information about advances where the soldiers hide behind branches. The stratagem must nonetheless have been practised many times in the course of history. Various forms of camouflage have from the most ancient times been a well-known element in warfare. As late as the First World War, in April 1915, when French troops advanced between Maas and Mosel, the soldiers carried green branches in front of them as camouflage (Stegemann 1919: 172). Those camouflage dresses worn by soldiers in our time can be said to be a present-day parallel to the green branches mentioned in the legends.

I would therefore interpret the legends about a wandering forest as narratives which ultimately go back to a real stratagem. The theoretical implication, which has often been overlooked in definitions of legend as a genre, is that legends might sometimes be historically true, without any additions from popular imagination. If we presume that the stratagem has been practised many times, the consequence is that tradition may have kept many mutually independent narratives with the same basic plot. It would therefore be wrong to see all narratives containing the motif of the wandering forest as belonging to one and the same migratory legend.

We find on the other hand that a substantial part of the legendary material collected contains traits which recur in many variants and which indicate a genetic relationship between them. The most obvious example of this connection is the sentence uttered by a soldier, sentinel or messenger who discovers that the forest seems to have come closer. One single, ominous utterance is a genre-specific trait in traditional legend narration which differentiates the legend from the folktale, in which great parts of the action may be told in the form of a dialogue. In 'the wandering forest' this utterance often has a wording similar to the one in Jesper Swedberg's version: 'I think the forest is walking.'

I will here give just some few examples in addition to those already mentioned. In a record from 1624, written down by a Danish clergyman in Skåne (now a Swedish province), a soldier in the Swedish army says: 'Jeg seer en stor skoff komme gangende' ('I see a big forest come walking') (Tuneld 1934: 102–3, cf. Kristensen 1980: p. 60 no. 249). In a legend from a Swedish-speaking part of Finland, recorded in dialect, a Danish soldier says to another soldier: 'Ja trór, at skóven krúper' ('I think that the forest is creeping') (Allardt & Perklén 1894 no. 308). The same sentence is found in a legend from the province of Halland, also uttered by a Danish soldier: 'Skogen kryper' ('The forest is creeping') (Bergstrand 1949: no. 431).

For the sake of completeness I should mention that the oldest written source containing the motif discussed in this article is a Greek romance from the fifth century AD, *Leucippe and Clitophon* by Achilles Tatius. It has, however, been utilised in another way than in the later instances. A hostile army is seen advancing with old men in the front row, all carrying green branches in their hands as signs of peace. However, behind them armed men are hiding, and when the army is close enough they rush forward, annihilating their adversaries (Kröger 1904: 81). If we look at the wandering forest as nothing but a literary motif, then we could play with the idea that this motif had developed from the stratagem described in the Greek romance. But it is much more likely that the stratagem with green branches as camouflage was widespread and practised already in

classical antiquity, and that this should be understood as the background of the motif.

In conclusion, one may ask how it comes about that legends of a wandering forest have been so vigorous and widespread when many other equally cunning stratagems from old times have been forgotten. I think it depends on the fact that the forest with its trees has become a universal image of something firmly rooted and immobile. The image of a wandering forest is a symbol of impossibility which has at all times captured people's imagination. ■

Bengt af Klintberg is a Swedish folklorist and writer who taught folklore at the University of Stockholm before he became a full time writer. He is known especially for his collections of traditional and contemporary legends.

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International colloquium 23.–25.5.2012 at Finnish Literature Society (SKS), Hallituskatu 1, Great Hall, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, Helsinki.

## Register: Intersections of Language, Context and Communication

The colloquium is intended to open cross-disciplinary discussion of the term and concept 'register' (primarily) among folklorists, linguists and linguistic anthropologists. The term 'register' originates from linguistics, but it has become important across several intersecting disciplines.

The uses of the term and concept 'register' have become highly diversified within the scholarship of each field, and these several intersecting fields have not opened a discourse with one another on this topic.

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# Reviews

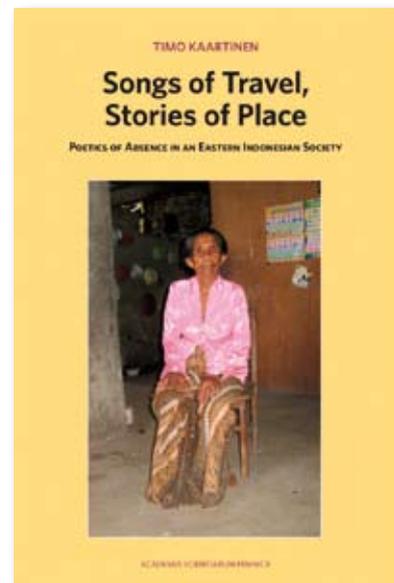
## Story of Banda retold

FFC 299. Timo Kaartinen, **Songs of Travel, Stories of Place: Poetics of Absence in an Eastern Indonesian Society**

207 pp. ISBN 978-951-41-1052-8. Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 2010.

In this subtle ethnography of historical consciousness among Banda Eli villagers, Timo Kaartinen traces how social relations for this eastern Indonesian people are centrally defined around experiences of travel, separation, and involvement with alien spaces. Banda Eli is founded on a geographic displacement that makes this anthropological fieldsite instantly fascinating. The Banda Islands, just 180 square kilometers in area, were once the only place in the world where nutmeg trees grew, from which both nutmeg and mace are harvested. It was to reach the source of these spices (as well as the source of cloves) that Columbus and Magellan were dispatched on their voyages, and the profits that could be made from risky trade expeditions to this region played a large role in the rise of northern European capitalism. But the 2,200 people of Banda Eli village do not live in the Banda archipelago. Their settlement lies 400 km east of their homeland, on the coast of the largest island in the Kei archipelago. Their ancestors settled in this new site following the nearly genocidal Dutch conquest of the Banda Islands in 1621, itself the culmination of many decades of conflict between Dutch, Portuguese, English, and Bandanese stakeholders over who would control the archipelago's lucrative nutmeg stands. Bandanese islanders fled in many different directions, but the people of Banda Eli and another village in Kei are unique in continuing to speak the Bandanese language.

