

MARKING OF SACRED PLACES

Mare Kõiva, Tõnno Jonuks, Mare Kalda, Andres Kuperjanov,
and Reet Hiimäe

Estonian Literary Museum and the Centre of Excellence in Estonian Studies

Abstract. For most religions, nature has been an important medium and, to a smaller or greater extent, all religions use nature or its sacredness as a metaphor for religion. However, changes have occurred in the twenty-first century, and so nature, and especially natural sacred places, have become significant signs in major Christian trends, in pagan traditions emphasising continuity, and in vernacular contemporary religious practices. In terms of world view, alongside ethnic and new religions, the sacralisation of natural places (and nature as a whole) is among the messages of many humanistic movements until the ultra-green groups and regarding the equality of humans and nature. Although different religions use nature in very different ways, one of the most intriguing outputs in Estonia has been putting sacred places under state protection, which in 2008 was formulated as a state development plan. This article gives an overview of how sacred space is created or adopted, along with any monuments located there. The leaders of spiritual movements, as well as societies and organisations that valued cultural history and religion, served as initiators. Later on, the marking of public space with figures expanded to citizens' and village movements, municipal powers, museums and individuals used to enrich the landscape. By such means, an ordinary landscape was rendered multi-dimensional and connections were forged between more distant history and folklore.

Keywords: sacred landscape, natural sacred places, wooden figures, folklore, paganism, community art

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3176/tr.2020.2.01>

1. Introduction

For most religions, nature has been an important medium and, to a smaller or greater extent, all religions use nature or its sacredness as a metaphor for religion.

For Lutheran Christianity, which has dominated in Estonia for the last couple of centuries, nature has been of little importance traditionally, representing above all God's creation. However, in the twenty-first century changes have occurred, and nature, and especially sacred nature has become a significant feature also for Christian trends, in pagan traditions emphasising continuity, and in vernacular contemporary religious practices. Yet the concepts of sacredness and intactness are related to nature more widely, especially in the climate change discourses of the past couple of decades and, in an Estonian context, also in the concept in which, for historical reasons, nature protection is closely connected with the preservation of the nation and national culture (Jonuks and Remmel, in press).

In terms of worldview, alongside ethnic and new religions, the sacralisation of natural places (and nature as a whole) is among the messages of many humanistic movements, beginning with religious groups and ending with the bearers of the radical and critical idea of the equality of humans and nature. Although different religions use nature in very different ways, one of the most intriguing outputs in Estonia has been taking sacred places under state protection, which in 2008 was formulated as a state development plan. However, the fulfilling of this most well-grounded and noble objective has been hindered by differences in worldviews as, under the leadership of the National Heritage Board, attempts have been made to merge the official level, academic humanities, and nature protection, and on the other hand the *maausk* (Earth belief), the dominating trend of contemporary paganism in Estonia. Due to these differences in worldviews, the initially simple and clear-cut activity has become a source of many problems and personal conflicts. For the academic worldview, the problem is the presentation of inner-circle and personal practices as general norms.

Such a situation foregrounds the individual as an entity, and his/her importance as a maker of connections with phenomena in the past; this is accompanied by the invention of appropriate pasts and rituals. Personal visions of sacrality, history, and the value of a place are presented as real history, and personally created systems of values and beliefs are extended to ancient tradition.

Firth (1996: 14) emphasises: "Religious beliefs appear less stable than ritual, more open to personal variation and modification. Their vagueness and lack of definition are seen in two respects. Different individuals in the same religious communion vary in their beliefs on a given topic, which makes it difficult to assign to any synoptic expression a truly representative value."

The cumulation of such problems has resulted in a situation where academic science has been left with practically no options to direct the processes, as the clamant spokesperson as well as personal perception and experience have become more influential.

The marking of natural sacred places has become one of the significant sources of problems. Traditional sacred places are known only from folklore and they were not widely marked throughout the twentieth century. Changes occurred at the end of the 1980s, when the contemporary pagan tradition *maausk* [Earth belief] became popular; at the same time a new tradition – marking personally relevant places with small objects, such as coins, strips of cloth, etc. – spread across Europe. It is obvious

that the one who placed the first marker determined the narrative of the place for the future. Once such a space is created or adopted, along with any monuments located there, connections can be started to be made with memorial practices, and with the biographies of monuments and buildings along with their latent religious and folkloric potentials. In addition to vernacular markers – coins, strips of cloth, small sacrifices – official markers are also influential. There are many examples (Avrami et al. 2000), where the area marked with a sign of state protection becomes mentally more significant than a similar kind of area next to it – authorized power legitimizes the meaning.

