

DATA COLLECTING AND RESEARCH OF FOLK MEDICINE IN ESTONIA DURING THE SOVIET ERA

AVE TUPITS

MA, researcher

Estonian Folklore Archives

Estonian Literary Museum

Vanemuise 42, 51003 Tartu

e-mail: avetupits@folklore.ee

ABSTRACT

Folk medicine in Estonia has been studied more thoroughly within the last 30 years. Still, the respective data has always been on the folklorists' work-list, when publishing questionnaires or going out on fieldwork. It has to be taken into consideration that the times were hard for folkloristics both during the Soviet occupation in 1940–1941 and the German occupation in 1941–1944. Also the new political situation had its demands on scholarly research throughout the second Soviet occupation in the years 1945–1991. Nevertheless, by far the biggest collection campaign of Estonian folk medicine took place in 1959. Focused interest of folklorists in this topic grew significantly in the 1970s and 1980s, the last decades of the Soviet era, when official access to folk healers was allowed and New Age phenomena spread. The article is an abridged version of a chapter in an upcoming doctoral dissertation analysing the collecting and research of folk medicine in Estonia in the 20th century.

KEYWORDS: folk medicine • study of folk medicine • history of folkloristics • Soviet era

The sources of this article are firstly ten volumes of the bulletin *Rahvapärimuste koguja* (Collector of folk traditions; 1961–1976), where questionnaires addressed to the voluntary folklore collectors and articles introducing various fields of folklore as well as current fieldwork expeditions were published. I have also used the content indexes of the manuscript volumes of the Estonian Folklore Archives (in 1940 renamed as the Folklore Department of the State Literary Museum), and pieces of different publications illustrating the period of the Soviet regime between 1945–1991. These questionnaires were mostly compiled for a particular study or publication, leaning on the system of the card catalogues of the Folklore Department (in the instance of folk medicine it consists of sub-topics such as separate disease groups, folk healers, spells, etc.) and on folklorists' own knowledge of the topic. The communication between folklorists and voluntary co-workers had already been developed at the end of the 1920s. In turn, the co-workers had their own net of informants. Feedback on their work done in recording folklore was given in the above-mentioned bulletins and via personal correspondence.

When I started to acquaint myself with the history of collecting and research of folk medicine in Estonia, I first assumed there was no considerable activity either in recording or scholarly research on the topic during the Soviet period. The only exceptions clear from the start were the 1960s, following a folk medicine data-collecting campaign, and the 1980s, when folklorist Mare Kõiva aimed her attention specifically to folk medicine

(spells, folk healers) and other folklorists, ethnographers, pharmacologists, etc. showed a deeper interest in the field. During my research that initial viewpoint changed considerably. The questionnaires on, and the history of recording of folk medicine during the Soviet period, have so far gained little attention, thus I try to fill in a gap with my research and the current article.

THE DATA-COLLECTING OF FOLK MEDICINE DURING AND DIRECTLY AFTER WORLD WAR II

During the decades of the Republic of Estonia (1918–1940) there was very little research done on the topic of folk medicine within folkloristics, although several questionnaires, where folk medicine formed at least a part, were published by folklorists, ethnographers and medical doctors. Dr. Jakob Hurt¹ (1839–1907) had already turned his attention to folk medicine in his call for collecting folklore nation-wide in 1888, where he also posed questions on the use of herbs in folk medicine and other areas, about the cures of several diseases and on the activities of folk healers. Decades later in 1912, veterinary doctor Johannes Kool urged people, mostly his colleagues, to collect data on folk veterinary medicine – that is, beliefs connected to domestic animals, diseases, cures and names of animal body parts (the questionnaire also included some questions on human ailments).

With the arrival of independence in 1918, the Chair of Estonian and Comparative Folklore was founded at the University of Tartu in 1919 and later on in 1927 the Estonian Folklore Archives were established. From the 1920s onward folk medicine shifted more into the focus of interest of folkloristics and ethnography. Among the folklorists, especially Oskar Loorits (1900–1961), the head of the Folklore Archives and, to some extent, his colleague Herbert Tampere (1909–1975), dealt with folk medicine. Loorits, researching the field of folk belief, paid attention to the linguistic terms and expressions concerning health and illness, the folk healers and several narrative-bound illnesses such as malaria or plague. Another employee of the Archives, Richard Viidalepp (1904–1986), had included the topic in his general guide for folklore collectors (published in 1936), which tried to cover every aspect of folklore. Around the beginning of the war, Herbert Tampere's questionnaire on ear and eye diseases (Tampere 1940), the first specifically folk medicine oriented questionnaire within folkloristics of that time, which I have found, was published in one of the last numbers of the bulletin *Rahvapärimeste Selgitaja* (Explanatory glossary of folk traditions, 1936–1940). This particular questionnaire carries the Roman number I, suggesting a more programmed approach to collecting folk medicine and I thus see the post-war activities, at the end of the 1950s, as a continuation of an aim interrupted by war. There were also attempts to publish Estonian verbal charms in co-operation with Finnish colleagues, but that idea ended with no real results.

During World War II, folklore collecting and research stopped for a short while and was, to some extent, considerably slowed down. After the war the situation for folkloristics was problematic – noted folklorists such as Professor Walter Anderson (1885–1962) and Oskar Loorits were in exile, some were deported; the archive holdings had been evacuated in 1943 to different locations all over Estonia and were re-evacuated in 1944/45. There were new rules as to what was supposed to be collected and studied –

the goal was to document folklore as a carrier of the ideas of the working classes, thus attention had to be turned to topics such as workers' folklore, critique of religion, revolutionary and war songs; also earlier principles for collecting were criticised (Haberman 1949: 18; Viidalepp 1969: 169–184).

