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A COMPARATIVE APPROACH TO THE FINNO-UGRIC FOLK POETRIES

Three Alternative Dispositions

This paper is based on a project aimed at introducing Finno-Ugric folk poetry to a wider scholarly readership. The title chosen for the publication now being prepared is «The Great Bear. A Thematic Anthology of Oral Poetry in the Finno-Ugric Languages» (the editors and translators are: Lauri Honko, Senni Timonen, Michael Branch, Keith Bosley). The formulation of the subtitle is no mere chance: the editors wish to prevent the misconception that all poems included in the anthology in some way represent the old, genetically discernible Finno-Ugric tradition. The project is not unique: anthologies of Uralic or Finno-Ugric folk poetry have been published before, especially by Hungarian scholars in recent years (Väisänen, Manninen 1924—32; Lach 1926—33; Kolk et al. 1970; Képes 1972; Domokos 1980; 1984). But most of them have been purely descriptive; they do not delve very deep into the goals and methodology of Finno-Ugric poetry comparisons. If the purpose was mainly to provide enjoyment of an aesthetic nature, by bringing in examples in translation gathered from fifteen languages, as single examples of the poetic potential to be found in a particular family of languages, there was really little need to debate the theoretical basis or background of these anthologies in any depth.

In our project the question of the comparability of the poems selected occupied the minds of the researchers from the very beginning. The structure of the anthology could not be decided without answering the question: what were the poems, placed side by side, really supposed to represent? There were three alternative dispositions available. A purely folkloristic solution would have meant concentrating on products of tradition known to have occurred in as many Finno-Ugric languages as possible. There was, however, very little preliminary folkloristic research adopting this perspective, and supplementary basic research was out of the question. This «monographic» alternative would have reduced the number of themes to be included in a rather random manner, and it would also have forced the editors to cross the border between poetry and prose, which they were loath to do. The aim was specifically to limit the work to Finno-Ugric folk poetry in the narrow sense of the word and to exclude long prose epics, for example; incantation and prayer recitatives not in any poetic metre proper constituted a border case that was finally included because these represent highly stylised and rhythmical prose.

The second, and undoubtedly the most common alternative would have

been to group the poems according to language. This «ethnographical» solution brings together products originating from the same or closely-related traditions. If space permits a relatively comprehensive body of material, and if the selection takes in a commentary examining the tradition systems occurring in the given language area as entities, the result may be good. In reality the uniformity is only ostensible, for poems in the same language may have their origins in very different component and subcultures each represented by at most one or two samples. The overall effect is easily chaotic, unless sufficient information is provided on the context and use of the poems. In an extensive anthology arranged according to 14—15 languages, poems on similar themes are so scattered and so far from one another that the reader does not compare them.

We therefore decided on a third, «cultural anthropological» disposition. This allows for fairly broad thematic groups based on the fundamental structure of culture, a sort of «outline of culture». Most peoples have songs about the origin of the world and a host of cosmographic symbols that recur in various poetic genres. By assembling samples of such cosmological songs, in principle in all the Finno-Ugric languages, we could form a group in which poems in the different languages reveal both similarities and differences and tempt the reader to make comparisons. A considerable proportion of folk tradition is organised round the occupational structure; it is thus natural to examine the sorts of folk poems grouped around hunting and fishing, cattle husbandry and nomadism, and the tasks that repeatedly recur in agriculture.

Our classification emphasises the importance of the context of the poem — the environment in which it was used and performed — through-out. Thus in addition to the songs sung as people went about their daily work and working techniques, special attention is paid to ritual poems, which fall into three main categories: songs connected with crisis rites, rites of passage and calendary rites. The poetry of the crisis rites is represented by the incantations and prayers recited in the curing of diseases. The most important rites of passage are here, namely weddings and funerals with their songs and laments. Within the thematic groups rite processes are kept as intact as possible, i. e. bear songs, wedding songs, dirges, etc. are presented as entities according to the regional rite scheme if this makes the poems easier to understand. Some of the calendary rite songs link up with occupations, others are requisites actualised on feast days and in the observance of customs.

This contextual approach does not exhaust all the poetry: there are also epic and lyrical poems the performing context of which can be determined only in general terms, or which have countless potential contexts of performance. Thus at the end of the anthology we find mythical, heroic, historical epic poems and ballads, and also lyric cradle songs, orphan's songs, love songs, village songs, personal songs, and so on. These sections permit the inclusion of popular or otherwise interesting poems that might have been overlooked in thematic groups formed using contextual criteria.

Oral poetry is poetry for use: in its authentic environment it links up with broader behavioural entities, work techniques, social intercourse, religious ritual, on ordinary days and special days. The disposition chosen by us emphasises this simple fact, which tends to get forgotten when folk poetry is approached via the conventions and norms of western high culture and literature. Folk poetry must have a stage; even its most individual products conform to the norms of tradition and group control. It is impossible to read, let alone understand folk poems if we neglect their functional ability and community orientation: for this reason the

aesthetics of folk poetry must to some extent be construed in a different way from those of recorded literature. This Finno-Ugric anthology is thus a vehicle for study and research. And this applies to both editors and readers alike. It is, however, the editors' duty to try to help readers, and they have done this by including in their commentaries all the available contextual information throwing light on the idea, key concepts and context of each poem. The classical device of folkloristics, the presentation of variants, also finds occasionally a place in the commentaries, which act both as introductions to the thematic groups and as actual comments on individual poems. The message and aesthetic worth of many a poem that may at first glance appear unassuming become far more apparent and a seemingly obscure poem reveals clarity and concrete references when it is viewed against its own functional background, e. g. as part of a rite process. An anthology of folk poetry inevitably turns an oral tradition into literature, and a skillful translation even literature of a high standard; but we wanted to make the process gradual, reminding the reader of the situations of everyday life, and the need for expression these inspire and on which oral poetry relied.

Yet there still remains the question of methodology in making comparisons. What theoretical models can we supply for understanding a side-by-side presentation in which poems from 14 languages fall into thematic groups as if they were trying to tell not only about themselves as individual poems but also about the cultures in which they were produced? Where does the comparison of Finno-Ugric folk poetries lead? If the answer to this question is to allow for both diachronic and synchronic factors, i. e. if it is to cover both the development of the tradition and its functioning and meaning, and if it is further to operate in the macrolevel heuristics and the microlevel empirics, it must resort to a three-dimensional model in which the comparisons are made from the perspectives of tradition phenomenology, tradition ecology and tradition history, in that order. What exactly are these dimensions, and can they be conceived of as aspects of one and the same process? We shall now be turning to this question. But the question raised is not entirely new. Let us first take a look at the views on this subject presented by earlier research.