The numerous sacred places of official, semi-official, and vernacular religions which have emerged within the framework of the twentieth and twenty-first-century religious pluralism, as well as their marking, has been widely studied (Rountree 2015, Ivakhiv 2015, Butler 2020, Strimska 2005, 2017, York 2015, Harvey 2015).

International consideration has been given to the altars, small figurines, and religious objects of new modern religious groups are studied globally (see e.g. Maggliooco 2001), while less attention is paid to temple architecture (Shizhenski and Suroveghina 2018, Gunnell 2015). Different sacral places have been described, on the European and American examples, by Jonuks and Āikas (2019), Kõiva (2017, 2018, 2019), Hiimäe (2017), Toncheva (2019), Kõiva, Kuperjanov, and Vesik (2018), Povedak (2011), Vaiškunas (2004), etc. On the basis of the authors' fieldwork materials, this article focuses on the practices of different religious groups, on how sacred places have been marked, and how this has established authority and the right to decide about the place.

2. Marked and unmarked places

Since the end of the 1980s, groups have been mentioned in interviews who have their own sacred places in a forest, meadow, or somewhere else in nature. This may be a personal, individual place not shared with others, or it may belong to a smaller group or a group of friends. The descriptions indicate that these are unmarked personal spaces; they have been found by happenstance and then acquired a special status; among other reasons, people return there to conduct small rituals. Sometimes the places are minimally marked: an unremarkable bit of string has been tied to a tree, or minimal modifications have been made (such as tying some of the branches together), giving the next visitor the signal that the place is universally sacred (EFITA, KK-034, 81–93).

Traditionally, the marking of sacred places was practiced only seldom and it is also not done very often by members of Maavalla Koda (The Estonian House of Taara and Native Religions) – the main institution representing contemporary pagan religions in Estonia. Although historical records mention statues in sacred places (HCL) and trees decorated with red ribbons (Olearius 1669), historically sacred places have been characterized through forests – *lucus sanctus* or *heilige Hain*. As marking traditions, fences around sacred places have been mentioned, yet historically these

have been rather around places in the vicinity of living places (see, e.g. Loorits 1935) and only during the past couple of decades have been integrated into the tradition of individual sacred places by the pagan trends (see, e.g. Kütt 2007).

Traditionally, however, the main characteristic feature of a sacred place has been the lore related to it – knowledge of the singularity of the place and different rules of behaviour established there. In addition to ritual behaviour and official marking, layers of meaning are created by narrations of the landscape, which help to place the real or hypothetical events related to it and people who have lived there into place narratives, which makes them part of the place memory (see also Ryden 1993: 64–66). There are several folklore motifs referring to the singularity of the place; in addition to traditional sacred place narratives, stories of ‘travelling’ nature objects or found treasures can refer to a onetime sacred place (Kalda 2011).

In most cases, the natural object is not marked; for its visitors it is a mark of personal religiosity, which does not require any additional designation. In general, the rocks, trees, and other objects under state protection in Estonia also do not have special markings. Clearly, if an organiser of spirituality courses lives nearby, participants in the courses leave their offerings. Even today’s excursions presume that out of gratitude to the guide, or spontaneously, one leaves offerings, which may often be the reason for their diversity and chance occurrence. For example, such a spontaneous activity takes place at the sacrificial stone in the Estonian National Museum, as well as at many springs. This custom is more widely known due to media attention and the recommendations of the articulators of religion and is invented in traditional places where it did not exist earlier. One good example is the springs at Taevaskoja, south-eastern Estonia, where previously no offerings were made. Due to the influence of earth belief practitioners (conversations with and speeches of Ahto Kaasik, and even more, the local information board imitating academic knowledge), people have begun throwing coins into springs and tying ribbons to trees there. People who have lived in this area for years speak about the changes, saying that this was not done before (1980, 1990), but in recent times mostly strangers and participants in excursions have begun to do it, not the people living in the area (EFITA, F31-001).

Therefore, the marking of a sacred place is essential; it distinguishes the sacred place from the surroundings, the ‘not-sacred’, but also signals belonging, which is especially important in the modern ardour of paganism, in which different trends compete for the truth.

3. Wooden figures on public and private territory

The oldest records of statues in sacred places date from the beginning of the thirteenth century, when the priests of the Order of the Brothers of the Sword destroyed pagan god statues in a sacred place (HCL), and an allegedly pagan statue of a god has also reached the library of St. Olaf’s Church and there is another brief record of a lithic idol from Lasnamäe (Sutrop 2004). Yet generally historical records on statues are scarce.

