

Archiving Tradition in a Changing Political Order: From Nationalism to Pan-Finno-Ugrianism in the Estonian Folklore Archives *

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**Paper prepared for the conference “Culture Archives and the State: Between Nationalism, Socialism, and the Global Market,”
May 3-5, 2007, Mershon Center, Ohio State University, USA.**

Introduction

The institutionalization of folklore scholarship, including the formation of folklore archives, took place in many eastern and northern European countries at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. In the Estonian context, this coincided by and large with the establishment of the Republic of Estonia.¹ The new-born state had to create and develop national institutions and power structures in order to lay a firm basis for (as well as to protect) national culture. The founding of the Estonian Folklore Archives (*Eesti Rahvaluule Arhiiv*) in 1927 should be seen as a consequence of the aforementioned process. Thus, one can observe close links between political changes and developments in the field of folklore studies. In Estonia this is even more evident while discussing the changes brought along by the Soviet occupation that introduced a totalitarian regime for more than five decades.

Barbro Klein has written about the need to re-evaluate the work of our predecessors regarding collecting folklore and folklore archives. According to her words, folklore archives in northern Europe became central to the formation of modern nation-states: “The archives became part of a public culture that was ordered and therefore controllable.” Thus folklore archives were “cornerstones in the creation of symbolically powerful national heritages that

* This essay has been written within the framework of the Estonian Science Foundation’s grant no. 7795. This research was supported by the European Union through the European Regional Development Fund (Center of Excellence CEET).

¹ The Declaration of Independence was announced on February 24th, 1918, and the sovereign Republic of Estonia existed until its annexation to the Soviet Union in 1940. Estonia regained its independence in 1991 and joined the EU on May 1, 2004.

were testimonies to the rich creativity of the simple citizenry” (Klein 2000: 33). The questions of inclusion and exclusion of certain cultural elements into the “store of cultural heritage” emerge in this respect. Klein stresses that for this particular reason archives, like museums, became contested spaces: “What materials should be included and which ones should be rejected, what materials should be made available to the public and which ones should be hidden from it – these are matters of endless controversies in the history of folklore archives” (ibid.). These questions are topical while discussing the case of the Estonian Folklore Archives and considering the basic ideologies that have shaped folklore scholarship in a small country like Estonia.

Three periods in the history of the Estonian Folklore Archives as well as concurrent developments in Estonian folkloristics will be discussed in this essay. These phases have been structured by rapid political changes, including the formation of the national state in 1918 and the beginning of the Soviet occupation in 1940. My aim is to compare developments in the field of folklore studies, and in particular regarding collecting and archiving folklore, (1) before the establishment of the Republic of Estonia, (2) during the twenty years of independence, and (3) in the conditions of the Soviet occupation. I would like to find out how and to what extent these political shifts influenced the formation of institutions dealing with folklore and activities in the field on the whole. In more detail I would like to consider changes in the topics studied by folklorists, the scope of collecting and archiving practices in tradition archives, as well as how these changes affected the fate of seminal folklorists.

The disciplinary history of folkloristics in Estonia follows the course of national history and reflects the process of nation-building (Kuutma 2005a: 12). It is evident that nationalism has been decisive in the formation of Estonian folkloristics, as has been the case in many other European countries. Following the accents of my current longer study on the

historiography of the discipline, I will consider here also the connections of nationalism with the ideas of linguistic and cultural affinity among Finno-Ugric peoples.² The concept of former Finno-Ugric unity or the common origin of Finno-Ugric peoples has become an integral part of Estonian “national mythology” and has thus shaped also folklorists’ research interests and the collections of the Estonian Folklore Archives. Therefore, my aim is to note the elements of Finno-Ugric discourse in Estonian folkloristics and to illustrate how the consequent phenomenon of “Pan-Finno-Ugrianism” was related to political changes.

In a broader sense I will discuss in the current essay the topic of Estonian nationalism and its attitude towards minority groups and neighboring peoples in different periods of nation-building. The concept of national identity has gone through considerable transformations in this process, depending on whether the image of the Estonian nation was constructed as an isolated “small universe” or through its relationships with others, i.e. with ethnic neighbors and kindred peoples. National imagery has been continuously restructured taking into consideration current contexts such as the political and social circumstances of the 19th century Russian Empire, the Baltic-German literary culture that significantly shaped the beginning of the national movement in Estonia, and the idea of Finno-Ugric linguistic and cultural affinity that became influential during the period of independent statehood and maintained its importance throughout the occupations.