In subsequent centuries, the people of Banda Eli have remained devoted maritime travelers. For long, their society revolved around trading voyages, and now over the last forty years it has been centrally defined around labor migration. A significant theme of Kaartinen's study is the resonance between Banda Eli people's memory of their founding migration and their ongoing dedication to 'long distance mobility' (p. 21). Their consciousness of the early exile and displacement is supported by more recent practices of travel, even as these travel practices are supported by the heritage of the original geographic rupture. Tellingly, routine practices of spatial reference assume that for a person's body to be facing seaward is the most basic situation of speech: the society faces toward sea travel as a kind of defining cultural center outside of itself (p. 83). Geographic distance and personal ab-



sence are pivotal to how kin relations are lived within the social space of Banda Eli itself, and to how the community imagines its own collective character.

The genius of Kaartinen's fieldwork and writing has been to focus his attention on an elaborate body of expressive genres through which Banda Eli people give voice to their sense of their society's complex geography. Yet his book pursues this close analysis of linguistic texts in a manner that also manages to convey a strong feel for the physical layout of Banda Eli village, and a clear sense of the village's day-to-day rhythms of economic and ritual life; the expressive genres, as they are maintained by Banda Eli persons, are densely embedded in these lifeworld contexts. All of these topics in the book are further intertwined with a prominent thematic concern with hierarchy. Banda Eli social life involves a good deal of stratification and political factionalism, turning on a 'forever contested' array of chiefly offices (p. 54), and also on a divide between high status villagers of unmixed Bandanese ancestry (chiefly titleholders among them) and commoners descended from indigenous Keiese people who moved into Banda Eli from surrounding settlements. Thus, for example, certain genres of song are by definition performed only by women of chiefly standing. Historiography as a general activity, and specific pieces of historical knowledge or modes of recording and circulating it, are linked to specific political positions in Banda Eli collective life.

While the empirical subjects that Kaartinen treats across eleven brisk chapters are diverse, his book can be read as unified around a single generative structure and

contradiction that recurs culturally in varied forms across different areas of Bandanese life. The structure can be described as one of close, paradoxical interdependence between reproduction of a home community and departure from home, or more widely as one of close interdependence between intimacy and alienation. For example, a routine aspect of Banda Eli social life is that young men betrothed to specific women must travel overseas for many years in order to accumulate wealth sufficient to establish a household separate from their fathers-in-law. In other words, basic processes of village-internal social reproduction through kinship depend on processes of travel and expropriation in faraway spaces. So too the new mosques that have gradually been completed in Banda Eli's different neighborhoods across the last several decades are a major objectification of people's existence as a local collectivity, but the construction is paid for by money gained overseas, and the architectural styles employed are statements toward and about national religious politics. Kaartinen also shows how in rituals and linguistic texts, not just the economic but also the imaginative existence of social groups comes into strongest focus for Banda Eli people (rather paradoxically) around transitions of leaving, when a person is going to be alienated. So too when a traveler is absent, his home household marks their relatedness to him through food stockpiling and other ritual acts making geographic otherness and moral distance strongly present in the 'here' of local village space. Many songs and narratives focus on poignant lapses of communication and understanding between intimate kin separated by travel, as well as scenes of revelatory encounter when an alien stranger is recognized as a lost relative, or the alien land of Kei is recognized as re-embodying the familiar Banda homeland. It is not just travel that is important, but the mental and emotional activity of *keeping track* of travelers. The diverse Banda Eli practices of keeping track of travelers are different cultural process of embracing ambivalences of separateness, loss, and uncertainty as foundational to positive human social existence. The travelers that are kept track of through these processes include those Banda Eli who stay at home, since in the larger sense the whole society is a community of exiles, who are dependent on ongoing voyaging for their village's existence and form.

The project of keeping track of travelers is perhaps reflected nowhere more strongly than in the proliferation of Banda Eli people's genres of poetry, song, and spoken or written prose narrative. Kaartinen persuasively interprets all of these genres as being centrally about temporality, and specifically about temporality as itself embodying a paradoxical dialectics of a self's constitution in what is separate or distant. Some oral genres are explicitly named as practices of 'memory'. Their content focuses on ways that personal subjectivity is lodged in other people separated in space from the rememberer, on society's ongoing grounding in ancestral foundations that were complete in their own time but are now fractured and obscured, and on perspectives of pastness that decenter present conditions and make the boundaries of otherness between present and past a source of insight and a fulcrum of self-definition.

Kaartinen notes at one point that 'The opposition between an inside domain of relatedness and the outside world of dislocation and commodified relationships can be found throughout the Malay-speaking world' (p. 162). While he is frequently concerned to specify unique or distinctive patterns in how Banda Eli people define and mediate this opposition, his book very much builds on a larger body of anthropological work on societies of eastern Indonesia and western Melanesia that has sought to develop adequate answers to the descriptive and theoretical challenges posed by how the region's societies make engagement with otherness central to their cultural self-constitution. Quite a few past contributions to this conversation were made by scholars teaching or trained at the University of Chicago, during the thirty year period when that institution's anthropology department was a major center for theoretically-ambitious ethnographic work in this world region. Kaartinen's book grew out of his own doctoral work at Chicago, and his study has many explicit and implicit links to related works such as Patricia Spyer's *The Memory of Trade* (2000, about Aru), Webb Kean's *Signs of Recognition* (1997, about Sumba), Danilyn Rutherford's *Raiding the Land of the Foreigners* (2003, about Biak), and Nancy Munn's *The Fame of Gawa* (1986, about a *kula* society near Malinowski's famous fieldsite in the Trobriands). The roots of the conversation Kaartinen addresses also extend to earlier Dutch scholarship such as van Wouden's *Types of Social Structure in Eastern Indonesia* (1935), to work by students and associates of James Fox in the United States and Australia and by students of Louis Dumont in France, and to Jukka Siikala's studies of space and mobility in Polynesian societies.

