

PETER GRZYBEK

MOSAIC OR JIGSAW? PUBLISHING AN ARTICLE FROM
ESTONIA IN THE “WEST”, 30 YEARS AGO, WHEN
CIRCUMSTANCES WERE QUITE DIFFERENT
FROM TODAY

The communication from April until November 1984 between Arvo Krikmann from Estonia and myself (at that time living in Germany) is from a time, when there was no electronic communication, neither written (be that by email or sms), nor spoken (via mobiles, skype, or similar media). It was a time, when “ordinary” letters or telegrams were written, and when “ordinary” telephones were used for spoken communication – provided there were open lines and connections, which was the case only to a very limited degree when communicating with members of the former Soviet Union. Despite such restrictions, particularly concerning communication across political boundaries, and despite analogical options and desires to control communication in our days, one advantage of the “old” communication media is that they are likely to be saved for a longer time than our modern ones, and that they thus can serve as documents not only of personal or inter-personal relations, but also of a specific period, both in political and academic respects.

I had been in Soviet Moscow, as an exchange student, with a grant for six months, in the first half of 1983. During that time, I established contact with Grigorij L’vocič Permjakov, the outstanding Russian paremiologist, whose works I had become acquainted with before. Permjakov lived some 25 km outside of Moscow, in the city of Žukovskij, which at that time was what was termed a “closed city”, because of some important aviation research center in that town, and, due to this fact, inaccessible for foreigners. At that time, Permjakov (who died shortly after my return to Germany on November 16, 1983) was already in bad health state, due to his head injuries he had suffered during World War II. It must have been some very special experience

PROVERBIUM 31 (2014)

for him to talk to a young scholar, interested in his research probably more than many of his country(wo)men, and coming just from that part of the world which ultimately was responsible for his personal state and for the fact that he could not leave his home any more. Yet, he was still able to talk to me by telephone, although sometimes not more than five minutes per day, and we had intensive phone discussions two or three times per week. Talking to him was not easy for me, too: doing this from a hotel was no good idea, since it was well-known that those telephone lines might be intercepted, and I had learnt quite fast that it was wiser to avoid any complications. As a result, after a Russian friend of mine had established contact with him per phone, and I had thus personally been introduced to Permjakov as a trustful person (i.e., I could reliably be identified as “one of ours”), I regularly gave him calls from a post office, and I made personal arrangements with his wife, Nadežda Iosifovna Rašba, whom I regularly met at various subway stations in Moscow, to exchange unpublished research material. At that time I had already started to translate his seminal *Grammar of Proverbial Wisdom* from 1979 into German, an English translation of which unfortunately has never been published, the reception of Permjakov’s seminal work thus having remained limited to our days.

After my return to Germany, at the end of 1983, I was informed about Permjakov’s death by his widow, who gave part of his academic papers to the Institute of Oriental Research, which I later visited, and another part, namely, the entire scholarly part of his personal library, to the Estonian Literary Museum in Tartu.

Immediately after hearing about Permjakov’s death, in the beginning of 1984, I made the first plans and negotiations to publish not only Permjakov’s *Grammar*, but also a whole book with translations from modern Soviet paremiology, at that time almost unknown in the Western world. The two most important books, in that respect, were the Russian collections *Paremiologičeskij sbornik* [Paremiological Volume] (1978) and *Paremiologičeskie issledovanija*, [Paremiological Studies] (1984), both compiled and edited by Permjakov, who had made available to me all articles from the second of these books before they were published. Thanks to my work in Moscow, I had been able to read and make copies, among others, of Arvo Krikmann’s paremiological works, which were, of course, present in the Lenin

State Library in Moscow, where foreign students (of whatever professional rank) had good access not only to literature, but also to affordable copy services.

