Arvo Krikmann: folklorist and paremiologist (21 July 1939 - 27 February 2017)[1]

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Abstract

Arvo Krikmann, Estonian scholar, stands out for being a folklorist, linguist and a paremiologist. His paremiological researches focus in the Estonian and the Baltic Finnish proverbs. Among his numerous works, the Estonian proverb collections developed in collaboration with Ingrid Sarv and the comparative works about Russian, Baltic, German and Skandinavian proverbs developed with Matti Kuusi stand out. On the death of Krikmann in February 2017, Wolfgang Mieder writes the present short biography dedicating special attention to his paremiological path, since Mieder considers him one of the most important paremiologists, due to the relevance of this work and to his theories. The reading and re-reading of his scientific researches will guide the growing number of researches interested in analysing, from an interdisciplinary or comparative perspective, the sententious and stable language units that exist in a language and that carry the culture of a country or a region.

Keywords
Paremiology.
Proverb.
Folklore.
Estonian.

Resumen

Título: «Arvo Krikmann: folclorista y paremiólogo (21/7/1939-27/2/2017)».

El académico estonio Arvo Krikmann destaca por ser folclorista, lingüista y paremiólogo. Sus investigaciones paremiológicas se centran en los refranes estonios y en los refranes de la zona balto-finesa. Entre sus numerosas obras destacan el refranero estonio elaborado con la colaboración de Ingrid Sarv y las publicaciones de índole comparativa realizadas con Matti Kuusi sobre los refranes rusos, bálticos, alemanes y escandinavos. Con motivo del fallecimiento de Krikmann en febrero de 2017, Wolfgang Mieder escribe la presente semblanza y dedica especial atención a su trayectoria paremiológica, pues Mieder lo considera uno de los principales paremiólogos, dada la relevancia de su obra y de sus teorías. La lectura y relectura de su producción científica podrán servir de guía al número creciente de investigadores interesados en analizar, desde una perspectiva interdisciplinar o comparativa, las unidades lingüísticas sentenciosas y estables existentes en una lengua y que son portadoras de la cultura de un país o de una región.

Palabras clave
Paremiología.
Refrán.
Folclore.
Estonio.

Résumé

Titre: « Arvo Krikmann : folkloriste et parémiologue (21/07/1939-27/02/2017) ».

L'académicien estonien Arvo Krikmann est un important folkloriste, linguïste et parémiologue. Ses recherches parémiologiques sont consacrées aux proverbes estoniens et aux proverbes balto-finnois. Parmi ses nombreux ouvrages, il convient de souligner la collection de proverbes estoniens élaborée avec la collaboration d'Ingrid Sarv et les publications comparatives faites avec Matti Kuusi sur les proverbes russes, baltes, allemands et scandinaves. Lors du décès de Krikmann en février 2017, Wolfgang Mieder en trace ce portrait, qui accorde une attention toute particulière à son parcours parémiologique, car Mieder le considère un des principaux parémiologues, étant donné l'importance de son ouvrage et de ses théories. La lecture et relecture de sa production scientifique pourront servir de guide au nombre croissant de chercheurs intéressés par l´analyse interdisciplinaire ou comparative des unités linguistiques sentencieuses et stables existantes dans une langue et qui portent la culture d'un pays ou d'une région.

Mots-clés
Parémiologie.
Proverbe.
Folklore.
Estonien.

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It is with much sadness that the international community of paremiologists received the news that one of its very best passed away on February 27, 2017, at Tartu, Estonia. Arvo Krikmann was a giant among the world's folklorists and paremiologists, and he will most certainly be dearly missed. His scholarly accomplishments are legendary, of course, but he will also be remembered as one of the kindest colleagues among all of us. My personal friendship with this great man, who used to give me strong bearhugs whenever we met at Tartu, Tallinn, Tavira, and elsewhere in Europe, meant the world to me, and it is so very difficult for me to come to terms with his departure. There are so many of my paremiological heroes who have predeceased me – Archer Taylor, Grigorii L'vovich Permiakov, Démétrios Loukatos, Matti Kuusi, Kazys Grigas, Alan Dundes, Lutz Röhrich, and others – and I must admit that while I remember them all fondly I also feel ever lonelier as my own life continues to advance towards its end.

