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INTRODUCTION: THE POTENTIAL AND CONSTRAINTS OF CULTURAL TRANSFER THROUGH VOICE, CONNECTION, AND MESSAGE

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This special issue gathers research articles that are based and elaborate on the presentations given at the conference under the theme “Voice, Connection and Message in Traditional Singing”, held at the Estonian Literary Museum from 30 November to 1 December 2020. The time and the setting were exceptional due to the COVID-19 pandemic in full swing. Consequently, this re-occurring scholarly meeting in Tartu, Estonia, with the guiding topic specifically focusing on traditional songlore, was transformed into an online event – a format that had gradually become a new normality. The number of contributions delivered turned out to be impressive, nevertheless: the conference featured 18 papers by 23 presenters from 7 countries. All in all, it was the eleventh scholarly gathering organized by the Estonian Folklore Archives of the Estonian Literary Museum

in a series that had initially concentrated on the older Finnic oral tradition of the runosong (Est. *regilaul*), yet from 2018 onwards the scope has extended to the song traditions around the world. A significant number of papers presented at these conferences have found their way into special collections of scholarly articles, either in the form of books or journal issues (Jaago & Sarv 2001; Sarv 2004, 2012; Lintrop 2006; Oras & Kalkun & Sarv 2014; Oras 2017a, 2017b).

The consolidating premise for the current collection of articles is found in the multidimensional quality of the conception of 'song': it denotes the vocal musical expression but may, at the same time, refer to verbal communication, lyrics, and poetic expression. Furthermore, it appears that the initial conference proposal to address the triad of voice, connection, and message has inspired the authors of the following explorations more observably for an indirect take, so that the suggested conceptual frame remains rather metaphorical when giving ground to a probable indication. Thus we would like to expand somewhat further on the conceptual frame proposed, which may be seen as a complex grounded basis for all the studies collected, and at the same time the formulations presented and expanded may incite new directions for research into the exciting field of songlore and singing, as a mental and artistic effort, as a creative act and performance that connects people by a meaningful communication.

From an analytical point of view, the concept of voice may stand for various approaches as, besides reference to the ability to produce sound, it signifies a medium of expression in the social production of meaning, which forms a rather predominant focus in the current humanities research. In discourse analysis voice relates to agency and to the individual, to the right of expression, to the position expressed, to power relations, and to discursive events (e.g., Hymes 1996; Blommaert 2005; Fairclough 2006), whereas the social context similarly implies the recognition of multiple voices, of collective agency. The state of many, i.e., a collection, indicates a related process, that of connecting, of bringing together or establishing a link or joining people and things. The act of singing connects: it builds social and emotional connections between the singers in a group, or with listeners – the audience. This perspective allows us to consider the connection to be likewise conducive of communication: there is a message conveyed while the content, form, and text of the song performed (or presented in textual form) reflect both the singer's voice and a cultural meaning. In addition to the direct musical or worded messages, one may distinguish between intended, accidental or occasional ones. Lastly, we have come full circle in this conceptual sketch by implying the equivalence of voice and message, the latter being a distinct unit or an idea in communication.

Moreover, the categories of voice, connection, and message are linked to the performatory quality or accomplishment, as well as create performative and

often emotional effects that reflect historical music-making traditions, singing repertoires or practices or aesthetics, which convey specific meanings, significance, and agency. One form of connection and communication in engaging with song traditions – when particularly highlighting the aspect of social communication – is revival. In this process the temporal and contextual frameworks undergo transformation, denoting a recontextualization and transition that aims at cultural renewal (see Slobin 2014; Hill & Bithell 2014). The project of revival opens a space for the imaginary within the tradition (Feintuch 2006), be it a direct communicative situation or a corpus of archival collections.

In the studies presented below, the thematic direction on voice, connection, and message has inspired the contributing authors to bring forth two of the paramount aspects of songs and singing – the situational and the textual, whereas the musical component remains predominantly outside of a targeted exploration as largely contextual. The act of singing may be studied as a musical expression or from the perspective of a poetic and linguistic quality of verbal communication, whereas engagement with an audience remains more occasional in this set. Another widely cross-cutting feature of the articles put forward in this special issue is the investigative take on the previously collected and archived material, forming links to the past but nevertheless posing questions that derive from the present, as it is often the case in the countries and cultures that host large archival collections of folklore.

The notion of the abovementioned crisis appears directly, addressed by **Jelena Jovanovič**, when she explores the transcendable ritual function in Serbian traditional songs employed in current singing practices that generate sought-after self-empowerment. The author leads the multipart singing group Moba engaged in the urban revival of traditional singing and elaborates on the meanings and messages of performed songs out of their traditional context. The article documents an experiment intended to arrange a performance of a selection of multipart repertoires of various peoples in Europe, which was unfortunately altered by the pandemic lockdown conditions. The search for ways to find one's voice or arrange collective singing under the restrictive circumstances of COVID-19 concurrently shifted the focus of this study on how the ritualistic essence, the ritual meaning and message of traditional songs become significant and revived in critical situations.

Austė Nakienė and **Rūta Žarskienė**¹ have studied the singing practice and the preferred traditional repertoires in the first-generation diaspora communities of Lithuanians in the United States, which were recorded by Jonas Balys, a seminal folklorist of the time, who profoundly shaped the dissemination of song repertoires and maintenance of emotional bonds. This historiographical review traces the documentation of traditional songs in which the image of the

homeland left behind connects to memories of the practice of singing traditional songs, hence reviving them, raising their importance, and certainly also ritualizing them. It became a means for connecting with the singers' loved ones left behind, by sending them those 'voice' messages of songs, visualized as postcards dispatched with a nostalgic and therapeutic message. The first-generation immigrants tended to become encapsulated in sharing such nostalgic memories.

In turn, **Janika Oras** examines the complexities of a colonial subject position by introducing a talented professional stage performer of folklore from the mid-twentieth-century Estonia, Laine Mesikäpp, who practiced traditional singing styles and repertoires. Against the odds, she managed to retain the stance of pre-Soviet origin, despite aligning with the Soviet-style public performance model. The article focuses on the creative voice and messages of Laine Mesikäpp, which were compromising, censored, and self-censored, but also resistant, constantly testing the limits. The singer's representation of historical wedding traditions carried an anti-colonialist connotation due to avoidance strategies and creative hybrid meanings that turned the required Soviet content into a formality.

With another focus on the constrained political agency, **Savannah-Rivka Powell** investigates the encoded Ainu identity and its bonds to the transnational Indigeneity movement, which the Ainu folk music revival promotes. The analysis traces the fusion of historical sources with global popular music styles, which creates a positive hybridity that carries the potential to build connections among the modern urban Ainu. The parallel tendencies of the fusion are also evident in Ainu identity formation, where the discovery and acknowledgement of one's roots draw inspiration and support from the global Indigenous movement. Powell shares the Ainu musicians' emotional testimonies of finding their own voice as Ainu, which may even have been a therapeutic experience, as well as her personal insights as a participant observer.

In her study, **Liina Saarlo** highlights once again the role of an individual, be it a singer as a performer or the counterpart represented by a documenting folklore collector. However, the author questions the latter's aesthetic judgments on the performative qualities as well as the overall scarcity of meta-data concerning the performance context. Due to archival and collection practices in Estonia, the number of poetic texts stored in the Estonian Folklore Archives is enormous, and this in turn influences how the *regilaul* tradition is conceptualized. Furthermore, the tradition was essentially text-centric, with a simple melody and a close-to-speech singing style. Hence the foregrounded component appears to be the poetic song text, because the scarceness of documented musical tunes or performance situations leaves the act of singing as a process in the background. In addition, most of these songs were documented in the phase of the demise of the tradition when singers no longer mastered a rich repertoire

of melodies or the skills to perform them with expected variation both in the text and the musical expression. The characteristics of their performance did not connect with those of the collectors, whereas modern researchers remain to be challenged in their search for the voice of the singers.

Hanna Karhu builds her critical study on the usage of archival materials when presenting Finnish rhymed folk songs that have fed into literary works, which became particularly popular in early-twentieth-century theatrical performances. She illuminates the process of national identity construction in Finland where creative writers of the new literary culture elaborated traditional songs into modern poetry through selection and recontextualization – some of the original messages did not correspond to the intellectual elite's conception of proper national heritage. Such exclusions left several age groups and social classes without a voice. Karhu also brings forth various emotions and meanings in singing, such as love, joy, sorrow, and longing as well as defiance, frustration, or confrontation, which were voiced in rhymed couplets and eventually found their place in the works of some younger writers, regardless of the elitist exclusion.

The remaining set of contributions tackle more substantially the digitized archival materials, in order to explore innovative methodological aspects for further songlore research. However, there is a challenge to be addressed in the context of investigating larger corpora of materials, with an intention of investigating poetic text collections, their semantic, stylistic, or linguistic qualities, as well as content. These studies pertain to and develop in a meaningful way the field of digital humanities which provides novel tools and methods for gleaning previously unattainable and strikingly new research results.

In their article **Kati Kallio, Mari Sarv (Väina), Maciej Janicki, and Eetu Mäkelä** introduce explorations of the similarities detectable between texts found in the Estonian language ERAB corpus and Karelian-Ingrian-Finnish language SKVR and JR corpora. They have investigated the large corpora of collected oral poetry in Finnic languages (Estonian, Karelian, Ingrian, and Finnish), which has instigated and suggested innovative and experimental methodological approaches to analyse small non-standardized dialectal language variants. Based on their research on various levels – song types, verse types, motifs, and formulae – the authors conclude that there is no single computational method or toolbox suitable for tracking all the aspects of similarities and variabilities. The results appear to be too cacophonous and require filtering through human interpretation. Nevertheless, the common Finnic voice can be detected, which allows to identify the connection between the Northern and Southern Finnic languages. Metaphorically, the task is to make the common message across the Gulf of Finland audible and recognizable.

Ukrainian researchers **Olha Petrovych**, **Inna Zavalniuk**, and **Valentyna Bohatko** study in their analysis the semantic usage of vocative expressions to address or invoke someone, and to serve as guides for introducing substantive and emotional elements, distinguishable in the folk song corpus from the Podillia region in Ukraine. The use of the vocative case has decreased in modern speech, but was widely represented in older poetry, conveying messages that signified human communication – emotions, intimacy, or hierarchy – as well as connections with other living beings or inanimate objects. The corpus analysis underscores the stylistic and semantic nuances of traditional songlore.

The article by **Taive Särg** and **Kaarel Veskis** addresses the concepts denoting singer or singing, which have been comparatively extracted from an archival corpus of Estonian media texts from the 1890s, and from the corpus of song lyrics / poetic texts at the Estonian Folklore Archives. The results highlight the verbal quality of the vernacular concept in traditional poetry, while also demonstrating the potential of corpus linguistics. This research combines quantitative word analysis with qualitative examination of lexical categories and semantic associations. The article offers new insights into the social representation of singing and demonstrates how distinct conceptualizations of expression are reflected in oral and written traditions. In the newspaper corpus, insights into new singing traditions and lesser-known communal singing practices are provided, revealing how language patterns were related to national identity construction. The tracing of the stem denoting 'song' reveals a potent meta-level in the conceptualization of singing, which symbolically opposes the archival collections where singing as a meaningful practice that unifies the community can easily remain muted by the multitude of poetic texts.

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NOTES

¹ Regrettably, Rūta Žarskienė passed away in 2023.

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TRADITIONAL SONGS AND THEIR MESSAGES IN THE CORONA PERIOD: AN EXPERIENCE FROM SERBIA

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Abstract: Folklore in so-called secondary oral tradition, i.e., in its ‘neo-traditional’ forms, has significantly changed its performing contexts in relation to the original context of traditional songs. In Serbia, traditional melodies gained new lives primarily in urban environments – at concerts, public and, more rarely, internal/private ceremonies, and at performances connected with church holidays. In these situations, the favourite pieces were those that were considered attractive to listeners because of their specificities in structure, form, melodic and chord/harmony characteristics; the functional aspect of songs became primarily aesthetic. However, during the Covid pandemic in 2020 the experience of the female vocal ensemble Moba from Belgrade, Serbia, showed that the function of songs may return to its ritual sense. In this period, the repertoire of the group was enriched by songs that regained the feeling of togetherness with colleagues and singers from other countries, since the direct contact with them was almost disabled. New experience was gained during preparations for the concert, which is analysed in this article according to the concept of “time, place and metaphor” suggested by Timothy Rice (2003). During this period, also partly due to the songs’ structural elements and their original genres, the songs regained their original functions. This phenomenon might also be observed in the light of *universal structural patterns* and archetypes that conduct and arrange every human activity, according to synthetic anthropological research based on the results of the work of Levi-Strauss, Jung, Eliade, Propp, and others.

Keywords: community, Covid, performance studies, message, Moba vocal group, neo-traditional singing, ritual function, entertainment, Serbian traditional songs, universal structural patterns

INTRODUCTION: CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGY

This article is dedicated to the topic of messages that performances of traditional songs might carry nowadays,¹ in times of pandemic, and is based on the first-hand experience of the author in the female vocal ensemble Moba in Belgrade, Serbia. This article is also the author's personal contribution to the group's work during the pandemic. The purpose of this study is to offer an answer to questions about the specific ritual messages of traditional songs which have been rediscovered today and have become relevant as a way of opposition to the painful and dangerous times of the pandemic. The article may also be seen as a response to reflections and suggestions of "time, place and metaphor" given by Timothy Rice in his article "Ethnomusicology in times of trouble" (2014), as well as to a paper specifically dedicated to folklore during the pandemic by Smiljana Đorđević Belić (2022). Taking all these insights into account, my task is to contribute to the subject of the increased importance of rituals, rituality, and ritual music in extraordinary, critical life conditions.

Vocal group Moba was founded in 1993 by two ethnomusicologists – the author of this article and Dr Sanja Ranković – and has been led by them until today. The aim of the group is to perform "rural traditional songs of Serbs in Serbia and in other regions where Serbs live or used to live",² that is, from different geo-cultural regions and with different stylistic features, and to share specific musical forms with the audience. In 2020, the year to which this article refers, the group consisted of seven active members, preparing a concert under the heading "Musical journey with the group Moba: Female folk songs in the traditions of Serbian and other European peoples" (see Figs. 1–2). The conductors of the group also have wide experience in practical pedagogic work, teaching Serbian traditional songs.

A general question might arise about the function of traditional songs in their public performances in "original" forms. Namely, traditional rural songs, with their roots in rituals with specific aims are now sung at concerts, in generally entertainment-conditioned contexts, and are thus in a substantial functional opposition with their own nature. In my opinion, exactly this opposition and a kind of unnatural symbiosis need a special scholarly attention. Aside from possible seeing it through the aspects of *time, place, and metaphor* of their performing (Rice 2003; see also Zakić & Rakočević 2012), it might also be explained through the writings of one of the most significant researchers in the field of performance studies, Richard Schechner.³ According to him, reflections on the performing aspect of traditional music today might be founded on the dichotomy *ritual-efficacy* vs. *theatre-entertainment*, applicable to any culture (Schechner 2002: 613–614, 624). This method is, in the author's opinion, also

applicable to all cases of performances of traditional songs and experiences shared by ethnomusicologists-practitioners all over Europe, especially among those who study *ethnomusicology at home* (see Stock 2008: 12).



Figure 1. Poster advertising Moba's concert held at KC GRAD on 20 December 2020 for the purpose of recording and YouTube broadcasting. Design by Jovan Gligorijević.



Figure 2. Moba group after the concert in December 2020, from left to right: Ana Milosavljević (professional dancer), Dragana Jović (linguist), Jelena Martinović (ethnomusicologist and actress), Jelena Jovanović, Sanja Ranković (ethnomusicologists), Dr Aleksandra Pavićević (ethnologist and anthropologist), and Maja Stojanović (ethnomusicologist). Photograph by Marta Janković.

When speaking of the Covid pandemic time, ethnologists have confirmed that in situations of uncertainty in the past, with “empowered danger for people, cattle and crops, so, in conditions when the community’s integrity is disturbed to the greatest extent” (Bandić 1978: 117), rural communities had a strong need for integrity, which was achieved through ritual practices. This way the community needed (/needs) to “alleviate increased insecurity and uncertainty; to prevent amplification of inner conflicts in a community ... in more difficult life circumstances” (ibid.: 116). Singing on such occasions might be designated also as singing in the state of emergency, with a conscious or subconscious intention to bring back formulas and sounds that used to play a significant role in providing well-being of the traditional communities. The hypothesis that is going to be elaborated in this article is that today this function of songs might also be valid about live singing and communication through living sounds and songs that people share in “contact” communication, not through digital devices.

This study could be regarded as a result of different approaches, chosen according to specificities of the subject and of the given context.⁴ A synthesis of the basic ethnological knowledge, performance studies, and newer achievements in ethnomusicology and anthropology – autoethnographic/self-reflexive research, artistic research, and applied ethnomusicology experience – has been made. This methodological direction might also be seen as a turn from the lenses of contemporary methods applied to contemporary phenomena in today’s reality of life, to those of “classical” ethnological and anthropological knowledge of historical traditional societies, and to a cooperation of these two aspects.

The auto-ethnographic/self-reflexive approach in this study is based on the sense of this notion from the 1970s: with the aim of researchers to “conduct and write ethnographies of their ‘own people’”, with undoubted and foregrounded “inclusion and importance of personal experience in research” (Adams & Ellis & Jones 2017: 1). It is about the intention derived from the auto-ethnographic research to “show people ... the meaning of their struggles” (ibid.).

These approaches were not chosen in advance, but the reflexions produced by the author’s inner personal processes led to the conception of this article. Hence also a need for another tool applied here, artistic research in a self-reflective approach, since the main observations in this article come initially from parallel performing and reflecting on musical experience, not from a rational scholarly approach. The performer/author is engaged in this research, making her position “reflexive”, as well as that of the insider/outsider and of the observer/observed, including “music-based research methods” (Mani 2017: 246).

The main topic of this article might be regarded as a continuation of Rice’s remarkable article “Ethnomusicology in times of trouble” (2014), with the aim to “accumulate more case studies of music in times of trouble”, especially when

it is about the music in times of disease (Rice 2014: 199) – as a case study this might enlighten the topic from one more point of view. Moreover, the activity that is going to be presented in this article can be interpreted as a resistance to the danger of disease – not through medical knowledge, but through a combination of ethnomusicological knowledge and musical practice, which might evoke spiritual and emotional (self-)healing, starting from the emotional level and from the artistic action as explained by Charulatha Mani (2017: 249). The premise is that such a practice might be suggested as a ground for a “new ... mode of cultural and social behaviour” (Rice 2014: 199), derived from the explicit ethnomusicological knowledge, personal life, and performing experience.

The social and musical scope of Moba’s work could be regarded as an example of “collectivities and forms of self-organization [which] continue their work in the often less visible zones between the public and the private” (Vujanović & Cvejić 2022: 14–15). Moba’s work, in this particular case and in general, has been directed mostly to small-scale audiences that encompass our friends who share the same musical taste and sensibility, other performers in Serbia and abroad, fellow ethnomusicologists, fellow singers, and pupils. So, the context which is referred to in this article is also of a limited scope.

It is important for this study that the case elaborated here originates in Serbia – a country in southeast Europe, on the Balkan Peninsula, with the majority of South Slavs of Orthodox Christian faith. Serbian people survived the troublesome twentieth century,⁵ which ended with the disastrous breakup of the common country, Yugoslavia, and NATO bombing its successor, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, i.e., Serbia and Montenegro.⁶ After two decades of the twenty-first century with changed political settings, marked by assurance that the country will reach its prosperity, the Covid pandemic occurred, with its overwhelming threats. One can only imagine how social stability has been endangered and why the individuals suffer(ed) for many different reasons.

MOBA, ITS WORK, THE AUTHOR’S PLACE IN IT, AND RITUAL NATURE OF TRADITIONAL SONGS

It has repeatedly been stressed and discussed in literature how the “secondary tradition”, for example, neo-traditional approach (Zakić & Nenić 2012: 170) in interpreting traditional songs, as a kind of revitalisation (Åkesson 2006: 1), has fostered the contemporary life of songs, mostly within substantially changed contexts, and has consequently changed the function of this music into primarily aesthetic one. As in other countries, in Serbia these songs are also performed mainly on the stage – at concerts, festivals, public (and, more rarely, internal)

ceremonies, which are often connected with church holidays. These situations generally turn the function of this music into aesthetic one (as also in Poland; see, e.g., Grochowska 2017: 68), so the songs for the public performances are most often chosen according to this criterion. Their musical qualities respond to general contemporary musical taste, partly formed through the influence of commercial musical genres popularized by the media; these are songs that are considered as musically attractive and cathartic, lyrical by their content, and talk about love, nature, are humorous, or narrative.⁷

By the year 2020 Moba had already had a rich performing experience in Serbia and abroad. We had sung not only in towns, but also at concerts and festivals in the countryside, partaking in the same events with traditional singers, and learnt about the original, natural functions of the music we shared with them in different situations. On all these occasions, and generally, cultivating types and styles of Serbian rural traditional singing from different geo-cultural regions, Moba has had significant experience with different musical folklore genres, and also with ritual year cycle songs (see Jovanović 2016a), but they are generally much fewer in the group's repertoire. Still, according to the group's general exposure to the public and their presence in the media (which the group has not insisted on throughout its activities) and according to specific experiences, in my opinion, Moba's activities are directed more to efficacy than to entertainment.⁸ The idea has been to transfer the unique experience of these intervals, chords, atmospheres, and moods (ethos), not to make the audience entertained. All the time we have been faithful to the songs themselves, not considering the stage appearances as crucial to present ourselves as singers or artists (see Jovanović 2016b).

Aside from tending to reinterpret successfully the right stylistic features and expressions in interpretations, the group does its best to find a clue for successful and functional communication with the audience. The group has gained important experience, taking part in the same events with the older generations of singers at village gatherings and festivals. After a reasonable course of time, we managed to notice something important: the older generations used to communicate in other ways than we did, in not concert-like, but in participatory contexts (see, e.g., Cambria & Fonseca & Guazina 2016).

There have been two layers and two kinds of aesthetics specified in Serbian rural singing tradition: two-part or one-part songs of the *newer vocal/musical layer* (so-called *na bas*), and songs that belong to the *older vocal/musical layer*. The *newer* Serbian rural songs are in homophonic texture, the scale close to diatonic, and with perfect fifth in cadence. They respond to the common contemporary way of thinking and understanding the world;⁹ their main function is entertaining and enjoyment, and less that of ritual. So, it is

obvious that folklore in contemporary “secondary oral tradition” exists in its modern cultural and social positions and roles. In new contexts of its public and private performances, the favourite pieces appeared to be those most attractive to listeners, accepted through their aesthetic function. However, new experiences suggest there is a need for reconsideration of these premises, parallel with the one about the notion of old ritual musical patterns in a contemporary context. On the other hand, songs of the *older* Serbian vocal layer, culturally and functionally closer to ritual genres (usually recorded in the field with clear ritual functions), are generally more rarely present in the programmes of public neo-traditional performances. The fact is that old ritual songs seem to be expelled from repertoires spontaneously, particularly those that belong to the annual ritual cycle (related to the seasonal cycle of the farmers’ year), due to their hermetic character and communicative codes that relate to the specific way of communal listening and understanding. Of course, there are some rare exceptions, programmes and conceptions which focus on the old-time/archaic, ritual-like songs, for example the festival The Oldest Songs of Europe (*Najstarsze pieśni Europy*), the International Summer School for Traditional Music (both organized by Fundacja Muzyka Kresów, Lublin, Poland),¹⁰ and artistic multimedia projects of the Artship Foundation (San Francisco) and Halka Gallery (Istanbul).¹¹ These projects cultivate and favour a specific musical sense, as well as a general interest in ancient folklore formulas (in music and other traditional arts), which reflect natural mathematical orders and patterns, such as symmetry and the golden ratio that may be found in traditional music forms; unfortunately, ethnomusicological studies of a wider interdisciplinary approach that would show these connections are clearly quite rare.¹²

Having in mind that “[n]o performance ... is pure efficacy or pure entertainment” (Schechner 2002: 622), and, on the other hand, on the premise that the ritual nature of traditional songs is determined by their musical structures and semantics, I would formulate the main thesis of this study: generally, human contexts in which songs are performed could be regarded as potentially ritual ones, and music within them might be a powerful tool of a ritual way to provide a good effect on the performers – and on their audience.

In numerous thorough analytical ethnomusicological studies, it has been shown and proved that the archaic ritual songs themselves carry a certain potential as parts of rituals. Furthermore, as it is supported by scholars in the field of performance studies, musical rehearsals are regarded as “liminal phases of rituals”, and therefore, potentially ritual situations. According to Schechner, “the workshop-rehearsal phase of performance composition is analogous to the liminal phase of the ritual process” (Schechner 2013: 66; Deriu 2013: 23). Within this thesis, we may also consider and observe rehearsals for public performances

of traditional songs. Moreover, the statement about the notion of performance as an event speaks in favour of it: “The understanding of ritual and play, as processes applying to a wide range of human activities ... is a crucial point in Performance Studies and a very important development in the social sciences” (Deriu 2013: 23); there is no reason to exclude the phenomenon of performing traditional songs from these findings. On the other hand, traditional musical pieces, having their origin in symbiosis with rituals, carry specific power as their elements, potentially applicable in different times and contexts, even (and why not?) nowadays. “Rituals are performative: they are acts done; and performances are ritualized: they are codified, repeatable actions” (Schechner 2002: 613). Moreover, “[a]nthropologists ... argue ... that theatre ... exists in every known culture at all times These activities are primeval, there is no reason to hunt for ‘origins’ or ‘derivations’. ... Sometimes ritual, sports, and the aesthetic genres ... are merged, so that it is impossible to call the activity by any one limiting name” (Schechner 1988: 6).¹³ Concerts of traditional music may be regarded as *performative representations* that fulfil not only the need for a functional ritual, but also for entertainment, mediating also elements of nature through them (Schechner 2002: 615). Also, Moba’s performances might be observed as events that occupy the middle between aesthetic and social drama: “ritual performance... is especially powerful because it equivocates, refusing to be solely aesthetic (for looking only) or social (wholly committed to action now); rituals participate both in the aesthetic and the social, drawing their power from both and operating within both” (Schechner 2002: 629).¹⁴ Moreover, it is a fact that arts and rituals developed and existed one next to the other through history, so the aspects of the primary aesthetic nature of Moba’s work coincide also with the ritual function and aesthetic of the songs.

It is not the case that our rehearsals and the sequence of chosen songs followed any firm pattern, as traditionally structured rituals do (Todorović 2005: 20–22, 449–469); still, some elements of our work may seem to show a connection with *universal structural patterns* (ibid.). These kinds of reflections, in tendency to a synthetic approach to musical structure and function in this article rely on findings of renowned world anthropologists and psychoanalysts, synthesized in the works of Serbian ethnologist and anthropologist Ivica Todorović, who writes:

For a methodological approach, ... extremely important are the results of investigations of such authors as Claude Levi-Strauss, Vladimir Propp, Carl Gustav Jung, and Mircea Eliade, who moved the limits of knowledge in a qualitative, i.e., in a substantial sense. Exactly the works of these four authors represent examples of a fascinating intellectual breakthrough into

the world of seemingly chaotic facts that succeeded in detecting a complex and hidden order – based on very particular laws. (Todorović 2005: 24–25)

The limits of the scope of this article do not allow wider explications of these statements, but there are references to sources at all the places relevant to the present occasion.

Relying on theoretical findings in Todorović's synthetic works, I will share my observations, based on ethnomusicological knowledge and practical performing experience, as well as experience of being in different situations with gathering people who can sing. The main thesis is that every human gathering or action, having its focus, produces a resultant of more directions of will, acts, thoughts, and emotions, shared by a community of a smaller or larger scale at a particular moment. This resultant has its character, its questions, its hidden or shown joys and/or fears; all of these tend to find their resolution in a common act – one of which could be, and often is, a song or a dance, with a specific character, ethos, and the kind of structural codes that respond or answer the questions and/or needs of the community. Through a catharsis of commonly performed songs or dances, a kind of answer, or consolation is provided to community's questions, fears, thoughts, etc. In such a way, songs might become powerful means of a transformation of the reality so as to "bridge" troublesome situations or emotions. This way the songs gain the roles of the old-time ritual songs. Some contemporary situations might show not only the need for such ritual situations, but also the (real?) effects of songs to resolve them, so that the songs overtake, or regain, a real ritual function in given circumstances. That is exactly what this article is about: its aim is to give a comment to the present-day activities and events connected to "secondary tradition", i.e., its "neo-traditional" forms, in the pandemic conditions that affected our lives.

SHIFT IN 2020: PLANNING A CONCERT IN THE CONDITIONS OF THE PANDEMIC

In early 2020, the group came up with the idea to prepare a concert which would represent Serbian songs and traditional songs of other peoples – songs that the members of the group (primarily myself) received, i.e., learnt from our colleagues during meetings abroad: at workshops, or just listening to them. These were songs from Moba's journeys in Epirus (Greece), North Macedonia, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, and from individual acquaintances from Istria (Slovenia), Russia, Ukraine, Latvia, and Georgia. The concert with such a programme was

scheduled for December 2020.¹⁵ A short time after that, in March, the pandemic was proclaimed.

The pandemic made an immense impact on the quality of our lives. It is not necessary to recall the stressful new reality of isolation, avoidance of close contacts and expressions of closeness with dear people, which marked the period of springtime 2020, when the first preparations started. It is already well-known that at this moment series of reactions on the public level, particularly small-scale societies/communities, as well as on personal level occurred, producing feelings of “general ... existential fear, inability of planning and uncertainty, ... which turned into a state of prolonged anxiety” (Đorđević Belić 2022: 192). Especially discouraging for musical gatherings was “fear of demonised otherness (embodied in the virus itself, as well as in those infected with the virus)” (ibid: 192). In these circumstances, specific *communavirus* appeared, redefining individuals and communities (ibid.) and, as reactions to the new situation, specific forms of behaviour emerged.¹⁶

Preparing our concert in the settings of a widespread illness was a task that we ourselves were not sure how to deal with. In any case, the first step was putting on paper ideas of particular songs, thinking of them and listening to them internally, but still without any rehearsals, being cautious because of the disease. It was my task to take care of the repertoire, programme, and method(s) of teaching my colleagues different new singing styles – as well as different two- and three-part textures and canonical forms.¹⁷ The course of preparations was guided by my personal choice of songs, and in fewer cases by preferences of my companions, relying on our intuition in the need for specific contents and musical sensibilities. The concert programme was based on our usual practice: the concept was not rationally or scholarly structured but followed the criteria of similarities and differences in music and in contents of songs from Serbian as well as other traditions. At first, we wanted to show the similarities in the musical structure and musical character of these pieces. This approach enabled a new perspective to all songs. At the beginning, we could not know about the outcome – whether the concert would really take place and even whether the whole group would participate in it, due to general uncertainty within each day. And from this uncertainty, from day to day, following the task of drawing up the programme, I found and then kept a *thin line* of thinking and inner reflection about particular pieces tied to specific annual cycle periods and holidays that were coming into our reality. Still, as the year went by and the spring set in, the ideas started to be formed about certain songs that would answer our needs of this specific *time of trouble*, including those with certain ritual functions.

Since we were not able to travel, and we intensively missed our contacts with colleagues abroad, our concentration spontaneously turned to invoking

memories of our encounters with them and the songs we had heard from them or shared with them. For us singing their songs had the meaning of our endeavour to regain the community, and hence to revive the feeling of strength in togetherness through a specific repertoire that we started to build. In due course of time, due to the lockdown, me and my colleague, ethnomusicologist Branko Tadić, were unable to travel and join our friends abroad, including my travelling to Poland in summer. So this concert was also a kind of substitution for travelling that we were deprived of.

After an unsuccessful and frustrating attempt to sing together via electronic devices during the early spring of 2020, we decided to start with live rehearsals, fully having in mind the potential danger and risk of such a plan. Since we wished and hoped to stay safe and healthy, we were cautiously looking for a solution to realise our idea to rehearse and to be together despite the difficult conditions, against the expected way of behaviour, i.e., against the expressed doubt that “music will be produced in such settings” (Rice 2014: 192). This situation of life threat, of avoiding contacts, and togetherness in living sound and living voice situations (Jovanović 2017), according to our previous singing routines was something hostile, and it demanded a kind of defence from it. Now it is clear that in our case music was a tool of oppression and resistance to the pandemic.

Thus, when warm days in early summer arrived, Moba’s rehearsals started after a long break. Now, if we take into account the previously presented premise and perceive our rehearsals as a liminal part of the ritual, we could also look at them through the lenses of *time, place and metaphor* (Rice 2003). Namely, the *places* where we did our work were suited for avoiding being infected by the virus – both indoor and outdoor. The indoor space was a very spacious room and we (usually four of us) took seats in corners, quite far away from one another, making it impossible for our aerosols to mix. The outdoor space, however, was definitely our favourite locus solution: the terrace on the top (eighth floor) of a residential building: in the open air and from high above the town and other people a beautiful view of the town and the river offered a significant relief for us in many senses.¹⁸ In both places the only “physical contact” between us was through the sound that we produced.

The *time* of our rehearsals was late spring, the whole summer and early autumn, afternoons and dusks. Gatherings for us also meant daily breaks after working time, terms for contemplation and ending of the day in a pleasant mood with the familiar ones, doing something that released from worries and provided a kind of escape from harsh everyday threats. Being in the open air, we had a strong feeling of being de-located from usual, common, endangered spaces and contexts. And the most important thing: these rehearsals, with

chosen traditional songs that speak about goodness, about health, about transcendent situations directed to the divine, gave us a feeling of real consolation and catharsis.

We had no trouble learning the foreign repertoire; nor did we have a feeling of uncertainty in *embodying the otherness*; the process of learning/passing on the songs from me to the group floated easily, with enthusiasm.¹⁹ It was also a kind of present to the group, or a confession, with all these beautiful melodies and contents that I showed them for the first time. Having in mind all the psychological burden of fear and anxiety, this context might also be read as a space for a handover that might not be repeated in the future: we were not sure whether we will still be healthy even tomorrow, and whether at any moment any of us could catch the virus. For this one strong reason, songs were shared with ease, widening the scope of listeners and receivers of universal messages, like a part of my own musical heritage, received through calmness, in communities filled with confidence and devotion to traditional songs. Maybe it was also an idea of sending a message of a small-scale action for feeling safe, encouraged, accepted, and healthy, enhanced with traditional songs of our people and of the peoples among whom we had good friends.

Thus, it might not be surprising that gatherings for singing in such conditions were motivated by intuition as a form of *archetypal mythological context* (Todorović 2005: 456; see Jung 1996 [1964]: 56, 72–88) that used to serve, and might do so today, as a life-defence device, used throughout history as a powerful weapon against harm to the community. This way, the new situation affected Moba's concert plan even in a positive way, since the new context and surroundings of work on our new repertoire significantly differed from the usual.

In early summer another aspect occurred: in live singing situations, songs appeared to us in a new light with their contents, ethos, and messages. Existing in their living sound again, they ceased to be just specific examples of different peoples' traditions, but they spontaneously turned, semantically and musically, to important parts of our lives in current surroundings. It turned out that the most reliable conception might arise also from the songs' original functions/genres, due to the knowledge and experience of culturally similar festive occasions of the countries and peoples belonging to Balkan, Slav, Mediterranean, and (Indo) European cultural context. Thus, the new criterion for choosing songs led to the aim to create a programme with living eloquent and pictorial testimonies of the messages that we were about to tell the audience through the songs. The criterion of the messages was also a challenging one, since it was closely connected with their inner structure, genre, and semantics.

The above-mentioned concert was held in December 2020, in the empty hall of the KC GRAD (European Centre for Culture and Debate) in Belgrade (Fig. 3).²⁰



Figure 3. Empty chairs at KC GRAD, December 2020, before the recording of Moba's performance. Photograph by Marta Janković.

PLANNING OF THE CONCERT PROGRAMME AND NEW EXPERIENCE WITH RITUAL SONGS

The beginning of springtime inspired my work on the first of the chosen songs from the foreign cultures. Since the beginning of the Covid period in March, its course overlapped with spring and all-encompassing blooming and growth, and, as we as living beings naturally felt, rising hopes for the best course of events, as a great encouragement coming straight from the nature. This part of the year initiated a need for a reliable, generationally confirmed, solid backbone for hope and faith like a kind of battle for survival in our life in isolation. From this circle of thoughts and impressions, as the introductory song to our “excursion” to other traditions – not in the sense of the concert programme, but in the sense of priority to rehearsals, I chose a Latvian three-part spring and summer song “Zīdi, zīdi, rudzu vuorpa” (Bloom, bloom, rye ears), which I had learnt from my dear colleague Zane Šmite from Riga during a summer seminar in Lithuania in 2019. I recorded all the three parts of the song with all the lyrics and sent it to my fellow singers, so that they could practice singing it.

The strong ritual content of this song may be “read” from its musical structure and form, as well as its immensely warm and effective ethos. There are similarities on many levels between this song and variants of Serbian old ritual

songs from southern (Metohija region, town Prizren) and southeastern Serbia (Leskovac region) for Easter and Pentecost; especially the similarity in their original ritual functions added a specific quality to the act of singing it right there, right then. The similarities are as follows: with songs from Metohija – in content, metro-rhythm, versification, partly in form, and partly in melodic motifs (Georgevitch 1928, ex. 410); with songs from Leskovac, ritual *kraljice* (queens’) songs for Pentecost – in metro-rhythm, versification, and form (Petrović 1989, ex. 44). All Latvian and Serbian variants mentioned here have a symmetry in form, including refrains that are in concordance with the length of the sung verses. A significant difference is revealed in texture: all Serbian variants are one-part/unison, *queens’* songs are sung antiphonally, with short two-part moments in the overlapping of starting and ending melostanzas, but the Latvian song is three-part, which was quite a new experience for Moba. This texture gave a significant new “colour” to well-known patterns and hence it was very attractive to be learnt and sung. Besides, there are similarities in its content with the Serbian one from Metohija, which encompasses a mythical place of a room/tower with three gates.²¹ For me personally, this song had and still has a meaning of an intimate *welcome* to the spring-summer period. As an invocation for the summer part of the year, this song in Moba’s interpretation gained its full potential when we managed to learn it better, exactly in the middle of summer 2020. Audio example 1 shows one of our first attempts to sing it together (with some obvious flaws of the interpretation, typical of the process of work).

Example 1. “Zīdi, zīdi, rudzu vuorpa”

(*Bloom, bloom, rye ears*), Latvia

(Moba, August 2020).²²



Another musical folklore genre that appeared as highly needed and welcome during the process of our work in the Covid period was toasts (Serb. *zdravice*) – sung good wishes for a long and healthy life, with lyrics “Many Years” as a refrain (originating from Greek *Εἰς πολλά ἔτη*). As a way to defend from the disease and also from fear – to revive, to regain strength – we included songs with those lyrics in different languages: Church Slavonic and Georgian. This genre also meant an encouragement for/from dear and loving fellow singers, and/or also as a response to a recorded singing message that we received that summer from our colleagues from Poland in times of being apart. Thus, following the wish to toast to ourselves, to our dear ones, to colleagues from whom we had learnt it, and to our community as a whole, we prepared two variants of “Many Years”.

The first one was “Mnogaya leta”, in the Church Slavonic language, in three-parts, according to the recording that ethnomusicologist Anna Koropnichenko from Kyiv, Ukraine, had made in Makarovskyyi region, village Nizilovichi, Kyiv vicinity.²³ This magnificent piece is also characterised by the perfect symmetry of (4-part) form, and of melody that gradually develops in consistent second movements, which produces an effect of high dignity, and with several climaxes at places that could represent the golden ratio in form. My colleague Branko Tadić and I received and learnt it at the (already mentioned) Summer School in Poland. In summer 2020, after receiving a greeting from Poland – a video with this song and our names mentioned in it – I could not help but teach Moba to sing it and make these emotions and good wishes physically present in sound here, in Belgrade, at the peak of summer, with all its brightness and joy, and to pass on to us the encouragement of the community that had presented it to us. We also included a slight change in the lyrics, so as to address Mr. Jan Bernad from Lublin. The characteristic feature that we especially wanted to revive may be heard in audio example 2.

Example 2. “*Mnogaya leta*” (*Many years*),
Kyiv vicinity (Moba, August 2020).²⁴



The same motive to sing a traditional toast in times of pandemic made us eager to learn also a three-part variant of “Many Years” from eastern Georgia. This song I learnt from my Georgian colleague Nataliya Zumbadze during a conference in London in 2001, and after that I also listened to it several times in Tbilisi, at symposiums on traditional polyphony (in 2010 and later). Good wishes, including the ones for good health, seem to be the right gift in times of pandemic. The way Moba learnt it (also from me) might be heard in audio example 3.

Example 3. “*Mraval zhamieri*” (*Many years*),
eastern Georgia (Moba, September 2020).²⁵



Lithuanian archaic polyphonic songs *sutartinės* are a musical tradition that impressed us very much. We all agreed one of them had to be presented at the concert. I learnt a *sutartina* with the first verse “Trepute martela” (Jump up, sister-in-law) from my colleague Daiva Vyčiniene²⁶ during a workshop at a conference in Dnipro (Ukraine) in February 2020; it is about the cultivation of flax. Such contents coincide with a similar motif in a cycle of Serbian traditional Midsummer songs. We practiced this *sutartina* with great enthusiasm, feeling it to be familiar to Serbian and Balkan second chord sounds and finding calm-

ness in its ancient ritual melody, hoping to achieve a specific ethos through the song. In this song the form of a canon throughout the song, which does not exist in Serbian older tradition, was new to us. The notion of “being in accordance” / “getting along” (Lith. *sutarti*) in *sutartina* singing, with matching solo parts in intonation, timbre, rhythm, and character, brought a new experience to the group, since Serbian old-time songs with second chords (traditionally emically considered *beautiful*) have different performing laws and demands. Besides, our choice to sing this song was also followed by a wish to share such singing experience with our colleagues in Lithuania and in a way to ask them for help *in times of trouble* through a ritual song with a similar function and aesthetic norm. The way Moba did it can be heard in audio example 4.

