



Creating Diversities

Folklore, Religion and the Politics of Heritage

Edited by

Anna-Leena Siikala, Barbro Klein and Stein R. Mathisen

Studia Fennica
Folkloristica

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Foreword

Extensive transnational migrations, recent changes in the political map of Europe and globalization manifested in the exchange of not only of goods but also of ideas and life styles have led to a world where multiculturalism and ethnic differences have become issues of increasing importance. In the Nordic countries, recent immigration has furthered new relationships between majorities and minorities, immigrants and ethnic groups. What is the role of folklore in multicultural societies undergoing these transformations? To what extent can the study of folklore shed light on the cultural, political and historical models that are now being shaped? These questions and issues have been at the center of interest in the Nordic research project “Folklore, Heritage Politics and Ethnic Diversity” which was led by professor Barbro Klein (SCASSS) in Sweden and financed by NOS-H and NorFa. The co-ordinator in Norway was associate professor Stein R. Mathisen and in Finland academy professor Anna-Leena Siikala with Dr. Pertti J. Anttonen. During 1998–2001, the project leaders, other researchers, and a network of twenty post-graduate students from different Nordic and Baltic countries held several meetings. The present collection of articles is a result of two of these meetings. The first, “Folklore, Museums and the Politics of Heritage” took place in Tartu, Estonia, in May 1999 and was organized by Anna-Leena Siikala and Pertti Anttonen with the generous assistance of professor Ülo Valk who also hosted the event. The other, a symposium entitled “Folklore, Religion, and Diversity Politics” took place in June 2000 in Alta, Norway, and was organized by Stein R. Mathisen and Kjell Olsen.

The aim of this anthology is to emphasize two important factors in the cultural political exchanges that have taken place in the past and continue to take place between majority groups (which tend to dictate the conditions for these exchanges), historical minorities, and recent immigrants. The first factor is religion which plays a crucial role for the understanding of both the self-representation and the oppression of a group. The second factor is the role of national or regional ethnographic or cultural historical museums and archives in representing the images of minorities in different political climates, images which greatly affect the general understandings of the peoples involved. In addition, the contributors to this volume explore ways in which

issues linked to religion or museums and archives intersect with folkloristic perspectives and materials.

The recent waves of globalization have opened up new ways to display the culture of indigenous peoples. Their efforts in seeking possibilities for self-expression and in voicing claims have been both a counter-force to economic development and at the same time a part of it. Sámi living in Norway, Sweden, Finland and Northern Russia have participated in these global movements and been highly visible within them. In his contribution to this anthology Stein R. Mathisen illuminates the images of the Sámi created by researchers and by cultural politics in Norway. He emphasizes that in contemporary discourse the cultures of indigenous people tend to be described as authentic, ecologically sound, and creative. However, during earlier historical periods Sámi culture has been represented in entirely different ways. In the nineteenth century, a strong traditional culture was regarded as primitive. The Sámi were even considered to be on such a low stage of development that it was impossible to civilize them. Narrow understandings of indigenous cultures tend to lead to political marginalization and ideologies of conservation. As Art Leete shows in his article dealing with the Nenets and Ob-Ugrian religion, the images created about these Siberian peoples by Western scholars are astonishingly similar to those created about the Sámi. Furthermore, the testimonies of local priests supported the descriptions by early researchers and travellers and, as a whole, the history of the Russian indigenous peoples was for centuries strongly influenced by the missionary policies of the Russian Orthodox Church, policies that the state supported. As Jelena Porsanger (Sergejeva) demonstrates in her article, the culture of the Eastern Sámi received its special features as a result of the Russification imposed by Church and State. Yet, at the same time as Sámi cultures and dialects differ from each other due to politics and history, some cultural expressions have come to be accepted as common identity symbols. Kjell Olsen's article is an analysis of one of the most significant of these identity symbols: *joik* singing. When the *joik* was introduced into institutional discourses, it achieved new meanings, becoming a tool of the educational system, heritage preservation and the global music industry. According to Olsen, the new institutional meanings have elevated the *joik* so that it is even suitable for Christian assemblies. At the same time, the new meanings have narrowed the communicative potential of *joik* singing in local communities.