Folk belief, as a research subject, was officially not favoured (although continually recorded during fieldwork), folklore was more understood as a poetic creation and the collecting and research focused on folk music, songs, narratives, short forms, etc. According to an administrative overview, there were altogether 283,018 items on the topic of "belief and customs" in the Folklore Department of the State Literary Museum in 1949 (Haberman 1949: 17), but there is no exact data on the number of accounts on folk medicine. Also, there is no statistical data regarding the recorded material on folk medicine during the 1940s and 1950s in any public reports I have found so far. However, the content indexes of the manuscripts show a small, but steady flow of records on folk medicine throughout the mentioned decades.

The folklore sector of the Institute of Language and Literature of the Academy of Sciences was established in 1947 in Tartu, but was moved to Tallinn along with several other departments of the Academy in 1952. This meant that the folklorists employed by the Institute were separated from the archival holdings. With scattered personnel the folklore collecting, systematisation and research suffered, but over time, the number of folklorists, both in Tallinn and Tartu, grew (Tampere 1971: 196; Tedre 1997: 201–204). The Institute of Language and Literature was founded as a research institution and the functions of the Literature Museum were mostly to record new data and provide researchers and other interested parties with necessary archival materials. The folklorists of the Institute also started to carry out fieldwork expeditions and a separate folklore collection was founded by the sector. Later on, folk medicine was made one of the research topics of the Institute.

The Chair of Estonian Literature and Folklore at the then State University of Tartu also continued functioning in the new situation, providing a necessary and regular addition of qualified young folklorists. In the folklore seminars of the second half of the 1940s, folk medicine was one of the topics discussed, in addition to wildlife and cosmic phenomena, under the guidance of medical doctors (Laugaste 1980: 398). The first seminar paper by a folklore student on folk medicine was written by Salme Kuusik in 1948 and dealt with folk cures for dental diseases. Students also recorded folk medicine during their fieldwork trips, but the manuscript indexes of this particular collection are somewhat superficial and do not always show the necessary data for specific sub-topics of beliefs and customs. Nor have there been any detailed analyses on the recordings of folk medicine of this collection.

From the point of view of folk medicine in general, several paradoxical developments took place in the years of Soviet regime. The new, Soviet academic medicine system was now being introduced by strongly forbidding folk healing (Korb 2006: 92). The high status of folk healers, up to that time, was affected by the introduction of new drugs and free medical help. On the other hand, difficult times during and after World War II made assistance of folk healers very valuable, a tendency which had started to diminish in the 1930s. The optimism based on the developments and discoveries in modern medicine rose, but again the extensive use of chemicals caused new allergies and illnesses, which made some people seek help from folk healers (Kõiva 1995: 218–220).

From the end of the 1940s, folklorists from both the Institute of Language and Literature and from the Folklore Department in the State Literary Museum undertook organised long-term (up to a month) fieldwork trips involving bigger groups of scholars. At first, these were inter-institutional, which also meant that the documented material was scattered between the institutions involved. While trying to fulfil the new demands of Stalinist ideology and still recording “ancient” genres of peasant folklore,² the beginning of the 1950s brought with it an obligation to collect modern, so-called *kolkhoz* lore and an involvement in creating new folklore. The end of that decade and the 1960s were in turn characterised by a relative loosening of earlier obligations and the main attention was again aimed at recording “classical” genres, nevertheless keeping an eye on new developments. The change in political and economic conditions was one of the reasons for the gradual disappearance of the manifestations of earlier peasant folklore, the arrival of better recording equipment also played its role in systematic recording of the folklore of older generations (Oras 2008: 60–68). It is logical to assume that folk medicine was then considered a disappearing knowledge, especially in the light of free, highly-praised Soviet medical help.

While carrying out fieldwork, correspondence with voluntary co-workers also continued. Instructing local folklore collectors was done in turns at the Folklore Department, and occasionally, as the articles and questionnaires in the series of *Rahvapärimuste kogu* show, the topic of belief was also brought to the foreground. In 1961, Herbert Tampere wrote in his instructions about the lack of folk belief material, which still needed to be collected. Among other things he also mentioned folk remedies and folk medicine terms, which, as he underlined, definitely had to be written down in local dialect (Tampere 1961: 7–8).

In the second half of the 1960s, folklorist Erna Normann (1904–1978) gave an overview of the work done so far on the topic of beliefs and customs, which included a short note on cataloguing spells. She stated that many folklore genres are closely connected to beliefs and customs, and without a thorough knowledge of the specific background it is impossible to understand songs, stories and other manifestations of oral tradition (Normann 1967: 69), which is why it is important to turn attention to such material. Also August Annist, an outstanding scholar of literature and folklore, lamented on the lack of folkloristic research and researchers in the field of folk belief in Estonia, pointing to the fact that folk belief was studied in other Soviet republics and Estonia should be no exception (Annist 1966). In spite of this insistent article by Annist, there was no obvious change in the situation (cf. Valk 2008: 20).

But, although folk belief, as an official theme for collecting, was forced to the background and research on it was minimal, belief topics, and along with them folk medicine, were recorded by folklorists of different institutions during field trips and through the network of voluntary correspondents. Nevertheless, a considerable push for a wider and better programmed collecting of folk medicine came from outside folkloristics.

The Initiative of Mihkel Kask and Kaljo Villako

The first actual campaign for recording Estonian folk medicine during the Soviet era came at the end of the 1950s on the initiative of two medical doctors, Mihkel Kask (1903–

1968) and Kaljo Villako (1919–2001). In co-operation with folklorists (Herbert Tampere, Erna Normann and others)³ they compiled in 1959 an extensive questionnaire that was, first and foremost, aimed at their colleagues, in hope that medical professionals will show a greater interest in folk medicine than so far. It was namely their main idea that earlier shortcomings in collecting, preserving and scholarly research of Estonian folk medicine lies in the disinterested attitude of the medical staff. They also thought that physicians should be the ones collecting folk medicine instead of folklorists, as the first have a “better understanding” of the material. The collecting method, however, should still be borrowed from ethnographers and folklorists.

