sciendo

Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics 17 (2): 1–11
DOI: 10.2478/jef-2023-0014

THE INSTRUMENTAL VERNACULAR*

ÜLO VALK
Professor of Estonian and Comparative Folklore
Institute of Cultural Research
University of Tartu
Ülikooli 16, 51003 Tartu, Estonia
e-mail: ulo.valk@ut.ee
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2981-0173

ABSTRACT

Written as a response to professor Simon Bronner's critical analysis of the concept vernacular and its uses, published in the *Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics* (2022), the article highlights the functionality of the term 'vernacular'. It has become a folkloristic category, binding conceptual domains such as 'folk' and 'institutional', 'folkloric' and 'authored', 'oral' and 'literary', 'belief' and 'knowledge', which have often been set apart in former scholarship. The main focus of the article is on vernacular religion as a concept and methodology, introduced by Leonard N. Primiano in the 1990s, which opened up a new perspective in the study of religions. The article considers 'vernacular' as a flexible concept, instrumental in developing folkloristics in its trans-disciplinary dialogues. Projected on the history of folkloristics as a multilingual field of studies with roots in multiple national, regional and ethnic traditions, vernacular as an outlook enables us to think of folklore as a transcultural concept and disconnect it from colonial legacies.

KEYWORDS: vernacular • folklore • folkloristics of religion • Leonard N. Primiano • history of folkloristics

We are used to thinking that folkloristics as a distinct branch of knowledge emerged in 19th century Europe. Disciplinary histories guide us from Herder to the Grimm brothers in Germany and from Macpherson to Thoms in England. Soon afterward, we find the expansive growth of folklore studies all over Europe, which, according to Diarmuid Ó Giolláin, followed two basic orientations. One was metropolitan with roots in the imperial countries, the second in "non-politically sovereign or politically fragmented territories", where "folklore studies were institutionalized and professionalized" (Ó Giolláin 2022: 17). As the folklore movement spread among the colonised peoples, it strengthened their national pursuits, which in some cases led to the establishment of political independence. Estonia, Latvia and Finland are good examples of such success stories. In 1907 the international network of Folklore Fellows was formed, led by Kaarle Krohn and Axel Olrik, and in 1910 the Folklore Fellows' Communications monograph

* This essay has been supported by the Estonian Research Council (project PRG670).

ISSN 1736-6518 (print), ISSN 2228-0987 (online)

series (FFC) was started, becoming the flagship of the new discipline. Its first two issues on the folklore collections in Copenhagen, written by Axel Olrik (1910) and Astrid Lunding (1910), appeared in English. From the third issue of the FFC – the index of folktales by Antti Aarne (1910) –, the German language started to dominate. 83 out of the 100 volumes of the FFC published between 1910 and 1932 appeared in German. During the second half of the 20th century, German declined and English became the lingua franca of international folkloristics. Of the last 100 FFC volumes, published between 1980 and 2023, 88 appeared in English. (See Folklore Fellows 2023.) However, many of these books were translations from different languages, revealing remarkable linguistic diversity. Today, folkloristics in English depends heavily on the inflow of scholarship with roots in other languages and in a variety of national, ethnic and regional research traditions. The majority of folklorists worldwide are not native speakers of English, and many of them play a role in developing the conceptual apparatus of folkloristics not only in their mother tongues, but on the international level. As English has become the shared vernacular of folkloristic communication, the creolisation of disciplinary discourse in English seems inevitable.

LANGUAGES, WORDS AND TROUBLESOME ETYMOLOGIES

As a student at the University of Tartu in 1980s, I had to read works in Estonian, German, Russian and Finnish. These works were prescribed by my syllabus and by the academic traditions of the philological school that prevailed in Tartu in earlier centuries. I never studied English at the university, as my specialisation was in Estonian folklore, the background of which was seen to lie in Finno-Ugric studies. During my student years, several professors shared deep interest in etymologies, looking for the original meanings of words. Thus, I learned from my philosophy professor that the ancient concept of 'truth' in Greek philosophy was *aletheia* ('disclosure/unconcealedness'), the opposite of *lethe* ('concealment'). Hence, it was concluded that truth tends to be hidden, and the goal of true scholarship is to shed light, to reveal, to find out the essence of something that remains invisible to the naked eye. Etymologies appeared to us, the students, as the supreme method of uncovering the truth about words, the true meaning of which had often become obscure. Max Müller's "disease of the language" (see Feldman and Richardson 1972: 481) was not mentioned, but such semantic analysis reminds one of the methods of this solar mythologist. What we learned about the history of languages often surprised us, as some common words, sounding neutral, had problematic histories. For example, it appeared that the English word *slave*, the Latin *sclāvus* and the ethnonym *Slavic* had the same origin, revealing the history of enslavement of the Slavic peoples by their powerful neighbours. Etymologically, the endonym appeared as related to *slovo* ('word'), implying one's own people who spoke the 'normal' and understandable language, in contrast to the 'dumb' foreigners. In addition, we learned that the Estonian word *ori*/ Gen. *orja* ('slave') was an ancient Finno-Ugric root, borrowed from the endonym of the proto-Iranian people who called themselves *arya*. Aryans were the neighbours and adversaries of the Finno-Ugric tribes, who had enslaved some Aryan men and women. The meaning of the word *arya*, originally referring to the superior classes of the Indo-European peoples, was thus inverted and started