The Nature of Comparison and the Concept of Development

The vision of the founding fathers of Finno-Ugristics of the future of this science was multidisciplinary. This fact was summed up by Y. H. Toivonen when he said that «Die allseitige Untersuchung und Erschließung der Sprachen unseres ganzen Sprachstammes sowie die der Urquellen der durch diese Sprachen getragenen und von der einen Generation zu der anderen vermittelten Kultur ist das Programm der finnisch-ugrischen Sprachforschung bereits vom Beginn dieser Wissenschaft gewesen» (Toivonen 1934 : 390; cf. Lakó 1975 : 21). Today we can say that this programme succeeded more in the collection of material than in the formation of a theory: the 19th century Finno-Ugrists, from A. J. Sjögren to E. N. Setälä, were not only scholars but also notable collectors, and an end was only put to this highly productive enthusiasm for collection by the First World War. These material conditions provided a good springboard for further activities, but developments were marked more by the advent of more and more new fields of research than by the theory-oriented integration of existing sciences. Archaeology, physical anthropology, ethnohistory, ethnography, ethnology, folkloristics, cultural geography, the history of art and literature, comparative mythology and

religion, musicology, linguistic paleontology and many other disciplines have contributed to Finno-Ugric studies and created a methodological multiplicity which makes it almost impossible for one scholar to master the total variety of theoretical premises and concrete research techniques utilised by these disciplines.

The dominant scientific model in Finno-Ugric studies has been linguistic-historical, and the other sciences have tried to adapt to this as well as possible. The result has, however, been only partly successful, and almost every non-linguistic branch of Finno-Ugric research has set out to develop its own research strategies also independent of linguistics. Linguistics has undergone dynamic development, but the trend has not favoured the expansion of linguistic theory to include cultural and social historical phenomena too. Thus the initiative for certain multidisciplinary Finno-Ugric projects has sometimes come from some field of research other than linguistics. The quantitative increase in knowledge of Finno-Ugric cultures has brought to light more differences than identical correspondences, and the areal approach applied to a growing extent also by the linguists has emphasised the part played by neighbouring peoples not linguistically related in the development of both language and culture.

All this has helped to sweep the ground away from under the unilinear concept of evolution and the «family tree theory» built on vertical genetic transmission. The conceiving of hypothetical proto-languages as the outcome of a process by which forms of language in constant contact with one another converge and merge, rather than as the property of some homogeneous, original population, has helped to alter the course of theory on linguistic history. More complex, areal evolution models are, it seems, either joining or taking the place of straightforward reconstruction. It is thus understandable if the linguists express their reservations on e. g. the attempts of the cultural sciences to reconstruct old traditional strata relying in principle on vertical transmission. On the other hand, the belief that the development of language and the evolution of culture are such separate phenomena that it is useless even to try to integrate them is rather negativistic and outdated. For the inclusion of communication communities in linguistic theory specifically demands that attention also be paid to the evolution of culture and society. The fact that allowing for these factors may be difficult in speaking of proto-languages dating back 5000—10,000 years, since all that is available is scant material and mere probabilities, is quite a different matter.

Faith in the justification of Finno-Ugric cultural comparisons was shattered in Finland by Kustaa Vilkuna in his inaugural lecture of 1950 (Vilkuna 1950), later translated into several languages (Vilkuna 1951; 1963). Vilkuna set up his own method in opposition to the typological research method applied by the founder of «Finno-Ugric ethnology» (his subject), U. T. Sirelius, or rather to its application to products other than those of folk art; the bulk of material and intellectual culture (such as means of production and working techniques) should, he claimed, be examined according to their function. The areal perspective was decisive in the development of culture: neighbouring peoples had more influence on one another than distant ones, and cultural phenomena had no respect for linguistic borders as they spread. Each nation and region moulded the material received into a suitable form, and it was the task of ethnology to study precisely this suitability or distinct character of cultural forms.

It was as if Vilkuna wished to rid himself of the evolutionist research tradition in expressing the following pointed opinion: «We can openly say that the history and origin of almost no phenomenon, object or

matter, custom or belief in Finnish folk culture becomes apparent by examining it specifically from the Finno-Ugric perspective» (Vilkuna 1950 : 381). He thereafter justified the existence of his own subject, Finno-Ugric ethnology, by saying that there existed valuable material collected among the Finno-Ugric peoples, and that there existed an associated discipline of a high standard, Finno-Ugric linguistics.

Vilkuna's attitude to culture research with a Finno-Ugric orientation was not, however, so negative as may perhaps be concluded from the above quotation. To begin with: it was only realistic to demand that the history and origin of cultural elements be examined not only on the basis of Finno-Ugric material. Secondly: we find the following sentence towards the end of this same inaugural lecture: «Also by comparing phenomena of the Finno-Ugric peoples and paying attention to the closest neighbouring regions we arrive at results that are in the general sense really remarkable in throwing light on the cultures of eras long past» (Vilkuna 1950 : 384). Thirdly: Vilkuna never tired of stressing the close relationship between the words in a language and phenomena in a culture. In his plenum address at the fourth international congress of Finno-Ugrists in Budapest in 1975 he said: «In den Wörtern und Konstruktionen der Sprache lebt unser gesamtes kulturelles Erbe. Oft lassen sich in der Sprache weite Entwicklungslinien verfolgen. Deshalb gehören die sprachlichen und die übrigen Kulturerscheinungen zusammen und deshalb ist es ganz natürlich, dass wir sowohl die sprachlichen als auch die kulturellen Grenzen auf einmal behandeln.» (Vilkuna 1980 : 40.) In relieving research into the Finno-Ugric cultural tradition of any superfluous mysticism Vilkuna came in his own research very close to the realisation that language was, as the factor structuring man's world of observation and experience, one, perhaps the most important key to the adaptation and appropriateness of tradition he so gladly spoke of. The historical research into material folk culture that was his main occupation did not, however, demand that he proceed any further in this direction.

Interest in Finno-Ugric comparisons has been preserved in research into the intellectual tradition and especially the ancient religion of the Finns without any dramatic about-turns. The numerous monographs and general comparative surveys by the most notable Finnish scholar of comparative religion, Uno Harva (e. g. Holmberg (Harva) 1914; 1922; 1926; 1927; Harva 1938; 1948; 1952), have in particular supported the preservation of the Finno-Ugric alternative even when, certain other researchers have, in their search for comparative material, preferred to head for the ancient cultural centres of Europe, the Byzantine Empire and the Middle East. There are still arguments in favour of the phenomenological comparison of the religions of the Finno-Ugric peoples, because this alone has provided a medium for understanding some of the structural features of religious traditions (e. g. Paulson et al. 1962; Honko 1971).

