

## FOREWORD

The three South Estonian language islands – Leivu, Lutsi, and Kraasna – form a unique group within the Finnic language area. They are the southernmost Finnic varieties and were spoken in the multilingual environment of the Central Baltic area where they shared long-standing contacts with neighbouring Baltic and Slavic languages and dialects. As a result, these now moribund varieties of South Estonian have undergone extensive typological changes. However, due to their peripheral location they have also preserved a number of old Finnic traits. This volume is the first multifaceted introduction to the linguistic, cultural, and social history and current state of the South Estonian language islands to a wider English-speaking audience.

The articles in this issue are divided into four thematic sections. The first section introduces the language island communities. Uldis Balodis and Karl Pajusalu present an introductory overview on the research history, location, and current situation of the language islands. Miina Norvik and co-authors analyse a number of typological traits of these South Estonian varieties and compare them to neighbouring Baltic, Finnic, and Slavic languages and dialects. Anna Stafecka describes possible Finnic influence in different Latvian subdialects. Heiki Valk examines the archaeology and history of this region and discusses evidence suggesting that Leivu is indigenous to Latvia rather than the result of later migration of South Estonian speakers from Estonia.

The other three sections are dedicated to studies on each individual language island; however, the articles in these sections also include intriguing comparisons. The section on Leivu contains articles on its language history, pronunciation, linguistic contacts, and toponyms authored by Petri Kallio, Ilga Jansone, Pire Teras, and Lembit Vaba. The next section deals with the cultural, social, and linguistic position of Lutsi. Uldis Balodis describes the present state of Lutsi and the lives and language knowledge of its last speakers and rememberers. Hannes Korjus observes how the Lutsis have been depicted in Latvian media and by researchers throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Kristi

Salve studies the relationship of Lutsi folklore with that of other South Estonian and Finnic areas, while also bringing to light striking Baltic and Slavic connections. The final section focuses on Kraasna. Enn Ernits discusses Kraasna nominal derivation. Tobias Weber describes Kraasna language documentation and gives its linguistic characterisation.

Uldis Balodis served as the language editor for this volume and also translated the articles by Enn Ernits, Kristi Salve, Lembit Vaba – from Estonian – and the articles by Ilga Jansone, Hannes Korjus, Anna Stafecka – from Latvian – into English.

The editors of this volume would also like to express their profound gratitude to Jüvä Sullõv (Sulev Iva) for using his deep knowledge of South Estonian to ensure the accuracy of the language examples in several of the articles in this collection as well as, in general, contributing his support and insight throughout the creation of this volume. We would also like to express our thanks to the anonymous peer reviewers for their valuable suggestions and critiques, which contributed greatly to the success of this collection.

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