

# RELATED BY CONTRADICTION: FOLKLORE AND ARCHIVE\*

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The year was 2005. The occasion was the Congress of the International Society for Folk Narrative Research (ISFNR) and I was in Tartu for the first time. As part of the Congress bonuses, a trip to the Estonian Folklore Archives (EFA) was offered to the participants. A relatively small group gathered for the event. I was also in that group, which was shown the Archives and specimens of censorship from the Soviet period in the basement. I did not realise at the moment what a deep impression these specimens made on my mind and that they would keep brewing in my head until I had a chance to come to Tartu to research the history of folkloristics from 1945 to the present. This chance came eleven years later, in 2016, but at that moment in 2005 when I visited the EFA for the first time, I was coming from London where I had been sitting in the archives of the Folklore Society, London (FLS) at the Royal Anthropological Institute (RAI), and of the India Office and Records Library (IORL). I had been studying documents related to the collections and collectors of folklore in the British colonial Empire, particularly India. This engagement had started another ten years earlier, in 1996, when soon after my PhD I had gone to London to understand the history of folklore research in colonial India in the middle of the 19th century. This engagement with the colonial archives was inspired by a previous engagement with a totally different archive – the *Deutsches Volksliedarchiv* or the German Folk Song Archive (GFSA) – where I learnt to see the very political nature of the discipline of folkloristics and of the archives of folklore.

Politics and power are in a way embedded in the very concept of ‘archive’. In “Archive Fever: A Freudian Perspective” Jacques Derrida and Eric Prenowitz (1995) propose a set of concepts to put the word archive into perspective. The word archive is based on the Greek word *arkhē*, which was the house of the magistrate to whom all the documents were submitted for record. Building up on this etymology, Derrida says that as the magistrate has the power to hold and withhold the documents as record, the word *arkhē* symbolises both a *commencement* and a *commandment*. The moment a docu-

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ment comes to the archive it transits from being something private to being something public and as such commences a new life. This commencement becomes commandment because the document now becomes a record, a law unto itself. "The concept of the archive shelters in itself, of course, the memory of *arkhē*. But it also shelters itself from the memory which it shelters: which comes down to saying also that it forgets it." (Derrida and Prenowitz 1995: 9) Why should the archive forget its connection with *arkhē*? It should and it must, especially in some cases, because *arkhē* refers to "initially a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrates, the *archons*, those who commanded" (ibid.). In democratic societies we prefer to believe that an archive is not necessarily the voice of the state. Several countries have national archives or public records offices to archive the documents generated in the process of governance by the state. However, there are other kinds of archive, purely intellectual in nature, the folklore archives, for example. And yet, such intellectual archives too are connected to political histories of the societies they are part of. In their commencement, as Derrida would call their formation, are located signs of the times, and in their continuance are sheltered histories of their relationship with changing political orders. The latter, that is, the changing relationship of an archive with the changing political orders, is more than the history of the individual archive; it is the history of the knowledge it commands and how the relevance of knowledge gathered changes over time.

In this paper I will reflect on the changing relevance of three types of archive in three different parts of the world: 1) Colonial Archives of Folklore; 2) Nationalist Archives of Folklore; 3) Post-Colonial and Post-Nationalist Archives of Folklore.

## COLONIAL ARCHIVES OF FOLKLORE

The archives in England that hold knowledge about India are many. In 1996 I was looking for a collection of North Indian folktales, famously collected by administrator-anthropologist<sup>1</sup> William Crooke. I did not find the collection as a published volume, but as un-catalogued material in the basement of the archive of the FLS. When I had opened the box in 1996 brought to me by the librarian, I did not know that at that moment my life was going to change forever. The box that I opened in 1996 had been closed in 1896. It contained enough signs that this was Crooke's famous folktales collection. In a cardboard file there were handwritten manuscripts of tales. The handwriting was beautiful, the pages were neatly organised with margins on all four sides; those margins contained notes that showed a scholar at work. At the end of each tale, however, there was a signature that read Pandit Ram Gharib Chaube. All the manuscripts were in the same handwriting and most were signed by this man called Chaube. Who was this, I asked myself. An obvious guess was that he was the so-called native-assistant of colonial anthropology – a figure well known to historians and anthropologists, and a person often thanked in the acknowledgements written by colonial writers. A native assistant in the British Empire was often a humble clerk with limited knowledge of English, but able to establish communication between natives as the researched subjects and the colonial officers as researchers. So, I looked in other famous and published works of Crooke to see if this man was thanked somewhere. No, he was not there, nor in any catalogue. I had to understand who this was to understand the manuscripts in