to denote slaves and servants in Estonian and other Finno-Ugric languages. I remember these old etymologies when I read about the current discussions about the English word *vernacular*, which has become a common concept in folkloristic discourse. As shown by scholars, such as Robert G. Howard (2011), the word is derived from the Latin *verna* 'home-born slave', revealing an exciting and controversial history. On the one hand, *verna* indicates inferiority, because a slave-woman's child was born a slave. On the other hand, it connotes remarkable verbal competence, as by contrast to other slaves, a *verna* was a native speaker of classical Latin, the institutionally-empowered language. Howard notes the semantic flexibility and dialectical nature of 'vernacular' that emerges from "hybridity between everyday or folkloric cultural elements and institutional structures of power" (ibid.: 1244).

Knowledge of historical semantics reveals profound philological knowledge, but it seldom affects our daily uses of language, be it academic or vernacular. Words become practical instruments of thinking and communication, and whereas we certainly avoid offensive words, we are generally not bothered by scholarly etymologies. If we start to dig into the histories of languages, many words appear in a fresh light, sometimes tainted by problematic connotations. Biologists have adopted the word 'cell' to denote the "smallest basic unit of a plant or animal" (*Cambridge Dictionary*). English scientist Robert Hooke (1635–1703) coined the term, when he made discoveries by using a microscope. In his work *Micrographia* (1665), he described the structure of slices of cork as consisting of little compartments like a honeycomb. Hooke decided to call them 'cells', because they "reminded him of the cells that housed monks living in a monastery" (Brum et al. 1995: 54). It appears that one of the basic terms in biological jargon has roots in the monastic culture of Christianity. In addition, the word has strong associations with the Western criminal law, evoking imaginations of prison. Talking about living organisms, doesn't this sound misleading, even subduing and repressive? Do biologists today dispute and regret the use of the term 'cell', and call for the jettisoning of this word? Perhaps some do. However, how constructive can such discussions be for the development of biology?

THE CONTESTED VERNACULAR AND FOLKLORISTICS OF RELIGION

As we are used to working with texts, words, and meanings, we have probably become more sensitive towards our academic jargon than scholars whose primary subject is non-verbal. Simon Bronner, one of the intellectual leaders of international folkloristics, has critically studied the uses of 'vernacular' as a term. In his discussion, 'vernacular' appears as a "negatively loaded categorization" (2022: 10). Bronner has clearly shown that in the recent history of folkloristic publications in English there is a correlation between the rise of 'vernacular' and the decreasing usage of 'folk' and 'folklore' (ibid.: 6). Is it possible that we are witnessing the displacement of these words? Do we, folklorists, need to be worried? According to the famous Dundesian definition, 'folk' refers to "*any group of people whatsoever* who share at least one common factor" and shares "some traditions which it calls its own" (Dundes 1965: 2). Thanks to this definition, the concept 'folk' stands firm in scholarship. 'Folklore' – another etic term, central to the discipline –

has also gone through radical poststructuralist scrutiny amongst American colleagues, as reflected in the special issue of the *Journal of American Folklore* (1998). Ilana Harlow (1998: 231), its editor, noted in the introduction that the term 'folklore' has remained functional throughout its history because "it has been continuously redefined". Harlow also spotted the "discrepancy between academic and popular conceptions of folklore both as a 'stuff' and as a discipline" (ibid.: 232). Hence, the semantic variability of "folklore" and the range of its redefinitions has been vital but the term has remained constant, providing focus to the academic field. Jettisoning it seems not only unnecessary but dangerous for disciplinary identity (see Ben-Amos 1998).

