



## MEMORY OF THE WORLD REGISTER – NOMINATION FORM

**Latvia - *Dainu skapis* - Cabinet of Folksongs - as a Part of the Archives of Latvian Folklore**

### PART A – ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

A massive collecting effort of Latvian folk songs took place during the latter half of the 19th century, coinciding with the period of National awakening in Europe. Carried out by Latvians themselves, it was made the basis for their national identity. Although some smaller collections had been published earlier, it is largely thanks to the lifetime work of Krisjanis Barons that nearly 218,000 song texts were assembled, classified and published in eight thick tomes (1894-1915). To this day it remains a source of collective self-confidence and inspiration for the Latvian people, revealing their rich cultural heritage that had not been previously recorded, yet had endured through centuries by oral transmission.

The source material for each of the printed songs, sent in to Barons by thousands of singers and informants, consists of over 350,000 hand-written paper slips sized 3 x 11 cm in many handwritings including that of Barons, with Barons' annotations and editing marks. They are all stored in a specially built cabinet with 70 drawers for these texts. This "treasure chest" was made in 1880, has served as a working tool, but now has become a cultural symbol. For more than 60 years now it has been housed at the Archives of Latvian Folklore in Riga. The folk songs are but a part of the rich folklore manuscript collection at the Archives that comprises not only song texts but also fairy tales, legends, proverbs, dances, beliefs, melodies, etc., for a total of nearly three million items. There are also audiovisual representations of folklore found at the Archives.

#### 1. Identity and Location

1.1 Name of documentary heritage

*Dainu skapis* - Cabinet of Folksongs - as a Part of the Archives of Latvian Folklore

1.2 Country

Latvia

1.3 State, province or region

1.4 Address

Akademijas laukums 1  
LV 1050 Riga  
Latvia

## 2. Legal Information

### 2.1 Owner (name and contact details)

Institute of Literature, Folklore, and Art  
University of Latvia

### 2.2 Custodian (name and contact details)

Dr. Dace Bula  
Head of the Archives  
Akademijas laukums 1  
LV 1050 Riga  
Latvia

Email: [bula@lanet.lv](mailto:bula@lanet.lv)

### 2.3 Legal status (if different from 2.1)

(a) category of ownership (e.g. public, corporate or private)  
Public

(b) details of legal and administrative provisions for the preservation of the documentary heritage

The legal and administrative norms concerning preservation and use of the materials stored at the Archives of Latvian Folklore are the following:

- *Law on the Institutions of Culture*, adopted in 1998. Envisages State guarantees for the operation of the institutions, which ensure preservation of the cultural heritage (art.1).
- *Copyright Law*, adopted in 2000. Protects published collections of materials from unauthorised use, if the selection and arrangement of the materials have been a creative work (art.5.1). Protects data basis from unauthorised use if their creation has demanded substantial qualitative and quantitative investments (art.5.2).
- *National Program "Culture"*, developed by the Ministry of Culture in 1998. Chapter "Cultural Heritage".
- *The Statutes of the Institute of Literature, Folklore, and Art*, University of Latvia, the part of which the Archives are. According to the Statutes, the main aim of the Institute is "collecting, preserving and study of cultural values" including folklore.
- *The Charter of the Latvian Academy of Sciences*. Among the other responsibilities of the Academy, the Charter states "the scientific supervision of depositories of the national cultural heritage".

(c) accessibility

The collection of the Archives of Latvian Folklore and *Dainu Skapis* as part of it is accessible to all researchers and students of folklore. The restrictions only concern the use of the originals. Several current projects of the Archives include creation of electronic data

bases and digitisation of archive materials aimed at the widening accessibility of the documentary heritage. There is a separate project of scanning the manuscripts of *Dainu Skapis*.

(d) copyright status

Generally, there are no specific restrictions for the collection of the Archives of Latvian Folklore, including also this particular item.

## 2.4 Responsible administration

The Archives of Latvian Folklore are run by the Head of the Archives who is responsible to the Director of the Institute of Literature, Folklore, and Art. Over him there is the Rector of the University of Latvia.

The Archives are funded by the Science Council, Republic of Latvia, which evaluates the work of the Archives once a year and makes the resources available for the research and maintenance of the collection.

## 3. Identification

### 3.1 Description and inventory

*Dainu skapis* (the Cabinet of Folksongs) is both the working tool and manuscript of the best known edition of Latvian folk-songs *Latvju Dainas*, edited and compiled by the outstanding Latvian scholar Krisjanis Barons from 1878 through 1915. It is similar in its concept to the treasured Elias Lönnrot's collection of original Karelian texts used for the Finnish epic "Kalevala".