Parallels have also been drawn between the early stages in the development of Finnish folklore and eastern Finno-Ugric and Siberian forms of culture by such scholars as Matti Kuusi (Kuusi 1963 : 7—80; cf. Kuusi et al. 1977 : 22—77). The Estonian folklorist and expert on folk religion Oskar Loorits is also remembered as a pan-Finno-Ugric who in his eloquent analyses made on the basis of the most varied of materials outlined cultural contrasts between linguistic families and tried to discern a feeling for life founded on the ancient Finno-Ugric spirit in, for example, Estonian folklore (Loorits 1949—57). The vertical continuity of culture was for him an axiom, and he thus claimed that Estonian folklore had remained more or less as it was for about a thousand years, right up to

the great spiritual and material upheavals of the present century (Loo-rits 1953 : 94).

Hungarian scholars, especially folklorists and ethnomusicologists, have, however, been more industrious than their northern colleagues in investigating the original Ugric tradition. In a paper at the second international Finno-Ugric congress in Helsinki in 1965 Gyula Ortutay stated that folkloristics comparing Finno-Ugric traditions had important tasks to fulfil and could also boast notable results in such fields as metre, melodies, laments, epic poetry or folk religion. Alongside the historical and monogenetic approaches he proposed the adoption of convergence and the polygenetic alternative in explanations. In certain cases social-historical developments might yield the same results without any contact or interdependence between the traditions observed among different peoples. On the other hand there did exist the possibility of unearthing early tradition strata; as an example he mentioned the folk tales: «Unserer Meinung nach ist es heute bereits sinnvoll, nach einer Absonderung der historischen Schichten im Märchenschatz der einzelnen Nationen bzw. nach der Erhellung der oft wiederholten Umdeutungen von archaischen Motiven und nach der Klärung der mehrmaligen Verwendung dieser Motive in der Märchenepik zu trachten und den so untersuchten Märchenschatz der Nationen im Bereich der finnisch-ugrischen Völker zu vergleichen, ohne jedoch die eurasischen Zusammenhänge des Volksmärchens auch nur für einen Augenblick ausser Acht zu lassen. Ein solcher Vergleich der historischen Schichten und der Gattungskategorien böte die Möglichkeit, die historische Absonderung des Märchenschatzes der finnisch-ugrischen Völker zu ermessen, die möglicherweise annehmbar gemeinsamen archaischen Elemente und Motive zu vergleichen. Dies könnte auch die Stellung der archaischen oder für archaisch gehaltenen Märchenelemente erhalten, die wir heute noch gerne ohne eingehendere Untersuchung zum Gefüge der Glaubensvorstellungen und Riten des Schamanismus in Beziehung bringen. Andererseits könnte ein solcher Vergleich aufdecken, ob die polygenetische Entwicklung infolge gleicher historisch-gesellschaftlicher Voraussetzungen zu verwandten Formen und Inhalten führe und ob sich diese von den Formen und Inhalten genetischer Prägung scheiden liessen» (Ortutay 1968 : 291). The task envisaged by Ortutay two decades ago still remains, though some such studies have been carried out by e.g. Hungarians and Estonians in musicological research (e.g. Rütel 1977; 1980). Of special interest in this connection is the analysis by Lajos Vargyas of the earliest strata of Finno-Ugric music and the stylistic trends that have grown out of them (Vargyas 1968; 1981; see also Vikár 1972). Also the folk poetries of the Finno-Ugric peoples have interested scholars from the comparative point of view (Евсеев et al. 1972; Domokos 1976).

According to Imre Katona «kann man seit der Entstehung der aus Schichten bestehenden Gesellschaften natürlich nicht mehr von einer auch nur einigermaßen einheitlichen finnisch-ugrischen Folklore sprechen. Denn diese sprachlich verwandten Völker, die früher zusammen lebten, waren mit der Zeit in grundverschiedene Volks-, Gesellschafts-, vielleicht auch Naturumgebungen geraten und hatten zu verschiedenen Zeitpunkten und unter verschiedenen Verhältnissen neue Entwicklungsstufen erreicht. Trotzdem hat die finnisch-ugrische vergleichende Folkloristik eben wegen ihrer Tematik eine selbständige Existenzberechtigung: die Völker, die einst in einer kulturellen, sprachlichen und dichterischen Einheit gelebt hatten, konnten auch die im Verlaufe ihrer eigenständigen Geschichte auftretenden Fragen nicht nur neue, sondern auch ähnliche, ja sogar gleiche dichterische Antworten geben. Ethnologische

Beispiele weisen deutlich darauf hin, dass wir den allgemeinen Entwicklungsgang auf keinen Fall zu der Frage des Entlehnens und Übernehmens einengen dürfen, sind doch gesellschaftliche Institutionen und Ideologien in ihrer Ganzheit kaum entlehnbar, ein weit aus grösserer Raum kommt der inneren Entwicklung zu.» (Katona 1968 : 168—169).

These examples probably suffice to show that there has been neither the desire nor the need in research into the intellectual folk tradition at least to abandon Finno-Ugric comparisons completely, even though the proofs of early common elements are often highly hypothetical. The comparison makes allowance for the possibility of monogenetic origin and vertical transmission, but alongside this is also the idea of polygenesis and convergence — a trend yielding similar results without contact or interaction. It is then argued that the communities are at the same stage of historical-social development. Is the trend thus envisaged unilinear or multilinear? The researchers do not say. But it can scarcely be wrong to assume that the multilinear alternative must also be accepted. According to this, societies develop in different directions, or they take the same direction via different stages.

The comparisons aim more at revealing similarities than at explaining divergences, even though the doubt may occur that cultural elements that are outwardly identical are not necessarily identical in their cultural meaning, or they do not necessarily belong to the same historical-social stage of development. Although the comparisons are concerned with cultural elements and not tradition communities, the changes taking place within these elements are nevertheless regarded as being tied to changes affecting the entire community. Demographic factors, the nature, size and proximity of neighbouring peoples, the frequency and duration of contacts, the mobility of the population and communications, natural ecological aspects, technical innovations, political and cultural hegemonies (e. g. linguistic or religious) are hardly ever the primary objects of ethnological or folkloristic research, yet both the ethnologists and the folklorists gladly refer to them in constructing explanations, in the interpretation of similarities and divergences alike.