As I am not a native speaker of English, it is difficult for me to sense the subtle connotations of some of its words. Hence, I have been puzzled by the devaluation of the word 'folklore' in English, the related "status anxiety" among folklorists and the "stigma of the F-word" (Noyes 2016: 71). Often, concerns have been expressed about the institutional marginalisation of our discipline, as some folklore programs decline and departments are closed. Yet, other centres rise and new generations of folklorists come forward. We have never become a prevailing power in national or international humanities. Should we lament the loss of something we never had? Shouldn't we be content with maintaining our status worldwide – marginal as ever, but firm, institutionally grounded, future-oriented, and multilingual? Parallel to the English language, folkloristics and its basic vocabulary undergoes development in many languages, and its cognate concepts may have different connotations. For example, there is nothing wrong with the Estonian equivalents of "folklore" – *folkloor*, *rahvaluule*, *rahvapärimus*. All of these are legitimate, apt and appropriate words, used both in academic and in vernacular contexts with no negative overtones, all expressing subtle differences in meaning, referring to miscellaneous aspects of folkloric phenomena in living cultures. Whereas *rahvas*/*rahva-* refers to the folk or people, *luule* means poetry, drawing attention not only to the rhythmic and rhymed traditions, but to the poetic qualities of folklore in general. *Pärimus* ('tradition') indicates the temporal continuity of transmission that links folk groups and generations.

One of the folklorists who perpetuated the use of 'vernacular' in English-language folkloristics was Leonard N. Primiano. In his definitive article "Vernacular Religion and the Search for Method in Religious Folklife" (1995) Primiano reflected on the semantic complications of the two-tiered model of religion, where its "high" and "low" forms have been juxtaposed. He sees the terms "folk", "unofficial" and "popular" as residual, derogatory categories. Hence, according to Primiano (ibid.: 38), "every time a folklorist encounters religion and designates it "folk religion", he or she has done that religiosity an extreme disservice". However, his main idea in challenging "folk religion" as a concept, was not to do away with "folk" because of its negative connotations. His goal in introducing the vernacular approach was to devise a novel, more comprehensive methodology for the study of religious folklife, which he found limited because of the prevailing bipolar paradigm of high vs low, separating the clerical from the folkloric. Whereas performance studies had already changed the governing perspective in folkloristics, highlighting the role of individual expressivity, the setting was different in the study of religion in the 1990s, where creativity, free thought and artistry could still be considered problematic diversions from the authoritative mainstream. Studying the religious vernacular, according to Primiano, sheds light on expressivity, actions

and interpretations at a personal level, whatever is the social role, gender or status of the individual involved ranging from institutional leaders, such as the Pope and Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem, to the lay members of religious communities. As Primiano (2012: 384) explained, vernacular religion is not a terminological substitution of 'folk religion' but signals a new approach, focusing on people in their religious practices and personal experiences. Graham Harvey (2013: 208) outlined the same perspective in his monograph *Food, Sex and Strangers: Understanding Religion as Everyday Life*, where he approached religion "as a performance, an activity, something people do".

Several scholars have found 'the vernacular' – both as a term and approach – in the study of religion insightful (see for example, Harvey 2013; Bowman 2014; 2022; Illman and Czimbalmos 2020). Others have contested it. For Marco Fabbrini (2019: 250), the term 'vernacular' sounds derogatory and polarising, and he proposes the concept of "folkloric religion" as a distinct domain in describing specific aspects of religiosity, "consisting in what is primarily elaborated or re-elaborated by subaltern classes and peripheral communities". Simon Bronner also finds Primiano's replacement of 'folk' with 'vernacular' problematic. Bronner (2022: 5) notes that in the study of architecture, the term 'vernacular' "has been hotly contested because of its association with colonialism, primitivism, and classism". In addition, Bronner finds the vernacular approach limiting as it excludes from analysis some basic folkloristic considerations, such as "the ways that knowledge, including belief, is traditionalized and cognitively understood and expressed". According to Bronner, instead of disrupting the 'unofficial'–'official' binary, Primiano's approach reifies the opposition. (Ibid.) He calls for the jettisoning of the term 'vernacular' in folkloristics and the maintaining of the words "folk" and "folklore" as practice-centred approaches that are more engaged with "tradition" and "traditional", whereas 'vernacular' is a notion inclined towards individualism (ibid.: 10–11).