Example 4. “*Trepute martela*”, northeast
Lithuania (Moba, November 2020).²⁷



Another example of Moba’s remarkable acquaintance with *others’* traditions was that of Epirotan multipart songs, which encompass traditions in Greek, Vlach (Aromanian), and Albanian languages and their variants. In summer 2001, during the festival Poliphonikou tragoudiou (Polyphonic singing) in Epirus, Greece, we were listening to many live performances of such songs. Being inspired by (as we considered it) “magical” Epirotan vocal and instrumental music within the landscapes and soundscapes of that area, we learnt a song from this tradition from our friend and singer Maria Tsukala from the group Haonia from Athens. This tradition is particularly interesting for us because of its common features with South Slav/Serbian older bourdon and heterophony (two- and three-part) singing (for more details see Golemović 2014). Especially during the summer of 2020 this song carried for us a significant remembrance of Epirus, its people, its music and dances, which we loved to reveal again, as shown in audio example 5.

Example 5. “*Yani mou, to mandili sou*”
(*My Yani, your handkerchief*), Epirus,
Greece (Moba, November 2020).²⁸



Being inspired by singing in the open air, on the top of the high residential building, we chose some songs as closing ones for our rehearsals (as events with a kind of ritual meaning). As the best common choice, according to the pandemic situation, we considered a lyrical Serbian song of a newer vocal layer from western Serbia, “Mog pauna glava bole” (My peacock has a headache). The older variants of this song used to be sung in unison or in heterophony

in vernal rites and at weddings, imitating a peacock with a mimetic dance for fertility. But in the last decades of the twentieth century it was traditionally transformed and kept alive as a song of a newer rural style. The content was changed from the previous form that accompanied the mimetic dance to a lyrical song, and this was followed by a change in the structure: the old ritual refrain was significantly prolonged and became a real melodic and textual climax of the song. The changed content calls the dear one(s) for healing, for being healthy, for recovering from disease, and there is a promise that there will be someone around to help them get well; there is also a nuance of mild irony and humour in the lyrics. The structure, form, free rhythm and cathartic melody with bourdon-like accompaniment (keeping the link with old-time singing) produce an effect of a call and invocation of encouragement and healing.

After summer dusk, when the sun had already set and darkness had fallen upon the city, we enjoyed singing this song from high above, loudly and in high intonation, with a full strength and dynamics, like sending a message to all our fellow citizens – as a good wish to stay healthy, and maybe even as a call to join us so as to defeat the illness. We did not know whether anyone heard us and whether we had any audience; anyway, for us, it was a nice form of relief from the isolation. This song may be heard in audio example 6.

Example 6. “*Mog pauna glava bole*”
(*My peacock has a headache*),
western Serbia (Moba 2001).²⁹



CONCLUSION

The central issue in this article is the possibility to re-actualize the ritual function of songs through applying ethnomusicological knowledge, singing practice, and art dimension of the singing act and to discuss whether the re-actualized ritual function might lead to individual and group self-healing and self-help *in times of trouble*. This particular experience described and discussed in this article shows that the messages of old ritual songs in neo-traditional performances are topical again as tools in life-threatening conditions, with all their crucial musical and semantic features. Hence, in this case, our experience is that the function, once changed from ritual to aesthetic, within the context of danger and closeness of life threat, in need of introspection in silence (as stated in Žebeljan 2021 [2017]: 343) and penitence instead of fear, might regain its ritual function once more.³⁰ Within the conditions of the pandemic, there also

appeared “an opportunity for transindividual social transformations on micro- and macroscales“ (Vujanović & Cvejić 2022: 15). This was exactly the case with Moba’s members and with me personally.

Verbal and musical phrases in traditional songs, not seeming existentially significant in usual conditions, might become apparent and clear in the changed context of life threat, as signs for the way to continue living and being peaceful, grateful, and joyful, despite serious difficulties. In this light, we reveal messages while singing, making them topical *here* and *now*, and reviving them on aesthetic and ethic levels. Getting in touch with songs of different folklore traditions appears to be a result of the awareness of the universality of the qualities described above, or we might say, a result of the universal value/virtue. Here we come to the point where we could draw a parallel between this particular case and a concept of ritual behaviours during the traditional rites, with the aim to find possible traces of *universal structural patterns* and archetypes. According to the results of the analyses conducted in other segments of (Serbian) traditional ritual life, this bond between rituals and universal natural laws has already been elaborated (Todorović 2005, 2009). Carl Gustav Jung and Claude Levi-Strauss show in their works that “a claim that myth matrix, universal structure of thinking, archetypal reality, and spirit that is self-realizing through culture are not just abstractions, but very specific categories of reality” (Todorović 2005: 377, 388).

Applying traditional ritual musical codes from different cultures might lead to a new, universal, or at least bi-cultural or poly-cultural rituality. Charulatha Mani has said: “When cultures come in contact, there is friction, but the same friction can give rise to warmth” (Mani 2017: 252) – which I think applies very well to Moba’s work discussed in this article. What is particularly interesting is that the old-time/archaic traditional ritual musical formulas both from one’s own and from foreign cultures might even interfere, which could be said about Indo-European, East European, and Slavic cultural and musical context. This experience might also be of wider significance, since all the nations and communities in their musical past have had musical patterns with a potential for such effects, and ethnomusicologists-practitioners are the ones who have the keys for those. Such a topic demands a much broader space and probably cannot fit in the frames of this single study. But the objective of this article is to direct scholars’/ethnomusicologists’ attention to this particular aspect of regarding traditional songs in their new life nowadays, especially in hard times caused by different reasons.

The traditional songs that we deal with are chosen according to their functions, and according to their aesthetic value as musical pieces. Here we also understand their regularity in form, where symmetry, the golden ratio and other

factors occur; mathematical and geometric principles in musical structure, but, above all, in the human mind and also in culture, are stressed by Levi-Strauss: “in his works he tells about the way our mind functions in ... all the fields of culture, finding geometrical order, in accordance with the attitude that myths act in a special, could be said in a perfect way, without people being aware of it, as the mind ‘has its reasons not known by man’” (Todorović 2009: 15; Levi Strauss 1966: 190). These principles of the human brain enable remembrance of elements of oral cultures and communication through these codes (Paich 2014: 11, 32–33).

In the conditions in which the pandemic “suspended the global temporality” (Vujanović & Cvejić 2022: 15), the music, i.e., traditional songs fulfilled the gap of isolation and anxiety and provided a more calming course of time with a strong feeling that seemed not to be visible/felt/experienced so clearly before.

In commentary to this case study, leaning on Timothy Rice’s concept, the aspect of *metaphor* might be read as follows: “music is a symbolic system or text capable of reference not only to already existing music but also to a world beyond music” (Rice 2003: 166). This statement, applied to research in this article, refers predominantly to the function of ritual songs which, above all, shows the power to revive the feeling of community, of togetherness, especially in the cases of physical distance. Besides, it seems that this event remains in the long-term memory as a lasting experience, exactly as it was put by Jan Bernad: once being in an embrace of common singing, people remain there, in the common sound, no matter how much time might pass (personal communication, 2008). The second reference to Rice’s *metaphor* provides the function of ritual songs as having the power to revive one’s existence in a specific time of the year, celebrating vitality and sharing the nature’s power (as also stated by Titon 2021: 1). Lacking the support of the former everyday commodities (which we usually take for granted), the fundamental human needs and emotions have come to the surface again. In such circumstances, (traditional) songs with their specific structural elements from the past might just cease to ‘decorate’ special moments in our lives but might start to regain their substantial meanings. This makes Moba’s songs at rehearsals and concerts ritual, as Richard Schechner has said: “If the performance’s purpose is to effect transformations, to heal, or to appease or appeal to transcendent Others ... to get ‘results’, then the qualities listed under the heading ‘efficacy’ will most probably prevail” (Schechner 2002: 622); choosing some songs of ritual meaning, putting them in the concert programme as a “redressive action is what is done to resolve the crisis” (Schechner 2002: 626). This might be a general new (universal) context for new supposed life of traditional songs and for a new function of “reading” traditional ritual songs.

Having all this in mind, we could also consider the notion of ethnomusicologists' / neo-traditional singers' highest "cultural competence", as articulated by Ewa Grochowska (2017: 67), with their potential strong impact on human social/communal and individual situations and relations.

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NOTES

- ¹ The notion of *messages* was suggested by the title of the symposium organized by the Literary Museum in Tartu, Estonia, in 2020 (see <https://www.folklore.ee/regilaul/konverents2020/>, last accessed on 1 October 2024), on which occasion the first draft of this study was presented.
- ² See <https://www.rts.rs/page/radio/sr/story/1466/radio-beograd-3/3458667/studio-6--zenska-pevacka-grupa-moba.html>, last accessed on 1 October 2024.
- ³ Colin Turnbull's contribution (e.g., 1990) is also important in the study of this topic.
- ⁴ The author cordially thanks the anonymous peer-reviewer of this article as well as colleague Dr Liina Saarlo for her support and unconditional understanding during the long course of this text preparations in times of trouble.
- ⁵ On Serbian history during the two world wars see, e.g., Fryer 1997; Živojinović 2015, as well as the editions by the Genocide Victims' Museum in Belgrade (<https://www.2.muzejgenocida.rs/sr/izdanja-muzej-zrtava-genocida-beograd/books-in-english>, last accessed on 1 October 2024).

- ⁶ On the breakup of Yugoslavia, see, e.g., Woodward 1995; Zimmermann 1999 [1996].
- ⁷ The main reason these songs spread among the young singers is that the teachers themselves, including me, choose them as good, effective examples of particular ethnic tradition(s); they rarely deal with ritual genres, being themselves distanced from this kind of folklore expression. This statement is based on the author's own work experience with singers at the International Summer School for Traditional Music, organized by Fundacja Muzyka Kresów from Lublin, Poland (the author was engaged as the instructor for Serbian traditional songs twelve times in the period 2006–2019). See, e.g., https://niematerialne.nid.pl/Aktualnosci/details.php?ID=1956_last, accessed on 1 October 2024.
- ⁸ During a concert within the festival Baltica 2002 in Vilnius, a member of Moba, D. Jović, could not participate in the group's singing because of her illness, and she was present in the audience. After the concert, she said to us: "All performers were doing their best to be cheerful, smiling, to make their appearances communicative, attractive for the audience. Only you and the North American Indians were deadly serious while singing/performing. That was a very remarkable difference." And that is true; we always considered our songs, especially those of older tradition, as musical pieces that demand special attention that has been far away from entertainment.
- ⁹ Examples of such attractive Serbian love songs are the ones that appeared in CD editions of young performers in Poland and in Lithuania. They were accepted so well because of their universal musical language, which was also the main reason that my colleague Branko Tadic and I were showing and teaching them at seminars abroad (primarily in Poland): "Tri devojke zbor zborile" (Three maidens had a talk) from West Serbia, a newer musical style, performed by Polish singers B. Drozd and E. Kurilyk in neo-traditional, a cappella manner (Drozd & Kurilyk 2018, No. 12) and "Sinoc sjala jedna zvijezda mala" (Last night a small star was shining) from Bosnia, a newer musical style, performed by ensemble Sen Svaja from Lithuania (Sen Svaja 2018, No. 4).
- ¹⁰ See <https://kurierlubelski.pl/jan-bernad-z-osrodka-rozdroza-dla-muzyki-punktem-wyjscia-jest-cisza/ar/13538120?fbclid=IwAR34fx88x7inhHK-nBGad4RijJC5vhIEkQpbps8QlftGYTVfMixzDCI3Xtk>, last accessed on 1 October 2024.
- ¹¹ See, e.g., https://youtu.be/ShT-87R5iCY_, last accessed on 1 October 2024.
- ¹² As an example of a highly successful model of interdisciplinary ethnomusicological approach to ritual songs, with insights into astonishing correspondence in result of archaeological, historical, ethnological, and linguistic findings is the book *Sutartinės* by Daiva Račiūnaitė-Vyčiniene (2002). An excellent approach with both ethnomusicological and semiotic analyses is adopted by Mirjana Zakić (2009) in the book *Ritual Songs of the Winter Season*.
- ¹³ Rehearsals themselves are also seen as universal human activities, as follows: "rehearsing or in other ways preparing actions; and making ready places where people can gather to perform and witness performances, are all integral to being human" (Schechner 2002: 614).
- ¹⁴ Here is the definition of ritual performance by the Museum of International Folk Art, which refers to Moba's work and, probably, most neo-traditional ensembles led by ethnomusicologists throughout Europe: "Ritual performance is one way that people connect with the sacred realm to bring overall wellness to their lives. ... To some, ritual performance is prayer. To others it is a way to express religious or cultural heritage or to affirm one's devotion by carrying out a particular commandment and

practice. Dance, complex musical scores, sacred sounds, repetitive beats, and shamanic movements are considered here” (see <https://www.internationalfolkart.org/exhibitions/sacred-realm/ritual-performance/>, last accessed on 1 October 2024).

- ¹⁵ The group gained financial support from the Ministry of Culture of Serbia for concert preparations.
- ¹⁶ One of them is the appearance of vernacular *folklore of the pandemic* in which it is even “possible to recognize deep folklore matrixes” (Đorđević Belić 2022: 191–193).
- ¹⁷ The group’s work has generally been based on the knowledge and skills of its two founders and conductors; on this occasion the main responsibility of choosing the repertoire and shaping it in musical sense were on me, so I did my best to dedicate myself to the task and to fulfil it with the engagement of vocal, reflexive, ethnomusicological, and aesthetic experience.
- ¹⁸ I find it quite appropriate to say: our common feeling up there might be compared to what was expressed by Apostle Peter during his stay on Mount Tabor with Christ the Lord and with Jacob and John, Moses and Elias after Transfiguration: Lord, it is good for us to be here! (Mt 17:4).
- ¹⁹ It seems important for this article to indicate the root of this word: “from Greek *enthousiasmos* (ἐνθουσιασμός) – ‘divine inspiration’; *enthousiazēin* – ‘be inspired or possessed by a god, be rapt, be in ecstasy’; *entheos* (ἐνθεός) – ‘divinely inspired, possessed by a god’; *en* (ἐν) – ‘in’ + *theos* (θεός) – ‘god’; see <https://www.etymonline.com/word/enthusiasm>, last accessed on 1 October 2024.
- ²⁰ The recording of this concert is available on the YouTube Channel of the KC GRAD (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VVbE2IZY-gQ>, last accessed on 1 October 2024).
- ²¹ In the Latvian variant, through the first gate the Sun is rising, through the second the Sun is setting, and through the third a girl is passing, with a myrtle garland on her head. In the Serbian variant, the first gate is of gold, the second is of pearls, the third is of scarlet; in another variant, the first gate is of marble, the second of pearls, the third of gold; in some variants, the fairy who built the tower is sitting on the third gate (Pitulić 2018: 95–97).
- ²² Available in the online version of the journal at <https://www.folklore.ee/folklore/vol94/audio/example1.m4a>.
- ²³ A published performance of this song is on a CD of Anna Koropnichenko’s students’ vocal ensemble Otava, named *Forgotten Songs of Kyiv Region* (2005).
- ²⁴ Available in the online version of the journal at <https://www.folklore.ee/folklore/vol94/audio/example2.m4a>.
- ²⁵ Available in the online version of the journal at <https://www.folklore.ee/folklore/vol94/audio/example3.m4a>.
- ²⁶ Moba got acquainted with this tradition and the Lithuanian group Trys Keturiose performing it at the festival Baltica 2002 in Vilnius, Lithuania. This encounter strongly encouraged Moba to keep singing songs of the older Serbian tradition.
- ²⁷ Available in the online version of the journal at <https://www.folklore.ee/folklore/vol94/audio/example4.m4a>.
- ²⁸ Available in the online version of the journal at <https://www.folklore.ee/folklore/vol94/audio/example5.m4a>.

²⁹ Available in the online version of the journal at <https://www.folklore.ee/folklore/vol94/audio/example6.mp3>.

³⁰ Such a phenomenon has already been noticed in Serbian traditional practice, namely in the case of brass music, whose function shifted twice throughout the twentieth century: from ritual to aesthetic and back to ritual; see Golemović 2006: 221, 222, 224.

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“LETTERS FROM AMERICA”: SONGS OF LITHUANIAN IMMIGRANTS IN THE USA

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Abstract: In the nineteenth century, most Lithuanian immigrants in America were peasants who had left homeland in search for a better life in Pennsylvanian coal mines or Chicago stockyards. Immigrant songs described the pain of parting from the loved ones, the impressions of the strange new land, and reminiscences of the homeland. Some songs were printed on postcards so that even an illiterate person could sign the card and send it home. The first immigrants, having grown up in green villages of Lithuania, used to return to their homeland in their thoughts, and, of course, through their songs.

The story of Lithuanian immigrants is not exceptional; it can be regarded as an example of the cultural situation and development of immigrant communities more generally. This article deals with the folk songs of the first-generation immigrants, recorded by Lithuanian folklorist Jonas Balys. In 1944, Balys left for Germany with his family, and in 1948 he moved on to the USA. Working at Indiana University in Bloomington, Balys was encouraged to visit Lithuanian immigrants and record their folklore. The expeditions (1949–1951) proved successful, and he recorded many songs on magnetic tapes, as well as folktales and other folklore genres. From this material Balys prepared a two-volume publication of songs (published in the USA in 1958 and 1977) which contained folk songs representing the traditional rural way of life, as well as some immigrant songs. This article focuses on immigrant songs, the longing for the homeland and other emotions that they convey.

Keywords: Jonas Balys, Lithuanian immigrants in the USA, Lithuanian folklore, immigrant songs, nostalgia

INTRODUCTION

Individual Lithuanians had travelled to America since the seventeenth century,¹ but massive emigration started in the 1860s and lasted up to World War I. The primary reasons were the abolishment of serfdom, the reprisals for the failed uprising against the tsarist government in 1863–1864, the famine of 1867–1868, as well as a desire to avoid the forced recruitment into the tsarist army. It is estimated that in the nineteenth century 50,000 to 100,000 Lithuanians came to the New World (Kučas 1975: 22–27). At that time in America there was a great demand for labor in coal mines, stockyards, factories, sewing mills, and on the railroads. A more exact count of Lithuanian immigrants was made after 1899, when they were registered as Lithuanians, and not as Russians or Poles. From 1899 until 1915 more than 252,000 Lithuanians came to the USA (Kondratas 2009: 22).

Most of the Lithuanian immigrants were peasants, without education, who left homeland “in search of a better life” in Pennsylvania’s coal mines or Chicago’s stockyards. One of the first and largest communities was in the town of Shenandoah in Pennsylvania, where the first Lithuanian coal miners settled in 1869. According to Antanas Kučas, Shenandoah was called the capital of Lithuanians in America. This town was the only American town where Lithuanian immigrants played an important role in the town’s history, forming about a third of the population and even taking part in its government (Kučas 1971: 38–40). Here Lithuanians built two churches, published newspapers and books, established Lithuanian schools, had a brass band, a choir, clubs, and even four cemeteries. A large number of Lithuanians also settled in other mining towns in Pennsylvania. At first, Lithuanian immigrants tried to stay close to Polish immigrants, establishing joint Catholic parishes and fraternities. As the Lithuanian national consciousness grew stronger with the desire that religious rituals, prayers and hymns be in Lithuanian, conflicts between Lithuanians and Poles also increased. For instance, the first church of St. Casimir of Shenandoah, built in 1874 from donations of Lithuanians, was registered as a Polish Catholic church because of an oversight. The Lithuanians who rebelled against the Polish priest, whom the bishop had assigned, were punished and thus lost their church. At that time, they began establishing a separate Lithuanian parish of St. George (Būtėnas & Kezys 1977: 14–16). When more Lithuanian priests arrived, they brought with them patriotic ideas that were published in Lithuania’s underground newspapers *Aušra* (Dawn) and *Varpas* (The Bell) and began establishing their own parishes in other Lithuanian immigrant settlements. According to folklorist Elena Bradūnaitė-Aglinskienė (2020), religious affiliation was a strong component of identity for the immigrants, and, therefore,

the parish priests were very influential in educating and encouraging national consciousness among the parishioners. Lithuanian communities were formed wherever they built their own churches and schools.

Scholars from Lithuania and the diaspora have researched and written about the communities and lifestyles of the first wave of Lithuanian immigrants to the USA (Sužiedėlis 1953; Ambrose 1967; Michelsonas 1961; Kučas 1971; Fainhauz 1977; Subačius 2006; Škiudaitė 2006; Kondratas 2009). Researchers have mostly focused on issues of immigration and the preservation of Lithuanian identity. According to them, “concern about identity markers was namely the actual experience of migration, which fostered a self-awareness of ethnic uniqueness and thus accelerated the formation of a national identity” (Grickevičius & Strumickienė & Dapkutė 2015: 18). Anthropologist Vytis Čiubrinskas (2005, 2011) and historian Alfonsas Eidintas (2021) have devoted much attention to this topic in their scholarly works. Musical culture as an expression of identity has been discussed by musicologists Juozas Žilevičius (1940, 1956), Danutė Petrauskaitė (2015), as well as Rūta Žarskienė (2020), who wrote specifically about the significance of brass bands in the formation of national consciousness.

Folklorists Jonas Balys, Juozas Būga, who immigrated after World War II, and Elena Bradūnaitė-Aglinskienė (née Elena Bradūnas)² made a significant contribution to the research on the first wave of immigrants. They managed to engage with the most songful and talkative members of the Lithuanian communities and wrote down songs, folktales, riddles, and other folklore genres that were preserved in their memories. The folklore they collected, as well as expedition field notes and life stories of their informants were first published in the diaspora (Balys 1958, 1977, 1989; Būtėnas & Kezys 1977). Later, once Lithuania regained independence, this material was also published in Lithuania: E. Bradūnaitė’s collection of songs was published in *Tautosakos Darbai* (Folklore Studies) (Aleksynas & Ramoškaitė 1994), and the expedition field notes of J. Balys and E. Bradūnaitė were presented in the book *Aš išdainavau visas daineles* (I have sung all the songs, Vol. III) (Bradūnaitė-Aglinskienė 1997). Recently, the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore published a collection titled *Lietuvių dainos Amerikoje, įrašytos Jono Balio (1949–1951) / Lithuanian Folksongs in America, recorded by Jonas Balys 1949–1951*, edited by Austė Nakienė and Rūta Žarskienė (2019). The Folklore Archives of this institute house copies of the manuscripts of this material that was sent from the USA.

Although the material of the expeditions is easily accessible,³ it has not yet been studied in detail. Thus, the authors of this article, drawing on historical, analytical and comparative methods, decided to focus on immigrant songs, which differ significantly from the older folksongs in their personalized lyrics and emotional charge. According to Philip V. Bohlman (1988: 29),

traditional music and cultural identity are two essentially different concerns that the ethnomusicologist couples as a normative research procedure. We cannot avoid this comparison when researching themes of immigration; however, we will turn our attention in a different direction – we look at immigrant songs not so much as an expression of Lithuanian identity but as a means of maintaining an emotional connection with the homeland.

WORKS OF THE FAMOUS LITHUANIAN FOLKLORIST DR. JONAS BALYS

Jonas Balys (1909–2011) spent his childhood in the village of Krasnava, not far from Kupiškis. He started collecting folklore while studying at the Teachers' College in Panevėžys. From 1928 to 1933 Balys studied at the universities of Kaunas, Graz, and Vienna – from the latter he received his PhD degree – and completed an internship in Helsinki. In 1933 he returned to Kaunas, became a lecturer at Vytautas Magnus University, and in 1935 he started to head the newly established Lithuanian Folklore Archives. The young, energetic scholar initiated an extensive gathering of folklore manuscripts and sound recordings and started publishing the periodical *Tautosakos darbai* (Folklore Studies). In 1939 the Archives became a part of the Institute of Lithuanian Studies and was moved to Vilnius. During the years of World War II, Balys resided and continued his scholarly work in Vilnius. In 1944, as the Soviet army was approaching Lithuania, Balys and his family left for Germany. He remembers that, being a war refugee, he was careful to safeguard a suitcase with copies of archival materials that he planned to use for his studies.

With bombs dropping from airplanes, I would drag my sleepy children and that suitcase with folklore manuscripts into the bomb shelter. During the awful November 27 bombing, British airplanes destroyed the entire city center of the beautiful, old Freiburg. A flammable phosphorus bomb came through the roof and fell into the attic that we had rented from a German lady, in exchange for a big slab of smoked bacon we brought from Lithuania. ... And so, we were lucky to survive in the basement of that little house, and that those constantly toted manuscripts were not destroyed by bombs and fire. I consider that to be my greatest success. All those theoretical musings in articles and books, written later, are only secondary in importance. There would not have been any of them had I not brought those selected materials with me. Theories come and go, but authentic materials remain. (LTRF k 2212)⁴

During 1944–1945 Balys worked as an assistant at the German Folk Song Archive in Freiburg. From 1946–1947 he taught at the Baltic University in Hamburg. In 1948, together with his family, he came to the USA, having been invited by Professor Stith Thompson to work at Indiana University in Bloomington. Thompson encouraged his young colleague to collect material from the first Lithuanian immigrants in America, and Balys decided to visit their settlements and record folklore they still remembered. These expeditions proved successful: he recorded about 1,200 items, mostly songs, also folktales, instrumental music and other folklore genres on magnetic tapes.

Having borrowed a magnetic tape recorder (one of the early models, made by Brush Developing Company, and quite heavy) from the university, and with some financial support, I purchased the necessary tapes and set out during the summer months of 1949 and 1950. I travelled by train and bus because I did not have my own car. (Balys 1977: VI)

My biggest discovery was the older generation of the earlier wave of Lithuanian immigrants. ... All those older men and women, whom I discovered as representatives of those earlier times, are now gone. They were the last Lithuanian Mohicans, who crossed the ocean but never forgot the spirit of their native culture. (LTRF k 2212)⁵



Figure 1. On a boat with a group of Lithuanians and Latvians, approaching America's shore near New York. Balys' family is on the left. Photographed in 1948. JBI ft 52.

He interviewed 118 people, the majority of whom were born in the nineteenth century (the oldest woman in 1866), and who had emigrated at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. The collection was smaller than the one left in Vilnius, but equally varied, reflecting all regions of Lithuania and different styles of singing. It is important to note that this was the first Lithuanian collection of sound recordings made on the newly invented magnetic tape recorder.⁶

In 1955, a good representation of Lithuanian folklore – recordings of 20 songs – appeared on a vinyl record *Lithuanian Folk Songs in the United States*, prepared by Jonas Balys. In the booklet the author wrote that the music of Lithuanian folksongs shows a considerable difference in melodic structure from neighboring peoples, namely Slavs and Germans. Lithuanian immigrants preserved the traditional songs of their former homeland surprisingly well. Among the Dzūkai, the people from the southern part of the country, the old songs were sung with one voice. Among the representatives of other regions, the singing in thirds for two voices (in a manner of a more recent origin) was also popular. The old-fashioned singing was still practiced at banquets and picnics (Balys 1955: 2).

In 1956 Balys started working at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., and at the same time concerned himself with the publication of Lithuanian folk songs. Leonardas Sauka, a researcher of Balys's biography and works, noted that from his collections J. Balys prepared a two-volume publication *Lietuvių dainos Amerikoje / Lithuanian Folksongs in America*.

The first volume with the subtitle – Pasakojamosios dainos ir baladės / Narrative Songs and Ballads – appeared in 1958 and opened a window onto a still living tradition in America. That volume contained 472 song texts, the majority of which he had transcribed in 1952–1954. At the end of the book were 222 melodies, transcribed by composer Vladas Jakubėnas. The second volume of Lietuvių dainos Amerikoje / Lithuanian Folksongs in America, subtitled Lyrinės meilės, papročių, darbo, švenčių ir pramogų dainos / Lyric Songs of Love, Customs, Work, Feasts and Entertainments, appeared in 1977. It included 702 texts, most of them recorded by J. Balys, but 257 songs were recorded by another collector, J. Būga. ... These two volumes are considered a great scholarly accomplishment. (Sauka 2016: 234)

These publications as well as the multivolume series *Lietuvių tautosakos lobynas / A Treasury of Lithuanian Folklore* helped the Lithuanians living in America not to forget their folklore and provided necessary data for researchers. In Lithuania, however, Balys's name was never mentioned, and his works never cited. The first reason was because Balys was an emigrant who had escaped from the

Soviet occupation. Secondly, with his patriotic sentiments, he was an active political figure in the diaspora, an active member of the VLIK (Vyriausiasis Lietuvos išlaisvinimo komitetas ‘The Supreme Committee for the Liberation of Lithuania’) and tried to make sure that the US government would not recognize the supposedly “voluntary” incorporation of Lithuania into the USSR.

His efforts were recognized after 1990, once Lithuania had regained independence. In 1994 he was awarded the National Jonas Basanavičius Prize for his scholarly work in Lithuania and in the USA, and for encouraging the maintenance of Lithuanian ethnic traditions. The laureate designated the prize money to be used for the publication of his works. In 1998–2004 the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore published five volumes of Balys’s works, edited by Rita Repšienė. In 1999 Balys was honored with the Presidential Award of the 4th Order of the Lithuanian Grand Duke Gediminas.

In 2009 the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore commemorated Balys’s 100th birthday. Interest in his published works as well as his archival materials increased. In 2010, in cooperation with the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress, the Institute received digitized copies of Balys’s sound recordings made in 1949–1951. And in 2013, with the help of Mirga and Ramūnas Girnius, who live in Boston, a truck arrived in Vilnius, loaded with Balys’s personal items and archival materials. The materials had been deposited at ALKA (Amerikos lietuvių kultūros archyvas / Archive of Lithuanian Culture in America) located in Putnam, Connecticut, and included cassette copies of the recordings made in 1949–1951 as well as much information about the folklorist, ethnologist, and politically and culturally active member of the Lithuanian refugee community. In the same year, the Institute of Lithuanian Folklore and Literature organized a presentation of “Dr. Jonas Balys’s Folklore Room” (as the exposition was called in Putnam’s ALKA). At that event, the coordinator of the Archives transfer stated: “Even though Jonas Balys never returned to Lithuania after it regained independence, his works did, and they always were, are, and will be of great importance to the development of Lithuanian folklore and ethnology studies” (Žarskienė 2013: 320).

Balys’s sound recordings (1949–1951) are of special interest to folklorists.⁷ There is a large collection of songs representing so-called old genres: songs of youth, ballads, love songs, family songs, wedding songs, work songs, calendar songs, and others that tell of the traditional rural way of life. According to Rima Visackienė, who worked with the recordings, “while listening, one cannot cease to be amazed that, after so many years of living far away from the homeland and being surrounded by the American world, a person could retain in his memory such treasures without much change or damage to them. After all, these recordings were made almost half a century after the immigrants had

left Lithuania. Most likely the songs were a great source of support, comfort, and constant renewal of ties with brothers, sisters, and relatives left behind in Lithuania, a breath of fresh air from the homeland” (Visackienė 2011: 231).



Figure 2. Jonas Balys with singers Ona Dakanienė, Sofija Adomaitienė, and Antanina Nenienė. Gary, Indiana, 1949 (Balys 1955: 3).

IMMIGRANT SONGS: IMPRESSIONS OF THE LONG JOURNEY AND HOPES FOR A BETTER LIFE

Jonas Balys, being a representative of folkloristic ideals of his times, recorded just a few songs about immigration⁸ since he was mostly interested in songs of more traditional genres and the entire repertoires of songs that his informants remembered. He published eight immigrant songs in the first volume of his compilation, *Lietuvių dainos Amerikoje / Lithuanian Folksongs in America*, and two songs of this genre in the book *Suvalkiečių liaudies kūryba Amerikoje: antologija* (Anthology of Sudovian Folklore in America) (Balys 1989, No. 29–30). Since he preferred traditional old songs, Balys believed that these songs composed from authored poetry were less worthy than the traditional songs:

There aren't that many immigrant songs; most of them are created by people who read books and knew how to write. For that reason, those songs are not that interesting for their poetic form, but they provide information on how the immigrants lived and what they felt a hundred years ago.
(Balys 1989: 139)

The material collected by Jonas Balys is special in that it is written down from “word of mouth”, from the first wave of emigrants, from conversations and communications with them, and from their biographies written down in a fieldwork notebook. Thus, it allows us to link the songs and the lives of the people who sang them, to compare the impressions and experiences mentioned in the verses of the songs and in the immigrants’ life stories. From the point of view of today’s researchers, immigrants’ songs are charming in their simplicity and sincerity, and they provide valuable insights into the feelings of rural people in a foreign land at that time.

The Catalogue of Lithuanian Folk Songs identifies almost 200 types of immigrant songs. These songs are divided into three thematic groups: the first group of songs is dedicated to parting with parents and relatives, the journey to a foreign country; the second group speaks about life after emigration, the work, the hardships, the longing for relatives and the homeland, the longing to return or at least to send a letter to the missed loved ones; and the third group of songs urges people not to forget their family and their homeland, not to forsake the mother tongue, and not to lose one’s ethnic identity.

The decision to leave for a distant land, and the determination to cross the Atlantic, entailed crossing a threshold akin to that of leaving for war. When emigrating, everyone knew that a connection to their family and loved ones would be lost for a long time, and that they could not hope for advice or help. Parting was followed by the knowledge that they might never see each other again. In saying farewell, there were many mixed emotions: people were nervous, they cried, begged for their parent’s blessing, prayed for God’s help:

*Užaugau kaimely,
Pas savo tėvelį,
Išėjau vandravot,
Sau laimės parjieškot.*

I grew up on a farm
Under my father’s arm,
And left my happy home
For my fortune to roam.

*Kelionei rengdamas,
Sunkiai dūsaudamas,
Parpuoliau an kelių,
Bučiavau kryželį.*

When I began to pack,
My future seemed so black,
My poor soul was at a loss,
I knelt and kissed the cross.

*Iš namų eidamas,
Gailingai verkdamas,
Visus sveikydamas,
Sudie sakydamas.*

And as we walked outside,
My parents and I cried;
Then, drying our wet eyes,
We said many good-byes.

*Kaip ėjau pro vartus,
Atsigrižau tris kartus,
Kaip širdį skaudėjo,
Tėvynės gailėjo.
(Balys 1958, No. 349)*

While passing through the gate,
I felt the hand of fate;
The love of native shore,
My heart and bosom tore...⁹

The song “Užaugau kaimely” (I grew up on a farm) had many verses and was written by village poet Jonas Mykolas Burkus (1839–1919; Noriai village, Pasvalys district); it became very popular both in the USA and in Lithuania. Composer Antanas Vanagaitis (born in 1890 in Šakiai district, died in 1949 in the State of Missouri)¹⁰ used both the words and the melody in his arrangement of the song (Petrauskaitė 2015: 55). From this song we learn that the journey by boat across the Atlantic took about twelve days, and those who were travelling across the seemingly immense ocean were overtaken by great fear. Travelers feared that they might perish, and their death and place of burial would remain unknown; no one would pray for them. When the boat would reach port, the fear would be replaced by great joy:

*Po dienų dvylikos
Krašte Amerikos
“Te Deum laudamus”
Užgiedam džiaugdamos.*

Then, after twelve days more,
We saw the New World’s shore
“Te Deum” we began,
And sang oft and again.

*Naujurke sustojom,
Po miestą vaikščiojom,
Kur eit nežinojom,
Giminių jieškojom.
(Balys 1958, No. 349)*

We landed in New York,
All set to go to work,
At a loss how to begin,
We sought help from our kin.

People would travel to foreign countries in search of a “better life”, and the same traditional formula as in folktales can be encountered in immigrant songs. It was imagined that each person had their place in the world, where they could live happily; everyone would receive their daily bread, or maybe even acquire great riches. However, no one could know what sort of fate awaited them:

<i>Tėvai, kaimynai</i>	Parents and neighbors
<i>Teip nusiminė,</i>	Are upset and blue;
<i>Greitai subėgo</i>	Friends and relations
<i>Visa giminė.</i>	Come a running, too.

<i>Vieni ramino,</i>	Some try to gladden,
<i>Kiti gąsdino,</i>	And some to scare me,
<i>O nė viens mano</i>	But no one tells me
<i>Laimės nežino.</i>	What my fate will be.

(Balys 1958, No. 345)

Going abroad, the chance to start a different life was inspiring. Young people felt that their future life would depend solely on their will, their strength and their abilities, and that the will of their parents and their siblings would no longer influence them. American culture was more liberal, and the political views of former peasants who had become workers often shifted from right to left, and socialist organizations and new social activities emerged alongside the Catholic societies that had fostered traditional folk piety (Michelsonas 1961; Kučas 1975).

Men were probably more likely to feel like free, independent individuals and the forgers of their own fortune/happiness. Meanwhile, girls who emigrated complained in their songs that they left Lithuania “without their share of inheritance”, “with no dowry, only a chaste face” (LTR 543, No. 498; LTR 521, No. 33).

SONGS RESEMBLING LETTERS IN VERSE: SENDING NEWS TO LOVED ONES

As migrants crossed the ocean, their parents worried how their sons and daughters were faring so far from home; at the same time the immigrants constantly wondered how their families were doing back home, whether everyone was healthy and well. In archaic cultures, various unusual phenomena in nature, such as sudden change in the weather, or unexpected behavior of birds and animals, might have been interpreted as bad signs, omens. For instance, a bird perched on the windowsill was seen as a messenger, as if it wanted to say something, bring news. However, at the end of the nineteenth – beginning of the twentieth centuries, when literacy was more widespread, parents and other family members would expect to receive a letter. According to British scholar Martyn Lyons, whose research compares letters of soldiers from World War I with those of immigrants to America, “[w]riting home, in this context, was

a means to preserve some continuity with the life they had known, to connect themselves with the previously stable values of the family, the land and the village community. Writing was a way to protect something of their individual identity” (Lyons 2013: 28). The less literate emigrants would seek out a more literate Lithuanian who could articulate the news they wanted to report. More enterprising compatriots took advantage of this: the Lithuanian-American printing houses printed letter-postcards (one of the first Lithuanian publications in the USA), embellished with drawings, texts of the Holy Scriptures, hymns or songs. They were distributed along with newspapers and books by emigre book carriers – clever agents known as peddlers. They would load up their suitcases with a variety of printed materials and head to the towns where Lithuanians lived. In the Lithuanian communities, they would sell thousands of ornate letters printed with songs and decorative flowers. According to one of them, the best times were Saturday nights, when the workers were paid, and Sunday mornings: “I walk down the street and listen to where singing or the sounds of an accordion might be coming from. In such a place you almost always find a Lithuanian family, and when you find one, you find others” (Michelsonas 1961: 205). Lithuanians who ventured on a long journey took instruments with them and played them at weddings,¹¹ as well as for their own enjoyment after hard work (Petrauskaitė 2015: 47, 90).

One can only guess how impressed the village was by a “gentlemanly” letter from America, which addressed the household with words written by poets, and enticed them to go to America – the land of paradise: “I greet you a thousand times and wish you success in your work, and in every step you take, may you always be as cheerful as the spring, as rich as the fall, and as healthy and strong as an oak tree” (Škiudaitė 2006: 758–759).¹²

One of the most popular emigrant songs “Aš, Lietuvos bernužėlis, laiškėlį rašysiu” (I, a lad from Lithuania) sounds almost like a rhymed letter:

*Aš, Lietuvos bernužėlis,
Laiškėlį rašysiu,
Amerikos gyvenimą
Visiem apsakysiu.*

I, a lad from Lithuania
Will write a letter,
I shall describe to all
The good life in America.

*Amerika – gera šalis
Yra daug pinigų,
Čion nereikia bijot Dievo,
Nei klausyt kunigų.*

America is a great place
With much money to be had,
God need not be feared
Nor strict priests obeyed.

*Katrie dirba, prociavoja,
Tie gyven kaip ponai,
Tur auksinį ziegorėlį
Ir juodą žiponą.
(Balys 1958, No. 342)*

Those who work hard
Live there like kings,
They own a golden watch
And a coat in black.

According to J. Balys, this song was composed in the United States, and was not only sung, but also published and distributed there. Barely literate people would sign a copy of this song and send it to their relatives as a postcard.¹³ If there was no bad news, the simple need to make contact with one’s family was most important. Such a letter would usually just mean that the person was alive, healthy, and doing well.

In researching war-historical songs of modern times, folklorist Vita Ivanauskaitė noted that “they are full of interesting variations of writing, sending and receiving letters. ... The motif of writing a letter, filled with archaic images of a deep pool, murky water, a pike, a falcon, etc., fits particularly well and naturally with the theme of carrying and sending a message from war, which is predominant in the oldest war songs” (Ivanauskaitė 2004: 20–21).

The folkloric perspective of sending a letter is inseparable from the bearers of the message, which are firmly established in the tradition: in the songs, letters are sent via a steed, a bird, the wind and water. Only a few later works no longer mention these mediators. (Ivanauskaitė 2007: 146)

Just like the creators of war songs, immigrant songwriters did not forget traditional imagery, as they longed for their homeland, dreamed of returning home in the shape of a bird, or wanted to send a messenger, such as a falcon, to carry news to their family. Many songs often sung by immigrants were based on the poem “Oi tu, sakal sakalėli” (Oh, you falcon, speedy falcon) by poet Antanas Vienažindys:

*Oi tu, sakal sakalėli,
Tu (j)aukštai lakioji.
Išlėkdamas, parlėkdamas
Navynas nešioji.
(Balys 1958, No. 343)*

Oh, you falcon, speedy falcon,
Far and wide you flutter,
Flying thither, flying hither,
Many news you utter.

In it, the imagery of a flying bird and sending a letter complement each other: the letter reaches the family like a bird, while a bird flies and brings long-awaited news like a letter itself. A similar image is also common on vintage postcards

and postal logos, showing a carrier pigeon delivering a letter in its beak. As emigration was a mass phenomenon, it was the subject of poems and songs both by Lithuanians who emigrated and by their relatives who stayed in their homeland. Songs of this genre were indeed “winged” – they spread on both sides of the Atlantic, and many of them were also recorded and documented in Lithuania.

EMOTIONAL TIES TO THE HOMELAND AND THE FOSTERING OF ETHNIC CULTURE

Those who immigrated at the end of the nineteenth – beginning of the twentieth centuries to seek a better life did not see themselves as “citizens of the world” and did not live in an “imagined community”. They were people of an earlier era who were very attached to their places of residence in the homeland, to the Lithuanian landscape, as well as to their family members and all their relatives. When they left, many would take a handful of native soil with them, which they kept safe until death, with a request to put it in their coffin at their funeral.¹⁴ The majority of them did not speak English, they socialized and married mostly among themselves. Even the names of the towns were given Lithuanian forms in their pronunciation. In this way Shenandoah became Šenedorius, Shamokin – Šimukai, Mahanoy City – Makanojus (Bradūnaitė-Aglinskienė 1997: 61).

