

# **Oral and Written Tradition during the Creation of the National Culture Early Fieldwork on the Kalevala Runes**

HENNI ILOMÄKI

*The Finnish Literature Society, Finland*

A work about Finnish 19th century history, published in 1973, is entitled *Kansakunta löytää itsensä* (The nation finds itself). Who or what was the seeker? For his part the Dane Bengt Holbek called his article, which appeared in 1991, *The invention of the folk*. Who was the inventor? Both studies examine the background to the birth of the Finnish national epic *Kalevala*. Are these texts referring to the same folk? In both the basic information is similar. The title of the latter may be considered more cynical, but in fact both crystallize the fact that all kinds of attempts were connected with the national idea and the development of Finnish literary culture.

During the period of Swedish rule, a situation arose in Finland in which alongside the vernacular oral culture, a literary culture first based on Latin and later Swedish was constructed. When in 1809 Finland became an autonomous grand-duchy within the Russian empire, there was a university, the Turku (Åbo) Academy, founded in 1640, a Lutheran church using the vernacular, and a judicial system, whose judges were not in practice required to speak Finnish (Danielsson-Kalmari 1919: 74-81). The necessary Finnish language literature primarily consisted of religious texts and ones explaining the decrees and legal actions of the authorities. The language used by the educated elite was still Swedish. Russian became official only in 1916. The middle class could speak Finnish, but in the early 19th century they had little experience in reading and producing texts in the language.

The decisive factor impeding development was the fact that Swedish was the language of education. The earliest schools, which had already been established in the Middle Ages, were meant for training the priesthood. Urban education centres set up later served the needs of business life or functioned as the preliminary grades of secondary schools. The school books used were in either Latin or Swedish, although elementary teaching was given in Finnish. The aims of learning were often limited to reading and the mastery of religious texts. Thus the ABC and catechism sufficed as Finnish language books. Higher education was entirely in Swedish, nor was Finnish the language of the authorities or business (Halila 1949: 39-111). Popular education did not interest the upper classes, their children studied in Swedish either with a private tutor or in an educational establishment corresponding to a secondary school. In 1841 Finnish became a

subject on the curriculum, and the first textbook used was the translation of the Swiss author Heinrich Zschokke's work *Goldmacherdorf* published by the Finnish Literature Society (Palmén 1881: 37-38). The foreword to the book states that a language can be developed and its expressiveness can be refined by writing it. It was not until the school decree of 1856 that the study of Russian entered into the picture with any force. (Kiuasmaa 1982: 19-20).

## THE PRACTICING FIELDS OF LANGUAGE: POETRY AND ENLIGHTENMENT

The attempt to develop the literary expressiveness of the Finnish language was linked to the kindling of the national ideal in Finland. Its breeding ground was the flow of European national romantic ideas, which had also spread to the Turku Academy in the early 19th century. It was at its height between the 1830s and the 1880s, when realism displaced Romanticism in the field of art. Nevertheless interest in folk poetry remained lively.

Mastery of a language requires its use in different forms, both spoken and written. The goal of the Finnish Literature Society (hereinafter the FLS), which was founded in 1831, was from the very beginning to produce "both useful books for the common people and suitable books for enlightened readers" (Palmén 1881: 27). The planning committee set up, "The Society of Belles Lettres", was considered a way of getting the upper classes to practice Finnish (Nurmio 1947: 135).

During the first few decades of the 19th century, a great deal of work was needed to create ways to develop the Finnish literary language. We can get an idea of the immensity of the task by examining the list of books which had appeared in Finnish. Over a half of the approximately 1,000 titles published at the start of the century before the *Kalevala* (1835) were of a religious nature: devotional literature, hymns, prayers and sermons. The other large group consisted of administrative texts: the decrees, proclamations and announcements of the Swedish king early in the century, and similar documents of the tsar after Finland was joined to Russia. At that time, about 100 titles had appeared which can be considered not to belong to these two categories. What then were they? Besides almanacs, broadsheet ballads, various advisory and educational texts, only a few texts which one can imagine would have interested educated people were published. Doubtlessly these were, e.g. Gottlund's *Otava 1-3* (1828-1833) and *Väinöimöiset* and the translations of songs of Anachreon, among others the Song from Sappho (1834).