For anyone interested in improving anthropological thought about culture, scholarship on eastern Indonesian societies' preoccupation with otherness is exciting because of how it pushes culture theory from flatness to depth. On the one hand, work in this region is usually culturally sophisticated (somewhat against the grain of wider tendencies in anthropology today toward culture-deafness). Ethnographers are led by eastern Indonesian people's own anthropological acuity to recognize and describe cultural distinctiveness as such. Yet on the other hand, as Kaartinen's study so richly exemplifies, these cultures are not self-contained or self-identical, but are in obvious ways characterized by qualities of spatial, temporal, and moral multidimensionality and openness. People in these cultural worlds focus their attention heavily on their own locality, but also on the distant elsewhere that are inside that locality while also other to it. So too they focus their attention on the temporal present, but also on other times disjunct from that present and yet pivotal to it. In these sorts of ways, culture as anthropologically documented becomes at once distinctive *and* a field of possibilities and dilemmas. Kaartinen, like other gifted regional ethnographers, has taken on the crucial task of describing people who are culturally not one fixed thing, but instead are themselves a bit divided. They are consciousness of multiple spatial worlds; conscious of their own centrality but also of other spatial and social formations that exist as other centers

outside their own; and conscious of multiple qualities of social relation and definitions of polity. Giving a rich account of these kinds of cultural formations has a certain urgency in anthropology now, as the field increasingly loosens its empirical and theoretical grasp of the idea of cultural distinctiveness, under the mistaken impression that to describe such distinctiveness would necessarily be to describe something fixed, one-dimensional, and insulated.

If Kaartinen has learned much from other anthropologists who carried out fieldwork in eastern Indonesia and the Pacific, the even stronger impetus for his elaboration of the theoretical theme of a dialectics of 'here' and 'elsewhere' has been the cultural preoccupations of Banda Eli people. Kaartinen's ear for the voices and feelings of Banda Eli people is wonderfully perceptive. Sometimes his most general interpretive statements come across as being a little bit aphoristically free-floating, relative to the ethnographic data they elucidate. But this is a difficulty that perhaps always arises in ethnographic writing, and in any case even the most abstract of Kaartinen's statements are clear and artful in their presentation, and highly appealing to think about. Meanwhile, the book's steady, carefully organized unfolding of Banda Eli stories, photographs, and quotidian practices bears all the hallmarks of an exceptionally sensitive labor of fieldwork inquiry and analytic reflection.

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## On first looking into af Klintberg's catalogue

FFC 300. Bengt af Klintberg,  
**The Types of the Swedish Folk Legend**

501 pp. ISBN 978-951-41-1053-5. Helsinki: Academia Scientarium Fennica 2010.

### The author and his background

Swedish folklorists are said to be an endangered species. Hopefully, there is a good bit of exaggeration in that dictum. In any event, it is obvious that it has proved impossible to exterminate Bengt af Klintberg. As apparent from a bibliography, covering his printed works from 1956–2007 (published by Kungl. Gustav Adolfs Akademien för svensk folkkultur, *Småskrifter* 8, 2008), his scholarly output is both extensive and varied. He has published widely on folktales, myths, songs, magic formulas, children's rhymes, and jokes, not to speak of folk beliefs, folk customs, the history of folkloristics and folkloristic theory.

In particular af Klintberg has paid much attention to folk legends, both more recent so-called urban or modern legends, on which he is an acknowledged expert, and the traditional ones mirroring life in the old rural society. It is to this latter of traditional folk legends, to which he devoted his anthology *Svenska folksägner* (1972) that af Klintberg returns in the book at present under review,

*The Types of the Swedish Folk Legend* (henceforth, as indeed already suggested by the author himself, abbreviated TSFL). More specifically, the task he has now set himself is to single out and bring together as complete a corpus as possible of traditional legends from Sweden and Swedish-speaking districts in Finland, on the basis of both printed sources and material preserved in the main folklore archives from these areas. His aim is to classify this material in such a manner that researchers and other users can most conveniently access it.

In addition to his scholarly publications, there are many other factors that qualify af Klintberg to undertake this formidable task. He worked as an assistant to Carl-Herman Tillhagen at the Folklore Archive of the Nordic Museum in 1962–4, and again as a curator there from 1973 to 1974. He also worked as a lecturer of folklore at the Institute of Folklife Research at the University of Stockholm for twenty years, between 1967 and 1987. During this period, he also spent some time as a visiting professor at the Department of Scandinavian in the University of California at Berkeley. All this has equipped him with an insight into the workings of archives and a thorough knowledge of manuscript source material. It also provided him with academic training and national and international contacts which have formed an important basis for achieving success with his present task. It might be added that Klintberg's affection for and understanding of his subject was deepened through direct contacts with orally transmitted legends, not only contemporary legends but also those from earlier times which, in spite of their age, sometimes turned out still to be alive in parts of Sweden. With bearers of these traditions af Klintberg came into contact largely as a result of his highly popular weekly radio programs of folklore, *Folkloristisk brevlåda* (Folklore Letterbox) which ran from 1984 to 1989, and *Folkminnen* (Popular Traditions), running from 1990–2005.

### The status of legends and legend catalogues in folk narrative research

The appearance of the TSFL must also be considered against the background of the history of folk-legend studies and earlier attempts that have been made to create legend indexes. These are matters that reveal a great deal about trends and problems in folklore studies in general.