Determining the Field: Folklore and National Movement

In Estonia, the national movement was established in the 1860s and was marked, among many other developments, by the publication of the national epic *Kalevipoeg* as well as the first national singing festival held in 1869 (see Valk 2002; Kuutma 1996). This was the

² The Estonian language, alongside Finnish and Hungarian, belongs to the Finno-Ugric subfamily of Uralic languages. In addition, languages like Livonian, Votian, Ingrian, Karelian, Vepsian, Sami, Mordvinian, Mari, Udmurt, Komi, Khanty and Mansi belong to the same language group, the speakers of which (except Livonians and Samis) live in the present-day Russian Federation. Besides Estonians, nation-states among Finno-Ugric peoples include Finns and Hungarians. (The Independent Republic of Finland was declared in 1917 while Hungarians have a longer history of more established statehood since the early medieval period).

period when Estonian peasants could become landowners and purchase property, as an economy based on capitalist relations became firmly rooted and the first generation of nationally-oriented intelligentsia emerged. The Estonian national elite was formed on the basis of Baltic-German literary culture when educated men with Estonian ethnic background recognized publicly their non-German origin and started to improve the position of the Estonian language. Keen interest among Estonians towards folklore arose at the same time as a part of the process of nation-building.³ As put recently by Ülo Valk (2004: 265), through this process “literacy penetrated the former oral culture and started to transform it into national heritage.”

The first large-scale campaigns of folklore collection were initiated by important figures of the national movement and these were supported by the recently established national societies. The most outstanding results were gained in this respect evidently by Dr. Jakob Hurt (1838–1907) who started a nation-wide campaign of documenting oral tradition via newspapers at the end of the 1880s.⁴ This initiative attracted more than 1400 voluntary coworkers representing a variety of professional and age groups, different social segments, and geographical regions of Estonia, and resulted in more than 122,000 handwritten manuscript pages, containing songs, proverbs, riddles, legends, folk tales, belief accounts, etc. The project was evidently successful due to the spreading literacy and reading habits provided by local rural schools as well as the newspapers that were the basic means of communication between the initiator, residing at that time in St. Petersburg, and coworkers

³ Earlier Estonian folklore was studied by Baltic-German scholars within the framework of Herderian Romanticism. Representatives of the ruling Baltic-German nobility were interested mainly in the poetic forms of Estonian peasantry.

⁴ Biographical data about and sample writings by the seminal Estonian folklorists of the 19th and early 20th century can be found in a recent publication edited by Kristin Kuutma and Tiiu Jaago, *Studies in Estonian Folkloristics and Ethnology. A Reader and Reflexive History* (2005). For more details on the life of Hurt and his activities in the field of folklore studies, see Jaago 2005a.

all over Estonia.⁵ This work was largely Hurt's individual effort, carried out alongside his career as a pastor of a large Lutheran congregation, supported partly by various individuals and societies. However, these activities had no institutional basis and Hurt's collection of folklore remained his personal property up to the end of his life.

It is important to admit that by collecting folklore Hurt's intention was to compile the "true national history" of Estonians. Up to that time Estonian history had been written by Baltic-Germans, the ruling class in Estonia since the Middle Ages, or from the official viewpoint of the Russian Empire to which Estonia had belonged since the beginning of the 18th century.⁶ According to the ideas of national activists, the Estonian perspective on historical events and developments could be found in oral tradition. Consequently, folklore was considered to be creation belonging to the past, an assumption vividly reflected at that time in the terminology used to denote the object of research – *rahvamälestused* 'folk memories' and *vanavara* 'antiquities' (Jaago 2005a: 52), both based on a past-oriented perception of folklore. Hurt's intentions in this field can be seen also in his endeavors to publish systematically collected folklore texts in full as a series of books titled "A Chronicle of the Estonian People." According to his plans, formulated already in 1876, the series consisted of five parts containing folksongs ('Old harp'), proverbs and riddles ('Old wisdom'), belief accounts ('Old beliefs'), tales, legends and jokes ('Old tales'), as well as descriptions of customs ('Old customs') (*ibid.*: 54-55).

Later researchers have underlined the scholarly approach apparent in Hurt's work as he applied the principle of topographic collecting, which involved all regions of Estonia. However, such praise is somewhat deficient. Initiatives for collecting folklore in the second half of the 19th century should be seen as purely nationalist enterprises, established according

⁵ Hurt gave continuous feedback to his coworkers via reports published in newspapers. On the concept of authenticity introduced by Hurt in amassing early Estonian folklore collections, see Valk 2005.

⁶ For a short overview of Estonian history, see <http://www.estonica.org/eng/teema.html?kateg=43>

to the needs and ideologies of the national movement. Discussions on the importance of folklore and consequent appeals in newspapers did not touch other ethnic groups in Estonia – for example Baltic-Germans, Swedes, Russians, Jews, etc. – as these initiatives were clearly oriented towards the formation of a linguistically and ethnically homogenous Estonian nation.⁷ The exclusion of minorities was due to the fact that appeals were published in the Estonian language and concerned a clearly bounded ethnic majority group. The fact that local amateur collectors had no linguistic expertise and motivation to study folklore of their non-Estonian neighbors should also be taken into consideration (Salve 2000: 7-8).