From the start of the 1840s, mainly broadsheet ballads and short stories as well as a few translations, appeared in Finnish for the common people to read, including J.L. Runeberg's Poems, published in 1846. J.F.Lagervall, who had made his debut with his version of Shakespeare's Macbeth in 1843, continued to write plays and was joined by Pietari Hannikainen, whose popular play *Silmänkääntäjä* (The conjurer) was printed in 1847. Finnish language textbooks also arrived on

the scene, although Gustaf Renvall's textbook of the Finnish language, published in 1840, was in Swedish.

During the 1850s, the number of Finnish translations increased to some extent. Alongside translations of religious texts, the first classics of light reading appeared: Harriet Beecher-Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *The Adventures of Baron von Munchausen*, Runeberg's work were also being continuously translated into Finnish. August Ahlqvist published his first poems. In the first thesis in Finnish *Johdanto Suomen kirjallisuushistoriaan* (An introduction to the history of Finnish literature), the writer Rietrik Polén dealt with his subject more or less from the perspective of language: what were the requirements for developing language. He optimistically stated: "There can scarcely be such a useless language that it could not be independently used in all matters of life. The Finnish language has also come of age, and only those who cannot speak it and those who look down on it could condemn it as a crude 'northern tongue', which is only suitable for smoky farmhouses and the mouths of naughty peasants, just as some gentleman had in his wisdom seen fit to utter a few years ago..." (Polén 1858: 9).

In the next decade, Aleksis Kivi began his literary output; his novel *Seitsemän Veljestä* (The Seven Brothers) appeared at the turn of the decade. However, it was only the Post-Romanticism of the 1860s and 70s which created the conditions for the birth of a broadly-based Finnish literature: works in Finnish of interest to the educated classes were also published (Pipping 1856-1857/1967). The psychological climate of the class society had assumed that different classes had different needs, but this began to crumble towards the 1880s. Both the press and the incipient literature played their part in this change of attitudes. Of the latter only a part has remained permanently in literary history, a part has been characterized as poetry of the common people whose output often appeared in small loose sheets. These modest attempts had their own significance in creating the reading habits of the common people.

## EARLY USERS OF THE FINNISH LANGUAGE

An important writer of his time was Jaakko Juteini, a journalist and author who worked as the secretary at the Viipuri (Vyborg) City Court. He began his literary output as early as 1804 when he published a poem *Hämäläinen* in *Åbo Tidning*. He can be considered the founder of Finnish secular poetry, but he also had a significant effect in promoting the expressiveness of prose, when he acted as a popular educator taking a stand on numerous questions of social and language policy in his writings, which he published starting from the early 1810s. He also demanded the right for people to be able to present their case in their mother tongue in court. Among others, the poets Samuli Kustaa Berg (Kallio) and Abraham Poppius have retained their place in Finnish literary history. A very important writer was K.A. Gottlund, a man who proposed the compilation of a national epic according to the Homeric model in 1817 (Kaukonen 1979: 16). He

consciously worked as a translator into Finnish, also believing in its suitability for the use of classical meters (Kaukonen 1964: 41-73).

Soon these middle-class, educated men were joined by self-taught men of the people, of whom some wrote poems, whereas others turned to the reader with controversial writings. The latter included the peasant writer Antti Manninen, who in 1854 drew up an appeal to the tsar on the amelioration of the position of the Finnish language (Nurmio 1940). The significance of the peasant poets has been characterized as threefold: they maintained the mental activity amongst the peasants, and they had a socially important and morally improving effect (Hallikainen 1964: 104-106).