I still remember celebrating Arvo Krikmann's seventy-fifth birthday when we honored him with volume 31 (2014) of *Proverbium* as a very special *Festschrift* on that occasion on July 21, 2014 (see my laudation on pp. 1-10). I also published a tribute to my dear friend with the fitting title "'Friends, Though Absent, Are Still Present'," in *Folklore*, 58 (Tartu: 2014), pp. 209-212. But the most telling account of our special friendship can be found in our moving correspondence that I edited about two years before his death: "'Old Friends Are Best!' Epistolary Highlights Between the Paremiologists Arvo Krikmann and Wolfgang Mieder," in Anneli Baran, Liisi Laineste, and Piret Voolaid (eds.), *Scala Naturae. Festschrift in Honour of Arvo Krikmann for His 75tb Birthday* (Tartu: ELM Scholarly Press, 2014), pp. 17-56. These letters are not only a testimony of our lasting friendship, but they also show how much such friendships mean among scholars beyond any borders and distances. Friendships are the humane side of research that add emotion and compassion to the scholarly world.

There were other tributes to Arvo Krikmann on his big birthday, and there is no need to repeat those words as well as my own here at great length. Suffice it to say that the Estonian folklorist and academician Arvo Krikmann was born on July 21, 1939, in the village of Pudivere in the small Baltic country of Estonia. By the time his incredibly productive life ended on February 27, 2017, at Tartu, he had earned himself a distinguished place in the hall of fame of international folkloristics. He graduated from the Department of Estonian Philology of Tartu University in 1962. From 1962-1969 he worked as a researcher and senior researcher at the Literary Museum in Tartu, from 1970-1972 he took postgraduate courses, from 1973-1993 he was a junior and senior researcher at the Institute of Language and Literature, from 1994-2000 he was head researcher at the Institute of Estonian Language, and since 2000 to his death he remained very active as a senior researcher at the Estonian Literary Museum. Having obtained much acclaim for his excellent folkloristic scholarship, he became distinguished professor in 1992 at Tartu University and in 1997 he received the high honor of becoming a member of the Estonian Academy of Sciences. Among his numerous other honors are: member of the Finnish Literature Society (1979), member of the editorial board of *Proverbium* (1984), National Science Prize (1999), Cultural Endowment of Estonia Annual Award (2000 and 2004), member of the Academia Scientiarum et Artium Europaea (2003), Baltic Assembly Prize for Science (2004), and honorary member of the International Society for Folk Narrative Research (2005).

His major research endeavors were concerned with culture and society, having conducted his scholarly work primarily from the point of view of folklore, humor, linguistics, paremiology, philology, semantics, and semiotics. His many studies on jokes and riddles were based on a sincere interest in ethnicity and stereotypes that often played a role in them. He also spearheaded the sophisticated analysis of the geographical distribution of verbal folklore genres by means of computer technologies to map the appearance and density of rich arrays of variants as they have been recorded in different regions. The resulting publications and fascinating lectures on these matters in Estonian, Russian, and perfect English were erudite achievements with an unquestionable influence on Baltic, European, and global scholarship. Clearly Arvo Krikmann

was one of the greatest folklorists of the twentieth/twenty-first centuries who brought international recognition not only for his own scholarship but also for the superb work that is going on by other folklorists in Estonia.

But to be sure, Arvo Krikmann was also among the leading paremiologists in the world, and his accomplishments place him next to such distinguished and departed proverb scholars as Alan Dundes, Kazys Grigas, Matti Kuusi, Démétrios Loukatos, Grigorii L'vovich Permiakov, Lutz Röhrich, Archer Taylor, and others. He belonged to the group of such renowned paremiographers as Gyula Paczolay, František Čermák, and many others who are still at work on the national and international compilations of proverbs. Of course, these scholars and many more, among them Valerii Mokienko, Charles Clay Doyle, Outi Lauhakangas, Peter Grzybek, Richard Honeck, Anna T. Litovkina, and Shirley L. Arora, have all benefited from his invaluable work.

It is above all as a theoretical paremiologist that Arvo Krikmann made his lasting mark on the international scene, publishing major papers on the linguistic aspects of proverbs. His seminal monograph *On Denotative Indefiniteness of Proverbs* (1974) and its sequel *Some Additional Aspects of Semantic Indefiniteness of Proverbs* (1974) represented milestones in the semantic and semiotic study of proverbs. Of course, Krikmann also made major contributions to the study of metaphors in proverbs, their geographical distribution, their variants, their classification, their structure, their syntax, and their significance as preformulated pieces of traditional wisdom. While many of these significant papers were published in his native Estonian tongue or in Russian, his important findings also appeared in English and German, reaching students and scholars of proverbs around the globe.

Together with Ingrid Sarv he published the monumental Estonian proverb collection *Eesti vanasõnad* (1980-1987) in five massive volumes. Both were also part of the international team of paremiologists who, under the direction of Matti Kuusi at Helsinki, put together the unsurpassed comparative proverb collection *Proverbia septentrionalia. 900 Balto-Finnic Proverb Types with Russian, Baltic, German and Scandinavian Parallels* (1985).