Thus their goals were to enlighten more diversely the relationships between Estonians and their neighbours, making sure, which folk remedies and ways were borrowed and which were not; to date the periods of folk medicine, for instance, sacrifices to springs on the occasion of certain illnesses could be placed in pre-Christian period. They aimed to clarify, which empirical folk medicine methods were borrowed, which were Estonian, and which empirical methods need to be studied experimentally to make sure, whether they can be used in the modern medicine; also, how the evolving medical science influenced the empirical folk medicine, since scientific medicine has taken over several folk practices over time and has been empirical itself in earlier centuries. In addition, they urged paying attention to those who were curing the sick in past times and who were using folk curing methods; and which terms used in folk medicine could also be used in modern medicine to enrich the terminology of the 1950s and 1960s (Kask, Villako 1959: 52–54).

The main topics of this rather extensive questionnaire were: 1. General questions (rather thorough, concerning questions on diseases, their treatment and knowledge of physiology and the attitude of people towards medical staff and folk healers). 2. Internal diseases (mainly a list of diseases and their folk names). 3. Surgical diseases (a list of problems). 4. Infectious diseases (some general questions and a very short list of problems). 5. Eye diseases (a very short list of problems). 6. Ear-, nose- and throat diseases (a very short list of problems). 7. Dental illnesses (extremely short list of problems). 8. Mental illnesses (some general questions and a list of diseases). 9. Children’s diseases (general problems and a list of diseases). 10. Pregnancy and labour (consists of several general and specific questions). 11. Women’s illnesses (a list of problems and some questions). 12. Skin diseases (a thorough list of problems and diseases). 13. Parasites on humans and in living quarters (a thorough list of parasites and related questions).

The questionnaire was published in the journal *Nõukogude Eesti Tervishoid* (Health care of Soviet Estonia; 1958–1988) and sent separately to the voluntary folklore collectors of the Folklore Department of the State Literary Museum. The language of the questionnaire indicates rather directly that it was aimed for use by the medical staff. Medical terms such as “vitiligo”, “inversion of the nipples” and “climacteric” probably remained incomprehensible to general public. Nevertheless, there were enough folk terms in the questionnaire, which on the one hand were probably meant to assist the medical professionals while questioning people, but on the other hand were no doubt of help for the voluntary folklore collectors. It is also highly recognizable that the questionnaire contains questions regarding the interaction between the patients and the medical doctors or midwives, not only between the patients and the healers. The next year, 1960, well over 10 voluntary folklore collectors had already sent large enough

collections to the Literary Museum to be mentioned in the annual overviews, and that continued up to the 1970s with decreasing intensity. There were, to my knowledge, only two doctors also otherwise interested in folk culture, Ilse and Lemming Rootsmäe, who gathered the requested information in 1959 and in 1964, and the then medical student Eda Aer, who recorded folk medicine on the islands of Muhu and Saaremaa in 1961. Also folklorists and folklore students used the questionnaire during their expeditions.

Many of those taking part of the campaign were already long-term active co-workers of the folklore archives before World War II. In addition to such distant places as Sochi and the villages of Estonian settlers in Krasnoyarsk krai (Siberia), the most active area in Estonia was the southern part of the country, which represented a more archaic tradition than the rest of the country. North-Estonia was considerably limited in answers. In the 1970s, the correspondents from the West and South Estonia were continually more active than the co-workers from the other parts of the country, thus pointing to remoter areas, where older traditions had been better preserved. A lot of collecting was done in the country-side, following the idea that true folklore was to be found in rural villages. Recording urban folklore, including attitudes of town people to health and healing, was not current.

What stands out is that the material was sent continually by particular correspondents, who had more or less focused on collecting folk medicine and followed the questionnaire of Kask and Villako. Not everyone had tried to get answers to all the thirteen topics, presumably the co-workers had been following the actual knowledge of their informants. There were also single entries on folk medicine among the other topics, which might be casual recordings, but the influence of the above-mentioned questionnaire cannot be excluded. As the annual overviews and the general indexes of the manuscripts show, there were quite many spells, information on folk healers and descriptions of folk healing, ethnobotany, very little information on folk veterinary, some narratives about local doctors and midwives among the answers. Occasionally, dried herbal samples were added to the hand-written recordings. The material collected, by using the questionnaire of Mihkel Kask and Kaljo Villako, is scattered across tens of manuscript volumes, still unanalysed, and there are also no statistics done on the results.⁴

In his memoirs, Dr. Villako has described his travels around Estonia, and how he liked to question local people on folk medicine. In his opinion, folk healing was made up of two components: firstly, a part of it is based on belief and is purely folkloristic; secondly, there is knowledge which has been preserved down through the generations and which doctors have found to be useful. Kaljo Villako mentions, with some regret, that people are still largely superstitious, not honouring the medical doctors as much as they should, so he blames the physicians themselves for neglecting explanatory work among people. At the same time he acknowledges local country people for the use of antibiotics (mould) long before Alexander Fleming discovered penicillin (Villako 2001: 214–222).

Regrettably, at least so it seems, the compilers of the questionnaire, Mihkel Kask and Kaljo Villako themselves, lost interest in the topic when the response from their colleagues remained modest. In 1975, ethnographer Ants Viires mentioned, in an overview of an all-Soviet folk medicine congress in Leningrad, that nothing has been heard of the results of this questionnaire. Ants Viires also said that although folk medicine material can be found in abundance in the Folklore Archives, folklorists have not been interested

in it at all and that Estonian folk medicine research was represented at this congress by two ethnographers (Viies 1975: 381). Nevertheless, the ethnographers themselves did not focus on folk medicine either.