If it is assumed that the reading matter available affects the mastery of a language, it is clear that the significance of the press was great. The pages of newspapers of that time were similar to a periodical in nature, although they also fulfilled the need of conveying of news. *Saima*, which appeared between the years 1844-1846 and was edited by J.V. Snellman, published an opinion according to which "every word spoken in Swedish was a lost from the point of view of the honour of the name of Finland and of young Finnish men" (Juva 1964: 115). After the paper was banned, Snellman published a more moderate Swedish language journal *Litteratursbladet*. Other important channels were *Turun Viikkosanomat* (1820-27, 1829-31), *Oulun Viikkosanomat* (1829-34 and three later periods before the 1880s), *Sanansaattaja* from Viipuri (1836, 1840-41, under its protection *Kanava* 1845-47) and *Maanmiehen ystävä* (1844-55). The three latter just like Lönnrot's *Mehiläinen* (1836-1840) included among other things writings sent in by the rural population. Moreover, a goal-oriented programme was needed if the desire was to alter the character of Finnish from the speech of the common people to a language of culture.

## THE STRUGGLE OF THE DIALECTS

What then was the Finnish used in writing like? The country's oldest spiritual centre was Turku, where the episcopal see and the university were located. A new centre of spiritual growth began to develop around Viipuri, so-called "Old Finland", when the area fell under Russian administration and Catherine the Great's progressive educational policy together with the cultural flow of the Baltic Germans improved conditions (Halila 1949: 100-103). However, the area's Lutheran priesthood for long received their education in the Porvoo grammar school and the University of Turku, so that the literary tradition there as elsewhere was linked to the western dialects. However, so long as the language was only rarely used as a vehicle of literary expression, it caused no problems. H.G. Porthan first noted the opportunities that the eastern dialects presented for enriching the language, and the first manifesto was drawn up by Reinhold Becker in *Turun Viikko-Sanomat* according to which Finnish books should "be purified of dialects and other mistakes", by which Becker meant the literary language's

western predominantly Swedish features. K.A. Gottlund adopted his own course, and used the Savo dialect in his own output, favouring the acceptance of different dialects as a tool of literary expression. The dispute about the different features of the language developed into "the struggle of the dialects", in the settling of which Elias Lönnrot played a part. In the *Mehiläinen* paper he cultivated a language which followed the western dialects structurally but which took advantage of the rich vocabulary of the eastern dialects. The establishment of the predominant position of the western dialects was also affected by the reasons of the linguist Kustaa Renvall according to whom it was not worth rejecting the apparatus of expression already created and so have to create a new one.

### CONCERNING THE REQUIREMENTS OF A NATIONAL MOVEMENT

In Finland during the 1830s and 1840s a psychological atmosphere which has been characterized as an idealistic uniform culture was dominant. It was a peculiar coexistence of romanticism, enlightenment and old-fashioned clericalism under the patriarchal protection of the Russian tsar and loyal civil servants. Although room for manoeuvre under this policy of patronage was rather limited, the educated classes had the possibility of preserving the national spirit, and thus the development of language and literature was got underway. Only when it appeared that factors of social policy were being connected with the language question did the authorities wake up. It was also feared that a common goal would unite different classes too much (Juva 1964: 110, 125). During those years, a lectureship in the Finnish language was established at the Alexander University in Helsinki and the Finnish Literature Society was founded which then published the *Kalevala*. The appearance of this work was considered proof that the Finnish language was suitable for literary expression. The head of the FLS stated in his annual speech in 1836 that thanks to the appearance of the *Kalevala* "Finland can with heightened self-assurance learn to understand not only her past correctly but also her future development. She can say to herself: I, too, have a history". This statement did not give rise to unease among the authorities, because the collection of the Finnish language and its poetic treasures was not politically dangerous (Nurmio 1947: 109-115). "The history" was written in archaic poetical language which the common people knew well but the educated classes only poorly.

There was a clear split in the middle of last century amongst the educated classes in their attitude towards the language question and the generation gap often appeared in relation to nationalism: the younger generation were in the grips of enthusiastic Fennomanism, aristocratic youths tried to study Finnish. Their elders, on the other hand, considered that the language struggle should be a matter left to the Finnish-speaking common people. Thus no need was seen for the immediate development of the Finnish language. Liberally thinking Swedish-speaking educated circles also considered that in time Finnish would become the dominant language of culture, but that there was no need to artificially accelerate

this process (Juva 1964: 116,121). Some of these Finnish speakers grew up to be the first generation of a Finnish-speaking educated class. Elias Lönnrot, the son of a village tailor, got the spark of Finnish-language culture while studying at Turku University, but particularly his job as tutor in the family of J. Törngren offered the young man the opportunity to get to know the leading nationalist cultural personalities of the time (Hautala 1954: 109). Those young men who in the latter half of the century turned towards recording the Kalevala tradition, were already growing up in an atmosphere where enthusiasm was more widely spread.