The work of publishing *Latvju Dainas* involved arrangement of great number of folk-song texts (that given by Barons himself is 217,996) and use of different both manuscript and printed collections. Therefore Barons designed this particular piece of furniture to accommodate paper slips (ca. 3x11cm in size) containing text quatrains. The original manuscripts were both copied by re-writing them and simply cut into the required format.

Altogether there are 70 drawers with 20 sections each, containing the texts and 3 more drawers containing different written material related to the edition - like letters to the editor (Barons) and his drafts for response, etc. There are about 400,000 slips in total.

*Dainu skapis* is just a part of the collection of the Archives of Latvian Folklore (ALF) that ranks among the Europe's biggest collections, documenting folk culture, language, history lifestyle and world-view over more than a century. Compared to the 218,000 song texts of *Dainu skapis*, the collection of ALF contains a total of 1,300,000 texts. It contains also 2108 other hand-written manuscripts, sound recordings (on wax cylinders, tapes - cassette and reel) of ca. 520 hours length; video recordings of ca. 350 hours length; historical photographs documenting folklore informants and the process of collecting folklore since 1921, documenting the folklore situation.

The manuscript collection of ALF covers a wide range of folklore genres. The total number of folklore items in the collection is 2,961,377. Among them, there are: 35,998 fairy tales; 57,844 legends; 34,938 anecdotes; 19,528 stories; 555,688 riddles; 309,774 proverbs and sayings; 1,043,841 classical folksongs; 76,185 songs of literary origin; 72,644 children songs and rhymes; 25,380 dances and games; 389,524 beliefs; 30,591 melodies; 54,935 magic spells etc.

### 3.2 Bibliographic/Registration details

The manuscript is marked by Barons, indicating the collectors and correspondents (according to the principles of his index published in the book), as well as the numbers of texts as published. The manuscript was microfilmed in 1940's, so the slips are also numbered in order to preserve the sequence in case some slips are misplaced in the process. Still this numbering is inaccurate and can show the total number of slips only approximately.

### 3.3 Visual documentation, if appropriate (for example, photographs or a video of the documentary heritage)

Photographs *Dainu skapis* are published several times in different mass media, they are also to be found on the ALF website :

[http://www.lza.lv/LAT/INST/LFK/ds\\_engl.html](http://www.lza.lv/LAT/INST/LFK/ds_engl.html)

### 3.4 History

Through countless centuries, folk singing has been an inherent part of traditional societies, such as the Latvian common people. Customs changed only slowly and gradually, and so did the songs, acquiring new layers, changing interpretations with the course of time, but always preserving the deeper layers, dating back to remote antiquity. Not until the 19th century did any changes arise that posed a threat to the continuance of the old tradition. Awareness of these changes and a growing appreciation of the cultural and historical value of ethnic antiquities led to a search for and preservation of both oral and material folklore in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The Cabinet of Folksongs was manufactured by an unknown craftsman in Moscow in 1880, following the design by Krisjans Barons. At that time the collection consisted of some tens of thousands of slips. For the first 13 years of its existence the Cabinet was kept in Moscow, then (in 1893) Barons returned to Latvia together with his collection. The cabinet travelled with Barons to different apartments in Riga, but after his death was kept in a bank vault. In 1940 the Cabinet was handed over to Archives of Latvian Folklore, that have kept and preserved it ever since.

The Archives of Latvian Folklore were founded in 1924 by Anna Berzkalne (1891-1956). The Archives have changed their institutional affiliation several times. Initially they belonged to the Ministry of Education. In 1945 the Archives were taken over by the University of Latvia; in 1946 they became a part of the Latvian academy of Sciences; since 1999 the Archives are a department of the Institute of Literature, Folklore, and Art, University of Latvia.

### 3.5 Bibliography: Please indicate up to three published sources describing the proposed documentary heritage.

The following are the main publications of the folklore materials preserved at the Archives of Latvian Folklore:

#### Folksong texts and melodies

Barons, K. un Visendorfs, H. (comps.) *Latvju Dainas*. 1-6. Jelgava-Sanktpeterburga, 1894-1915. (217,996 folksong texts, representing all texts collected by the 1910's).

Smits, P. (comp.) *Tautas dziesmas. Papildinājums Kr. Barona "Latvju dainam"*. 1-4. Riga, 1936-1939. (32,049 folksong texts collected by the Archives of Latvian Folklore in the so-called "mute parishes", not represented in *Latvju Dainas*).

*Latviesu tautasdziesmas*. 1-7. Riga, 1979-2000. (The academic edition, includes 327,878 folksong texts, is planned to consist of 15 volumes and to represent the entire collection of folksong texts stored at the depository of the Archives of Latvian Folklore).

Melngailis, E. (comp.) *Latviesu muzikas folkloras materiali*. 1-3. Riga, 1951-1953. (4280 melodies with texts).