In about 1862, a Baltic-German cultural figure and Estophile, Georg Julius Schultz (1808–1875), opened a mythological park near his home at Friedenthal in Laiuse parish; the exhibits bore the names of Estonian mythological and pseudo-mythological characters. This family tradition continued until the 1940s (Pärnik 2006). An impressive example was also a huge horned figure of Kalevipoeg (national hero of Estonia), which corresponded to the character in folk prose¹ – but contradicting the character as represented in the national epic, erected by another Baltic German, Alexander Nikolai von Glehn (1841–1923) at his estate at Tallinn-Nõmme.

Features of local mythology and folklore appear in the work of some artists during the Soviet period (for example, a sculptor who lived and supported himself at Aidu in Jõgeva County, and artist Vanda Juhansoo at Valgemetsa, where her colourful and eccentrically designed home was referred to as The Witch's House). They both also carved wooden statues, and their display on private lands, which renders a slightly mystical tinge to a place, has become popular in Estonia during the past few decades. However, most of these places remain in the undefined grey area, where religious or spiritual background is not clearly defined.

The creation of specialised cult sites in the public space and at people's homes became popular once again in the 1980s and 1990s, at the height of the national movement.

Toomemägi Hill in Tartu has been presented as a sacred place since the end of the nineteenth century, and this concept was approved at the end of the 1980s by the Maavalla Koda, which had just appeared on the public arena. To better introduce their activity and establish a striking landmark, they erected three wooden statues of gods there in 1992, without any agreement with the municipality. The statues were destroyed, and although no culprit was found officially, they unanimously claimed that it was Christians who destroyed them (see, e.g. Kaplinski 1992).

At the beginning of *Porikuu* [Mud Month, i.e. October] in 10202, according to the general reckoning of time in 1989, we erected the first (medium-sized) wooden figure at the location of the offering stone on Toome Hill. This was followed by a larger one in *Urbekuu* [Catkin Month, i.e. March] of the year 10203.² The third (a smaller one) appeared in fall of the year 10204. Until the end of *Urbekuu* of the year 10205 they remained quietly in their place, but then, on the eve of the 23rd day of *Urbekuu*, either during the night or on the morning of the 24th, they had all been dislodged from their positions. The largest one lay where it had stood but the two smaller ones had been dragged down the hill toward the 'Toome' shop (Leete 1992).

¹ Legends of the giant Kalevipoeg served as the basic material for Fr. R. Kreutzwald, when he wrote the national epic *Kalevipoeg*. The giant is depicted as an enormous human being. Glehn, on the other hand, was inspired by other typical traits related to the giant tradition, so he generalized his sculpture on the basis of other motifs. Another well-known Estonian giant is *Pagan*, *Vanapagan* (Devil, Old Nick).

² Estonian earth believers count years starting from the time when the Estonian territory was supposedly freed from the continental ice sheet. Names of months have been restored according to Estonian and Baltic-Finnic local names, e.g., March is called *urbekuu* – the month when willow catkins flower, and October is called mud month.

The whole sequence of events was covered by the media, and due to several unpleasant episodes, it culminated in a court case between a charismatic Christian congregation The Word of Life and a media publication. However, the journal of *maausulised* provides its own analysis of the events, taking the blame upon themselves: it was wrong to pick a fight with The Word of Life.

The following boom in wooden sculptures was probably started by an Ethno-Futu camp led by Ersä-Mordvian masters-carvers of wooden figures, organised by Fennougria. After this, making wooden sculptures became part of the activities of several organisations, and the first masters of wooden sculptures began to emerge. From the end of the 1980s to the twenty-first century, wooden sculptures were erected near some old fortresses and archaeological memorial sites, for example, in western Estonia near the Varbola fortress (first mentioned in written sources in 1212), which later had become an important ritual site for several groups. As an ancient battle site and a nature reserve, this place was ideally suited for being a holy site for groups for conducting rituals. In addition to figures of fairies, the wooden sculptures of four Estonian kings were erected there, adding a historical and ideological dimension.

In 1989, with the support of Jõgeva County and the Estonian Forest Society, the local village community and volunteers, a sacred grove (*hiis*) was established nearby the Kassinurme hillfort, which had been in use until the thirteenth century. The new place included a range of creative cultural structures, as well as nature and sporting trails. Again, this is a multifunctional site, used by various communities for their own purposes. At the sacred grove local residents celebrate holidays in the folk



Figure 1. Wooden ancient gods on both sides of the marathon finishing line at the Elva Recreational Sports Centre. Photo by Andres Kuperjanov 2006.

calendar, and different groups come to perform their own rituals. At the centre of the sacred grove is a birch tree with an offering stone; the site is fenced in on one side, with a gate. The multidimensional use of the place is enhanced by a replica of the hillfort, a stage, a swing, reconstructions of old conical dwelling places, a campfire place, and various wooden sculptures (Ilmet 2018: 3). In the twentieth century, the holy place has begun to be interpreted as a gathering place for earth energy (Ilmet 2018: 10). In addition to its archaeological background and the beautiful landscape, the place is rich in folklore – its landscape formations are explained in a series of folk tales about the activities of the giant Kalevipoeg. For years, this has been a favourite spot for role-players, historical re-enactments, Tolkien fans, and a camping spot for the Mütöfest festival (Hiimäe 2017, Kõiva 2018).