The two main categories of popular prose narrative, folktales (*Märchen*) and folk legends (*Sagen*), have been recognized since the time of the Grimm brothers. Nevertheless, the two genres were not given—and have never been accorded—anything like equal attention or standing. Significantly, everybody knows the folktales of the Grimm brothers, the *Household Tales* (*Kinder- und Hausmärchen*), while their legend collection, *Deutsche Sagen*, is seldom mentioned and generally neglected even by professional folklorists. When collections of tales and legends began to appear in greater numbers in Germany and elsewhere, it was also almost invariably the tales that were given pride of place. The hundreds and hundreds of collections advertised as 'Märchen und Sagen', 'tales and legends', 'contes et legends', 'sagor och sägner', and so on, is a clear indica-

tion of this favouritism; one will have to look very hard indeed to find any publications in which the two genres occur in the reverse order. Monographs on tales drastically outnumber those devoted to legends. Small wonder, then, that the same pattern is clearly discernible in relation to indexes of folk literature. The publications in Folklore Fellows' Communications offer a good illustration, From the outset of these publications in 1910 up to the year 2000, a dozen indexes devoted exclusively to folktales of a country or language area were published in this series, and a further five covered folktales and legends (again in that order). Only five publications were devoted to folk legends (and these sometimes only to particular sub-genres, such as 'mythical legends' or 'origin legends'). Without in any way denying that folktales fully deserve the attention given to them, it cannot be denied that the legends and legend indexes have been afforded much less than their fair share of the cake.

There was a time, however, when matters seemed to be on the upgrade. Significant tentative steps forward were being taken, for example the appearance of Reidar Th. Christiansen's *The Migratory Legends* (1958) and Lauri Simonsuuri's *Typen- und Motifverzeichnis der finnischen mytischen Sagen* (1961). As is outlined in af Klintberg's Introduction, plans for intensified cataloguing of European folk legends were evolving at international congresses, and reached unprecedented height at a seminar entirely devoted to legend classification and cataloguing in Antwerp in 1962. It was at this seminar that Carl-Herman Tillhagen presented his plan, laid out in print in his article 'Das skandinavische Sagenmaterial und dessen Katalogisierung' (*Volkskunde* [Antwerpen ] 64, 1963, 149–70) and in 'Was ist eine Sage?' (*Acta Ethnographica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 13, 1964, 9–18). All of this inspired af Klintberg to take on the project that eventually became the TSFL. By 1965, things were looking up for legend studies to such an extent that the prominent Austrian scholar Leopold Schmidt was led to prophesy the dawn of a glorious new era. Innovative Finnish research in the field of legend research, like that produced by Lauri Honko and Juha Pentikäinen, strengthened these hopes.

It was not long, however, before storm clouds began to gather. At a congress in Freiburg 1973 devoted to the problems of folk-legend research, one of Germany's greatest folk-legend scholars, Lutz Röhrich, declared that there was little cause for euphoria; many projects had come to naught and a strange lethargy had descended upon the plans for an international folk legend catalogue ('um die internationale Sagenkatalogisierung is es merklich stiller geworden'; Lutz Röhrich, 'Was soll und kann Sagenforschung leisten' in Röhrich (ed.), *Probleme der Sagenforschung*, Freiburg im Breisgau 1973, p. 13). It is in keeping with this that only one folk-legend index (Lena Neuland's *Motif-Index of Latvian Folktales and Legends*) was published in the Folklore Fellows' Communications series during the interval between Simonsuuri's *Typen- und Motifverzeichnis der finnischen mythischen sagen* of 1961 and Jauhiainen's *Motif Index of Finnish Belief Legends and Memorates* of 1998 (and this latter catalogue, while being

the fullest and best in its time, is also basically a revised and enlarged edition of Simonsuuri's work). Fortuna's wheel had turned again, and folk legend studies appeared to be heading down rather than up.

What had gone wrong? Basically, it would seem to me that two things had happened. First of all, the scholars who had been aiming at the creation of a catalogue on a European scale, began to see more and more problems in proceeding with the undertaking as they got hopelessly bogged down in theoretical, if not to say metaphysical discussions about the nature of the legend and the overall feasibility of the task. They also managed to entangle themselves in a web of self-invented terminology. Much energy, to little profit, was spent on preparatory schemes, terminology dictionaries, such as Laurits Bødker's *Folk Literature (Germanic)* of 1965, and general surveys, such as Vibeke Dahl's *Nordiske sagnregistre og sagnsystem* (1973), while little work was carried out on the concrete legend material itself. Not surprisingly, many scholars became frustrated on foot of this 'much-talk-and-little-wool' scenario and began to turn their scholarly attention elsewhere.

The second, and even more devastating reason for the set-back in folk legend studies—and for that matter in folk literature as a whole—was the so-called paradigm shift in folklore studies, advocates of which in the 1960s and 70s were vociferously and arrogantly proclaiming that indexes, monographs, and even textual studies were hopelessly passé and ought to be abandoned as soon as possible. 'Context' and 'performance' became the order of the day, and the material in the folklore archives was deemed to be practically useless, because of the supposed dearth of contextual information; some fanatical adherents to the new creed went as far as declaring that it was time all archives were burnt! It beggars belief that such sermonising could have had such a powerful impact.

### What is a folk legend?

The most serious crux confronting cataloguers of folklore material is the question of what to include or exclude. This is closely connected with the genre problem. Is folk legend really a genre and, if so, how is it to be described, defined and demarcated from other genres? Opinions on this matter are almost as many as folklore scholars. One can nonetheless draw up a long list of criteria that have been pressed into service in the various attempts to determine the essential character and qualities of the terms folk legend (or *Sage* to use the German term that may be slightly more precise). Many of these criteria have been highlighted by contrasting folk legends to other genres, a method with obvious virtues, if it were not for the drawback that these genres themselves can be equally or even less amenable to precise definition. As every folklore student knows, the game began with the Grimm brothers, who stated that 'Das Märchen is poetischer, die Sage historischer' (The folktale is to a greater extent poetic, the legend to a greater extent historical'). In judging this attempt at characterizing the respective types of tale, one has to bear in mind that the Grimm brothers here used the word 'Märchen' in a narrow sense, more or less synonymous with what folklorists later

on termed 'wonder tales' or 'tales of magic.' However, even with such a limitation, the statement is of dubious validity: poetic qualities are not lacking in folk legends; neither are all or even the majority of legends historical in any meaningful sense of the word. Perhaps it would be nearer to the truth if one were to state that folktales are more romantic, folk legends more realistic, but that would not add up to a workable distinction either, when attempting to establish type catalogues.