front of me. For the next five years I went back and forth from Delhi to London and from archive to archive: from the archive of the FLS to the archive of the RAI, where I was given permission to see the private papers of Crooke with the condition that the archivist would all the time sit across from me at the same table, lest I steal or destroy a document. I agreed to every condition. From there I went to the archive of the IORL<sup>2</sup> to gain a wider picture. It is an unparalleled institution keeping the records of India's colonisation, history, culture and society from the 17th century to 1947 when India gained independence. As the story of Crooke and Chaube unravelled in the archival papers and documents, much else came under my purview, about the lives, loves, journeys and sorrows of the British colonisers and their Indian subjects. Many views of the past of a country whose citizen I am, views created by those who were later forced to leave this country. The purpose of creating these views was something very different from the purpose with which I was viewing them. Even folklore collections were compiled with very different purposes, like understanding the mind of the people so as to control them better. Through all this was embedded the story of two individuals – Crooke and Chaube – one British the other Indian. And as they started emerging I was led out of the archive to seek traces in the reality outside. So, on the one hand grandsons of Crooke were tracked down, and on the other, I reached the village of Chaube in Gorakhpur district – a region of India today called the crime capital of India. The reality now so different that it would not connect with that of a century ago. So, back to the archives. Over a period of six years the story emerged of two folktale collectors who had tried to rise above the limitations of their era, tried to create a folktale collection the methodology of which was far ahead of its time, and been obsessed with trying to harness the complexities of the Indian folk narrative. In the process one became estranged from the powerful system of which he was a part and also from his family, the other could not overcome the obsession and once the project was over and he had packed the file to be taken to England, he had nothing left and went mad. Chaube died insane, unacknowledged for his work. Crooke lived long in England, estranged from his family, did not acknowledge Chaube, but also did not publish the fabulous collection. He left the file with manuscripts in Chaube's handwriting in the basement of the library of the FLS without a note of explanation.

Why did he not publish? Why did he leave the signed manuscripts? Why did he archive a 50-page letter by Chaube in his private papers in the archive of RAI? The answers to these questions have not yet been found. Perhaps they are sitting in another archive, in another document!

Those manuscripts of folktales from north India brought forth not only a collection and a brilliant Indian folklorist, but transformed our understanding of the role of the colonial 'native assistant' in the creation of modern knowledge about India and other colonies.<sup>3</sup> We can say now that in many cases the native assistant was the co-author of the colonial collections, that without him in the field of folklore collection the renowned British collectors could not have gathered the vast amount of folklore that they did gather in India. This story is not visible in the published volumes, but cannot be hidden in the archival documents.

The archives in London constantly influenced my relationship with the present reality. Often the documents I studied made me very angry or sad, but in the end I said to myself: what if the archivists of the FLS had not cared for the boxes they knew nothing

about? What if they had thrown them away? What if the archivist of the RAI had not shown me all 60 boxes of Crooke's private papers with such patience? If she had not been patient I would not have found that 50-page letter of a Chaube written at the time he was just beginning to lose sanity? What if IORL had not kept every scrap of paper with such diligence? If all these archives and archivists had not done what they did, history would not have changed, but we would never have known what we know about the colonisation of India, about collections of folklore and the related issues of linguistic translations, cultural explanations and inter-cultural aspects of the voluminous folklore collections published in England. And the story of a mere two individuals who engaged so intensely with their times so as to affect their personal lives would have been lost forever.

Writing about the relationship between archivists and historians, Terry Cook (2011: 606) says: "As archivists appraise records they are doing nothing less than determining what the future will know about its past: who will have a continuing voice and who will be silenced". This is indeed so true! The task of an archivist is to be the keeper of history. Cook tells us that until recently the archivist in England was called 'Keeper'. An archivist must constantly decide on the value of documents with reference to an indefinite future, although any archive is created in a definite time and context. The archives in England for example were created in the colonial times and context.