In Svetlana Boym’s view, the spread of nostalgia had to do not only with dislocation in space but also with the changing conception of time. Nostalgia was a historical emotion, and we would do well to pursue its historical rather than psychological genesis. There had been plenty of longing before the seventeenth century not only in European tradition but also in Chinese and Arabic poetry, where longing is a poetic commonplace. Yet the early modern conception embodied in the specific word came to the fore at a particular historical moment. “Emotion is not a word, but it can only be spread through words,” writes Jean Starobinski, using the metaphor of border crossing and immigration to describe the discourse of nostalgia (as cited in Boym 2008 [2001]: 36). According to Žydrone Kolevinskienė, researcher of Lithuanian emigre literature, at first glance it seems that nostalgia is a longing for specific places, but in fact it is also a longing for another time (childhood, youth), as if in search of a “lost time” (Kolevinskienė 2022: 388).

Lithuanians, the children of farmers who grew up in the countryside, had difficulty adapting to the urban environment; they missed nature and greenery. In their imagination they idealized the Lithuania that they had seen so long ago, writing poetry about it as if it was the land of their dreams. The yearning for one’s homeland is the deepest emotion expressed in immigrant songs; thus,

these songs do not lack elements of grief, sorrow, sighs, and tears. Longing is expressed through the use of the poetic formulas of love songs, talking about the homeland like a lover:

Lietuvos žemelė už visas meilesnė, Lithuania’s land is dearer than any,
Jos juoda duonelė už medų saldesnė. Its black bread is sweeter than honey.
(LTR 947, No. 1437)

Balys observes that sometimes in their songs “they complain about the new land and complain about a lot of things. ... They admit that they left their native land for money and the hope of a better life” (Balys 1989: 139), for example:

Vai tu, aukse, tu sidabre, Oh, you shiny gold and silver,
Susukai galvelę, You turned my head around,
Aš už tave pravažiavau This is why I left my homeland
Svetimą šalelę. For a foreign country.

Atvažiavau (į) Ameriką, When I reached America,
Čionai apsistojau, I was too elated,
Kai pamačiau aušros žvaigždę, Dazzled by the evening starlight
Linksmi uliavoju. Oft I celebrated.

Būtų linksma bernužėliui It would not be bad to live here –
Svetimaj šalelėj, Such a life sweet as this is –
Tik negirdžiu dainuojančių But I miss the lovely singing
Lietuvos panelių. Of Lithuanian misses.
(Balys 1989, No. 29)

Sometimes the immigrants who overwhelmingly missed their homeland and family decided to return (“Važiuosiu, liūliuosiu į tėviškėlę” (I’ll travel, I’ll sail to my homeland); Nakienė & Žarskienė 2019, No. 12), but most of them remained, returning to Lithuania only in their thoughts. Singer Uršulė Žemaitienė, who wrote down the story of her life at Balys’s request, ended it with the following words:

If God would let me return to Lithuania, I would recognize every footpath, every tree. I remember every tree or rock and where each grew or lay. Even today I see everything in my imagination, and I don’t forget anything, because I never let go of those images of my dear Lithuania during the 36 years I spent here. Lithuania stands like a mirror, like an altar before my eyes. (Balys 1989: 18)

The songs also reflect on life in an environment where “there are compatriots, but there is no homeland” (LTR 508, No. 39), and these songs contain didactic lessons on how not to forget one’s mother tongue and how to cherish Lithuanian identity:

<i>Kas bus, lietuvi, pagalvok</i>	Fellow Lithuanian, be careful
<i>Ir savo vardą pagodok.</i>	And honor your name.
<i>Mokykis iš kitų tautų,</i>	Learn from other nations,
<i>Būt kultūringu ir gerbtu.</i>	To be cultured and respected.

(Nakienė & Žarskienė 2019, No. 11)

Immigrants who had received a better education and achieved a higher social position realized that identity is not passed on by genes, spontaneously, but is only preserved if it is consciously nurtured. If Lithuanian books are valued in the parents’ home, traditional festivals are celebrated and national food is prepared, then children do not forget their origins and do not distance themselves from the Lithuanian communities.

CHANGES IN THE CULTURE OF IMMIGRANTS

American Lithuanians lived in a free country, they did not have to endure political and ideological oppression, so they were more self-confident, willingly joined social and cultural associations, and regularly participated in various activities. Just like the Irish, who celebrated St. Patrick’s Day every year, they began to commemorate St. Casimir, the patron of Lithuania, on March 4. They also held large celebrations on the Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary’s Assumption on August 15. They became generous donors, supporting Lithuanian political and social initiatives, and various cultural causes; the Lithuanian Association in America collected patriotic pennies and allocated them for book publishing and scholarships (Biržiška 1933: 466). Many people sent their hard-earned money to their relatives in Lithuania. Particularly many donations were collected in 1914–1918, during World War I, to support the families of those who died in the war, especially war orphans. The immigrants also supported the struggle for the independence of Lithuania in 1918–1920: “the workers laid hundreds of dollars on the altar of their homeland” (Biržiška 1933: 480). The second – and third-generation immigrants were equally active. Although they could hardly speak Lithuanian and communicated better in English, they remained sincerely concerned about Lithuanian affairs, and celebrated Lithuanian Independence Day – February 16 – with joy.¹⁵

It was often noted that American Lithuanians were more cheerful than their compatriots back home; they allowed themselves to be easily distracted and did not succumb to gloomy moods. Many would buy a gramophone and listen to the voices of their favorite singers on 78 RPM records. A very interesting mix of semi-traditional, semi-professional music can be heard on records made in the USA by big recording companies that catered to immigrant populations. Some of them were sold by thousands of copies and were often played in expatriates’ homes. Perhaps the best-known performers were Antanas Vanagaitis’s vaudeville troupe *Dzimdzi drimdzi*, which successfully toured Lithuanian-American communities between the two world wars, awakening Lithuanians through song and humor. Their records included not only songs but also comic dialogues. Balys has recorded a folklorized version of the song “Fordukas” (Little Ford) arranged by A. Vanagaitis:

*Dirbau kasykloj
Per nedėlėlę,
Kai sulaukiau subatėlės,
Savo naują Fordužėlį
Pamėginėtie.*

All week, rain or shine,
Worked in a coal mine;
But on Saturday I scored
Got my pay, took out my Ford
For a pleasure ride.

*Pripyliau geso
Penkis galionus,
Mano naujas fordužėlis
Pasipurtęs kaip pašėlęs
Tik strapalioja.*

Tuned up the motor,
Gave gas and water;
My well-worn and rattling Lizzy
Jumped up, backfired and went dizzy,
Raring to travel.

(LTRF cd 361/22)

It is an imitation of a traditional song “I fed my steed the whole week long” and resembles some other folk songs. Instead of speaking to his steed as in traditional songs, the man speaks to his “iron horse”— his car:

*Privažiavau mergelės namelį,
Ir paspaudžiau forduko ragelį.
Aš atvykau po ilgų kelionių,
Atbirbėjau su glėbiu svajonių.*

Oh, my Ford, my pal and playmate,
Are you sad, ‘cause you are old?
Let’s stop at my girl’s home,
See my dearest one.

*Išeina mergelė
Peintytoms lūpelėms,
Su šilkine skrybėlaitė
Ant gelsvų plaukelių.*

My beloved appeared –
Lips all paint and glowing,
From ‘neath funny little bonnet
Her light blue eyes showing.

(LTR cd 361/22)

As Balys commented, “the ideal of beauty in Lithuanian folksongs is a blond girl with red cheeks and blue eyes. In this country a beauty wears much makeup, only the eyes remain natural blue” (JBI r 14). There are some, but not many, immigrant songs that can be called humoristic, with ironic and self-critical texts. These humorous songs reflect the process of industrialization, and the noticeable changes in the lifestyle of miners and other workers.

As generations changed, so did the culture of Lithuanian immigrants. While the first generation of immigrants were representatives of traditional culture and their musical self-expression was spontaneous, the musical activities of the second and third generations were already institutionalized and professionalized, including studying in music schools, participating in amateur musical activities, and becoming professional musicians. This was the case with Petras Vytautas Sarpalius (1886–1953), a second-generation immigrant, who led Lithuanian choirs, mixed instrument and wind ensembles and orchestras. J. Balys wrote about Sarpalius in his fieldwork diary:

Sarpalius was a great lover of folk songs, had a large library of Lithuanian music, song collections, etc. He was born in Pennsylvania, but his father came from Vilkaviškis and had come to America at the age of 19. His father played the violin and his mother loved to sing. Their son used to follow [marching] brass bands [in the street] when he was little, and at the age of ten he was already playing the violin by ear at weddings. After receiving a scholarship, he studied music in New York for two years. His father used to tell him to speak Lithuanian at table or else he would get a spanking. There were eight children in the family, and his brothers also loved music. Following J. Šliūpas’s advice, he came to Chicago at the age of 21. He worked with Mikas Petrauskas, led choirs, composed songs based on the words of K. Binkis (“Dukružėlė” (Dear daughter), “Vakaras” (Evening), etc.), and had his own compositions in manuscripts. It was very interesting to talk to him. He knew a few folk songs that he had learnt from others here in America. He played a couple of his father’s polkas on the violin. He spoke Lithuanian without an accent; he was a conscious Lithuanian. He had four daughters and one son and was happy that his son married a Lithuanian. His daughter, Birutė, became a pianist. (Balys 1977: XVI)

At the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, brass bands – *benai* – were especially popular. They were usually affiliated with various fraternities and found in almost all mining towns – the first was organized in Shenandoah in 1885 – and in larger cities. Usually, these bands consisted of miners and other workers with no musical education, who could not read

notes or play any wind instrument before joining a band. The societies would purchase the instruments and hire the band leaders. Some bands, consisting of more skilled players, could reach a considerably high level of performance, and represented not only their society or town, but could also participate in public events, and got invitations from other national communities. Lithuanians took great pride in their bands that played a repertoire different from the American ones. Brass bands would express Lithuanian identity and nationality and promote the name of Lithuania in the multicultural environment of the USA. They performed in almost all Lithuanian social community gatherings (Žarskienė 2020). Lithuanian choirs played a similar role. The first ones were established in the Lithuanian parishes of Pennsylvania. Church choirs became extremely popular at the end of the nineteenth and start of the twentieth centuries. Their primary task was to sing during services and represent the parish at various religious and social events, keep up national identity and foster patriotic sentiments among immigrants. At the end of the nineteenth century non-religious choirs were formed especially by left-leaning and other free-thinking organizations. Choirs prepared concerts for their fellow Lithuanians and drew in public to various other types of events (Petrauskaitė 2015: 156–187).

Lithuanians in America did indeed demonstrate their musical abilities – the twentieth century saw many professional singers, violinists, pianists, composers and directors. A strong generation of Lithuanian intellectuals grew up in the USA in the families of the educated people, who preserved the Lithuanian identity and supported their compatriots during World War I and during the struggle for Lithuanian independence. The first generation of immigrants and their descendants, along with the second wave of immigrants who came as World War II refugees, preserved Lithuanian identity related to patriotism and national sovereignty. For decades, while Lithuania was occupied by the Soviets, they cherished their national culture and believed in the liberation of Lithuania.

CONCLUSIONS

The formation story of the Lithuanian diaspora in America is not exceptional; it is also perfect for representing the cultural situation and development of European immigrant communities in America more generally. Those who immigrated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries did not see themselves as the “citizens of the world”; they were people of an earlier era – most of the Lithuanian immigrants of that time were rural dwellers, farmers. When they came to the USA, they settled close to each other, established Lithuanian communities, and created their own Lithuanian cultural environment. The immigrants

who participated in the creation of America's industrial society, who worked in mines, slaughterhouses, and factories, found it difficult to adapt to the urban lifestyle, since they missed greenery, nature, and the familiar landscapes.

As the research of J. Balys's recordings reveals, the first-generation immigrants to a foreign country overseas brought their traditional culture with them. Despite being surrounded by a foreign culture, they always remained Lithuanians in their hearts and lifestyle; they tried to make sure that their children, born in the USA, would speak Lithuanian. Traditional songs and singing strengthened them and helped maintain an emotional bond with their homeland, yet these songs could not replace it. Unfortunately, some things cannot be replaced.

Immigrant songs can be called nostalgic songs about love for a lost homeland; most often they are melancholic and sentimental. Some of the songs resemble poetic travel narratives or rhymed letters sent to relatives. In their poetic and musical expression, they are close to late war-historical songs and love songs and share similar emotional states with songs of these genres. A smaller proportion of immigrant songs are humorous, reflecting changes in lifestyle and leisure activities, and the influence of American entertainment culture. There are also quite modern-sounding songs that talk about the conscious preservation of one's mother tongue and native culture, and express the ideas of Lithuanian national rebirth and the importance of national identity.

Many immigrants would buy a gramophone and listen to the voices of their favorite singers. By listening to the records, they learned Lithuanian folk songs not by reading musical notes, but in an old-fashioned way – by ear. In this way, the records certainly helped to preserve the singing tradition.

NOTES

¹ The first known and perhaps the most famous Lithuanian in American history was Alexander Carolus Curtius. The Lithuanian nobleman had degrees in medicine, law and theology and was invited to direct and teach at the Latin school founded in New Amsterdam (now New York) (Kučas 1971: 13).

² In Pennsylvania, Juozas Būga also collected songs from early immigrants in 1950. Elena Bradūnaitė-Aglinskienė did the same job during the aforementioned 1972–1973 expedition. She recorded 247 songs from Lithuanians still living in coal-mining towns. A selection of 40 songs from this collection (9 of them describing the immigrants' destiny) was published in 1994 (Aleksynas & Ramoškaitė 1994).

³ In 2022, once this article was already accepted for publication, a second collection edited by the same authors appeared: *Lietuvių dainos JAV, įrašytos Elenos Bradūnaitės (1972) / Lithuanian Folksongs in the USA, recorded by Elena Bradūnas (1972)*.

- ⁴ From J. Balys’ speech recorded in the USA and transmitted at the award ceremony of the National Jonas Basanavičius Prize on February 15, 1995, in Vilnius (LTRF k 2212). Cited quotations of Jonas Balys translated by Elena Bradūnaitė-Aglinskienė and Vaiva Aglinskas.
- ⁵ From J. Balys’ speech recorded in the USA and transmitted at the award ceremony of the National Jonas Basanavičius Prize on February 15, 1995, in Vilnius (LTRF k 2212).
- ⁶ This innovation reached Lithuania later. Magnetic tape recorders were first produced around 1955 by the electronic company Elfa in Vilnius.
- ⁷ P.V. Bohlman in his article “Traditional Music and Cultural Identity: Persistent Paradigm in the History of Ethnomusicology” noted that since the nineteenth century or even earlier, documentation and data gathering were considered as the most important things in the research field of ethnomusicology (Bohlman 1988).
- ⁸ J. Balys recorded about 20 immigrant songs: LTRF cd 355 (67, 70, 85), LTRF cd 356 (57), LTRF cd 358 (30, 47), LTRF cd 359 (8), LTRF cd 361 (18, 22, 37, 38, 48, 71), LTRF cd 362 (73, 77), LTRF cd 363 (33, 59), LTRF cd 365 (16), LTRF cd 369 (40).
- ⁹ Lyrics translated by Nadas Rastenis.
- ¹⁰ It is interesting to note that J. M. Burkus, who wrote around 70 poems that became songs, never left Lithuania. At the same time, the composer, organ player, choir master, actor, journalist and public figure, A. Vanagaitis, immigrated to the USA in 1924. Once there, he established a vaudeville troupe *Dzimdzi drimdzi*, conducted choirs, participated in the production of the first Lithuanian opera *Birutė*, founded the journal *Margutis*, and composed vocal pieces as well as harmonized Lithuanian folk songs (Petrauskaitė 2015: 354–386).
- ¹¹ A wedding feast among Lithuanian immigrants was described in Upton Sinclair’s novel *The Jungle*, written in 1904 and published in 1906.
- ¹² Letters from America not only “comforted” relatives, but also sought to entice a new workforce to the USA, thereby lessening the potential of the homeland. Intellectuals who noticed this tried to stop this process by publishing articles in the press and attempting to educate the new arrivals in other ways. The immigrant press often stressed that “letters of American Lithuanians written to relatives in Lithuania play the most important role. They are full of lies, replete with boasts and bragging, ... which entices the best minds away from their country” (Eidintas 2021: 92).
- ¹³ From a recorded lecture by Jonas Balys on immigrant songs (JBI k 56/1).
- ¹⁴ “The Lithuanian farmer is so attached to his land that provides for him, that he considers it to be sacred, prays to it, kisses it, and fights for it because it is his greatest treasure. He has sacrificed his blood and life many times to defend it. When he is torn from his land, he feels like an uprooted tree, which quickly wilts. When emigrating from their country, many bring a bundle of their native soil, which they request to be included in their coffins when they die” (Balys 1966: 15).
- ¹⁵ Lithuanian independence was declared on February 16, 1918. In the aftermath, there were various military clashes with both Soviet Russia and Poland.

ARCHIVAL SOURCES

- JBl – Jonas Balys Fund of the Lithuanian Folklore Archives of the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore:
JBl ft – photograph from J. Balys Fund
JBl k – cassette from J. Balys Fund
JBl r – manuscript from J. Balys Fund
LTR – manuscript fund of the Lithuanian Folklore Archives of the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore
LTRF cd – CD fund of the Lithuanian Folklore Archives of the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore
LTRF k – cassettes fund of the Lithuanian Folklore Archives of the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore

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AS MUCH AS NECESSARY AND AS LITTLE AS POSSIBLE: THE INTERPLAY OF NATIONAL AND SOVIET IN A WEDDING PERFORMANCE AT THE 1960 FOLK ART EVENING OF THE ESTONIAN SONG FESTIVAL

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Abstract: This case study explores the political uses of folklore during the Soviet colonial regime through an examination of a traditional wedding performance at the 1960 Folk Art Evening of the Estonian General Song Festival. The aim of the study is to understand the multiple meanings of such folklore performances within the framework of post-Soviet postcolonial studies, drawing on archival material, published memories of the creator of the wedding performance, Laine Mesikäpp, and interviews with her contemporaries.

The wedding performance presented local pre-modern traditions and at the same time contributed to the articulation of Soviet ideology, exploiting the regime's broader and everyday political themes and agendas. The analysis demonstrates the political anti-colonial significance of the staged tradition for the participants, the possibilities for ambivalent interpretations of the wedding performance, and the hybrid nature of some of its elements. A closer look at the personality of the main creator of the wedding performance, Laine Mesikäpp, a prominent singer of traditional songs of the period, as well as the assessments of her contemporaries, reveals how the positions of colonial subject and active creator were reconciled and what strategies were used to cope with the inevitable compromises with the demands of the authorities.

Keywords: stage performance of folklore, Estonian runosong, traditional singing, wedding ritual, religion policy, Soviet regime, post-Soviet postcolonial studies, colonial subject position

This case study discusses the political use of heritage and the ambivalent meanings of stage performances of traditional customs and songs under a colonial regime. The focus is on the staging of a traditional wedding at the Folk Art Evening (*Est. rahvakunstiõhtu*) of the 15th All-Estonian Song Festival (officially

called *Nõukogude Eesti 1960. aasta üldlaulupidu*, ‘General Song Festival of 1960 of Soviet Estonia’).¹

The staging of traditional wedding in 1960 is a vivid example of how, in an authoritarian system, behind the official, unambiguous political use of folklore lie greatly diverse and sometimes contradictory ideological meanings. Another reason to focus on the 1960 Folk Art Evening is that the staging of traditional songs and customs at this event can be considered, in a sense, a representative example of the modernised stage style of the mid-twentieth century, before the beginning of the folklore revival movement in Estonia in the 1970s (Kuutma 1998).

The author and lead singer of the wedding scene – as well as the most famous representative and creator of the modernised stage tradition of the older folk song – was Laine Mesikäpp, who performed at all the all-Estonian song and dance festivals of the Soviet era and earned the title “Hostess of the Festivals”.² Laine Mesikäpp, as a central figure in the wedding scene, also raises issues regarding the themes of the colonial subject and the choices of an individual creator under an authoritarian regime.

The study is based on audio and film recordings, archival documents and media coverage connected with the song festival as well as on Laine Mesikäpp’s life and activity. The post-Soviet memories of the festival participants were also used to understand the ideological undercurrents of the time.

HISTORICAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To interpret the sources and the complexity of the historical reality they reflect, I have drawn on the post-socialist postcolonial studies framework (Annus 2018; Kõncis 2021, 2023). The concepts of ambivalence, hybridity, and mimicry, which are central to postcolonial theory, are well suited to understanding the mentality and practices of the politically complex period of the Khrushchev Thaw in Estonia (Kuuli 2002; Hennoste 2003; Kangilaski 2016; Saarlo 2017a, 2017b; Annus 2018; Kapper 2018). The Thaw eased the fears of the Stalin era and gave impetus to testing the limits of the possible by introducing decolonial ideas into public discourse. On the other hand, by that time Estonians had realised that the Soviet regime, established in 1940 and restored in 1944 after the German occupation, was not temporary but would remain in place and that they had to adapt to it in order to achieve self-fulfilment and ensure their livelihoods, and “the local modes of resistance became a hybrid coexistence with the new power” (Annus 2018: 100; see also Mertelsmann 2003; Kirss & Kõresaar & Lauristin 2004; Karjahärm & Sirk 2007).

Ideological ambivalence is apparent, among other things, in representations of the local cultural heritage. While striving towards and during the period of independence in the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, folk song and dance had been associated with the ideology of national political sovereignty. Under the Soviet regime, folklore was supposed to express the idea of official Soviet nationalism, which supported the colonial system directed from Moscow. What makes the interpretation of staged folklore interesting is that, despite representing an official ideology, the practice of staging the tradition already had its own local decolonial meaning that dominated the perceptions of many people (Kuutma 2008; Herzog 2010; Brüggemann & Kasekamp 2014). Earlier ideas, norms and practices of national modernity merged with those of Soviet modernity, as was characteristic of the wider Soviet-influenced Central and Eastern Europe (Kołodziejczyk & Şandru 2012; Annus 2018).

One of the intriguing themes of colonialism is the position of the colonial subjects who inevitably participated in the practices that imposed and legitimised the system. During the Soviet period, many Estonians had to resolve for themselves the cognitive dissonance between their public practices and their personal values. Active creators like Laine Mesikäpp had to reconcile the positions of the colonial subject and of the creator. While the colonial subject is characterised by a willingness to compromise, a tendency to self-limitation and mimicry (Ashcroft & Griffiths & Tiffin 2013 [1998]),³ the position of the creator implies creative energy, agency, and a desire to convey personally significant messages. The process of creation meant constantly testing “the limits of the possible” (Annus 2018) – Soviet ideas / ideological formulas had to be used “as much as necessary and as little as possible”, as the common saying went. However, these limits may have been set not only by the authorities but could also be a consequence of internal censorship and adaptation. In order to understand the creator’s choices at a given moment in time, it is useful to include a biographical perspective, in this case considering Laine Mesikäpp’s life and experiences (see also Oras 2023).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND LAINE MESIKÄPP’S MOTIVATION FOR STAGING WEDDINGS

Staging traditional weddings was not unprecedented either in Estonia or elsewhere. It was facilitated by the theatricality of this long, varied ritual with its specific characters and activities and its wide range of emotions. In the Finnic wedding tradition, singing had a special place, accompanying all the main

rituals. An example of early performances of Finnic weddings can be seen in the wedding customs staged in 1896 at the ninth Sortavala General Song and Music Festival in Finland (Tenhunen 2006: 83). In Estonia, the wedding ritual of the Seto ethnic group from southeast Estonia was performed at concerts first organised by the Estonian National Museum in Tartu and Valga in 1912 and later in 1921 (Kalkun 2017: 12; Postimees 1912, 1921; Päewaleht 1912). Awareness of the spectacular nature of traditional weddings was definitely increased by the Finnish ethnographic film *Häiden vietto Karjalan runomailla* (Wedding in poetic Karelia), made in 1921, which reconstructed old local wedding customs, and which was also distributed with an English translation. Armas Otto Väisänen, the main director of the Finnish film and an ethnomusicologist who had collected Seto folklore, even proposed making a similar film about Seto wedding customs in Estonia (Päewaleht 1922). In the 1920s and 1930s, local courtship and wedding customs were demonstrated at several Estonian festivals, as well as at concerts in support of the music museum, organised by the cultural activist and museum founder August Pulst (Postimees 1923, 1928; Teataja 1923; Vaba Maa 1924; Päts 1935; Kermik 1983: 49; Kalits 1988: 49).

It can be assumed that the idea of staging a wedding at the 1960 Folk Art Evening came from Laine Mesikäpp herself. She had probably seen at least one of the concerts organised by Pulst where wedding customs were performed – for example, in her home community of Hageri (e.g., ETMM M234:1/19:447). Laine Mesikäpp may also have been motivated by the knowledge that her grandmother had been a wedding singer. In media interviews, Mesikäpp interpreted her singer's career as a continuation of her grandmother's activity. She had several other reasons for proposing a wedding performance. One of these may have been a vivid experience of the power of old rituals in a real wedding situation. In 1957, the wedding of Laine Mesikäpp's niece, Õilme Krell (Vasari), was held, following the historical wedding traditions. In addition to relatives, Õilme's fellow musicians and dancers from the University of Tartu Folk Dance Ensemble took part in this memorable wedding.⁴ The wedding singers were Laine Mesikäpp and Muia Veetamm (legal name Elts Ventsel), a poet who had previously sung runosongs with Mesikäpp on stage (Krell 2019, 2022).

Laine Mesikäpp was probably also influenced by the work of folklorists.⁵ Folklorists from the Folklore Archives visited the island of Saaremaa in the 1950s and 1960s, and documented, amongst other things, the local wedding tradition of Mustjala parish, which was still alive. At Laine Mesikäpp's niece's wedding in 1957 the wedding guests went to the wedding house in the *Mustjala pulmarong* (Mustjala wedding procession, literally 'wedding line') – a traditional procession with dance movement.⁶ There are also other indications in archival sources that Laine Mesikäpp was inspired by Mustajala's living wedding

tradition, which had been performed on stage by the locals.⁷ The singer was apparently also aware that folklorists were currently working on contemporary Soviet rituals based on the old wedding tradition (see further details below).

The successful wedding performance at the 1960 Folk Art Evening provided the impetus to continue with the theme. The performance was repeated at the jubilee concert of Ullo Toomi, the grand old man of Estonian folk dance, in 1962 (ETMM T503:1/2:24). The 1960 Folk Art Evening wedding performance obviously provided additional inspiration also for the wedding performances of the regional folk-art evenings in southern Estonia in the 1960s, where Helju Mikkel, the leader of the University of Tartu Folk Dance Ensemble, played an important role in preparing the programme (Mikkel 1999: 344; Tee Kommunist-mile 1968; Punalipp 1968; see also Vaba Eestlane 1968; Vaba Eesti Sõna 1969).

THE WEDDING PERFORMANCE AT THE 1960 FOLK ART EVENING

The folk-art evenings of the all-Estonian (general) song festivals, later called dance festivals, are large open-air concerts focusing on folk dance, which take place during the song festival (later known as the Song and Dance Festival). Alongside folk dance, folk-art evenings have also featured gymnasts, folk musicians, folk singers and, before 1960, also choirs. In 1960, the Folk Art Evening was held for the first time at the Komsomol Stadium.⁸ There were around 4,000 performers and, at every performance, an audience of around 11,000 people. In order to be accessible to all, three performances were planned. As one of these was interrupted by heavy rain, it was repeated, so that in fact there were (almost) four full performances altogether.⁹

As was customary, the folk-art evening began with a manifestation of Soviet ideology. The Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the Estonian SSR, Johan Eichfeld, gave a long political speech in both Estonian and Russian, with the anthems of the USSR and the Estonian SSR played in between (Rahvakunsti-õhtu 1960, 01). The first performance of the dancers was the unrolling of a big slogan written on a piece of cloth: “We will fulfil the 7-year plan in agriculture in meat production in 4 years and in milk production in 5 years”. Next, they arranged themselves in the stadium to form the letters “Salute”, then “ESSR” and “XX” – in Soviet times, the song festival was held every five years and always coincided with the anniversary of the annexation of Estonia; this time it was the 20th anniversary. Then Laine Mesikäpp stepped up to the podium and presented the opening song. She started with a call in traditional style: “... Hey! Come sing, come dance! Come, my dears, come, my brothers, come to

celebrate our jubilees! Come, all our Union brethren, come from far and near!” Laine Mesikäpp’s calls were answered by a small female choir singing in two parts (Rahvakunstiõhtu 1960, 01: 44:45–47:05). The folk dances followed.

The wedding performance, entitled “Wedding in the Kolkhoz”, took place in the middle of the evening (Rahvakunstiõhtu 1960, 02: 21:10–41:29). The script and lyrics for the staging were compiled by Laine Mesikäpp, while the entire folk-art evening was directed by Leo Kalmet, a well-known producer and theatre professor. He chose as the bride and groom for the wedding the newly graduated actors Linda Kuusma (later Olmaru) and Rein Olmaru, who actually got married shortly after the song festival. Laine Mesikäpp played the role of the wedding singer and mother of the groom. The wedding was performed by professional actors Lembit Anton and Johannes Rebane, as well as amateur actors, dancers and singers.

The wedding procession drove in on horse-drawn carriages. Traditionally, weddings have been held first at the home of the bride, then at the home of the groom. On stage the second part of the wedding was performed, with the bride being brought from the bride’s home to the groom’s home. As the wedding train pulled in, the announcer would recite the words in old, runosong style,¹⁰ informing everyone that the wedding of the kolkhoz was coming and that the young people were as old as their home republic.¹¹ The names of the collective farms were mentioned: “The groom takes the bride home, / from ‘People’s Victory’ to ‘Future’.”

An enormous beer tankard was driven in on one of the wagons, from which men emerged holding ordinary tankards. The crowd had risen to their feet as the wedding procession entered – as was the custom for both contemporary church weddings and secular wedding registrations. The announcer shouted the old wedding call “*Hõissa, pulmad!*” (‘Hurray, wedding!’) many times, and from the recording it seems that the crowd cheered along, although such traditional calling was generally no longer practised at modern weddings.

The traditional request for documents (“passports”) followed: the path of the wedding procession was blocked by the “villagers” and the possibility to proceed had to be redeemed with alcohol. The old custom of blocking the road had survived in the tradition of the time and acquired new elements over time (Kalits 1968). Upon arriving at the “groom’s home”, the bridal couple came through a gate made of birch trees to sit on a small stage in the middle of the stadium (green branches were also used in traditional weddings). The rest of the ceremony followed – in general, but not in detail – the old marriage ritual of putting on the wife’s headdress. These practices had mostly disappeared from modern tradition. Laine Mesikäpp first greeted the daughter-in-law, alternately reciting and singing the text of a wedding song. This was followed by

the “farewell song” sung by a group of women – a song consisting of two vocal parts accompanied by a *kannel* (Estonian traditional plucked string instrument, psaltery) in a newer style, which was not part of the old tradition. The bride was then given a wife’s headdress, an apron and a ladle, accompanied by the singing and reciting of the runosong. The groomsmen brought a bridal chest, the custom of giving bridal gifts was explained by the announcer reciting verses of the song. The distribution of gifts was again accompanied by the singing of a traditional song in a newer style by the choir – in the older tradition, ritual runosongs were also sung at this time.

This was followed by the throwing of the newlyweds into the air and then “the patching of the apron” – a traditional money-gathering ritual in which families tried to outdo each other. The performance here turned into a “song fight” between the wedding singers representing the families mocking each other in song. Song-fighting was one part of the several stages of the ancient wedding ritual. On the stage, it took place with lyrics in traditional style created by Laine Mesikäpp, which were gentler and less rude than the older mocking song tradition. At some stage of the fight, the parties started to outdo each other with the achievements of their collective farm and their grand work plans.

Laine Mesikäpp, singer on the groom’s side, in response to mockery:

*“Ohkan oma lehma poole!
Aga kes on me kolhoosis
kõige kangem karjanaine?
Kes on üle Eesti lüpsja?”*

“Ah I sigh at my cow!
But who is in our collective farm
the most powerful cattle woman?
Who’s the all-Estonian milkmaid?”

The wedding singer on the bride’s side:

*“Aga kes on kõige kangem,
kangem loomakasvataja,
ja kui meie seda poleks,
kas siis vabariik saaks anda
100 000 tonni liha?
Meil on jõudu, meil on jaksu!”*

“But who’s the strongest,
the strongest cattle breeder?
And if we weren’t,
could the republic give
100,000 tons of meat?¹²
We have strength, we have stamina!”

The bride’s party repeated the last verse in chorus.

Laine Mesikäpp:

*“Ah on jõudu, ah on jäksu!
Aga kes on tõotand lüppsta
550 000 tonni piima?
Meie jõud käib ikka üle!”*

“Ah there’s strength, ah there’s strength!
But who has promised to milk
550,000 tons of milk?
Our strength is still the greatest!”

The groom’s party repeated the last verse.

Organised bursts of laughter and the repetition of the lead singer’s final verses demonstrated the support of the wedding guests in both parties for their lead singer.

The fighting sides then decided to use a series of traditional games of strength and skill to find out who was better. In the end, the parties settled on a consensus that they were equally strong. There was a shout, “The guests are coming!” A Russian troika (a carriage drawn by three horses) drove in, followed by cars. A Russian dance group from northeast Estonia came out and performed a Russian dance, after which they handed over a traditional Russian salt and bread. The “dear guests” were asked to show off their skills, followed by another Russian dance. After that, the groom’s mother Laine Mesikäpp invited the bride to see the pastures; during this the wedding parties left the stadium.¹³ The festival continued with dancing.

PRESENTING WEDDING TRADITION ON A MODERN STAGE: DISTANCE AND INVOLVEMENT

Compared to a traditional wedding, where all the guests were familiar with the traditions and were active participants in the rituals, the stage situation and the performance of historical customs included both a spatial and temporal distance between the performers and the audience. To explain customs that have become unknown, they were introduced by verses recited by the announcer. The fact that the setting was a stage was underlined by explicitly theatrical details, the most impressive of which was the huge beer tankard. Both in contemporary media reports and in later memories this tankard was a detail which was frequently referred to: it played an important role in creating a special mood. The theatricality, in effect, created a modern affinity between the stage and the audience.

Most of the audience would have experienced the marriage ritual as one of the most important events in life, and this emotional connection created a sense

of real participation in the wedding. Besides this, the fascination of the audience was probably enhanced by the fact that some of the old customs performed were also still used in the modern tradition. As one newspaper report described, the performance awakened in participants as well as in the audience emotions that had been experienced at a real wedding. A heightened ritual energy and the fact that the spectators felt like participants is also shown by the spontaneous standing up of the audience as the wedding procession came in, as well as by their shouting along with the wedding calls: “The wedding procession rushes to the stadium. The spectators are excited, waving... Everybody feels like they are part of the celebrations” (Noorte Hääl 1960a).

The enthusiasm of the participants and spectators was not diminished by a downpour of rain which interrupted the performance of the folk-art evening on 20 July, right during the wedding performance. As Laine Mesikäpp recalled in newspaper interviews: “The party in 1960 came with a big ‘Hurray, wedding!’ scenario, which so fascinated the crowd that even the heaviest downpour, which started just as I was putting a [symbolic married woman’s] cap on the bride’s head, didn’t matter” (Haan 1987); “The rain was so heavy that she [LM] almost couldn’t see the bride’s face as she sang to her, took the wreath from her head and replaced it with a cap. No one left. A dance was made around the bride and groom, as the script had intended. Barefoot” (Vainu 1997).

Looking more closely at the vocal side of the wedding performance, it can also be summarised as bridging the aesthetic distance between the old traditional song – the runosong – and the modern audience, using a modernised performance style. Having learnt from traditional singers, Laine Mesikäpp knew the traditional performance style well. The use of a modernised style was a conscious choice on her part, but was partly influenced also by her work and training as an actress. The reason for her choice was the common understanding of the time that the short, repetitive melodies of the runosong, consisting of one or two phrases with a narrow range, had no aesthetic value in themselves.¹⁴ According to the aesthetics of the first half of the twentieth century, the melodies were monotonous and suitable only as a basis for musical composition. The traditional “untrained” chest voice, the “imprecise”, varying pitches and the similarity of such singing to speech intonation was also deemed aesthetically “poor” (e.g., Särg 2012; Oras 2017).

Laine Mesikäpp’s style in the 1960s had been developed over 20 years. She used her own lyrics in the style of the runosong, with (sometimes slightly modified) traditional verses and formulas. Her lyrics used a simpler language than traditional songs. There was a very frequent alternation between reciting and singing the lyrics, probably with the aim of conveying the content of the text as clearly as possible. Each sung section used a new melody, supposedly

in an attempt to avoid the “monotony” of runosong (see Example 1). One of the identifiable melodies is a wedding tune by the traditional singer Anna Lindvere, who was one of Laine Mesikäpp’s musical models, the other is a wedding tune of Tõstamaa parish (Tampere & Tampere & Kõiva 2016 [2003], no. 74, 45, 46). Some of the tunes seem to have been improvised on the basis of runosong melodies. Only once during the performance were some lines sung according to the older tradition: Laine Mesikäpp sang a line and then the other singers repeated it. Two songs in the modern style, sung by a multi-part women’s choir, were probably added to provide additional musical variety and “real” music alongside the runosong – it would have been possible to use the old traditional songs in these parts of the wedding ritual.

Example 1. Wedding song performed by Laine Mesikäpp in 1960 wedding performance (Rahvakunstiõhtu 1960, 02: 23:05–25:55).

[reciting] *Tere, tütreks mul tulemast ...*
 Hi, you’ve become my daughter ...

[singing]

Laine Mesikäpp, solo:

G4-G4
 ...mi-niks mi-nu-le o-le-mast! Võ-ta vas-tu ei-de eh-ted, e-si-e-ma-de pä-ran-dus!

[longer pause]
D4-F4
 Is-tu nüüd nai-se-jär-je pea-le, pe-re-nai-se pin-gi pea-le! Nüü-dap pär-ja sa mi-ne-tad,

nüü-da eh-ted hei-dad en-dalt...

... you came to be my daughter-in-law! Accept the jewellery, the heritage of the foremothers. Now sit on the woman’s bench, on the mistress’s seat! Now you’ll be left without a headdress, throw away your maiden jewels ...

[reciting] *...tõused tanukandijaksi,*
astud noorikute hulka,
jätad hüvasti õeksed.

... you will become a woman's cap wearer,
join the ranks of young married women,
say goodbye to your sisters.

[multi-part choral song]

[reciting] *Võta vastu naisetanu ...*

Take the woman's cap ...

[singing]



... forget your father's home, let go of your girlhood ...

[reciting] *...pea oma kaasakest kalliks!*

... cherish your dear husband!

[LM ties an apron on the daughter-in-law and hands her a bowl], reciting runosong lines.

Singing in alternation with the choir, the choir repeats each two lines.]

Laine Mesikäpp: *Choir:*

G4-G4
Nüüd o-led nai-ne nai-su-ke-ne, nüüd o-led noo-ru-ke-ne noo-rik, nüüd o-led nai-ne nai-su-ke-ne,
Laine Mesikäpp:
nüüd o-led noo-ru-ke-ne noo-rik. Hoi-a siis, hoi-a siis uu-ta hoo-net, uu-ta hoo-net, kait-se kol-let,
Choir:
hoi-a siis, hoi-a siis uu-ta hoo-net, uu-ta hoo-net, kait-se kol-let!

Now you're a wife, now you are a young wife. Now keep your new house,
keep the house, protect the fire!

Laine Mesikäpp's singing followed the modern stage aesthetic: she sang with a trained voice, with a more precise, controlled intonation, higher vocal register and clearer articulation than traditional singers, and used the expressive gestures characteristic of an actor, filling the stage with her presence. Thanks to her modern aesthetics, a link can also be seen with the distinctive theatrical style cultivated throughout Soviet folklore performance, which was modelled on professional stage traditions (Olson 2004; Rolf 2009; Smith 2002; Stites 2004). In the wedding performance itself Laine Mesikäpp did not use the kind of expressive singing-calling recitation characteristic of herding songs, in which the groups of verses recited end with a call on the final vowel. She made use of this latter technique, however, especially in the opening songs of the party, also in 1960 (Rahvakunstiõhtu 1960, 01: 44:43–47:18).

SOVIET POLITICAL MOTIFS AND THEIR AMBIVALENT MEANINGS

A number of the political motifs used in the wedding performance were common to heritage performances and, more generally, to public cultural discourse throughout the Soviet era. They legitimised the Soviet regime in Estonia, idealised socialism and its economy, introduced the idea of friendship between “brother nations” and the special position of the Russian people, the “elder brother”. Obvious Soviet motifs in the wedding performance were the Estonian SSR-aged newlyweds; the kolkhoz representing the family or lineage as the main party at the wedding; the kolkhoz names “People’s Victory” and the (bright) “Future”; the wealth of Soviet people, their success in fulfilling economic plans and the element of socialist competition in this; the inclusion of “dear Russian guests” in the local family ritual. In addition to these, there were themes more specifically related to the politics of the late 1950s / early 1960s, such as the campaign for animal husbandry development and the anti-religion campaign.

Some of these Soviet motifs may have taken on a critical or ironic meaning in the eyes of the participants, compared to their original intended political message. For example, the political kolkhoz names “People’s Victory” and the (bright) “Future” were typical at the time of the establishing of the collective farms. Combining them in the wedding performance created a powerful image – the 20-year-old children of the ‘people’s victory’ have a bright ‘future’ ahead of them. However, such kolkhoz names may also have had an ironic connotation for the participants, as ‘the people’s victory’ stood for the annexation of Estonia, and optimistic kolkhoz names such as ‘future’ may have been associated with the real poverty and misery that characterised the rural economy in the years

following the forced collectivisation of Estonian agriculture, which took place mainly after the mass deportations of 1949.