In 2006 nature religion followers erected eighteen wooden sculptures of ancient gods on both sides of the marathon finish line at the Elva Recreational Sports Centre, performing chanting and feeding rituals to bless them (Figure 1; Kõiva 2017: 210). A dwarves' reserve was added to amuse smaller children, so there are both great and small power trails. According to Karl Kontor, the director of the recreational sports centre, the idea for the figures sprung up when trees began to be chopped down in the woods for the marathon path. What should be done with the wood?

Why not sculptures. All the more so that the RMK (the state forest management centre) had nothing against it. And thus the artists Anni Irs and Mariina Tiidor drew up the designs (partly taken from relevant sections of [healer] Vigala Sass' book), and last Thursday artisans from all over Estonia got to work with their saws, chisels and other tools. But it was not only *Taara*, *Murueit* [Mother of the Sword], *Taevaissa* [the Sky Father], *Maaema* [Earth Mother], *Veteisa* [Father of Waters], *Päike* [Sun] and others that the artists were working on. When the roughly designed figures of the deities were in place, the artists were given freedom to go from there. In the future, these wooden creations should be visible both near the athletic centre and elsewhere in Elva (Postimees 2006).

As distinct from the earth gods at the Elva Sports Centre's finishing line, the figures on the so-called power trails are mostly characters familiar from Estonian fairy tales, as well as nature fairies and some animal shapes. Some of the figures are placed higher up in trees; some of them are good places to sit, and at others one can light a candle or engage in reflection. The locations of the figures were chosen by intuition. It is meaningful that according to the sculptors, the figures are located at places of positive energy, and others at sites of negative energy. However, several of the figures at places with a lovely view are meant for meditation or communing with nature. One can walk along the paths enjoying the natural sites along the way, remembering folktales, or making connections between the stories and nature. Sculptor Marina Tiidor, one of the inspirers and creators of the trail, has talked about her views together with Reet Priimann, a conservationist and specialist in nature energy, in a film (*Väike väerada Elvas* 2012). Once again this is an extraordinary place for health and recreation, which has grown out of folklore and has many parallels with the territories created by nature healers.

One custom initiated in 1992 is connected with the erection of a tall wooden statue, a so-called energy pillar at the places where earth's energy flows out (cf. more detailed descriptions in Kõiva 2018, Kivari 2016). Such pillars have been erected at Otepää (1992) and near the Witches' Well at the Tuhala nature reserve (in 21st c.). In addition to characterising new interpretations of the influence of the earth, these have been regarded as ways to unite with nature and heal oneself of various illnesses.

4. Sacred places established on private land

A key example of a sacred place established on private land is the dendrological park at Männisalu in Saaremaa, with its exemplary ritual spot. This place was designed by Vigala Sass (Aleksander Heintalu 1941–2015), who was known as a healer. The ritual spot, which is surrounded by circle-crosses also has wooden figures. Since its establishment in 1985, hundreds and thousands of people, some of them with health problems, have visited Sass' home and the ritual place. Mare Kõiva's impressions of the place date back to 1980–2000 – she tried to follow the establishment of the ritual complex in Saaremaa until its completion. In developing the place, its owner's mastery of folkloric and religious information and its creative application were important (on creativity, see Csikszentmihályi and Csikszentmihályi 1988, Csikszentmihályi 1996), as well as its ritual effectiveness, i.e., the acceptance of these rituals and their copying by other healers and masters of ritual.

25 years ago, when Sass drew up the plans and this whole patch of forest was full of the beliefs of our own people and of mythology uninfluenced by Christianity, full of wooden figures. Unfortunately, these rotted away. But a sculptor from Tallinn finished new ones according to Sass' drawings, says his friend Jaak (Teder 2015).

In his interviews Vigala Sass explained the mythological background of the characters on whom the sculptures are based. Some of this material has been published in his mythological dictionary (Heintalu 2007).