James Kapaló has also preferred the category "folk religion" in his ethnographic study of religious life in Romania and Moldova. For Kapaló (2013: 15) the political and ideological connotations of folk religion are essential, as it "can best be defined by discursive contestation and acts of suppression by religious elites and acts of resistance by the laity". However, Kapaló is not arguing against 'vernacular' or against innovation of the scholarly lexicon. He notes that 'vernacular religion' has contributed "to our understanding of the dynamics of the religious field" (ibid.: 9). He acknowledges the analytic potential of both terms, 'folk' and 'vernacular'. Indeed, maintaining the analytic distinction between the two approaches and concepts seems a more balanced way to proceed. The vernacular perspective implies starting research from individual expressivity, and understanding it in a "creative dialogue with tradition" (Primiano 2022: 316). Proceeding from the notion of "folk religion" implies a shared, group-based approach, which is often useful in studying communities but also in archival work, where the expressions of 'lived' religion often remain invisible. The replacement of 'folk' with 'vernacular' should not signal a thoughtless act of going with the flow of some trendy current, but rather an analytically and methodologically justified shift in terminology. Yet, 'folk' and 'vernacular' do not form a set of two binary alternatives. These are complimentary approaches that can be combined and engaged with other perspectives.

Is 'vernacular' really a polarising category, as some authors have suggested? In this case it might be easy to pinpoint its verbal opposites. According to *Roget's 21st Century Thesaurus*, the antonyms of "vernacular" as an adjective are 'abnormal', 'different',

'extraordinary', 'refined', and 'uncommon' (2013). Does this sound like a set of binary opposites? Perhaps. However, examining dictionaries to assess the usefulness of the vernacular as a category seems misleading. Rather, we should study how the concept is used in scholarship and, what fruits – results and accomplishments – the related perspective can offer (cf. Matthew 7:16). It seems too early for a conclusive assessment, as we project 'vernacular' on the backcloth of the hundreds of years of folkloristic scholarship. The approach is still young. If we study cultural phenomena – and that's what folklorists do – many ideal-typological opposites appear as intrinsically entangled. Live traditions and their individual expressions often reveal the ambivalence of dividing notions, such as high vs low, folkloric vs authored, oral vs literary, belief vs knowledge, natural vs supernatural, or nature vs culture. In textual practices, 'vernacular' has become a hybrid concept that undermines such dichotomies and reveals their dialectic cohesion. Vernacular has become particularly useful in the explorations of the unruly and unsettled world of digital culture, which presents multiple methodological and theoretical challenges. In addition, religious folklife has radically changed, appearing today as messy and disordered. As scripturally formed institutional religions are losing their attraction and social power, the relevance and potential of the folkloristic study of vernacular spirituality and the related practices has grown.

The changing research foci in religious studies have sparked interest in earlier scholarship with a vernacular and folkloristic orientation. A good example of this is the international reception of the Italian scholar of lived religion Ernesto de Martino (1908–1965), whose works are now discovered as pathbreaking. His legacy was celebrated in a special issue of the *Journal of American Folklore* (see Zinn 2015), and his contribution to the study of religion is discussed in dedicated monographs (Ferrari 2012; Geisshuesler 2021). De Martino relies upon the Gramscian understanding of folklore as 'popular creativity', which emphasises the aesthetics of voluntary performance; concepts such as hybridity, mimicry, particularism and the permeability of culture are all part of his theorising of folklore and the related social phenomena (Ferrari 2012: 44). Remarkably, De Martino's views and the noted keywords resonate with the vernacular approach in folkloristics of religion, which has gained visibility at the leading international forums of the study of religion, such as the conferences of the European Association for the Study of Religions, the International Association for the Study of Religions, and the American Academy of Religion. Maybe not so surprisingly, the vernacular approach seems to be more appealing at such interdisciplinary forums than proceeding from 'folk'-ingrained terms, such as 'folk religion'. In 2003 a conference was held in Turku, Finland, the topic was Method and Theory in the Study of Folk Religion (Holm 2004: 71). Not surprisingly, scholars were not unanimous on the usefulness of this category. According to Håkan Rydving (2004: 149), 'folk religion' has done its duty as a concept and is "not needed any more", as religion has become "an unbounded category", open to multiple approaches. Ilkka Pyysiäinen (2004: 160), however, found 'folk religion' meaningful, as "the natural real-time religion of everyday practice, as distinguished from the 'theologically correct' off-line religion which is only an abstract idea, an artefact". Now, 20 years later, "folk religion" appears in a critical reader about contested concepts in the study of religion for a number of reasons (Chryssides and Whitehead 2023). Some of the problems are its semantic vagueness, associations with the obsolete notion of survivals, and that it "artificially reifies 'official religion' as the real religion" (Bowman 2023: 42). However, Aaron Michael Ullrey and Sravana

Borkataky-Varma (2023: 3) prefer 'folk religion' as a concept, to embrace "the non-elite and non-sanctioned, the oral, fluid, accessible, evolving religion of people (*volk*) on the ground". In the introduction to an impressive volume, *Living Folk Religions*, they proceed from Primiano's seminal article from 1995, referring in their discussion to the "vernacular mode of religion" (ibid.: 1). Hence, both concepts, 'vernacular' and 'folk' are actively used in the study of religions today, sometimes in tandem. Some scholars are not aware of the terminological debates and simply focus on empirical material, others have critically considered the two perspectives and made a choice.