## KALEVALA CRITIQUE AND THE POETRY COLLECTION PROJECT

To the majority of the educated classes, the appearance of the Kalevala was proof of Finnish spiritual greatness and suitability as a European civilized nation. However, Elias Lönnrot continued to collect folk poetry. From 1828 to 1844 during a total of eleven journeys, he recorded about 40,000 verses of poetry in the Kalevala metre. His journeys took him to all parts of the country, although he got his best haul on the other side of Finland's eastern border, in Russian Karelia. D.E.D. Europaeus, who had heard mention of the Ingrian poetical tradition in 1846, the songs of the Baltic-Finnic Ingrians, and of the Savakkos and Äyrämöinens, who had earlier moved from Finland on the south coasts of the Gulf of Finland, west of St Petersburg, also went on poem collecting journeys in the 1840s. The following year he went there in the company of H.A. Reinholm and so a whole new treasure trove of poetry was discovered. During the 1850s several young men made summer trips to Ingria. The Finnish Literature Society reserved a travel grant aside for this reason because it wanted to find still possibly unrecorded poems for the Society's collection.

Although Lönnrot's work was admired, people were still not entirely convinced of its suitability as proof of Finnish culture. When the new edition of the *Kalevala* appeared in 1849, the popular origin of the poems started to be considered. A partial reason was that at one time it was thought that Lönnrot's notes had disappeared and doubts about whether the poems were genuine were raised. At first the aim was just to gather evidence of the popular origin of the Kalevala (Hautala 1954: 198-203). In the early 1870s, A.A. Borenius started to arrange the Archangel Karelian poems for publication, and after have noticed some gaps, he made three trips to Russian Karelia in 1871, 1872 and 1877. He was accompanied on his second journey by Genetz and Berner (Borenius 1874). In the 1880s the objectives of gathering poems were reformulated, and material began to be collected as the basis for scholarly research, in which the places where the poems were found and the performers were the object of interest. Gradually, the existence of other traditional genres became known, although at first they were not highly regarded.

## THE FIELDWORK CHARACTER OF POETRY GATHERING

Modern fieldwork is generally connected with some kind of research problem; folklore connected with some kind of subject is collected or the ideas of informants about some matter are charted. The task given to the collectors of the 19th century was the gathering of a specific genre of folklore bound to national political goals. What kind of ideas, what preconceptions and what information did the collectors of that age have as they set out on their task? This matter can be examined on the basis of their own texts, because many of the researchers compiled travel reports. Some of these reports on their fieldwork were published in appendices to the minutes of the FLS, or in the Suomi series or in the work *Runonkeräjäiemme matkakertomuksia 1830-luvulta 1880-luvulle* (Travel reports of our poem collectors from the 1830s until the 1880s)(hereinafter R). From the point of view of this article the most important texts date from the 1850s, only F. Polén's report concerns a journey made in 1847 and O. Groundstroem was on the move in 1861. Although these stories were written as an account for grants received, they can also be read as descriptions of the poem collector's concepts and feelings in the field. Especially rewarding are the reports written by collectors not belonging to the inner circle of the FLS, who were not work leaders but carriers out of the collection. The majority of the poems recorded in the Kalevala metre in our possession today are due to them.

Fieldwork experience since those days has increased, the objectives have been set in a different way and neither can reports dating back to the last century be read in the same way as modern reports. However, we can try to understand the position of the collectors of that time when we know what they did not have available when they went out into the field. The modern fieldworker realizes that research is not free of values, he is occupied by problems of objectivity. He is "constructed by those by we set out to study, who in objectifying us turned the ethnographic process into a project of forced resubjectification. Subject and object become terms of analysis of a phenomenon we experience but are always grasping to understand" (Domingues 1989: 13).