Vigala Sass created the ritual place near his dwelling, in a patch of forest, and at first glance it is invisible. There are actually two connected ritual places, symbolically separated from the rest of the landscape by ropes and circle-crosses. At the entry gate hangs a wooden gong (*lokulaud*), and one can only enter the innermost circle during a ritual. The complex includes a large sacrificial stone and a wooden building. Strips of cloth have been left as offerings, tied to the ropes surrounding the area, but on the sacrificial stone, in addition to ordinary offerings, marked items have been left, e.g. a piece of the trophy of the famous Kalev basketball team. Ostensibly, this had been donated when the healer conducted a ritual with the team and gave them tinctures of his healing plants in order to raise the team's energy level. After the team became masters at the Soviet Union level, Sergei Babenko smashed the trophy into pieces so that every player could get his piece, but the largest piece was donated to Sass

as thanksgiving (Teder 2015). There have been numerous narrative records about what was experienced during the rituals, about miraculous healings, and balancing of complex situations; some of these belonged to Vigala Sass' personal repertoire. Let us add that on the left of the trail as seen from the dwelling, Sass' wife, a sculptor, established a ground for women's rituals, which also influenced the culture at large.

In the 1990s, Irje Karjus established the Metsamoori family park on the lands of the Veetka farm near the Karula national park. There are wooden sculptures on her land as well. Irje Karjus, nicknamed *Metsamoor* (Forest Crone, born 1983) supports herself financially with experiential and health tourism, engaging in experiments on human psychology, herbal healing, and spell-casting rituals (Karjus 2004). The household, in many ways resembling an ordinary farm, includes an outbuilding, which has been converted into a Spell Cellar (*Loitsukelder*), where the mistress of the farm casts spells in the darkness, accompanied by drumbeat. The place also stores and sells natural products. Some of the wooden figures have interesting natural shapes, and have been used as figures, others have been fashioned by artists. What is interesting is how, over time, these figures have become healing; they have been introduced as elements in healing certain kinds of diseases, as was true of the figures erected along the Elva power trails. The cultural transfer has been similar also in other places: the Kassinurme sacred grove has undergone a similar process of development.

5. Major aspects of the process of creating ritual places

Unfortunately, a short article does not enable enough space to devote sufficient attention to all the aspects of the phenomenon, but we will highlight the more important ones. At the beginning, disciples of earth religion and mediums, the leaders of spiritual movements (Vigala Sass, Thule Lee, Heie Tuli, etc.), as well as societies and organisations that valued Estonia's own cultural history and religion served as initiators. Later on, the marking of the public space with figures expanded to civil movements as alternatives that both spared nature and offered multiple possibilities for decoration at a smaller cost. For example, the Estonian Forest Society and the Centre for the Management of National Forests, several municipal authorities and institutions (the Tartumaa Recreational Sports Centre at Elva; the town of Vastseliina and Kambja municipality, the Museum of Old Believers in Varnja), and intellectual and freethinking individuals, have used wooden figures to enrich the landscape (Figure 2).³

One can see a certain parallel development between the expansion of interest in wooden figures in the realms among mediums and religious groups to other spheres, as well as the process of site formation championed by a leader of a community, taking into account both its creative and ecological aspects.

³ Taking sacred groves under state protection legalized the trend of establishing sacred places, which has continued up to the present.



Figure 2. Figure of a raven. Estonia, Kambja. Photo by Andres Kuperjanov 2013.

To characterise the former, Sofield remarks that the establishment of a place that is directed and managed by community leaders provides roots for emic, folkloric, and community-led initiatives, as distinct from the formal, so-called industrial construction of spaces. Expressions that are of interest to tourism are created even if tourism has not been the primary motivator (Sofield et al. 2017: 2). This position fits the Estonian sacral landscape and public space; the figures are original, and they are connected with local mythology and folklore, even if they are tied specifically to the creation of a religious site. By such means, an ordinary landscape is rendered multi-dimensional and interesting, and connections are forged between more distant history and folklore.

Mihaly Csikszentmihaly (1988: 325) has characterised creativity as a dynamic phenomenon, for which the reciprocal influences of several elements are required. The individual is at the centre of creativity, but he/she can only be activated when other main factors are present; these include the existing culture with its traditions and conventions, to which the individual can refer and from whence he/she can derive support. A second crucial factor is the existence of a social group that criticises, evaluates, and verifies the creative product. Created sacral spaces are the result of creative inquiry. However, it is clear that a social group recognised and accepted the creation of such sites. The phenomenon is also characterised by the effectiveness of places both as sites of ritual and targets of excursions and tourist attractions.