As claimed by Diarmuid Ó Giolláin, folklorists can be seen as nation builders, “who ‘map’ the nation through the project of intensive folklore collecting throughout its territory, and who use folklore as a national resource, whether for national history or for the construction of national high culture” (Ó Giolláin 2000: 63). This passage suits the Estonian case well, as folklore was used there in the second half of the 19th century as well as in the beginning of the 20th century as a resource for national history and partly as a basis for national culture. Campaigns of collecting folklore were organized by other scholars and national societies in addition to Jakob Hurt.⁸

It is interesting to note that unlike in Finland, the Estonian national movement and the consequent interest in peasant folklore was not initially shaped by the idea of a common Finno-Ugric heritage. Swedish and Hungarian scholars formulated the first scholarly concepts of linguistic affinity between Finno-Ugric peoples already in the second half of the 18th century. This knowledge soon reached leaders of the *Fennoman* movement in Finland as

⁷ See, for example, Anttonen 2005: 156-157 on parallel developments in Finland, where folklore collecting activities concerned the Finnish-speaking population and excluded Swedish-speakers. In the 19th century the Estonian population was relatively homogeneous, with Estonians accounting for 90 percent. The most prominent minorities were formed by Russians, who lived mostly in separate villages near the eastern border; by Swedes residing in the coastal areas of Western Estonia; and by Germans and Jews in urban centers (Salve 2000).

⁸ Hurt's example was followed, for instance, by another Lutheran pastor Matthias Johann Eisen as well as by the Estonian Student Society (see Kuutma 2005b: 85-90; 2005c: 131-133).

well as Baltic-German scholars in Estonia (cf. Korhonen 1986, Vääri 1997). In Finland the ideas of Finno-Ugric affinity resulted in the 19th century researchers' field trips to many close and far-away "kinsmen" in Russia whose language, folklore, and ethnography were studied in order to understand the prehistory of the modern Finnish nation (see Branch 1973, Anttonen 2005). One can even say that Pan-Finno-Ugrianism belonged to the ideology of the Finnish national movement and shaped their leaders' connections with their Estonian colleagues.

In the process of the Estonian national "awakening" the Finnish example was obviously instrumental, but one can see also different developments. Some of the leading figures of national movements on both sides of the Finnish Gulf eventually had close personal relationships. For example, the Finnish national epic *Kalevala* compiled by Elias Lönnrot served as a model for the Estonian epic *Kalevipoeg* ('Kalev's Son') compiled by Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald.⁹ Also, both Finnish and Hungarian participants gave speeches on the first all-Estonian singing festival in 1869 that has been considered the beginning of the Pan-Finno-Ugric movement in Estonia (Vääri 1997).

As for the relationships between Estonian and Finnish scholars of folklore, one can mention an intensive correspondence between Jakob Hurt and professor Kaarle Krohn from the University of Helsinki.¹⁰ The latter was extremely interested in Hurt's voluminous folklore collections and made several attempts to get these materials to Finland. Hurt, however, rejected all these endeavors, but his collection was taken from St. Petersburg to Helsinki soon after his death in 1907, as the political situation in St. Petersburg was unstable after the Russian Revolution of 1905. Hurt's collection remained at the Finnish Literature Society until the Estonian Folklore Archives was established in 1927.

In order to commemorate and continue the work of Jakob Hurt, the Estonian National Museum was founded in 1909. This can be considered the first step in the process of the

⁹ On the biography and activities of Kreutzwald, see Jaago 2005b.

¹⁰ A professorship of Finnish and comparative folklore was established at the University of Helsinki in 1898.

institutionalization of folklore and ethnology as independent disciplines within Estonian academe.

The Creation of the Estonian Folklore Archives: Recognition of Ethnic Minorities and Kindred Peoples

Establishment of the sovereign Republic of Estonia in 1918 brought along considerable political, economical, social, as well as educational changes. For example, up until that time teaching at the Imperial University of Tartu had been carried out either in German or Russian, but with the opening of the “Tartu University in the Republic of Estonia” on December 1, 1919, the foundation was laid for higher education in the Estonian language. Due to the lack of suitable candidates among Estonians, many Finnish scholars started their careers as university professors in Tartu, as they could speak Estonian or learn the language far more easily than candidates of other nationalities.¹¹

In addition, the rapid process of establishing a national university resulted in the institutionalization of several new scholarly disciplines, including folkloristics and ethnology. This concerned, above all, the founding of the rank of the so-called ‘national sciences’ (*rahvusteadused*) that comprised disciplines forming the basis for the investigation of Estonian culture (cf. Kuutma 2005a: 11-12).