THE VERNACULAR, FOLKLORE, AND THE HISTORY OF FOLKLORISTICS

Although the vernacular can still be considered an incipient concept and approach in folkloristics, it has also spread beyond the English language. Recently, a special issue, *Vernakulaari*, was published in the Finnish digital folkloristic journal *Elore* (2020, vol 27: 1). Outi Fingerroos, Niina Hämälainen and Ulla Savolainen have emphasised the analytical value of 'vernacular', as it enables the examination of cultural phenomena and processes as fundamentally relational, shedding light on the entanglements of high and low; folk and elite; informal and institutional; local and global, public and private. In addition, the vernacular enables critical reflexivity, how cultural expressivity is perceived, presented and valued through these categories (Fingerroos et al. 2020: 7). In the Finnish language the term *omaehtoinen* has been introduced as an indigenous synonym to vernacular (ibid.: 6).[1]

Willow G. Mullins (2019: 23) has named the vernacular as among the folkloristic "articles of faith, beliefs so fundamental as to seem unquestionable". As she notes, thinking in terms of faith "gives us space to doubt, to question, and critically: to disagree with our communities" (ibid.). It is hard to imagine the humanities today without critical reflexivity of the terms and concepts that on one hand are the building blocks of disciplinary discourses, on the other hand, instruments of thinking. Lauri Honko (2013 [1989]: 62) has advocated the need to define minimum sets of terms for dealing with the material of particular studies. Technologically, the meaning of terms can be fixed *ad hoc*, bearing in mind special topics and research goals. Yet, words and their uses cannot be captured in longer run by any author or authority, as they have lives of their own in the history of thought. The word 'vernacular' has already become instrumental in developing folkloristic discourse, as it appears in the works of many scholars. More often used as an adjective, it has become an occasional alternative to 'folk' with a slightly different meaning. As 'folk' often works as a dividing term, separating folklore and non-folklore, 'vernacular' sounds more ambivalent, implying the blending of conceptual domains. Used as a noun, 'the vernacular' is a term for analytic and abstract thinking, appearing in categories such as 'vernacular knowledge' and 'vernacular epistemology', referring both to the mental domain and related practical know-how (see Valk 2022; Laudun 2023). Semantically, 'vernacular' seems looser than 'folklore' and opens it up in relations with other cultural phenomena, such as professional art, authored literature, official medicine or institutional religion, often seen as the 'others' of folklore in its polarised renditions.

With roots in the classical Latin of the Roman Empire, the word 'vernacular' demonstrates the continuity of cultural history and unpredictability of semantic shifts. As one of the building blocks of current folkloristic discourse, it indicates that if we search the beginning of our discipline in the rise of great empires and European nationalisms, our horizon might remain too narrow. The grand historical narrative of the emergence of folklore studies usually starts from the 18th and 19th centuries. Such standard histories highlight the founding figures of the discipline and their fundamental publications, and call special attention to the coinage of the neologism 'folklore' in 1846. Next, according to the history books, colonial folklorists appear in the provinces and margins of great empires, and the discipline is implanted in many societies worldwide. Parallel to the spread of folklore studies, its institutional foundations are set, involving systematic boundary work to uphold its autonomy (cf. Briggs 2016). In addition to this narrative about the formation of folkloristics in metropolitan centres and among the rising nations (cf. Ó Giolláin 2022), it is possible to see its rise beyond these two domains as *generatio spontanea*. Alan Dundes (1966) once called for folkloristic documentation of metafolklore and of oral literary criticism, implying that vernacular theorising of folklore does not need the existence of academic folkloristics. This kind of informal folkloristics has existed worldwide, including the conscious processes of transmission of knowledge: becoming a singer, a storyteller, a ritual expert, a healer or a shaman. Maintaining the continuity of tradition and learning the related social roles of performers can be seen as a parallel to the history of folkloristics. Becoming an academic folklorist is also a performative role, analogous to the bearers and makers of folkloric traditions. Dorothy Noyes (2016: 72) has acknowledged the significant work of provincial intellectuals in the history of folkloristics, holding the middle position between the elite and other groups of the 'folk'. This all gives evidence of the manifold origins of folkloristic thought and practices. Moreover, in some cultures, such as ancient India, the theorising and analysis of folkloric phenomena has reached advanced intellectual levels far before the European colonial invasions and introduction of the English word 'folklore' (see Lowthorp 2019: 140–141; Korom 2023: 19–21).