Hearing about Permjakov's death, and starting to work on the special volume devoted to the semiotics of the proverb, I decided to contact Arvo Krikmann from Tartu. For me, at that time, he was not from Estonia, but from the Estonian Republic of the Soviet Union. To write him in Russian seemed to me the most natural thing to do. During my stay in the Soviet Union, I had repeatedly been in contact with official institutions, and I had acquired, at least partly, the phraseology which was necessary and adequate in dealing with such institutions, or in writing letters to private persons, which might eventually be read by such institutions.

This explains, among other reasons, the highly official addresses in my first letter from April 4, 1984, which of course was not handwritten, but typewritten on official university stationary. This also explains why the letter contained appreciating and praising references to the "outstanding Soviet scholar" Permjakov, and to "important works and results from Soviet paremiology". This also explains why, at the end of the letter, there is an explicit remark as to expecting some answer – this was not, of course, an indirect hint at the addressee's possible laziness in answering, but a sign to make sure that the letter got through (whatever possible controlling and censoring instances) and arrived safely.

In his handwritten answer two weeks later from April 30 (which was not written on university stationary, but of course sent as a registered letter), Arvo Krikmann took up the ball, referring to Permjakov, and although his initial address was quite formal, too, his letter would not only end analogically, i.e., with a quest to re-assure receipt, but also with "cordial greetings", signaling that we were sharing a particular segment of the world. And it was clear to me that our correspondence was not undesired by the official organs, which was not completely unexpected to me, of course, after I had been tolerated in the Soviet Union for half a year, without any scandals, and after I had done my best to meet the official organs' communicative desires.

After one intermediate letter, Arvo Krikmann's answer from September 6, again handwritten on ordinary stationary and sent

as registered mail, already contains the private address “Dear Peter”, starting with a confirmation that he got my letter, and ending with the almost colloquial wish “All the best to you”.

His letter from November 8, handwritten and registered, was just to inform me that his work progressed; on the one hand, this was a personal sign from him that I could trust his promise, on the other hand, this was an official sign saying that no letter, which might have been sent in the meantime, might not have gotten through, or might “wait” at some controlling instances.

I was then completely surprised to receive Matti Kuusi’s letter from November 30, along with a copy of Arvo Krikmann’s text. I had known, of course, that there had always been, for long times, special relations between Russia and Finland, on the one hand, and between Finland and the Baltic states including Estonia, on the other. But I had never been aware of this specific window from (or to) the Soviet Union. And Matti Kuusi’s phrase speaking of the “legal” copy to arrive some time makes me smile still today...

The official version of the text indeed arrived some time later, along with Arvo Krikmann’s official letter from November 30 accompanying it. It was written, of course, in a highly formal way. That can be seen not only from the addresses, but also from the fact that it was typewritten again, not handwritten. It was of utmost importance that the permission to publish it was given just for once, and that no remuneration would come into play, because else VAAP would intervene and ask for enormous money, or even refuse publication. Quite logically, the reference to the paper’s registration at that agency was not missing.

As can be seen, it took approximately half a year, and we had not only established personal friendly relations with Arvo Krikmann, but we had also made successful business negotiations over the Iron Curtain which fell only years later.

It would take many more years till I first met Arvo Krikmann personally. Our written correspondence in the meantime had been episodically, with a peak in December 1999, when we detected our common interests in quantitative paradigms of scientific research, particular with regard to paremiological questions. Our first personal meeting then took place in 2008, in Helsinki, after more than 20 years of our long-distance acquaintance.

May this, that has turned into an open-minded and faithful friendship over the years, continue for many years, and may the publication of our first letters from three decades ago keep us aware of the importance and the value of personal relations and ties, in academic research too, along with friendship and confidence.

Peter Grzybek
Institut für Slawistik
Universität Graz
Merangasse 70
8010 Graz
Austria
E-mail: peter.grzybek@uni-graz.at

Letter 1

16.4.1984

Respected Arvo Arnol'dovič,¹

As you probably know, the outstanding Soviet paremiologist Grigorij L'vovič Permjakov died at the end of last year in Moscow.