The Other Published Questionnaires and Guidelines for Local Folklore Collectors

Most of the other questionnaires of the time, where folk medicine forms a part, were published in the bulletin *Rahvapärimeste koguja*, addressed to the voluntary co-workers of the Folklore Department of the State Literary Museum. These were compiled by folklorists who were interested in particular topics related to their research projects. In 1961, Erna Normann published a questionnaire on proverbs, where there is a question about proverbs on health, illness and doctors (Normann 1961: 37). Ellen Liiv asked in 1962 about the use of lake water in folk medicine in the questionnaire concerning local legends about lakes (Liiv 1962: 24) and in the same year, Erna Normann asked about folk medicine and folk veterinary in the questionnaire on spells (Normann 1962: 36). In addition, ethnographer Jüri Linnus has published a questionnaire on smiths and smitheries, also asking, whether any curing of illnesses has been performed in the smithy, which ones and how (Linnus, Liiv 1962: 41).

Arvo Krikmann, while compiling questionnaires on jokes, also paid attention to those concerning illnesses. The topics dealt with here were health problems, old age and death, illnesses and physical problems or handicaps. As Arvo Krikmann wrote, it was not acceptable to laugh at illnesses or handicaps and in these jokes the main stress was put on the comical situations and word comics that illnesses helped to achieve. The characters in these jokes have a physically significant body part (big nose), they can be hunchbacked, blind, deaf or stutterers (Krikmann 1965: 54–55).

Doctor Gustav Vilbaste (1885–1967), the noted Estonian botanist and publicist, had collected data on the dialectal plant names and ethnobotany for a very long time since 1902 and had urged others to collect such material. His last call to collect the plant names was published posthumously in *Rahvapärimeste koguja* (Vilbaste 1968). Towards the end of the 1960s Vilbaste's manuscripts on ethnobotany were handed over to the collections of the Folklore Department of the State Literary Museum (Proodel 1968: 88; Kõiva 1971: 213). This bulky collection consists of over 40 files and volumes of both self-collected materials and manuscripts sent by his informants, made up of linguistic, botanical (names of plants in different languages), historical and folkloristic materials (including healing with herbs). The collection also includes intense correspondence with informants, manuscripts of his books, and the extensive monograph on Estonian plant names, which was edited and published decades after his death, in 1993.

At the end of the 1960s, Richard Viidalepp published an informative article on how to take photos of objects connected with local legends, which often include places of healing – trees and stones, hills, springs, also places which are haunted, sacred groves, etc. He underlined that the object has to be seen fully on the photos, and photographing using several angles and distance is recommended (Viidalepp 1968: 27).

Around the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, there were also some questionnaires, concerning the topic of folk medicine. Regina Praakli compiled a questionnaire on food customs, asking among other things, what the children, the sick, those

recovering, women, who have given birth and old people ate, and about the restriction of talking about illnesses while eating (Praakli 1967: 50, 54). In Mall Proodel's (Hiimäe) 1970 questionnaire on wild animals there were questions on cures of alcoholism and the use of bat's blood (Proodel 1970: 51). Eha Allik compiled a questionnaire on death customs, which also contains questions on predicting death of the ill person according to the behaviour of several animals, signs and the appearance and behaviour of the ill (Allik 1972: 27–35).

It is more difficult to estimate the amount of the answers that arrived regarding these questionnaires, as the materials handed over to the Folklore Department of the State Literary Museum were noted in the manuscript indexes with specific abbreviations and there were not always further descriptions, which would indicate an answer connected to folk medicine. Also, in the case of single questions, the answers were more scattered than in the case of larger recorded themes. For example, the contributions received in 1969, focusing specifically on ethnomedicine, may have derived from the corresponding call by Gustav Vilbaste, published a year earlier.

In the annual overviews the material, including folk medicine sent to the State Literary Museum by voluntary co-workers, was acknowledged when the records were considerably large or included important data. The manuscript indexes reveal, however, a number of smaller contributions, which include material on folk medicine and which have not been mentioned in the published overviews. This, in turn, means that the actual number of answers containing folk medicine is considerably bigger than can be assumed at first glance. The comments on the incoming material indicate that, for example, the quantity of recorded spells was quite big, and at the same time these texts were systematised in the archive. Spells are also a verbal genre, which probably fitted well into the dominant research paradigm of the time, such as folklore typologies, textual variations and their geographic distributions.

The comments made by folklorists on correspondents' answers also show that the term "folk medicine" had been fixed instead of the earlier additional versions of "folk healing" and "vernacular healing methods". While commenting on the arriving material in the years of 1962 and 1963, Selma Lätt seemed somewhat surprised about the extent of folk medicine data sent to the archive (Lätt 1965: 89). It remains unclear however, whether she was surprised by the fact that people were continually responding to the questionnaire published in 1959 or there were other reasons. As folk medicine was still a natural part of everyday life in these days, it was understandably documented extensively. The problem arising was that there was not enough contextual information added to the recordings.

In the beginning of the 1970s, folklorist Otilie-Olga Kõiva, while giving suggestions for sound recordings, again pointed out the need to record spells and healing words: words of fire, snake, stomach, pain, sprains and erysipelas, etc. (Kõiva 1970: 19). Being interested in recording the performance situation, she also guided and encouraged the co-workers to write down everything concerning the situation – expression, tone of voice, arm movements. She admitted, though, that these things were difficult to capture and describe. Those believing in magic formulas were reluctant to give them out and those who did not believe in them also usually did not know them. Most of such information was collected through the patients and relatives of the folk healers (Kõiva 1972: 10).