Imagining folkloristics as a loose field of multiple beginnings, origins and outsets liberates us from the confines of the Western academic tradition and the colonial paradigm, logocentrically focused around 'folklore', the term coined in English. Whereas 'folklore' has emerged in Europe in the context of rising nationalism and modernity, 'religion' also carries a semantic burden, as a "fundamentally Christian term" (Dubuisson 2019: 15). 'Religion' as an analytic concept has been problematised due to its Western connotations, i.e. because of its roots in Christian protestant theology and its role in the history of colonialism. However, Karénina Kollmar-Paulenz has convincingly shown that as a concept, 'religion' is not only a Western invention, as it has emerged in different cultural contexts, such as 17th century Mongolia, where Tibetan Buddhism as an institutionalised and scriptural religion encountered indigenous shamanism. The abstract terms *nom* and *šasin* in old Mongolian texts signify Buddhist teachings, and the related rules and practices, and give evidence of thinking of religion in the same vein as in Western tradition, without any colonial interventions from Christianisation (Kollmar-Paulenz 2013, see Valk forthcoming). Likewise, the history of folkloristics goes far beyond Euro-American academic traditions and British colonialism with

the dominant English vocabulary. Thinking of indigenous folkloristics can be seen as part of the provincialising Europe project, outlined by Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000). This approach celebrates multilingual and -cultural folkloristics and acknowledges that rigorous academic folkloristic discourse in English cannot control the processes of its vernacularisation. According to this kind of relaxed and democratic view, folkloristics can be understood in a similar vein as Simon Bronner's (2017: 46) apt definition of folklore, as a "traditional knowledge put into, and drawing from, practice". Folkloristic practice can take multiple forms, and apart from the common conceptual ground, there is space for variations, such as choosing the 'folk', 'vernacular' or some other path and the related terminology. An instrumental approach to the vernacular – thinking with the concept – is oriented towards transdisciplinary dialogues and boundary crossings. Yet, if developed as an essential concept in folkloristics, 'vernacular' has a good potential to mark folkloristics as a special brand in the humanities – as a distinct, autonomous discourse and domain for theoretical thought. After all, vernacular is much more than a word that can be plucked from its context for critical scrutiny. This word carries and represents folkloristics as a discipline with its roots in enduring intellectual history. Instead of discarding it under the authoritarian control of other branches of knowledge, we should maintain, nurture and develop vernacular approaches. Among others, the vernacular signifies 'us'.

NOTES

1 *Omaehtoinen* can be translated into English as 'self-originating', 'self-produced' or 'on one's own terms'. I thank Pihla Maria Siim and Jonathan Roper for explaining the verbal nuances in Finnish and in English.

REFERENCES

Aarne, Antti. 1910. *Verzeichnis der Märchentypen. Folklore Fellows' Communications* 3. Helsinki: Soumalaisen Tiedeakatemian Toimituksia.

Ben-Amos, Dan. 1998. The Name is the Thing. – *Journal of American Folklore* 111 (441): 257–280. DOI: https://doi.org/10.2307/541311.

Bowman, Marion. 2014. Vernacular Religion, Contemporary Spirituality and Emergent Identities: Lessons from Lauri Honko. – *Approaching Religion* (Special Issue: *The Legacy of Lauri Honko: Contemporary Conversations*) 4 (1): 101–113. DOI: https://doi.org/10.30664/ar.67542.

Bowman, Marion. 2022. Afterword: 25 Years of Vernacular Religion Scholarship. – *Vernacular Knowledge: Contesting Authority, Expressing Beliefs*, edited by Ülo Valk and Marion Bowman. Sheffield: Equinox, 405–418.

Bowman, Marion. 2023. Folk Religion. – *Contested Concepts in the Study of Religion: A Critical Exploration,* edited by George D. Chryssides and Amy R. Whitehead. London: Bloomsbury, 39–44. DOI: https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350243842.ch-6.

Briggs, Charles L. 2016. Disciplining Folkloristics. – *Grand Theory in Folkloristics*, edited by Lee Haring. Bloomington, IN; Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 125–139. DOI: https://doi.org/10.2979/grandtheory.0.0.13.