It is not possible in this short necrology to list all of his paremiological publications, but his entire scholarly accomplishments and honors can be found in Karin Maria Rooleid's *Arvo Krikmann. Bibliograafia 1963-2009* (Tartu: Eesti Kirjandusmuuseumi folkloristika osakond, 2009) and on the internet under https://www.etis.ee/portaal/isikuCV.aspx?PersonV!D=654&lang=en. It is mindboggling to survey his rich contributions to paremiology alone of which at least the following titles published in English and German deserve special recognition:

"Zur Problematik der Metasprache als Ausdruck der Bedeutungsstreuung der Sprichwörter." *Proverbium*, no. 17 (1971): 624-626.

On Denotative Indefiniteness of Proverbs. Tallinn: Academy of Sciences of the Estonian SSR, Institute of Language and Literature, 1974. Also in *Proverbium*, 1 (1984): 47-91; and in Arvo Krikmann, *Proverb Semantics*. *Studies in Structure, Logic, and Metaphor*. Ed. Wolfgang Mieder. Burlington, Vermont: The University of Vermont, 2009: 15-50.

Some Additional Aspects of Semantic Indefiniteness of Proverbs. Tallinn: Academy of Sciences of the Estonian SSR, Institute of Language and Literature, 1974. Also in *Proverbium*, 2 (1985): 58-85; and in Arvo Krikmann, *Proverb Semantics*. *Studies in Structure, Logic, and Metaphor*. Ed. Wolfgang Mieder. Burlington, Vermont: The University of Vermont, 2009: 51-77.

"Some Difficulties Arising at Semantic Classifying of Proverbs." *Proverbium*, no. 23 (1974): 865-879; and also in Arvo Krikmann, *Proverb Semantics*. *Studies in Structure, Logic, and Metaphor*. Ed. Wolfgang Mieder. Burlington, Vermont: The University of Vermont, 2009: 79-94.

"Some Aspects of Proverb Distribution." *Symposium on Mathematical Processing of Cartographic Data, Tallinn, December 18-19, 1979*. Ed. G. M. Remmel. Tallinn: Academy of Sciences of the Estonian SSR, 1979: 28-44.

"1001 Frage zur logischen Struktur der Sprichwörter." *Semiotische Studien zum Sprichwort. Simple Forms Reconsidered I*. Eds. Peter Grzybek and Wolfgang Eismann. Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 1984: 387-408.

Proverbia septentrionalia. 900 Balto-Finnic Proverb Types with Russian, Baltic, German and Scandinavian Parallels. Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1985. Editor in chief Matti Kuusi; in cooperation with Marje Joalaid, Elsa Kokare, Arvo Krikmann, Kari Laukkanen, Pentti Leino, Vaina Mälk, and Ingrid Sarv.

Some Statistics on Baltic-Finnic Proverbs. Tallinn: Academy of Sciences of the Estonian SSR, Division of Social Sciences, 1985.

"The Great Chain Metaphor: An Open Sesame for Proverb Semantics?" *Proverbium*, 11 (1994): 117-124. Also in *Folklore*, 1 (Tartu: 1996): 74-83; and in Arvo Krikmann, *Proverb Semantics*. *Studies in Structure, Logic, and Metaphor*. Ed. Wolfgang Mieder. Burlington, Vermont: The University of Vermont, 2009: 95-103.

"The Tartu Research Group of Paremiology." *Folklore*, 2 (Tartu: 1996): 87-115 (with Ingrid Sarv). With 1 illustration. Also in *Proverbium*, 13 (1996): 111-133.

"Matti Kuusi and the Project of Baltic-Finnic Proverbs." *De Proverbio. An Electronic Journal of International Proverb Studies*, 4, no. 1 (1998), 10 pp. (with Pekka Hakamies).

"On the Relationships of the Rhetorical, Modal, Logical, and Syntactic Planes in Estonian Proverbs." *Folklore*, 6 (Tartu: January 1998): 99-129; 8 (December 1998): 51-99; and 9 (December 1998): 71-96; and also in Arvo Krikmann, *Proverb Semantics*. *Studies in Structure, Logic, and Metaphor*. Ed. Wolfgang Mieder. Burlington, Vermont: The University of Vermont, 2009: 105-205. With 4 maps.

"Finnic Paremiology: Past, Present, Future." *Congressus Nonus Internationalis Fenno-Ugristarum 7.-13.8.2000 Tartu*. Eds. Anu Nurk, Triinu Palo, and Tõnu Seilenthal. Tartu: Ülikool, 2000. I: 77-92.