Theories of fieldwork have mainly originated in connection with anthropological research. The difference between these research trends is considered to be that anthropologists usually carry out their work in a community whose physical and cultural distance from the researcher's own reality is often significant. Folklorists, on the other hand, have traditionally moved among people speaking their own language, albeit that the informants' way of life and world view have often greatly differed from the researcher's own. What then was the position of the early poem collectors in this respect?

## POEM COLLECTORS AND THEIR GOALS

According to the evidence provided by the travel reports, the poem collectors had adopted the idea of the significance of the Kalevala poetry in supporting the national culture. A clearly defined target of a journey can be read in W. Lavonius' report: he wanted "to work for the benefit of the Society and fulfil me own wishes which originated long before this" (R 258). Also an inclination to value the Finnish language was important on the journey (R 30). F.A. Saxbäck tried to explain to people in Ingria that in Finland "they were interested in the future of the Finnish language and people, because now Russification on one side and Swedishness on the other were crowding in to oppress Finland..." (R 353).

Most of the collectors came from clerical or civil servant families. The decision to set out on a trip demanded a high degree of motivation of the young men and a decision not to complain about difficulties. The strains of the journeys are well known. For example, O.E. Pettersson wrote in his travel report that he was preparing himself in an inn "for the coming tribulations" (R 185). August Ahlqvist mentioned in his own report that Kaarle Slöör was the person who "dared to accompany me on this journey lacking in pleasure". The gentlemen first decided to become accustomed "to the activities and difficulties of this kind of journey, because it would have been quite bad to have gone travelling like a city person in a quite different and strange country" (R 201).

The collectors were then aware of the problems which they considered to be physical discomforts: they were unable to foresee cultural differences, and many problems of contact with their informants came as a complete surprise to them and they were then unable to deal with them. F.F. Ahlman must have been bitter when he stated that he had almost completely failed in his poem collection journey, on which he had set out "following the honourable decision of the Literature Society" and during whose first stages "the sun shone brightly". According to the report the most evident result was that it was not worth the Society sending anyone else "to those regions" (R 249-257). T. Tallqvist and A. Törneröos begged the forgiveness of their financier the FLS for "the mistakes and deficiencies in our poetry notes and in this report" which were due to their inexperience (R 398).

## MEETING THE INTERVIEWEES

Besides the progress of their work, the collectors also described their meetings with people and their own feelings in their reports. On the one hand, the texts depict a profound admiration of the old tradition and the desire to share their own idealistic view of the world with their informants, and, on the other, their irresolution, alienation, real fear and great annoyance when a situation got out of hand. The goal of objectivity had not then been set; so how could the collectors have set out from that point of view? The researcher's liking for otherness or his



objectification of the otherness of what he was studying is an attractive task, but it leads to the question of what is peoplehood. Whose concept is it and what is its representation? How is it formed, changed and eternalized, what are its illusions? The early collectors still had not come up against these questions.

Many positive experiences and character sketches of the rune singers have been written into the travel reports. They partly reveal a picture of their writer as well as people whom they are writing about. The Ingrians are friendly to their guests (R 391). "Although surrounded by all kinds of wickedness, the songs have kept alive the spirit of honesty in them. Unless the advice and admonitions of the verses were found, they would probably sink lower than the Russians on this part" (R 282). "Miraculous in their honesty, when they live among the cunningly pure Russians and greedy Orthodox" is said about the Lutheran Ingrians (R 284). These appraisals are not particularly unbiased, the scale of good and bad is clearly not of Ingrian origin.