Bronner, Simon J. 2017. *Folklore: The Basics*. London; New York: Routledge. DOI: https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315688381.
Bronner, Simon J. 2022. Inspirational Insights: The Problematic Vernacular. – *Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics* 16 (2): 1–15. DOI: https://doi.org/10.2478/jef-2022-0010.
Brum, Gil; Larry McKane and Gerry Karp. 1995. *Biology: Fundamentals*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
Cambridge Dictionary. https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/cell (accessed October 31, 2023).
Chakrabarty, Dipesh. 2000. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton, NJ; Oxford: Princeton University Press.
Chryssides, George D. and Amy R. Whitehead, eds. 2023. *Contested Concepts in the Study of Religion: A Critical Exploration*. London: Bloomsbury. DOI: https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350243842.
Dubuisson, Daniel. 2019. *The Invention of Religions.* Sheffield: Equinox.
Dundes, Alan. 1965. *The Study of Folklore*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
Dundes, Alan. 1966. Metafolklore and Oral Literary Criticism. – *The Monist* 50 (4): 505–516. DOI: https://doi.org/10.5840/monist196650436.
Fabbrini, Marco. 2019. Folkloric vs. Vernacular: Reconsidering Old and New Approaches to Ethnographic Study of Religion. – *Erreffe: La ricerca folklorica* 74: 245–256.
Feldman, Burton and Robert D. Richardson, Jr. 1972. *The Rise of Modern Mythology 1680–1860*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
Ferrari, Fabrizio M. 2012. *Ernesto de Martino on Religion: The Crisis and the Presence*. Sheffield: Equinox.
Fingerroos, Outi; Niina Hämäläinen and Ulla Savolainen. 2020. Mikä vernakulaari? – *Elore* 27 (1): 4–14. DOI: https://doi.org/10.30666/elore.95523.
Folklore Fellows. 2023. Complete Catalogue of the Folklore Fellows' Communications. https://www.folklorefellows.fi/ffc-catalogue/ (accessed October 31, 2023).
Geisshuesler, Flavio A. 2021. *The Life and Work of Ernesto de Martino: Italian Perspectives on Apocalypse and Rebirth in the Modern Study of Religion*. *Numen Book Series* 173. Leiden, Boston: Brill. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004457720.
Harlow, Ilana. 1998. Introduction. – *Journal of American Folklore* 111 (441): 231–234.
Harvey, Graham. 2013. *Food, Sex and Strangers: Understanding Religion as Everyday Life*. Durham: Acumen.
Holm, Nils. 2004. The Finnish Society for the Study of Religion 40 Years. – *Temenos: Nordic Journal of Comparative Religion* 39–40: 51–71. DOI: https://doi.org/10.33356/temenos.4817.
Honko, Lauri. 2013 [1989]. Folkloristic Theories of Genre. – *Theoretical Milestones: Selected Writings of Lauri Honko*. *Folklore Fellows' Communications* 304, edited by Pekka Hakamies and Anneli Honko. Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 55–77.
Hooke, Robert. 1665. *Micrographia: Or Some Physiological Descriptions of Minute Bodies Made by Magnifying Glasses with Observations and Inquiries Thereupon.* London: The Royal Society. DOI: https://doi.org/10.5962/bhl.title.904.
Howard, Robert Glenn. 2011. Vernacular. – *Folklore: An Encyclopedia of Beliefs, Customs, Tales, Music, and Art* 3, edited by Charlie T. McCormick and Kim Kennedy White. 2nd edn. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-Clio, 1240–1246.
Illman, Ruth and Mercédesz Czimbalmos. 2020. Knowing, Being, and Doing Religion: Introducing an Analytical Model for Researching Vernacular Religion. – *Temenos: Nordic Journal of Comparative Religion* 56 (2): 171–199. DOI: https://doi.org/10.33356/temenos.97275.
Kapaló, James A. 2013. Folk Religion in Discourse and Practice. – *Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics* 7 (1): 3–18.
Kollmar-Paulenz, Karénina. 2013. Lamas und Schamanen: Mongolische Wissensordnungen vom frühen 17. bis zum 21. Jahrhundert. Ein Beitrag zur Debatte um aussereuropäische Religions-

begriffe. – *Religion in Asien? Studien zur Anwendbarkeit des Religionsbegriffs*, edited by Max Deeg, Oliver Freiberger, Christoph Kleine and Astrid van Nahl. Uppsala: Uppsala University Library, 151–200.