In addition to the material sent by voluntary co-workers, folklorists themselves recorded folk medicine during the fieldwork (with variable intensity), especially Mall

Proodel (Hiimäe), to some extent Selma Lätt, also Erna Tampere, Arvo Krikmann, Lilia Briedis from the Folklore Department of the State Literary Museum; and Udo Mägi, Ülo Tedre, Richard Viidalepp, Pille Kippar and some others from the folklore sector of the Institute of Language and Literature.

Mall Hiimäe commented positively on the results of a fieldwork expedition in the North of Estonia in 1969, which showed that the beliefs about the influence of the evil eye on animals, snake spells and healing with herbs were well known, compared to the calendar customs or family traditions that were not any more in active use or had lost their initial function (Hiimäe 1972: 43). These expedition results show that although the co-workers in South-Estonia were eager to document and send the data about folk medicine to the archives, these beliefs circulated in the other parts of the country as well.

Along with folklorists' own fieldwork trips and guiding the voluntary folklore collectors, the material documented so far was also being organised. In the end of the 1960s the copies of the belief and customs catalogue were put to order and in 1968–1970 the card catalogue of ethnobotany was continued to be copied and systematised. By that time the named card catalogue consisted of 11,000 cards (Räim 1974a: 182, 1974b: 195).

According to the indexes of the manuscripts and annual overviews, the records on folk medicine (including spells and ethnobotany) were sent to and collected for the Folklore Department of the State Literary Museum among songs and folk music, games, stories, beliefs and customs, short forms, cultural and historical data and life stories. However, folk medicine as a topic was overshadowed by the amount of other recorded folklore data. The main problem in dealing with folk medicine in these decades was the general lack of systematic approach while recording the material (with the exception of the campaign by Kask and Villako), and the initiatives to collect and study folk belief discussed above brought no change in the lack of scholarly research until the last decade of the Soviet era.

THE COLLECTING AND RESEARCH IN THE 1980s

The 1980s mark a considerable activity in both programmed collecting as well as folkloristic and interdisciplinary research of folk medicine in Estonia. Mare Kõiva, from the Institute of Language and Literature, concentrated on collecting material on and about folk healers, and she continued to copy and systematise Estonian spells (Kõiva 1997: 101–102, 112–113; Hiimäe 2002: 286), which Herbert Tampere had done to some extent before World War II. She also compiled questionnaires on folk healers and folk medicine, concentrating on the roles of the healers (also in finding lost items and people), their background, healing techniques, relations with the community, also psychic experiences, the use of Oriental medicine and astrology (see Kõiva *s.a.*).⁵ In 1990, Mare Kõiva defended her doctoral dissertation on the classification of Estonian spells (Kõiva 1990). She has also suggested that the interest of folklorists in folk medicine and healers had so far been more textual (recording spells etc.) rather than personal (Kõiva 2007: 79–80). Thus the 1980s bring a change in terms of what, how and whom to record when collecting folk medicine.

Gradually other researchers also came to the foreground. For example, ethnographer Andra Veidemann studied the cures of several skin diseases such as erysipelas or a disease related to the beliefs about folk living underground (1985, 1990) and analysed

folk medicine from the point of view of semiotics (1987). Folklorist Marju Kõivupuu collected data concerning the family of folk healers, the so-called *Suri* (father and son Kusta and Anton Taitis and their family) in South-Estonia (cf. Kõivupuu 1995), defending her MA thesis on the topic in 1993 and later publishing a book on this (Kõivupuu 2000). In the middle of the 1980s, Mall Hiimäe put together a questionnaire on ear and eye diseases and related problems (see Hiimäe *s.a.*) for collecting the folklore of the deaf and mute, thus continuing the theme touched upon by Herbert Tampere in 1940.

From the point of view of scientific medicine, several pharmacologists showed considerable interest toward folk medicine (Raal 1988; Tuisk et al. 1992). Pharmacist Ain Raal, in co-operation with Mare Kõiva and Mall Hiimäe, compiled his own questionnaire on the use of plants in folk medicine in the 1980s (see Raal *s.a.*). He paid attention to the qualitative answers, testing the effectiveness of herbs and the knowledge people had about the use of herbs in treating illnesses, while trying to widen the list of herbs that could be actually used in pharmacology.

Towards the end of the Soviet regime, on 1 January 1987, the amount of data on folk belief and customs was assessed at 356,145 items (Saukas 1989: 200). There is no separate note on the amount of folk medicine material in these statistics, although the topic was recorded continuously, especially by those who focussed specifically on folk medicine research. Generally it has been understood that bigger and comprehensible studies on folk medicine were seldom published by scholars during the Soviet period, nevertheless there were smaller articles or studies on individual illnesses or groups of illness (Kõiva 1992: 33). Within folkloristics, on the initiative of Mare Kõiva and Marju Kõivupuu, the actual research of folk medicine was largely carried out at the Institute of Language and Literature and the Chair of Estonian Literature and Folklore of the Tartu University. For myself, considering the changing social and historical situation, the 1980s form a somewhat separate time period, which can either be looked at as a mid-phase between the old and new folkloristic approach to folk medicine, or as a beginning and part of folk medicine research in Estonia today. In saying this I also take into consideration that new questionnaires compiled during that decade, which took the changed situation into consideration, and thus also the approaches of these scholars to folk medicine, are still up to date.