Nevertheless, two things implied in the statement by the Grimm brothers might be useful in attempts to delineate and define 'folk legend', namely that the characteristics will be brought out more clearly in contrast to wonder tales than to any other folklore genre, and that these differences must be stated in relative terms, so that certain traits are distinguished as being more or less prominent in the one genre than in the other. Of necessity, therefore there will be borderline cases between the two genres.

Once one also accepts what most scholars, including af Klintberg, would accept nowadays, namely that both legends and folktales are structured prose narratives, and that personal experience stories without a fixed plot (memorates, to use von Sydow's term) or family sagas (chronicates) should be excluded on principle from both genres, one can identify a whole battery of criteria, that might be more or less useful attempts to characterize legends. Various scholars have been at this game. Some of their criteria are based on considerations of length and composition—legends as a rule being shorter and containing fewer episodes than wonder tales (usually only one). The structure of the legend is also simple, usually built up around one single core sentence, rhyme or the like, seldom using such devices as threefold repetition (which might be seen as the rule in wonder tales). Other differences have to do with the setting in time and place, and the character of the dramatis personæ: the action in legends as a rule being set in the recent past and in real places, the human actors being real people with real names, while wonder tales are set in an indeterminate past, long long ago, and are about anonymous people or people with poetic and fictitious names.

The themes dealt with are also different in the two genres; though they both reflect people's wishes and fears, the themes of wonder tales are more general and unspecified, concentrating on riches and happy marriage, while legends deal with a wider spectrum of problems and issues that can be as specific as luck in cards or bee-keeping, and also frequently with how to avoid or get rid of threatening, dangerous or annoying agents, such as the devil, supernatural beings, or rats and lice, to take only a few examples. Further distinctions can be drawn on the basis of belief related to the content and characters in the respective genres. Though the supernatural looms large in wonder tales and legends alike, the giants, witches and dragons of the former are one-dimensional cardboard creatures, which will at best frighten children. The ghosts, forest and water spirits, and other such supernatural beings in the legends, on the other hand, are figures about which many tellers and listeners in traditional society had no doubt with regard to their existence.

Still further distinctions can be drawn from the point of view of distribution: most wonder tales were told over a much wider area than most legends, former known sometimes practically everywhere from Ireland to India, while the latter were perhaps limited to a single country or a few countries. Moving on to contextual matters, such as the tellers, telling occasions and telling situations, one can with some assurance maintain that legends were told frequently and on informal occasions, often triggered by something casually mentioned in ordinary conversation, or when passing localities where they supposedly took place. Wonder tales, on the other hand, tended to demand a more formal setting. Their tellers, fewer in number, were regarded as specialists. One would also be entitled to state that much more often than wonder tales, legends were a subject of discussion by those to whom they were told, raising for example questions as to why and how something took place and could be explained, and what lessons one could draw from what had happened.

However, though all the above may give an idea of the contents and character of folk legends, many of the criteria will fail to be of much practical help when it comes to the concrete task of deciding whether or not a particular item should be considered a folk legend worthy of classification in a catalogue. In particular, af Klintberg, following Linda Dégh, is of the opinion that definitions based on belief criteria are unworkable. To his mind, however, we are 'entitled to define the legend as a genre closely linked to collective belief'. It might be possible to quibble with this statement, however carefully phrased. What is nonetheless beyond doubt is that those legends which have somewhat unfortunately been called 'mythical', that is those about supernatural beings in forest, aquatic and other locations, as well as the dead, sorcerers and witches, which form by far the largest part of the legend corpus, reflect to an extraordinary degree the needs, hopes and fears of our forefathers. Nor should we neglect to note that many people in the traditional society had a stronger belief in supernatural beings and occurrences than the bulk of today's urbanized population is able to grasp.

In any event, the definition that af Klintberg has chosen is one based on formal criteria: to him a legend is a short, mostly mono-episodic narrative 'using devices aimed at making them trustworthy' (p. 13). It might be objected that this formulation can give the impression that those who tell legends consciously set out to represent as truth what they know to be inventions. A slight amount of rephrasing, for example altering this to 'including traits that make them seem trustworthy' (which would make no difference to what would actually be included) would leave little to object to in adoption of such a definition as a practical gauge for the legend.

### **How numerous are Swedish folk legends?**

Leaving such niceties aside, how many legend types can one expect to find in Swedish tradition or in the tradition of any particular country? The figures that can be extracted from the various indexes and related works vary to such a degree that they are likely to generate total confusion.

Thus, for example, Christiansen's Norwegian catalogue includes only about 80 types, while Liungman in his books treats of some 350. Simonsuuri and Jauhianen seemingly beat that by a long shot; but this is partly down to their catalogues not being restricted to 'types' in the sense of stories with a fixed plot; they also include isolated motifs, not in themselves constituting complete narratives. The TSFL, however, dramatically outdoes all its forerunners by containing more than 1800 types.

Are we to believe that there are over twenty times as many legend types in Sweden as in Norway? No, certainly not. The reasons for the discrepancy must be sought elsewhere. An obvious reason is that af Klintberg, unlike or to a greater extent than his precursors, has not restricted himself to mythical legends; he also includes stories of noteworthy occurrences and people with remarkable traits and abilities that may be of a strange and superhuman, but not actually supernatural kind. Furthermore, Christiansen's catalogue, in particular, has been guided by frequency and distribution criteria, something by which af Klintberg has felt less bound. As the title clearly states, Christiansen's catalogue lists only 'migratory legends,' that is legends known to have a wide distribution (in fact it only includes a selection of these). Obviously, such legends have a special appeal to scholars, since they offer fascinating topics for the study of dissemination and adaptation processes, and this is one of the reasons why *The Migratory Legends*, has had a marked impact on subsequent legend scholarship. That is not to say that rare legends, and the reasons for their rarity, cannot also raise intriguing questions. Judging from the scarcity of references given, a number of af Klintberg's types are indeed rare, having been documented from only one or a couple of provinces. This, however, might in many instances be the result of the collecting situation, rather than a reflection of actual distribution. Considering this, and how little we know about the occurrence outside Sweden of specific types, it is not practical to restrict inclusions in a legend catalogue to items of proven 'migratory' status; many more than we have hitherto suspected may turn out to be more or less international.