The Tradition-phenomenological Dimension of Comparison

Although the development of cultural phenomena is a single, unbroken process, it has to be approached analytically in the methodology of comparison. There are three dimensions of comparison: the tradition-phenomenological, the tradition-ecological and the tradition-historical. Tradition-phenomenological comparisons do not call for genetic affinity in the phenomena for comparison. For example, phenomena or elements that are contentually, structurally or functionally similar can be combined regardless of whether they have ever been known to be in contact with one another. In this manner there in principle emerge global categories characteristic of human culture. These may be called cultural universals if they really are global, i. e. if they occur in different cultures in different parts of the world and are not derived from any particular historical genetic traditional basis.

The thematic groups in the anthology of Finno-Ugric folk poetries referred to at the beginning aim at such cultural universals. All nations sing about the origin of the world, heal their sick, hold weddings, bury and remember their dead, arrange feasts, tell stories of their heroes, express lyrical feelings. The grouping of the songs sung in the course of daily occupations reflects the classical sequence of archaic forms of production: hunting and fishing are followed by a type of economy based

on cattle-raising and nomadism, and these in turn by farming, though in actual fact they are not often found in their pure form but grouped with numerous other more specialised forms of production into compound economics, especially where there is a shortage of resources due to natural or other conditions. There is thus nothing particularly Finno-Ugric about the thematic groups, and any culture in the world can in principle be expected to supply some sort of material. They are moulds or frames for the basic similarity of human culture into which the material provided by certain living cultures can be fitted. Cultures prove to be both comparable and individual. No culture can supply material for every possible category, at least not in equal amounts or at least not similar material. Systemic cross-cultural comparison brings out the important quantitative and qualitative differences that make a culture unique (see e. g. Naroll 1973; Carneiro 1973). It appears that cultures have their own developmental and functional focuses, that they are more preoccupied with some things than with others, and that they have a dominant direction in which they develop. Folklore is one possible cross-cultural indicator for revealing all manner of things about the inherent nature and trend in a given culture. It is impossible to present yet any precise profiles of the frequency and the distribution by region and genre of folk poetry among the Finno-Ugric peoples, and in the anthology we must be content with making observations of a general, mainly qualitative nature.

Not only thematic groups but also certain genres may be viewed as phenomenological categories. The lament, for example, is a global genre because it is encountered in very many cultures the world over (Honko 1980 : 23). It is not necessary to call it a cultural universal even though it occurs in conjunction with such a universal phenomenon as grieving for the dead. Nor is it essential for us to imagine that the laments found in different parts of the world have any historical connection, i. e. the same roots in tradition. On the other hand we may with relative ease point to lament poetries with a common basis of tradition that may be further subdivided into smaller groups, e. g. according to tradition areas. Among the Finno-Ugric peoples we may speak of, among others, a Balto-Finnic, Mordvin, Komi and Hungarian lament poetry. In between the first three is northern Russian lament poetry. It has never so far been decided whether these northern and northeastern European laments constitute only a phenomenological category or whether they have the same traditional roots. Finno-Ugric and Slavic material here provides a good opportunity for examining the development of a given poetic genre from the point of view of such factors as language, religion, customs and geography. We can, for example, ask whether the laments encountered among the Finno-Ugric peoples are in some respects closer to one another than, say, the Slavic lament, or whether e. g. areal proximity is ultimately of greater importance than linguistic affinity. The fact that the lament is as a genre archaic does not necessarily mean that all the Finno-Ugric lament traditions are archaic or equally ancient. Determining the stages in the development of the lament poetries of the Finno-Ugric peoples is one of the tasks of the tradition-history approach (cf. p. 142).

The phenomenological categories are lasting, independent even of cultural changes, and cultural universals are always taking on new manifestations without any change in their basic function. Concrete poetic traditions are in turn historical, which means that they have a beginning and an end: at some time they came into existence, developed, and finally vanished. The framework provided by Finno-Ugric tradition comparisons is sufficiently broad in both time and space to embrace both phenomeno-

logical and historical examinations, yet not so broad that it becomes necessary to write the cultural history of entire continents in order to maintain the historical aspect. A research situation of this type has been called regional phenomenological research (e. g. Hultkrantz 1970 : 86—88). From this point of view cultural differences and distances between Finno-Ugric peoples are interesting only because they ensure diversity in the research material. Equally interesting in principle are, of course, the non-Finno-Ugric peoples in the area, but there is nothing to prevent peoples linked by their linguistic history from being taken as the point of departure, especially if they represent the oldest known population groups in the area in question.

The Tradition-ecological Dimension of Comparison

The tradition-ecological dimension of comparison in a way represents the system theory of folkloristics and culture research. Whereas the system of phenomenology is almost complete and given in advance, and whereas the historical approach recognises no systems, tradition-ecological research tries to demonstrate the systems within which tradition operates and is handed down. Tradition itself, such as folk poems, also tends to be viewed as a system, which means that it must be anchored in the consciousness of the individuals and physical communities producing the lore in question. The study of living tradition systems is generally micro-ecological; its temporal and spatial frame is rather limited but at the same time it provides the potential for empirical observation and the use of «dense» archive materials. But the macro-ecological dimension is also possible: comparisons are then made of e. g. cultural regions, distances grow in time and space and the evolutionary dimension also makes its appearance: it is not enough to say how a system works, but also how it changed and what sort of relationship it had with earlier or other areal tradition systems.

Tradition-ecology tries to allow for three factors simultaneously: the tradition itself, the community maintaining it, and the natural environment embracing them both. Special consideration is paid to the adaptation of tradition to a given milieu (Honko 1981 : 19—33; see also Honko, Löfgren 1981 : 9—63). The natural environment places certain restraints on, say, economic activity, and it also places restrictions on the forms of tradition: a tradition originating in alien circumstances adapts to the demands of the milieu according to the principles of familiarization and localization; alien concepts become familiar and the tradition is connected with well-known or dominant places in the environment. This adaptation is called milieu-morphological. But there is also a tradition-morphological adaptation, in which a tradition that is new or of alien origin must adapt to the moral and other values collectively approved by the community such as they appear through the plot structures, favourite figures and key symbols of the genre in question. The third type of adaptation is functional: the tradition is ultimately only focused and given meaning in the context of performance and use. This is influenced by the entire situation, by the listeners and the performer, by previous events and actual goals various fears and hopes. The resulting variation in a traditional product may be called «minor» variation, because it is temporary and does not leave any permanent marks on the tradition. Milieu- and tradition-morphological variation is, however, of a lasting nature, in other words adaptation processes are visible for long periods in the traditional product. Variation of this type may be called «major» variation; viewed from this angle, variation in tradition is not even and continuous, and a

tradition that has undergone this adaptation process may be preserved virtually unchanged for a long time. The combined effect of the different forms of tradition adaptation may be called «ecotypification»: a particular area or a particular community favours some figures and genres at the expense of others, so that the adaptation processes come to follow the same direction and produce isomorphs which, in comparison with other areas and communities, gain emphasis and prove to be characteristic features stressing the inherent quality of the area or community.