However, the first professor of Estonian and comparative folklore was neither Estonian nor Finnish, but Walter Anderson (1885–1962), the former professor of literature from the University of Kazan, who had a Baltic-German background.¹² Anderson started lecturing in 1920 in German but began to teach in Estonian only two years later. It was

¹¹ Among them were professor of Baltic-Finnic languages Lauri Kettunen, professor of archaeology Aarne Michaël Tallgren, professor of Estonian and Nordic history Arno Rafael Cederberg, assistant professor of ethnography Ilmari Manninen, and others.

¹² His father Nikolai Anderson, later professor of Finno-Ugric languages at the University of Kazan, was born in Estonia and studied philology at the University of Tartu. On the life and scholarly activities of Walter Anderson, see Seljamaa 2005. Anderson held the professorship until 1939, when he left for Germany following thus the call for repatriation addressed to Baltic-Germans by the authorities of Nazi Germany.

obviously due to the wide scope of Anderson's interests that the chair was officially titled *Estonian and comparative folklore*, thus crossing the border of the purely national bias of the subject and stressing the importance of comparison in accordance with the principles of the historic-geographical method (cf. Seljamaa 2005: 154, 156-157). Anderson's personality had a strong impact on institutional developments in the field of folklore as well as on the formation of an Estonian community of professionally trained folklorists, all his students, throughout the period of the independent state.

Political change meant a new phase in the development of the institutions founded within the national movement but before the birth of the independent republic. For example, the Estonian National Museum acquired the status of a state-funded institution and the collections of the museum, up until that point stored in occasional depositories, were placed in 1922 into the former manor house of the Liphart family near Tartu.¹³

The issue of returning Jakob Hurt's folklore collection, a source of extraordinary importance for the national sciences, from Finland to Estonia was discussed soon after the establishment of the Republic of Estonia. Heated debates between state officials, university professors, and representatives of the Estonian National Museum followed in the beginning of the 1920s in order to decide the most suitable institution to host Hurt's folklore collection, which bore the status of national treasury. These debates resulted in 1927 in the establishment of a new institution – the Estonian Folklore Archives – as an autonomous subdivision of the Estonian National Museum. A governing committee consisting of representatives of the Ministry of Education, the University of Tartu, the Estonian National Museum, and Hurt's family was formed to manage the archive (Västriik 2005: 206). The first director of the archive was Oskar Loorits (1900-1962), Anderson's first student to obtain a doctoral degree in folklore, whose task was to gather all hitherto separate folklore collections into one

¹³ For basic facts and photographs about the Raadi manor house see <http://www.erm.ee/?node=199>. On this phase in the history of the Estonian National Museum, see Õunapuu 2005.

depository.¹⁴ All this meant that a centralized national institution, funded by the Ministry of Education, was founded and designed to meet, above all, the needs of professional folklorists in Estonia as well as abroad. Estonia followed thus the example of many Nordic and Baltic countries where similar central institutions were founded at the end of the 19th century or at the beginning of the 20th century (see Wolf-Knuts 2001: 10-12). International experience was taken into consideration while working out the organization of the Estonian archive. Loorits was familiar with the systematization principles of folklore materials in the Finnish Literature Society and the standards used in the Archives of Latvian Folklore that had been founded three years earlier.¹⁵ Basic principles for arranging the materials in the archives were worked out using the know-how from the other folklore archives, without copying any particular example.

In the 1920-1930s the permanent staff of the Estonian Folklore Archives consisted of five people who had all been trained as folklorists. According to Loorits, the archive's first and foremost task was to put the material in order. All the individual collections accumulated in the archive maintained their original organization, but the new materials obtained in the archives were arranged according to the system of Hurt's collection – manuscripts were set into volumes according to their format and the volumes chronologically into series, etc. A current survey of the collections was provided by the general register as well as special card indexes for the topographic distribution of folklore, folklore collectors, and informants. With the help of students and workers commissioned to relieve unemployment, the archives initiated the compilation of various bibliographical lists and card indexes covering the wide range of folklore genres. In addition, general folklore collecting strategies were formulated: new materials were obtained via a network of correspondents, through collecting campaigns

¹⁴ For biographical data about Loorits and his activities in establishing the Estonian Folklore Archives, see Västriik 2005.

¹⁵ For more on the history and organizing principles of these archives, see <http://www.finlit.fi/english/kra/> and <http://www.lfk.lv/>

addressed mostly to schoolchildren, and also with the help of grant-aided scholars and the archive's employees (Västriik 2005: 207).¹⁶