I wrote a small necrologue in honor of Grigorij L'vovič for the new yearbook *Proverbium*, and am just now about to publish a special issue of the journal *Kodikas/Code – Ars Semeiotica. An International Journal of Semiotics* devoted to the memory of Grigorij L'vovič. In this volume, I would like to introduce the readers with important works and results from Soviet paremiology (in German or English translation).

In this context, I would very much like to re-publish your work "Some Aspects of Semantic Indefiniteness of proverbs", written in 1978, in German translation.

Before officially contacting VAAP², I would prefer to ask you first if you have any objections against the translation or against a re-publication.

I know, by the way, the following works of yours:

1. „Zur Problematik der Metasprache als Ausdruck der Bedeutungsstreuung der Sprichwörter." *Proverbium*, (17) 1971; 624-626.
2. *On Denotative Indefiniteness of Proverbs*. Tallinn, 1974.
3. *Some Additional Aspects of Semantic Indefiniteness of Proverbs*. Tallinn, 1974.
4. "Some Difficulties arising at semantic classification of proverbs". *Proverbium*, (23) 1974; 865-879.
5. *К проблематике исследования содержания и мировоззрения пословиц*. АКД, Таллинн, 1975.
6. See above (*Паремилогический сборник*)
7. „К объяснению некоторых семантических механизмов пословиц." (Abstract)

If you have additional works, I would very much appreciate relevant information about them. I will be waiting for your answer.

With deep respects,

(Peter Grzybek)

¹ Addressing a person by first name and father's name is the formal and official version in Russian oral and written communication; it would not be in Estonian. The original letter was written in Russian, however, the lingua franca not only in the Soviet Union, but all other East European countries of that time, so the official address was phrased correspondingly.

² See fn. in the introductory text.

RUHR - UNIVERSITÄT BOCHUM

SEMINAR FÜR SPRACHLEHRFORSCHUNG

Peter Grzybek

4630 BOCHUM 1
UNIVERSITÄTSSTRASSE 150
GEBÄUDE 6B
POSTFACH 102148
TEL: (0234) 700-3815
TELEX 0825860Bundesrepublik
Deutschland

16.4.1984

Уважаемый Арво Арнольдович,

Как Вам наверняка известно, в конце прошлого года в городе Москве умер замечательный советский ученый-паремиолог Григорий Львович Пермяков.

Я написал маленький некролог в честь Григория Львовича в новый ежегодник "Провербиум" и теперь же собираюсь издать специальный номер журнала "Code Kodikas - Ars Semeioticaie. An International Journal of Semiotics" в честь и на память Григория Львовича. В этом сборнике мне хотелось бы познакомить читателей с важными работами и результатами советской паремиологии (в немецких или английских переводах).

В связи с этим мне очень хотелось бы переопубликовать Вашу работу "Некоторые аспекты семантической неопределенности пословиц" из 1978-ого года в немецком переводе.-

До официального контакта с ВВАП-ом я предпочитал бы узнать есть ли у Вас каких-либо возражений против перевода или против переопубликования?

Я знаю, кстати, следующие Ваши работы:

1. "Zur Problematik der Metasprache als Ausdruck der Bedeutungsstreuung der Sprichwörter". Proverbium, (17) 1971; 624-626.
2. "On Denotative Indefiniteness of Proverbs". Tallinn, 1974.
3. "Some Additional Aspects of semantic indefiniteness of Proverbs." Tallinn, 1974.
4. Some Difficulties arising at semantic classification of proverbs. Proverbium, (23) 1974; 865-879.
5. "К проблематике исследования содержания и мировоззрения пословиц." АКД, Таллинн, 1975.
6. см. выше (Паремиологический Сборник).
7. К объяснению некоторых семантических механизмов пословиц. (Abstract)

Если у Вас есть добавочные работы, я очень оценил бы соответствующие информации.

Я жду Вашего ответа.