The macro-ecological examination of folk poetry begins with the idea that processes of disintegration and integration take place within a tradition belonging to some ethnic, language or tradition community or area from time to time, resulting in tradition «climates» in which the trend in folklore is towards standardisation. These processes concern a number of genres and they cannot be satisfactorily comprehended merely by referring to e. g. cultural loans or migrations of the population. For no one factor can explain why in some area folk poetry chooses a particular direction, develops some genres and at the same time possibly neglects others, and favours a certain poetic style that may ultimately embrace several genres to which originally it possibly did not belong at all. Some element of folk poetry may become qualitatively standardised and increase in size, while other elements possibly remain as they are or wither away. This trend does not, of course, take place in a vacuum but in the systems to which the tradition under examination belongs. Such systems are the community's genre system, cultural institutions and socio-economic structures. The folklorist is advised to begin with genres: an inventory must be made of the genre system of the community or region in order to determine what genres are known and how widely, and also the gaps in the system — the «missing» genres. This inventory leads to an examination of the division of labour of genres in their culture: what is the division of labour between the prose tradition and poetry? What needs for expression are primarily or exclusively entrusted to folk poetry? If some type of poetry, such as the lament, seems to be missing altogether, has its place possibly been taken by some other genre, or does the community also lack the cultural institution, such as the ceremony in which leave is taken of the dead or the bride, which justifies the existence of the lament? In this way there gradually emerges a profile of the poetic culture of a given community or area, including both its highly-developed features and its deficiencies. It is advisable to compare the result with the poetic profiles of neighbouring peoples and areas; the researcher can then begin to see whether he is dealing with the phenomena of a restricted area only or those of a wider macro-ecological zone. Dominant and expansive poetic styles that have had a standardising effect on poetic culture may in particular act as guidelines in comparison.

The border to the macro-ecological zone may separate linguistic relatives living fairly close to one another. This applies in the case of Mordvin and Mari poetry. The Mordvins have broadly epic poetry and a highly-developed lament poetry (Маскаев 1964; 1975; Кавтаськин 1975), whereas these are almost completely missing among the Mari. The Mari do still have institutions taking leave of the dead and the bride, their lyrical wedding poetry is even very rich, but it is questionable whether the short songs sung in memory of the dead can be classified as laments proper. The Mari have only a slight occupationally-bound song tradition, far slighter than the Mordvins, yet there is a large volume of prayer recitatives connected with occupations. They also have a highly-developed and rich fund of wedding songs, feast songs, recruit songs and lyrics in general. We find a very similar basic profile in the poetry of the

eastern neighbours of the Mari, the Udmurts, the Chuvash and the Tatars. The Chuvash, who belong to the Turkic-Tataric family of languages, have been in close contact with the Mari ever since the 13th century, giving and taking cultural influences across the linguistic and religious borders (Vikár, Bereczki 1979 : 12).

The standardisation of folklore has taken great steps forward among the southeasterly Finno-Ugric peoples: one dominant type of poetry that has crossed the genre borders is the lyrical quatrain, the most typical form being the contrastive quatrain in which a picture of nature and the state of mind of the singer are polarised. As an example, let us now take the following poem, used among other things as a recruit song. It shows not only formal but also contentual affinity of the variants.

1. Mari: (Wichmann 1931 : 453)

Der schwan fliegt, flaumfedern fallen ab —
wer liest seine flaumfedern auf?

Wenn wir ins fremde land gehen und unglücklich werden,
wer nimmt in seine obhut unser junges leben?

2. Chuvash: (Vikár, Bereczki 1979 : 480)

The swan flies, hey, scattering feathers.

Who will gather, hey, its feathers?

If we set out, hey, on the long road,

Who will see us, hey, there?

3. Tatar: (Paasonen 1901 : 6)

Der schwan fliegt und lässt seine federn fallen.

Wer sammelt seine federn auf?

Wenn du in der ferne verschiedest,

wer wird dein grab einsegnen?

4. Udmurt: (Lach 1926(I) : 92; cf. Benzing 1953 : 218)

Die Gänse fliegen, hei, das Wasser entlang,

Ihre Federn fallen herunter das Ufer entlang:

Wenn du, in eine fremde Gegend fortgegangen, allein geblieben bist,

Ein Tag [dieser Zeit] vergeht so lang wie ein Jahr.

The contrastive quatrain is familiar also among the Hungarians, the Finns and the Russians, and we find phenomenological counterparts e. g. in Syria, China, the Malay Peninsula and New Zealand (Bán 1924 : 151; Sokolov 1950 : 530—548; Laurila 1956 : 67—79; Ortutay 1963 : 18—20; Hako 1963 : 419). This style of poetry probably would not have spread among the southeastern Finno-Ugric peoples without Turkic-Tatar influence; the cultural interpenetration of these peoples, who belong to different language families, was strongest during the height of the Bulgar Empire and even after this, in the late Middle Ages. How far the Russian lyrical quatrain was influenced from this direction is not for us to decide here, and it is also uncertain whether the occurrence of this type of poetry in Hungary is a result of Turkish influence or the German Schnaderhüpfel poetry, claimed by some to have originated in Austria. It is, however, clear that the lyrical quatrain so popular in Western Finland is not directly connected with the corresponding Volga-Finnic poetry, for it is probably modelled on the German Schnaderhüpfel and the Norwegian gamlestev (Hako : 419—421). Tradition-historical background information is of use in tradition-ecological comparisons, the primary aim of which is, however, to determine how the breakthrough of a new poetic style influenced the genre system as a whole.

On examining the profiles of Finno-Ugric folk poetries in the northern and northeastern parts of Europe, we find something that might be called a «long epic» zone. True, it is not entirely uniform and it contains qualitative differences. At the southern end we have the Mordvins, and the

relationships between their rich folk poetry epic with Balto-Finnic folk poetry on the one hand and the Russian on the other deserve more study than they have so far received. Broad epic entities are one characteristic of Mordvin poetry.