The structure of ritual places was established quickly, and the elements used became visible: objects in nature such as a large (sacrificial) stone, a tree growing nearby, and a new, created ritual place (along with sculptures and, at least, circle-crosses, wooden gongs, etc.). The complex also includes a specific entryway. Boundary markers, such as circle-crosses placed on high wooden posts, along with the opportunity of making one's approach known (e.g. by sounding the wooden gong) are missing in urban spaces.

Erecting a monument in the public space presumes a permit and public funding; by contrast, no such documents are required when erecting similar structures on private land. This explains why design elements are more variegated there and worldview backgrounds are visible. Most of the sculptures are created by artists, though some vernacular creativity is also involved. Since wooden sculptures are a means of livelihood for sculptors, the expansion of areas (home garden, settlement, recreation area, theme- or adventure park) has been accompanied by the changes in the themes and execution of wooden sculptures. It would indeed be useful to explore, in a subsequent research, the stereotypic nature of figures of gods and fairies over a more extensive area of Europe, including Baltic (Figure 3), Slavic and Scandinavian figures, and to ask whether the reason for such disparities lies in materials, execution, or characteristic similarities.

When viewing the creative process, what emerges as a relatively marginal topic is that of conflict and resolution. Beginning with the difficulties related to the wooden figures erected on Toomemägi Hill up to more recent times, it is clear that some religious community members do not acknowledge new structures (one cannot exclude the possibility that such reservations are shared by people with secular world views; such a question has simply not been researched). Similar conflicts have led to unforeseen opinions and overt violence, such as destroying figures of nature fairies and throwing them from a considerable height at the Elva power trail. Superstitious belief in wooden figures is part of a paradigm, albeit a small segment thereof. For example, a university-educated woman has expressed an opinion that since the figures along the Elva recreational sporting trail are of the devil, she herself will not go to see them (EFITA, F31-001). Recently we found an interesting piece of writing describing a local woman's destructive activities on Hiiumaa Island: this religious woman considers it her duty to destroy crosses that people have fashioned themselves (EFITA, F31-001). The Hill of Crosses was founded in 1781 as a memory site for the Swedes deported from the island. This woman's activities point to a conflict in which an individual believes in his/her right to spontaneously destroy a memorial site; the site is interpreted by her as an expression of new paganism, without awareness of the fact that it is based on an old, local tradition, which has persisted in Estonia over centuries. Doubtless, this is also an example of a reaction to personal initiative and creativity, but in this specific case it also indicates lack of knowledge of cultural history.

The use of wooden materials has been regarded as an expression of ecological awareness, and as such they have found broader societal support. This can be illustrated by the words of a wood sculptor, whose figures can be found in many



Figure 3. Figure of Perkunas. Lithuania, Moletai. Photo by Andres Kuperjanov 2005.

places: “Our idea is to give beauty back to the environment from trees that have been chopped down. We believe that before choosing to cut down trees in one’s own yard, one might think of what it would be possible to do with the wood afterwards. But if the tree is vital and beautiful and if it does not endanger anyone, it might be a better choice not to touch it at all” (Perandi 1999).

Acknowledgements

This research is part of the research project “Narrative and belief aspects of folklore studies” of the Department of Folkloristics of the Estonian Literary Museum and was supported by IUT 22-5, EKM 8-2/20/3, and the European Union through the European Regional Development Fund (Centre of Excellence in Estonian Studies, TK-145).

Address

Mare Kõiva

Vanemuise 42

Estonian Literary Museum

51003 Tartu, Estonia

E-mail: mare@folklore.ee

Archival sources

EFITA = Scholarly Archives of Folklore and Religiosity, Department of Folkloristics, Estonian Literary Museum

References

- Avrami, Erica, Randall Mason, and Marta de la Torre (2000) *Values and heritage conservation*. Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute.
- Butler, Jenny (2020) *21st century Irish paganism: worldview, ritual, identity*. Farnham, Surrey: UK: Routledge.
- Csikszentmihályi, Mihály and Isabella Selega Csikszentmihályi, eds. (1988) *Optimal experience: psychological studies of flow in consciousness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Csikszentmihályi, Mihály (1996) *Creativity: flow and the psychology of discovery and invention*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Firth, Raymond (1996) *Religion: a humanist interpretation*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Gunnell, Terry (2015) “The background and nature of the annual and occasional rituals of the Ásatrúarfélag in Iceland”. In T. Minniyakhmetova and K. Velkoborská, eds. *Magicin rituals and rituals in magic*, 28–40. (The Ritual Year, 10.) Innsbruck and Tartu: ELM Scholarly Press.
- Harvey, Graham (2015) “Playing croquet with hedgehogs: (still) becoming a scholar of paganism and animism.” *Pomegranate: The International Journal of Pagan Studies* 17, 1–2, 99–114. doi: 10.1558/pome.v17i1-2.27747.