Vitolins, J. (comp.) *Latviesu tautas muzika*. 1-5. Riga, 1958-1986. (The academic edition of folksong melodies, contains 6232 melodies with texts).

3.6 Names, qualifications and contact details of up to three independent people or organizations with expert knowledge about the values and provenance of the documentary heritage

Dr. Vaira Vike-Freiberga  
State President of the Republic of Latvia

Dr. Janis Stradins  
President  
Latvian Academy of Sciences  
Akademijas laukums 1  
LV 1050  
Riga  
Republic of Latvia

Andris Vilks  
Director of the National Library of Latvia  
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LV 1423 Riga  
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Dr. Inta Gale-Carpenter  
Special Projects Director  
Folklore Institute  
University of Indiana  
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Email: [carpente@indiana.edu](mailto:carpente@indiana.edu).

#### **4. Management plan – see below Annex 1**

The activities envisaged in the management plan cover the following spheres: legal norms, storage conditions and preservation, access policy.

#### **Legal norms**

In order to guarantee the necessary legal protection of the collection, the following measures should be taken:

- Development of the *Law on Folk Art*, envisaged in the National program “Culture”, section “traditional culture and folk art” for 2001. Institutions responsible: Ministry of Culture, Republic of Latvia; National Folk art Centre;
- Development of the new regulations of the Archives of Latvian Folklore, institutions involved: Archives of Latvian Folklore, Institute of Literature, Folklore, and Art;
- Carrying out actions necessary for the assignment of the status of the National Archive to the Archives of Latvian Folklore, suggested by the “UNESCO Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore” (Part C,a).

### **Storage conditions and preservation of materials**

The storage conditions of the Cabinet of Folksongs as well as the other manuscripts, audio and video recordings, and photographs at the depository of the Archives of Latvian Folklore are not completely satisfactory. Therefore the management plan envisages moving the Archives to the new building of the National Library as soon as it is built (planned around 2005). There exists an agreement between the National library and the Latvian Academy of Sciences on this. The project of the Library envisages rooms adjusted to the specific need of the Archives of Latvian Folklore. Institutions involved: Archives of Latvian Folklore, National Library of Latvia, University of Latvia, Latvian academy of Sciences.

To preserve the originals of the collection several projects of digitising are planned to be completed in 3-5 years, with scanning of the folksong originals of the *Dainu skapis* (started in 1999) being one of the main among them. It is planned to make the electronic material thus created available via Internet.

### **Access policy**

In order to facilitate the access to the collections it is planned to create the following electronic data base under the title of “Latvian Folksongs” available on the Internet, including: 1) scanned originals of the *Dainu skapis* with an HTML format index to it; 2) the data base of *Latvju dainas* published texts; 3) database of folksong melodies (for an example see [www.music.lv](http://www.music.lv)).

Institutions involved: Archives of Latvian Folklore, Latvian Academy of Music, University of Latvia.

## **5. Assessment against the Selection Criteria**

5.1 Assessment of the documentary heritage against each criterion described in Annex 2.

### **Criterion 1 – Influence**

The edition “Latvju Dainas” has had an enormous impact on the development of Latvian culture. Janis Endzelins, the greatest among the Latvian linguists, has stated that it created the basis for the study of the Latvian language. Study of folklore in general and folksongs in particular was the main source for creation of Latvian cultural identity. Thus “Latvju Dainas” as the embodiment of this cultural heritage sought for grew into a cultural

symbol, with the manuscript - *Dainu skapis* - symbolising the hard and scrupulous work of the editor, namely Krisjanis Barons.

## **Criterion 2 – Time**

*Dainu skapis* belongs to the oldest materials of the Collection that date back to the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They are an evidence of the folklore collecting activities of the first Latvian national liberation movement (the so called Awakening). Taken together, the Collection documents folk culture, language, history lifestyle and world-view over more than a century. Also “Latvju Dainas” contain not only song texts, but also description of customs, games, riddles, proverbs and other folk traditions.

## **Criterion 3 – Place**

The majority of the material is collected in Latvia; geographically it covers many regions and parishes of this country thus being a source of the exceptional value for the students of local lore. Still it reflects the general international views as to what is folklore and what criteria it should meet. It is an example of international ideas implemented locally (for instance, there were folklore-based identity construction processes also in Finland, Germany, Estonia).

A part of the collection at ALF also derives from the fieldwork carried out among the Latvians living abroad, e.g., in Siberia. The Collection contains also materials gathered in the neighbouring countries – Lithuania, Estonia. The collection includes folklore material of other ethnic groups as well (e.g. the Jews, the Gypsies, the Russians, etc.).

## **Criterion 4 – People**

The activities of the collecting folklore were initially connected with the nation building activities and they were aimed at the documenting of “national difference” of the Latvians. This was also the aim “Latvju Dainas” were meant to serve.