Within the Balto-Finnic domain we find Kalevala-metre poetry, which can with good reason be called a poetic style, since it covers a vast number of genres and was so popular in its nucleus area that people began to «translate» fairy tales, for example, into trochaic tetrametres. Counterparts to this poetic metre have been claimed sometimes among the Mordvins, sometimes among the Ob-Ugrians, but the Finno-Ugric poetic forms seem to be based more often on accent, alliteration and multifaceted parallelism than on a strict syllabic structure (Austerlitz 1958; Gáldi 1960; Kálmán 1962; Leino 1974; Paasonen 1897; 1910; Ravila 1935; Sadeniemi 1951; Steinitz 1976 : 1—61). Thus the true area of the old Balto-Finnic poetic metre is limited to a zone extending from Estonia to Ingria, Finland and Karelia, but even in this zone there are contrasts within the tradition. For example, the nature and status of the epic poetry is not the same in all the tradition areas in the zone. The absence of large-scale epic poems in Estonia has puzzled researchers and has been attributed to the historical development of a people long in a state of subordination, the central position of women as the users and preservers of poetry, and so on (Laugaste 1948 : 8; Loorits 1953 : 112—113; Tedre 1974 : 14). Be that as it may, the treatment of certain epic poems known from Karelia to Estonia changes decisively on the southern borders of the area, becoming more lyrical and less action-oriented. Reasons may be sought not only in the manner and context of performance but also in the composition technique itself, which is by nature one step more improvisational, combining borrowed lines and clichés to form a new entity to suit the situation and need. It would be interesting to know how far Estonian folk poem variants really are reproductions of fixed-form poems and how far they are results of a «composition-in-performance» type of production. In Ingria the epic is already broader, but collage technique with certain «composition-in-performance» features and the central importance of women's poetry can be observed here too.

The real nucleus area of the long Finnish-Karelian epic poetry is smaller than is often credited: it extends in a narrow strip from the Government of Archangel to Northern Olonets, from Kainuu via Savo, North Karelia and Ladoga Karelia to Ingria. Although the area in question is a cultural periphery, it should not be imagined that the location of this nucleus area on the borders of two cultures, the western and the eastern one, is either a late or a chance phenomenon. Karelians are living in numerous small territories which reach from the Government of Archangel to the District of Kalinin; we could, if we wished, pick out at least 10—12 areas of Karelian tradition that differ considerably in some respects. In this Karelian area lament poetry, for example, is far more obviously a shared genre of poetry than the long epic ever was, this being restricted to a few northern regions of Karelia and ending with Ingria in the south. Even in Southern Olonets the tradition is clearly thinner, and by e. g. Tver Karelia it is missing almost entirely (Honko 1978 : 180—181; Kuusi 1973; 1978).

Theories concerning the age and origin of individual poems usually overlook the fact that the discernible tradition-ecological conditions for the development of the long epic came into being rather late and in a small area that was either too late or too feeble to join decisively in all the Karelian migrations of the 17th century. Or if it did, it did not prove capable of adapting. There is no justification for transferring the credit

of poetic skill, the development of the long epic and the real Kalevala-metre poetic climate to, say, Western Finland or Estonia, as students of the themes and motifs of individual poems have sometimes been moved to do. The credit and climate belong to the zone made up of regions in Finland and Karelia that can, thanks to 19th century poetry collection, be fairly clearly determined. This does not mean that there could not have been more Kalevala-metre poetry and perhaps even epic poetry in Western Finland than has been preserved, but we know nothing about it, and it is unlikely to have been in every respect of the same quality as eastern Finnish, Karelian and Ingrian poetry. The birth, growth and strengthening of the poetic culture in question, the grafting of eastern and western cultural influences «in the backwoods», which nevertheless had links with the main centres, cannot be conceived without profound analysis of ethnic, social, economic and cultural conditions and evolution. Viewed via the tradition-ecological dimension, it is impossible to shift this analysis of the emergence of a poetic culture to completely different territory. Furthermore its own roots extend sufficiently far back in time in the history of settlement around Lake Ladoga.

An interesting parallel to this debate is provided by the preservation of Russian byliny in the zone between Olonets and the White Sea. The themes and princely heroes of the byliny contain elements that point to a completely different region from that in which the poems themselves have been collected, such as Kiev, far away to the south (Oinas 1985). Tradition-historical conjectures have been made as to how the byliny came north with touring minstrels and were spared the destructive contact with Turkic-Tataric influence. Thus this poetic culture was transferred almost intact from south to north. But poetic culture and the themes of poems are two different things; the latter may be transferred in, say, the form of prose, or in a completely different poetic form from that in which they were later found in the northern region.

Alert scholars have noted that the Kalevala poetry zone and the area in which byliny have been preserved best are adjacent to one another. Could it therefore be that the development in question was specifically an areal one based on similar ethnic and social development, similar cultural contacts and innovations, similar natural conditions and economic structures? The macro-ecological conditions existed for the birth of the long epic. The theory is reinforced by e. g. the development that took place in laments and fairy tales: the laments and the tales of magic of both the Karelians and the northern Russians have expanded in a way that did not occur further south (cf. Рюйтел, Чистов 1978 : 180). Tradition-ecology may provide the best explanation for a development such as this, covering different genres. Yet this does not mean the identification of the long Finnish-Karelian epic poem and the Russian bylina: as types of poetry they certainly differ in both their content and their form. Scholars have noted that from the point of view of the production of tradition, the Kalevala epic is more concerned with the reproduction of established forms than the bylina, which displays more «composition-in-performance» (Kiparsky 1976 : 95—96; Oinas 1985).

Moving on to the folk poetry profile of the Komi, we note that the rich epic tradition of the Komi concentrates on the northern areas not far from the zone of Karelian and northern Russian epic poetry (Микушев 1973; Mikushev 1977). Another observation is that the emphasis has shifted from the long epic towards the lament and other «improvised poetry». The Komi lament is an expansive poetic genre, or rather a poetic style that has taken upon itself tasks it does not assume in other areas. In addition to the ritual laments, dirges, wedding and recruit laments

proper, there exist non-ritual laments connected with events in everyday work, such as farming, hunting and reindeer herding, or which emerge out of a situation, are autobiographical or even humorous. One interesting sub-genre is the *nuranky*, «a quiet song», probably an autobiographical lament that was quietly hummed and which has been compared to the «song of fate» of the Ob-Ugrians, the Lapp *juoiggus* and the improvised poetry of the Baltic Finns. It appears from the distinguished research by A. K. Mikušev that this poetic style, characterised by «composition-in-performance», is North Komi (Mikushev 1976). The songs of the Western and Southern Komi have similar contexts but they no longer employ the devices of the ritual improvised song and are more established in form; they are preserved by reproduction. It therefore seems that we may divide the song tradition of the Komi into at least two main macro-ecological zones.