So, what is the purpose of these archives when the Empire is over? These materials still constitute knowledge about the world and as such Britain continues to be the biggest holder of knowledge about the world. People from the erstwhile colonised countries come to study these documents to construct their national histories. The folklore collections compiled in the British times are often the only record of oral folklore in that period. Therefore, a researcher like me must contend with the issue that these are records created for a certain purpose and yet are the only source to knowing what was folklore in the 19th century. An archivist stands between the creators of documents and the unknown users in an indefinite future.

## NATIONALIST ARCHIVES OF FOLKLORE

The archivists are not always the founders of the archives. Wonderful archives of folklore are often established by individuals with a passion for folklore. Some such individuals established the Folklore Archives, in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, namely Oskar Loorits, Anna Bērzkalne and Dr. Jonas Basanavičius, respectively. The founders of archives in the Baltic countries also belonged to a generation of folklore scholars establishing similar institutions across Europe. One such individual was the German folksongs collector John Meier who founded the German Folk Song Archive in 1914 in his house in the city of Freiburg (Suppan 1964: 29). The fact that he established the archive in his own house reminds one of the origin of the concept of archive – the Greek *arkhē* in the residence of the magistrate – a commencement and a commandment. Derrida calls this "the house arrest" of documents and reflects on the importance of this 'domiciliation': "The dwelling, this place where they dwell permanently, marks this institutional passage from the private to the public, which does not always mean from the secret to the non-secret" (Derrida and Prenowitz 1995: 10). Meier's archive commenced a process

of archiving folksongs, but the concept of Folksong had commenced with the work of a Baltic-German – the famous Johann Gottfried Herder. His collection of German folksongs (Herder 1778–1779) included Baltic songs and it was perhaps his background in Latvia that made him theorise that the oral song was the purest form of *Poesie*. Herder set in motion a concept that would become linked to nationalisms of many varieties. One such was Meier's establishment of the GFSA. It was in this archive that I gained my first experience of researching in an archive as a doctoral student between 1990 and 1993. The archive was still in the same house and John Meier could not be forgotten. Apart from learning to use an archive and its resources, I also learned about the history of John Meier. The archive he founded in 1914 survived through the Nazi period from 1932–1945. As we all know, the Nazis employed the terminologies of ethnology, such as folk, folk culture, to their own purposes. This use or abuse was so intense that it left nothing untouched. So, there is a question as to what was the relationship between the GFSA and the Nazi regime, or between the founder of the archive and the powers-that-were. After the Second World War Meier was accused by some of complicity, but nothing more than the silence that he maintained could be offered as evidence of that complicity (Brednich and Cotter 1968). Yes, Meier had remained silent, he had not come out as a critic of the Nazi state or its concept of folklore, but he had also not gone out to support them. Meier's case, like that of many other German intellectuals of the time, is not easy to evaluate. Was his silence a strategy for survival or a sign of complacency? Although the matter of Meier's political position was never conclusively settled, the GFSA continued to function after the Second World War and he donated his house to the state to run the institution after his death. The Archive became part of the University of Freiburg and continued to be an excellent institution for research. But something else happened that changed the course of the history of this institution.

The charge that was made against Meier was a charge made against the entire discipline of folklore and ethnology – the discipline called *Volkskunde* after the Second World War (Naithani 2014: 22–23). Several academics within the discipline were seen as clearly complicit in the Nazi state's cultural politics. Moreover, it was felt that the nationalism of the early 19th century, that is the romantic nationalism of Brothers Grimm and their generation, already contained the seeds of fascist nationalism and it was due to this that the discipline could be exploited by the Nazi state (Dow and Lixfeld 1994). Several scholars have questioned the wisdom in this evaluation of romantic nationalism, made with hindsight. And yet, the image of the discipline and its subject of study, the folktale and the folksong, was so tarnished by the Nazi period, that the discipline's history changed significantly after 1945 (Bendix 2012: 370–378). In the Federal Republic of Germany the discipline split into two: one continued with philological tradition but broke the connection with past ideologies, and the other constructed itself more as a social science – as cultural anthropology. The latter advanced, while the former receded into the background.

