

## **Report on the conference held in Kiev, Ukraine, September 8-14, 1997**

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A conference entitled "Oral Epic: Ethnic Traditions and Performance" was held in Kiev, Ukraine, Sept. 8-14, 1997. The conference was dedicated to the memory of Filaret Kolessa and Albert Lord and was attended by scholars from a number of countries, including Ukraine, the United States, Poland, Hungary, Georgia, Latvia, Russia proper and the Tuvan and Sakha Republics of the Russian Federation. The American participants were Linda Dégh, Elizabeth Fine, Natalie Kononenko, Hari Rorlich, Walter Stevenson, and Jeffrey Wills. In addition, John Miles Foley, John Kolsti, and Helene Turkewicz-Sanko, who were unable to attend, sent papers that were published in the conference proceedings.

The genres covered were epic poetry, ritual poetry, ballad, lament, tales, legends, jokes, and dance. Speakers discussed problems of collecting data. They reported on the work of previous scholars, especially Lord and Kolessa, but also others, such as Iavornyts'kyi and Martynovych. They described material available in archives and discussed its conservation and use. One session dealt with the special problems of the data collected on wax cylinders at the turn of the century, and current efforts to conserve the cylinders and transfer the data into formats that would make it readily accessible to scholars. Reports on collecting experiences and opportunities for collecting proved extremely valuable. Interesting papers included attempts to apply oral formulaic theory to prose genres. Following the work of Kolessa and Lord, many papers focused on the performer

and the performance situation, including performer-audience interaction. Kiril Chistov talked about the collecting situation and the problems of recording the sort of performance that would occur if no outsider, such as the collector, were present.

A special event was an evening during which modern minstrels, including Pavlo Surpun and Mykola Budnyk, performed for the conference participants. The evening included explanatory commentary by Sophia Hrytsa and field video tapes collected by graduate students of the Kiev Folklore Institute. Other events outside the conference included a special tour of the St. Sophia cathedral led by Irma Totska that provided access to parts of the structure not normally open to the public. In addition, a lively discussion of the famous "minstrel" figure frescos on the cathedral walls took place. There was also a tour of the Lavra, the Kiev Cave Monastery. The author of this report was treated to a tour of the folk instrument collection of the Lavra by Raisa Husak and Leonid Cherkaskyi.

Two volumes of conference abstracts were published. If the mail system works, copies may be obtained from:

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The Folklore Institute in Kiev has an e-mail address. It is <imfemail@gilan.uar.net>, but it has not worked in a long time.

The people at the various folklore institutes in Ukraine are anxious to have American partners in their various field work expeditions and can customize field expeditions for you. Anne Ingram, whose report on her field work appears elsewhere in this issue of the SEEFA Newsletter, had collecting trips arranged with the help of the Kiev and Kherson folklore institutes. A call for a conference and field work opportunity in Cherkasy also appears elsewhere in this Newsletter. The members of the various folklore institutes would also be happy to work with American colleagues in finding grants and constructing applications for support. Again, if you have trouble contacting Ukraine, contact Natalie Kononenko and she will help with mail or other contact.