The Russian dance troupe's arrival may also have aroused unpleasant associations – the intrusion of representatives of another culture into the course of an inter-family celebration may have been associated with the Soviet invasion of Estonia. The inappropriateness of the guest scene was pointed out in one of the speeches at the closing conference of the folk-art evening: “The Russian group seemed like an alien body in our wedding customs. In the future, the idea of friendship between peoples should be treated differently” (ETMM MO268:1/4:3). One of my interviewees, who did not remember the episode of the Russian guests without asking, said with great irony: “Yes, yes, it comes to mind now. Well, friendship between peoples was always, always a must” (Krell 2024).

One issue that was obviously open to controversial interpretations was the “song fight” between the two wedding parties – the boasting about the production of meat and dairy products on their collective farms. The issue was linked to Nikita Khrushchev's campaign, launched in the spring of 1957, to catch up economically with the United States. The first area in which to catch up was agriculture, and the Soviet Union's abundance of meat and dairy products was supposed to be a sign of this (Scherrer 2014). Campaigns dominated the entire Soviet economy, and in the absence of any significant economic levers, there was a constant “socialist competition”, the aim of which was to motivate people to work harder (Miklóssy & Ilic 2014). On the one hand, everyone knew that data and figures were manipulated, and that success in the socialist competition was in part the usual Soviet camouflage. On the other hand, after the total collapse of agriculture as a result of forced collectivisation, the collective farms were slowly beginning to recover from the worst of the economic depression, and people had learned that their wellbeing ultimately depended on economic indicators. All amateur cultural activities were also supported by farm resources, as participation in them was controlled by the state and was also an indicator of socialist competition. The universal emotions of the competition also had an impact: “It's still like a kind of highlighting of their homestead. What happened on a state level was ridiculous. But if you think about it in a narrower sense and in a specific situation, people were still cheering for their own people” (Krell 2024). Thus, although the rhetoric of socialist competition used in the “song fight” was a political cliché, it was still linked to the excitement of competition and to people's quality of life, and people could thus identify with it, at least to a certain extent.

Some of the issues that represented Soviet ideology in the wedding performance can be traced back to the earlier pre-Soviet discourse of modernity. One episode of the wedding scene was the debate about the customs of collecting money. The best man starts to collect money (“the patching of the apron”) and according to the preliminary handwritten wedding script the representative of the bride’s family calls it old-fashioned: “Look at the fool! [You] started to practise a bad custom, the custom of ancient, poor people ... We don’t need a poor people’s custom, our kolkhoz is big and rich” (ETMM T503:1/25:66; Rahvakunstiõhtu 1960, 02). Such a statement fits in with Soviet ideology – there is no need to collect money for “rich” young kolkhoz workers. In fact, the argument that the ritual collecting of money has to be avoided as a shameful form of begging had already been used before the Soviet era, in the period of the modernisation of society during the second half of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century.

Another topic that can be traced back to pre-Soviet Estonia was the secularisation of society connected with the development of non-clerical customs. The policy of the Soviet regime was in principle anti-religious, although there were periods of leniency. Nikita Khrushchev’s policy, especially since the consolidation of his power in 1957, was strongly anti-religious (Rommel 2011). Among other anti-clerical measures, the replacement of church rituals associated with major events in human life with secular ones became important. One reason for this was the increasing popularity of religious rituals in the 1950s due not only to the increased prestige of the church as a result of Stalin’s wartime policies and the decreasing fear of repression, but also to the solemnity of the existing Soviet family ceremonies with their lack of emotion, avoidance of symbols (e.g., veil, ring), and the drab, non-festive offices used for the ceremonies (Kalits 1988: 52–53).

In order to diminish the role of the church, something akin to church rituals had to be proposed. As early as June 1957, the first “secular confirmation school” – a camp for young adults – was organised in Estonia. It became a tradition of “summer days for young people”, which lasted throughout the Soviet era (Värv & Järs & Anepaio 2008).¹⁵ In 1958, committees for the establishment of secular ceremonies, including a wedding committee, were formed in the government of Tartu (by the Executive Committee of the Tartu Soviet). In addition to politicians, the committee included representatives of several cultural institutions. Ethnologist Vilve Kalits and folklorists Selma Lätt and Herbert Tampere contributed significantly to the creation of the new rituals (Kalits 1988). In 1959 the first book with recommendations for secular ceremonies was published (Tähistagem 1959; Kalits 1960).

In Estonia there was a rather fertile ground for the adoption of secular ceremonies based on historical traditions as an alternative to church rituals. Firstly, society had gradually secularised during modernisation, especially in the decades before the Soviet occupation. For example, while in 1922 only a little over 6% of all marriages were registered in secular form, by 1938 this percentage had risen to 40% (Kalits 1988: 11). Also, the old wedding rituals can be characterised as non-clerical until the end of the nineteenth century: the church ceremony played a marginal role in long weddings lasting several days; the actual marriage took place in the family, with rituals characterised by elements of magical thinking and the preservation of many pre-Christian religious elements (Rüütel 2011 [1995]).

Secondly, the local historical wedding ritual had already acquired a national value in the stage representations of the independence period. Considering the national meaning of tradition, the creation of Soviet wedding customs was an ideologically ambiguous process. Since the need for ritualism in weddings is natural and the use of tradition had modern national connotations, the traditional ritual, with some elements practised until modern times, had potential beyond the Soviet political order – as, for example, in the case of the wedding of Laine Mesikäpp's niece, mentioned above. Soviet national policy required the use of the “national form”, but at the same time, some commission members may have interpreted the offer of an alternative to Christian ritual not (only) as a Soviet innovation, but also in a politically nationalist way.¹⁶ If one of Laine Mesikäpp's ideas with the 1960 wedding performance was to popularise the recommendations of ethnologists and folklorists for the use of old customs, she may not have seen it in terms of the implementation of Soviet religious policy.

It should be noted that, as time went on, it became clear that in fact most of the old customs proposed for revival were not being used. The original ritual meaning of the customs and the beliefs behind them were not in line with modern thinking. Of the customs proposed, people continued to actively use mainly those that had anyway survived in the continuous tradition, adapting over time to the changing world (Kalits 1968, 1988).

COMPROMISES, SELF-CENSORSHIP, AND THE POSITION OF THE CREATOR

Despite adapting to the colonial system, anti-colonial ideas still persisted in society throughout the Soviet period. This was strongly supported by the song festivals, despite the strict direction and control of these events by the authorities (Annus 2018: 150–158, 2019c; Brüggemann & Kasekamp 2014; Kuutma 1996).

One striking example of the mindset of the participants of the 1960 Song Festival is the story of the symbolic song “My Fatherland is My Love” (Rahi-Tamm 2022; Labi 2011). The lyrics of the song come from Lydia Koidula, one of the most famous poets of the national awakening of the nineteenth century, and it was sung at one of the central events of the beginning of the awakening, the First All-Estonian Song Festival in 1869. Composer Gustav Ernesaks created a new melody for the lyrics during World War II and it was performed at the first Soviet-era song festival in 1947, which was less restricted than the festivals that followed (Lippus 2006). During the repressions, on the eve of the All-Estonian Song Festival in 1950, this song was banned. In 1960, the song was initially included in the repertoire but was removed before the festival. The choirs started singing it on stage outside the official programme on their own initiative, without a conductor. The whole festival was characterised by an atmosphere of resistance and has been called “a small singing revolution” (Rahi-Tamm 2022).

Several elements of the wedding performance were also interpreted in an anti-colonial perspective. Linda Olmaru, who played the role of the bride in the performance, remembered that after the last performance of the Folk Art Evening, the excited audience spontaneously took the “newlyweds” on their shoulders and carried them for more than a kilometre to the Estonia Theatre, which is a nationally symbolic object (Olmaru 2021).¹⁷ She explained this as an opportunity to show the “Estonian mentality”, the anti-Soviet political mentality, characteristic of the entire 1960 festival. Linda Olmaru repeatedly stressed that although the wedding performance was a kolkhoz wedding in name, it was in fact about “ancient Estonian wedding customs” and it is reasonable to assume that quite a large part of the audience interpreted the event in the same way. The spontaneous procession was certainly an expression not only of the general heightened festival mood that had accumulated by the time of the closing ceremony, but also of the anti-colonial sentiments of the participants.

As the memoirs of contemporaries working in the field of tradition attest, the inevitable compromises with the authorities did not prevent heritage performances from being interpreted as expressions of political nationalism, although most of the formal national elements also fitted in with the discourse of Soviet nationalism and the concept of “nationalist in form” of socialist realism. Wearing Estonian folk costumes at social gatherings and events, as well as performing the “wedding customs of the ancestors”, was interpreted in this way, as were the self-created new customs based on traditional elements, as long as these contained no elements of Soviet ideology (ERA, EV 510; Olmaru 2021; Krell 2024; Herzog 2010; Kapper 2018). Even the props for the wedding performance, including the large beer tankard, could be described as something national and

opposed to the Soviet. A parallel can be drawn with the Estonian-language press, where journalists tried to offer an alternative to listing all the Soviet political elements of the wedding performance by stressing that it was the old Estonian tradition, “the wedding customs of the foremothers” (Säde 1960; see also Kreegipuu 2009).

In all her post-Soviet interviews, Laine Mesikäpp emphasised the politically nationalist aims of her activities (Oras 2023). In view of the political motifs of her Soviet-era lyrics, one may wonder whether her later statements were influenced by the changed political situation or whether she was expressing her internal motives, which previously had to be concealed. According to the memories of people close to her, Laine Mesikäpp’s political views were clearly anti-Soviet. Her interviews show that she tried to avoid political issues in her performances, but she had to submit to constant pressure from the authorities (Haan 2007; Roomets 2012; Vainu 1997). This was probably aided by self-censorship, underpinned by a persistent sense of fear – Stalin-era repressions in Estonia that also affected her family were traumatising for her.

The delicate balancing act on the borders between the use and avoidance of Soviet elements in her performances is illustrated by the story about the “forgotten” political message in one of her songs. The authorities kept demanding that she include data on agricultural production in the opening song of the festival. She had to explain repeatedly that it was not possible to include the names of the best milkers, the figures for the grain harvest and the amount of milk milked in the opening song because it did not fit in with the traditional style of singing (Klaats 1997). At the Jubilee Song Festival in 1969, she had agreed to the request to sing about the “promises to the Party”, i.e., the planned milk and meat production figures, but, while singing at the festival, she “forgot” to sing these verses and later apologised for her poor memory (Sikk 2008). She told a friend how worried she was about the consequences of breaking her promise: “For several weeks afterwards I thought they [the captors] might have come for me when someone knocked at the door” (Oja 2020).

Another example is Laine Mesikäpp’s notebook which contains the main points of her memoirs, apparently for media interviews. She wrote about the song festival in 1955 or 1960: “I was invited to the Central Committee [of the Communist Party]. Percentage of meat and milk”. This note has been crossed out and an earlier note in the same manuscript about the Stalinist repression of her theatre colleagues begins with the question “Should I talk about deportation?” (ETMM T503:1/2:17, 20). It seems that Laine Mesikäpp chose not to mention politically sensitive issues in interviews. It is possible that such self-censorship continued even after the end of the Soviet regime.

Laine Mesikäpp's recollection of the choice of title for the 1960 wedding performance suggests that the contradiction between the desired and the imposed consciously or unconsciously "cancelled out" reality in her memory. The authorities wanted the event to be presented as a collective farm wedding, and the official title of the performance was "Wedding in the Kolkhoz". In a newspaper interview from the post-Soviet time Laine Mesikäpp recalled: "Again I was asked from above to call the whole story 'Wedding in the Kolkhoz'. Then I got angry and told them that in that case I would do nothing. Of course there can be weddings in a kolkhoz, but at the song festival I only do folk things" (Klaats 1997; see also ETMM T503:1/2:9; Haan 1987, 2007). Here "folk" as an indicator of the (politically) national is contrasted with "kolkhoz", representing the Soviet system.

The political compromises for the sake of being allowed to perform the tradition, or to hold the festivals at all, were inevitable, and the need to make compromises shaped distinctive coping strategies (Aarelaid 1998, 2003, 2006; Annus 2018). The attitude towards compromises is illustrated by the comparison drawn by Lille Arraste, the folk-dance leader of the time, with the purchase of books in Soviet times: in order to buy the book you wanted, you also had to buy a volume of Lenin's works or a book of materials of the Communist Party Congress (ERA, EV 510). Most people never bought this "red literature": the bookshelf that held it, prominently placed in the bookshop, was largely ignored by customers. But since the sale of such literature had to be reported to the authorities, bookshops used the technique of adding a compulsory "red book" to books that were in short supply. Comparing the perhaps emotionally complicated situation of making political compromises with the buying of unusable and unwanted books in a sense makes the former a pragmatic trade.

Another side of this pragmatism was the strategy of "not seeing", which, based on an anti-colonial perspective, was designed to ignore everything Soviet and focus on the national side of the festivals. This "not seeing" was facilitated by the Soviet "highly normalized, fixed, and citational" authoritative discourse, which became steadily normalised under the Khrushchev regime – as a result the Soviet formulas lost meaning for people (Yurchak 2005: 37). All my interviewees remembered the wedding scene as a display of old national customs, without any recollection of Soviet elements, at least initially. I even felt a little embarrassed to recall and ask about them – people took it for granted that, as someone who grew up in the Soviet era, I understand how insignificant and inevitable the compulsory Soviet elements were:

"Young people today think and beat around the bush ... that this way and that way and: 'Think what was done then!' ... For us, it was important that it [national tradition] was actually preserved. What the text was there in

the meanwhile, nobody remembers. And those slogans ... What you had to say, you said, and that was it. What was ordered had to be done to get our own thing done” (Arraste 2024).

Laine Mesikäpp’s vocation was to perform on stage as a singer of traditional songs and as an actor. She was motivated not only by abstract nationalism, but perhaps above all by her personal experiences and the values she got from her childhood home and from older performers of traditional music (Oras 2023). Laine Mesikäpp’s childhood memories reveal her great passion for creative self-expression and performing on stage. The importance of past traditions and their preservation as a national endeavour bonded Laine Mesikäpp to her father, Hans Mesikäpp, who had volunteered as a contributor to the folklore archives during her childhood, as well as to her grandmother, who had been a traditional wedding singer. As a child, she had experienced the sense of togetherness and mutual support provided by extended family members and the whole village community.¹⁸ A particular value was the ability to party in a traditional way, to create a heightened party mood, which Laine Mesikäpp learned both at home and later from older traditional musicians. In this way, her personal emotional experiences resonate with the general nostalgic gaze of Estonians towards the time of independence born of the sense of social and cultural rupture during Soviet time (Annus 2018: 125–126). All in all, being a performer of traditional songs gave Laine Mesikäpp the opportunity to combine her personal emotional values and the ideological values with her need to perform.

IN CONCLUSION

This study focused on the staging of traditional wedding customs and songs at the Folk Art Evening of the 1960 All-Estonian General Song Festival as an example of the political use of heritage under the Soviet regime. What makes the heritage performances intriguing is the way in which pre-Soviet national discourses and Soviet colonial discourses meet and merge within them, resulting in a remarkable multiplicity of possible interpretations. Due to the national meaning acquired during the period of independence, the elements that fitted in with the ideology of Soviet nationalism could at the same time be seen unambiguously as symbols of political nationalism – the wearing of folk costumes, the performance of folk songs and dances adapted to modern stage aesthetics, and the staging of the “traditions of the foremothers”. As Epp Annus (2018) has pointed out, such paradoxes were typical in the implementation of Soviet colonial policy in those Soviet republics which had previously been modern nation-states.

The 1960 Song Festival with its Folk Art Evening, held during the Khrushchev meltdown, was in many ways distinctive of the history of Soviet-era song festivals (Rahi-Tamm 2022). The participants quite explicitly opposed the colonial regime, singing spontaneously on stage the nationally symbolic song “My Fatherland is My Love” which had been removed from the programme before the festival. One episode in the Folk Art Evening of the same festival was the staging of a traditional wedding. After the last Folk Art Evening performance, the bride and groom of the wedding scene were carried on the shoulders of the participants in a spontaneous final procession as far as the Estonia Theatre, one of the symbols of national culture, which can also be interpreted as an expression of the mentality of this festival.

The various possibilities for interpreting the official programme reflect the hybridity and ambiguity typical of colonial discourse. Several Soviet elements, such as the optimistic kolkhoz names or the arrival of the “dear Russian guests”, could be interpreted ironically. However, in addition to the critical view, the participants could also become involved, for example, in the “song fight”, which led to the counting of agricultural achievements typical of the discourse of socialist competition in the Soviet economy. Hybrid meanings could be given, for example, to the development of a Soviet secular wedding ritual based on the traditional Estonian wedding ritual which, on the one hand, was commissioned by Khrushchev’s anti-religious campaign, but on the other hand was in line with the political nationalism and the secularisation of society that had already occurred in the pre-Soviet period.

At a stylistic level it is difficult to draw a line between the pre-Soviet and Soviet performance style of traditional songs and customs, especially as there is no direct material for comparison. The performance style of Laine Mesikäpp, the creator and lead singer of the wedding performance and singer at all the other Soviet-era song festivals, started to develop at the end of the 1930s. While it is possible that the Soviet model of stage performance of folklore underpinned the theatricality and professionalism of Laine Mesikäpp’s performance style, it is clear that most of the modern elements in her 1960 Folk Art Evening performance had their origins in the pre-Soviet period.

One question in this study was how wedding performances and performances of tradition in general could be interpreted from the position of the colonial subject, and further, how the positions of active creator and colonial subject could be reconciled if the values of the creator did not coincide with the established norms of colonial discourse. It seems that Laine Mesikäpp’s need to perform traditional songs, and to make compromises in order to do so, was not only based on political motives, but also on the values and emotional experiences

that she brought with her from her rural home and from her encounters with living singing traditions. Balancing on the borders of the possible and always with the fear that the next performance, work or festival “may not go through” – not to mention fears connected with the repressions experienced only about 10 years before – guided the choices of Laine Mesikäpp and the other creatives who made compromises with the authorities and who were willing to censor themselves. One of the main mitigating strategies used for everyday life was an extreme pragmatism involving the “not seeing” of the Soviet elements and, as if turning these into a barter commodity issued in exchange for their being allowed to create and perform and uphold their anti-colonial national values.

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NOTES

¹ For the history of Estonia, one of the Baltic states occupied by the Soviet Union in 1940, and for information on the all-Estonian song festivals see, for example, Kasekamp 2010; Annus 2018.

² Laine Mesikäpp, born in the northern Estonian parish of Hageri in 1915, was the ninth child of a peasant family. She trained as a saleswoman and worked in retail until 1942. After moving to Tallinn in 1939, Laine Mesikäpp joined an amateur drama group and a folk dance group, where she also began to perform older traditional songs. Her song performances received positive reviews during World War II and continued after the war. She became famous after performing at the General Song Festival in 1947, influencing many traditional song enthusiasts. Under Stalinism, she was also presented as the creator of “Soviet folklore” (Miller 1990; Ziolkowski 2013; Kencis 2017; Kalkun & Oras 2018; Oras & Kalkun & Saarlo forthcoming). In 1942 Laine Mesikäpp was invited to work at the professional theatre in Pärnu, and from 1944

until 1992 she worked as an actress in Tallinn. She joined the Communist Party in 1964 in order to keep her job and served in various public positions. At the age of 80 she joined the folklore ensemble Leigarid, which was founded during the folklore revival. She died in 2012 (see Oras 2023).

- ³ On the complexity of possible subject positions, especially in the context of Soviet colonial discourse in the Baltic countries, see Annus 2019a.
- ⁴ The University of Tartu Folk Dance Ensemble and its director from 1953 Helju Mikkel became one of the important initiators in staging traditional wedding rituals at folk dance festivals. Her ensemble also created a modern marriage ritual for the members of their group, using elements of the traditional wedding ritual in the secular marriage ceremony at the State Registry Office (Mikkel 1961: 29; Kalits 1988: 88). Following the example of the Tartu ensemble, the Karksi-Nuia folk dance group directed by Lille-Astra Arraste also used similar rituals for the marriage registrations of its members at the local Viljandi Registry Office (ERA, EV 510).
- ⁵ For example, Laine Mesikäpp visited the Folklore Archives (at that time the Folklore Department of the Estonian State Literary Museum) on 25 July 1959, and the subject of the consultation is mentioned as wedding customs (folklore department visitors' guest book 2.03.1959–2.07.1962, entry no. 657). Of the folklorists, Laine is said to have had the most contact with Selma Lätt, who was an expert on traditional customs and who also participated in the development of modern secular rituals.
- ⁶ *Pulmarong* is a ritual dance at Mustjala weddings in which all the wedding guests participate, holding each other in a line (Rüütel 2018: Films IV, 02:35).
- ⁷ The wedding customs of Mustjala had already been staged locally in 1940, and Laine may even have witnessed this or some of the local weddings (Teataja 1940a, 1940b; RKM II 75, 486). One of the scripts (the first script?) of the wedding performance found among Laine Mesikäpp's manuscripts has the title "Wedding in Mustjala Kolkhoz" written on it (the title has been crossed out and "Hõissa, pulmad! ('Hurray, wedding!' has been written next to it – ETMM T503:1/25:14). The minutes of the committee meeting of the 1960 Folk Arts Evening in March 1959 mention a *Pulmarong* from Mustjala (ETMM MO268:1/10:19), and at the July meeting the *Pulmarong* dance was removed from the repertoire (TLA.R-1.15.233: 111) – perhaps the original plan was to perform (an episode of) a wedding from Mustjala.
- ⁸ Currently Kalev Central Stadium in Tallinn.
- ⁹ The Folk Art Evening was due to take place on the evenings of 19 and 20 July and the morning of 21 July. Due to rain the performance on 20 July was curtailed and was held in the evening of 21 July (Sirp 1960; Noorte Hääl 1960b). The participants have mentioned four performances, and this is referred to in the title of the newspaper article "The Fifth Wedding", which describes the official, legal registration of the real marriage of the bride and groom of the folk art evening performances, which took place shortly after the song festival (Valdma 1960; EFA.203.f.1264).
- ¹⁰ Runosong (in Estonian *regilaul*) originated from nearly 2,000 years ago as a common singing style of most Finnic peoples, and was turned into a symbol of Estonian culture by the national movement in the nineteenth century (Saarlo 2017b). It is characterised by the simultaneous use of ancient linguistic forms that are no longer used in modern language, alliteration and parallelism, the absence of stanzas and rhyme, and a peculiar poetic metre. In the second half of the nineteenth century it was gradually replaced in oral tradition by a more modern or newer folk song style characterized by

end rhyme, stanzaic structure, and syllabic-accentual metre (Rüütel 1998; Sarv 2009; Oras 2017).

- ¹¹ Of the young couple, Linda Olmaru (Kuusma) was born in 1940, Rein Olmaru in 1939. Estonia was occupied by the Soviet Union in 1940.
- ¹² In accordance with the economic plan, the Estonian SSR undertook to “give” (produce and market in the Soviet Union, largely outside Estonia) a certain amount of meat and milk.
- ¹³ In southern Estonia, visiting the pastures was traditionally associated with a fertility ritual and joke, a symbolic peeing, during which the wedding guests imitated peeing and put money into a bucket brought by the women carrying out the ritual (cf. Tedre 1974: 318).
- ¹⁴ Samples of runosong recordings can be heard in Tampere & Tampere & Kõiva 2016 [2003].
- ¹⁵ Young people aged 18 spent a few days in a camp in the summer, where they worked in the fields and attended political and other lectures. For the young people, it was important to have the opportunity to party together and summer days were popular among them.
- ¹⁶ For example, commission member Herbert Tampere is known to have had a nationalist mentality (see, e.g., Hiimäe 2009a, 2009b).
- ¹⁷ The Estonia Theatre originated from a society of the same name which was active during the nationalist movement of the nineteenth century. Built at the beginning of the twentieth century, the theatre building was the main cultural centre during the independence period.
- ¹⁸ The peasant model of life and the special relationship with the land were very important in the Estonian cultural imagination, especially in the first half of the twentieth century (Annus 2018: 208; 2019b: 429–430). Rooted in Estonian history, however, such an attitude may have been influenced to some extent by the romanticising, anti-urbanist view of pre-modernity that was characteristic of the era.

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ETMM T503 – Personal collection of Laine Mesikäpp

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AINU *PURI* AS A COMPASS: FROM YUKAR MUSICAL EPICS TO A CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT OF TRANSNATIONAL INDIGENEITY OF THE AINU

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Abstract: The objective of this paper is to analyse the approaches utilized by contemporary Ainu people when enacting Indigenous self-craft or becoming Ainu through musical expression. To achieve this, I connect music preservation and engagement with transnational Indigeneity to the music revival movement that has been active from the 1970s to the present. For the Ainu living in Japan, traditions have been heavily impacted by pressure to assimilate into mainstream society fuelled by a stigmatized identity. Considering the circumstances of this history, the preservation of Ainu musical traditions has been fraught with many challenges.

In an effort to gain a holistic understanding of the role of Ainu music in the reclamation of identity, I have reviewed early documentation of musical epics, performances of contemporary musicians, community engagement through music, and conducted interviews. The role of maintaining ancestral traditions through honouring Ainu *Puri*, which encompasses the extent of customs, is highlighted in this process as an essential cultural grounding. I conclude that traditional Ainu music in this case has a profoundly positive impact on identity construction and reclamation when approached through self-craft. This effect is reinforced through sustained contact with transnational Indigenous networks.

Keywords: Ainu, folk music, transnational Indigeneity, music revival, identity

INTRODUCTION

The Ainu are an Indigenous people of Japan and Russia, which inhabited Honshū, Hokkaidō, Sakhalin, and the Kurile Islands. Hokkaidō government surveys in 2013 found over 24,000 Ainu in Japan (UNHCR Refworld), and in the 2010 Russian census¹ 109 people identified as Ainu predominantly in Sakhalin.² Richard Siddle (2012 [1996]) asserts that the Ainu originate from the ancient Emishi who inhabited northeast Japan, with documentation as far

back as the fourth century, citing historical attitudes that had framed them as “barbarians”. While it is widely acknowledged that the Ainu emerged as a distinct culture around the mid-twelfth century, their precise origins remain a point of contention. The social dichotomy of civilized and barbaric was also evident among the Wajin, or ethnic Japanese in the Edo period (1603–1868), linked to a belief of superiority of the Wajin based in part on their use of written language (Siddle 2012 [1996]: 75).

In the Meiji era (1868–1912) there was an increased interest among intellectuals to contextualize Japanese origins as a means of inventing or establishing a Japanese ‘sense of nation’ (Siddle 2012 [1996]: 82). The Wajin came to be identified with the ancient culture of the Jōmon (ca. 10 500 – ca. 300 BCE) of northern Honshū, while evidence connecting Ainu origins with the Jōmon was contested (*ibid.*: 80–82). Japanese nationalism has been expressed through the Wajin celebration of the Jōmon as their ancestors and as a historical means of justification for their dominance over Honshū and the surrounding territories which include traditional Ainu lands. Ainu traditions were heavily impacted by pressure to assimilate into Japanese mainstream culture. Historically, state policies have had an adverse effect on Ainu culture through the unilateral appropriation of traditional lands, the prohibition of subsistence practices of fishing and hunting, forced relocation, imposed agrarianism, and the barring of the Ainu language and practices which were enforced through assimilatory education (Gayman 2011: 19). Systemic discrimination has resulted in high rates of extreme poverty among the Ainu who may, in turn, reject their Indigenous heritage, or aspire to “pass”, that is, to hide their identity to survive (*ibid.*).

In the context of this history, the preservation of Ainu music and traditions has faced many challenges. The Former Aborigines Protection Act of 1899 enshrined aggressive assimilationist policies into Japanese law by criminalizing Ainu ways of life and the very right to self-identify (Zaman 2020). This in combination with forced migration and drastic changes to subsistence living practices caused a sharp decline in the continuation of Ainu culture, including music. Despite these challenges, some Ainu found ways to persist and made bold efforts to preserve their traditions during the Meiji era (1868–1912). In her research on women’s art *ann-elise lewallen*⁵ (2016) presents Japan not as a postcolonial entity, but rather points to the continued colonial practices enacted by government policies.

Some progress has been made with the enactment of the Act on Promoting Measures to Achieve a Society in which the Pride of Ainu People is Respected, in April 2019 (Japanese Law Translation 2019). As a historic move, for the first time Japanese national legislation formally recognized the Ainu as Indigenous people of Japan. While this may have established a ban on the discrimination

of the Ainu based on ethnicity, it failed to provide recognition of their rights as Indigenous people as has been outlined by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) (Uzawa & Gayman 2020). The UNDRIP is a Charter of the UN containing 46 articles recognizing the historic injustices of colonization/dispossession of Indigenous lands, affirming the equal rights of Indigenous peoples, and affirming that the exercise of these rights should be free from discrimination of any kind (UNESCO 2019).

This paper examines modes of holding space for the diversity of perspectives within contemporary Ainu communities in Japan. This requires a consideration for how they balance their engagement with “self-craft”, or the construction of contemporary Indigenous identities, in relation to their ancestors. This will be further explored in terms of processes of “becoming” in the modern context of Japanese society. This paper pursues an inquiry of how historical expressions of Ainu music have changed over time in order to meet the needs of contemporary communities. This line of questioning will additionally aspire to ascertain the impacts of transnational Indigeneity in relation to the process of identity construction and expression through music.

As my research addresses the circumstances of historical and current trends in the music revivalist movements, I will combine in this study historical sources with the materials collected during fieldwork visits to Hokkaidō over two six-month periods in the summers of 2019 and 2022, consisting of interviews and participant observation at music events and in classes addressing traditional Ainu arts.³ To historically contextualize contemporary processes, my primary source will be the translations of Chiri’s works provided by Sarah M. Strong (2011), with accompanying excerpts regarding Chiri’s family and their involvement in music preservation. Chiri Yukie⁴ (1903–1922) translated thirteen musical epics known as *Kamuy Yukar* (Deity/Spirit epic song chants) from the Horobetsu Ainu dialect and transcribed them into the Latin alphabet with provided Japanese translations.

I draw upon the work of ann-elise lewallen⁵ (2016), who examined how artists and musicians create cultural vitalization spaces in processes of “becoming Ainu” through their traditional crafts. The crafts discussed are connected with the cultural revival movement that included Ainu music. Lewallen defines “becoming Ainu” as a process of “fashioning an Indigenous identity and embodying this as a lived connection to ancestral values and lifestyles” (2016: 1). Spaces of cultural (re)vitalization such as embroidery workshops and song/dance ensemble rehearsals provide opportunities for negotiating from “being Ainu” through birth and actively constructing an identity through self-craft, thus “becoming Ainu” through an intentional dedication to an Indigenous way of life (ibid.). My analysis will include lewallen’s broad application of transnational Indigeneity

in a contemporary context with consideration for transcultural encounters and their transformative impacts (lewallen 2016: 230).

While lewallen presents useful frameworks for understanding the construction of Ainu identity in her theories of self-craft and the act of becoming Ainu, this chapter introduces a visual representation of additional contributing factors and mechanisms guiding such processes. Discussions about the nature of the deeply personal journey surrounding identity formation arose during interviews with Ainu performers, which led me to begin exploring ideas about an analytical tool to aid in framing these experiences. Relating to something so personal as an internal mechanism of an artist or musician, that is to say, what inspires their engagement with their art, as a researcher presents challenges as to how such concepts could be framed with appropriate consideration for the diversity of Ainu musicians and their communities. One possible solution I will explore is a highly flexible and culturally grounded methodological research tool that, for the purpose of this study, I shall refer to as the Ainu *Puri* compass.

The Ainu *Puri* compass serves as a means of honouring diverse perspectives within Ainu communities. It is based on the maintenance of ancestral traditions as a guiding framework where Ainu *Puri* refers to an Ainu spiritual and philosophical way of being. Lewallen more specifically defines Ainu *Puri* as “proper comportment based on ancestral protocols” (lewallen 2016: 272). Rooting processes of becoming and self-craft through the traditional framework of Ainu *Puri* link the past to the present while projecting forward into imagined futures. The case of the Ainu people is particularly relevant to discourses of traditional music preservation in contemporary society, given their remarkable perseverance and their uniquely flexible approach in the maintenance of their musical practices.

The theoretical framework of this article includes several additional approaches to the Ainu revival processes of the twentieth–twenty-first centuries. Strong (2011) has documented the revival process with consideration for the early influences of Chiri. Ainu music revival emerged around the mid-twentieth century and really began to take hold as part of a greater cultural revival movement in the 1970s. As a great deal of Ainu culture was lost through processes of assimilation, the materials gathered and documented by Chiri’s family have provided a considerable basis for Ainu revival work. Techniques of performing *Yukar*, which were preserved by the efforts of Chiri Yukie and her family, have been used by prominent figures in the Ainu music revival movement, such as Nakamoto Mutsuko (1928–2011) (Strong 2011: 9). Memories of Chiri’s family are still alive in their hometown of Norboribetsu, and the broader Ainu community recognizes the value of their efforts to research and document Ainu language, culture, and traditions. Reviewing important biographic elements

of Chiri's story as presented by Strong (2011) aids in contextualizing the rich and complex history of *Yukar*.

There are many Ainu artists and researchers who have done remarkable work in Ainu and Japanese, which provides invaluable insights for them as members of their communities, such as Shigeru Kayano, Toyokawa Yoko, Umeko Ando, and the members of the female vocal group MAREWREW, to name just a few. Other influential researchers have contributed important ideas on subjects relating to Ainu music. This includes contributions from Yurika Tamura (2013), who explored the intersection of intercultural performance and belonging, and Nathan Renner (2012), who examined Ainu ceremonial music and dance. My current work draws upon the above-listed sources in my efforts to provide an accurate and balanced representation of the topics addressed in this paper.

THEORIES FRAMING HISTORICAL NARRATIVES OF AINU MUSIC REVIVAL

The revivalist movement that has emerged among Ainu artists and musicians has been led by artists who are engaged with innovative interpretations of traditional music. Endeavouring to gain a greater depth of understanding regarding this history requires theoretical framing. The art of the revivalist movement was framed by lewallen as an approach that combines contemporary lifestyles and ancestral repertoires which she termed as "self-craft" (2016: 1–2). The presence of this movement forged an alternative space where modern Ainu identities can exist and be expressed as contemporary subjectivities (lewallen 2016: 46–47).

Establishing a connection between self-craft and Indigenous modernity arises out of the necessity to address prevailing beliefs that frame Indigeneity as frozen in time. According to Diamond Szego and Sparling (2012), Indigenous modernities "emphasize the fragmentation, deterritorialization, and struggles for reclamation" as these issues tend to be central to the Indigenous experience around the world. This has been presented in contrast to typical developmentalist narratives of Western cultural perspectives. There is a multiplicity of Indigenous modernities which are tribally subjective, trans-Indigenous, cosmopolitan, and transnational in nature (Brown 2021). According to lewallen (2016: 47), the key components of Ainu modernity and their negotiation of identity within contemporary Japanese society hinge on the centrality of choice, agency, and self-determination.

Ainu self-craft is the actualization of the synthesis of Indigenous modernity and the act of becoming Ainu (lewallen 2016: 58). The connection of self-craft

with Indigenous modernity was made clear by lewallen who asserted that Ainu cultural self-determination within contemporary settler-colonial Japan takes place through a celebratory form of Indigenous self-craft. Cultural production thus becomes a space of radical critique of the various contested and unresolved tensions regarding Ainu in contemporary Japan (lewallen 2016: 39). In further expanding upon Indigenous modernity among other groups and how it incorporates flexibility, lewallen refers to writings by Waziyatawin and Yellow Bird (2012), asserting “[i]ndigenous agency and the capacity to exercise self-determination, the denial of which has long reinforced mental, spiritual, and emotional colonization” (lewallen 2016: 58–59).

Self-craft embodies an identity that utilizes a globally minded approach and is neither limited by concepts of tradition nor is it necessarily tied to ancestral places; rather it is comprised of those values which have been espoused by both. To emphasize this point, lewallen discussed the importance of what Ainu artists described in Japanese as *chi ga sawagu* or a clamouring of blood. In this example *chi ga sawagu* is a deeply embodied sensation that compels an individual to take meaningful action. For the Ainu lewallen collaborated with this, engaging in ancestral rites, speaking the Ainu language, and singing ancestral songs (2016: 117). Much like an invocation, *chi ga sawagu* appears to manifest through the drive to obtain access to what lewallen calls “ancestral space” encompassing “the complex of ancestral ways, revitalized heritage and material practices, and restored physical, spiritual, and affective links to land and territory” (2016: 117).

As a form of Ainu identity, self-craft is “sufficiently flexible to adapt these values to meet the needs of the present, including asserting shared identity and solidarity with Indigenous peoples elsewhere” (lewallen 2016: 2). Examples of these specific values as named by lewallen include ancestral repertoires as they combine with contemporary lifestyles in the construction of Ainu identity. Lewallen continues by emphasizing how these conscious choices defy structures of settler colonialism, racialization and extinction discourses contained within assimilation rhetoric (lewallen 2016: 10).

In addition to actualization through self-craft, lewallen discussed the process of “becoming Ainu in connection with movements to ‘reclaim modernity’ as a cultural category, pushing majority-Wajin society to expand its conceptualization of the modern in contemporary Japan” (2016: 58). Despite that Ainu are self-aware of their Indigenous modernity, it may still be necessary to assert the reclamation of modernity within the context of contemporary Wajin society which often categorizes them as frozen in the past or extinct.

It is necessary to further contextualize Ainu modernity regarding the history of governmental frameworks dictating standards and expectations relating

to heritage economy. Historically speaking, heritage-based tourism, or ethno-tourism, has been a means of survival and in certain periods the only legally condoned way of expressing Ainu culture and practices. While the commodification of Ainu culture for mass consumption through tourism has a reductive and tokenizing impact, it also creates space for the incubation of traditional knowledge (lewallen 2016: 89). An excellent example of this is the Akanko Ainu *Kotan* community and complex on the shores of Lake Akan. While there is evidence of Ainu families living in the region in the mid-nineteenth century from the *Complete Medicinal Diary* of Matsuura Takeshirō (1861), the *Kotan* (Ainu community) as it exists today developed in the 1950s of the postwar tourism boom in Hokkaidō. During this period the Ainu from other parts of Hokkaidō migrated to form the basis of the current Akanko Ainu *Kotan*, which is now heralded as one of the largest established Ainu *Kotans* (see Upopoy National Ainu Museum, Main Exhibition). This continues to impact representations of Ainu culture particularly in regard to concepts of authenticity as it may be presented by governmental programmes and heritage institutions versus how these manifest organically within the Ainu community. Many contemporary Indigenous peoples throughout the world struggle to maintain ancestral ties and are living in diaspora in urban settings. As lewallen (2016: 47) has pointed out, to engage with and represent the reality of Indigenous modernity requires the suspension of essentialist paradigms that portray premodern sensibilities.

Meaningful research on Ainu music has been carried out in official and unofficial channels for many years. Other Ainu who contributed to early documentation and research beyond the works of Chiri Yukie and her Aunt Imekanu (1875–1961), included Chiri's brother Chiri Mashihō (1909–1961), who was the first Ainu to enter into university studies and become a linguist and anthropologist specializing in Ainu topics. It should be noted that many Ainu people and ensembles have been engaging with in-depth research into musical traditions to build and expand their knowledge base and repertoire. One such example is that of the ensemble Team Nikaop, which has incorporated ethnographic videos, monochrome photographs, images of traditional items, and maps projected on a large screen during their musical performances. Many of the 12 members attended university and one member, Mokottunas Jirota Kitahara, has become a professor at Hokkaidō University. Another individual who has been active in the realm of Ainu research is Kanako Uzawa, who is an Ainu scholar, artist, activist, and founder of a global online platform called *AinuToday*,⁶ supporting Ainu culture and communities. Notable Wajin scholars, such as Kochi Rie and Chiba Nobuhiko, have also made contributions to the cataloguing and research of Ainu music.

Yurika Tamura, who has done extensive research on the intersection of gender and activism in Ainu music, referred to a mode of international postcolonial collaboration practiced by many Ainu activists and musicians, which she termed as “transnational Indigeneity” (Tamura 2013: 40). Transnational Indigenous exchange was employed by Indigenous feminist Danika Medak-Saltzman (2010), to contextualize historical interactions of Ainu with other Indigenous peoples in the development of transnational critiques of the empire. Medak-Saltzman examined representations of cross-cultural exchanges between Ainu people and other Indigenous peoples during the 1904 World Fair that took place in St. Louis of the United States. Native American and Ainu peoples sought one another with great intention. In the words of Medak-Saltzman, “when we recognize the theoretical spaces that encounters and exchanges such as these occupy in the minds of the participants, this mutual interest ceases to be merely anecdotal”. She continues by describing transnational Indigenous encounters as nuanced engagement imbued with complexity through processes spanning political, economic, and diplomatic issues (Medak-Saltzman 2010: 602).

Transnational and intercultural Indigenous exchange has unquestionably been a lived reality for the Ainu for centuries. The Ainu were actively engaged with trade among neighbouring groups in the Sakhalin regions, such as the Nivkh and the Uilta, in addition to other Indigenous communities on the mainland of Asia, and the Amur region of Russia (Morris-Suzuki 2020: 5). These dynamics shifted following World War II, after the majority of the Ainu were forcibly relocated to various regions of Hokkaidō. This severed contact with many of the communities with which the Ainu had once been connected. The intensive assimilationist policies of the Japanese government caused further isolation of the Ainu not only from other Indigenous people, but it pushed Ainu identity to the extreme margins of society.

Pressure from the international community combined with internal efforts of preservation and activism for recognition slowly began to establish space for an Ainu identity within Japanese society. With increased communication and travel starting from the end of the Meiji period (1912), transnational Indigenous exchanges have obtained new forms and venues allowing for the deepening of relations between geographically distant communities. These trends have had a prolonged effect on contemporary Ainu cultural movements. Transnational encounters have been immensely impactful on Ainu musicians who then incorporated newfound elements into their own works. Some performers and ensembles branched out internationally to share and educate regarding Ainu culture and the challenges they face within Japan. Beyond musical movements and performances, the instruments played by Ainu musicians, some of which are going to be discussed in this paper, are themselves often transnational

in nature, developing over periods of trade and intercultural exchange with peoples of Siberian regions.

