Деятельность Литературного Общества Финляндии в изучении урало-алтайских языков

Activities of the Finnish Literature Society within Uralic Studies

Діяльність Літературної спілки Фінляндії у дослідженні урало-алтайських мов

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Литературное общество Финляндии (www.finlit.fi) является научным обществом, нацеленным на изучение и распространение финской культуры и наследия, с особенным вниманием к языку, фольклору и литературе. Сегодня в Обществе есть фольклорный и литературный архивы, научная библиотека и информационный центр финской литературы. Кроме того, есть издательский отдел, который выпускает около 100 научных и популярных изданий в год. Общество также содействует исследованиям и публикациями финно-угорских материалов.

Finnish Literature Society (www.finlit.fi) is a scholarly society committed to the study and advancement of Finnish culture and heritage with an emphasis on language, folklore and literature. Today the Society maintains the Folklore and Literary Archives, a scientific library and the Finnish Literature Information Centre (FILI). Besides there is a Publication Department, that issues about 100 scholarly and popular books a year.

The most far-reaching projects undertaken by the Society in the early years concerned the collection and publication of Finnish literature and folk poetry as part of national heritage. Soon after its foundation 1831 the society provided its secretary, Elias Lönnrot, with the means to embark upon collecting trips to eastern Finland and Karelia. From the poems noted down on these excursions, Lönnrot composed the Finnish national epic *Kalevala* as well as the *Kanteletar*, a collection of folk lyrics.

This is how the first connections with other Finno-Ugrian peoples were aroused. By then Finland was an autonomous part of Russia. Besides collecting folklore from Finns and the Karelians, living in the neighbourhood of Russians, contacts and cooperation with Estonians, Vepsians and other Finnic groups around the Baltic Sea were established. The pioneer explorer in the Finno-Ugrian areas of Siberia, Mathias Castrén was the Society’s secretary in 1838-1839. Later influential persons within the Society like A. J. Sjögren, the academician of Finno-Ugrian and Caucasian linguistics and ethnology at the Academy of Sciences of St. Petersburg, August Ahlqvist, K. F. Karjalainen, Artturi Kannisto and others continued fieldwork in Siberia for instance among Mordvinians, Khants and Mansi collecting not only linguistic material but folklore and mythological matters as well.
As Finland won independence in 1917, connections to Siberia and even the Finno-Ugrian peoples living in that region were cut off. However, as late as until the 1960s, most Finnish folklore research was concentrated on the Finno-Ugrian peoples. In the previous years collected materials were used and published. During the II World War casual communications with cross frontier Karelians and Ingrians were utilized and the materials collected were deposited into the Folklore Archives of the Finnish Literature Society as well as other archives. Towards the end of 1970s Finnish scholars Bo Lönnqvist and Anna-Leena Siikala were able to use materials concerning Finno-Ugrian peoples of Siberia at the Academy of Sciences of the USSR. Both of them published works on Siberian shamanism.

A large joint project carried out by the Academy of Finland and the Academy of Sciences of the USSR resulted from 1988 onwards in *Bibliographia Studiorum Uralicorum 1917-1987*. The series covers Finnish and Soviet research on Finno-Ugrian archaeological, folkloristical, ethnological, linguistic and literary research in four volumes separately for both countries. The Finnish Literature Society had a versatile role in the implementation of this project. It provided a basis for the bibliographical work in its library collections as well as expert knowledge. The Society also published both the Finnish and the Soviet volumes 1-4 each.

Another project aiming to publish folklore of Finno-Ugrian peoples resulted 1993 in a volume called *The Great Bear. A Thematic Anthology of Oral Poetry in the Finno-Ugrian Languages*. This work published by the Society is based on collections in several Finnish archives. The material covers most Finno-Ugrian peoples’ folk poetry, but is not arranged according to ethnic cultures but themata like the cosmos, sources of livelihood, festivities, love etc. equating the ethnic groups. A previous volume *Iso karhu: old photographs of the Volga-Finnic, Permian Finnic and Ob-Ugrian peoples* presenting the peoples in illustrations was published by the Society in 1980.

Towards the end of the Soviet era contacts between the Finnish Literature Society and Soviet folklorists interested in Finno-Ugrian studies started to recover. Fertile cooperation with Estonian and Karelian colleagues resulted in joint seminars as well as translations into Finnish of folk poetry by the Komi, the Mordvinians, the Udmurt, the Mansi and the Hanti were given out by the Society. Later researchers of the Folklore Archives visited Karelia and Ingria; a dissertation by Ingrian born Arno Survo *Magian kieli. Neuvosto-Inkeri symbolisena periferiana* (The language of magic. Soviet Ingria as a symbolic periferia) was published in 2001.

At the moment an ongoing large joint project is that of *The Encyclopedia of Uralic Mythologies*. It investigates the mythology and belief traditions of Uralic peoples. The aim is to publish a 12-volume series in both Russian and English. The series will provide extensive information on Uralic peoples, languages, mythological terms in each language, as well as an entire volume devoted to comparative analysis. The editors-in-chief of the Encyclopaedia are Mihály Hoppál (Hungarian Academy of Sciences), Vladimir Napolskikh (The Udmurt State University), and Anna-Leena Siikala (Academy of Finland; Helsinki University). The international research project producing the Encyclopaedia has been financed by the Academy of Finland and by respective academic and university institutions in Russia, Estonia and Hungary. The first volume 1. *Komi Mythology* by Nikolai D. Konakov and the research group was published 1999 in Russian (Syktyvkar), translated into English and published by the Finnish Literature Society 1999 in 2003.

Another project interconnecting Finnish, Russian, Estonian and Hungarian researchers is *Myth, History, and Society. Ethnic National Traditions in the Era of Globalization*. The publications are still to come.