So, when I came to study the German folksongs in the GFSA in 1990, very few German doctoral students were interested in the subject. Many in the University did not even know about its existence and were surprised that I had come all the way from India to do a PhD in German folksongs. For me, on the other hand, a whole new world was opening up in the archive – the world of ordinary and rural German people from the 18th century onwards. And it was so different from the world reflected in the great



works of modern German literature that I had studied. The early printed versions, the songs of the *Bänkelsänger*, the folk ballads opened another Germany for me and I learned to see its modernity in another perspective. The German village became live and I saw what a people had gained and lost in its march towards industrial modernity, and also what it had retained through the changing times. Above all, the Archive showed me how songs could be catalogued to encourage different kinds of study. Sadly however, the reducing number of young researchers of folksongs allowed the institution to be re-evaluated, and in 2011 it was moved out of John Meier's house and its vast collection became part of a new institution: the Centre for Popular Music Research. The destiny of this great archive has changed forever, not because of any fault of its own. The case of GFSA shows that archives are not only made in a certain time and context, but that they also thrive or survive in certain contexts beyond their control. The Archives that control knowledge are themselves controlled by external forces.

My last published book was concerned with the change of folklore discipline in postwar Germany. It was published in 2014, and soon afterwards in late 2015 I received an invitation from the Department of Ethnology, University of Tartu to come on a research fellowship. At that moment, what had been brewing in my mind since 2005 when I visited the EFA for the first time burst forth and I was thankful for the chance to explore what had caught my attention in 2005 – the Soviet censorship of the EFA materials and the impressions I had gained during another visit in 2008. In that second visit I was invited to deliver lectures on colonialism and folklore at the Department of Estonian and Comparative Folklore. From this experience I retained two impressions: one, that the colonial experience of Indian folkloristics made sense to students, but I did not understand exactly why; and two, that folkloristics is a vibrant discipline in Tartu and that institutions like the EFA are charged with energy. I decided to carry forward my research in the international history of the discipline of folkloristics in Estonia, and hopefully reach out to Latvia and Lithuania from there.

#### POST-COLONIAL AND POST-NATIONALIST ARCHIVES OF FOLKLORE

Sometimes, wishes come true, and in 2016 I spent three months researching the history of folkloristics in the Baltic countries. My focus was on the period 1945 to the present, but to understand that I had to go back to the beginning. And to understand the beginning I had to understand the history of the Baltic countries. On the one hand I was enabled by my knowledge of German to read some early texts, such as Jakob Hurt's writings, and on the other hand I was able to access some of the recent writings that are in English. Obviously, lack of knowledge of Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian was a handicap I could not overcome.

So I devised a method, which was inter-disciplinary on the one hand, and on the other, inter-medial. Apart from reading I decided to have conversations with scholars in the field of folklore, ethnology, history and political science. These were conversations and not interviews. I recorded them on video and they became my research materials to study as I could listen to them again and again. I could also return to the scholars if I felt the need. Moreover, they became linked as I pondered over them and brought

up issues in my next conversation. In a way they are conversations with one person at a time, although in another way they are inter-linked, because I confirmed, reconfirmed and cross-checked my own understanding of issues with more than one person. In the process I generated some thirty hours of audio-visual material. These are documents of their own kind. A handwritten manuscript, for example, carries the signs of the person who created it. These audio-visual documents carry the people themselves, that is, me and people who spoke with me.

My conversations did not simply fill the gap in reading, but created a new kind of research material. While in writing people express their research and analysis, in conversation they respond to one particular person and her quest. I was not a faceless reader of their written text, but a folklorist from a far-away country. Therefore, they explained, narrated, analysed, showed places and materials, and guided me to other scholars and materials for further understanding.

So, through inter-disciplinary and inter-medial methodology I explored wider and deeper the questions that the specimens in the basement of the EFA had raised in me. This exploration took me to Riga and Vilnius, where again, archivists, researchers and scholars shared with me their knowledge of the archives, of the history of their archives, of folklorists and the way folklore scholarship was practiced through the Soviet era and the challenges that scholars face today. While lack of knowledge of languages limited me in every possible way, cooperation and the openness of everyone involved enlightened and informed me.