One might feel more hesitant about bestowing type numbers on clusters and cycles of legends, for example legends about named ancient heroes or strong men, something af Klintberg has resorted to (see e.g. pp. 452–3 or 457–8), but this is seldom done, and it is indeed likely that this has resulted in decreasing rather than increasing the number of potential types.

However that may be, I believe that, on the whole, it is true to say that the principle of 'when in doubt leave in,' rather than 'when in doubt leave out,' has been followed in the TSFL. When it comes to the crunch, this cannot be considered anything but sensible, since it is easy to ignore what one might consider superfluous, but frustrating to have to look in vain for what one would have fondly expected to find.

In spite of the variety of reasons given above for the number of af Klintberg types so vastly exceeding those distinguished by his forerunners, the main reason has yet to be mentioned. That is simply the unprecedented scale

of af Klintberg's painstaking and systematic search which revealed vast numbers of narratives to which little or no previous attention had been paid, but which by any reasonable definition could not be considered to be anything but legends. True enough, *Svenska folksägner*, with its 430 texts, had given us an inkling that the number of different Swedish folk legends might be higher than earlier expected, but I very much doubt that anybody had foreseen that the result would be anything like the eventual figure. The establishment of this range is one of the most important results of af Klintberg's research. It is now an indisputable fact that the Swedish legend flora is so rich and varied, and forms such a prominent part of the oral narrative tradition, that it deserves the highest attention of scholars in the field. Even more importantly, it underlines the probability that previous catalogues from other countries often grossly misrepresent the scope of their legend tradition. Hopefully, legend scholars in the Nordic countries (especially in Norway and Denmark), but also elsewhere in Europe and further afield, will be inspired to take a closer look at their own traditions, in order to establish the richness of their legendary flora to a fuller and truer extent.

### Contents and arrangement of the TSFL

So what does TSFL contain? The TSFL is a massive work, occupying 500 pages. Apart from the main type catalogue itself, it contains a map, showing the provinces in Sweden and Finland referred to in the work, an Introduction, a list of abbreviations, a section listing the printed sources for the legend types in the main body of the text, a literature list covering scholarly treatments of the various legend types, a concordance between the TSFL types and those tales listed in Hans-Jörg Uther's *The Types of the International Folktales* (ATU); and, finally an Index.

In the short, but concise Introduction, the author sketches the genesis of the work and the inspiration he received from Carl-Herman Tillhagen. He also refers to other scholars, such as Lauri Simonsuuri, Marjatta Jauhianen and Reidar Th. Christiansen, whose works have been of special importance to his undertaking. The works of V. E. V. Wessman, whose legend material in *Finlands svenska folkdiktning* is constantly referred to, and of Waldemar Liungman, whose seven-volume edition *Sveriges sägner i ord och bild* has been of similar importance, are also briefly discussed. Liungman's work is rightly characterized as 'a goldmine for the legend scholar' (p. 15), but the caveat that many of Liungman's conclusions are open to question is equally well-founded. In this connection, it might be added that af Klintberg has dealt with Tillhagen and Liungman more fully in *Svenska etnologer och folklorister* (M. Hellspong and F. Skott, eds, Uppsala 2010).

The ensuing survey of printed and manuscript sources informs us that some 150 printed books and articles have been excerpted and that the author has also drawn from the manuscripts held in the archive collection in Gothenburg, Lund, Stockholm and Uppsala, comprising hundreds and thousands of pages. Some special problems related to the legend material in these archives and the collectors working for them are also touched upon. The south to north

geographical order in which the material is presented under the respective types in the catalogue is explained, as is the system used in references to other catalogues, classificatory systems, and scholarly literature. The system of cross references to related types used within the catalogue is also accounted for.

### What matters does the catalogue deal with?

The main body of the catalogue is divided into 24 sections, ranging from A. Fate. Omina to Z. Unusual people. The first 15 sections deal almost exclusively with supernatural phenomena and supernatural beings (corresponding more or less to what used to be termed mythical legends). Some of the remaining sections, though not always lacking in supernatural ingredients, are of a more 'historical' nature in as far as they treat of settlement and social relations (section T), times of war (section W), kings and nobility (section X), and other such matters. Each section is introduced by general surveys of the themes and motifs in the types encompassed. These surveys, of which there are no parallels in any other type index known to me, are extremely informative. They also contain valuable references to scholarly literature covering the whole subject matter under discussion. Each section concludes with cross references to legends that might have been considered for inclusion were they not treated elsewhere. The types within each of the sections are supplied with running numbers, well-chosen titles and concise description. Thanks to their arrangement, it is possible to get an overview of those themes that most occupied people's interests and concerns. One of the largest sections, that on death and the dead, contains 284 legend types.

Each section is also divided into sub-sections. The aforementioned section on death and the dead, contains a score of such sub-divisions, ranging from the moment of death (C1-10) and time before burial (C11-20) to the sacrificial pile (C271-80) and the apparently dead (C281-4). Once again, the number of types within each sub-section gives valuable indications of the themes that were of most concern to Swedish legend tellers and listeners.

Many of the main sections deal with traditions attached to individual supernatural beings or groups of beings in particular habitats, as in the case of sections E. Spirits of the forest, F. Spirits of the waters and G. Spirits of mountains and mines. Though this arrangement is practical and has value from certain points of view, it nonetheless entails the drawback that of one and the same legend may be told about different supernatural beings. The legend about the supernatural being shot by a silver bullet, for instance, can be told about a ghost (as in C199, Ghost shot) or a forest spirit (E55, Forest spirit killed by silver bullet or other magical remedy). However, such problems are as a rule ameliorated and ironed out by generous cross referencing. Strict logicians might occasionally find other faults with the section divisions, but on the whole it is easy to find what one is looking for, and that is what really matters in a catalogue of this type. The user is also much facilitated by the clear and attractive typographical arrangement and the subject matter index at the end of the book. One thing

one might have asked for is a CD accompanying the book which would have allowed for electronic searches.