The more northerly of the zones was probably already in contact with the world of the arctic singers. The autobiographical «songs of fate» of the Ob-Ugrians, the Komi *nurankyys*, the Samoyed *jarabcs*, the occasional laments and *joiku* of the most northerly parts of Karelia and the personal *juoiggus* of the Lapps would seem to represent a lyric-epic style that should not too readily be branded as primitive but which in the best products comes close even to the modern Western lyric. Characteristic features are its ability to capture a visual situation, the symbolic connection between the singer's state of mind and the surrounding countryside, narrative, recollective elements and the use of stylistic devices originating in ritual improvised poetry. The dividing line between the long epic and this type of poetry is flexible (the longest *nurankyys* run to 700 lines), but it can be drawn.

We may also speak of a flexible dividing line with the arctic poetry characterised by scant verbal substance, the wide use of interjections and filler words or syllables, redundancy and the importance of the melody in relation to the text (Kálmán 1962; 1979; Kannisto 1930; Laitinen 1981; Lehtisalo 1937; Schmidt 1981; Väisänen 1917). Dominant motifs in this poetry, examples of which are to be found in the arctic *juoiggus*, are spots in nature, animals, animal sounds, sometimes also a direct or an indirect reference to the existence of man in this natural theatre. Probably we should, in speaking of these forms of arctic poetry, also remember incantations, and also the ritual recitatives by which the shaman approached the spirits and, in healing, for example, the patient and the audience. Somewhere among the incantation recitatives with an even number of bars one might expect to find the seed of poetic metre, for it may have been the ritual function that first began to demand a fixed, lasting form, a basic scheme, a poetic metre.

Macro-ecological comparisons are made chiefly from a bird's-eye perspective and help to determine the main lines of development. They should, however, be followed by micro-ecological, detailed analyses of the tradition of some region or the nature of a genre and its context in culture. There is potential for such examinations in the Finno-Ugric materials, though not always and not everywhere. Some materials are so «dense» and exhaustive that analysis is possible, and the materials on living traditions collected by modern fieldwork methods are especially suitable.

The Tradition-historical Dimension of Comparison

The oldest records of folk poetry are not usually so ancient, numerous or in other ways significant that the history of tradition may rely primarily

on documents. The oldest literary sources tend to raise problems rather than solving them. An example of this in Finland is Mikael Agricola's list of the ancient gods of the people of Häme and Karelia dated 1551. Many a generation of scholars has tried to interpret the limited and often enigmatic information in this list, but the list of gods in part at least still remains problematic (Krohn 1932; Harva 1948; Haavio 1959). The information on some of the gods is, in the light of later tradition, very fragmentary, while other entries fail to reveal their meaning because there does not appear to be any later tradition connected with them. The most important tradition-historical find is perhaps the stratum of tradition connected with Roman Catholic saints in between the primitive gods and spirits, apparently based on prayers and incantations. Later tradition holds a key position in writing the history of tradition, because some of its products can be placed in strata of different ages, at least in relation to one another, and assumptions can be made from the distribution patterns of the directions in which the tradition spread. This calls for not only an analysis of the tradition itself but also an adjustment of the results to the settlement, linguistic and ethnohistorical material and other information on social and cultural evolution. Unfortunately synchronising the knowledge of different disciplines with the results obtained in the analysis of the tradition itself is not always without its problems; for example, the tendency has been to date Finnish-Karelian poems in such early eras that it is no longer possible to point to the region they might have come from. The style-historical analysis by Matti Kuusi is: an ambitious attempt to utilise all the devices of folkloristics in tradition-historical research (Kuusi 1963). Since the datings even of linguistic history change as e. g. archaeology, linguistic paleontology and other closely-related sciences revise their own concepts of dates, there is constant movement in the field. One of the most important tasks shared by Finno-Ugric linguistics, folkloristics and ethnology is in fact the constant revision of the temporal framework on which tradition-historical hypotheses are constructed.

Tradition-historical comparisons readily speak of culture loans, justifying this by saying that a foreign counterpart can be found for a given phenomenon. The only discussion is then of the direction of the borrowing, and once this has been decided, the matter is closed. But this method of research is neither satisfactory nor sufficient in all cases. It is also necessary to study the nature of the loan and the use of the borrowed element in the receiving culture. It is often claimed in Finno-Ugric folkloristics, ethnology, comparative religion, etc. that a product or institution in some tradition comes from e. g. the Russians. However, it is not often debated whether the borrowing was a result of long-term interaction, in which case the borrowing could in principle have been in the opposite direction, or whether it really was a case of surface imitation. Examples of the latter are the Russian songs found among certain groups of the Veps, the Karelians and the Komi: the recipients could not speak the language of these songs and the texts thus became mutilated until they were virtually devoid of content. A «quotation loan» such as this may, of course, fulfil some cultural — even an entertaining or ritual function, but there cannot be any very profound moulding of the message of the tradition or adaptation to its new environment. In some cases such loans, finding their way to the periphery, have as it were been frozen: thus musical scholars have found that certain types of Russian melodies have been best preserved in Vepsian folk music, where they were not involved in the development taking place at the centre of the tradition in question (Лапин 1977 : 215).

The history of tradition must be viewed as a series of expansions and regressions by populations, cultural institutions, forms of tradition, etc., and the accompanying assimilation. This phenomenon is known in linguistics by the terms superstrate and substrate. Let us assume that in a given area Vepsian culture, for example, has for a long time been declining, receding, but that it has constantly been assimilating with the dominant Russian culture, surrendering elements to it the whole time. In this area we thus have Russian culture with a strong Vepsian substrate. This Russian culture is then no longer identical to the Russian culture in another area. This being the case, it is not enough merely to concentrate on the language: the Russian-language tradition of an area may be more Vepsian than Russian in its content and structure. The assessment of the substrates and superstrates of tradition is further complicated by the fact that when in repeated contact with one another for long periods, they may take opposite directions in the case of various genres. Syncretic cultural situations such as this are far more common than researchers care to admit. If a society has very equal and virile competing cultures, it easily happens that people turn to culture A for healing diseases, weddings are held according to culture B, but the dead are buried in accordance with culture C.