This history and theoretical grounding provide an important framework which centralizes Ainu autonomy in processes of Indigenous self-craft. Self-craft with consideration for transnational Indigenous engagement can be utilized to achieve a deeper understanding of the factors impacting Ainu musicians and their goals. The examination of processes of Ainu self-craft with consideration for transnational Indigeneity aids in understanding the position of those engaged with the music revival movement and the distinct manner in which they carry themselves as conscious, empowered, and interconnected.

THE CULTURE-BOUND COMPASS AS GROUNDED THROUGH AINU *PURI*

Ainu *Puri* is a culture-specific ancestral concept and way of living that refers to the maintenance of ancestral traditions through spiritual and philosophical ways of being. Lewallen defines Ainu *Puri* as “proper comportment based on ancestral protocols” (Lewallen 2016: 272). This multifaceted Indigenous approach that weaves tradition with fresh interpretations and expressions encompasses what Lewallen designated as ‘becoming Ainu’. “An approach centred on becoming Indigenous allows for the requisite flexibility,” including the continuously adaptive, selective behaviour incorporated by individuals and communities as they remake themselves (Lewallen 2016: 58).

When asked in surveys in 2008, collected by Sakurai Yoshihide with Hokkaidō University to define Ainu *Puri*, the majority of Ainu respondents described it as “remembering/practicing traditional culture, customs in everyday life, etc., among Ainu people”, “Ainu characteristics such as coexistence with nature”, or “living as part of the Ainu community” (Sakurai 2008: 111). This was also emphasised as a certain approach to interpersonal and community life through an integrated Ainu lifestyle. To adequately explain the practice respecting ancestral lifeways through Ainu *Puri*, it is relevant to address the *shinnurappa* or ancestor worship that is a vital element of Ainu spiritual traditions. The tenets of *shinnurappa* teach that ancestors live in a different world or realm which can be interacted with through reciprocal ritual practices upheld through Ainu *Puri*. The belief holds that ancestors are aware of their descendants and wish for them to be protected. These principles have been described as the foundation of Ainu ethical standards (Sakurai 2008: 109).

Ainu *Puri* and *shinnurappa* can be observed in historical accounts and contemporary practices. Medak-Saltzman’s (2020) Indigenous recentring of Ainu

peoples in her historical analysis of the 1904 World Fair is one such example. She highlights that those departing their communities bound for the United States were mournfully prepared with funerary rites due to the significant distance and time demanded of the journey. While in transit to the fair and during the event itself, Ainu people eagerly engaged with transnational Indigenous exchange. Upon returning home, the community gathered and a representative faced the traveller and began to sing. The traveller in turn narrated their journey through song and the representative would respond by singing what had transpired in the village during their absence. In this instance music becomes a rendezvous point marking the traveller's return to their community and symbolically reconnecting them with Ainu *Mosir* (home realm of the Ainu). This rendezvous point is one of numerous interconnecting moments of import pertaining to the evolution of Ainu traditions.

Due to the transnational nature of the encounters of Ainu with other Indigenous peoples beyond Ainu *Mosir*, I suggest shifting the focus from the precise geographical positioning, and to rather emphasize the importance of ascertaining the direction of the individual in relation to the cultural practice as it exists in space as a more abstract concept. This can thus be examined through the Ainu *Puri* compass as the space being considered spans temporal, corporeal, ancestral, spiritual, community oriented, and generational landscapes. The purpose of examining these factors in relation to the individual is to hold space for the diversity of interpersonal realms of heritage and identity,⁷ and how they might be projected into imagined futures tracing through plotted contemporary and ancestral heritage paths.

Through the design of the Ainu *Puri* compass I endeavour to create a framework to aid in understanding processes of identity formation. Ideas relating to temporality, space, heritage, and identity are culturally grounded through Ainu *Puri*. The compass is presented as a visual diagram including the various contributing elements that can potentially impact identity formation (Fig. 1). While this diagram is by no means a fully comprehensive model, it provides a basic outline that aspires to map the landscape in which these processes take place in order to provide context. While the compass is not intended to be applied broadly in ways that risk generalizations, it is a tool that I plan to implement, with the appropriate cultural adjustments, in forthcoming publications that will be linked to this study as part of my doctoral research.

For the case of this study, the action of identity formation is positioned in the centre of the Ainu *Puri* compass surrounded by culturally distinct factors impacting engagement with the music revival movement. The surrounding factors are hyperflexible to accommodate the individual's unique situation, identity, and needs as they grow through their personal experiences. This

metaphorical space accommodates the reality of lived minoritized experiences by integrating liminal and intersectional actualizations. This is intended to centre the individual as an autonomously empowered and consciously engaged actor rather than an object of study. I developed this model through the process of autoethnography while navigating experiences and expressions of diverse identities with my own communities mostly in Jewish spaces. The model aids in framing the context of my interviews by illustrating my understanding of the positionality of my fieldwork collaborators. Thus, the contributing factors I offer here are merely suggestions to provide an example, one that may not reflect the outlook of all individuals. This model could be extended beyond music revival into other creative modes of expression by maintaining an emphasis on the (re)interpretations of ancestral formulas grounded in cultural tradition. Similar to what Lewallen has highlighted through her research, in this approach the negotiation of marginalised identities within contemporary spaces highlights agency and determination.

In order to create a visual representation of this space and the potential contributing elements, I use the structural arrangement of the ancient astronomical instrument used in regions of both ancient Asia and Europe, representing a celestial globe (see Fig. 1). The celestial globe is a sphere consisting of several rings representing celestial bodies revolving around the Earth in the centre. The rings comprising the spherical framework can rotate freely around its axis. As a tool this can be used to demonstrate the movement of celestial bodies at differing times and positions depending on the location of the observer on the globe. The intension is to map constellations on the celestial sphere (Salev 2022). By utilizing this framework in the application of the culture-bound compass, in this case the Ainu *Puri* compass, it is possible to visually model potential contributing factors as cultural constellations in the construction of diverse identities. The actor is centralized in order to chart their cultural universe and plot possible heritage futures as influenced by ancestral pasts and other contributing factors.

The components of the culture-bound compass correlate to the constructive elements of heritage and identity. The actor is centred, surrounded by concentric spheres representing potential impactful factors and realms. It is important to note that the ring representing identity actualization intersects with the actor to emphasize how the two are intertwined. The visual design is multidimensional, with elements arranged on the rotating spheres, allowing for the fluidity demanded of the highly complex processes involved in identity construction. The temporal horizon denotes the present moment where the space below comprises past realms including components such as cultural memory and ancestral grounding (in this case Ainu *Puri*) while those above house the

present and future realms of lived spaces such as the social sphere. In this study the *Kotan* Ainu village/community within contemporary Japanese society represents the social sphere, and those that are being moved towards encompassing imagined futures. The manifestations of heritage and identity traverse space and time. Representing the pinnacle of these combined elements is the cultural zenith which would be embodied through idealized heritage identities including the space to house, explore, and celebrate such expressions. Rather than focusing on purist or essentialist notions of cultural expressions that have the potential to cause harm, this high point corresponds to empowering and positive aspirations for the individual and their community.

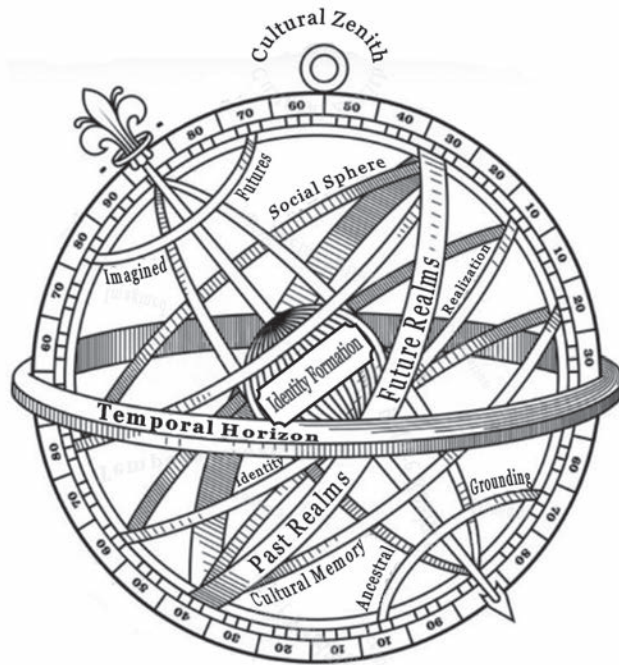


Figure 1. *The culture-bound compass.*

The concepts included in the Ainu *Puri* compass harken to those presented by Henry Glassie, regarding tradition as the basis of creation to ultimately fashion the future out of the past. Glassie argues that this is a “continuous process situated in the nothingness of the present, linking the vanished with the unknown, tradition is stopped, parcelled, and codified by thinkers who fix upon this aspect or that, in accord with their needs or preoccupations” (Glassie 1995: 395). This definition acknowledges the multiplicity inherent in the concept of tradition, opening the possibility for compelling contradictions to arise. Although it may seem counterproductive for a process to embrace contradiction, Glassie explains that this allows for expansion to include the diverse ways in which individuals interpret the past in order to convert the old into something new. This openness to multiplicity allows not only for diversity in the expression of traditions, but also in the expression of identities. Tradition thus “spreads into association with adjacent, related, equally indispensable terms” (ibid.). This process maintains an element of continuity, progression, and evolution, as has been determined by those who created the tradition. Much as is suggested by the ideas put forth by Glassie, the culture-bound compass accounts for various components based on their value in the process of identity construction as it is intertwined with diverse mobilizing visions for the future.

Perhaps the most poignant aspect of the culture-bound compass is the way it centralizes Ainu performers in their personal journeys of identity actualization. The importance of self-reflection on identity was emphasized by singer Toyokawa Yoko when I inquired during an interview if and how music might connect with her sense of Ainu identity:

More than half of my music is about being Ainu and raising awareness about Ainu culture. I hope that people who listen to it are able to deepen their understanding about the culture and music. This includes Ainu history, Ainu lives, what the current situation is, all that we have suffered as well as everything that we experienced. Most of it is about sharing Ainu things and having the audience deepen their understanding... But I don't think of my audience when I am writing my music. It is for me mostly. At first, when I started writing music, it was like a healing process for me. I felt like if I didn't write this and share it, what am I supposed to do with the situation I have found myself in? And then gradually I began to write the music that I like, and sometimes the performances are actually a story... Often with the band we'll think about a concept first and make the music towards that. (Toyokawa, personal communication, 8 November 2022)

Toyokawa spoke of what she hoped to represent or communicate through her music not only for her audience, but also for herself. These ideas align with Glassie's comments on the role performance in creating and maintaining tradition. He frames performance as a temporal event in which transmission and communication coincide, positioning the performer at a "complex nexus of responsibility" as a "potential link in the chain of transmission" (Glassie 1995: 402). Glassie asserted that performers navigate to balance between the past and present, a process which includes audience members. However, performers must also keep faith in themselves and their own internal visions for the future as this relates to their sense of identity. For Ainu people this can be a particularly complex process as it relates to their understanding of Ainu identity as can be seen in Toyokawa's reflections on the interrelationship of Ainu music and identity:

When I was a child, I would hear my grandmother singing Ainu songs, but I wasn't really interested in it then. However, after my grandmother passed away, I would hear Ainu songs sung in the same voice as hers. So, when I came into my 30s and found recordings of Ainu dancing and music in archives, I became incredibly interested and felt a deep connection with the music. At that point in my life, I still wanted to hide my Ainu identity, but music was so important to me that it went further than that feeling of wanting to hide. Because when you sing Ainu music, you have to be living as an Ainu person, you have to be out as an Ainu person. And it was that important to me that it made me want to change my way of living. It made me want to live as an Ainu person, like out and proud. If there wasn't music, if I didn't find Ainu music, then I would probably still be living hiding my identity and just passing as Japanese. (Toyokawa, personal communication, 8 November 2022)

Archival recordings played an essential role in Toyokawa's process of becoming Ainu and how she came into her identity as Indigenous in relation to her ancestors. In some cases, the past realms represented in the Ainu *Puri* compass may be populated by prominent ancestors such as Chiri Yukie and her family who contributed to the growing base of cultural knowledge relating to music and *Yukar*. While the archives certainly played a central role in this process for Toyokawa, it was the memory of her grandmother that established the essential connection to her sense of Ainu identity. She explained that although she was not open about her Ainu identity in the past, it was Ainu music that brought her into a space of realization. The intangible memories of Toyokawa's grandmother singing Ainu songs materialized in the present through the voices

of the archives and those singing the same songs around her in the present. By bridging the past and present, the music opened up a new possible future realm in which it was acceptable to embrace and celebrate her Ainu identity. The visual representation of these contributing factors and important cultural and historical figures aids in understanding of the components impacting Ainu singers such as Toyokawa, and their complex processes of constructing Ainu identity.

Toyokawa appears to embody a varied approach as a performer, with music as the continuous thread linking her to Ainu identity and the creation of tradition. She is continuously (re)accessing contributing factors to determine which traditions in her concentric realms are worthy of reformulation and thus revitalization as part of the greater Ainu music revival movement. Toyokawa is a practitioner and an ambassador of tradition, based on her positionality within these realms. Much as Glassie has explained, these adaptive urges to becoming exist in the meeting point between the culture of the past and present where the actor accesses and epitomizes tradition (Glassie 1995: 409).

The realms outlined in the Ainu *Puri* compass are a means of illustrating the Ainu cosmivision in which processes of identity formation occur. The factors outlined there are mere suggestions as possible contributing factors in the overall stories woven by and for the performers in their personal journeys that may venture well beyond the point of origin. Experiences that occur beyond the reach of Ainu *Mosir* when anchored through the lens of Ainu *Puri* may thus be shared as stories told through song. Much as those who ventured far from Ainu *Mosir* back in 1904, music appears to remain a potent meeting point where diverse perspectives and experiences of Ainu identity and tradition can be negotiated and actualized.

AINU RESILIENCE: PRESERVATION OF YUKAR TRADITIONS AS GUIDED BY AINU PURI

Practice and maintenance of traditions through keeping Ainu *Puri*, which draws upon ancestral tenets, has been framed by many contemporary Ainu artists interviewed by Lewallen, as a means of survival rather than being viewed as a form of activism or resistance against colonial structures. Lewallen's research highlighted the central role of women as prominent leaders in Ainu communities. Kinda'ichi Kyōsuke (1942), along with Tanaka (2000) and other scholars, has also recognized that women have been central in the processes of transmission of traditions surrounding ritual, performance, and the preservation of Ainu oral literature. During my fieldwork among the Ainu communities of Hokkaidō,

I likewise noticed women leading in performance and musical spheres with an emphasis in their activities on the continuation of Ainu traditions.

The central role of women in the transmission of lore is clearly illustrated in the work of Chiri Yukie's *Ainu Shin'yōshū Yukar* (Collection of Ainu Chants of Spiritual Beings) which was compiled into a book following her death. *Yukar* are Ainu epics typically sung or chanted in a rhythmic pattern. Some *Yukar* are narrated by the *Kamuy* which are sacred Spirits, Animals, or Deities.⁸ Strong (2011) found that *Kamuy Yukar* were not performed merely for entertainment but religious efficacy and didactic purposes, thus comprising a sacred category of music. At the beginning of the twentieth century, it appears that the context of *Yukar* performance had already begun to shift towards entertainment and as a means of reinforcing community cohesion and heritage.

Chiri Yukie was of Ainu descent, from the Noboribetsu region of Hokkaidō, and bilingual in Ainu and Japanese. Chiri spent part of her childhood with her grandmother Monashnouk (1848–1931), who was well known locally as one who could recite *Yukar* with a large repertoire. The collection of *Kamuy Yukar*, which Chiri learned from her grandmother, makes up the foundation of Ainu oral traditions and animistic worldviews. By 1921 Chiri had completed her first transcription of oral epics in the Latin alphabet which she had learned in mission school.

It appears that the female members of Chiri's family played a central role in the transmission of ancient traditions. Chiri's aunt Imekanu (1875–1961), who was also bilingual, transcribed Ainu oral genres including *Yukar* into the Latin alphabet following Chiri's death in 1922, compiling a large volume of over 150 *Yukar* and *Uepeker* or folktales. In 1956 she was designated as a living intangible cultural asset by the Japanese government and awarded for her contributions with a *Shiju Hōshō* or Purple Ribbon Medal (Strong 2011: 21).

It is relevant to consider the nuanced role of the church, predominantly through the influence of the missionary John Batchelor (1855–1944), on the lives of Chiri and her aunt Imekanu. At the time that Imekanu began her transcriptions in 1927, after Chiri's death, she had retired as a Bible woman. The home that Imekanu lived in with Chiri and Monashnouk had also served as an Episcopal mission building. Although many Indigenous experiences with the church have often been contentious as they could at times be discouraging of the practice and preservation of Indigenous traditions, in this case, this partnership appears to have provided some support and tools for such an endeavour among the Ainu.

Chiri's family was residing in a Japanese-style mission structure rather than the traditional Ainu-style home and their education was heavily influenced by the church, which likely created a blend of traditions. Strong asserted that

based on her research of Chiri and her family, the two elements did not appear to conflict with one another. Imekanu simultaneously ran a Sunday school and an Ainu women's centre out of the same building in which the family resided. Chiri documented Ainu traditions and *Yukar* while regularly attending church and recording prayers along with Bible passages in her diary (Strong 2011: 23). Conditions were favourable for Chiri and her family to engage with the preservation and documentation of Ainu musical oration. This may be due to the fact that Batchelor, who had heavily influenced Chiri's family along with many other Ainu, was an Anglican English missionary, meaning he was aligned with an approach that supported literacy and the collection of folklore.

Chiri and her family's relationship to their identities as Ainu and the influence of the church through Batchelor's involvement appear to be distinctive of this period, considering the unique role of the church in the community at the time. John Patric's (2005 [1943]) examination of earlier works by Batchelor, who lived in Hokkaidō from 1877 to 1941, among Ainu communities, reveals why this relationship may have appeared beneficial to some degree for Indigenous peoples. At the time Batchelor was extremely critical of Japanese government policies and attitudes, which he found to be deplorable (Patric 2005 [1943]: 72). After Chiri's untimely passing in 1922, Batchelor worked directly with her aunt Imekanu to document Ainu traditions starting from 1926, including many *Yukar*.

While this did benefit the Ainu community, Batchelor did not always act in the best interests of the Ainu people in mind. Returning to Medak-Saltzman's (2010) historical re-examination of the Ainu people in the 1904 World Fair, it was documented that Frederick Starr, the man tasked with "collecting"⁹ Ainu people for the event, had great difficulty finding Ainu people interested in participating. There was in fact a great deal of reluctance until Starr obtained the support of Batchelor, who at that time had already been interacting with Ainu communities for decades through his missionary work (Medak-Saltzman 2010: 606). Although Batchelor does appear to have had some concern for Ainu welfare, his central role as a missionary reverend was to spread Christianity. After offering his home as a safe haven for the Ainu in need, they felt they could not refuse his request that they depart with Starr for the World Fair. Despite the manipulative elements of this interaction, the Ainu ultimately acted based on their cultural conventions.

Another individual who played a supportive role in preserving Ainu heritage was the Wajin scholar Kyōsuke Kinda'ichi (1882–1971). The role of external actors, such as Batchelor and Kinda'ichi, who encouraged Chiri to document Ainu epics, is ultimately quite complex in the progressive story of the Ainu. Kinda'ichi met Chiri in 1918, when she was fifteen years old. He was making visits to the area during a research trip under the recommendations of Batchelor. After their meeting, Kinda'ichi and Chiri exchanged letters between 1918 and 1922.

Through these correspondences, Kinda'ichi convinced Chiri that the oral traditions needed to be documented and preserved in written form, thus recruiting her for the project (Strong 2011: 28–31). Beyond the emphasis on literature in his approach, Kinda'ichi was driven by the sense of urgency imbued in the colonialist doctrine of the Ainu as a “backward and hence vanishing race” (Strong 2011: 29). This all occurred during a period of aggressive assimilation programmes implemented by the Japanese government, and through correspondence from 1918–1920 Kinda'ichi conveyed his belief that Ainu culture would soon cease in practice, thus instilling a sense of urgency in Chiri regarding the project (Strong 2011: 32). Although Chiri had the capacity to pursue the transliteration and translation of the oral traditions, it appears that support from the Tokyo-based Wajin linguist Kinda'ichi was critical in the completion of the project. As a respected scholar, Kinda'ichi had the status and connections necessary to make publishing a possibility, something that would otherwise be unobtainable for a young Ainu woman from Hokkaidō during that period (Strong 2011: 28).

Strong translated *Ainu Shin'yōshū Yukar*, collected and transcribed by Chiri from 1921 up until her death in 1922. In assessing the *Yukar* as outlined by Strong, following the activities of Chiri's family, it is clear that there was a degree of gender-coding of these traditions depending on the region and dialect, thus historical trends must also be considered from a gendered perspective. Regional trends had already begun to shift for many Ainu communities in the Edo (1603–1867) and Meiji (1868–1912) periods when traditional forms of subsistence were disrupted, and men were forced to leave home for work. Accounts by Ainu residents in Chikabumi (now Asahikawa) suggest that Imekanu and Monashnouk began reciting *Yukar*, an activity in which women in the region did not typically engage in at that time. They then began to encourage other women to do so as well to ensure the continuation of the tradition (Strong 2011: 22).

Twentieth-century ethnographic accounts of *Kamuy Yukar* found the style to be a predominantly female performance genre with links to female ritual specialists who channelled spirits through possession (Strong 2011: 7). During a 2019 interview with Ainu singer Yuki Kōji he explained that some Ainu regard *Yukar* as a male recitation genre in certain areas, which is likely representative of the ways that Ainu traditions have varied regionally. Ainu self-craft evolves as it is adapted to the needs of the people and their communities in order to preserve the tradition.

Contemporary Ainu musicians often face anxiety regarding traditional practices stemming from concerns as to whether their expression of traditions such as *Yukar*, within the broader context of Ainu *Puri*, would be extolled by their ancestors or if it would offend them (Iewallen 2016: 57). As many Ainu now live in urban diasporas and engage with global Indigenous movements, approaches to maintaining ancestral ties will surely continue to evolve. The direction of

this evolution is determined through individual interpretations of Ainu *Puri* as an incubator for the many contributing factors suggested in the culture-bound compass. Ancestral legacies act as guiding stars among cultural constellations within the context of the Ainu cosmovision, and the magnetism of Ainu *Mosir* grounds their vision for the future in contemporary space.

Although Kinda'ichi asserted in a letter to Chiri that her writings would be a "gift left behind for future generations of scholars", she viewed the undertaking as a way of honouring "the ancestors of [her] people" and her audience as extending beyond Japan to "all the countries of the world" (writings of Kinda'ichi and Chiri translated by and cited in Strong 2011: 32). While it is impossible to say for certain, one way to understand Chiri's approach to the preservation of *Yukar* could be as guided by Ainu *Puri*. It is clear through entries in her journal that Chiri considered the future of her people and hoped for balance between the preservation of "Ainuness" and an expression of "modernity" enabling equal status in society (Strong 2011: 35). Here we find early expressions of Ainu self-craft despite efforts by the Japanese government to suppress such traditions. Chiri's writings became known nationally in the 1970s, in the period of the Ainu cultural revival movement. Artists and performers such as Yuki Kōji draw inspiration from Chiri who is still well known among Ainu communities, and her work is extremely influential in present-day processes and practices of Ainu self-craft. While the foundations of identity may be established through Ainu self-craft, the continued embodiment of intergenerational aspirations is guided by Ainu *Puri* as a compass.

EVOLUTION OF MUSICAL TRADITIONS: FROM COLONIZATION TO EDUCATION

Since Chiri's time, practices surrounding *Yukar* recitation have continued to be impacted by the dispossession of Ainu lifestyles through processes of colonization. The settler colonial mindset has dominated the discourse around what it means to be an "authentic" or "real" Ainu person. Through these frameworks the Ainu have been presented as being "incommensurable with Japanese modernity" (Iewallen 2016: 47). Even the early twentieth-century Chiri could imagine Ainu people balancing tradition with modernity. The belief of the two being incompatible does not reflect the reality for two-thirds of the world's Indigenous peoples who live in urban diasporas with the continuous struggle of maintaining ancestral ties (ibid.: 58). Indigenous modernity requires the integration of flexibility and agency to exercise self-determination. However, integrating

these concepts into the Japanese government and society that has continuously sought to “civilize” the Ainu through assimilation presents quite the challenge.

Traditional Ainu communities have been disrupted with many people being assimilated into Japanese society. *Yukar* practices have suffered due to the shift in the vernacular life of the Ainu people. These epics had to be committed to memory and it has become more difficult to find a person capable of performing *Yukar*. In the traditional execution of *Yukar*, the audience played a central role by aiding in rhythm keeping, using their *repni* rhythm sticks and joining the leader of the recitation for the accentuation of the more exhilarating passages. The loss of an audience with the capacity to understand and participate in *Yukar* oration has had a devastating impact on this practice (Macé & Curtiss Gage 1998: 36–37). Although I have witnessed several performances of *Yukar*, only few have had much participation from the audience.

In 2019 I had the opportunity to interview Yuki Kōji who has played an active role in the Ainu revival movement as a visual artist, musician, creator, and performer of *Yukar*. Yuki is the leader of the Ainu Art Project, which is an internationally active collective of artists, musicians, and dancers. Yuki explained that *Yukar* are intended for both men and women to perform and observe, each with different story types. The audience of *Yukar* are meant to be the *Kamuy* and the people, with the intent to entertain, bring joy, and teach. He argued that the Ainu consider music to be sacred and utilize it as a tool to communicate with the *Kamuy*. The Ainu Art Project has held performances throughout the world as a way of raising consciousness and engaging with transnational Indigenous movements.

The Ainu Art Project uses music as a form of education in the community and at educational institutions from kindergarten up through the university level. Their music and performances are a combination of ancestral traditions and modern innovations, which Yuki describes as Native rock. Yuki engages with maintaining the tradition of *Yukar* by creating new story material. He explained that “repeating the same style means that the tradition and culture have stopped. Making new *Yukar* means we are creating new periods” (Yuki Kōji, personal communication, 13 August 2019).

Yuki conveyed that *Yukar* reveal the power of vernacular life by depicting otherwise mundane subjects on a monumental scale. He provided the example of one *Yukar* which describes a majestic dragon moving between strips of clouds in the sky, used to tell how one would make embroidery with this dragon-like being representing the needle and the clouds as the fabric. Size changes magnitude in the story told through the *Yukar* in a manner that instils divine power into the otherwise ordinary task of sewing. Embroidery and cloth work are central to Ainu tradition and the process of becoming which was described

by lewallen as a way of “fashioning an Indigenous identity and embodying this as a lived connection to ancestral values and lifestyles” (2016: 1). This *Yukar* dignifies the tradition of embroidery through a musical epic framing the practice in grand splendour.

In April of 2019 I visited the Nibutani Ainu Culture Museum which had been established in 1992 to showcase Ainu culture of the Saru Valley, to view the permanent exhibition addressing Ainu music. Museum exhibit materials explain that *Yukar* contain a distinct melody and *sakehe* – repeating phrases. The melody and the *sakehe* intertwine as separate elements in a simultaneous pattern that creates a unique rhythm.

During fieldwork in the village of Urakawa in June of the same year, I had the opportunity to experience this musical syncopation during a workshop led by the local community. Using sticks we had collected from a nearby riverbank, we learned an Ainu song and dance about a rabbit. The dance contained a syncopation created by simultaneous movement of the arms holding the stick while stepping with the feet in a counter-rhythm. Many of the participants struggled to properly execute these steps. Singing the song while moving appeared to aid in understanding and embodying the correct rhythmic movements.

Through this workshop, it was made clear why it is said that the songs and dances of the Ainu are inseparable from one another. The sharing of dance based on ancestral traditions harkens to lewallen’s concept of self-craft and the idea of becoming via the fashioning of an Indigenous identity (2016: 1). Through the workshop this approach is expanded to include others beyond the Ainu community in the process of affirmation of cultural practices. These processes occur on individual and interpersonal levels as heritage practitioners construct and perform their identity through traditional music and dance. Becoming and self-craft require a somewhat studious self-dedication that can be enacted and woven through song and dance.

FROM THE ARCHIVE TO THE STAGE: MUSICAL EXPRESSIONS AND CULTURAL LEGACIES

Some Ainu ensembles have focused on the recovery, documentation, and preservation of Ainu music through research based on historical documents. One such example is Team Nikaop. The ensemble members have worked with educational institutions and cultural organizations based in Hokkaidō. Team Nikaop has brought traditional Ainu music to contemporary environments to reshape its significance in a positive manner (Renner 2012: 216). Researcher Nate Renner examined vocables of traditional Ainu singing with the culturally specific names

of *rekte* of *Ku rimse* (Bow Dance) and *Emushi rimse* (Sword Dance). Examples of these musical patterns have been integrated into Team Nikaop’s performances. Much like the patterns found in *Yukar*, these songs contain complex and layered rhythms. In this style, however, these rhythms are achieved through breath control and the use of throat muscles to rapidly shift from falsetto to normal registers. Examples of these patterns can be seen in Figures 2 and 3 authored by Renner (Renner 2012: 220–221). Renner explained that the opening pattern depicted in Figure 2 does not employ the use of the falsetto register, but rather presents a pulse between two vocal parts created through meticulous syllabic articulation.

The musical score for Figure 2 is in 4/4 time. It consists of three staves: vocal part A, vocal part B, and hand claps. Vocal part A has a melody of quarter notes with lyrics 'oh hey hey hey oh hey hey hey oh'. Vocal part B has a melody of quarter notes with lyrics 'oh hey ha ha oh hey ha ha oh'. Hand claps are represented by 'x' marks on a staff, occurring on the first and third beats of each measure.

Figure 2. *Rekte* (Renner 2012: 220–221).

Continuing with Renner’s explanation, the music maintains a steady seventy-six beats per minute moving into Figure 3 after approximately fifty seconds.

The musical score for Figure 3 is in 4/4 time. It consists of three staves: vocal part A, vocal part B, and hand claps. Vocal part A has a melody of quarter notes with lyrics 'an ho hoi an ho'. Vocal part B has a melody of quarter notes with lyrics 'an ho hoi an ho'. Hand claps are represented by 'x' marks on a staff, occurring on the first and third beats of each measure.

Figure 3. *Rekte* vocables. Second pattern. Glottal stops at the highest pitch are transcribed with an *x* while falsetto notes are marked with *o* (Renner 2012: 220–221).

Through their own independent research, Team Nikaop integrated historical expressions of Ainu traditions in performance, such as those outlined through Renner's research. By referencing archival records, the band developed a rich repertoire of multimedia content representing the artistic legacy of Ainu expression to contemporary audiences.

Another Ainu band composing and performing music based on traditional songs from archival recordings is Nin Cup. In 2022 I interviewed Toyokawa Yoko who is the lead singer of Nin Cup. Toyokawa is renowned in Hokkaidō for her traditional singing style which is capable of achieving complex vocal patterns, such as those by Renner notated above, with relative ease. To accomplish this, Toyokawa listened closely to archival recordings and practiced diligently to try and replicate sounds from the past. Toyokawa began to realize that in her efforts to sound authentic, she began to sound like an old woman despite being relatively young. This highlights the possible limitations of archival records as the vast majority of material is of older women singing, although it is also possible that the singing style from earlier periods maintained a different sound quality. Either way, this style of Ainu singing became so engrained in her that it became imposed onto any song she would sing. She additionally explained that the lyrics of the *Yukar* she studied from the archives were at times difficult to understand due to differences in the Ainu language of the past, such as regional variants or alternative grammar forms. Despite these challenges Toyokawa has come into her identity as Ainu through processes of reconnection in her own journey. Her vast repertoire of original songs and traditional *Yukar* are a testament to the continually evolving traditions of Ainu music.

One such example of archives referenced by Ainu music revivalists is maintained by the Ainu Archive of the Hokkaidō Museum. In September of 2022 I met with Kōchi Rie, who is a senior researcher on Ainu music and a curator in the museum. The digital archives which are available online contain 756 recordings of Ainu stories, interviews, and music dating from 1934 to 2022. Many archival records include details about the singer, location where the material was collected, song type, and the date it was recorded. Kōchi has published extensively on Ainu music, predominantly in Japanese, and curated a detailed section within "The Culture and Recent History of the Ainu" exhibit in the Hokkaidō Museum addressing music titled "Ainu Oral Tradition" (see Hokkaidō Museum, Main Exhibition). Within this section is a display dedicated to the history of recording and researching the Ainu language and music (see Fig. 4). Among the noted researchers are Chiri Yukie (second panel from the right) and her brother Chiri Mashiho (third panel from the right).

Beyond these archives and state-managed heritage institutions, Ainu singers and ensembles record, maintain and share recordings amongst themselves as was explained to me during fieldwork in Sapporo and Shiraoi in 2022. This sharing of songs has given rise to structural stylistic changes of certain songs as they move beyond their communities into the broader Hokkaidō regions and beyond. Natural and intentional transformations of the music serve to meet the needs of expression for contemporary Ainu people. It would seem that to some degree Chiri's hopes for an active and contemporary Ainu tradition have indeed been achieved. As can be seen through the actions and attitudes of Ainu musicians such as Toyokawa and Yuki, these traditions are indeed alive and evolving to meet the needs of contemporary Ainu communities.



Figure 4. History of recording and researching Ainu language, Hokkaidō Museum. Photograph by Savannah-Rivka Powell 2022.

BECOMING AINU THROUGH SELF-CRAFT AS A SHARED EXPERIENCE

Although deeply personal, processes of becoming and self-craft can be strengthened through community expressions and as shared experiences. While this may occur internally for Ainu communities, there are also many efforts for outreach. These often combine an approach to preserve and educate regarding traditional Ainu knowledge systems. One such example is the Ainu Ecotour,

which I attended in June and July of 2019, and which took place at the Hokkaidō University Botanic Garden as it represents a reclamation of the environmental landscape controlled within the context of cultural institutions. The tour was led by a woman who is Karafuto (or Sakhalin) Ainu. This individual acts as a guide in different locations around four times a year. These day-long events, which include detailed information on local Indigenous knowledge, are typically offered free of charge. The event has received sponsorship from the city of Sapporo and the Cultural Foundation that has repeatedly requested the tour.

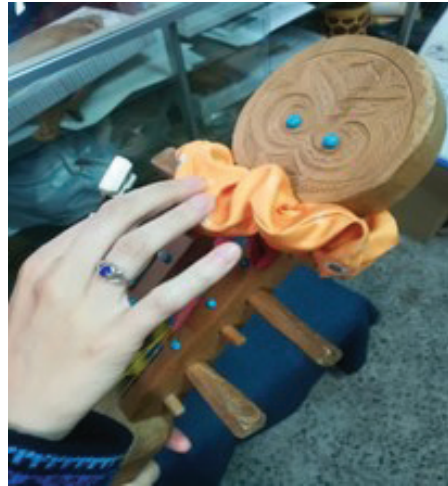
Although the content of the programme concentrated on Indigenous botanical knowledge, music was utilized throughout the day as a means of connection. The organizers had brought three instruments: two *mukkuri* (an idiophone like a jaw harp), and one *tonkori* (a plucked string instrument of Karafuto Ainu origin). One *mukkuri* was made of bamboo, while the other was made of metal, much as is commonly used in many parts of the world. The main guide explained that the metal *mukkuri* is used by the Karafuto Ainu who interacted with peoples of Siberia who played similar metal instruments. The metal variant of the *mukkuri* is representative of transnational Indigeneity through distinct cultural exchanges. The guides sang Ainu music throughout the day in a blend of Ainu and Japanese languages.

Nearly 20 students and community members gathered for the tour that began with viewing exhibits in the Northern Peoples Museum, while one of the guides played the *tonkori* and sang. The guides wore contemporary clothing mixed with traditional Ainu embroidery. Their presence in the exhibit space created a stark contrast against black and white photos and textiles fragile from age. Here were the living, singing Ainu presenting simply as they are in everyday life. The use of music, or self-craft, in conjunction with the sharing of traditional knowledge systems raises the visibility of Ainu in contemporary society, thus relating to lewallen's concept of becoming.

After exiting the museum, the tour continued through the gardens. As the tour meandered through the Northern Peoples Ethnobotanical Garden, the guide invited members of the group to pass around and play the *tonkori* as we walked, teaching a simple string-plucking pattern. She then began clapping and singing as we continued through the garden with the accompaniment played by different members of the tour. The Ainu hosts engaged the group so directly in the process of self-craft by creating traditional music *with* them rather than merely *for* them, which created a space for mutual or reciprocal affirmation of Ainu existence in contemporary Japanese society. This shifts away from the state-controlled narrative typical in many of the heritage institutions by allowing the Ainu hosts to freely express themselves and connect with the participants on their terms. The active engagement with Wajin and

other communities within Japan integrates the process of becoming Ainu by imbuing others with the embodied experience of their culture.

Although the *tonkori* originated in Karafuto, it has become popular among many Ainu throughout Japan. According to William Malm (2000 [1959]), both the *tonkori* and the *mukkuri* were traditionally played by women. A folktale passed down among the Karafuto Ainu describes the origins of the *tonkori* as a gift given from a husband to his wife for comfort after their baby had died. This was relayed to me during an Ainu Ancestral Remembrance event I attended in 2019, while I accompanied an Ainu musician who was preparing for a concert in the parking lot. She handed her *tonkori* to a friend who immediately started rocking the instrument like a baby. He then relayed the story explaining that the top of the instrument is made to resemble the head and face of a baby, and a stone or glass ball is placed in the hallowed section to represent the spirit or heart of the child (see Figs. 5–6). Considering the intercultural exchanges with peoples of northern Siberia, which may have influenced the Ainu *tonkori*, the instrument itself may be considered part of the transnational Indigenous sphere (Tamura 2013: 115).



Figures 5–6. Tonkori made by master carver Shigeru Takano of Biratori in Hokkaidō, Japan. Figure 6 shows detail that is said to resemble the face of a baby. Photographs by Savannah-Rivka Powell 2019.

As the Ainu Ecotour came to a close, I inquired with the guide about her *tonkori*. It was then that I learned that the Karafuto Ainu sing and play the *tonkori* at the same time, whereas the Ainu originating further south typically play the instrument while others provide vocal accompaniment. She sang in a mixture of Japanese and Ainu, which is common among members of the revivalist movement. The distinct musical style for those of Karafuto descent is evidence of considerable diversity among Ainu traditions. Unfortunately, these cultural nuances have been extremely difficult to maintain in contemporary Japanese society. Despite some loss of distinct dialects and regional variations, the linguistic blending presented in the guide's performances is a testament to the propensity of the Ainu people. The culture has been adjusted to accommodate individual processes of becoming that present the reality of the lived experiences of Ainu people in the modern context of Japanese society and their expressions of Indigenous modernity.

AINU SELF-CRAFT THROUGH THE REINTERPRETATION OF MUSICAL TRADITIONS

Some Ainu ensembles have re-configured cultural practices, traditions, and performances on the basis of their changed social circumstances, at times engaging with modes of community activism. One such group is the Ainu Rebels, which was founded in the Tokyo region and was active from 2006 to 2010. This group created a fusion of traditional Ainu music and dance with contemporary compositions which include new elements such as rap to convey a positive and empowering message for Ainu peoples. Yurika Tamura (2013) wrote about belonging, intercultural performance, and the sense of coexistence for Ainu musicians. She analysed performances of the Ainu Rebels in relation to the construction of Ainu identity with consideration for the impact of the band's activities. As Tamura made many insightful observations, I will draw upon her work to frame a concept of Ainu self-craft.

Due to lingering legacies of colonization and assimilation, many Ainu people grow up detached or even unaware of their Indigenous heritage. The members of the Ainu Rebels had to work to reconnect with their Indigenous heritage in their processes of becoming Ainu and to build their repertoire as there was a disruption in the transmission of heritage and traditions. Heritage institutions may aid in connecting source communities with traditions that had long been impacted by national and colonial powers; however, in the Ainu case, there is a movement to seek ways of connecting with ancestors directly. This represents a distinctly Ainu approach guided by Ainu *Puri* in their processes of reclamation and revitalization. The Ainu Rebels have actively engaged with activism in their work and sought to bridge connections with other Indigenous groups globally.

Processes of colonization and assimilation, which have intentionally and tactically framed Ainu cultural signifiers in a negative regard, are rooted deep in historical memory and can be traced through various art forms and expressions. One such example brought forth by Tamura involves the distinctly Ainu patterns of *Aiushi* representing a thorn design which has been appropriated by Japanese colonial and nationalist agendas as can be seen in one 1910 kimono design. This kimono appears to integrate Ainu and Korean elements with Japanese imperial symbols. In the words of Tamura, “the two cultures are beautifully presented in these artworks yet at the same time, they are paradoxically subjected as colonized subordinates...when worn this creates a body which dons a colonial and nationalistic ideology which is brought into daily public space” (Tamura 2013: 8). The *Aiushi* style has since been reclaimed by the Ainu people.

One such example of a very intentional and symbolic reclamation of this Ainu cultural symbol was in a performance by the Ainu Rebels in which the group’s leader Sakai Mina would take centre stage and perform the act of putting on Ainu clothes that showcase *Aiushi* patterns and traditional make-up. According to Tamura, “[t]he piece reveals how one becomes an Ainu performance artist in appearance, but at the same time demonstrates the process of a person becoming a person visible for her ethnicity through the donning of the signs (needless to say, the robe with Ainu embroidery patterns) and through audience’s gaze. Both Atsushi’s rap and Mina’s make-up piece look at the process by which Ainu subjectivity is donned and read on one’s body ... the issue being dealt with seems to be about being identified, being donned as a representation of ethnicity” (Tamura 2013: 47). By donning Ainu traditional clothes and performing in this way, this group asserts a reclamation of identity and autonomy while speaking out against discrimination and colonial oppression in connection with transnational Indigenous movements outside of Japan. The members of the Ainu Rebels openly embraced their Ainu identities by creating a celebratory kind of visibility.