С глубоким уважением

(Peter Grzybek)

Letter 2

Tartu, 30.IV.84

Respected¹ dr. P. Grzybek

Some days ago I received your letter with very interesting information for me. Of course, I was familiar with Grigorij L'vovič for a long time, we had a regular correspondence, etc.; therefore I am very glad about any news, which concern attempts to perpetuate his memory, the dissemination of his works and the like. I am also very grateful for your suggestion to re-publish my article on the *Semantic Indefiniteness of Proverbs*. It goes without saying that I do not have (in principle) any objections against its re-publication, although, strictly speaking, I would suggest to write a completely new article² for you, because that work of mine expresses my "mental state" somewhere of the early 1970s, and not at all the present – not even speaking what happened during that time in the fields of linguistic semantics, theory of metaphor, or paremiological theory itself. But I am afraid that you do not have enough time for this, particularly taking into account, additionally, formalities³ and the like. [Otherwise I would be glad to know as soon as possible, how much time will be at my disposal. In that case I could offer immediately an English (or, if this is inevitable, German) text, the editing of which would waste much less time than a solid translation.]

In the last years I worked more or less on questions of the geographical distribution of proverbs. To my mind, the works of this period are not of particular interest for you; nevertheless I quote some of them:

1. "Some aspects of proverb distribution." – Symposium 'Mathematical processing of cartographic data'. Tallinn, December 18-19, 1979). Tallinn 1979, pp. 28-44.

2. "Towards the typology of Estonian folklore regions." Paper presented to the Fifth International Finno-Ugric Congress (Turku 1980). Preprint KKJ-16- Tallinn 1980.

3. „Опыт оценки тесноты фольклорной связи прибалтийско-финских народов (на материале пословиц).“ – Ученые записки Тартуского Государственного Университета №. 628. Труды по лингвостатистике VIII. Тарту 1982, стр. 63-79.

So, I will wait for your answer.

With cordial greetings

Your

Arvo Krikmann.

¹A phraseologically correct equivalent of the Russian address „Уважаемый“ would be “Dear”, but this English translation would also include the much more intimate Russian “Дорогой” which is not used here.

² Ultimately, this suggestion would result in the German translation and publication of Arvo Krikmann’s important article “1001 Questions on the Logical Structure of Proverbs”, which unfortunately has never been translated to English.

³ The most important „formality“ at that time was, of course, to get the publication permission from *ВААП* (see endnote 1 in the introductory text).

г. Марту 30. IV 84

Уважаемый др П. Грзбек.

Несколько дней тому назад получил от Вас письмо с очень интересной для меня информацией. Конечно, я давно был знаком с Григорием Львовичем, мы вели регулярную переписку и т.д.; поэтому меня радуют любые вести, касающиеся попытки увековечения его памяти, ознакомления его трудов и т.п. Весьма признателен Вам и за предложение перепубликовать мою статью о семантической неопределенности пословиц. Разумеется, у меня нет никаких (в принципе) возражений против ее перепубликации, хотя, собственно говоря, предпочел бы написать для Вас совсем новую статью, поскольку эта работа отражает мое "ментальное состояние" где-то в начале 1970-ых годов, а статьи не пишется — не говоря, тем более, о том, что произошло за это время в лингвистической семантике, в области теории метафоры и проп., а также самой паремимологической теории. Но опасаясь, что для этого у Вас не хватает времени, учитывая, к тому же, формальности и т.п. (В противном случае был бы рад возмозно поскорее узнать, сколько времени именно будет в моем распоряжении. В том случае я мог бы предложить сразу английский (или, если это неизбежно, немецкий) текст, редактирование которого уже было бы гораздо меньше времени, чем сплошной перевод.)