The history and representations of Russian Finns or Finnish Russians differ greatly from the history and representations of indigenous peoples. The Ingrians, who in the early 1990s were granted permission by President Mauno Koivisto to move from Russia to Finland, are descendants of people who left Finland three hundred years ago. Pekka Hakamies describes the history and present situation of the Ingrian Finns in Finland. During the Stalin regime they were transported to Siberia and had to hide their linguistic and cultural specificity. Their tragic history forced them to hide or change their ethnic identity until recent times. The "repatriated" Ingrians in Finland differ from the Finnish majority by their Russian culture and language and from Russians in Finland by their Lutheran religion. According to Hakamies, there

are three possibilities available to the Ingrians in Finland: to integrate with the Finnish majority, to maintain a Russian Finnish identity, or to create a special Finnish Ingrian identity. On the whole, the most successful Russian immigrants in Finland are those who have achieved celebrity status, for example as athletes. Noting that migration leads to an increase in the number of people professing a transnational identity, Jyrki Pöysä examines issues linked to gender and to the expression of “banal nationalism” in sports journalism. “Who can represent us?” and “What is Finnishness?” are questions frequently asked by sports journalists. Ultimately such questions lead to a need to redefine Finnishness. Is language the only criterion?

The media has a decisive role in defining who “we” are and who the “others” are. Since religious practices and religious faith are often profound aspects of our notions of who we are, issues of otherness are often most striking and visible within the area of religion. Barbro Klein analyzes the meeting-ground between “us” and the “others” in her discussion of miracles embodied in a fifteen-year-old Syrian immigrant girl, Samira Hannoeh, who saw Jesus and a Syrian Orthodox saint in her visions in Södertälje, Sweden. Oil poured out of the girl’s body and from the image of the saint and tens of thousands of people came to be blessed by her. People of various ethnic and religious affiliations were captivated by the miracle which led to intense debates involving not only religious leaders but government employees, medical workers, journalists, etc. Klein examines the role of the mass media, especially TV, in disseminating and interpreting stories about Samira’s experiences. Conflicting interpretations strengthened prejudices towards the Syrian Orthodox community. Yet, at the same time the events created bridges between different kinds of people so that the mystery united both Swedes and immigrants. Still, writes Barbro Klein, the visual techniques of TV, which made the miraculous events a part of the collective Swedish memory, also created an image of an exotic Oriental, an icon of Otherness.

The media is powerful also in Post-Soviet Russia where new religious movements and activities are prevalent. Galina Lindqvist examines transcultural beliefs and practices in Moscow circles interested in Western Voodoo magic. She refers to Jonathan Friedman, according to whom a distinction must be made between weak globalization (which entails the sheer availability of global structures), and strong globalization (in which the patterns of attribution of meaning are changed). In describing the new religious movements and practices in the Moscow area, Lindqvist uses Friedman’s ideas. But she also points out the importance of the concept of ecumene, a habitat of meaning. After perestroika new forms of religious life penetrated to create ecumenes out of previously disparate elements, among them a variety of African and American magical practices. New ecumenes evolved out of encounters between peoples representing different cultural values. For the majority of Russians Western infrastructures represent weak forms of globalization. For some people, however, such as Voodoo magi, these infrastructures figure in attempts to redefine deep cultural meanings. The Moscow Voodoo priestess Helena Santera, for example, is a strong globalist who uses material drawn from around the globe. She has created a new identity by breaking away from

several Russian ideologies. Among them are not only the secular scientific one and the Russian Orthodox one but also Russian folk models because these reject the African elements of her cult as inferior and primitive.

The recent expansion of the field of religions in Russia does not include only Western phenomena but also so-called nature religions which are now practiced openly among the Finno-ugrian and Siberian minorities. Thus the annual animal sacrifices that re-emerged in the 1980s and 1990s among the Khanty now play an important role in strengthening Khanty identity; in his article Art Leete notes that native political leaders take part in these rituals, even though other local authorities reject them. The Khanty rituals are practiced in traditional, sacrificial places. Such holy places are, indeed, important symbols for religious groups. They are also grounds where faith and the right to execute religious ideology are contested as Anna-Leena Siikala demonstrates in her analysis of the meaning of mental maps and the religious significance of sacred places for indigenous groups. The holy groves, the sacrificial sites of the Khanty and the Udmurts were kept secret during the Soviet period but became important instruments in the ethnic movements of the 1990s because they bear the historical memory of the group. The rebuilding of the groves went hand in hand with the renewed identity construction of these groups. Yet, as Pia Karlsson Minganti shows, the same logic is visible in a highly modernized society as well. The building of mosques in Sweden symbolically binds immigrants to the new country. Spaces once lacking cultural importance to newcomers is transformed into Muslim spaces. But, it has to be remembered that there is seldom consensus in the process of establishing ethnic and religious symbols. The meanings of sacred places are determined by conflicting interests, intentions and ideologies. Both in the Russian and Swedish cases, the building of visible symbols of religious difference led to counter- reactions.