The band brought the process of becoming Ainu on stage through their positive reinterpretations of Ainu culture. While Tamura explained that the Ainu Rebels hoped to inspire a revolution in the hearts and minds of Ainu people to find pride in their identities, this too could be understood as an effort to create space for Ainu self-craft (Tamura 2013: 42). In the construction and expression of her Ainu identity Sakai struggled between the lingering imagery of the colonial era and the contemporary identity of the Ainu people (ibid.: 39). She had grown up in Hokkaidō where she was taught to feel ashamed of being Ainu, creating a kind of dissonance in her identity. Her whole view changed after participating in an Indigenous youth exchange programme that brought her to Canada where she witnessed Indigenous youth celebrating their cultures with pride through traditional dance performances. The transnational alliances

formed out of global Indigenous movements represent a mode of postcolonial collaboration. This experience of transnational Indigenous exchange awakened and enlivened Sakai's connection with her Ainu identity (Tamura 2013: 40). The transnational alliances formed out of global Indigenous movements represent a mode of postcolonial collaboration.

In her research on Ainu fibre artists, Lewallen (2016) revealed how Ainu women engage in the process of becoming Ainu and obtain a sense of self that is Indigenous through similar transnational encounters with Indigenous people outside of Japan. Lewallen further emphasised this by sharing Sakai's explanation on how this high school exchange with Indigenous youth of Canada impacted her self-perception:

Strong dancing. A secure sense of identity. Bold expressions of pride in their ethnic identity. I was shocked. Next to them, I looked like a weak and tiny person. We Ainu, so full of shame at being Ainu, that we might be able to feel pride – this shifted my thinking 180 degrees.... [Two years later when we invited them to Hokkaidō] we sang songs around the campfire and the me in that space was filled with a sense of deep contentment. This was the original me, I realized. To live openly as Ainu, this was the path for me. (Sakai 2008: 13)

Lewallen (2016) emphasized the importance of Ainu youth interacting with Indigenous contemporaries outside of Japanese society as a means to affirm belonging through the sense of connection with a global movement that has the potential to encourage the reclamation of Ainu as a core identity from a positive perspective.

Sakai had to engage with a reconstruction process to reconnect with Ainu heritage practices in her journey of becoming Ainu. In the early stages of the band's formation in 2006 most of the members had not yet "come out" publicly as Ainu, as doing so would put them and their families at risk of discrimination. Ainu Rebel performances included testimonial stories shared by band members in the form of public statements which became a ritual of sorts for coming out as Ainu. The process of putting together performances had the impact of politicizing band members, yet it simultaneously affirmed their identities. In a way, the very experience of performing became therapeutic to a certain degree (Tamura 2013: 48). The landscape forged by the band's performances created a place of belonging for Ainu youth and people of other minoritized groups. These performances were not limited to concert halls; they were brought into schools and universities where the music was followed by a discussion regarding issues of racism and discrimination in Japan. They achieved not only the recovery of Ainu representation but additionally, multicultural educational content.

Sakai sought to perform traditional songs and dances to have a positive impact, a sort of celebratory performance that would challenge the stigmas attached to Ainu culture. Due to this stigma, she had to find a way to reconstruct the concept of being Ainu in a positive manner within a Japanese context. “Mina’s methodologies on the initial reconceptualization of Ainu difference was [sic] thus aimed at the recovery of representation” (Tamura 2013: 42). The “coolness” Sakai sought to express through music can be related to a certain transformative element of traditional Ainu music linked with the group’s engagement with multicultural and transnational movements.

The band’s expression of Ainu music included hip-hop, rap, and contemporary dance, which would then be fused with traditional Ainu elements such as dance which had been inscribed in UNESCO’s Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2009 (UNESCO 2019). Sakai’s brother Atsushi had been deeply influenced by the African American black cultural production of ethnic pride in hip-hop and rap (Tamura 2013: 42). Presenting vernacular Ainu music with spiritual and sacred meanings alongside contemporary styles and elements offered a new and alternative form of Ainu performative arts. The group’s innovative image of the Ainu as people who take pride in performing in their once forbidden language has influenced their audiences tremendously. Similar trends were confirmed by Lewallen through her fieldwork among young Ainu artists who often choose to garner empathy for Ainu struggles by connecting with the global vernacular of hip-hop music, modern and hybrid dance, and multimodal performances as an alternative approach to political sloganeering or direct condemnation of imperialist history (Lewallen 2016: 41).

The band Ainu Rebels is no longer active, but Sakai continues performing music with Ainu influences. In 2011 she joined with composer Hamauzu Masashi to form the musical group IMERUAT, which means flash of light or lightning in the Ainu language. Sakai has integrated her Ainu identity into her current work, regularly singing in Ainu and playing traditional instruments such as the *mukkuri* and the *tonkori*. Rather than introducing and representing Ainu culture, Sakai now embodies an approach that merges these elements as a natural accompaniment to her presentation and performances on stage. Sakai and Hamauzu have collaborated to create new interpretations of traditional Ainu songs, such as *Pattaki Upopo* or Grasshopper Dance, which IMERUAT performs as a song titled *Battaki*. The band produced a music video that tells the story of the traditional song and dance by following a long winding trail of folded paper origami grasshoppers (IMERUAT 2012).

By engaging with global audiences and maintaining connections with Indigenous movements outside of Japan, performers such as Sakai are enacting a transnational form of Indigeneity. These connections aid in garnering

visibility on international and national levels while energizing the Ainu music revitalization movement. Through continuous cultural exchange, these musicians are seeking out new modes of expression inspired by ancestral formulas, thus keeping their traditions alive by creating new performative forms.

CONCLUSION

Self-craft and the process of becoming Ainu have taken various forms from the time of Chiri Yukie, a young Ainu woman who began writing and translating the traditional Ainu epic *Yukar* in the early twentieth century, into the contemporary musical expressions of today. Certain traditional foundations, such as *Yukar*, remain central to musical practice and cultural identity. External actors may have provided some support in preservation efforts; however, it is essential to recognize Ainu resilience in these times of great upheaval. While some current expressions of *Yukar* may work to accurately recreate archival recordings such as the vocal expressions of Toyokawa, others such as Yuki engage in writing new prose based on the tenants of the practice to ensure the evolution of Ainu tradition as that of a living culture.

The Indigenous modernity expressed by Ainu musicians presents alternative perspectives that are founded in ancestral traditions yet relevant to their contemporary experiences. Unlike discourses of modernity among majority-Wajin or Western perspectives, “an ontological frame rooted in ‘becoming’ is not constrained by a quantifiable metric of achievement or a historical dialectic between primitivity and modernity, whereupon progress may be evaluated” (lewallen 2016: 58). Ainu communities have thus utilized music to reconstruct a positive Ainu identity, engage in educational outreach, and find empowerment. Messages conveyed through media produced by these musicians have addressed issues of diversity, identity, and language preservation. The themes presented in Ainu musical expression encourage solidarity on local and global scales among Indigenous peoples while establishing spaces for intercultural dialogues to take place.

Contemporary Ainu musicians balance between upholding ancestral traditions as they engage with self-craft in their processes of becoming by continuously seeking informed feedback within their communities, thus calibrating their internal guidance system or Ainu *Puri* as a cultural grounding. Understanding the contributing factors to identity construction and expression has been visually presented by the author through the model of the Ainu *Puri* Compass. This internal cultural dialogue is additionally informed by involvement with transnational Indigenous movements which serve to orient these smaller communities within the international context.

Ainu musical movements have employed various methods of multiethnic coding within their performances to promote the acceptance and inclusion of Indigenous identities and other marginalized peoples. An examination of these techniques has revealed an approach based on transnational Indigeneity in which performers establish and maintain international connections. These musicians have endeavoured to assert an identity that they have artfully encoded into their performances. The performers achieved empowerment for themselves, their communities, and other oppressed groups by establishing bonds of solidarity. These creative forces have displayed the potential to sway hearts and minds to garner support for the Ainu perspective.

NOTES

- ¹ The 2018 Russian census does not appear to address Ainu populations, and the results of the 2021 census are not currently available online.
- ² See <http://www.gks.ru>, last accessed on 11 October 2024. It should be stated that there are Ainu living in Russia and while their situation is one of great interest, it is beyond the scope of this paper as the Ainu communities in Japan have been the central focus of my study.
- ³ My research in Japan was supported by Hokkaidō University and Jeff Gayman who expanded my awareness of Indigenous education, political issues, historical elements, and current Ainu movements. I have also been guided by Kochi Rie of the Hokkaidō Museum as an ethnomusicologist specializing in Ainu music.
- ⁴ When referring to people from Japan, I will follow Japanese naming conventions in which the family name comes first, followed by the given name.
- ⁵ This author chooses to use lower case letters to write her name.
- ⁶ Available at <https://ainutoday.com/>, last accessed on 11 October 2024.
- ⁷ I refer here to the interrelationship of heritage and identity as has been outlined by Laurajane Smith in her chapter on Heritage, Identity and Power: “Heritage, in either its intangible or tangible form, is intuitively understood to be about the assertion and reinforcement of identity – be that associated with social, cultural, national, ethnic, or other forms of identity” (Smith 2017: 15).
- ⁸ I have intentionally chosen to capitalize those being referred to as *Kamuy* to convey respect for their position in the Ainu belief system.
- ⁹ Medak-Saltzman used the word “collecting” in reference to Starr’s actions. This may have been to emphasise the overall objectification of Indigenous peoples in this process. She also refers to a journal published and sold at the fair by Starr in which this same wording may have been implemented (2010: 595).

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SHE SANG IN A BEAUTIFUL LIGHT VOICE: MUSICAL QUALITIES OF RUNOSONG PERFORMANCES IN FIELDWORK REPORTS

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Abstract: Folklore has been systematically collected in Estonia over 150 years, resulting in more than 500 fieldwork reports, diaries, and travelogues, in addition to folklore texts. Since runosongs were in the preferred position when folklore was collected, most of the fieldwork reports contain descriptions of encounters with people who knew and performed runosongs. As a genre of oral tradition, runosongs have text and melody, as well as certain performance practices and contexts of use. These self-evident aspects, regrettably, do not manifest themselves equally either in the archived folklore materials or fieldwork reports.

The article starts with a discussion on the reasons why collectors wrote so little about the melodies and musical aspects of the performance of runosongs. Then the focus goes on descriptions and evaluations of the musical aspects of the runosong performances in the fieldwork accounts and analysis of how the preparation and musical background of the collector influences evaluations and perceptions. The most common aspects of evaluations come under consideration: the prominence and peculiarities of the runotunes, the characteristics and qualities of the performer's voice, and the musical skills of the performer.

Keywords: folklore collection history, fieldwork, runosong melodies, performance, variation, mistuning, voice, timbre

There were several motivations for writing this article. Firstly, observations of how different components of the representative genre of Estonian folklore – runosong – were treated differently during the history of Estonian folkloristics. Although the name of the genre – the *song* – presupposes the consistency of lyrics, melody, performance, and the context of use, attention has been paid primarily to the textual component of the songs. In the nineteenth century

and later, runosongs were seen as a testimony to the history and cultural value of the Estonian nation, a justification for the aspirations of national independence, which is why many glorifying approaches dedicated to the texts of runosongs were written. The value of runosingers was judged above all by the level of knowledge of the verse lines in the writings about singers and in fieldwork diaries that describe performance situations. Outside ethnomusicological research, collectors or academics did not tend to pay much attention to runotunes in the collection reports, while even less attention was paid to the musical aspects of the performance. In the fieldwork reports there were rather customary observations by the collectors that singers knew many verses, the textual material varied extensively, but there was little variety in melodies, and they were simple or monotonous.

Another motivation stems from a notion presented by Janika Oras, the compiler of the typology of runotunes of Kodavere parish in eastern Estonia (Oras & Tuvi 2014), referring to different singing styles of two Kodavere runosingers: Rosalie Tark sang in a low chest voice, typical of the older tradition, Anna Lindvere in a loud and high head voice (*ibid.*: 113–115). This notion drew my thoughts to the fact that collectors' descriptions and evaluations reflect the influence of music culture of their era – in addition to the singer's personality. Anna Lindvere was the best-known singer in Kodavere in her time, representing the east-Estonian singing tradition in the eyes of collectors, researchers and the local community as well as the media in the 1930s–1950s (Saarlo 2012). Rosalie Tark was an informant for several folklorists and linguists in the 1950s; nevertheless, her performances received particular attention neither from folklorists nor from the local community. Perhaps the collectors did not pay enough attention to her archaic singing because of her humble personality and modest singing manners, in addition to the unfamiliar music style.

The article is devoted to descriptions and assessments of the musical aspects of the runosong performances, which are reflected in the fieldwork diaries. The most common aspects taken into consideration are the characteristics and qualities of the performers' voice and their musical skills (first of all, mistuning vs carrying the tune). The key to interpreting assessments of performances could be the significance, meaning, and quality of the runo melodies from the point of view of both collectors and singers, which is most evidently expressed in the lack of descriptions of singing.

The aim of the article is not to evaluate the worldview of the folklore collectors and researchers of their time; I am conscious of the contextual association of the assessments with the knowledge and beliefs of the respective era. These estimates as well as complexity of the descriptions changed over time but varied also in relation to the preparation of the collectors. A volunteer contributor or

even a student without any (or special) training or education noticed different things than a folklorist with a philological education, not to mention that the musical details were noted differently by a musician with a training in classical music or an ethnomusicologist with a philological, musical, and ethnological education.

Several researchers of Estonian folkloristics history have pointed out that the study of the disciplinary history, concepts, and language use shows their multilayered links to different individuals, objectives, and cultural policies, while rhetoric, metaphors, and imagery used in both academic and public writings confirm the importance of the topics and have helped to validate, confirm, and reproduce participants' power relations and hierarchies (e.g., Kalkun 2012: 182; Särg 2022). As Estonian musicologist Taive Särg has emphasized in reference to Bourdieu, words create reality (Särg 2022: 82). I can but accept Särg's statement that also the words describing and analysing the runosong tradition, the performance, and the performers form an idea of what was (or is) the reality to which this singing tradition belonged (or belongs), and how this tradition should be treated – or accepted. I also draw on the view that writing about culture represents and reproduces culture, being never absolute but rather imperfect and biased, and writing about fieldwork reflects the background and position of the writer (Clifford & Marcus 1986). It is therefore relevant to examine how fieldworkers in their notes wrote about runosinging, reflecting their views on archaic music, and influencing their contemporary as well as future readers, researchers, composers, and others, and indirectly affecting their interviewees' relationship with runotunes and the runosinging tradition at large.

The article is based on the fieldwork diaries, reports and notes accompanying the folklore texts documented during fieldwork from the beginning of the twentieth century until the end of the 1960s. The source material is archived and available for research in the Estonian Folklore Archives' (EFA) manuscript collections. I have used approximately 200 reports focused on collecting runosongs or other musical traditions, which have not been statistically analysed during the research, since there are relatively few descriptions of interest. Instead, the fieldwork notes have been analysed using close-reading methods, making observations regarding general tendencies with the aim of finding reasons for these tendencies and placing the assessments in the context of the era.

It should also be noted here that Estonian runosongs were collected in the situation of the late tradition, that is, other forms of musical expression had already occurred in addition to or displacing runosinging, influencing the practices, possibilities and spectrums of the performers' musical expression. It has also shaped the attitude of the singers to runosinging.

THE COLLECTION OF RUNOTUNES

Many singers did not understand what ‘the melody’ meant at all; yet they thought there was no peculiar melody for the old songs, everyone kept recounting with their speech-sound. Indeed, it could be seen, in particular, in the ‘kaskekanke’ songs that their simple melody was largely similar to the intonation of speaking.

Armas Otto Väisänen, 1911 (EÜS IX 1262)

The older form of Estonian oral poetry, runosong (Est. *regilaul*), is a tradition common to most Finnic peoples and dates back to the first millennium BC. The common formal characteristics of runosongs are octosyllabic trochaic tetrameter, alliteration, and parallelism; similar formulae, motifs and song types can be found in the traditions of different related languages. The method of runosong text composition is characterized as stichic, and the system of musical thinking is monophonic or linear (Lippus 1995). Runosong melodies have relatively narrow ambitus and melodic contours close to speech intonation. Unlike Western tempered music, the performance of runotunes is characterized by the non-tempered tuning and shifting intonation (Rüütel 1998; Sarv 2009).

Runosinging is characterized by the use of group-melodies. This means that several texts can be sung with the same melody, and vice versa, one text can be sung with multiple melodies. The use of melodies is generally functional – according to emic classification, different melodies are used for wedding songs, working songs, ritual songs, swinging songs, lyrical songs, and narrative songs (Särg 2009). There are, of course, examples of polyfunctional tunes that are used in different song genres (e.g., Pärtlas 2021). Over time, during the decline of the older tradition, the diversity of melodies also diminished.

As several reviews about the collection of runo melodies have been published by folklorists, ethnomusicologists and musicologists (e.g., Särg 2002, 2009, 2012; Sarv 2002; Sarv & Oras 2020), I am limited here only to a brief summary to illustrate the difference in the musical background and education of collectors during different periods.

Very few runotunes were documented during the collection peak of Estonian folkloristics, the all-Estonian collection campaign initiated by Jakob Hurt in 1888.¹ Collection focused on the texts of runosongs, because it was in the texts that the historical value of the runosongs was seen (Särg 2012; Saarlo 2008) and despite Hurt’s contributors having a diverse education, quite a few of them were able to note down music. Also, back then, runosongs had gradually gone

out of fashion, since their archaic simplicity did not meet people's musical needs anymore. The newer singing tradition – end-rhymed songs that replaced runosongs – was musically more complicated and the lyrics corresponded to people's changed expression of feelings and thoughts. This newer tradition was rejected by the ideologists of collection because it was seen as foreign and verbally undemanding (e.g., Oras 2017).

However, at the same time, linguist and musical figure Karl August Hermann (1851–1908) organized his smaller collection campaign, which called for the collection of “folk's melodies”, with special emphasis on the importance of the old tradition, runotunes, and aimed at providing original material to Estonian professional composers. Hermann's call was aimed at rural intellectuals with modest musical education; his collections include very diverse material, including individual compositions (see, e.g., Sarv 2002; Särg 2002).

Hurt's first folklore collection stipendiary in 1888, Oskar Kallas,² noticed the difference between song texts during singing and reciting performances and pointed out the need to collect runotunes (Särg 2012: 90). There were a few notations, but in most cases the ambitions of the late-nineteenth-century collectors clashed with practical obstacles: there were no educated musicians among Estonian enthusiasts; the preparation of specialists with more modest musical education was based on a classical harmonic system that made it difficult to note monophonic, freely intoned and both melodically and rhythmically varying folk melodies (Sarv 2002: 280).

Kallas commenced the collection of melodies in 1904, using the methodological assistance of Ilmari Krohn (1867–1960), an expert in collecting Finnish folk melodies. Under the auspices of the Estonian Students' Association (EÜS), students were sent on collection trips in pairs, one of whom had musical education – mainly from the Saint Petersburg Conservatory. During this activity, several later recognized Estonian composers – Mart Saar, Cyrillius Kreek, and others – acquired the basics for their musical compositions. In addition to runotunes, the melodies of newer songs and instrumental music were documented. It should be noted that it was during this action that travelogues and fieldwork diaries were systematically requested by Kallas (Tamm 2002).

In the period of Estonia's independence (1918–1940), the professionalization and institutionalization³ of folkloristics took place, the most important of which was the establishment of the Estonian Folklore Archives in 1927. Young folklorists who started working in the early years of the archives became leaders of the study and designers of collection policies until the second half of the twentieth century. Professional musicians were involved in collecting runotunes; some of them had already taken part in EÜS's fieldworks. In addition to documenting the melodies, the first means of recording the sound were used – from 1912

onwards Estonian folk music was phonographed on wax rolls; the pioneer of the recording method in Estonia was a Finnish student, the later ethnomusicologist Armas Otto Väisänen (1890–1969).

It was in the folklore archives that the Estonian ethnomusicological research started, initiated by the young research fellows of the archives, Karl Leichter⁴ and Herbert Tampere.⁵ They were also the first ones to see the value of folk music not only as a source of national professional music, but also its own value (Kalkun 2005; Hiimäe 2009; Särg 2022).



Figure 1. Singers from Setomaa in the National Broadcasting studio. August Pulst and Herbert Tampere on the right. Photograph by Peeter Parikas 1937 (ERA, Foto 765).

One of the most important folk music figures of that period was August Pulst,⁶ who, in order to popularize and document folk music, organized great staged performances and tours with traditional instrumentalists and runosingers. It brought live performances of traditional music to urbanized people – though no longer in a “natural” everyday setting but staged as a part of the show, evoking feelings of nostalgia and perhaps some exoticism.

Pulst’s singularity was that he was not merely a manager of folk singers; he figuratively and literally-speaking lived with the musicians during the tours, sharing all the joys and concerns. He became close with the musicians, as he saw them as people with their personalities and peculiarities and not just ethnographic objects. Pulst wrote excellent memories about his tours, which are part of the source material of this article (Sildoja 2014).

Pulst was also involved in the sound recording of folk musicians and singers in the National Broadcasting studio organized by the EFA, Herbert Tampere, and Oskar Loorits, the head of the archive. Tampere, unlike Pulst, wrote quite a few collection reports and personal impressions. He preferred to stay academically detached and restrained in his writings, avoiding giving any personal or subjective assessments.

The first decades after World War II, during the Sovietization of Estonia, the collection of archaic folklore continued, albeit in a somewhat renewed form. Musicians were once again involved in the collection of folk music – this time the students and lecturers of the Tallinn Conservatoire⁷ participated in folkloristic field trips and wrote down melodies (e.g., Saarlo 2017). Here the fact that Herbert Tampere worked as a lecturer at the conservatoire in 1946–1951 played an important role. Since the officially favoured or even demanded composing, especially during Stalin’s period, was to be based on folk melodies, the traditions of the national music of the pre-war period continued mutated in a grotesque way (see, e.g., Lippus 2011). The practice of collecting folk melodies also gave musicians creative inspiration and source material. Of the participants in the folk music collection at the time, the best-known composers were Anatoli Garšnek⁸ and Ester Mägi.⁹

As it was a long way to go before the wider adoption of tape recorders, the phonograph and wax rolls were still used for rerecording after the transcription of the melody until the 1950s (Oras 2009: 705). From the 1950s onwards, recording on tape was increasingly used; the method became overwhelming starting from the 1960s, diminishing the need for the transcription of the melodies, and the inclusion of the music students in the fieldwork faded (ibid: 712).

During the post-war decades, several large series of fieldworks took place under the direction of Tampere, dedicated to the collection of musical folklore in rich singing areas. In addition, several young researchers took up work as

folklorists, formatting the collection, publication, and research of runosongs. Among them were Olli Kõiva,¹⁰ who was devoted to documenting the runosing-tradition on Kihnu Island, Udo Kolk,¹¹ who made a great contribution to the study of melodies, and Ingrid Rüütel,¹² who largely continued Tampere's ethnomusicological school.

In the 1960s the attitude towards folk songs changed internationally – i.e., non-Western singing, once exotic and alien, became acceptable and understandable, and the “authentic” tradition became preferable contrary to arranged adaptations (Oras 2009: 716; Kuutma 1998, 2008; Särg 2023). Veljo Tormis (1930–2017) was one of the Estonian composers who took the runosong as the basis for his compositions, trying to transmit it as tradition-sensitively as possible, not just by arranging it according to the rules of Western music. In the philosophy underlying his work the technique of singing, the method of generating voices, and the sound itself were also important. At the same time, several folklore groups were founded, drawing on archival transcripts or even encounters with traditional performers during their presentations, rather than stylized arrangements. This topic remains out of the focus of the article, but it is important to mention how the changing attitude towards runosongs by academics, manifested in the changing vocabulary, terms and concepts, as well as the transformation of research focus towards performance – in Estonian case the fieldwork and research done by Tampere, Kõiva, Kolk, Rüütel, and others – changed both the (re)use and performance of runosongs as well as the aesthetic preferences of composers and musicians (see, e.g., Oras 2008: 101–108).

WAS RUNOSINGING CONSIDERED TO BE MUSIC AT ALL? OR MUSICAL ENOUGH?

Omnēs eodem cantantur tono et melodia.
(Dionysius Fabricius, 1610)

*Wie lieblich sind die Töne ihrer Gesänge und Tänze!
Die größte Einfachheit der Melodie paart sich mit der
schmeichelndsten Gefälligkeit der Worte; ich bin jederzeit
ganz hin gewesen, wenn ich dem vorher nur Wirrwarr
und schwerfällige Sonate gefiel, unter dieser Zone so
viel Liebkosende aus dem Innern des Herzens heraus
gequollene Melodie hörte.*
(Christian Hieronymus Justus Schlegel, 1819)¹³

The attitude towards runosinging, the awareness and understanding of the tradition has been changing over time, depending not only on the cultural background of witnesses – Baltic-German literati, leaders of Estonian national movement and first generations of Estonian intellectuals, linguists, folklorists, musicians and ethnomusicologist, etc. – but even more on the proximity or distance to the runosinging tradition, and the performers. The central problem seems to be the definition or perception of music.

Ethnomusicologists have pointed out that although music is a universal phenomenon, the understanding of music is culture-specific, the aesthetics and perception of music are not universal but are formed in the course of experiencing (Särg 2022: 88). Estonian ethnomusicologist Žanna Pärtlas has argued that in every traditional community some kind of “sound ideal” exists – a comprehension of how the songs and voices should sound to represent the specific singing tradition – singing “the right way”. This ideal can include several factors like the manner of singing, mode of voice production as well as specific tuning and musical scales. Pärtlas has noted that the “sound ideal” functions as an ethnic or social marker of the community or is perceived by outsiders as the group’s ethnic marker (Pärtlas 2017).

Taive Särg has indicated in her research that the study and appreciation of non-Western music, inter alia, the song styles close to speech, began in European literary circles in the nineteenth century. Estonian runotunes did not gain proper vocal music status among Baltic-German literati or Estonian educated elites until the 1930s. Although being a part of folklore, runotunes did not resemble the sound ideal of European folk songs – e.g., folk ballads –, which is why this music was not enjoyed outside the peasant culture; also, it was not considered a testimony to the history of the Estonian people or a justification for cultural sovereignty like lyrics was (Särg 2022: 86–87; see also Sarv 2002; Särg 2005, 2012; Saarlo 2008).

The first descriptions of the runosong performance confirm that foreign listeners did not get much of an aesthetic musical experience, although the specificity of the lyrics and the prowess of improvisation were recognized (see Laugaste 1963). At the collection peak of runosongs, already at the end of the nineteenth century, the runosinging tradition had been gradually replaced by the end-rhymed stanzaic song almost everywhere in Estonia. The collection of runosongs was a kind of memory work; they were recalled – or not wanted to be remembered – as memories of the practices and rituals of the past, so the documentation of the “living tradition” was, in fact, possible only in certain regions. It can be assumed that Estonian runotunes became more and more foreign to most performers and collectors – outdated and embarrassing or nostalgic and exotic.

In the historiographies on Estonian folklore collection, it has been pointed out that the *other* in the context here is not the same as in the Western European ethnological/anthropological fieldwork tradition (e.g., Meizel & Daughtry 2019 [2008]: 192–193). As a rule, Estonians collected from Estonians, sharing language and living experiences – it could be considered an autoethnographic school of research (e.g., Adams & Ellis & Holman Jones 2017: 1). However, during the modernization of Estonian society, there emerged a cultural and educational difference, a distinction between urban and rural people, as well as between social classes and age groups, which caused the relationship between the folklore collector/folklorist and the “tradition carrier” to become alienating and sometimes objectifying, as evidenced in the fieldwork reports. Despite the relative proximity, the runosingers were *others* who represented a different, lost or soon-to-be-lost archaic world for the collectors.

There were various reasons why runotunes – apart from the texts – were not worth any special attention for the singers, thus being those *others* within the runosong tradition. First, because the runosinging tradition was text-oriented with an extremely sophisticated poetic system and relatively simple musical features; second, there are testimonies that the performers themselves sometimes disrespected these tunes, often did not consider them as music – or musical enough –, already being possessed by modern melodies in the era of the fading tradition. As to collectors – with the exception of collectors with a special purpose – the melodies were also of secondary importance for a number of reasons: runotunes were often treated detachedly or even ignored in the fieldwork notes, and the deafening silence that replaced the descriptions of musical sides of the runosong performances refers to the collectors’ distant attitude towards melodies.

Runotunes were collected as they were seen as the necessary bedrock for the creation of national professional music. The simplicity and unaesthetic nature of the folk melodies had to be compensated by artistic workmanship. No sufficient information was documented on the presentation of the tunes, since it was not considered necessary or investigational – the raw material was important (Särg 2012, 2022).

Do the general preparation and musical literacy of the folklore collector (folklorist, musician or ethnomusicologist) somehow influence the attitude towards folk music or character, content or existence of the description of the musical side of a performance? Särg has noted that, paradoxically, the lack of music education may have encouraged becoming a researcher in folk music, because European music teaching diverted one’s aesthetic perception and interests away from traditional music (Särg 2022). Kati Kallio has suggested that the collectors of Finnish runosongs were not always in a positive relationship with the musical side of the singing tradition (e.g., Kallio 2013). This is also the

case elsewhere in the history of European ethnomusicology. Särg has pointed out that several of the first researchers of non-Western music came from other disciplines (Nettl 1964: 15 as cited in Särg 2022).

The following sections are based on the fieldwork diaries which focus on the collection of runosongs and other musical traditions analysed within this study. Unfortunately, notes and reports are written mainly by the collectors who documented lyrics – philologists and folklorists –, musicians often wrote nothing more than melody transcripts. Therefore, those few melody-collection analyses found among fieldwork materials are particularly interesting.

REDUCING THE IMPORTANCE OF RUNOTUNES: ALL SONGS WITH ONE MELODY...

*The main importance, however, is in the words of the song,
since he mostly sings everything with one melody.*
Johann Aavik, 1904 (EÜS I 750)

The importance of the runotunes was reduced by the remarks of many collectors that singers sang all the song texts with the same melody. One of the reasons for that kind of degrading observation can be the aspects of modern reality: there were few tunes used in the fading singing tradition but also the collector accustomed to Western music was not able to register dissimilarities of different melodies. Deeper behind these obvious reasons lays the nature of the runosong: focus of the singers mainly on the complicated textual side and use of archaic group melodies.

The runosong tradition is text-oriented, which means that the text has the primary role, and the music mainly follows the build-up of the text. While song texts are complex, runo melodies are relatively 'simple', as Särg (2009) resums. The runotunes are short, with a narrow ambitus and stepwise melodic movements; often the pitches are realized during the performance in a "loose" and approximate way. Särg justifies the simplicity of the tunes by the fact that, next to the complex textual side, the melody cannot be complex (*ibid.*).

Runosongs were dominated by group melodies which were linked to the song's function (e.g., Röötel 1998). Särg (2009) argues that singing several texts with one melody is not a scarcity of tradition, but a hallmark of the oral transmission of songs, the functional association of songs, and human creativity. Of course, when the tradition was gradually forgotten, only one of these

group melodies could be remembered. Still, in the active tradition, the number of group melodies of a singer could be quite remarkable (e.g., Laanemets 2008).

The intrinsic text-centricity of the tradition – along with what has already been discussed above – is certainly one of the reasons behind the fact that from the very beginning of the collection of runosongs, there has been no balance between valuing and documenting lyrics and melodies by the collectors and researchers. The singer's gold standard was the volume of verses they knew, and the level of their knowledge was compared to the number of verses of classic epics (Laugaste 1963: 238). However, in the middle of the twentieth century, when the discipline of ethnomusicology began to develop in Estonia, the representatives of the ethnological school stressed the equal importance of lyrics, melodies, and performance context; performativity became the focus of the studies for mainstream folklorists, improvisation in the performance situation became the quality mark of the song, and the reference was the wedding singer (Saarlo 2023). But still, most of the variability research was done on the improvisation of *lyrics*, not on the virtuosic style of singing or varying melodies.¹⁴

RELUCTANCE TO SING: *DON'T DARE TO SING, DON'T WANT TO...*

*Her voice, which is very good for such an old person,
she herself finds to be ugly and is sure
everyone will laugh when they hear it.*
Kristi Salve, 1973 (RKM II 308, 413)

Fieldwork reports, especially those from the first decades of the twentieth century, contain descriptions of persuading informants to agree to recall and sing old songs. For several reasons, even those skilled in singing did not dare to sing. What caused the resistance and refusal and what were the solutions for documenting the valuable runosongs?

Runosong collection consisted in a constant overcoming of value conflicts. On the one hand, it was a completely conventional disinclination to the obsolete (or fading) tradition. The singers were afraid to perform to a stranger, an upper-class person or a representative of officials; or they were afraid that other community members, younger people or family members in a stronger position would resent and ridicule archaic knowledge. On the other hand, this

outdated tradition had become an invaluable resource for scientists and builders of national cultural identity – a national treasure.

Conflicts were manifested in both nineteenth- and twentieth-century collection reports describing situations, when, as usual during summer fieldwork, rural people's most urgent working period, singers were persuaded to "waste time" to recall old times and outdated songs. Only some fieldwork diaries uncover what force of persuasion was needed. It is noteworthy that the singer's preferences are often revealed neither in manuscripts nor in audio-collections since the material was pre-selected and edited before archiving. We should not forget that the singers also complied with the collectors' wishes, and one might but wonder what self-denial it required for the singers to perform utterly unpleasant and outdated melodies (see, e.g., Oras 2008). On such occasions there was a combination of manipulation, persuasion, use of power, acceptance and selflessness – on both sides (Saarlo 2023).

Here, for the sake of truth, it must be emphasized that until the last decades of runosong collection, there were remarkably bright exceptions – both on geographical and personal level – where runosinging was self-evident because of the uninterrupted tradition, or by some performers who felt an individual affinity with the old style linked to precious memories. Also, over time, the knowledge of the importance of folklore collection increased, runosongs became a special part of Estonian literature in school curricula, so singers felt a certain sense of duty to fulfil the needs of science and national institutions, sometimes volunteering to contribute to the archives. Furthermore, with the changing collection methods in the mid-twentieth century – repeated long interviews – the relationship between singers and collectors became closer, more intimate, and they sometimes became close friends or even interested parties (Oras 2008).

In 1969, Erna Tampere wrote in her fieldwork diary about a singer who performed both runosongs and end-rhymed songs singing, not reciting, like the collector had experienced in the area. She recalls previous fieldwork experiences where informants did not sing although they knew the lyrics.

Velli Elhi (76) from the village of Vaiatu knows more newer songs. We also wrote down a couple of snippets of the runosongs. She sings runosongs with a melody, she can also sing newer songs. It seems strange somehow that many women here do not know the melodies and do not know how to sing. Men can sing better, but they don't know the lyrics very well. It's strange, because it is usually women who sing more than men. Last summer some villages in Lääne County left the same impression – that it was the women who do not keep the tune while singing, but they know the lyrics. (RKM II 261, 347/8)



Figure 2. Singer Velli Elhi, Väiatsu village, Kadrina parish. Photograph by Hindrik Hiimäe 1973 (ERA, Foto 18955).

The question arises why Tampere got these impressions: did the women not really know the melodies, or did they not want to sing to the collector or audio-record their voice?

In her article about fieldwork to Ingria by Armas Launis at the beginning of the twentieth century, Kati Kallio has argued that it is absurd to think that people did not remember the tunes but remembered the lyrics of the songs (2014: 8). There are examples in the fieldwork reports where collectors have admitted that singers have been struggling, recalling lyrics while reciting, or – as the initiator of the EÜS’s collection campaign Oskar Kallas noted – that text can be significantly altered during reciting as opposed to singing (Särg 2022: 102). Still, during the fading of the runosong tradition, it may have been quite possible that people knew (some) lyrics by heart or recalled them, yet they had never learned songs from their parents, but rather from written sources. People might even have respected runosongs, accepting the cultural and historical importance of

the tradition, or sometimes feeling emotional ties to certain themes and being enraptured by the complex figurative language, although they did not like to sing them – or really did not know the tunes.

Nevertheless, one reason why people refused to sing to collectors may have been that they shied away from singing. In 1969, when Tampere wrote her fieldwork diary, participatory and individual singing was still a perfectly common musical practice.¹⁵ In the context of fieldwork, however, one must bear in mind the derogatory attitude towards runotunes. Most likely, more pleasant songs are sung more often, and unpleasant ones are avoided. But, in addition, one must take into account that it can be insurmountably difficult to sing in front of a stranger – especially with an audio recorder present – if you do not consider yourself a good singer and singing does not give you a sense of accomplishment.

As a result, the question arises: how was the huge number of runosongs collected if singers did not want to sing? The answer to it lies in the simple fact that many songs were not documented from singing, but from reciting. Reading the fieldwork diaries, it takes some time to realize that this was exactly the documenting process in fieldwork situations – as singing situations were described very seldom. Folklore collectors might have heard singing quite rarely. August Sildnik wrote in 1908:

As a rule, in the poorhouses, among the farmhands, manor labourers, and cottagers they still know the words pretty often (wealthier people consider this writing down a bigoted joke, so they don't say, even if they know), but those who know the melodies are seldom found, and those who know, rather recite words, so I hardly ever heard the melodies. (EÜS V 1009)

The songs may have been documented based on recitation not singing not only because of performers' preferences, but also because of collectors' consent – for technical reasons. Next to the song texts there are quite often remarks such as 'words written from dictation'. At first glance, it even works as a proof of authenticity – meaning that the words are written down as they were said, from the actual performance, not afterwards from memory. Still, it actually means reciting as opposed to singing. In technical terms, it is understandable that it is easier to write a dictated text rather than a sung one.

All in all, it brings us back to the main problem of the article – the lack of descriptions of singing in the fieldwork reports – and the assumption that there may be a simple fact behind it: that collectors did not hear enough singing at the performances of runosongs because singers did not dare to sing, or collectors themselves preferred reciting to singing.

PORTRAYAL OF SINGING: IN A BEAUTIFUL HIGH VOICE...

*The singer said she remembered these songs being sung
by her grandmother. Her voice was beautiful
and clear, which is why we were able to note down [the notes] well.*
Silvia Porosson, 1957 (RKM II 65, 244)

In the collection reports where folklorists describe the singing of runosongs, one of the strikingly prominent features considered is the voice of the singer, its quality: strength or weakness, clarity/harshness, brightness/dullness, and above all its height/lowness. Does the description of the voice of the runosinger reflect the sound ideals of the collector's musical background or of the imagined runosinging soundscape? How did the singers themselves imagine a beautiful voice?

In the quotation at the beginning of the previous section, there was mention of being ashamed of the quality of one's voice. This is obvious, as runosongs were collected mainly from elderly people whose voice quality had often deteriorated – their voice had tired out during their lifetime and perhaps had no training. Here we could again recall the phenomenon of “sound ideal” – an idea of how singing should sound. Probably the singers thought that their voice did not correspond to the modern sound ideal.

But did the performers have any idea of the ideal sound of a runosong performance? This may have been the case for informants born in the first half of the nineteenth century, from whom the songs were collected in the first decades of the twentieth century, at the end of their lives. They had heard the performance of runosongs in a traditional performance situation – young maidens singing on a swing, an active singing of wedding singers or the like, in which case a strong and resounding voice timbre was used. In such a case, disappointment in their tired voice may also have been understandable. For the recordings of the runosong of the second half of the twentieth century, it is known that it was often done by recalling the singing of one's grandmother at home (Saarlo 2023: 583–584; Särg 1995; Oras 2004: 99). In this case, there was no likely significant difference in the voice quality between the performer and their recollections, and the contradiction arose presumably about the “sound ideal” caused by the singers' modern musical environment – the simplicity of runotunes and the timbre close to speech seemed inappropriate.

According to fieldwork diaries, it can be argued in general that both performers and collectors preferred a high and strong singing voice. In general, this may also be related to the difference between the aesthetics of singing of

young and old people. People, universally, prefer the singing of a younger person (Kallio 2012). As folk songs were usually collected from elderly people, the collectors of folk songs certainly heard rather tired and weak voices. Therefore, it was astonishing to listen to singers who had maintained their good voice at their old age.

Studies on the relationship between the development of the human larynx, age, and voice pitch have indicated, in the case of women, that the high pitch points to sexual activity and young age, or reproduction. Empirical studies have shown that men prefer higher-pitched women as they consider them more feminine, youthful, and sexually attractive. It has been observed that women tend to raise their voices when interacting with an attractive man (Re et al. 2012). Such studies are consistent with the content of the runosongs and the context of performance: young singers had to sing loudly and in a high voice in the public performance situation – for example, at village parties and on the swing – so that it would resonate further. And it carries, in addition to its communicative importance, the performer’s message of the fertility and readiness for marriage.

Returning to the observations of folklorists who – as said above – heard mainly elderly people singing, and mainly in a relatively weak and tired voice, it is understandable that the strong and clear voice was noted as an extraordinary positive surprise.

The voice he [Aleksander Rüütel] has is very clear and resounding for his age. ... August Trei is indeed a great singer and jokester. When he started singing, it was so strong that the microphone almost failed to record.

Otilie Kõiva, 1961 (RKM II 103, 38, 42)

A woman starts singing runosongs. She has an extremely clear and high voice. It’s surprising to me, since I’d only heard leelo-singing in a low harsh voice before and imagined it would always be so.¹⁶

A. Hallik, 1937 (ERA II 166, 434)

A remarkable fact, however, is that in the last quotation the voice is described as high – this, of course, in the case of female singers who, after all, are the majority of the performers of runosongs. But indeed, singing in a bright and high voice is noted positively more often in the collection reports than singing in a low and strong voice. As a matter of fact, the latter is essential to the descriptions of performers corresponding to the “ideal singer” representing the historical performance tradition (e.g., Kolk 1984; Saarlo 2023). The intriguing question is whether the accentuating and admiring of a high voice could reflect

a more modern – and institutional – language of music, in which, for example, positive characters with a high (sounding) voice sang in the operas (Siitan 1998). Oras has suggested by analysing the audio-recordings of prisoners of war from 1915 that the high voice of the (male) performers may have resulted, in addition to technical reasons, from aesthetic preferences of the time (Oras 2012: 169).