В последние годы я был занят в основном вопросами картографического геопространственного моделирования. Думаю, что работа этого периода не представляется для Вас особого интереса. Разовы все же некоторые:

- (1) Some aspects of proverb distribution. → Symposium "Mathematical processing of cartographic data", (Tallinn, December 18-19, 1979). Tallinn 1979, pp. 28-44.
- (2) Towards the typology of Estonian folklore regions. Paper presented to the Fifth International Finno-Ugric Congress (Turku 1980). Preprint KKF-16, Tallinn 1980.
- (3) Опыт оценки тесноты пространственной связи прибалтийско-финских народов (на материале пословиц), — Члены записки Тартуского ГУ № 628. Труды по лингвистике VIII. Тарту 1982, стр. 63-79.

Итак, буду ждать Вашего ответа.

С сердечным приветом
Вам

Arvo Krikmann.



Letter 3

Tartu, 6.09.84

Dear Peter,

Finally I succeed in answering your last letter, which I received already two weeks ago. I must say that you made me very happy: I mean your message that you achieved some prolongation in the publication of your issue or volume. From your last but one letter I read that you have such a small amount of time that I absolutely had no chance to write a new article (particularly if one additionally takes into account formalities and the like). Now for me arose some new hope.

You write that you are also planning to re-publish my “new” (that is, again some other old) article on semantic mechanisms of proverbs, which I wrote in fall 1975, but which came out only recently. I again, this time, too, do not have, and this goes without saying, any principle objection, except for, maybe, the following one: as an archivist, I do not like the existence of doublets. I got to know, completely post factum, that the first of my old pre-prints “On Denotative Indefiniteness of Proverbs” will be re-published in the first volume of the new yearbook *Proverbium*, and for the second volume the publication of its continuation “Some Additional Aspects...” is planned – but the text of these two works largely coincide with the text of my article “Some Aspects of Semantic Indefiniteness...”, which you intend to re-publish. Moreover, there were negotiations of Grigorij L’vocič (via Ben Amos or whom? – I do not know exactly) concerning the publication of some English translations of works from Soviet authors, who were represented in the volume *Paremiologičeskij sbornik* and *Paremiologičeskie issledovanija*, among them both of my articles, which are mentioned in your letters. Wouldn’t this be too much? On the other hand, a Russian text will most probably be not very readable for a Western reader, so that probably this will not represent a special problem. So I leave this question completely for your decision.

If I succeed to write a new article until October, then its title will be, probably, “Logical versus Pragmatical?” or something of the kind. I would very much like to discuss the problem of this kind of “explosion” in contemporary approaches to the semantics of the proverb, on the background of analogical developments and tendencies in linguistic and general semantics (even if in the pragmatic direction of some works undertaken in the framework of the so-called artificial intelligence, on the one hand, and “logistic” works – as for example Montague grammar, on which Kanyó bases his hopes – on the other.

Nadežda Iosifovna¹ just was my guest here, together with her small friend Anja (maybe you also know her, i.e. Anja?). On their way they visited Pskov and Pečery, and from here they left some days to Tallinn. Cordial greetings to you from them and from myself.

All the best!

Your

Arvo Krikmann

¹ Nadežda Iosifovna Rašba is the wife of the late Grigorij L'vovič Permjakov.

Паргу, 6.09.84.

Дорогой Питер!

Удастся наконец ответить на Ваше последнее письмо, которое получил уже неделю две тому назад. Должен сказать, что Вы меня обрадовали меня: имено в виду сообщения о том, что у Вас получилась некоторая стеночка со своим номером или серийным. Из Вашего предпоследнего письма я вычитал, что у Вас настолько мало времени, что я ни в коем случае уже не успею написать ответу статью (учитывая еще и формальности и прочее). Теперь у меня на этот счет возникла новая надежда.