In a globalizing world, the space that anchors cultural identity is changing as Joann Conrad demonstrates in her article in which she examines the ethno-politics of everyday geography in Northern Norway. In the world of displaced peoples cultural identity is not anchored in stable communities with shared traditions. Rather, the place where one belongs has to be reached through the imagination. Following Arjun Appadurai, Conrad argues that all cultural processes imply the articulation of difference and that this difference is neither fixed nor especially local but interactive and improvisational. Throughout history the concept of the North has been a romantic construction: a hostile land to be conquered. For the Sámi the natural and authentic relationship to the mystical North represents their rights to the land. Conrad examines maps and mental maps constructed in local lore. Through such genres people create a space that is meaningful at the same time as it is always subject to the conditions of the human mind. She emphasizes that the more the Sámi become global and internationalized, the firmer their articulated identity is anchored in the Sámi core area. The roads and routes leading to and from this core form an ambivalent field of meaning; they mediate between personal experiences and “official” intentions, between the local and global. Sámi identity is legitimated by evoking the “local” but the narratives of ethno-political discourses are evoked in national and global contexts.

The use of historically meaningful religious places in a national agenda is studied by Pertti J. Anttonen. The Catholic Bishop Henrik possibly came to Finland from Sweden in the twelfth century in order to strengthen political ties with Sweden by carrying out missionary work. He was killed by a Finnish peasant, Lalli, who today is a symbol of Finnish national sovereignty and independence. In Finland the fate of Bishop Henrik has been a source of oral tradition and pilgrim practices originating in Catholic times. But nowadays the heritage of the Bishop Martyr is claimed not only by Catholics but also by the Lutheran Church. In 1983, the first ecumenical pilgrimage along the Saint Henrik Road was organized; the participants came from Lutheran, Orthodox, and Catholic congregations in Finland. The week-long pilgrimages reflect the need for co-operation between different religious denominations. Pilgrim rhetoric stresses a need for unity, a moral community of Christians. Hence, pilgrimages with their locally anchored historical themes are a part of the construction of a nationally important heritage.

In the Nordic countries as well as elsewhere, museums and archives have played a decisive role in creating images of nations and ethnic groups. As important tools for cultural policies many of them have been both financed and controlled by state authorities. Moreover, at different historical moments, experts employed by museums and archives have been guided by different scientific ideas and ideologies. For this reason there are visible differences in the ways in which ethnic diversity is represented in museums and archives. In her contribution Zoë-Hatehc Durrah Scheffy describes the differences between exhibitions of Sámi drums in various Norwegian and Swedish museums. Each museum has constructed its own contexts for presenting Sámi traditional spirituality but the exhibitions also reflect different relationships between museums and state. Of particular interest is the Swedish museum, Åjtte, which claims to have adopted the voice of the Sámi. The problems of voice and of ownership of cultural property also concern archival collections, even if the nature of collected and kept traditional materials is different. Tuulikki Kurki examines the principles of Finnish archival practices in the late nineteenth century by focussing on the activities of Heikki Meriläinen, a self-educated peasant collector. Meriläinen interpreted the folklore he collected himself, although he lacked ethnographic authority. He did not master the canonized rules of ethnographic writing and in his textual constructions he represented the voice of the people from whom he collected – a voice rejected for years by the archivists. Kurki studies the boundaries of ethnographic authority and the process of negotiations of tradition from the field to academic and literary contexts. The ambivalence of Meriläinen's position was also furthered by Fennoman intellectuals, who celebrated peasant authors for their own reasons. They wanted to establish an alliance with the representatives of the "folk" in order to become spokesmen for the Finnish people.