An analysis of one's own feelings can be a conscious mapping of a work situation or a search for the reasons for one's own uncertainty. The collectors were clearly not prepared for the antithesis to which the meeting of the people and "the gentry" led. The collectors did not consider the ethnic diversity of Ingria an interesting research problem, instead they respected the Ingrians and the other ethnic groups more or less on the basis of how much their culture resembled their own. Modern fieldwork analysis has formed two almost contradictory views of the relationship between researcher and informant: the interpretive and the subjective. According to the former, the relationship **self** and **other** is not based on a realization of mutual similarities, but rather the researcher interprets the object of research in the light of his own knowledge, understanding, however, the native's point of view. According to the latter, researcher must first be aware of the effect of their own personality, role and cultural prejudices on both their work and the community of the people being studied (Kirschner 1987). Peggy Golde has developed the concept of conformity in her fieldwork (Golde 1986). It means the adapting of one's own expectations and models of behaviour to those of the traditional community. In human relations, reciprocity requires that the researcher's role is taken into account in all fields of human activity, not just in the interview situation. Debra Picchi has observed that when communicating with a fieldworker outside the community, a strong pressure to conform is also concentrated on the informant. He also has to stretch his own concepts and models of behaviour in this direction. Unless the fieldworker takes this into account "in expecting the informant to conform to the fieldworker's preconceptions the latter ignores his humanity and his individuality" (Picchi 1989: 67). The theoretical formulation of fieldwork was not a part of the goals of the rune collectors at that time.

## AMAZING PEOPLE

The collectors who visited Ingria had only had experiences of their own circle, whose values and attitudes they naturally felt to be "right". The national enthusiasm amongst students was based on reading the texts of the Kalevala and the establishment of national policy goals. When engaged in fieldwork, the people were not quite what they had expected. On this basis, the collectors might characterize the common people as stupid, stubborn and quarrelsome. Priests were both a help and a hindrance; it was harmful that they had often said that rune singing was a sin (R 20-21, 272). The priest had frightened an old woman who knew spells into believing that "The devil would possess" the rune collectors (R 251). On the other hand, the collectors sometimes resorted to the priest's help to get the rune singers to trust themselves (R 311). It seems contradictory that spells and folk beliefs were an interesting "tradition", but that their belonging to the world view of the informants felt primitive (R 279, 281, 397, 413): "Savakkos are more lively than Äyrämöinens and more inclined to give up their old habits...although there are old superstitions remaining among them...the obstinate Äyrämöinens remain unchanged" (R 385-6).

It also happened that advance expectations about a given person caused disappointment when the singer turned out to be, for example a drunkard! (R 69-71, 252). It was also an annoying observation that in Serebetta even the children took money rather than junk (R 404). The collectors thus hoped that their informants would be living in a state of innocence without knowledge of the power of evil money. On the other hand, they wanted to share their conceptions of the necessity of national progress - a matter for which the ordinary people had no prerequisites.

Some collectors even had unpleasant experiences: Saxbäck had to flee the village of Kelttu because it was thought that he was carrying cholera (R 312). In Paanajärvi, Karelia, "something rather dangerous" happened to Borenus when his cameras awoke the same suspicion (R 480). T. Tallqvist and A. Törneros had to pay for their inexperience in the village of Ruskovitsa in Ingria. They were turned away from the Whitsun bonfire, where the young people from the village gathered. Nevertheless, the collectors went in their own good time towards the songs they heard. It came to an end, however, when "the servants of the Anti-Christ and the envoys of the devil" arrived there (R 369). They almost got into trouble in the village of Serebetta, Kontu, when about twenty drunken men began to steal their poetry books and tie them up (R 392). The unlucky youths had to "run like wolves, without getting any poems" for a whole week (R 393). The collector's glasses on the other hand scared a bride in one of the villages on the Narva highway (R 376).