Вы пишете, что собираетесь перепубликовать и мою "novum" (т.е. опять-таки дурную статью) статью — о семантических механизмах слововиз, которую я написал осенью 1975 г., хотя она и вышла только недавно. У меня, разумеется, и на сей раз нет никаких принципиальных возражений, кроме, может быть, одного: мне как архивисту в общем не нравятся обилие дублиров. Я узнал — совершенно пост фактум —, что в первом номере нового ежегодника "Rocznik" перепубликовали первый из моих старых предпринтов "On Denotative Indefiniteness of Polish", а во втором номере намеревается перепубликовать и по продолжении "Some Additional Aspects..." — а текст этих работ во многом совпадает с текстом статьи "Некоторые аспекты семантической неопределенности...", которую собираетесь перепубликовать Вы. Кроме того, ~~уже~~ Григорий Павлович были заключены договоры (через Бэн-Амоса или кого? — я точно не знаю) относительно издания ~~их~~ в английском переводе некоторой выборки трудов советских авторов, входящих в сборники "Лингвистический сборник" и "Лингвистический сборник исследования" в том числе обеих моих работ, о которых говорилось в Ваших письмах. Не много ли получится? С одной стороны, для западного читателя русский текст, по всей вероятности, не является особенно читабельным, так что и особой бедой ~~из~~ лишнего повторения, наверно, не будет. Итак, предоставлю этот вопрос полностью на Ваше усмотрение.

Если целью написать и опубликовать новую статью, то ее заглавием будет, по-видимому, "Logical versus Pragmatical?" or something else of the kind. Мне очень хотелось бы обсуждать проблему своего рода "разрыва" в современных подходах к семантике пословиц, на фоне аналогичных разрывов и тенденций в лингвистической и общей семантике (например, прагматической направленности части работ, выполненных в рамках Т.п. интеллектуального интеллекта, с одной стороны, и лингвистических работ — хотя бы прагматиком Монтегю, на которую возлагает надежды Канье, — с другой). Целью ли, будет видно в ближайшем будущем.

Надежда Цвиевровна только что была у меня в гости, вместе со своей маленькой подружкой Анней (может быть Вы и с ней, т.е. Анней, знакомы?). Они мимоходом посетили еще и Петров и Петровы, а от нас уехали на несколько дней в Калинин. Сердечный привет Вам и от них и от меня самого.

Всего хорошего!