New manuscript series and photographic and sound collections were founded within the archive in order to accumulate new material (labeled with the acronym ERA = *Eesti Rahvaluule Arhiiv*). The geographic distribution of the folklore collected up until then was taken into consideration: the archive's intention was to fill in the gaps of earlier collection work. The scope of the collections broadened considerably as the archives started to document the folklore of minority groups in Estonia as well as kindred Finno-Ugric peoples. However, the national bias of organizing principles is evident in the abovementioned shift. Manuscripts of folklore materials of "non-Estonian groups" were stored in separate series, the labels of which contained accordingly particular ethnonyms. For example, the collection of Russian folklore was labeled *ERA, Vene* ('Russian'), the collection of Latvian folklore *ERA, Läti* ('Latvian'), German folklore *ERA, Saksa* ('German'), Swedish folklore *ERA, Rootsi* ('Swedish'), Jewish folklore *ERA, Juudi* ('Jewish'), Gypsy folklore *ERA, Mustlase* ('Gypsy'), etc. (see Salve 2000 for a more detailed survey). The impact of current trends in folklore scholarship of the time can be seen in this tendency. Folklore of ethnic minorities living in border areas was studied in order to find out the routes of dissemination of oral lore. According to the influential historic-geographical school, the researchers' task was to discover directions of cultural loans, to learn the ethnic groups who were "givers" and those who were "receivers."¹⁷

Furthermore, researchers' individual interests and initiatives were decisive in shaping the profile of folklore collections. The key figure in this respect was in many cases Paul Ariste (1905-1990), later professor of linguistics of the University of Tartu, who worked at

¹⁶ The archive's questionnaires for both professional and amateur folklore collectors were published. In 1936-1940 a special periodical *Rahvapärimeste Selgitaja* ('Explainer of Folk Traditions') was issued with the aim of communicating with collaborators.

¹⁷ I am grateful to Elo-Hanna Seljamaa for sharing these ideas. For more details, see Seljamaa 2006.

the archive in 1927-1931. Due to the wide interests and initiatives of Ariste, for example, the series of Swedish, German, Jewish and Gypsy folklore were started. In addition, his “linguistic and folkloristic notes” can be found in the series dedicated to the folklore of Russians, Latvians, Finns, Votians, and the one designed to assemble folklore of “various ethnic groups” – series *ERA, Mitmesugused rahvad* (Salve 2000: 11-15). The combination of linguistics and folkloristics in Ariste’s work was reflected, for example, in his life-long involvement in documenting the language and folklore of the Votians, a small Baltic-Finnic ethnic group living in the present-day Russian Federation. Estonian researchers’ informants during this period were Votians who lived in so-called Estonian Ingria, a territory that was affiliated with Estonia between 1920-1940 according to the Tartu Peace Treaty, but Ariste continued his studies in Votian villages later during the Nazi as well as the Soviet occupations. In this respect, after the establishment of the independent state and national sciences within the academy, Estonian scholars started to investigate the language and folklore of Finno-Ugric peoples.

Oskar Loorits, the director of the archive, was particularly interested in Estonian-Russian cultural contacts, which was obviously the reason why the collections of Russian folklore in the archive were the largest among the series dedicated to minority groups. Loorits supported the idea of the “eastern orientation” of Estonian culture and blended the concept of Byzantine cultural relations and that of Finno-Ugric linguistic affinity while presenting his alternative ideas in public to western-oriented Estonian society. His attraction to Finno-Ugric affairs was particularly apparent in his long-term affiliation in collecting and studying the folklore of Livs (Livonians), another Baltic-Finnic ethnic group residing in present-day Latvia. Loorits made his first field trip to Livonian villages as a first year student in 1920; in

a few years he managed to collect an extensive corpus of Livonian folklore.¹⁸ and his PhD dissertation (1926) was a bulky monograph on folk beliefs of the Livonians. Moreover, Loorits' scope of activities crossed the borders of academe and reached cultural politics. He became, for example, one of the leading figures organizing and promoting Livonian national societies, as well as establishing education and literature in their mother tongue. His endeavors concerning Livonian nation-building, which included also severe criticism of Latvian state institutions, were reflected in the fact that Loorits was decreed to be *persona non grata* and was expelled from Latvia during the Baltic congress of history in 1937 (Blumberga 2004).

The aforementioned activities of Ariste and Loorits should be seen in the wider context of a Pan-Finno-Ugric movement that became recognized on a state level after the establishment of the Republic of Estonia. In addition to personal relationships between academic researchers in Estonia, Finland, and Hungary – that is, in so-called Finno-Ugric states – an institutional “friendship movement”¹⁹ was developed between governmental bodies of these countries as well as by non-governmental organizations in a variety of fields.²⁰ In its initial phase the University of Tartu was the center of the movement, due to the Finnish and Hungarian scholars who worked there. In 1927 a state-funded umbrella organization *Fenno-Ugria* was established in order to coordinate activities in this field (similar central organizations were functioning both in Finland and in Hungary). *Fenno-Ugria* published periodicals dedicated to Finno-Ugric affairs and from its foundation took the primary responsibility for organizing the international Finno-Ugric Cultural Congresses that

¹⁸ Loorits did not hand over these materials to the holdings of the Estonian Folklore Archives but created a separate Archive of Livonian Folklore.