Yet, in the course of time the interest of the folklorists shifted also towards the other nationalities of Latvia and this resulted in considerable collections of folklore of different ethnic groups, gathered mainly in the 1920s-1930s. Today, these collections are of the utmost interest and importance for the Culture Societies of these groups. Among about 21,000 items there are songs, proverbs, narratives etc. of Livs, Russians, Germans, Jews, Estonians, Gypsies and Byelorussians.

## **Criteria 5 and 6 – Subject/Theme, Form and Style**

“Latvju Dainas” and their manuscript - *Dainu skapis* - contain not only folksong texts, although they are the main purpose of the edition, but also data on traditions, customs, game descriptions, texts of magic spells, proverbs and riddles. The material is arranged according to the principles developed by Krisjanis Barons, namely according to the cycles of human life, placing songs on social situation, mythology and folk festivals separately. *Dainu skapis* contains all of the texts with markings by Barons, showing the work contributed - how the original text was compared with others, edited, sometimes remade. The Cabinet holds also the texts never published, as those were regarded as fake or unsuitable by Barons.

*Dainu skapis* is a working manuscript for the edition with each quatrain (that being the basic complete unit of the text) on a separate slip. Still the way Barons in his editing process treated the longer songs consisting of more than one quatrain.

The ALF collection in general is very similar to that found in *Dainu skapis*, it contains all traditional genres of intangible folklore (folksongs, folktales, legends, riddles, proverbs and sayings, beliefs, games and dances, anecdotes, melodies) covering all thematic, functional and stylistic variations they can have in Latvian tradition. Yet, there are also materials in the Collection that, normally, do not deserve much attention from folklorists, such as house names, graveyard monument inscriptions, animal and bird sound interpretations and others.

## **Criterion 7 – Social value**

As explained above, folklore has been the basis for the building of Latvian national identity. It was of great importance in all periods of historical misfortunes. *Dainu skapis* has served as the symbol of Latvianness, symbolising the supposed Golden Age of Latvian tribes in the distant past. Also Krisjanis Barons has been turned into a somewhat symbolic person.

The Collection of the Archives of Latvian Folklore is a document that illuminates culture and aspirations of various social groups in different time periods. Folklore has been collected among soldiers of the National Armed Forces, inhabitants of alms-houses. In the 1930s the Archives of Latvian Folklore got a collection of the prisoners' notebooks, containing their favourite song texts, drawings and personal notes.

### **Secondary Criterion 1 – Integrity**

All the materials of the ALF collection, including *Dainu skapis* are preserved in the depository of the Archives of Latvian Folklore and maintained by the Staff of the Archives.

### **Secondary Criterion 2 – Rarity**

*Dainu skapis* is one of the unique documents of the Latvian cultural history preserved by ALF. There also are others like the unpublished manuscript of the Part 2 to the 7<sup>th</sup> volume of A. Lerhis-Puskaitis's *Latviesu tautas teikas un pasakas*, the folksong sound recordings on wax cylinders of the 1920's, etc. Still *Dainu skapis* is unique in that it contains manuscripts made by hundreds of collectors, it reflects the process of creating a unified edition out of these separate manuscripts, as well as the correspondence regarding it.

The depository of the Archives of Latvian Folklore is the only place in the world where such a complete collection of Latvian folklore is stored.

5.2 Contextual assessment including an assessment of the importance of a series of documents, the importance of a series of documents in a particular setting, and the assessment against other documentary heritage

5.3 An evaluation of the authenticity

The manuscripts of *Dainu skapis* are all originals except for the re-written copies of texts. Still there are also manuscripts considered lost for some time, as they were cut to form the slips K. Barons used in his work. This makes this item unique for the study of Latvia's cultural history.

Also the majority of the ALF collections are originals of folklore materials gathered in the field. Yet a part of it are copies taken from the important materials stored at folklore archives elsewhere.

5.4 An assessment of rarity (if appropriate)

## 6. Consultation

6.1 Details of consultation about the nomination with the:

- (a) Owner  
As 2.1
- (b) Custodian  
As 2.2
- (c) Relevant Regional or National Memory of the World Committee (if appropriate)

Latvian Committee for Memory of the World, National Commission of Latvia for UNESCO, Ministry of Culture of Latvia

## 7. Nominator

7.1 Name

**Ministry of Culture of Latvia**  
**The Latvian Memory of the World Committee**  
**The National Commission of Latvia for UNESCO**

7.2 Relationship to documentary heritage  
Cf. 2.1 and 2.3

7.3 Contact person (if appropriate)

Dr. Dace Bula  
Head of the Archives of Latvian Folklore

Andris Vilks  
Director of National Library of Latvia  
Chairman of Latvian Memory of the World Committee

7.4 Contact details

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