- HCL = *Henriku Liivimaa kroonika. Heinrici chronicon Livoniae* (1982) Ed by. Enn Tarvel. Tallinn: Eesti Raamat 1982. See also: Henricus Lettus (2003) *The chronicle of Henry of Livonia*. Transl. and ed. by James A. Brundage. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Heintalu, Aleksander (2007) *Väeraamat. Warraku raamat* 1. [The book of power.] Tallinn: Robirohi.
- Hiimäe, Reet (2017) “The making of a sacred place: an example of constructing place identity in the contemporary mentality”. In E. Anastasova and M. Kõiva, eds. *Balkan and Balticum: current studies in the postsocialist space*, 221–237. (Sator, 18.) Tartu: ELM Scholarly Press. DOI: 10.7592/Sator.2017.18
- Ilmet, Kaupo (2018) *Vaiga-Kassinurme maalinn*. [The vaiga-kassinurme hillfort.] Põltsamaa: Vali Press.
- Ivakhiv, Adrian (2015) “Pagan(ish) senses and sensibilities.” *Pomegranate: The International Journal of Pagan Studies* 17, 1–2, 194–205. doi: 10.1558/pome.v17i1-2.29680.
- Jonuks, Tõnno and Tiina Äikäs, (2019) “Contemporary deposits at sacred places: reflections on contemporary paganism in Estonia and Finland”. *Folklore: EJM* 75: 7–46.
- Jonuks, Tõnno and Atko Rimmel (2020, in press) “Metsarahva kujunemine – retrospektiivne vaade müüdiloomele”. [Formation of the Forest-nation – retrospective view to the creation of a myth.] *Keel ja Kirjandus* (Tallinn).
- Kalda, Mare (2011) *Rahvajutud peidetud varandustest: tegude saamine lugudeks*. [Hidden treasures in Estonian tale tradition: from deeds to folk legends.] (Dissertationes folkloristicae Universitatis Tartuensis, 15.) Tartu: University of Tartu Press.
- Kaplinski, Jaan (1992) “Nüri kirvega uuspaganluse vastu”. [With a blunt ax against Neopaganism.] *Postimees* 101, May 5.
- Kivari, Kristel (2016) *Dowsing as a link between natural and supernatural: folkloristic reflections on water veins, Earth radiation and dowsing practice*. (Dissertationes folkloristicae Universitatis Tartuensis, 24.) Tartu: University of Tartu Press.
- Kõiva, Mare, Andres Kuperjanov, and Liisa Vesik (2018) “Sacred places – destinations of travel and pilgrimage in Bulgaria”. In Ekaterina Anastasova and Svetoslava Toncheva, eds. *Balkan and Baltic states in united Europe: history, religion, and culture* 2, 121–134. Sofia: International Society of Balkan and Baltic Studies.
- Kõiva, Mare (2019) “Izobraženija derevjannyh božestv kak elementy sozdanija novogo religioznogo prostranstva”. In Sergej Šatrvskij, ed. *Religija i komunikacija*, 432–437. Minsk: Beloruskii Gos. Universitet.
- Kõiva, Mare (2018) “Inventing sacred places: wooden sculptures and placemaking of contemporary landscape”. *Yearbook of Balkan and Baltic Studies* 1, 1–76.
- Kõiva, Mare (2017) “Constructing contemporary periodical and occasional rituals”. In Ekaterina Anastasova and Mare Kõiva, eds. *Balkan and Balticum: current studies in the postsocialist space*, 199–222. (Sator, 18.) Tartu: ELM Scholarly Press. DOI: 10.7592/Sator.2017.18.
- Kütt, Auli (2007) “Maarahva pühade puude ja puistutega seotud käitumisnormid” [Countryfolk’s codes of conduct relating to holy trees and groves.] In Heiki Valk, ed. *Looduslikud pühapaigad. Väärtused ja kaitse*, 185–212. [Natural sanctuaries: values and protection.] (Õpetatud Eesti Seltsi toimetised, 36.) Tartu
- Leete, Art (1992) “Puuslikud Toomemäel” [Wooden gods on Tartu Dome Hill]. *Hiis. Maausuline ajakiri* 5. Available online at <http://www-1.ms.ut.ee/mart/raamat/hiis5.htm>. Accessed on 19.05.2020.