In Riga Rita Treija, Māra Viksna and many other colleagues in the Folklore Archives shared with me their intellectual and experiential knowledge of the Soviet period. From them I also learnt how the Archives of Latvian Folklore (ALF) is today devising innovative ways of including school children in the process of digitising old manuscripts. Dace Bula shared with me her vast and deep knowledge of Latvian folkloristics and intellectual experience of political change. In Vilnius Lina Būgienė not only introduced me to history of Lithuanian folkloristics, but through the narration of family history introduced the subject of deportation in a manner that I followed it up in my research, this subject becoming pivotal to my understanding of folkloristics under the repressive Soviet regime. In Tartu folklorists Ülo Valk, Ergo-Hart Västriik, Kristin Kuutma and Risto Järv along with others were always there for me.

With all this I was able to gain an understanding of the history of folkloristics in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. And yet something was not complete. What I was missing was an understanding of the life of the folk, particularly from 1945 onwards. Ethnologist Ene Kõresaar and folklorist Tiiu Jaago got involved in my quest and introduced me to the life stories that the EFA in collaboration with the Estonian Cultural History Archives (ECHA) has collected. Fortunately for me, some of these life stories had been translated and published. The life stories opened a new world and I began to understand the history of folkloristics from a larger perspective. Historians Aigi Rahi-Tamm and Andres Kasekamp opened up their minds and resources for my exploration and I saw the broad canvas of history in which folkloristics takes place.

So finally, my research materials were made of published analyses, of personal experiences and anecdotes as well as theoretical references. Integrating this vast variety of materials, perspectives and information was my task for over a year. I returned again in the summer of 2017 to follow some of the questions that had emerged from a year-long

engagement with Baltic folkloristics; one of them was to visit the ALF again, and also the centre for Oral History in Riga. The differences between the method and outcome of documenting life stories in Estonia and Latvia are so significant that they bring out the complexities of oral history as a resource. Another purpose of this second visit was, as a very strong urge, to gain some visual reference to the Soviet period. Once again, Ene Kõresaar came to help and had her resourceful assistant Reet Ruusmann give me a tour of the villages of south Estonia, where huge infrastructure from the Soviet period stands unused and boarded up. The importance of this tour can perhaps not be understood by those for whom this reality is well known, but for me the visuals fed into the imagination that had emerged from readings and conversations. The silenced buildings, pipe lines, collective farm equipment, resorts and granaries were like an open archive of an era gone by.

My methodology to understand the history of folkloristics and the folklore archives in Baltic countries has been inter-disciplinary and multi-medial. To begin with this was born of my need to comprehend an absolutely foreign reality. It was totally unlike my experience of researching in Germany where even the first visit was preceded by seven years of German Studies done in India. It was totally different from my visit to the archives in London where the physical space of the archives was foreign but the materials of the archives deeply, historically and culturally connected to me. The EFA had enticed me into venturing into the unknown and I devised not one but multiple ways to comprehend the unknown. In the process I have generated audio-visual materials, some of which could be edited into a film, but as a whole they are documents to be archived. I will be happy to hand over copies of these conversations with scholars in the three Baltic countries to the archives in Tartu, Riga and Vilnius.

What I have understood has now become the manuscript of a book: *Folklore in Baltic History: Resistance and Resurgence* (forthcoming in 2019) with University Press of Mississippi. On one level, it would fill a void in the international history of the discipline where little is known about folkloristics in the Baltic countries. On another level, it offers both a method and a perspective to study folkloristics as a site of resistance in a totalitarian state. It will perhaps invite and entice others to undertake more detailed research.

I would not venture to repeat what I have learnt from my Baltic colleagues, but I would like to share what I have understood about the history and present of folklore archives in Tartu, Riga and Vilnius.

The passion of those who initiated the collection of folklore and those who founded these folklore archives has a lot in common with the passion of pioneers elsewhere, but the trajectory of these passions was firmly rooted in Baltic history. For example, the nationalism of those founding the archives in the 1920s has nothing in common with the fascist nationalism rising in Germany at the same time. In my opinion, in the Baltic countries this passion has two phases: one, it was part of the fervour of creating the first independent nations of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in modern history; and two, to reclaim nation and culture from the Soviet occupation. It is my attempt to define and profile the language, culture and poetic expression. Both the effort and need are justified by the history of the Baltic peoples.