Ваш

Arvo Krikman



Letter 4

Tartu
8 XI 1984

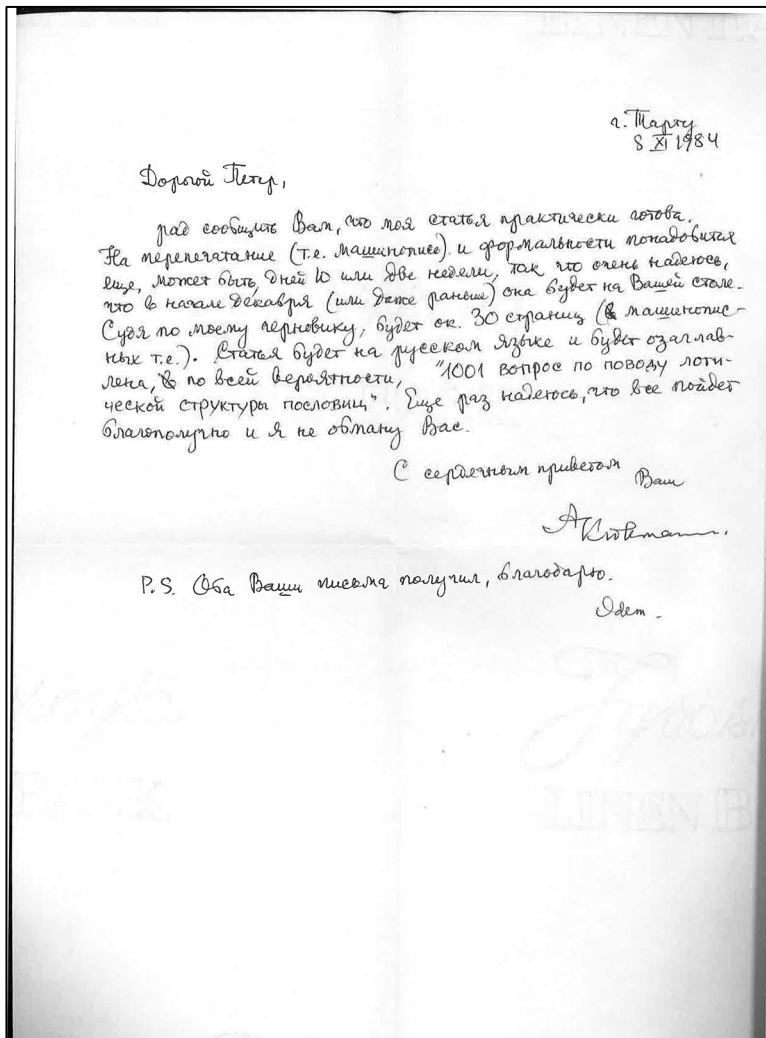
Dear Peter,

I am glad to inform you that my article is almost finished. Re-printing (i.e., typewriting) and some formalities will need some 10 days or maybe two weeks, and I hope very much that at the beginning of December (or even earlier) it will be on your desk. Judging from my handwritings, it will comprise ca. 30 (typewritten) pages. The article will be in Russian, and most probably it will be entitled "1001 Questions on the Logical Structure of Proverbs". I hope once again that all will end well and I do not cheat you.

With cordial greetings

Your
Krikmann.

P.S. I got both your letters, safely.





MOSAIC OR JIGSAW?

31

Letter 5

30.11.1984

Dr. P. Grzybek

On behalf of Arvo Krikmann I hereby send you his article. A legal copy will arrive some time.

With best greetings

Matti Kuusi
Professor Emeritus

HELSINGIN YLIOPISTO
KANSANRUNOUSTIETEEN LAITOS
FABIANINKATU 33, 00170 HELSINKI 17
PUHELIN, VAHDE 1911

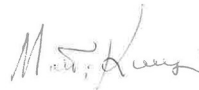
UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI
DEPARTMENT OF FOLKLORE
FABIANINKATU 33, 00170 HELSINKI 17
FINLAND

30.10.1984

Dr. P.Grzybek. Bochum

Im Auftrage von Arvo Krikmann sende ich hiermit
seinen Artikel. Ein legales Exemplar ankommt seinerzeit.

Mit besten Grüssen



Matti Kuusi
Professor Emeritus

Letter 6

30.11.1984

Mr P. Grzybek
Editor of the Journal "Ars Semeiotica"

Deeply respected Mr Grzybek !

In accordance with your suggestion I am sending you my article "1001 Question on the Logical Structure of Proverbs" (39 pages) for publication in the journal "Ars Semeiotica. An International Journal of Semiotics".

I give my agreement to publish the article once in Russian or German without any remuneration. No promise was made before to publish the given work in any other publication. All rights for the further use of the article will then be returned to the author.

The present manuscript is registered at VAAP (103104 Moskva, Bol'shaja Bronnaja, 6-A).

With regards,

Krikmann

Tallinn, November 30, 1984.

г-н П.Гржибек
Редактор журнала "Ars Semeioticae"
Bundesrepublik Deutschland
4630 Bochum 1
Universitätsstraße 150
Ruhr-Universität Bochum
Seminar für Sprachlehrforschung
Postfach 10 21 48

Глубокоуважаемый г-н Гржибек!

В соответствии с Вашем предложением посылаю Вам статью "1001 вопрос по поводу логической структуры пословиц" (39 с.) для опубликования в журнале "Ars Semeioticae. An International Journal of Semiotics".

Даю согласие на однократную публикацию статьи без гонорара на русском или немецком языке. Ранее не было дано обещание на опубликование данной работы ни одному изданию. Все права на дальнейшее использование статьи возвращаются автору.

Настоящая рукопись зарегистрирована во Всесоюзном агентстве по авторским правам (ГОЗИО4 Москва, Большая Бронная, 6-А).

С уважением


А.Крикманн

Таллин, 30. ноября 1984 г.