The positive example of institutional high culture music can also be seen more generally in the descriptions of the singers' voice and performance style. August Pulst described the singing of Hendrik Jantson, a 75-year-old wedding singer, using an opera-epithet: "His voice is deep, which is rare, with a good colourful timbre, a baritone. Sings like an opera soloist. Bold on stage" (Sildoja 2014: 224). It is clear that the quality of the voice of the opera singer was the sound ideal for people involved in the music of the first half of the twentieth century, which is why folk musicians were also recognized using this category.

In the case of a high and strong voice, there is an interesting technical – as well as aesthetical – question of whether a so-called head or chest voice is used. At this point, we should come back to the controversial contrast presented in the introduction of the article: the different singing styles of Kodavere singers and their reception. Anna Lindvere participated in the sound recording and the tours of folk musicians in the 1930s, being chosen to represent the eastern-Estonian runosing tradition. The tour organizer August Pulst highlighted her strong and resounding voice. As Oras noted, Lindvere represents, from an ethnomusicological point of view, both technically and aesthetically more modern singing and musical style, using high head voice. Rosalie Tark, whose recording is relatively unremarkable from the point of view of today's listener, represents the traditional singing style, using a relatively low chest voice (Oras & Tuvi 2014: 113–115).

Lindvere's prominence among folklorists, in the media and the local community certainly relied on her eminently artistic performing manners and her expertise in heritage, but was also influenced by a very modern phenomenon: she was a celebrity because she was famous.¹⁷ Lindvere was an acclaimed storyteller, but she was not a well-known wedding singer or the like. Her fame as a singer seems to be caused, or at least intensified, by outside attention. This raises the intriguing question of whether her prominence was due to her excellent mastery of the singing tradition, or rather due to the acceptability and familiarity of her singing for contemporary listeners? Oras's observation on the singing styles of Anna Lindvere and Rosalie Tark contextualizes Pulst's remarks on both Jantson's and Lindvere's voice and highlights the contractionary assessments of the time: despite the appreciation and prioritization of the archaic music culture, the features inherent in modern culture are appreciated

in its representatives. Singing in a high bright head voice and opera-like timbre is one of these features.

In archaic European singing traditions, it was common to sing in a chest voice, no matter what the pitch level was. Under the influence of the aesthetics of Western art music, singing in a head voice became prevailing also in Estonia. It can be assumed that in the twentieth century most singers preferred and used head voice for singing. Unfortunately, collectors have not specified whether they praise the singer's high pitch levels of the chest voice or the head voice.

Thus, certainly, the assessments of song collectors are influenced by the prevailing cultural norm, the idea of proper singing, the "sound ideal", and, in addition, by a certain evolutionary norm by which a high, strong, and clear voice is preferred as a sign of good health and fertility.



Figure 3. Eeva Valner. Urvaste parish, Vana-Antsla commune. Photograph by Armas Otto Väisänen 1912 (ERA, Foto 906).

ASSESSING THE MUSICALITY OF RUNOSINGERS: COULD EVERY SINGER SING?

The man's memory was weak too: he repeated one "tone" [tune] several times, still thought them to be new each time; the new tunes again came to light with great distress and pain – though the man spat, scratched behind his ear, went outside before anything came to mind. ... The writing down was hard; he sang in a pathetic weepy voice, sometimes high, sometimes low, simply as it happened; he could not keep the tune.

Frieda & Siegfried Talvik, 1904 (EÜS I 983/4)

The features of the performance of the runosongs examined above were highlighted by folklorists – mainly collectors with philological education – and others, non- or semi-professional collectors with various education and preparation for fieldwork. More diverse are the observations by those with musical education – above all, music students and active musicians who, from the very beginning of the collection history to the third quarter of the twentieth century, before audio-recording became prevalent, bore the fundamental weight of collecting runotunes. Thereafter and alongside, in relation to Herbert Tampere's work, ethnomusicologists with both musical and philological (folkloristic) preparation, who, in their activities, combined musical expertise with an understanding of the peculiarities of oral tradition, followed suit.

The questions of whether the performer of runosongs can sing correctly or sing at all, has musical talent, or carries the tune have been addressed – although often discretely as it is inappropriate – as long as the runotunes have been collected. If we use as a basis the "sound ideal" phenomenon, it is certainly plausible that singing had to meet certain criteria for it to be considered acceptable, according to vernacular understanding. Since the topic of this article is not ethnomusicology, I omit these criteria because they cannot be answered relying on fieldwork diaries. Instead, I ask a question that is more important from the point of view of historiography: was such an estimation of runosingers' musical talent even reasoned or appropriate? And if yes, what was the background to the estimations?

Already in 1912, Finnish music student Armas Otto Väisänen noted the speech-like intonation of runosinging and associated it, in a special way, with unmusicality, writing: "Their simple melody closely resembles the speaking intonation. It

could be seen most clearly in Eeva Vallner, who, of the singers I encountered, was the most primitive and – I dare say – the most unmusical one” (EÜS IX 1262).

To consider archaic, close-to-speech singing of a simple melody as non-musical singing is certainly related to the prevailing modern musical context; it did not correspond to the “sound ideal” imaginations of the collectors. Discussing the specifics of the documentation of the folk tunes, especially noting down differences between intervals smaller than half-tone, Jüri Välbe described singing in key in “correct” (tempered) pitch in 1910:

Very rarely there are such persons among the common folk who have some perception of the musical pitch. For the most part, all singers are pretty careless about the size of the intervals, because greater influence of the folk song lies in their words and rhythm. Of course, the singing of folk songs often contains intervals smaller than half-tone, but these can't be counted as advancement in the melody of the song, because they do not appear in the repeated melody during the song – maybe just sporadically. That's why they must be considered as mistuning. (EÜS VII 2248/50)

Since Välbe claims, at the same time, that “the tone-scale of the modern time has already become well-known to our people” (EÜS VII 2251), it can be assumed that he considered the varying and singing typical of oral music to be an imperfect, flawed singing, because people should be able to sing in key and tempered pitch – it means their “sound ideal” should be modernized.

We can draw a parallel to the changing and modernizing “sound ideal” with the example of Kihnu, where the vernacular heterophonic way of group singing started to disappear in the second half of the twentieth century, when participatory singing was replaced by supervised institutionalized cultural activities. In addition to the tutors who received cultural education outside Kihnu Island, this process was certainly also influenced by a more general change in the musical background under the influence of Western music culture. “Pure” singing became the ideal; everyone had to sing exactly in tune and exactly the same tune, the spontaneous variation that caused vernacular heterophony inherent in oral traditions disappeared (Rüütel 2013: 89–97).

As Särg has pointed out, the professional musicians of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century did take the example of folk music as a source for individual creation and inspiration, but did not appreciate the artistic qualities and performative style of the original material (Särg 2012). The views of Soviet-era folk music collectors were more ambivalent. Professional musicians may still have been struggling with documenting tunes of singers whose singing did not match their own “sound ideal”. Examples can

be found from the 1950s, when musicians of the Tallinn State Conservatoire – e.g., Anatoli Garšnek, Ester Mägi, and others – participated in the fieldwork in different regions of Estonia. Being Herbert Tampere’s students, they had been prepared for documenting musical folklore. The diaries and working principles of the musicians were completely different from those of folklorists. Their observations, while rather laconic in scope, focused on specialized topics, describing the informants’ musical experiences, qualities (e.g., range of voice), the peculiarities of the performance, repertoire, etc., also describing problems of documenting archaic speech-like music, identifying vague intervals, shifting intonation, and the like.

The musicians were no doubt also more foursquare in their assessments of musicality – or harsh for the contemporary reader. In her diary (1957, KKI 25, 418/32), Ester Mägi rated one singer as musically talented. About another singer Mägi said that she could not sing, i.e., she sang out of tune. Were Mägi’s assessments based on her understanding of folk music or universal understanding of musicality? The documentation of the runosongs in the 1950s, during fieldwork in northeastern Estonia, was extremely scant, which points to the long-standing fading of the runosong tradition and allows for an assumption that local singers no longer had a runosong repertoire, nor did they follow the archaic singing style. Mägi’s experience in documenting runosongs and other genres of folk music – she participated in several folklore field trips as a documenter of melodies in different regions of Estonia in the 1950s and 1960s – and the observations made in her reports allow us to suggest that she understood well the differences between Western/modern music and oral musical tradition. So, it can be said that she did not hesitate to give an assessment of the musical skills of a singer not out of disrespect or ignorance, but she knew experientially that there were performances of different quality in the oral tradition as well.

UNDERSTANDING VARIABILITY: SINGING OFF-KEY, FORGETTING, OR CREATIVE IMPROVISATION?

Attitudes to musical variation have also been volatile among collectors-researchers. When the characteristics of the oral tradition were not known, singing with variation was considered to come from the performer’s incompetence. When the flexibility of oral culture became apparent, the possibility of musical variability was also recognized. There is a certain natural variation inherent in oral culture; just as the song texts are never memorized verbatim, so is the spontaneous variation and improvisation which causes heterophony in group singing typical of oral musical traditions (see, e.g., Pärtlas 2013).

In the 1950s and 1960s, one of the central research questions was the variability of runosongs, the formularity of the songs and the creativity of the performers, the improvisationality. Alongside the variability of the texts, the variation of runotunes was also considered. In fieldwork reports and in media reviews, folklorists highlight the artistic and creative value of “folk creations”, emphasizing that the variability of the melodies in the performance situation was not a reduction in quality, but a conscious action inherent in the oral tradition. It was important to emphasize that improvisation was artistic modification, not random and unaware variation or flawed singing. It was also a political issue, since it was important in the Soviet folkloristic tradition to emphasize the artistic value of the creations of “working crowds”, its equivalence to professional and high-class art.

However, collectors and researchers continued to be concerned whether the variability in documented runotunes was a musical variance, or mistakes caused by the singer’s unmusicality or memory problems, or mastery of the runosinging tradition. The uncertainty of the collectors themselves about their own competency to evaluate the traditional musical qualities of the performance was also expressed.

Udo Kolk documented in detail the repertoire of a singer in Pärnu County, Leena Peterson, and observed that she improvised runotunes to an unusually large extent, raising doubt in him that maybe the singer did not hold the tune. However, when Kolk had also observed her performances of newer, rhymed stanzaic songs, he realized that she remained within the predetermined correctness (1952, EKRK I 7, 25/199). Thus, mastering the more recent melodies evidenced the musicality of the singer, and he was assured that her improvisation was “conscious” and traditional (*ibid.*: 193).

In her diary in 1960, Selma Lätt describes in plain words how a singer from Karksi, Ann Toompalu, was able to sing runosongs, but not complicated melodies of rhymed songs.

We heard old folk songs, it really caresses the ear. The runotunes come out pretty well, while the newer folk song with its extensive melody presents difficulties for Toompalu. Not accurate. Ann has not been a great singer. Dad didn’t let her sing at all as a girl, as she could not carry a tune. Later, however, she gained courage and could sing together with others; besides, Ann has a very good memory and she remembers a lot of lyrics and tales. (RKM II 94, 310)



Figure 4. Sound-recording of Ann Toompalu in Polli village, Karksi parish. From the left: Olga Jõgever, Lilia Briedis, Ann Toompalu, Selma Lätt. Photograph by Viuu Jürken 1960 (ERA, Foto 4693).

Lätt was a folklorist, and unfortunately Ann Toompalu's singing has not been described by musicians. According to the singer's biography, her parents did not think her singing was appropriate, either. Toompalu was young at the time when the song repertoire changed – the archaic runosong was replaced by modern music culture, dance evenings, circle-games, singing choirs, and printed songbooks. Probably her grandmother still sang runosongs, but the parents may already have been influenced by the aesthetics and musical requirements of Western modern music and evaluated Toompalu's singing according to modern criteria. Does that mean it does not require as many musical skills to sing runotunes as it does to sing Western music? But still, even if runosing might have made simpler claims to the singer's musical competences, we must not conclude that there were none of them at all, that there were no vernacular musical rules and requirements in archaic oral musical traditions. Unquestionably, there were certain rules to respond to the sound ideal, as claimed by Pärtlas (2017). The problem was whether the folklorists who documented runosing were competent enough to identify the sound ideal and these rules.

At the peak of the variability research, the capture of the variability of the performance was treated with real enthusiasm, which is why the repeated performance of one song by the singer was patiently documented in the fieldwork. Sometimes those efforts were, in the case of extreme variability, overshadowed by the concern of whether the variation was caused by memory problems – a topical problem, again, because of the advanced age of the singers. For example, in the case of the Kodavere singer and healer Sohvi Sepp, neither the collectors (Ottilie Kõiva and Udo Mägi) nor the later researchers (Ingrid Rüütel and Sirle Lorvi) came to terms with whether her unusually extensive variation stemmed from forgetting, the blurring of the traditional rules of variation, or creative improvisation (Saarlo 2014).

The complexity of documenting runotunes from a performer with weakened memory is vividly described by Ingrid Rüütel and Ottilie Kõiva in their Saaremaa fieldwork diary (1961), which also reflects the consistency of collectors in capturing the last relicts of archaic heritage.

The oldie kindly agreed to sing. Sadly, her memory had faded considerably. Melodies often came out vaguely, once this way, then the other, and mistuned. Sometimes, though, she sort of got the right sequence and was stable in staying in tune, especially if she remembered the song better. The uncertainty of her memory encouraged mistuning. However, we made an audio-recording of her singing and filmed her. (RKM II 103, 35)

In the diary of Ottilie Niinemägi (Kõiva) from 1956, the agency of the singer as an active user of tradition, and not only a passive carrier, is most directly manifested:

From her we receive genuine runic folksongs. Runosongs have not only stayed in the mind of Anna Kivi, but she has also used them – she still sings old songs while playing with children and putting them to sleep. Anna Kivi has essentially one melody, but she uses it freely in variance. In every new performance, something new appears in the melody. It's not about forgetting the melody; Anna Kivi completely owns the melody, and that's exactly why she uses it as a mistress. Unfortunately, we have very little time to audio-record. The singer cannot concentrate calmly. The first time (on 6 July) she sang to us much more freely and variably than during the recording. (RKM II 54, 72/3)



Figure 5. Singer Marta Pull in the middle, Milvi Sakkis (left), Ingrid Ruus (Rüütel) (right). Kihnu, 1956 (EK RK, Foto 208).

The actual diversity of those skilled in the song tradition comes out well from the next example – the diary kept by Aino Strutzkin on Kihnu Island in 1948. The two singers she describes were not musically talented, but they knew many lyrics. Most likely, their function in a singing group was to know the words and to sing along with others. The coexistence of the rich textual repertoire and singing in tune in one person may not have been a rule.

She had a good memory and answered and explained the asked questions well. She recited a bunch of songs, both wedding songs and others, newer ones. Singing with a melody didn't work out, she didn't stay in tune, which she confirmed herself.¹⁸

Nothing came out of the performance of the songs, except for one three-verse-long lullaby. ... She explained that she could sing together with others, but not alone. (RKM II 27, 467, 468)

Ingrid Ruus (Rüütel) described the phenomenon in her impressions of the summer fieldwork in Kihnu in 1955:

To my great amazement, I heard that Paju Ann does not carry a tune well while singing newer songs, although she is such a fine wedding singer. Nevertheless, she helped others to sing, and [she has] no problems with singing together with others. (EKRK I 9, 392)

Probably the same has been true for the melody and for the lyrics – it depended on the singer’s personality whether they repeated exactly or varied. In the case of lyrics, it is known that the singers themselves also accepted variation alongside “singing as it has always been sung” (e.g., Timonen 2004: 274). Quick reaction and the willingness to improvise lyrics were highly appreciated in performances of wedding songs.

CONCLUSIONS

One of the main characteristics of the collection story of Estonian runosongs is that the tradition began to be documented during its crumbling phase. All over Estonia – with some regional exceptions – the runosong had receded or was receding from active life; it was remembered and to some extent used for the accompaniment of the family and calendar customs, but its importance was fading. As a result, informants’ attitude towards it was often contemptuous, although over time the importance of tradition for national culture and science was recognized, and the attitude changed for the better. The decaying of the tradition also affected its richness, as memories were never complete and could be faulty.

The community involved in documenting runosongs was also evolving – their skills and professional training advanced over time. Voluntary collaborators, students, and professional folklorists, musicians and ethnomusicologists took part in fieldwork. The fieldwork diaries express a wide variety of views according to collectors’ professional background and personal attitudes.

When describing the performances of runosongs, collectors use quite a few distinctive features. The monotony of runotunes and lack of different melodies have been observed most often. Collectors of runotunes, especially those without ethnomusicology training, were struggling transcribing tunes close to speech, tackling the recitative style of singing, non-tempered tuning, shifting intonation, and variability. In the reports, collectors mostly characterize the voice, positively emphasizing the presence of a high and/or strong voice in (mainly

elderly) singers. As a rule, the technical details of singing and generating a voice (timbre, sound, pitch, chest or head voice) are not reflected.

Archaic music was not inherent – or even familiar – anymore in all the collectors even at the beginning of the collection of the runosongs; it was evaluated through the prism of modern Western music education. That is why the high and/or strong voice of (elderly) singers was appreciated, but the runotunes themselves were evaluated as extraneous, insignificant, exotic, and even non-music.

The runosong tradition was text-oriented, which means that the text had the principal role, and the music mainly followed the build-up of the text. The primary reason why several songs were sung to collectors using the same melody was the musical nature of the tradition – different song texts were sung with group-melodies, divided rather by their functionality, and, vice versa, the same lyrics could also be used in different contexts with different melodies. At this point, again, the crumbling of the tradition played a role, and the singers may have remembered only one melody. This deepened the insignificance of the position of the melodies compared to the lyrics.

Much perplexity was caused to collectors by variation which is inherent in runosinging as an oral tradition. The problem was exacerbated by the decaying of the tradition, which led to an improvisation diverging from the border of the tradition or a complete absence of variability. At the beginning of the collection history, variability was not appreciated and was considered faulty singing, not keeping the tune. Later on, collectors had no competence or did not dare evaluate the musical quality of variative singing. The end-rhymed songs representing the modern singing culture could be used to measure the musical competence of the singer. However, in the course of time, as the peculiarities of runosinging were studied and experienced during fieldwork, the specific competence of runo-singers also began to be evaluated.

Although not directly the subject of the article, we cannot overlook the fact that sympathy for the singers played a role in the assessments that folklorists gave to their performances. In the second half of the twentieth century, during the long interviews and recording sessions, a humanly close relationship emerged between folklorists and singers; they became collaborating partners and were no longer merely interviewers and informants. Collectors would not like to say anything critical about singing when the singer was a pleasant person, modest and accommodating to the wishes of the collector, and met their ideas of an archaic way of life. Therefore, silence was sometimes more eloquent than an expressed opinion.

The aim of this article was to highlight more general tendencies in the descriptions of runosong performances in the fieldwork diaries from the twentieth century and to discuss their details and the reasons for their assessments. The

article does not offer a detailed analysis of how the singers performed runosongs – because that is not what the source material allows. However, it can be taken as inspiration for more comprehensive future studies by comparison of report texts, melody notations, and audio recordings.

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NOTES

- ¹ Jakob Hurt (1839–1907), reverend and linguist of Estonian origin, one of the leaders of the Estonian National Movement. He was the ideologist of Estonian folkloristics and initiator of the all-Estonian folklore collection campaign in 1888–1907, which engaged appr. 1,400 people all over Estonia, including farmers, schoolteachers, and pupils, all kinds of (rural) professionals and intellectuals, as well as some students-stipendiaries (see Jaago 2005).
- ² Oskar Kallas (1868–1946), Estonian folklorist, later diplomat. As a student, Kallas was a member of the Estonian Students' Society and one of the first folklore collection stipendiaries of Jakob Hurt (Kuutma 2005).
- ³ The Estonian national university (Tartu University) was established in 1919, and the Chair of Estonian and Comparative Folklore was established in the same year. The Estonian National Museum was founded in 1909, its sub-institution, the Estonian Folklore Archives, in 1927. On Estonian history, see, e.g., Kasekamp 2010; on Estonian folkloristics see Valk 2005 and 2007 [2004].
- ⁴ Karl Leichter (1902–1987) was an Estonian musicologist. He worked at the EFA in 1929–1931, and continued collecting musical folklore later, too. He worked as a musicologist, music critic, lecturer, cultural official and organizer of musical activities (see Särg 2022: 95–96).
- ⁵ Herbert Tampere (1909–1975) was an Estonian folklorist and musicologist. He started work at the EFA in 1929 and was its head in 1952–1966. After World War II he also taught ethnomusicology at the Tallinn Conservatoire. Tampere's contribution to the collection, cataloguing, publication, and research of Estonian folklore, especially folk music, is unique and crucial (Kalkun 2005).

- ⁶ August Pulst (1889–1977) was an Estonian painter, theatre decorator, collector of antiquities and traditional music, and popularizer of folk culture. He was involved in the establishment of several museums. As a passionate enthusiast of traditional music and instrumentalist himself, he had a close relationship with traditional musicians. The idea of the folk-music tours was, among other things, to raise money for the establishment of the Estonian Museum in Tallinn – analogous to the Estonian National Museum founded in Tartu in 1909 – which later became the Estonian Art Museum. The Society for Remembrance of Estonian Composers, founded by Pulst, later grew into the Music Museum, now the Estonian Theatre and Music Museum.
- ⁷ Now the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre.
- ⁸ Anatoli Garšnek (1918–1998) was an Estonian composer and pedagogue.
- ⁹ Ester Mägi (1922–2021) was an Estonian composer and pedagogue. From 1946–1951 she studied composition at the Tallinn State Conservatoire, in the class of Mart Saar, who was an active collector of folk melodies and used them in his compositions. In 1951–1954 she was further trained at the Moscow Conservatoire and from 1954 was a lecturer at the Tallinn State Conservatoire. The source for her compositions is often folk melodies.
- ¹⁰ Otilie-Olga Kõiva (1932–2023) was an Estonian folklorist, researcher of runosongs and compiler of academic runosong volumes *Vana kannel*. She started work at the EFA in 1954 and was its head in 1966–1977. She participated in folkloric fieldwork and conducted it from 1954 until the 1990s.
- ¹¹ Udo Kolk (1927–1998) graduated from the University of Tartu (Tartu State University at the time) as Estonian philologist in 1951, but he also had an education in music. He worked as a lecturer in literature and folklore at the university. He organized fieldwork practice for students, documenting many folk tunes himself. The focus of his studies was on the variation of the lyrics and melodies of the runosongs.
- ¹² Ingrid Rütel (b. 1935) graduated from the University of Tartu as Estonian philologist in 1959, but she also had an education in music. Later she complemented her studies in ethnomusicology. She worked as a research fellow at the Estonian Literary Museum, and from 1978 was head of the Department of Folk Music at the Institute of Language and Literature, later the Department of Ethnomusicology at the ELM. Her contribution to the recording, publication, and research of folk music, both vocal and instrumental, is outstanding – and fundamental.
- ¹³ Quotes from the reader *History of Estonian Folkloristics* (Laugaste 1963: 35, 101).
- ¹⁴ Udo Kolk's articles on variability were based on lexical formulae, his research on musical improvisations remained mostly in manuscripts and was printed only in the 1980s (see, e.g., Kolk 1984).
- ¹⁵ About the reasons of the decline of participatory singing in European culture see Särg 2023: 128.
- ¹⁶ Today *leelo*-singing denotes exclusively the runosong tradition of Setomaa, southeastern Estonia. The fieldwork notes, however, are written in Jõhvi parish, in northeastern Estonia. In the 1930s – as well as in the 1940s and 1950s – *leelo* stood for the runosong as a whole, including contemporary compositions in the runosong form.
- ¹⁷ This is referred to, for example, by Udo Mägi in his collection diary in 1947 (KKI 1, 20/48).

- ¹⁸ Kihnu Island on the southwestern coast of Estonia was one of the regions where the tradition of runosinging persisted for a relatively long time, it might even be said to the present day. Nevertheless, runosongs persisted, above all, in relation to customs and rituals. The most potent was the tradition of wedding songs; the wedding singers were professionals who, in addition to knowledge of the songs and specific performance skills, also had to have thorough knowledge of conducting wedding rituals. At the same time, of course, newer, end-rhymed songs were sung for entertainment (see, e.g., Rüütel 2002).

ARCHIVAL SOURCES

Estonian Folklore Archives of the Estonian Literary Museum

EKRK – manuscripts of the Chair of Literature and Folklore, Tartu University, 1950–1992
EKRK, Foto – photographs of the Chair of Literature and Folklore, Tartu University
ERA, Foto – photographs of the Estonian Folklore Archives
EÜS – manuscripts of the Estonian Students' Society
KKI – manuscripts of the Folklore Sector of the Institute of Language and Literature
RKM – manuscripts of the Folklore Department of the Estonian State Literary Museum, 1945–1996

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MELANCHOLIC, JOYFUL, AND OUTLAW VOICES: FINNISH RHYMED COUPLETS AND WRITERS' ARCHIVAL MATERIALS

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Abstract: The article explores the importance of writers' archival materials for the study of the cultural significance of Finnish rhymed couplets in Finnish literature. It demonstrates that the analysis of writers' notebooks, letters, drafts and other archival materials can contribute to the understanding of the literary use of this particular tradition of folk songs. The writers whose works and archival materials are analysed are two poets, Otto Manninen and Larin-Kyösti, and playwright Artturi Järviluoma. The material dates from the 1890s to the 1910s. The article deals with emotions and meanings of singing that manifest in certain rhymed couplets. The emphasis is on lyrical songs that deal with love and sorrow, longing and joy, as well as prisoner's songs and "brawl songs", depicting fights.

Keywords: rhymed folk songs, Finnish literature, archives, writers' manuscripts, emotions, oral and literary traditions

In the middle of the 1890s, many Finnish writers became fascinated with rhymed couplets (*rekilaulu*), a particular form of oral culture. Young poets used rhymed couplets in their poems, and they appeared in contemporary prose and drama, too.¹ The multifaceted occurrences of these rhymed folk songs in literary works point to the popularity of this oral tradition in general, often used in gatherings of young people, in dances, and when working or walking together. According to Matti Hako, there was occasionally a lead singer. If the crowd was walking on village lanes, a man led the singing, and when songs accompanied dancing, the lead singer was a woman. In addition, antiphonal singing occurred (Hako 1963: 425–426).

In this article I look at how the writers used rhymed couplets in their writings. I demonstrate that it is fruitful to pay attention to writers' manuscripts,

notebooks and drafts in order to understand this process. The analysis of archival materials can expose voices and discourses present in the stage of drafting a work of literature – features that are not visible in the finished text – and enhance our understanding of what was left out (Hämäläinen & Karhu 2023: 78–79). My archival findings are a result of my previous studies made in the context of genetic criticism that focuses on the exploration of writers' creative process and the analysis of archival materials (see, e.g., Karhu 2023b). Genetic critics see a literary work as a network of writing processes, not as a singular (published) text (Deppman & Ferrer & Groden 2004; Grésillon 1999 [1994]). Among other things, they are interested in ways discourses are manifested in the course of writing (Mitterand 2004). My aim is to show how the genetic analysis of archival material can also lead to other interesting culture-historical findings. This article brings out emotions presented in certain folk songs and offers an insight into how certain songs used by writers depict meanings of singing.

Rekilaulu is a Finnish version of a widely spread international rhymed folk-song genre. Rhymed couplets form a unit consisting of two verses sometimes divided into four short verses: the first part precedes an argument and the second one discloses it (Sykäri 2017, 2022).² Rhymed couplets can be characterized as a register to express things that were important in the lives of young people.³ These folk songs reflect many social changes Finnish society went through in the nineteenth century. New generations wanted more freedom. Among other things, the youth did not want arranged marriages (Asplund 2006: 152–153). The increase of population and the industrial revolution changed rural life: young people left their villages and sought employment in towns or emigrated to the United States and Canada. Songs of leaving Finland to seek a better life manifest this situation. In Ostrobothnia, the unrest caused by structural changes in society had culminated in the phenomenon of the *puukkojunkkarit* (knife fighters), which is reflected in brawl songs and prisoner's songs that depict fights and lives of prisoners (Asplund 2006: 153–154). However, love and courtship were the most popular themes in rhymed couplets. According to folklorist Anneli Asplund, they gave vent to expressing one's feelings of joy, sorrow, and longing, as well as the faithfulness or deceitfulness in relationships (Asplund 2006: 153). It also seems that rhymed couplets gave voice to young people to express their sexual feelings more directly.

It is important to consider that during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the attitudes towards rhymed couplets were ambivalent in Finland. Despite their popularity among common people and young writers, rhymed couplets were heavily criticized on many forums. Time after time, it was argued that popular songs corrupt the sense of proper (folk) poetry or arouse and titillate (wrong) sentiments: songs of courtship lead to immorality and those on

famous villains enhance criminality. This kind of criticism, espoused by part of the educated Fennoman elite and enlightened peasants, had its roots in the nation-building project that included a strong emphasis on popular education, morality, and sexual virtuousness. Disapproving newspaper articles demonstrate how feelings of disgust operated in the assessment of nationality and its cultural manifestations, just as Sara Ahmed has written in her book *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004)⁴ (Karhu & Kuismin 2021). As a result, the tradition was secluded from Finnish cultural heritage. As rhymed folk songs did not serve the ethos of public enlightenment and nation building, folklore publications did not focus on this kind of material and, as a result, the subject has remained understudied (Hämäläinen & Karhu 2021).⁵

The question arises why writers were interested in these songs even though they were widely criticized. Firstly, the interest in folklore (Campbell & Perraudin 2012) and folk songs (Thiesse 2022 [1999]: 140–144) was common in Europe in the long nineteenth century in general. In other words, the interest of writers in the contemporary oral singing tradition was a transnational phenomenon. Rhymed folk songs inspired poets in France, Russia, and Sweden. They utilized features of the tradition in their texts (see, e.g., Akimova 2007). Secondly, folk songs were a living tradition for young Finnish writers, many of whom had grown up in the countryside. Rhymed couplets offered a familiar and melodious rhythmical pattern for poems (Lyly 1983: 113), and the way the singers expressed their feelings and attachment to the surrounding natural world appealed to poets. The use of the Finnish language in songs was imaginative and witty. Thirdly, rhymed couplets represented the voices of youth that the writers wanted to echo in their texts. Finally, singing was an important activity among all social classes.

In Finland writers' interest in rhymed couplets lasted roughly a couple of decades. This folk-song genre lost its popularity during the first decades of the twentieth century, as partner dance replaced circle dances that were accompanied by singing (Asplund 2006: 149). At the same time in literature poets were influenced by modernist trends, and the expression leaning on folk songs became old-fashioned.

In the following, I will analyse materials of two poets, Otto Manninen (1872–1950) and Larin-Kyösti (1873–1948), and those of playwright Artturi Järviluoma (1879–1942) at the turn of the twentieth century. Finnish classic Manninen, best known as a Symbolist poet, began his career with poems that alluded to the Finnish rhymed couplets. The material, dating from the poet's years of apprenticeship, provides a glimpse of a literary context in which oral poetry provided models for Finnish-language writers. When Manninen experimented with the rewriting of folk songs, he was an unpublished poet in his twenties.

Some of these texts were published in literary magazines, but Manninen's first collection entitled *Säkeitä* (Verses, 1905) includes only one poem in the style of rhymed couplets.

Kyösti Larson, who later used the penname Larin-Kyösti, made his debut in 1897 with poems resembling folk songs. According to Kai Laitinen, the title of his first collection, *Tän pojan kevättrallatuksia* (This lad's spring-lilts), points to oral tradition, and the same trend continues in the titles of his *Kylän lauluja* (Village songs, 1898) and *Kulkurin lauluja* (Songs of a wanderer, 1899). As Laitinen has stated, Larin-Kyösti's poems are characterized by light, effortless-seeming expression, and folk song-like accents (Laitinen 1998: 120–121). O. A. Kallio writes in his literary history that Larin-Kyösti brought the tone of joyful humour to Finnish poetry. He was inspired by two Swedish poets, Carl Michael Bellman (1740–1795) and Gustav Fröding (1860–1911), who used elements of folk song traditions in their poems (Kallio 1929: 230–231). At the beginning of the twentieth century Larin-Kyösti was popular among the readership, but nowadays he is mostly known only for his poems that various composers set to music.

In 1914, journalist Artturi Järviluoma made his debut with the play *Pohjalaisia* (Ostrobothnians), which soon became one of the most favourite dramatic works in Finland. It was translated into many languages, made into an opera by Leevi Madetoja in 1924, and filmed for the first time in 1925. Two strands of rhymed couplets, those expressing love and longing and the ones connected to brawl and prisoner's songs, stand out in the play. When analysing the songs included in the play and the ones in Järviluoma's archival material, I will pay attention to the singer's (or speaker's) relationship with other people, and to the emotions and messages expressed in the rhymed couplet in general, as well as the contexts in which the characters sing.

I focus on archival materials and published works of literature in their first editions. The archives of Otto Manninen and Artturi Järviluoma are kept in the archives of the Finnish Literature Society (SKS), while Larin-Kyösti's papers are found in two archives, at the SKS and the National Library of Finland. Archival materials of writer Johannes Linnankoski, kept at the SKS, will also be briefly touched upon. The oral source materials used in this article can be found in the folklore collection of the Finnish Literature Society.

SORROW – PERCEPTIBLE AND HIDDEN

The archival materials of Manninen, Larin-Kyösti, and Järviluoma reveal that the creative processes of these writers include attentive examination and rewriting of oral folklore. Otto Manninen's archive includes a notebook (SKS/KIA: A1908) filled with rhymed couplets, gathered by his friend Antti Rytönen from oral sources in Sippola, southeastern Finland (Lyly 1983:112; Karhu 2019b). Both Manninen and Rytönen created poems inspired by this oral tradition (Karhu 2019a).⁶ Manninen also reshaped – and to some extent even rewrote – some of the songs recorded in the notebook and incorporated them in his own poems (Hämäläinen & Karhu 2019; Karhu 2021, 2023a, 2023b). There are also folk song transcriptions in the archives of Larin-Kyösti and another contemporary writer, Johannes Linnankoski (1869–1913). Rhymed folk songs have an important role in Linnankoski's romantic best-selling novel *Laulu tulipunaisesta kukasta* (Song of the flaming red flower, 1905).

First, I will focus on what can be said about singing as a way to cure sorrow and other negative feelings with the songs in writers' archival materials, and how writers seem to react to this. In the minds of Finnish literati in the nineteenth-century Finland, folk songs carried sorrowful undertones. The educated elite saw folk songs as expressions of Finnish people's melancholic and humble mentality (Laitinen 1986: 42–43).⁷ The lyrical songs in Kalevala metre also expressed mainly worries and sorrows (Timonen 2004: 64–66; Tarkka 2005: 48).

The analysis of the notebook in which Antti Rytönen had recorded rhymed couplets shows that Manninen's interest fell mainly upon the songs that expressed sorrow or longing. He either marked or made changes to the stanzas that he would later use in his poems (Karhu 2023a). For example, the following stanza jotted down by Rytönen (1900) caught Manninen's attention:

<i>En mie sen vuoks laulele että heliä on ääni</i>	I don't sing because my voice is so melodious
--	--

<i>Laulelen huvituksen, tuli heiliä ikäväni.</i>	I sing to entertain myself as I miss my sweetheart.
--	--

There are numerous variants of this song in the folklore collection of the SKS, the oldest one dating from 1885. In this song, the motive of singing expressed by the speaker is to lessen the feeling of longing, not the urge to boast about one's good singing voice. In songs recorded by Rytönen, longing and sorrow are mostly connected with disappointments in love. The joyful and defiant words often form a surface to cover other emotions in the songs. According to Matti

Hako, this kind of nonchalance was a shield to protect the sensitive parts of a singer's personality (Hako 1963: 431). The Janus-faced character is present in the following lines that Manninen later used in a poem draft:

<i>Ja luulevat mun iloiseksi silloin kun mina laulan Silloinhan mie suuren surun sydäm- meeni painan.</i>	And they thought that I was happy when I sing but it is then when a great grief presses my heart.
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(SKS/KIA: A1908)

The oldest variant of this song in the folklore collections of the SKS dates from 1889. The same attitude of the hidden sorrow is present in Otto Manninen's famous poem "Pellavan kitkijä" (The flax roter, 1897/1905), which follows the tradition of the rhymed couplets:

<i>Muien paioiksi pellava kasvaa, minä vaan sen kitken. Muien iloiksi iloan, mut itsekseni itken.</i>	The flax grows for others' shirts, I'm just a roter, I. I give the others joy but inwardly I cry.
---	--

(Allwood 1982: 363)⁸

This singer's inner pain is also visible in one of Larin-Kyösti's folk-song-like drafts. The first four lines variate the Finnish rhymed couplet metre, while the rest of the poem has a different rhythmical pattern:

<i>Onnettoman laulajan onneton laulu – Minä laulan iloni kaikille pilalauluja mulla on monta, minä laulan suruni kaikille ja monta on onnetonta – – Kun suruinen soittoni kuullaan niin itse suruiset nauraa vaan ja murekin pilaksi luullaan. – Kenen elo olis kurjempi päällä maan?!</i>	A sad song of a sad singer – I sing my joys to everyone joke songs I have many, I sing my sorrows to everyone and there are plenty of miserable ones – – When my sad music is heard the sad ones only laugh and they take sorrow as a joke. – Whose life could be more miserable on earth?!
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(Larin-Kyösti's archive, SKS/KIA, Kl. A 9396)

The folk song transcriptions found in Larin-Kyösti's archive are mostly melancholic. They are full of sorrow caused by unhappy love, like in the following rhymed couplet (National Library, Coll. 122):

<i>En minä luullut näkeväni surullista iltaa: kun minä näin tuon oman kullan toisen rattahilla.</i>	I didn't think I would see a sad evening but it happened when I saw my sweetheart in another's carriage.
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In these kinds of texts, the singer of the song appears to be alone. This was also the dominant feature in lyrical Kalevala-metre songs collected from northern Karelia. Senni Timonen calls the songs in which the singer seems to be alienated from the others the poetry of loss (Timonen 2004: 63–64). In melancholic rhymed couplets, other people named are often the sweetheart and the rival (*toinen*) who has stolen the singer's sweetheart.

Sorrow was not only present in the song transcriptions found in Manninen's and Larin-Kyösti's archives but also in their drafts and in published poems alluding to this tradition. In Manninen's published early folk-song-like poetry, it was the only mood prevailing. Furthermore, even though Larin-Kyösti was known for his happy tunes, the themes of melancholy and sorrow appear in the folklore material in his archive and in his draft that can be characterized as literary rewriting of folk songs. The singer appears to be either physically alone or feeling lonely among others. The sadness of the poetic "I" is a theme that arises from both types of materials: the act of singing (joyful) songs interweaves with sorrow. In the draft of Larin-Kyösti, quoted earlier, the singer performs a role for the benefit of their audience or a community. Their feelings seem to be unimportant in this necessary and unavoidable task.⁹

JOYS OF LOVE

Singing was also a way to express joy brought about by the song itself. For example, joyful songs like the following one can be found among the songs recorded by Rytkönen:

<i>Pienen linnun taivaan alla laulelevan luulin Mieleni oli niin iloinen kun kultani äänen kuulin.</i> (SKS/KIA: A1908)	I thought a little bird was singing above in the skies My mind was so happy because I heard the voice of my sweetheart
--	---

The idea that joy is the essence of life takes form in the following song:

*Ei meitä surulla ruokita, se on ilo
joka elättelee
Eikä se heilini minua heitä, vaikka
se pelättelee.
(SKS/KIA: A1908)*

We are not fed with sorrow; it is joy
that keeps us alive
And my sweetheart is not leaving
me, even if he/she threatens to do so.

In the first line, there are two opposite feelings, sorrow and joy, while the latter includes a reference to the fear of losing one's sweetheart. Many variants of this song exist in the folklore collection of the SKS. The oldest one dates from 1889 and the most recent one from 1955. A variant of this song also exists in the archive of Johannes Linnankoski (B1756).¹⁰

Even though Manninen's folk-song-like poems carry melancholic themes, the notebook filled with Rytönen's transcriptions demonstrates that Manninen was well acquainted with merrier songs, even though he did not allude to them in his published poems. There is also one poem draft of Manninen dealing with joy and happiness. In this text, the second and the third stanza are rewritings of rhymed couplets found in the notebook. The first stanza begins with a formula common in oral tradition:

*Kuusi se kummulla kohoa
Ja yli muita puita
Minun kultani kaunis on
Ja kaunihimpi muita.*

A spruce rises on a hill
Above other trees
My sweetheart is beautiful
More beautiful than the others.

*Kultani kasvot kuin päivän paiste
Ja ääni se soi kuin peli
Seitsemän impeä ihastui
Kun kultani hymyeli.¹¹*

The face of my sweetheart is like sunshine
And his voice rings like an instrument.
Seven maidens fell for him
When my love smiled.

*Minun kultani kaunis on
Se on kuin kultaraha
Siit' on tainnut monella tytöllä
Olla mieli paha.*

My sweetheart is beautiful
Like a golden coin
Many girls seem to have
Become sad because of that.

*Kultani mieli iloinen
Ja kultani sydän hellä
Itse mä puolta iloisempi
Kultani sydämellä.
(SKS/KIA: A1908)*

The mind of my sweetheart is merry
and his heart is gentle
And me, I'm even happier
because I have his heart.

The first stanza emphasizes the beauty of the sweetheart. In the stanza that the poet has crossed out, the speaker is a woman. She compares her sweetheart's face to sunshine and mentions that his good singing voice gives pleasure to the listeners. The next stanza points out that the beauty of the sweetheart causes resentment among other girls, which heightens the splendour of the sweetheart and does not seem to threaten the happiness of the singer. The last stanza is a cry of joy and delight: the sweetheart is happy, but the singer is even happier. Manninen's rewriting of rhymed couplets creates a sunny image of love and happiness as well as sentiments of vitality. This ethos is also present in the folk song "Ei meitä surulla ruokita" (We are not fed with sorrow) mentioned earlier. Melancholic sentiments dominate Manninen's early poetry, but the unpublished material shows that he was also interested in happier themes. It seems that Manninen drafted this text approximately at the same time Larin-Kyösti published his first poem collection that brought joyful humour to Finnish poetry.