¹⁹ This cultural-political movement was called in Estonia *hõimuliikumine* ‘kin-movement,’ in Finland *heimotyö* ‘kin-work,’ and in Hungary *rokonnépek mozgalma* ‘movement of kindred peoples’ (Seilenthal 1997).

²⁰ One can mention here, for example, societies like the Finnish-Hungarian-Estonian Teachers’ Union, the Finnish-Hungarian-Estonian Society of Pharmacologists, and the Estonian-Finnish-Hungarian Union; the latter, initiated by the President of Estonia Konstantin Päts in 1925, was regarded as the most influential (Prozes 1997).

were held five times between 1921 and 1936.²¹ Much attention was paid to the work within public opinion and the educational sphere. As a consequence, Pan-Finno-Ugric ideas were accepted by wider audiences and became an integral part of a national discourse about Estonian identity. Ideas about Finno-Ugric linguistic and cultural affinity reached textbooks and the speeches of seminal political and cultural figures. This was accepted as a basic presumption of further nation-building, directing both academic endeavors and political choices. Thus nationalism and Pan-Finno-Ugrianism became intertwined.

The Estonian Folklore Archives under the Totalitarian Regime: Soviet Censorship and Pan-Finno-Ugrianism

The Independent Republic of Estonia ceased to exist *de facto* in June 1940 when Soviet troops occupied the country as a consequence of the secret amendment to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany. Two months later, Estonia was formally annexed by the Soviet Union as the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic. Soon after, large-scale changes followed that affected again almost all spheres of life in Estonia. As a result of the outbreak of the Second World War, Nazi occupation started in Estonia in the fall of 1941 and lasted three years. The end of the war, however, did not bring back an independent state; instead, Soviet occupation continued. Especially complicated was the period of Stalinist repression that lasted until 1953. This was followed by a short period of the somewhat more stable “Khrushchev’s Thaw” and several decades of stagnation. Estonia regained independence in 1991.

It is evident that the political cataclysms of the 1940-1950s had a strong impact on the whole society. The same concerned the Estonian Folklore Archives, folkloristics in Estonia, and the life of the scholars mentioned above. I will discuss below only some of the developments resulting from these political changes.

²¹ The sixth congress, planned to be convened in 1940 in Hungary, was banned due to the outbreak of the Second World War (Prozes 1997).

Under the conditions of the Soviet regime, many national institutions were closed or re-organized already during the years 1940-1941. For example, the Estonian National Museum was divided into two separate institutions, following the patterns of Soviet scientific tradition. Most of the collections and the main exhibition were converted into the State Ethnographic Museum (*Riiklik Etnograafiamuuseum*). On the basis of several hitherto autonomous subdivisions of the museum – the Archival Library, the Estonian Bibliographical Foundation, the Estonian Folklore Archives, and the Estonian Cultural History Archives – was formed a new institution, the State Literature Museum (*Riiklik Kirjandusmuuseum = RKM*). The Estonian Folklore Archives got the status of department in the new museum and was thus renamed the Department of Folklore (*Rahvaluule osakond*).²² In the very beginning the impact of Soviet ideology was superficial and was reflected, for example, in compulsory references to Communist authorities in the forewords of folklore publications and in collective celebrations of new Soviet holidays. The archive functioned following almost the same principles as earlier, and the first wave of Soviet repression did not affect the staff.

The Nazi occupation of the years 1941-1944 brought along new changes. The State Literature Museum as an autonomous institution ceased to exist, and its departments were united with the University of Tartu. For political reasons Oskar Loorits was eliminated from his position as the director of the archive and was relegated from Tartu to internal exile in western Estonia, from which he fled to Sweden in 1944.²³ As military authorities dislodged the folklore archive together with other subdivisions of the museum in 1943, its collections were evacuated to remote places all over Estonia in order to save them from destruction. However, under the conditions of occupation that erased the eastern border with Russia,

²² The archive's original name was restored in 1995.

²³ Loorits followed thus the destiny of many Estonians (ca 60.000 in total) who left their homeland during the war in order to escape the Soviet regime. In exile Loorits worked as an archive assistant and grant-aided scholar at the Uppsala Dialect and Folklore Archives. He never acknowledged the Soviet regime and institutions, considering his personal archive as a legitimate successor of the Estonian Folklore Archives.

Estonian scholars used the possibility to do fieldwork among the kindred peoples in northwest Russia. For example, the temporarily re-established Estonian National Museum organized field trips to Votian villages in 1942-1943, and many later outstanding Estonian ethnographers and folklorists, among them Paul Ariste, participated in these expeditions.