This realisation clarified for me why (perhaps) my lectures in colonialism and folklore made sense to students and colleagues in Tartu. Interestingly, while the national-



ism of the inter-war period in the Baltic countries has nothing in common with the nationalisms in contemporary Europe, it has much in common with the colonies of the British Empire, like India, who in the 1920s were fighting for independence from colonial rule and in a nationalist fervour were creating an image of themselves in which their folklore played a vital role. If we look at the international scene, Western Europe, the USSR and the USA were trying to extend their dominance of the world, while countries elsewhere fought to gain independence and represent themselves. I see the passion behind making the folklore archives in Tartu, Riga and Vilnius rooted in local history, but also as having parallels in international history. The Second World War affected the destinies of nations in different ways. While India gained independence from British colonial rule, the Baltic countries lost their freedom and were occupied by the USSR. It is at this point that my research on Baltic folkloristics starts.

I see the repression unleashed by the USSR on the folklore archives in Tartu and elsewhere in varying degrees, as one side of the coin: the other side being the repression unleashed on the people as a whole. Methodologically, I juxtapose the simultaneous censoring of the archives with the deportation of hundreds of thousands of people to Siberia, and show the violence and terror being unleashed at every level (Davoliūtė and Balkelis 2012). On the one hand, archives of life stories in Tartu and Riga and conversation with Lina Būgienė in Vilnius showed me how people still tried to survive in Siberia; on the other hand I learned from conversations with Tiiu Jaago and Ülo Valk how life in the University departments went on. Tiiu Jaago's concept of 'parallel worlds' and 'parallel knowledge systems' reveals how teachers tried to continue to follow the diktats while subverting them in many ways. Archivists in all the three countries told me how folklore research and collection during the Soviet period went on. They told me about the "expeditions" that were undertaken with the permission and support of the state to collect folklore. Everyone was appreciative of these expeditions for two reasons: one, they involved people from different disciplines, and two, they were funded by the state. Many scholars told me about the need to cite Stalin or Lenin's works in order to have work published and how these were added at the end of the research, what Dace Bula calls "a very thin layer of rhetoric". What was most important for me was the fact that everywhere archivists said that the collections compiled during this time are very good and valuable as archival materials, and are now being used for new kinds of publication. Simultaneously, everyone also complained about the project driven funding with which every collector and scholar today has to deal. While I am very impressed with the current state of these three archives and the works being undertaken there, what I have learnt as the most important lessons are some other things.

The most impressive feature in the history of the folklore archives in the Baltic countries is the zeal, passion and intelligence with which the collectors continued to work in a totalitarian state. The history of the folklore archives in the Baltic countries tells me that knowledge hubs can find ways to exist even under fascists, and exist in a manner that keeps them relevant for better times.

Although state repression was not the same over the three archives in terms of censorship, the policies that governed their functioning were identical. I understand that the life stories project initiated at the time of independence are methodologically very different in Estonia and Latvia and have therefore, arrived at different conclusions. For example, in Estonia, people have been asked to write and send in their stories with

reference to the themes of different calls (Jaago et al. 2006). In Riga, the National Oral History project researchers have gone out into the field and made audio recordings of life stories (Skultans 2017). They selected different regions and different groups of population to systematise their research. The overall picture of life and scholarship under Soviet rule and after independence is complex and varied in the three countries, and I do not present a homogenous picture in my recently completed manuscript. The similarities I see and show are one on a temporal scale and two, in terms of the spirit that has guided the making and keeping of the folklore archives under changing political structures.

#### FOLKLORE AND ARCHIVE...

There is one issue that concerns all folklore archives: folklore archives are knowledge hubs of materials, which are inherently in contradiction to the idea of the archive. Folklore, rooted in orality, is an ever-changing phenomenon, but the very idea of archives implies fixing something as a document. Derrida and Prenowitz (1995: 12) say “every archive, [...] is at once institutive and conservative. Revolutionary and traditional. [...] it keeps, it puts in reserve, it saves, but in an unnatural fashion.” This document of folklore henceforth commands a status that it never had in its oral existence, experiencing a fixity that it did not have in its oral existence. This apparent contradiction is however also the justification for the folklore archive: because orality vanishes the moment it comes into existence the folklore archive is the only way of keeping a record of it. This record of orality is multi-layered as it is simultaneously a record of the way orality was being recorded. As with any archive folklore archives are full of stories that do not exist in print. These stories are inherent in the process of an archive becoming a knowledge hub.