"Proverbs on Animal Identity: Typological Memoirs." *Folklore*, 17 (Tartu: 2001), 7-84. Also in Arvo Krikmann, *Proverb Semantics*. *Studies in Structure, Logic, and Metaphor*. Ed. Wolfgang Mieder. Burlington, Vermont: The University of Vermont, 2009: 207-246.

"The Monograph *Lithuanian Proverbs* by Kazys Grigas and Its Significance to the Paremiological Research." *Tautosakos Darbai / Folklore Studies*, 30 (Vilnius: 2005): 23-42 (review article). With 11 maps.

"'Digging One's Own Grave'." *Folklore*, 35 (Tartu: 2007): 53-60. Also in Arvo Krikmann, *Proverb Semantics*. *Studies in Structure, Logic, and Metaphor*. Ed. Wolfgang Mieder. Burlington, Vermont: The University of Vermont, 2009: 301-309.

"Imagery of Proverbs: The Great Chain of Being as the Background of Personificatory and Depersonificatory Metaphors in Proverbs and Elsewhere." *Proceedings of the First Interdisciplinary Colloquium on Proverbs, 5th to 12th November 2007, at Tavira, Portugal.* Eds. Rui J.B. Soares and Outi Lauhakangas. Tavira: Tipografia Tavirense, 2008: 29-68; and also in Arvo Krikmann, *Proverb Semantics*. *Studies in Structure, Logic, and Metaphor*. Ed. Wolfgang Mieder. Burlington, Vermont: The University of Vermont, 2009: 247-300. With 7 illustrations.

"Balto-Finnic Proverb Lore as a Mirror of Folkloric, Ethnic and Linguistic Relationships." *Proceedings of the Second Interdisciplinary Colloquium on Proverbs, 9th to 16th November 2008, at Tavira, Portugal*. Eds. Rui J.B. Soares and Outi Lauhakangas. Tavira: Tipografia Tavirense, 2009: 247-275. With 17 maps and numerous diagrams.

Proverb Semantics. *Studies in Structure, Logic, and Metaphor*. Ed. Wolfgang Mieder. Burlington, Vermont: The University of Vermont, 2009. With numerous illustrations and maps.

"Metaphor vs. Joke? Figurativeness vs. Funniness?" *Proceedings of the Third Interdisciplinary Colloquium on Proverbs, 8th to 15th November 2009, at Tavira, Portugal*. Eds. Rui J.B. Soares and Outi Lauhakangas. Tavira: Tipografia Tavirense, 2010: 300-309.

"An Attempt at Multidimensional Structural Classification of American Proverbs." *Proceedings of the Fourth Interdisciplinary Colloquium on Proverbs, 7th to 14th November 2010, at Tavira, Portugal*. Eds. Rui J.B. Soares and Outi Lauhakangas. Tavira: Tipografia Tavirense, 2011: 231-245.

"The Problem of 'Motivating Power' of Proverbs." *Proceedings of the Sixth Interdisciplinary Colloquium on Proverbs, 4th to 11th November 2012, at Tavira, Portugal*. Eds. Rui J.B. Soares and Outi Lauhakangas. Tavira: Tipografia Tavirense, 2013: 459-468.

"On the Hypervariability of Some Fixed Expressions on the Internet." *"Bis dat, qui cito dat". "Gegengabe" in Paremiology, Folklore, Language, and Literature. Honoring Wolfgang Mieder on His Seventieth Birthday*. Eds. Christian Grandl and Kevin J. McKenna. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang. 2015: 215-228.

As can be seen from this list (excluding publications in the less accessible languages of Estonian and Russian), it has been one of my very special and treasured honors to edit eight of these essays in a special celebratory volume at the time of Arvo Krikmann's seventieth birthday: *Proverb Semantics*. *Studies in Structure, Logic, and Metaphor*. Ed. Wolfgang Mieder. Burlington, Vermont: The University of Vermont, 2009. It is in this volume where he described his scholarly life and work better than what is said here, to wit, his personal comments of "How I Started and Continued, and to Whom I Am Indebted" (pp. 1-14). The title of these reflections indicates the humility and kindness of this big man, who to me was like a benevolent and friendly giant bear with an incredible mind that revolutionized modern paremiology. Proverb studies would not have reached today's impressive theoretical level were it not for the seminal paremiological work of our treasured, respected, and admired Estonian friend Arvo Krikmann. His legendary scholarship will survive and continue to influence generations of paremiologists and folklorists. And those of us, who had the fortune, privilege, and honor to know him personally and belong to his circle of friends, will most certainly carry Arvo Krikmann in our minds and hearts until the end of our own lives.