CONCLUSION

The years and decades following World War II were characterised by suppression, Stalinist ideology and fear for one's fate. Before the war, the use of help from folk healers in Estonia began to diminish with the advancement of official medicine, but hard times during and after the war helped to preserve the use of folk medicine. On the other hand, the work of folk healers was forbidden for most of the Soviet period and academic medicine with its progress was placed in the foreground, in spite of its certain lack of quality. The continuing interest in the traditional healing methods can be seen in a way as cultural escapism in its own time, which helped to come to terms with the repression and to preserve national self-consciousness.

In accord with several controversies during the Soviet occupation, although folk belief was not favoured, there were statements made on the importance of beliefs and customs, and calls to collect and study the topic more intensively in the 1960s (Tampere 1961; Annist 1966; Normann 1967). The practices of folk medicine were supported by the continuing use of home remedies for lesser ailments and leaning on the knowledge of the older generations. Data on folk medicine was documented by folklorists during fieldwork expeditions and with the help of voluntary folklore collectors, especially thanks to the questionnaire of two medical doctors Mihkel Kask and Kaljo Villako (1959) and their co-operation with the Folklore Department of the State Literary Museum. Questions concerning different aspects of health and folk medicine also came up in several other questionnaires compiled by folklorists. Specific questionnaires on folk medicine were not compiled again until the 1980s by Mare Kõiva and other scholars.

The most important time for active collecting of folk medicine in these decades, springing from the initiative of Kask and Villako, remained in the 1960s and lessened considerably by the middle of the 1970s. What remains hidden in the annual reports, but is clearly seen in the indexes of the manuscripts, is that folk medicine was recorded steadily during the Soviet period both by folklorists and the voluntary co-workers of the archive, even in the cases where there had been no specific calls to collect such information. Still, in the lack of calls to collect, the material recorded was somewhat scanty.

According to Mare Kõiva (1995: 223), by the 1980s the continuity of many traditional healing practices was interrupted, although the interest in folk healers started to grow again. There was no return to the old tradition, but alternative medicine, influenced by the mass media, was being favoured. Urbanization, loss of strong ties with country-life, advancement of scientific medicine and free healthcare, which dictated a different attitude to health and healing, were probably some of the reasons for the changes in the use of folk medicine.

The end of the 1970s and the 1980s brought changes to the folkloristic study of folk medicine. The changing tradition meant that folk medicine had to be studied from new perspectives, more deeply and consistently, which has been done so from the 1980s onward. Topics within folk medicine, which were most largely dealt with in the Soviet period were ethnobotany and spells, later also folk healers. Still, more profound research from both experienced folklorists and folklore students were reached step by step.

The study of various remedies, means of cure and folk healers was mainly left to ethnographers and folklorists. Therefore, Mihkel Kask and Kaljo Villako, with their interest in folk medicine, can be seen as a considerable exception among their fellow doctors. Analysing their initiative to collect folk medicine at that time and facing the fact that a huge amount of material was collected but up till now has remained unstudied, it is clear that there is a huge gap in the research of Estonian folk medicine. Taking into consideration that traditional medicine gradually began to change and give way to arriving alternative healing in the middle of the 20th century, their initiative produced a massive amount of information on health and healing known and used up to the 1960s and 1970s. Thus it can be assumed that the answers coming in for the questionnaire of Kask and Villako contain older beliefs, perhaps changes over time and presumably arriving new practices, which all characterise this period of time. A closer analysis of the recorded material will answer this question. Also the contributions to the questions on folk medicine in other questionnaires need to be sought out and analysed.

So we can say that folk medicine has always been recorded by folklorists of different institutions, folklore students and the co-workers of the archive, however with variable intensity. Up until the end of the 1970s, the work done in the field of folk medicine was mainly collecting and organizing the material. From the 1980s onwards we can speak about purposeful collecting and a stable research of folk medicine. This depended largely on the individual efforts of scholars, most notably by Mare Kõiva, Andra Veidemann, later also Marju Kõivupuu, and their contacts with colleagues from other disciplines. The research started in the 1980s forms a base of the analyses of folk and alternative healing today.

SOURCES

Archival sources at the Estonian Folklore Archives of the Estonian Literary Museum:

Indexes of the manuscript folklore collection of the Folklore Department of the State Literary Museum.

Indexes of the manuscript folklore collection of the Institute of Language and Literature.

Indexes of the manuscript folklore collection of the Chair of Estonian Literature and Folklore at the State University of Tartu.