The three types of archive that I present here – the British, the German, and the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian – have very little similarity with each other in terms of the specific details of their history. And yet certain theses can be outlined that would be applicable to more than the archives discussed here. An archive is created with a particular type of material and some specific purposes in a definite period of time. The purposes are often defined by an individual or a group of individuals, and therefore the archive represents an important aspect of the *Zeitgeist*. Their individual concern is often the concern of an entire generation or even a nation. As such they harness knowledge that is in the making, provide it a location and give shape to an idea or ideas. Once they become established institutions they command not only knowledge but also orient knowledge in certain directions. For example, the colonial archives systematically generated a view of the world that justified British dominance over other peoples. This orientation that they generate is higher than the single or collected sets of documents they hold.

In this way they gain power, a power, which according to Derrida and Prenowitz (1995: 10),

gathers the functions of unification, of identification, of classification, (and) must be paired with what we will call the power of consignation. By consignation, we do not only mean, in the ordinary sense of the word, the act of assigning residence or

of entrusting so as to put into reserve (to consign, to deposit), in a place and on a substrate, but here the act of consigning through gathering together signs.

For example, the making of the EFA in the 1920s becomes evidence of the uniqueness of Estonian language and culture and orients people to think of Estonia as an independent and sovereign country in its own right. This orientation commands respect and agreement and becomes law unto itself. The changing course of history, however, does not allow this orientation to continue its command in the same manner. The occupation of Estonia by the USSR forced the founder of the archive to go into exile. One may wonder why a folklore collector and scholar like Loorits was threatened. This threat, which came from the USSR, was a response to the importance of the orientation of the EFA, which established the right to independence of the Estonian people as a unique cultural entity. The USSR had to contend with this statement, made by the archive and its founder. They could sense that this seemingly harmless institution was a threat to their power. Kaisa Kulassalu's (2013) work has shown how quickly the EFA was taken control of and how it was censored. The dramatic nature of the operation would leave no doubt that an archive is not a passive holder of knowledge, but an active communicator of perspective. The EFA as an institution has proven its historical relevance, importance and sense of responsibility in creating perspective right at its inception in 1927, and once again after 1991, by being part of the initiative to document, record and archive stories about a time in which information was the biggest casualty, in which the voice of the people was silenced in every possible way, and in which people's lives changed dramatically. The changes were such that the impression created by the EFA in the 1920s about Estonian culture could no longer hold true. By losing no time in archiving the life stories of a generation that time might naturally silence soon, it has, along with other institutions, played a historical role in the creation of knowledge by creating the possibility to break the silence that was imposed by a totalitarian state. The EFA is indeed an example of how an archive is not a passive storehouse of documents but an active creator of knowledge. This characteristic, I find, is shared by the Latvian and Lithuanian folklore archives, and therefore, I have come to the conclusion that in the field of folklore studies, the contemporary hubs of knowledge are in the Baltics.

## NOTES

1 The term refers to British officers of the colonial civil or military establishment who compiled scholarly works during their tenure in India and afterwards.

2 IORL is now part of the British Library in the African and Asian Studies section.

3 Manuscripts and my research published as *In Quest of Indian Folktales: Pandit Ram Gharib Chaube and William Crooke* (see Naithani 2006).

## ABBREVIATIONS

ALF = Archives of Latvian Folklore

ECHA = Estonian Cultural History Archives

EFA = Estonian Folklore Archives

FLS = Folklore Society, London  
GFSA = German Folk Song Archive  
IORL = India Office Records and Library  
RAI = Royal Anthropological Institute

## SOURCES

Videographed conversations in 2016 and 2017 with:

In Tartu, Estonia: Ene Kõresaar, Tiiu Jaago, Risto Järv, Ülo Valk, Aigi Rahi-Tamm and others.  
In Riga, Latvia: Rita Treija, Toms Kencis, Dace Bula, Māra Viksna and others.  
In Vilnius, Lithuania: Lina Būgienė and others.

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