## THE SELF-ANALYSIS OF THE RUNE COLLECTORS

The fieldwork might have been, from time to time, psychologically rather heavy. The perception of problems depends on preconceptions. Virginia Domingues writes, "If emotional fragility is a condition of fieldwork and consequent tools of data gathering, the emotional reactions are the most powerful indicators of the sensitiveness of the two worlds that meet and clash in us and through us" (Domingues 1989: 13). The sensitivity of encounter in fieldwork is a matter only recently understood, and its significance could not have even been guessed at last century. As Anita Kelles has noted, one reason for unfriendly actions was hurry. The traditional communities considered to be static were noticed to be dynamic changing units. It was feared that the tradition would disappear and it was considered necessary above all to collect material (Kelles-Viitanen 1982: 71). At worst real problems of contact were met with - and comical, if somewhat dangerous situations, ensued. In 1847 F. Polén in his report published in *Suometar* described his joy in managing to save the poems "from this region of darkness, from the path of oblivion and partly already disdain, to harvest the perhaps unreached and ungathered beautiful and noble memorials of our forefathers, whose turn of mind was profound and sublime already in the ancient days of heathendom". According to the preconception of the rune collector, sublime poetry was alive in the most unsuitable conditions. Where did this assumption come from? Frederik Polén (b. 1823) was the son of a curate, who became a journalist, teacher and Fennoman. Throughout his life, he was inspired by an ideal careless of his own advantage. The boy's own upbringing was middle-class, his student years were spent during the period when the struggle between the Finnish and Swedish languages was at its height. The way of life of the common people seen close at hand as a child must have been different from what he encountered on his collecting journeys.

D.E.D. Europaeus was also most probably surprised when according to the story he "could not get a Pistojärvi singer to sing". He surmised that the scarcity of the runes he collected was due not only to his own inexperience, but also the fear of the common people (Niemi 1905: 1-4). Also according to J. Länkelä "great fear" towards the collector could only be overcome by living "among the people" (R 282). He wrote: "I heard everyone singing far from where I was, but let me get close and there mouths were closed" (R 272). According to some opinions, the desire to sing might have depended on religion, as the Orthodox were considered to have a more negative attitude towards singing (R 273-275). In this case it was a question of how the collector presented himself. It did not occur to anyone to ask what was in the final analysis most important: the collector getting his rune or the peace of mind of the singer.

Although the young men could not perceive their situation in the way of modern theoreticians, they were aware of the problem in practice: "We scarcely had the occasion to examine the life and nature of the common people more closely on our journeys, as for virtually the whole time we travelled we were

subject of suspicion, and the common people were as much on their guard against us as against the enemies of their souls", wrote Tallqvist and Törneröos (R 385) in their report. F. Saukko noted that they had not got to know the customs and inner life of the people. Although he believed the people had feelings, "although they no doubt express them differently from cultivated people, or at least in a fashion which they would not understand". However, someone used to mixing with the people could carry out collection work (R 123). However, there were no intellectual tools for dealing with the problem, nor did the collectors have to consider their own attitudes.

## THE RESULT OF THE COLLECTIONS IN THE COLLECTOR

According to the frustrating experience of F. Saukko, the common people did not understand the significance of their songs, no one had any time for singing and when eventually one got a song down, it was impossible to totally clarify the contents of the songs or the one offered had no value. They "scarcely resemble the runes of the Kalevala at all". The reputation of many of the singers proved to be false (R 116-119). Europaeus mentions that laments, fairy tales, proverbs and other traditions could be found, but "the runes only began to sound again" in Tulomajärvi (Niemi 1905: 2). Ahlqvist was also disappointed that Kalevala type poems were not remembered, young Ingrians performed "modern artificial poems and worthless jingles". However, it was possible to make people understand that these kinds of verses were not good enough (R 215, 228, 254, 367). Ahlqvist believed that the lack of spells was due to the fact that in Ingria nature is "pretty rather than splendid, nowhere noble or terrible" (R 216).

According to W. Lavonius, "the original songs of the people have already fled from these regions... And mostly the songs which can be found have been composed by someone or another. But because noble happenings have not affected people, so their songs are poor and, like their life, monotonous" (R 269). This was how newer poems whose composer was known were judged. As for laments, there existed "a vast number, but there was not much time to write them down" (R 394). According to others, there was not very much of importance to add to what Lönnrot had already collected, apart from spells and wedding poems (R 481, 489). Borenus mentions that he rejected the desire to correct the mistakes made by the singers (R 448). In the opinions of the collectors, the poems deteriorated as the world view changed. Everything available of the Kalevala metre epic was collected, lyric poetry, on the other hand, only from the most skilled or "when there was time" (R 490-1).