With the re-establishment of the Soviet regime in 1944, the pre-war *status quo* was restored. Folklore collections were moved back into their former depositories and the State Literature Museum was opened again in the fall of 1945. Continuous work was, however, not possible as the same year brought along the repression of several folklorists, both former and cotemporary employees of the archive. For example, Paul Ariste was arrested in spring 1945 and was under “preliminary investigation” for a year (PAE 1998). Ariste was fortunately exonerated and was able to continue his career as a professor of Finno-Ugric languages at the University of Tartu, but not all his fellow victims shared the same “lucky” destiny.²⁴ The Stalinist repression peaked with mass deportations in spring 1949, resulting in an overwhelming atmosphere of fear and the political persecution of intellectuals, researchers and archivists included. All these episodes were evidently reflected in the archive’s daily routine, as well as collecting and research practices.

As for the administration of the institution, membership in the Communist Party was compulsory for key figures. Members of the Communist Party headed both the museum and the department of folklore during the post-war years, and archival work was carried out in accordance with the instructions from the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks).²⁵ In the 1940-1950s, these instructions included, among other Soviet “innovations,” the elimination

²⁴ Archivist Herbert Tampere (1909-1975) was in prison from April 16, 1945 until April 29, 1946. Another archivist Rudolf Põldmäe (1908-1988) was also arrested in April 17, 1945 but he was sent to Siberian forced labor camps and settlements of deportees for ten years. Typical accusations ascribed to intellectuals were “nationalistic activities” and “possession of illegal literature” (see PAE 1998).

²⁵ This was the official name of the Communist Party up until 1952 (later the Communist Party of the Soviet Union). All-Union directives were forwarded to the Estonian Communist Party that controlled both executive and legislative power in Soviet Estonia. Local sub-organizations of the Communist Party were created in all (state) institutions, the Literature Museum included.

and extermination of literature that did not match with Soviet ideology – these were books both by Estonian and foreign authors dealing with a variety of subjects, depicting mostly the life of “bourgeois society” (i.e. pre-war Estonia). For the Literature Museum, like many other scholarly institutions and libraries, this meant the segregation of “improper nationalistic literature” into a special depository with limited access. Also, some of the materials from folklore collections were kept for decades in isolation where restricted usage was possible for those with special permission from the director of the museum. While shaping the collections for Soviet readers and researchers, museum workers had to follow “predetermined Soviet principles” (this is the phrase used in contemporaneous documents), which meant that some of the materials, mostly that of “bourgeois” writers and scholars, were regarded as worthless and therefore were concealed from public usage or even destroyed (cf. Lotman & Lõhmus 1995).

In addition, overall censorship of the manuscript folklore collections was carried out between the years 1946 and 1951. In the course of this ideologically prescribed project, texts with improper content were erased or crossed out, covered up with pieces of paper, or cut off from the volumes. The category of “improper content” included, for example, folklore items that were regarded as nationalistic, anti-Soviet, anti-Russian, anti-Semitic, obscene, or in some other way inappropriate. The same concerned references to “bourgeois researchers.” For example, the name of Oskar Loorits was erased from all books in the archive’s library and even from the covers of leather-bound manuscripts. This work was accomplished by the archive staff, as verified by dates and signatures on the title pages of bounded manuscript volumes. In some cases manuscripts were censored even twice, which probably reflects new “norms” imposed by the power structures. As documented in annual monitoring records, separated pages were considered “dangerous” enough to be stored in the Central State Archive, i.e. in the institution where secret documentation was accumulated from all over

Estonia. These materials, ca 1000 pages in total, were returned to the archive in the end of the 1960s, after the period of the so-called Khrushchev's Thaw. However, these pages were not returned to their initial places in volumes but kept in separate boxes in order to avoid further complications. According to the words of later archivists, the content of the folklore collections was monitored systematically by local KGB officers up to the end of the 1980s. This was the reason why certain "delicate" materials, including a bulky volume of political anecdotes collected by linguist Jüri Viikberg, were not included in the archive's collections, as archivists were afraid of problems that might arise with security officers.²⁶ The latter can be interpreted as a reflection of a kind of inner censorship or feeling of ideological insecurity, which is also detectable in field diaries of the Soviet-period folklorists.

Besides public and hidden censorship, the impact of the totalitarian regime in shaping the collections of the Estonian Folklore Archives can be observed in changes concerning the themes studied by postwar folklorists. As declared in an anonymous statement of the year 1946, the folklore archive's main task in these years was to study the folklore of the Great Patriotic War²⁷ that "will reflect our nation's self-sacrificing struggle against German Fascist enslavers" (SV 1946). This principle was soon put into practice and, in many cases, topics were chosen that matched Soviet ideology. One can mention here studies on anti-clerical jokes, serfdom and revolutionary songs, reflections of the class struggle in folklore, etc. (See, for example, Raudsep 1969).

On the other hand, the archive – despite the fact that it was called the Department of Folklore – functioned systematically throughout the Soviet period. The basic principles of organizing archival materials remained the same and many large scale research projects were carried out thanks to stable funding. Field trips and even more extensive "folklore collecting

²⁶ Viikberg's materials were taken to the archive as late as in 1989. A part of these anecdotes has been published also in English (see Viikberg 2003).