References to printed versions of each legend type are given, but in regard to manuscript versions we are only informed about their occurrence in the respective archives, with no details being supplied either as to the number of variants, signa or the ways in which they can be retrieved. This is, however, fully understandable in view of the enormous magnitude of the task of providing such data and the extent to which it would have added to the length of the catalogue.

According to af Klintberg (p. 17), 'Swedish legend tradition is on the whole homogenous', adding that 'many legend types have a country-wide distribution.' Though the latter part of the statement is undoubtedly true, and even though I would hesitate to disagree with somebody whose knowledge of the material is so uncanny, I wonder if af Klintberg has not overstepped the mark here. My own impression is that the differences between the legend tradition of the southern and northern parts of Sweden are so considerable that they sometimes lead one to wonder whether one is in the same country. The fact that many legend types are found all over the country does not give the lie to this, for it is not simply a question of occurrence alone, but also that of frequency in the various districts, as well as the distribution and frequency of specific forms and sub-types of the legends. Such matters can best be investigated by means of distribution maps, such as those contained in Åke Campbell's and Åsa Nyman's *Atlas över svensk folkkultur* II, a work to which af Klintberg refers several times. Those who see red whenever monographs and type indexes are mentioned, tend to also be opposed to the cartographical method, shrugging their shoulders and muttering glibly about them being 'goals in themselves'. It should be self-evident, however, that distribution maps of legends and legend motifs, if based on sufficient and trustworthy data, have the potential to form excellent starting points for the investigation of a number of important problems in legend research, not only those relating to distribution areas and distribution channels but also reasons for popularity, or scarcity of different legend types, as well as the mechanisms involved in change and variation. It is therefore to be hoped that the method will be more widely used in the future. The TSFL should be an inspiration for such undertakings.

### The catalogue in a Nordic context

When it comes to mapping projects, as in all other investigations relating to Swedish folk legends, it is essential that one does not halt operations at present or previous national borders (as has so often been the case even in Campbell and Nyman's work). Not for nothing was folk narrative research in Sweden once carried out under the heading of *Nordisk och jämförande folklivsforskning* (Nordic and comparative folk life research), and it is natural that Swedish folk legends should first and foremost be viewed in a Nordic context. Borders between Nordic countries have never been tradition boundaries, and in many respects it might be more correct to talk about a homogenous Nor-

dic tradition than the unity of traditions within individual Nordic countries. Thus, it might be argued that what we now ought to work towards is a Type Index of Nordic Folk Legend, a TNFL. This was, in fact, what Carl-Herman Tillhagen intended to create, and he was also of the opinion that the system he outlined, which is essentially the same as that now refined and further developed by af Klintberg, would be applicable for such a purpose. I, for one, would agree with that. The task would of course necessitate the creation of a substantial amount of new type numbers, but the framework, as well as much of the substructure of the TSFL, could remain unchanged. However, perhaps rather than attempting to create a TFNL at one fell swoop, it might initially be better to aim at separate indexing of the Norwegian, Danish, Icelandic and Faroese material according to the TFSL system (a similar catalogue for the material in Finnish is perhaps of lesser urgency, due to the existence of Jauhiainen's work). All this, if it ever comes to pass, will demand an enormous amount of work over a long period of time, but one of the most important aspects of the TSFL is that it has proven such an endeavour to be within the bounds of possibility. Furthermore, af Klintberg has now provided the inspiration, the hope and the example, essential buttresses to all scholarly work.

Information already present in the TSFL will facilitate inter-Scandinavian studies. This is particularly applicable in the cases of references to Christiansen's Norwegian and Jauhiainen's Finnish catalogues and references to Liungman and ATU, to which, as already mentioned, there is a concordance in the TSFL. In many instances, these cross references lead on to other relevant Nordic material. In this connection, it might have been useful if af Klintberg had provided concordances between Jauhiainen's, Christiansen's and Liungman's type numbers and the TSFL, but again, in view of the bounty we have already received, one almost feels ashamed to ask for more.

### References to scholarly treatments of legend types in the TFSL

It should already have become obvious that the *bon mot* 'folklore like charity begins at home, but should not stay there' is readily applied to the study of folk legends. Nor should the Swedes restrict their attention to comparisons with their Nordic neighbours, however worthy they may be of special attention. We have, as yet, only the vaguest idea of how many of the TSFL legends might be represented on the Continent of Europe or in Great Britain and Ireland, but we know enough to be certain that they are thick on the ground in both areas. The TSFL will also prove a useful tool in working towards the establishment of groups of legends with distribution areas that might bear witness to old historical connections between Scandinavia and the Continent or the British Isles.

Quite apart from what type of legend research one might pursue, knowledge of previous scholarship will always be a *sine qua non*, and this is something that the TSFL can provide to an unusually high degree. Unlike most other legend indexes, it contains abundant references to scholarly treatments of individual legends or groups of legends,

within both the restricted Swedish and the international perspective. The many hundred books and articles in the literature section bear witness to the author's wide reading and learning. In addition to scholarship in the English language, af Klintberg is also thoroughly familiar with German research, and the extent to which the most recent books and articles have been taken into account is truly astounding. A special source of satisfaction to the present reviewer is the degree of attention that has been afforded to Irish research. As an indication of the great care with which the list of 'Literature' (pp. 461–5) has been executed, it might be mentioned that it contains no errors worthy of mention in the Gaelic words and phrases found in it (in stark contrast to the misshapen forms in which they usually occur, even in an otherwise excellent work such as ATU).