The importance of carefully selected artefacts in communicating the values of an ethnic group is emphasized in the article, "Christmas in Lindsborg," in which Lizette Gradén investigates miniature replicas of historical buildings symbolizing Swedishness in Lindsborg, Kansas. Lindsborg has launched itself as "Little Sweden U.S.A." with the *dala* horse as official town sym-

bol and the displays of these building miniatures are linked to tourism. Of course, such uses of older cultural forms for economic purposes are among the main forms of preserving and presenting heritage. In the final article Kjell Olsen analyses different dimensions of such heritage processes in Northern Norway, where Sáminess with its exotic and aesthetic potential is important for the tourist industry. In this part of Norway tourist attractions are shaped in accordance with international models so that stereotypes and emblematic signs are selected to be sold. However, in these communities the occupational and cultural diversity is great among those who identify themselves as Sámi. Many people profess several identities. Who then are the emblematic Sámi depicted in the tourist advertisements? For those who claim political rights over the territory it is important to present themselves as bearers of Sámi tradition and to represent Sáminess. But for those whose occupations differ from the traditional ones and whose life-style resembles that of many other Norwegians, the idea of the “emblematic” Sámi is problematic. Nevertheless, the tourist gaze is an important element in present day Sámi culture and like other indigenous peoples they have to deal with the consumption of their culture by outsiders, because it is a valuable source of income. At the same time they have to find ways to lead a normal life in a modern society.

The themes of our collection are diverse, but so are the peoples and situations studied. Yet, they are all to be found in the Nordic countries and Russia. The nation state programmes that formulated ideas of Finnishness, Norwegianness, Swedishness and Russianness (or Sovietness) once dictated the selection and display of folklore and artefacts to be collected and preserved in archives and museums. In many respects, these hegemonic national ideologies have continued in the museums and archives to the present day, even though new immigrants and minorities transform everyday life in these countries. Cultural historical and ethnographic museums and archives are symbol makers for nations and ethnic groups. As is the case with other forms of ethnographic representation they create, confirm, and reconfirm images of us and others. Hence, the museum and archive politics and policies must be re-evaluated and re-interpreted frequently. Such re-evaluation has also been the goal of several of the contributions to this book.

In a globalizing world the relationships of ethnic groups and nations are transformed so that places once disparate and distant from each other enter into dialogues with each other. In this flow of ideas and images, people seek their cultural anchors in different ways, be they inherited traditions, new reconstructions of ethnicities, economically beneficial forms of cultural display, or religious faiths and practices. Perhaps more than any other cultural expressions, religions (as “ultimate” forms of culture) have the powers to unite and divide. For this reason religions are important tools in the constructions of ethnic selves and in the establishing of boundaries between groups.

We hope that this collection, because of its many diverse cases and analyses, will offer new insights and background materials for discussions that must go on, because the world we live in is not stable. On the contrary, the flow of migrants and their life conditions are rapidly changing as is the situation of the indigenous populations and the nation states in which we live.

As editors we are grateful for the generous assistance we have been given in producing this book. Special thanks to Saara Paatero for her great contributions as editorial secretary, to technical assistant Pirkko Hämäläinen, and to professor Karen Armstrong for correcting the language of most of the articles.

Helsinki, Uppsala, and Alta in November, 2003
Anna-Leena Siikala, Barbro Klein and Stein R. Mathisen

Representing Ethnicity and Religious Diversity

The effects of globalization and the momentous changes to the political map of Europe have led to a world in which multiculturalism and ethnic differences have become issues of increasing importance. In Nordic countries, relationships between new immigrants, local ethnic groups and majorities are created in ongoing and sometimes heated discussions. In transforming multicultural societies, folklore has taken on new manifestations and meanings. How can folklore studies illuminate the present cultural, political and historical changes?

Creating Diversities. Folklore, Religion and the Politics of Heritage seeks answers to this question. It emphasizes two important factors in the cultural and political exchanges among historical minorities, recent immigrants, and the majority groups dictating the conditions of these exchanges. The first factor is religion, which is a powerful tool in the construction of ethnic selves and in the establishment of boundaries between groups. The second factor is the role of national and regional folklore archives and ethnographic and cultural historical museums which create ideas and images of minorities. These representations, created in different political climates, affect the general understanding of the people depicted.

Fifteen well-known folklorists and ethnographers from Norway, Sweden, Finland, Estonia and the United States offer insights and background material on these problems. In addition to immigrants and ethnic minorities in the Nordic countries, especially the Sámi, examples are sought from among the Finno-Ugrian minorities in Russia and the Nordic population in North America.



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