Korom, Frank J. 2023. Interrogating the Folk/Classical Divide in Indic Traditions. – *Living Folk Religions*, edited by Sravana Borkataky-Varma and Aaron Michael Ullrey. London; New York: Routledge; 19–34. DOI: https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003257462-3.

Laudun, John. 2023. Repairing Tradition: Vernacular Knowledge, Cognitive Spaces, and Economies of Work in an Agricultural Repair Shop. – *Journal of American Folklore* 136 (541): 274–297. DOI: https://doi.org/10.5406/15351882.136.541.02.

Lowthorp, Leah K. 2019. Folklore, Politics, and the State: Kutiyattam Theatre and National/Global Heritage in India. – *South Asian Folklore in Transition: Crafting New Horizons*, edited by Frank J. Korom and Leah K. Lowthorp. London; New York: Routledge, 139–156.

Lunding, Astrid. 1910. *The System of Tales in the Folklore Collection of Copenhagen. Folklore Fellows' Communications* 2. Helsinki: Soumalaisen Tiedeakatemian Toimituksia.

Mullins, Willow G. 2019. Our Lady of Authenticity: Folklore's Articles of Faith. – *Implied Nowhere: Absence in Folklore Studies,* edited by Shelley Ingram, Willow G. Mullins and Todd Richardson. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 19–37. DOI: https://doi.org/10.14325/mississippi/9781496822956.003.0002.

Noyes, Dorothy. 2016. Humble Theory. – *Grand Theory in Folkloristics*, edited by Lee Haring. Bloomington, IN; Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 71–77.

Ó Giolláin, Diarmuid. 2022. *Exotic Dreams in the Science of the Volksgeist: Towards a Global History of European Folklore Studies*. *Folklore Fellows' Communications* 325. Helsinki: The Kalevala Society.

Olrik, Axel. 1910. *Dansk Folkemindesamling (DFS): The National Collection of Folklore in Copenhagen. Folklore Fellows' Communications* 1. Helsinki: Soumalaisen Tiedeakatemian Toimituksia.

Primiano, Leonard N. 1995. Vernacular Religion and the Search for Method in Religious Folklife. – *Western Folklore* (Special Issue: *Reflexivity and the Study of Belief*) 54 (1): 37–56. DOI: https://doi.org/10.2307/1499910.

Primiano, Leonard N. 2012. Afterword: Manifestations of the Religious Vernacular: Ambiguity, Power, and Creativity. – *Vernacular Religion in Everyday Life: Expressions of Belief*, edited by Marion Bowman and Ülo Valk. Sheffield: Equinox, 382–394.

Primiano, Leonard N. 2022. The Upper Room: Domestic Space, Vernacular Religion, and the Observant University Catholic. – *Vernacular Knowledge: Contesting Authority, Expressing Beliefs*, edited by Ülo Valk and Marion Bowman. Sheffield: Equinox, 309–335.

Pyysiäinen, Ilkka. 2004. Folk Religion and Theological Correctness. – *Temenos: Nordic Journal of Comparative Religion* 39–40: 151–165. DOI: https://doi.org/10.33356/temenos.4823.

Roget's 21st Century Thesaurus. 2013. 3rd edn. https://www.thesaurus.com/browse/vernacular (accessed October 31, 2023).

Rydving, Håkan. 2004. Saami Religion and Saami Folk Religion: What Is the Difference? – *Temenos: Nordic Journal of Comparative Religion* 39–40: 143–149. DOI: https://doi.org/10.33356/temenos.4822.

Ullrey, Aaron Michael and Sravana Borkataky-Varma. 2023. Introduction: Three Little Words. – *Living Folk Religions*, edited by Sravana Borkataky-Varma and Aaron Michael Ullrey. London; New York: Routledge, 1–16. DOI: https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003257462-1.

Valk, Ülo. 2022. An Introduction to Vernacular Knowledge. – *Vernacular Knowledge: Contesting Authority, Expressing Beliefs*, edited by Ülo Valk and Marion Bowman. Sheffield: Equinox, 1–21.

Valk, Ülo. Forthcoming. Religion and Folklore: Conceptual Comparisons and Current Developments. – *E-Zeitschrift АЯGOS: Perspectives in the Study of Religion* 2 (3).

Zinn, Dorothy Louise. 2015. An Introduction to Ernesto de Martino's Relevance for the Study of Folklore. – *The Journal of American Folklore* 128 (507): 3–17. DOI: https://doi.org/10.5406/jamerfolk.128.507.0003.