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**Emne:** CfP: Method & Theory in the Study of Folk Religion

Symposium on

Method & Theory in the Study of Folk Religion  
Turku, Finland October 23 - 25, 2003

Call for Papers

The Finnish Society for the Study of Religion (FSSR), The Kalevala-Institute in Turku and the Graduate School for Cultural Interpretations (funded by the Ministry of Education in Finland) will be organizing an international symposium on *Method & Theory in the Study of Folk Religion*, at the Linnasmäki Conference Centre in Turku on October 23 - 25, 2003. The occasion will also mark the 40th Anniversary of the FSSR, a learned society dedicated to the promotion of academic study into religion worldwide.

The symposium will be regional and welcomes scholars of religion in Finland, Estonia, Hungary and the Scandinavian countries. It will focus on exploring the theoretical import of the notion of 'folk religion' and address the wide array of methodological solutions whereby its divergent forms of mental and cultural representation are dealt with by anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, archaeologists and historians of religion. In comparative study of religious traditions, 'folk religion' is an established scholarly category for distinguishing religious representations prevalent among 'the folk' (in any world religion context) from the 'orthodox' or theologically correct forms of thinking and behaviour of religious experts. There still prevails a conceptual confusion among scholars of cultural traditions in employing the category, since religious experiences and expressions among the level of 'the folk' do not form 'a religion' in a systematic sense. In this discourse, the notion of 'religion' is used in a 'church-oriented way' and restricted to religious traditions in which the language and overall architecture of religion are dominated by the corpus of teachings codified in sacred texts and the transmission of which is mediated by religious experts in a specific ritual space and an institutional setting. It has been customary for scholars to contrast 'folk religion' with the 'official religion' in the manner of German scholar, Gustav Mensching. According to him, "the gods of folk religion are exclusively related to a particular folk and limited to that folk as their province of domination" (while) "the universal religions are, in principle, supra-national and owe their diffusion and ability to diffuse to this supra-national character".

In spite of the magnitude of research already carried out by anthropologists and historians of religions, we need to rethink the conceptual contents of the notion of 'folk religion'. Methodologically 'folk religion' does not necessarily need to refer to forms of religious classification and representation among the rural, uneducated segment of society rooted in 'pagan

beliefs and practices', but to innate systems of inference and intuitive understanding on the basis of which human beings in general construe religious knowledge and make distinctions between religious and non-religious aspects of culture. The opposite of the folk-oriented way of dealing with religious materials is the knowledge by religious experts. In addition to explorations to cognitive underpinnings, we need to pay attention also to various political uses of the notion of 'the folk'. Far too little scholarly concern has been directed to examining mechanisms by which popular forms of religious representation and signification, e.g. in the form of narratives and/or systems of ritual representation, are generated in specific sociopolitical and historical contexts when gender, ethnic, regional and national identities are in the making or when their maintenance is at stake.

Due to time restrictions proposals for papers are evaluated and accepted by the organizing committee, the chairman of which is Prof. Veikko Anttonen. Other members are Dr. Ilkka Pyysiäinen, Fellow of the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, and MA Tiina Mahlamäki, a Ph.D. Candidate in Comparative Religion at the University of Turku. She is also the secretary of the committee. Please send your abstracts of 150 - 200 words by regular mail or as email attachments (MS Word or rtf-file), no later than April 1, 2003, to Prof. Veikko Anttonen at the Department of Cultural Studies, Henrikinkatu 3, FIN-20014 University of Turku, Finland. Email: [veikko.anttonen@utu.fi](mailto:veikko.anttonen@utu.fi). Time for presenting a paper is 20 minutes. We will send a note on the acceptance of your proposal by April 30. Linnasmäki Conference Centre is located about 25 minutes from the centre of Turku by bus. Their address is Lustokatu 7, FIN-20380 TURKU, tel. +358 2 4123 070, fax +358 2 4123 700, gsm +358 40 7323 191. Internet: [www.linnasmaki.fi](http://www.linnasmaki.fi).

There is no conference fee, but the centre charges 47 euros per night for a single room and 66 euros for a double room (both options include breakfast). Lunch and afternoon coffee/tea from Thursday Oct 23 through Saturday Oct 25 are 46,50 per person.

Sincerely

Veikko Anttonen

Ilkka Pyysiäinen

Tiina Mahlamäki