- Loorits, Oskar (1935) "Mulgimaa ohvrikohad. Die Opferstätten in Mulgimaa". *Kaleviste mailt*, 226–319. Tartu: Õpetatud Eesti Selts.
- Maggiocco, Sabina (2001) *Neo-pagan sacred art and altars: making things whole*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.
- Karjus, Irje (2004) *Metsamoori perepark. Retked loodusilma*. [Forest Crone's family park.] Tartu: Piirialade ja Ääremaade Toetuse Agentuur.
- Olearius, Adam (1669) *The voyages and travells of the ambassadors sent by Frederick, Duke of Holstein, to the great Duke of Mucovy and the king of Persia...* London: Printed for John Starkey and Thomas Bassett.
- Väike Väerada Elvas (2012), video by Loov maatriks [Video. Power trail in Elva]. Available online at <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C4hPM9qq4Mg>>. Accessed on 29.12.2019.
- Perandi, Raivo (1999) *Puukujud*. [Wooden sculptures.] Available online at <<http://www.puukujud.ee>>. Accessed on 29.12.2019.
- Povedák, István (2011) "Transforming sacred places". In Mare Kõiva, ed. *The inner and the outer*, 27–42. (The Ritual Year, 6.) Tartu: ELM Scholarly Press.
- Postimees (2006) = "Maratonifiniš saab kõrged valvurid". [Marathon finishing line at the Elva Recreational Sports Centre gets high guardians.] *Postimees*, May 23. Available online at <<https://www.postimees.ee/1548303/maratonifini-saab-korged-valvurid>>. Accessed on 29.12.2019.
- Pärnik, Ülo, ed. (2006) *Dr. Georg Julius von Schultz (dr. Bertram). Läbilõige ühe Balti idealisti maailmavaatest Eesti kultuuriloo üldpildis*. [Dr. Georg Julius von Schultz (dr. Bertram). A snapshot of one of the Baltic idealists' worldview in the general picture of Estonian cultural history.] Tartu: Ilmamaa.
- Rountree, Kathryn, ed. (2015) *Contemporary pagan and native faith movements in Europe: colonialist and nationalist impulses*. New York: Berghahn.
- Ryden, Kent C. (1993) *Mapping the invisible landscape: folklore, writing, and the sense of place*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press.
- Sofield, Trevor, Jaume Guia, and Jan Specht (2017) "Organic 'folkloric' community driven place-making and tourism". *Tourism Management* 61, 1–22. Available online at <<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S026151771730002X>>. Accessed on 28.08.2018.
- Sutrop, Urmas (2004) "A wooden god of Estonians from before 1800?". *Trames* 8, 3, 339–344.
- Teder, Teet (2015) "Vigala Sass: 'Ma kogu aeg ootan. Juba kolmandat nädalat ootan, millal ma ära lähen'". [Vigala Sass: 'I am waiting all the time. Already three weeks I'm waiting for my passing away.] *Õhtuleht*, 17.08.2015. Available online at <<https://www.oh tuleht.ee/689909/vigala-sass-ma-kogu-aeg-ootan-juba-kolmandat-nadalat-ootan-millal-ma-ara-lahen->> Accessed on 29.12.2019.
- Toncheva, Svetoslava (2019) "Redefining human-nature dichotomy: the voice of spiritual-ecological movements in environmental debate". *Antropologija/Anthropology. Journal for Sociocultural Anthropology* 6, 57–73. Available online at <http://anthropology-journal.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/sp.-Antropologia_N_6_03.-Svetoslava-Toncheva.pdf>. Accessed on 29.12.2019.
- Vaiškunas, Jonas (2004) *Studies into the Balts' sacred places*. (British Archaeological Reports. International Series, 1228). Oxford: J. & E. Hedges Ltd.
- Strimska, Michael C. (2017) "Paganism and politics: a view from Central-Eastern Europe". *Pomegranate: The International Journal of Pagan Studies*, Vol 19: 2, DOI: 10.1558/pome.34591.

- Strmiska, Michael C. (2005) "Modern paganism in world cultures: comparative perspectives". In *Modern paganism in world cultures: comparative perspectives*, 1–54. Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio.
- Shizhenskiy, Roman and Ekaterina Surovegina (2018) "Sovremennyyi russkii jazyčeskii xram: opyt 3d prezentacii russki jazyčeskii xram: opyt 3d prezentacii". In I. Erlikhson and Y. Savosina, eds. *Evropa, Rossija, Azija: sotrudni estvo, protivoreija, konflikty. Sbornik statej III meždunarodnoj nauno-prakti eskoj konferencii*, 287–292. Rjazan.
- York, Michael (2015) "Navigating academia and spirituality from a pagan perspective". *Pomegranate: The International Journal of Pagan Studies* 17, 1–2, 115–127. doi: 10.1558/pome.v17i1-2.29681