REFERENCES

- Allik, Eha 1972. Surmaended. – *Rahvapärимuste koguja*, nr. 8: 27–35.
- Annist, August 1966. Eesti rahvausundi uurimise olukorrast. – *Keel ja Kirjandus*, 9. ak. nr. 8: 457–467.
- Haberman, Alice 1949. Riiklik Kirjandusmuuseum teadusliku uurimisbaasina. – Alice Haberman (toim.). *Riikliku Kirjandusmuuseumi aastaraamat* I. Tartu: RK Teaduslik Kirjandus, 5–31.
- Hiiemäe, Mall 1972. Rahvaluule-ekspeditsioon Rakvere ja Harju rajooni. – *Rahvapärимuste koguja*, nr. 8: 38–48.
- Hiiemäe, Mall s.a. Surdo. Kuulmise nõrgenemise, kurtuse, halva nägemise ja pimedaksjäämise rahvapärased põhjused. Eesti Rahvaluule Arhiivi küsitluskavad. – <http://www.folklore.ee/rl/era/kysitlus/surdo.htm> (accessed November 24, 2008).
- Hiiemäe, Reet 2002. Uued suunad rahvaluulekogumises alates 1980. aastatest Eesti Rahvaluule Arhiivi laekunud ainese põhjal. – Mall Hiiemäe (toim.). *Kogumisest uurimiseni. Artikleid Eesti Rahvaluule Arhiivi 75. aastapäevaks*. Tartu: Eesti Kirjandusmuuseum, 280–293.
- Kask, Mihkel; Kaljo Villako 1959. Rahvameditsiini andmete kogumise vajalikkusest. – *Nõukogude Eesti Tervishoid*, 2. ak., nr. 4: 52–59.
- Korb, Anu 2006. Ravitsemisoskus kui pärimusrühma ühisteadmus: Siberi Rõžkovo küla näide. – *Mäetagused*, nr. 34: 87–110.
- Krikmann, Arvo 1965. Küsimusi rahvanaljandite alalt I. – *Rahvapärимuste koguja*, nr. 4: 21–57.
- Kuutma, Kristin; Tiiu Jaago (eds.) 2005. *Studies in Estonian Folkloristics and Ethnology: a Reader and Reflexive History*. Tartu: Tartu University Press.
- Kõiva, Mare 1990 = Кыйва, Маре. Эстонские заговоры. Классификация и жанровые особенности. Диссертация. Tallinn, 1990. [Manuscript in author's possession.]
- Kõiva, Mare 1992. Rahvaarst – kogumismetoodika ja tegelikkus. – Virve Tuubel, Heiki Pärdi, Ivi Tammaru (toim.). *Etnograafia ja folkloor. Eesti Rahva Muuseumi XXXIV teaduskonverentsi teesid*. Tartu: Eesti Rahva Muuseum, 33–35.
- Kõiva, Mare 1995. From Incantation to Rites. – Mare Kõiva, Kai Vassiljeva (eds.). *Folk Belief Today*. Tartu: Institute of the Estonian Language and Estonian Museum of Literature, 215–236.

- Kõiva, Mare 1997. Rahvausundi ja -juttude uurimise töörühm 1990–1996. – Jüri Viikberg (toim.). *Eesti filoloogia poolsajand Teaduste Akadeemias*. Tallinn: Eesti Keele Instituut, 93–121.
- Kõiva, Mare 2007. The Transmission of Knowledge among Estonian Witch Doctors. – Mare Kõiva. *Through the Ages. Folklore as a Common Expression of Lingual, Figurative, Emotional and Mental Memory*. Sator 5. Tartu: EKM Teaduskirjastus, 77–112. – <http://www.folklore.ee/rl/pubte/ee/sator/sator5/doctor.pdf>. (accessed November 24, 2008).
- Kõiva, Mare s.a. Rahvaarstid. Eesti Rahvaluule Arhiivi küsitluskavad. – <http://www.folklore.ee/rl/era/kysitlus/rahvaarst.htm> (accessed November 24, 2008).
- Kõiva, Ottilie 1970. Juhiseid helilindistamiseks. – *Rahvapärимuste koguja*, nr. 7: 18–25.
- Kõiva, Ottilie (toim.) 1971. Kirjandusmuuseum 1967. aastal. – *Paar sammukest eesti kirjanduse uurimise teed. Uurimusi ja materjale VII*. Tartu: Eesti NSV Teaduste Akadeemia Fr. R. Kreutzwaldi nim. Kirjandusmuuseum, 207–213.
- Kõiva, Ottilie 1972. Rahvalaulude esitamistavade jälgimisest kogumistöös. – *Rahvapärимuste koguja*, nr. 8: 5–11.
- Kõivupuu, Marju 1995. Three Healers in South-Estonia. – Mare Kõiva, Kai Vassiljeva (eds.). *Folk Belief Today*. Tartu: Institute of the Estonian Language and Estonian Museum of Literature, 237–240.
- Kõivupuu, Marju 2000. *Rahvaarstid Võrumaalt: Noor ja vana Suri Hargla Kihelkonnast*. Võru: Võru Instituut.
- Laugaste, Eduard 1980. *Eesti rahvaluuleteaduse ajalugu II*. Tallinn: Eesti Raamat.
- Liiv, Ellen 1962. Kohamuistendid veekogudest I. – *Rahvapärимuste koguja*, nr. 3: 21–25.
- Linnus, Jüri; Ellen Liiv 1962. Sepp ja sepatöö rahvatraditsioonis. – *Rahvapärимuste koguja*, nr. 3: 39–42.
- Lätt, Selma 1965. Aruanne rahvaluulekogumisest 1. I 1962 – 31. XII 1963. – *Rahvapärимuste koguja*, nr. 4: 89–96.
- Normann, Erna 1961. Küsimusi vanasõnadest I. – *Rahvapärимuste koguja*, nr. 1: 35–38.
- Normann, Erna 1962. Küsimusi lausumissõnade alalt. – *Rahvapärимuste koguja*, nr. 3: 35–38.
- Normann, Erna 1967. Rahvaluulematerjali säilitamise ja korraldamise meetoodiline juhend. – *Rahvapärимuste koguja*, nr. 5: 65–71.
- Oras, Janika 2008. Viie 20. sajandi naise regilaulumaailm. Arhiivitekstid, kogemused ja mälestused. *Eesti Rahvaluule Arhiivi toimetused 27*. Tartu: Eesti Kirjandusmuuseumi Teaduskirjastus.
- Praakli, Regina 1967. Küsimusi söömisega seotud rahvakommetest ja uskumustest. – *Rahvapärимuste koguja*, nr. 5: 50–54.
- Proodel, Mall 1968. Rahvaluulekogujate kokkutulek Kadrinas. – *Rahvapärимuste koguja*, nr. 6: 87–88.
- Proodel, Mall 1970. Uskumused seoses metsloomadega. – *Rahvapärимuste koguja*, nr. 7: 46–51.
- Raal, Ain 1988. Miks rahvameditsiini on vaja uurida? – *Nõukogude Eesti Tervishoid*, 31. ak., nr. 5: 383–384.
- Raal, Ain s.a. Küsitluskava ravimtaimedest. Eesti Rahvaluule Arhiivi küsitluskavad. – <http://www.folklore.ee/rl/era/kysitlus/ravimtaim.htm> (accessed November 24, 2008).
- Räim, Heino (toim.) 1974a. Kirjandusmuuseum 1969. aastal. – *Paar sammukest eesti kirjanduse uurimise teed. Uurimusi ja materjale VIII*. Tartu: Eesti NSV Teaduste Akadeemia Fr. R. Kreutzwaldi nim. Kirjandusmuuseum, 173–182.
- Räim, Heino (toim.) 1974b. Kirjandusmuuseum 1970. aastal. – *Paar sammukest eesti kirjanduse uurimise teed. Uurimusi ja materjale VIII*. Tartu: Eesti NSV Teaduste Akadeemia Fr. R. Kreutzwaldi nim. Kirjandusmuuseum, 183–195.
- Saukas, Rein 1989. Fr. R. Kreutzwaldi nim. Kirjandusmuuseumi rahvaluule osakonna käsikirjalised fondid seisuga 1. jaan. 1987. a. – Mall Hiiemäe (toim.). *Paar sammukest eesti kirjanduse uurimise teed XII. Jakob Hurda 150. sünniaastapäevaks*. Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, 200.
- Tampere, Herbert 1940. Küsimusi rahvameditsiinist I. – *Rahvapärимuste selgitaja*, nr. 2 (9): 69–72.