Let us take a few examples from comparative research into the lament tradition. One is connected with the early history of laments in Northeast Europe, the other with their recent history. One difficult problem that has so far not been fully solved is the interrelation between the Finno-Ugric and Russian lament traditions. Many opinions have been expressed by scholars. Some speak of a strong Russian influence in the case of some tradition, such as Komi laments, others of the co-existence of Finno-Ugric and Russian tradition and their great degree of independence. Balto-Finnic laments have been preserved almost exclusively in the areas of the Orthodox religion, and this has led certain Finnish researchers to conjecture that the origin of this tradition should be sought among the Slavs, possibly even within the Church (Härkönen 1932 : 493; Kirkinen 1961 : 323). K. V. Čistov, an expert on Slavic and Finno-Ugric lament poetry, nevertheless seems to support the view that the laments of both the Karelians and the Setu Estonians are older than the corresponding Russian poetry. The traditions of the Karelians and the Northern Russians, for example, have a number of features in common: both recognise all four chief categories of laments (dirges, wedding, recruit and occasional laments), there is thematic and functional similarity and the development of a poetic language towards periphrases and substitute phrases. Yet the Karelian and Russian laments are still two distinct development variants of the same phenomenon. They differ in their verbal expression and make such active use of lexical, derivative and other special features of both languages that it is better to speak of co-existence and independent development than of indebtedness or dependence. Naturally Karelian-Russian ethnocultural connections have left their marks on tradition, especially in areas with long-standing bilingualism. Very interesting comparisons can be made from this angle of style (e. g. the formation of certain nucleus metaphors), ritual behaviour and individual poetic motifs (Рюйтел, Чистов 1978 : 180). This approach is typical of the attitude of modern research to the life and development of tradition: the existence of culture loans is not denied, but nor is their importance as explanations exaggerated, and they are viewed in relation to the entire system of tradition and its own inner development potential. To simplify, the fact that motifs found in two different poetic traditions are identical does not mean that their meaning and function

are also identical; outwardly similar motifs may have a different interpretation and use in different cultures, just as different motifs may bear the same meaning or fulfil the same function in the system of expression.

Modern tradition history is thus not usually written on the basis of one-sided indebtednesses or the even preservation of tradition. There are high and low ebbs in tradition influenced by the development spans of the cultural institutions maintaining the tradition, structural changes in society and finally events in history. The late history of lament poetry provides an example of an unexpected boom in tradition. When, immediately after the Second World War, folklorists made their way to the villages of Northern Russia seeking *byliny*, all they found were fragments of them. But they did find a reborn lament tradition (Базанов, Разумова 1962 : introduction). The archaic form of this tradition had begun to recede in the 1920s and 1930s, but then, amid the upheavals and suffering of war, there came a remarkable renaissance: the bitter experiences and loss of dear-ones of millions of people gave the lament new relevance, and thousands upon thousands of women used it as a means of expressing their sorrows, as if in protest against the course of history. The boom enjoyed by the lament was primarily rooted in reality, but there also had to be a traditional vein that had not yet been severed. Collectors in certain villages in Northern Russia also observed the influence of the written tradition on this revival: people leafed through the book of laments by perhaps the most famous Russian lament singer, Irina Fedosova, and this left its own mark on women's performances of laments. In the absence of models the laments were almost certainly less traditional. But generally speaking this trend strengthened and revived tradition-bound laments in a way that lengthened the life of the tradition. The boom was followed by a recession: many women who performed laments for collectors immediately after the war could no longer remember them by the late 1950s. But some retained the art of lamenting as a living art, and it has been possible to interview them until very recently. The trend was very similar in the villages of Karelia, where the collector could only observe the recession of the Kalevala epic and the astonishing virility of the lament (as observed during my fieldwork in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s). Similar observations were made among many other Finno-Ugric peoples, and lament research gained new impetus. The handy tape-recorder speeded collection up and made it possible to record laments in authentic situations. The study of performing techniques and situations was further aided by documentation on film. Thus the revival of a tradition caused by one of the tragedies of world history — war — and developments in collection techniques and equipment paved the way for the writing of an interesting chapter in the history of the lament in Northeast Europe.

At the beginning I mentioned an anthology of Finno-Ugric folk poetry. Its name, «The Great Bear», has a slightly ambiguous meaning, referring both to the well-known constellation and to the most solemn element in the Finno-Ugric hunting tradition, the bear feast. We can, without going into detail, say that Ob-Ugrian, Finnish-Karelian and Lapp ceremonies surrounding the killing and feasting of the bear in all probability have the same historic origins. It would appear that the totemic myth of the marriage between bear and man, the myth of the heavenly origin of the bear and its descent to earth, of how it is slayed and returns home after the bear ceremony to the father, the god in the sky, and certain features of the ritual itself are clues that entitle us to speak of the historic-genetic dimension of this tradition. The tradition developed in its own direction in each of the three areas. The bear

ceremony of the Ob-Ugrians is characterised by a fervent, joyful alternation between sacred and profane. With its songs, dances, pantomime, acting, feasts, sacrifices and prayers, the bear ceremonies of the Hanti and the Mansi have developed their own unique synthesis of knowledge and emotion in which may be discerned a long process of development from a relatively simple hunting rite to a complex religious ceremony and finally various genres of performing art, which together permit the comprehensive and current treatment of the most important economic, social and religious values (Bakró-Nagy 1979; Cushing 1977; Kannisto 1906; 1937; Kannisto et al. 1958 : 194—198, 207—226, 333—383; Karjalainen 1927 : 8—19, 193—235; Tschernjetzow 1974). Although the bear has been an object of rites, fear and respect among most of the northern peoples of Asia and America (Holmberg 1926a; Hallowell 1926), there are few ritual dramas comparable to the bear ceremonies of the Ob-Ugrians, Finns and Lapps. The existence and development of dramatic and verbal elements in particular, such as bear songs, have aroused the interest of researchers.

The background to the bear rites and myths found among the Finno-Ugric peoples can, of course, also be extended in a phenomenological direction, as research already has (Haavio 1967 : 15—41). References have been made to, for example, the Star Husband tale and corresponding stories of the descent from heaven found among e. g. primitive peoples in different parts of the world. It has been pointed out that according to the Finnish poem the bear was born *otavitten olkapäällä, seihteen tähtien selällä* — on the shoulder of the Great Bear, on the back of the seven stars, this brings to mind the Arcadian maiden Callisto, later a constellation, who bore a son to Zeus who had approached her in the form of a bear. The son was called Arcas, which is related to the Greek word for a bear (ibid. 28). The lines *otavaisen olan alla, suuren karhun kainalossa* — beneath the shoulder of the Great Bear, under the arm of the mighty bear — would seem to provide a thin connecting line between the Finnish myth about the origin of the bear and the myth about the origin of the constellation whose name reaches back to Antiquity (Ganander 1938/1786 II : 300b). One thing is certain, and that is that the bear ceremonies and totemic narratives of the Finno-Ugric peoples, relics of which also exist among e. g. the Komi and the Mordvins, are but a small, illuminating chapter in the world history of the worship of the bear that began with bear skulls placed and specially prepared in caves in Central Europe during the early Stone Age and ended with the now almost extinct hunting cultures of the Arctic.

Abbreviations

FFC — Folklore Fellows' Communications, Helsinki; KV — Kalevalaseuran vuosikirja, Helsinki.

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