### Uses and usefulness of legend indexes

Some of the needs that the TSFL fulfils or helps to remedy have been touched upon above, but much else could be mentioned. What it all boils down to is that the TSFL calls attention to a vast amount of exciting, well-told narratives about subjects and problems that were of central importance to people in previous generations, and indeed, *mutatis mutandis*, to us today. And, to boot, it leads us further towards the well springs (*die Urquellen*), the manuscripts and printed works in which the full richness of folk legends, in all their amazing mixture of stark realism, intriguing strangeness and mysterious variety is presented to us. It would be a dullard indeed whose fantasy would not be stirred by entries such as P34, Hunter almost strangled by intestines of milk-hare; P51, Owner feeds spiritus with spittle; Q28, The nightmare and the mittens; or R22, The Bear's last meal; not to mention B11, Flower on grave as sign of salvation; or K193, Fairy woman as guest at baptism in farmer's family. It sounds incredible that a type index could have such striking and poetic qualities as to allow it to be read for sheer pleasure, but take it from me, this is the case with the TSFL!

When it comes to profit that can be gained from opening this book, one does not need to be a folklorist. Historians, sociologists, historians of religion, historians of literature and scholars in many other fields will be greatly facilitated by the TSFL in their search for sources of vital importance for their research.

That people's opinions, reactions and feelings in times of adversity and oppression matters at least as much as what objectively happened to them and their nation is an insight which modern historians have been gaining to an increasing degree, also in Sweden. In this book, they are given access to a plethora of fresh material that has the potential to throw new light on such matters. One can take for instance the narratives in section S, Plague and other epidemics; T, Settlement and social relations; W, Times of war; or X, Kings and nobility. A number of the legends included in the TSFL also offer drastic examples of xenophobia and racism in earlier times, all of which will be of great interest to students of such matters. Among such narratives is T66, Travellers ask for permission to bury person

who is still alive (a legend that is also told about gypsies and the Sámi); and T71, Laplanders squeezed to death between table and wall.

As already mentioned, the confrontation between men and women with supernatural beings or witches and sorcerers is the central theme of the vast majority of the legends in the TSFL. Such narratives are built up around a core of belief, and they abound in descriptions about how, when and why the supernatural manifests itself. In view of this, and in view of the many legends about fate, omens, miracles and divine punishment and other similar matters, folk legends may be said to be a source of almost equal importance to historians of religion as to folklorists. This has, of course, long been realised in Sweden as elsewhere, but the material in the TSFL opens new vistas.

### A new era for folk legend research?

It should be clear, then, that folk legends serve many purposes and that the type catalogue of Klintberg has provided further the study of the legends in a variety of ways. Would it even be correct to say that the publication marks a turning point or at least betokens a trend towards renewed interest in a long-neglected narrative genre and the reacceptance of the legitimacy of studies based on content and form in traditional narratives? There are certainly signs of spring in the air. Conferences devoted exclusively to the study of folk legends have been arranged with fruitful results. Among these are the Celtic-Nordic-Baltic symposia, initiated in 1988, of which the sixth is to be held in Tartu next year. Parallel with these symposia, indexing activities have accelerated in Ireland and Scotland (including Orkney and Shetland); in the Faroe Islands, and in Iceland, where work on *Sagnagrunnur*, an on-line database of the Icelandic legends, is in progress in Reykjavík. Other ongoing projects in Germany, not least the excellent articles on legends in *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* give reasons for hope. Are we perhaps finally heading towards the golden age of legend research that Leopold Schmidt foresaw? Has the time come and are the scholars there to bring it to fruition? Without being overly optimistic, one might declare with the great and wise legend scholar Lutz Röhrich that, in spite of fashionable trends, there are certain long-time tasks that necessarily need to be performed, and among these are archiving, indexing and the publication of editions, carried out on the basis of critical historical principles. In all these fields, Bengt af Klintberg has produced magnificent work and, unless I am very much mistaken, his TSFL, will act as a mighty catalyst both in Sweden and internationally, working to inspire a new generation of scholars to continue work towards a fuller and deeper understanding of legends—a genre that has so much to teach us about the human condition. For all this he deserves great thanks.

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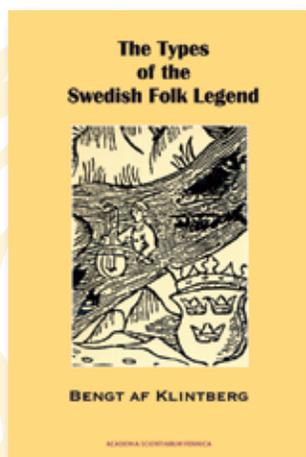
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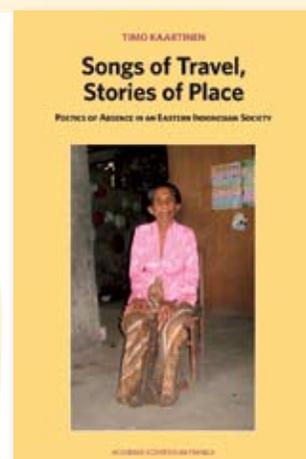
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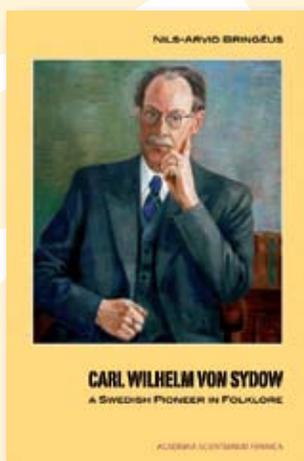


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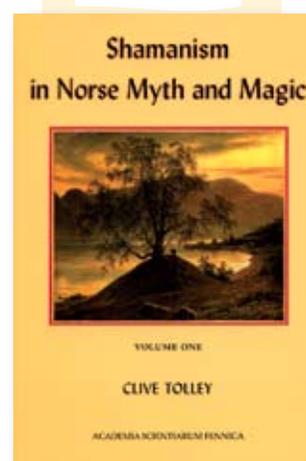
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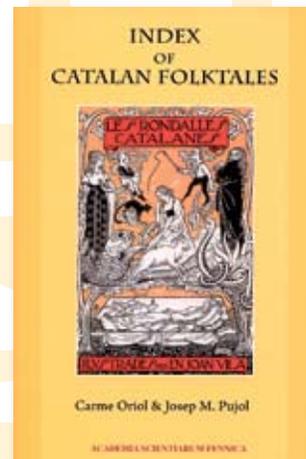
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