

## **Archiving Living Traditions: The Finnish Model over Time**

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My intention is, to begin with, to give an idea about the ideological background of Romanticism as an impetus for collecting of folklore materials at the beginning of the 19th Century. The romantic trends that spread throughout Europe began to be felt more and more strongly in Finland too. At that time Finland was an autonomous grand duchy under the Russian tsar (from 1809). Romanticism arose a need for recreating or reconstructing mythical past, poetic landscapes of golden age. In the latter half of the 19th Century the romantic, nationalistically inspired movement aimed mostly (as in the case of Finland) at supporting the nation-state status.

The organized collection of folklore began in the first half of the 19th century. The major milestone in the history of collecting and protecting the Finnish traditional heritage was the founding of the Finnish Literature Society in 1831 by members of educated circles. Elias Lönnrot (the Society's first secretary) compiled the Finnish national epic, the Kalevala, on the basis of traditional folk poetry. The first edition appeared in 1835, the second and greatly enlarged edition in 1849. Lönnrot also edited lyric poetry, proverbs, riddles and spells for publication. The poems and charms in Kalevala meter were joined at the end of the century by collections of folktales. In the 1870s researchers already thought that everything of any importance had been collected,

and around 1900 the folklore archive of the Finnish Literature Society had already about 200,000 "items" of folklore.

Finland gained its independence, finally, in 1917 during the First World War. In a civil war that followed in 1918, the socialist forces were defeated, and Finland became a parliamentary republic. The large-scale collection work of oral tradition did not, however, end up together with the weakening national romantic current. By 1930 the figure of the archived folklore items already stood at more than 500,000. The wide-scale collection work continued in the new ideological setting in the 1930s by legends, and encompassed gradually all fields of agrarian folklore, proverbs and riddles, the belief tradition, laments. In 1934 the Society's folklore collections were consolidated into a research institution known as the Folklore Archive. The first director, Martti Haavio, organized a major collection campaign on prose genres. Since then, collecting campaigns have been a productive channel for collecting folklore materials. Various target groups have been encouraged to write their responses to the archive. The collecting campaigns have tended to focus on some previously unexplored area of the life of the people. In 1965, a collection of material associated with the events of the 1918 Civil War was organized. This was the beginning of a rapidly growing tendency of gathering material related to oral history and autobiographical research, a collecting method that is still, among other methods, used in our Archives.