- Tampere, Herbert 1961. Üldisi juhiseid rahvapärimeste kogujale. – *Rahvapärimeste koguja*, nr. 1: 3–9.
- Tampere, Herbert 1971. Kaks ettekannet eesti folkloristika ajaloost. – Otilie Kõiva (toim.). *Paar sammukest eesti kirjanduse uurimise teed. Uurimusi ja materjale VII*. Tallinn: Eesti NSV Teaduste Akadeemia Fr. R. Kreutzwaldi nim. Kirjandusmuuseum, 183–199.
- Tedre, Ülo 1997. Keele ja Kirjanduse Instituudi rahvaluulesektor 1947–1990. Mälestuslik ülevaade. – Jüri Viikberg (toim.). *Eesti filoloogias poolsajand Teaduste Akadeemias*. Tallinn: Eesti Keele Instituut, 201–225.
- Tuisk, Hellen; Mari-Mall Mitt; Merle Männiste; Ain Raal 1992. Lisandusi eesti etnomediitsiini alastele uuringutele. – *Eesti Rohuteadlane*, 3. (18.) ak., nr. 2/3: 107–112.
- Valk, Ülo 2008. Superstition in Estonian Folklore: From Official Category to Vernacular Concept. – *Folklore*. Vol. 119, No. 1 (April 2008): 14–28.
- Veidemann, Andra 1985. Rahvapärased arusaamad roosihaigusest ja selle ravimisest Eestis 19. sajandil ja 20. sajandi algul. – Ants Viires (toim.). *Eesti külaelu arengujooni*. Tallinn: Eesti NSV Teaduste Akadeemia, 130–152.
- Veidemann, Andra 1987. Rahvameditsiin sotsiokultuurilisest ja semiootilisest aspektist. – *Looming*, nr. 7: 965–969.
- Veidemann, Andra 1990. Maa-alused eesti rahvameditsiinis. – Heno Sarv (toim.). *Jakob Hurt 150. Eesti Rahva Muuseumi Aastaraamat XXXVIII*. Tallinn: Valgus, 86–104.
- Viidalepp, Richard 1968. Me vajame häid fotosid! – *Rahvapärimeste koguja*, nr. 6: 25–29.
- Viidalepp, Richard 1969. Rahvaluulekogude evakueerimine ja reevakueerimine 1944. aastal. – Meelik Kahu (toim.). *Paar sammukest eesti kirjanduse uurimise teed. Uurimusi ja materjale VI*. Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, 169–184.
- Viires, Ants 1975. Rahvameditsiini uurimine päevakorral. – *Keel ja Kirjandus*, 18. ak., nr. 6: 380–382.
- Vilbaste, Gustav 1968. Rahvapärased botaanikast. – *Rahvapärimeste koguja*, nr. 6: 52–58.
- Villako, Kaljo 2001. *Ajarännak II. Mälestused 1944. aasta sügisest kuni tänapäevani*. Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus.

NOTES

1 A more detailed introduction to several Estonian folklorists mentioned in this article (Jakob Hurt, Walter Anderson, Oskar Loorits, Herbert Tampere and Richard Viidalepp) can be found in Kuutma, Jaago 2005.

2 “Classical” or “ancient” genres were, in the eyes of the folklorists of that time, the narratives (legends, fairy tales), short forms of folklore and especially *regilaulud* (Baltic-Finnic Kalevala-metric folksongs) of the 19th century peasant folklore, which were circulating also in the 20th century and were gradually disappearing.

3 According to my older colleagues Mall Hiimäe and Ellen Liiv the then director of the Folklore Department Herbert Tampere knew personally both Mihkel Kask and Kaljo Villako. I have also understood that Mihkel Kask had dealt with the topic of folk medicine during the pre-war period and as two medical doctors joined their interests, they turned to Herbert Tampere and other folklorists for some help. A further study (historical archival material, correspondence, personal archives) on this issue would certainly bring more light on the backgrounds of the questionnaire.

4 From all the collected material basing on the Kask-Villako questionnaire, mainly the spells have been digitised in the Department of Folkloristics of the Estonian Literary Museum (the former folklore sector of the Institute of Language and Literature), following the research interest of Mare Kõiva.

5 The questionnaires are still to be found on the website of the Estonian Folklore Archives at <http://www.folklore.ee/rl/era/kysitus/>.