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Sheep bound for mountain pastures in Lyngsalpan [‘The Lyngen
Alps’] in Northern Norway 2014. Photo: Tor Arne Lillevoll.

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Miscellanea: Notes / Notizen

Anna-Leena Siikala (1943–2016)

Academician of Science Anna-Leena Siikala died on 27 February 2016. She was born on 1 January 1943. Anna-Leena defended her doctoral thesis at the University of Helsinki in 1978, and worked during her career as a professor at the Universities of Turku, Joensuu and Helsinki. In 1999–2004 she worked as an academy professor at the University of Helsinki. Anna-Leena was appointed as an academician of science in 2009. In addition to being an eminent scholar and much-loved teacher,



Photo: Lotte Tarkka.

Anna-Leena served the academic community through several scientific societies and journals, such as the Finnish Literature Society and Folklore Fellows Communications. She was also a member of the editorial board of the *Journal of Northern Studies*.

Anna-Leena was, above all, a scholar of oral tradition and vernacular religion. From the beginning of her career, she was interested in shamanism, in particular in Siberian shamanism, which she studied as early as her doctoral dissertation. The themes of the dissertation, namely the interaction of ritual texts and techniques of ecstasy as well as their variation, fascinated Anna-Leena throughout her career: she returned to the themes in her studies on the Finno-Karelian *tietäjä* institution, as well as in her lectures, which filled lecture halls in the 1990s.

Anna-Leena was linked to the chain of scholars studying Finno-Ugric mythologies and oral traditions through her own teachers. However, she was not able to conduct fieldwork among these peoples during her early career, but had to make do with archive materials. Nonetheless, Anna-Leena's work was characterised by ethnography even before her fieldwork in the Cook Islands with Jukka and Harri Siikala and among Finnish narrators. Consequently, her interpretations of archival materials were always close to the local meanings, emphasising the performers' and community's points of view.

When the Soviet Union collapsed, Anna-Leena began to travel among the Finno-Ugric peoples in Russia: the sacred groves and ethnic festivals of Udmurts, features of the oral and written heritage of Komi and private and

public Khanty rituals soon found their interpretations in her texts. Fieldwork in Russia became a way of life that marked Anna-Leena's last years at the university. Many of her important encounters and her fervent desire to defend Russian minorities, and also major scientific projects, such as the Encyclopaedia of Uralic Mythologies, were related to this fieldwork in Russia.

Mythology, myths, and the incantations related to them define Anna-Leena's career. Her interpretations on Kalevala metre poetry brought new perspectives, concepts and methods not only into the Finnish, but also the international research field, breaking old conceptions of poetry, its vernacular images and ways of using it. Later, Anna-Leena combined performative points of view with comparative aspects in ways that opened up new interpretations and possibilities.

Openness and the courage to work and think with new methodologies, such as cognitive perspectives on narration, were repeated features of Anna-Leena's career. In her teaching and writings, she also stressed the importance of considering the long lines and continuities in scientific discussions. In her own work, the old archival materials and academic discussions always went alongside new fieldwork materials and perspectives. The researcher should consciously link herself into academic chains, both textual and social, which for Anna-Leena Siikala was not only an academic but also an ethical choice for sensible interpretation and comprehensive knowledge.

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