²⁷ This is the name for the Second World War in Soviet official discourse.

expeditions,” where 10-15 professional folklorists participated at the same time in the same region, were organized by the archive. Partly these fieldwork expeditions were carried out in cooperation with the folklorists from the Tartu State University and the Institute of Language and Literature.²⁸ Thus, the Soviet principle of “collective work” was introduced also into the field of folkloristics, resulting in massive textual corpora and new sound recording series.

Due to the fact that the state border with Russia was removed, Estonian scholars had the possibility of making field trips among kindred peoples in Russia from the end of the Stalinist period, in some cases even earlier. A central figure in educating young Estonian scholars as well as representatives of Finno-Ugric ethnic groups and organizing these field trips was again Paul Ariste. His initiatives as the professor of Finno-Ugric languages at the University of Tartu made Estonia an international center of Finno-Ugric studies. In these years many young scholars of Finno-Ugric minority groups from all over the Soviet Union received an alternative, non-Russian education in Tartu. Thus, during Soviet rule, especially from the 1960s, Estonian scholars could develop contacts with Finno-Ugric regional centers as well as other Finno-Ugric researchers in Russia. This kind of collegial exchange of ideas between kindred peoples was made acceptable to Soviet authorities under the slogan of “Soviet friendship between brotherly nations.” National and Finno-Ugric discourses were intertwined even more in these decades, adding new “concealed” dimensions to the movement of “Pan-Finno-Ugrianism.”²⁹

²⁸ After the Second World War folkloristics was subsumed under the studies of Estonian literature and the two fields were administratively united at the Tartu State University. The Department of Estonian and Comparative Folklore was re-established in 1993. Following the Soviet standard of centralization in sciences, the Institute of Language and Literature of the Academy of Sciences of the Estonian SSR was founded in 1947. Both institutions created their own folklore collections that have by now been deposited in the Estonian Folklore Archives.

²⁹ Earlier Finno-Ugric friendship organizations were banned at the beginning of Soviet period. However, cooperation between the Academies of Sciences of Finland, the Soviet Union, and Hungary was started in the 1960s, manifested by the International Congresses of Finno-Ugric Studies, held in every five years. Congresses always have sections for linguistics, literature, archeology, folkloristics, and ethnology.

Results of extensive fieldwork expeditions of Estonian scholars among Finno-Ugric peoples reached also the collections of the folklore archive, where, in addition, recordings and manuscript materials collected by local researchers were accumulated (for example, the collections of Mordvin folklore by M. Tshuvashov).³⁰ Again a separate manuscript series *RKM, Soome-ugri* ('Finno-Ugric') was created in order to localize this kind of material in the archive (Salve 2000: 17-20). Compared to Finnish scholars, Estonian researchers were in much better conditions in respect of the studies of kindred peoples. In these decades a continuity of research traditions among Finno-Ugric minority groups was established that has more or less shaped also the current presentation.

In conclusion, it is evident that folkloristic discourse and scholarly activities reflect the society in which they take place. In line with the words by Finnish folklorist Pertti Anttonen, the challenging task of the researcher is to show "how folkloristic discourse reflects, is constituted by, reproduces, and potentially transforms and is transformed by politics and policies, histories and national narratives, world views and forms of socio-spatial consciousness in given societies" (Anttonen 2003: 48). I have briefly sketched above three periods in the history of Estonian folklore studies where connections between political changes in society and practices in the field of scholarship are clearly observable.

Throughout the period of national awakening, folklore was used with the aim of building up a homogeneous Estonian nation, and folklore collections served as "reservoirs" of national history in the absence of firm documentary evidence (cf. Ó Giolláin 2000: 63). During the period of independent statehood, folkloristics was institutionalized within Estonian academe and the state-funded folklore archive was established. The newly-born republic needed central institutions in order to validate and legitimize its existence and sustainability. When the basis for national culture had been formed, "others" were also

³⁰ Folklore groups from Russia were also invited to Estonia, where their repertoire was recorded (Salve 2000: 20-21).

recognized, and studies of ethnic minorities and kindred groups were initiated in accordance with the principles of historic-geographical method as well as the ideas of Pan-Finno-Ugric movement. These tendencies reflect evidently the basic necessity to define national identity with the help of or through others as well as the need to associate it with distant “ethnic relatives.”

During the Soviet period the Estonian Folklore Archives was not closed, but its institutional affiliation and name were changed. Folklore collections were censored following the “predetermined Soviet principles” and improper materials were isolated from public use. The Soviet power structures shaped and controlled folklorists’ research topics, but the basic principles of archival practices remained the same. In this context the importance of the studies of Finno-Ugric peoples and their folklore increased, which furthered the intertwining of national and Finno-Ugric discourses in Estonian folkloristics.

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