Thus the collectors more or less evaluated their results on the basis of the volume of serious epic. Disappointment with the quantity and quality of their haul shines through in nearly all the field reports. In Ingria the comments of the collectors seem to be an excuse for the scarcity of the material. Did something remain undiscovered? Did the lack of linguistic ability have a harmful effect? The

difficulty with language would have been a hindrance to modern collectors, too: the dialects varied widely, nor did the collectors come from eastern dialect areas before the collections of the 1880s. The literary use of Finnish could not have been very familiar to the collectors: at school they had mainly used Swedish, Finnish reading material was, as described above, rare. The transcription of what one hears is a skill of its own, especially if the knowledge of the language is not too good. Some of the collectors wrote their travel reports in Swedish! It is very probable that some of the "illogicalities" in the rune texts were due to the lack of linguistic skill on the part of the collectors rather than the singers' mistakes. The knowledge of Finnish of these young men was evidently not always good. In some of their reports they even confessed this. Some had problems in understanding the vernacular in Ingria, as "their dialect is so different and so mixed up with Estonian..." (R 365). Saxbäck made no bones about the fact that "he was travelling" to learn Finnish (R 352). O. Groundstroem admitted that his knowledge of the language was deficient and for that reason he accepted "the 50 silver roubles sent me by the Literature Society with feelings mixed with fear...the haul corresponding to moderate demands..but could not resist my desire to study the life of the people in Ingria and the Finnish folk poetry such as it existed there" (R 399-400).

Probably the poor knowledge of the language caused more harm in the everyday communication between the collector and his informants than in the actual recording of the poems. When language, i.e. the tool, was functioning imperfectly, the number of disturbing factors increased. When they underestimated the poems they had gathered, the collectors were not considering the significance of tradition to the singers themselves and their communities. They collected it only for national ends, whereas in the villages it existed as part of the cultural communication of the population.

However, from the point of view of the instructions received, the results achieved were incredibly good. The material which had been collected was recorded in the FLS's archives. The result of the fieldwork, which had lasted for decades, was the 33-volume work *Suomen kansan vanhat runot* (The old runes of the Finnish people). Perhaps things which they had not been told to collect were recorded in the collector's store of experiences and could not be given an archive number. Sometimes a reference to some sensitive experience is found in a matter-of-fact travel report. For example, Borenus writes of a young daughter-in-law singing "with her sweet voice and varied melody...giving the loveliest image of a lyrical folk song...the preciseness of the memory of a child of nature!" (R 483-5).

## THE KALEVALA POETRY AND FINNISH-LANGUAGE CULTURE

Above, some of the reasons for the contradiction mentioned at the start, according to which the nation "found itself" and the folk was "invented", have been presented. Both are hindsight, but the representatives of the educated classes were

acting as the processors of both in the late 19th century. As discoverers they travelled to record a poetical treasure and they really found what they were seeking: more and more evidence of Finnish spiritual reserves. Unaccustomed to incredibly difficult circumstances and great poverty, misunderstood and unaware of their results, they persevered in collecting a huge traditional entity. A noble minded people who had created a history and religion of their own was invented as its interpreter. In the collectors' eyes it did not entirely match the image created by themselves, but foreign influences, especially Russianness and the Orthodox religion, which was shunned by many, could be found as the explanation. The elements of a national culture were gathered together in the form of cooperation between the classes, even if total unanimity about the significance of the goals was not achieved during the period of collection.

Why then did Lönnrot appear to have succeeded better in finding noble poetry and rune singers of a worthy quality? Perhaps because owing to his personality, he inspired the rune singers more than the enthusiastic sons of the gentry. He did not seek ideal heroes among the people, but consciously created literature from the runes in the manner of a classical European epic: "Then himself began to conjure, And himself commenced his singing". Lönnrot's literary output is extremely broad and diverse. Everything he started he carried through with ardent enthusiasm, treating all his sources with equal respect: Lönnrot's popular background might be a partial explanation for the vast volume of his life's work. He was convinced of the right of his cause, but avoided its direct political interpretations, because he had not come from circles which were interested in power.

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