In many folk songs studied for this article, having a sweetheart brings happiness to the poetic "I". Joy is also present in the preliminary notes in which Larin-Kyösti drafted ideas for poems. While Manninen often made lists of rhymes around which he began to evolve his text (Karhu 2012: 74), Larin-Kyösti seems to have made preliminary notes in prose. In his notebook (SKS/KIA, box 2, Kl. 8972) there are jottings that present joy as a poetic theme. For example, the poem "Kievar tytti" (Girl from a tavern) is characterized as following: "lempi ja juomalaulu sekä maailman kuulu suruttomuuden ylistys runo" (song of love and drinking – a world-famous poem praising light-heartedness). This combination of nonchalance and cheerfulness is often present in oral rhymed couplets. Apart from commenting on love's sorrows, they often praise the merry sides of life. As rhymed couplets often included jokes, banter and sexual undertones, they were associated with worldliness and sinfulness (see, e.g., Karhu & Kuusmin 2021). As Larin-Kyösti's note on the theme of his poem shows, the poet was defiantly opposing this kind of thinking.

It is interesting that joy manifests differently in the archival materials and published works of Manninen and Larin-Kyösti. As mentioned earlier, Manninen was aware of the merry side of the tradition but he published only melancholic folk-song-like poems. In Larin-Kyösti's published texts, joy was a central feature, even though the folk songs in his archive are not particularly joyful. However, happier themes appear in some of the archival materials of Larin-Kyösti, kept at the National Library. These folk song transcriptions belong to the genre of *rinkilaulut* or *piirilaulut* (circle songs / roundelays), meant to accompany dancing. They are not all rhymed couplets but belong to the rhymed folk song tradition. Rhymed couplets were often used as dancing songs (Asplund 2006: 137–139; Sykäri 2022: 166–168; Karhu & Vuorikuru forthcoming).

SONGS OF LONGING

Artturi Järviluoma's play *Pohjalaisia* (Ostrobothnians) is set in Kauhava, western Finland, in 1850. The play deals with the phenomenon called *puukkojunkkarit* (knife-fighters) that occurred specifically in Ostrobothnia. *Häjä* is another word used, connoting wickedness. Fights among young troublemakers were common, and they often resulted in deaths (Ylikangas 1998). The counterforces of the knife-fighters in the play are *körttiläisyys* (awakening), a Pietist revivalist movement, and the temperance movement. Two young couples provide material for love and romance. In addition, Järviluoma's drama reflects nationalist sentiments, as the characters of *Pohjalaisia* oppose police forces whom they see as organs of repression at the time Finland was an autonomous part of Russia.

In the following, I will focus on some songs expressing longing for one's sweetheart, as well as brawl songs depicting the exploits of knife-fighters and their imprisonment. Some of the folk songs that Järviluoma included in his script were collected by the writer himself and by composer Heikki Klemetti in 1907 (Seppä 2016: 16). I have analysed two manuscript versions of the play, written in black-covered notebooks (SKS/KIA, notebook A and B) with the help of Timo Kallio's edition of the manuscripts (Kallio & Kangas & Järviluoma 2024). Besides Järviluoma's writing process vis-à-vis the use of folk songs, I am interested in the ways and in what kinds of contexts female and male characters perform rhymed couplets in the play.

Pohjalaisia opens with a song that Maija, daughter of a farm owner, is singing by herself (Järviluoma 1914: 12). Her fiancée Antti has been detained after having assaulted a cobbler who had questioned Maija's honour. She is alone on the stage and sings softly about her longing for her sweetheart:

<i>∴ Se ilta oli pimeä ja taivahalla paloi Ne lukemattomat tähdet. ∴ ∴ Ja enkä minä saattanut hyvästiä sanoa Kun viimeisen kerran lähdit. ∴</i>	That evening was dark and the innumerable stars were shining in the skies. I didn't have the opportunity to say goodbye when you left for the last time.
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Anna Kuismin has made an observation that often in the first part of the plays folk songs were used to portray the feeling of longing (Kuismin 2023: 28). In the first scene of act II, servant Liisa is off-stage, singing about loneliness. Again, the singer is alone. The song consists of rhymed couplets that are common in oral tradition:

*Luullahan, jotta on lysti olla,
Kun minä aina laulan.
Laulullani minä pienet surut
Sydämeni pohjahan painan.*

They thought I was happy
when I sing.
With singing I push
my small sorrows into the bottom of
my heart.

*Enkä minä sillä laulele,
Jotta mulla on heliä ääni.
Laulelennhan sillä vaan,
Kun oon näin yksinäni.
(Järviluoma 1914: 69)*

I don't sing because
my voice is so melodious
I sing because
I'm so lonely.

Kaisa, the middle-aged wife of the farmhouse's hired hand, hears Liisa's song. She asks if Liisa's sweetheart has found someone else, but the girl replies that she does not have a steady sweetheart. In fact, Liisa is in love with Jussi, Maija's brother.¹² Kaisa hints at the farm hand Kaappo, but Liisa says that she wants a better man for her husband. Kaisa advises her to remember her position: she is a servant even if she is treated almost like a daughter in the house.

The draft of the first song appears also in the manuscript at the end of the play (SKS/KIA, notebook A, scene 8, act I). There is one rather interesting alteration between the draft and the published text. In the draft, the singer wants to suppress her great sorrows, not small ones as appears in the play. In every variant of the song in the folklore collection of the SKS the singer speaks about great sorrows, not small ones. Because of this, the alteration appears especially meaningful. This change can indicate that Järviluoma did not want to depict the character as too sorrowful, even if the song is melancholic. The manuscript analysis also shows that Järviluoma had considered two other stanzas to be part of this scene. They both appear in Heikki Klemetti's collection *Valittuja kansanlauluja Etelä-Pohjanmaalta* (Selected folk songs from southern Ostrobothnia; Klemetti 1909: 4; Kallio & Kangas & Järviluoma 2024: 177). In the draft of notebook B Liisa first sings the following stanza:

*Ei kukaan puhu puolestani
Vaan jokahinen kaataa.*

Nobody is my advocate
No, everybody wants to knock me
down.

*Ne panisivat jos ne saisivat
Mun alemmaksi maata.*

They would push me if they could
lower than the ground.

The folklore collections of the SKS include only one transcription of these verses, but there are several variants beginning with the formula *ei kukaan* (nobody).

The theme of poverty appears in many of them: *Ei kukaan köyhää rakasta / Ei edes säälikkään* (Nobody loves the poor / They don't even pity them) (SKS/KRA). In the light of oral sources, the rhymed couplet in the manuscript Liisa sings could be seen as a comment on social classes. The reason for the removal of this song might stem from the writer's desire to undermine social inequalities in this way. In the play, Jussi's parents do not oppose the marriage of Jussi and Liisa. Even though she is poor, she is a hardworking girl.

The other song that is present in the draft but absent from the published play expresses the speaker's feelings for her former beau:

<i>Jos minä saisin takaisin</i>	If only I could get back
<i>Sen ajan, jonka elin,</i>	the time I have lived
<i>Ja saisin nähdä sen vanhan heilan</i>	And could see that old sweetheart
<i>Jota minä rakastelin.</i>	whom I courted.

(SKS/KIA: notebook B)

The song emphasizes the activeness of the female speaker in the act of courting and hints at the existence of a new beau. The stanza also includes the verb *rakastella* (make love) that refers to courting. This was a common word used in the songs. Women often took a casual stand towards sleeping with their sweethearts. In the following example, a girl humorously praises her sweetheart and the pleasures of a night spent together:

<i>Renkipoika mun heilani on</i>	A farmhand is my sweetheart
<i>ja voi kun se on rakas.</i>	Oh, how he is dear.
<i>Yökin loppu liian kesken</i>	The night was too short
<i>kun sen vieres makas.</i>	when I lay in his bed. ¹³

(Apo 1989: 282; see also Karhu & Kuismin 2021: 32)

According to Anneli Asplund, in the age of the old Kalevala-metre song tradition, it was uncommon and inappropriate to express oneself publicly, but the culture in which rhymed couplets were sung was no longer so restrictive (Asplund 1997: 299–300). Nevertheless, in Järviluoma's play, women express their feelings in shy, chaste and quiet ways, while men handle the theme publicly as I will show in the next subchapter. However, if we look at the songs archived in the folklore collection of the SKS, and the songs that appear in his drafts, it seems that Järviluoma decided to picture in the published play a more discreet image of women's ways of singing than the original songs. He may have had an idealized idea of what was suitable for girls to sing (and feel). There are songs in the manuscript that hint towards a more active female voice, but these

songs do not appear in the published play. Järviluoma's alteration to the first song example diminishes the feelings of the female singer. As for the removal of the songs in the second example, they eliminated the references to class and sexuality. At that time sexual morality was very important for the whole idea of nationhood and this also concerned literature to a great extent (Jalava 2011; Karhu & Kuismin 2021: 27–28, 36).

SONGS OF KNIFE-FIGHTERS

Apart from songs of love and longing, Järviluoma's play includes songs that represent masculine brawl culture. Folk songs in the style of rhymed couplets depicting famous criminals were very popular in the nineteenth-century Finland (Asplund 2006: 154–155; Hako 1963: 437). The song Antti sings at the beginning of the play refers to this tradition. However, it begins with a stanza commenting on love. Antti is in chains while waiting for his trial. First, he sings quietly, partly humming the tune:

<i>Tuuli se taivutti koivun latvan .,: Ja meri oli lainehissa. Minä vain istuin ja lauleskelin .,: Heilini kamarissa.</i>	The wind bent the top of a birch and the sea rose and fell. I was sitting and singing in my sweetheart's chamber.
(Järviluoma 1914: 21)	

After this stanza, Antti stands up and starts to sing in a loud voice, rattling his chains. The third and fourth lines mirror the situation in which the young man has found himself, waiting for his journey to the prison:

<i>Tuuli se taivutti koivun latvan Ja nostatti lainehia. Nyt mua viedähän linnasta linnahan Kantaen kahlehia.</i>	The wind bent the top of a birch and the sea rose and fell. Now I am taken from one prison to another, carrying my chains.
(Järviluoma 1914: 21)	

Kaisa asks if Antti is telling his own story in the ditty. In the published play, Antti replies that his life is not yet worthy of a song. Besides, it seems that most songs are about knife-fighters and their exploits, he adds. In Järviluoma's manuscript (notebook A), Antti's reply is longer. He says that most songs depict the knife-fighters of Härmä and Kauhava, who fight for their honour, steal sheep,

and mistreat horses. Kaisa says that those kinds of songs are ‘*knivboo*’-songs (knife songs), while the best songs tell the stories of the best of men (Kallio & Kangas & Järviluoma 2024: 142). The use of the Swedish-origin word *knivboo* (Sw. *kniv* ‘knife’) seems to relate to the contemporary polemics in which it was claimed that rhymed couplets originated from Sweden (Hämäläinen & Karhu 2021: 299–300).¹⁴

In the minds of Ostrobothnian people, Antti’s assault was justified. Besides, the cobbler was a known thief and a troublemaker, and unlike in many cases in which knife-fighters were involved, the assault did not have fatal consequences. After his imprisonment has become a fact, Antti boasts – but in a bitter tone – that now he has earned his own song. He has become one of the men whose life provides material for a song. While waiting for transportation to the prison, Antti sings a song in which the speaker emphasizes the ferociousness of his character (Järviluoma 1914: 93). In another ditty, also sung by Antti, a prisoner addresses his sweetheart, seemingly not caring about being locked in:

<i>Älä sinä tyttö sitä voivottele</i>	Do not wail, my girl
<i>Ja älä ole murehissa,</i>	And do not feel sad,
<i>Vaikka vuorattu ovi ja raudasta</i>	Even though there is a heavy door
<i>kalterit</i>	and bars of iron
<i>On heilisi kamarissa.</i>	in the chamber of your sweetheart.

(Järviluoma 1914: 94)

In research, the unrest and violent behaviour have been seen as a reaction to the upheaval in land-owning conditions that took place in Ostrobothnia (Ylikangas 1976, 1998). However, it is easy to understand that knife-fighters provided models for young men who were attracted by the idea of fame (Remes 2011; Niskanen 2014: 12–13). The songs depicting knife-fighters circulated orally, but they were also published in booklets and sold in great numbers (Karhu & Kuismin 2021: 29). The protagonists in these kinds of songs were strong, brash, loud, arrogant, daring, and promiscuous. However, the songs in Järviluoma’s play refer also to the theme of love; the sweetheart has been mentioned in all the cases that have been commented here.

At the end of the play, people are dancing in the main room of a farmhouse. The crowd of intruding knife-fighters sing the following brawl song:

<i>Ala-Härmästä keskeltä pitäjestä</i>	They are easy-going fellows
<i>Rentoja veljeksiä</i>	From Ala-Härmä, from the centre of
	the parish

*Ja ne saa hypätä pöydälle
Jotk on meitä verrempiä.
(Järviluoma 1914: 108)*

Those who are mightier than us
Can jump on the table.

At this point, the whole crowd has stepped outside, and men begin to search for objects that they could use as weapons against knife-fighters. One villager has a steelyard in his hand, but the text does not indicate explicitly that it could be used as a weapon. Oral tradition implies that this was the case, like this song, recorded by writer and collector Samuli Paulaharju, indicates (1933 [1932]: 334): “Härmän kirkon portahilla on poikaa koulutettu, kun puukoolla ja puntarilla on lyömähän opetettu” (Boys have been trained at the steps of Härmä church, they have learned to use the knife and the steelyard) (Kallio & Kangas & Järviluoma 2024: 200).

In Järviluoma’s play, women sing alone and quietly. Their songs are melancholic, while men sing loudly, and often together with other men. This kind of situation does not reflect exhaustively the singing practices of the nineteenth-century country people, as women sang songs that expressed various feelings, and also collectively. Järviluoma’s song choices were motivated by the urge to write a play with certain aesthetics, and the folk songs had a role in his literary composition.

LITERATURE, ARCHIVES, AND THE RHYMED COUPLETS

The archival material attests to the deep interest of writers towards the meanings and messages of the songs and their desire to capture some of it in their works of art. Some themes and emotions are the same in both the original folk songs and writers’ texts, while in other cases the writers have modified them. Writers’ manuscripts can contain orientations, interests, and aspirations different from those manifested in the published version of a literary work of art.

As stated earlier, the contemporary oral tradition of rhymed couplets inspired Otto Manninen, Larin-Kyösti, and Artturi Järviluoma, which is visible both in their published works and in their archival materials. In particular, Otto Manninen’s years of apprenticeship provide a glimpse into the context in which the rewriting of folk songs acted as a stepping-stone in Manninen’s own poetic writing (Karhu 2023a). Manninen was mostly attracted to songs in which the tone was melancholy. He concentrated on rhymed couplets expressing sorrows, while Larin-Kyösti focused on the merry side of the tradition in his published oeuvre. It is interesting that while the “worldliness” of rhymed couplets was criticized in the press and research, an unpublished text of Larin-Kyösti flaunts

the light-heartedness of the genre. However, manuscripts reveal that the poet also experimented with sombre tunes of rhymed couplets, as did Manninen with the merry side of the tradition.

The comparison of the songs expressing love and longing, which appear in Järviluoma's play and draft material, with those found in oral sources reveals that the writer wanted to maintain the reserved and chaste image of a country girl who sings melancholy songs. In the folk songs archived at the SKS, women comment on love from humourous angles, too, and present women as active agents in relationships. It seems that Järviluoma leaned on the views of the educated elite on the alleged melancholic character of folk songs.

How do the literary use of the folk songs and the processes in which they were transformed into literature affect our comprehension of the meanings and messages of this oral tradition? It seems that one important role of the songs in literature was to intensify the expressions of certain emotions. The rhymed couplets gave vent to different kinds of feelings and singing and listening to them acted also as a communal activity. Singing alone or together gave people a means to deal with their sentiments from sadness to joy. In folk song transcriptions of Larin-Kyösti's archive, there is a connection between singing and dancing. Perhaps this physical activity and proximity made singers more courageous to express themselves more freely.

Art seldom reflects reality directly. It modulates, tames, and aestheticizes. However, literary works, and archival materials preceding them, can reveal some of the cultural meanings and messages that rhymed folk songs carried at the turn of the twentieth century. In *Pohjalaisia*, women sing sad love songs in situations when they were alone or off-stage, while the boisterous brawl songs were in most cases sung by men on the stage, in the presence of other people. The songs performed by women, expressing feelings of melancholy and lovesickness, support the idea of female passivity, while brawl songs can be interpreted as signs of masculine energy and activeness, even if the vitality is on the transgressive side. As already stated, this does not capture the true essence of the singing practices in their natural context. However, the indisputable fact is that because *Pohjalaisia* was so popular among different generations of theatregoers, the ways and types of songs the characters perform has had a great impact on the ways folk song culture has been seen.

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NOTES

- ¹ On drama, see Kuismin 2023.
- ² On metrical features of rhymed couplets, see H. Laitinen 2003.
- ³ Compared to the register of the Kalevala folklore (Tarkka 2005: 40).
- ⁴ Similar negative attitudes towards rhymed songs were also common in Estonia. Folklorist Jacob Hurt even denied the collecting of these kinds of poems for the archives (Hako 1963: 418). See also Oras 2017 and Särg 2012.
- ⁵ See, e.g., H. Laitinen 2003; Kurkela 1989; Asplund 1997, 2006; Sykäri 2022.
- ⁶ See Antti Rytönen's collection of poems *Lauluja* (Songs, 1900).
- ⁷ See also Kurkela 2012.
- ⁸ The term 'cotton' is used in the translation, but I have changed it to flax.
- ⁹ See more on this material in the context of the study of the emotions in Huhtala & Hämäläinen & Karhu 2022.
- ¹⁰ Weera Suomi and Aino Tulonen had sent rhymed folk songs to Linnankoski by mail. When these songs are compared to the songs found in his novel *Laulu tulipunaisesta kukasta* (Song of the flaming red flower, 1905), it can be seen that Linnankoski has incorporated the songs sent to him in his oeuvre.
- ¹¹ Manninen has crossed out this stanza in a later phase of the writing process.
- ¹² Liisa is called Sanna at this stage in the manuscripts.
- ¹³ According to folklorist Satu Apo (1989: 282), rhymed couplets also captured the sentiments of young women who came from the lowest strata of rural society. These sentiments were of course absent from the general discussions of that time.
- ¹⁴ The extract also raises the question of song types. Most likely there have been different kinds of brawl songs.

ARCHIVAL SOURCES

Archives of the Finnish Literature Society

SKS/KRA – folklore collection:

“Ei kukaan köyhää rakasta”. Väinö Kallio, Uskela, 14.6.1908.

SKS/KIA – collection of literature and cultural history:

The Artturi Järviluoma archive: Box 1. Pohjolaisia. Kansannäytelmä kolmessa näytöksessä, version I. (Version I of the catalogue contains two notebooks; the thicker notebook is referred to as notebook A, and the slimmer one as notebook B).

The Larin-Kyösti archive: Box 2. Poem drafts and copies of poems of others. 1896–1999. Kl. A 9396. [A1655]; Box 2. Notebooks 1896–1898, 1900. Kl. 8972. [A1651]

The Johannes Linnankoski archive: Kansanlauluviikko [Folk song notebook], B1756

The Otto Manninen archive: Uudempia kansanlauluja [New folk songs], A1908

National Library

The Larin-Kyösti archive: Coll. 122. Reki- ja muita lauluja. [Rhymed couplets and other songs]

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BRIDGING NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN TRADITIONS IN THE FINNIC CORPUS OF ORAL POETRY

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Abstract: Historical Finnic oral poetry – called *runolaulu*, *regilaul*, or Kalevalaic poetry – makes a versatile corpus across several related languages, representing numerous genres from epic and charms to lyric, ritual poetry, lullabies, and so forth. Despite the first comparative efforts and collaborations already at the end of the nineteenth century, the local traditions in Northern and Southern Finnic languages have mostly been analysed within national research traditions.

Data-driven approaches have a potential to reveal new perspectives to this multilingual tradition, especially to the less studied parts, and the overall characteristics of it. Yet, due to the multilevel linguistic, poetic, and cultural variation of the data, the use of computational methods is complicated and, typically, necessitates interlaying quantitative analyses with close reading and source-critical approaches.

In this paper, we introduce some results at the intersection of Northern and Southern Finnic song text corpora discovered with the help of similarity detection analyses. Our approach consolidates the idea of the complex interplay of divergence and commonality of regional runosong traditions. While often having particular features not found in other parts of the Finnic area, the regional traditions are also connected to one another by similar formulas, motifs, poem types and themes, and, at the same time, distinct in their variations, uses and interpretations of these. We hope that our tools also help others in examining these further.

Keywords: oral poetry, runosongs, Finnic languages, variation, verse similarity

Most Finnic languages share an oral tradition in a poetic system that is featured by irregular alliteration and parallelism, and a specific metre with a trochaic core. This tradition is currently called by several names, such as *regilaul* in Estonia and *runolaulu* or “Kalevalaic poetry” in Finland and Karelia.¹ Here, we use the term *runosong* for the tradition with all its branches and variants. With local variations, a similar poetic system has been in use in most of the Finnic languages. It has lived side by side with other metrical systems, such as free verse laments, children’s songs with shorter lines, free verse and prose charms and, during recent centuries, stanzaic rhymed songs of various kinds.

The notion that the oral traditions in Northern and Southern Finnic languages share not only a similar poetic system but also some content is an old one.² The interconnections derive from the common origins of the Finnic languages and poetic tradition, and from complex processes of diversification and interactions ever since (see, e.g., Grünthal 2020; Kallio 2015; Lang 2016; Korhonen 1994; Frog 2019). However, wide systematic up-to-date surveys of connections between the poetic cultures in the Finnic languages are lacking for several reasons. The archival data is wide. The local Finnic traditions have mostly been curated into and analysed as three separate national collections in Estonia, Russian Karelia, and Finland, typically within parallel research traditions. In practice, no one knows the whole data well enough to make encompassing comparisons: efforts have mostly been made at the level of individual song types and motifs, especially in the early twentieth century research (e.g., Krohn 1903–1910; 1931).

Currently, large amounts of poems from Estonian and Finnish archival collections are available in digital text form.³ This makes it much easier to browse the texts (see Kallio & Mäkelä 2019; see also Lintrop 2024; Seppä 2021; Sykäri 2020) or to apply and develop computational analysis methods (e.g., Sarv & Järv 2023; Sarv & Kallio & Janicki 2024). Indeed, the computational methods for the

analysis of folklore are quickly developing (see, e.g., Abello et al. 2023; Eklund & Hagedorn & Darányi 2023; Tangherlini et al. 2020).

The data itself, however, poses challenges for digital and quantitative approaches: the long recording and curating history of a complex and varying set of poetic cultures did not produce a user-friendly or balanced corpus (Kallio et al. 2023; see also Ilyefalvi 2020). Linguistic, poetic and orthographic variation of the corpus is extensive, the available dialectal dictionaries do not cover the whole corpus, there are no parsers or language models that fit the data, and, despite the considerable size, the data appears to be too small and heterogeneous for machine learning or creating language models. This means that, for example, some truly inspiring approaches to compare or recognize poems and narrative traditions across relative languages (e.g., Jänicke & Wrisley 2017; Meder & Himstedt-Vaid & Meyer 2023; Meinecke & Wrisley & Jänicke 2021) are not, for now at least, feasible for runosong data. Although the Estonian and Finnish corpora are built up following similar metadata structures, the type indices used in Finnish and Estonian databases have different structures and characteristics. Thus, in this current state, it is truly hard to track down the common themes and motifs among the vast number of texts and song types in Southern and Northern Finnic corpora. By Southern Finnic languages we mean North and South Estonian (including Seto) and Votic, while Northern denotes Ingrian (Izhorian), Karelian and Finnish. With the exception of Votic, the runosongs in Southern Finnic languages are mostly included in the Estonian ERAB corpus and the runosongs in Northern Finnic languages in the Finnish SKVR and JR corpora.

In the interdisciplinary FILTER project,⁴ we have explored computational means suitable for quantitative and qualitative analysis of the runosong data, and for interleaving these. We combined different runosong datasets into a joint SQL⁵ database, set the data into a text and metadata search interface Octavo, and created a base map that fits the historical parish information of the data. We have been concentrating on methods that are suitable for our non-standard language data, where lines with the same content words exhibit significant dialectal, morphological, poetic, and orthographic variation, especially on methods for similarity recognition of poetic lines and for alignment and comparison of passages and texts (Janicki & Kallio & Sarv 2023; Janicki 2023). These similarity recognition results are offered for close reading in similarity recognition interface Runoregi, which enables qualitative exploration of similar lines, passages, and texts side by side, as clusters, in dendrogram or on the map (Janicki et al. 2024).⁶ The bigram-based similarity recognition method works surprisingly well in identifying similarities in regional corpora or songs from nearby linguistic areas, and for recognising oral sources for literary works and

verse-level effects of runosong publications on local oral cultures. This is due to the formulaic and repetitive variations of the poetic idiom. Yet, although it is known that there are similar poem types, motifs, and formulas also in the more distant areas, these are much more difficult to recognize computationally, due to greater content, motif and formula variation caused by partly linguistic, partly cultural distances.

In this article, we introduce some explorations on the similarities between texts in the Estonian language ERAB corpus and Karelian-Ingrian-Finnish language SKVR corpus, discovered with the help of different similarity detection analyses. Although the similarities between Northern and Southern Finnic traditions typically do not take place at the level of formulaic similarity of longer motifs or entire texts, the verse similarity detection method can bring together smaller elements such as similar verse types, which can then help in bringing together longer elements and contents that are – in terms of language, formulas, and verse types – too distant to be identified by using bigram similarity. The analysis catches verse types, which are shared in Southern and Northern Finnic oral poetry and contain similar word stems. We also compare different methods with one another and with the existing ERAB and SKVR poem type indices.

BASIC PROPERTIES OF THE THREE RUNOSONG CORPORA

The joint database of Finnic runosongs, compiled within the FILTER project, contains three large text corpora: the database of Estonian runosongs (ERAB, *Eesti regilaulude andmebaas*), the Finnish SKVR corpus (digitized version of the book series *Suomen Kansan Vanhat Runot* ‘The old poems of the Finnish [Finnic] people’) and the Finnish JR (*Julkaisemattomat runot*) corpus of unpublished poems.⁷ Curating, typologizing, publishing, and digitizing the data has been a long effort of numerous people at the Estonian and Finnish folklore archives.

1) ERAB (the Database of Estonian Runosongs) of the Estonian Folklore Archives currently consists of 108,968 texts and is a work in progress: the database is constantly supplemented with texts from archival collections. The data is for the most part extracted from the OCR⁸ of earlier machine-typed copies transcribed from manuscripts. The texts are checked with original manuscripts, and an orthographically normalized version is added. In addition to runosongs, the database contains some texts of other genres – for example, older-type dance or game songs, children’s songs that may have some connection to runosong tradition, and the information on performance and performers of runosongs, making up approximately one quarter of the items in the database. The type

names retrieved from the machine-typed copies were assigned throughout several decades and are not in a totally coherent system. Hence, the pressing need to revise typology, which is in progress. Currently, the revised index contains 2,514 type names, and the original unsystematized one – with all the name versions – 14,818. Of these, 828 type names in the new index and 10,181 in the old one are only given to one poem text.⁹ In this article, we use the revised type index, which does not cover the whole corpus yet (see Fig. 1). The corpus mainly contains material in Estonian languages and dialects.

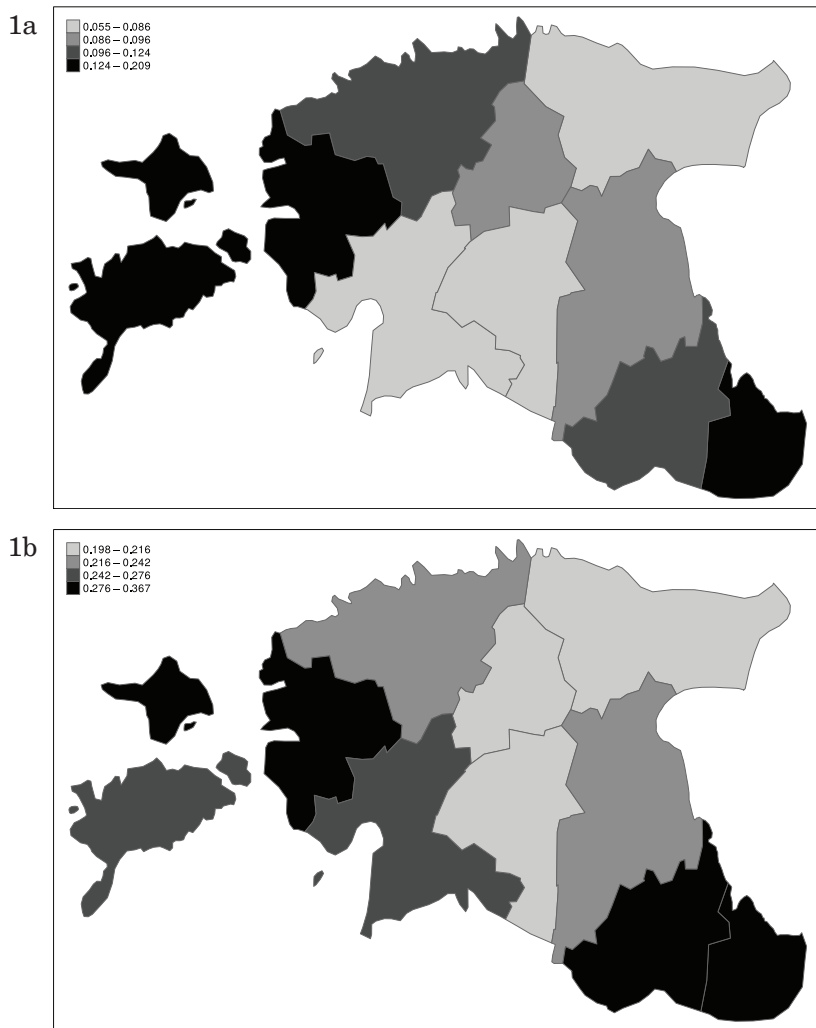


Figure 1. Share of texts a) with missing type names, and b) classified to other genres than runosong in the Estonian ERAB corpus.

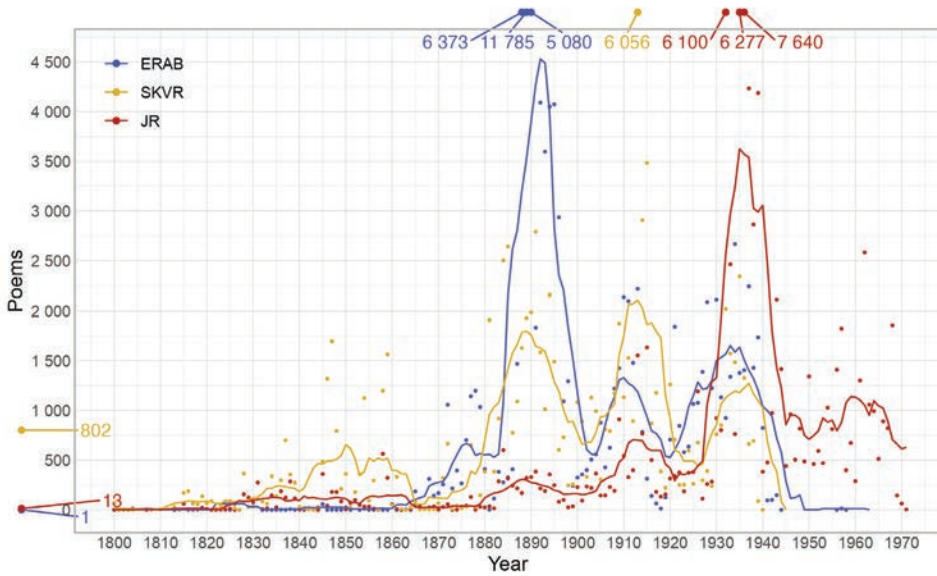


Figure 2. The recording timelines of the three runosong corpora during the 19th–20th centuries. In addition, ca. 800 texts are from the 17th–18th centuries. The spots represent yearly counts, the lines five-year averages counted based on these. The two spots above the plot with numbers represent two years with exceptionally big collections in the ERAB and the JR, and also affect the five-year averages.¹⁰

2) SKVR is the corpus of Karelian, Ingrian, Votic, and Finnish runosongs, originally in archival manuscripts, edited and published as a book series (1908–1948, 1997) and then digitized in the early 2000s. It consists of 89,247 texts and has a type index created using the old volume-specific indices, partly re-analysing the corpus, compiled from the 1980s onwards at the Folklore Archives of the Finnish Literature Society. The index contains 7,573 type names, of which 2,827 are indexed to one poem text only.

3) The JR corpus (Julkaisemattomat runot ‘Unpublished Poems’) contains 85,228 texts mostly from Finland, Karelia, and Ingria, also 1,142 texts from the Veps area and 12 from Setomaa. It is a selection of poems that were not published in or were recorded after the publication of the SKVR book series, later copied into a card file and digitized into a corpus of Unpublished Poems. The JR contains a significant number of other than runosong texts: children’s songs, rhymed songs, songs of literary origin, and even some Sami joiks and Karelian laments. While all corpora in our joint database contain some data other than runosongs, the number of other genres is highest in the JR. The corpus also contains copies – especially the oldest collections often circulated

among scholars, each making their own copies and editions. The metadata of the JR is not verified, and it contains no type index. Due to the very heterogeneous and non-verified nature of the JR corpus, and the lack of type index, we do not use this corpus in the explorations of the present article.

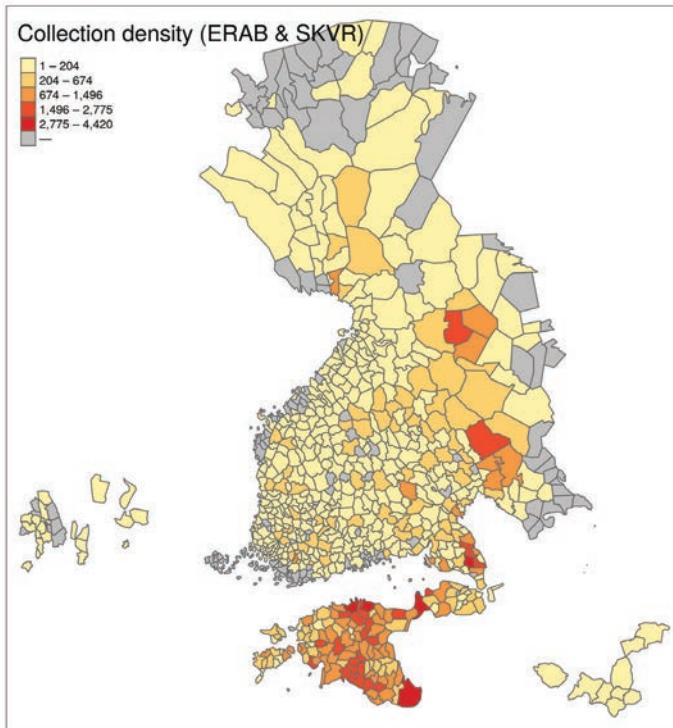
Having these three corpora in one database allows basic quantitative analysis of the data. All in all, our database combining these three corpora consists of 283,568 texts, mostly recorded during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Fig. 2). These contain 14,204,631 words and 1,084,389 unique word forms. The timeline of the accumulation of the collections shows that the three peaks have occurred around the same time in Estonian and Finnish collections, which would warrant a more detailed analysis.



Figure 3. Map of the Finnic languages and dialects at the beginning of the 20th century (Grünthal 2020: 6).

The Estonian runosong corpus consists mainly of songs in North- and South-Estonian dialects, and the Finnish one of songs in Karelian, Ingrian, Votic, Ludic, and Finnish languages and their dialects. As languages are not coded in the data – and the borders of languages are often ambiguous – the number of texts in different languages is not reachable but rather constitutes a complex research question for future work. In terms of language history, Southern Finnic languages – South and North Estonian and Votic – are near to one other, and the Northern Finnic languages – Karelian, Ingrian, Ludic, and Finnish – form another group of close-by varieties, but the languages are also tied by their close geographical proximities and long interaction (e.g., Ingrian, Ingrian-Finnish and Votic in Ingria). In this article, due to our current metadata, we are not treating Votic, Ingrian, and Ingrian-Finnish songs as separate categories.

The map of the Finnic languages and their dialects at the beginning of the twentieth century (Fig. 3; Grünthal 2020) is a good reference to the nineteenth- and twentieth-century runosong collections, although the earlier immigrations, assimilations, and substrates affecting the local poetic cultures are not shown, and the complexity of multilingual areas especially in Ingria and Ladoga Karelia is difficult to visualize.



4a

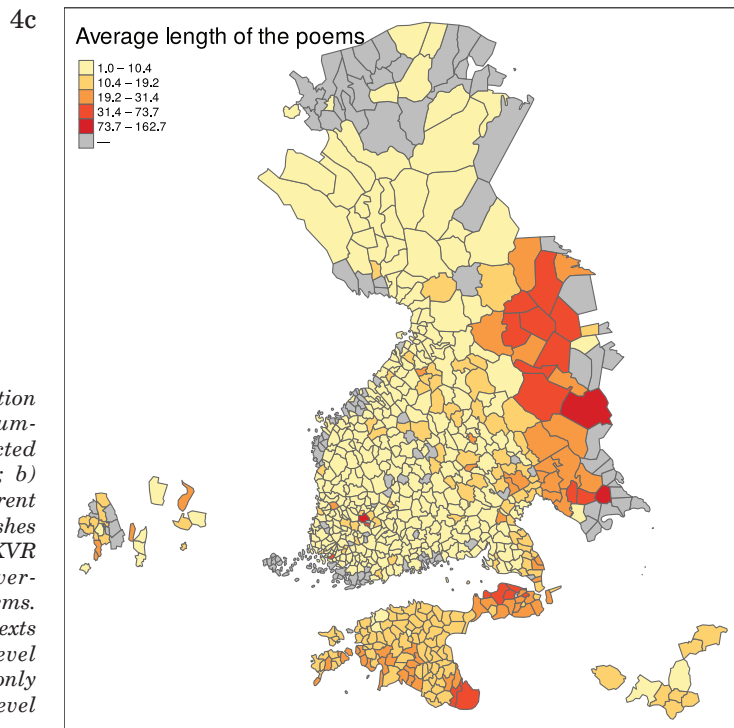
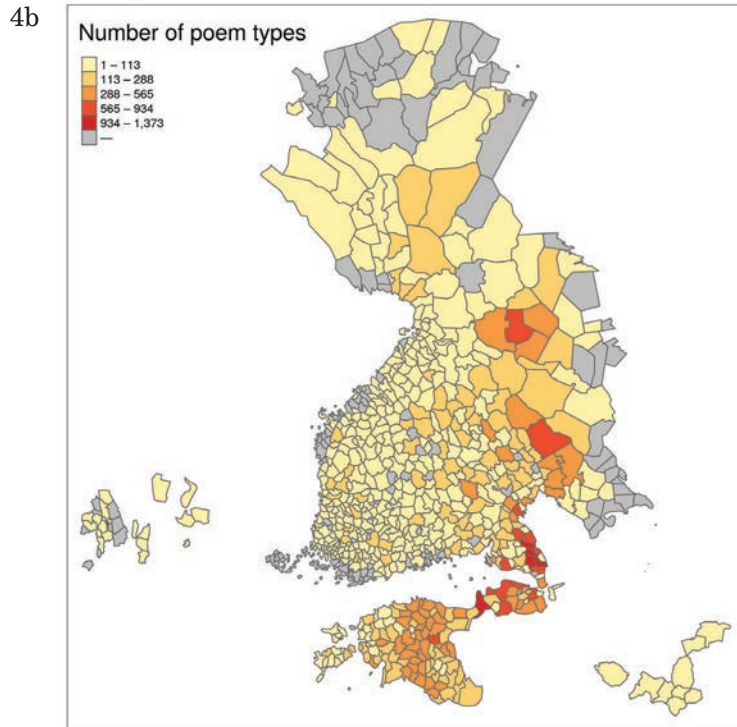


Figure 4. a) Collection density, i.e., the number of poems collected from each parish; b) the number of different poem types by parishes in the ERAB and SKVR corpora; and c) average length of the poems. A minor part of the texts lacks the parish level indications or are only given the county level information.

In the recorded collections, the number of poems, the average length of poems, and the number of indexed poem types in the material roughly follow similar patterns. More poems have been recorded from northern Estonia, Setomaa, and particular Ingrian and Karelian areas than elsewhere. On average, the poems are longest in Setomaa, coastal Ingria, and Karelian language areas. The amount of poem types in our indices is largest in Ingria, Karelian Isthmus, and Karelian language areas. These areas have versatile lyric song traditions, which in the SKVR corpus have been indexed at the level of small motifs, which affects the maps. (Fig. 4a–c.) In addition to the recording history and local poetic cultures, also the share of indexed material and other genres in the Estonian corpus (Fig. 1a–b) affects the analyses of poem types and genres.

At the time of recording, the local oral cultures were different, affected by various local and ethnic histories, linguistic and cultural exchanges, local livelihoods, political and religious developments, and processes of literacy and modernization (see Siikala 1994 and Sarmela 1994 for Northern Finnic areas). Further, the interest of the scholars and others in documenting the traditions, especially during the nineteenth century, focused on particular genres, poem types, and poetics (particularly on archaic mythological epics in regular poetic meter), and following these interests, on regions where the tradition corresponded best to the scholarly or elite ideologies, such as Karelian language area or Setomaa (see, e.g., Kalkun 2015; Sarv 2012; Tarkka 2013). The interests also changed in time.

Early nineteenth-century recorders mostly went to eastern Finland and Karelia, searching especially for long and archaic mythological epics and charms, which were available there. During the second part of the century, the overall focus widened to the whole Finnic area and a much wider set of genres. During the early twentieth century, the aim was to cover better also the areas in western Finland, which resulted in collecting large amounts of songs for children and very short charms, as these were at the time the most well-known runosong genres in the area. In Estonia, the collection process produced more even data, although the northern Estonian coast, Mulgimaa in the south, and Setomaa in the south-east are known as versatile tradition areas in general and have also more runosong texts collected.

These kinds of reasons explain the data distributions especially in the Northern Finnic areas, also in terms of recorded poetic genres (see below). The maps and plots of the work of individual recorders, and the distributions of materials collected from individual parishes at different times enable a much more detailed view into the collecting history and the local singing cultures than we can treat here or than has yet been written into articles (Kallio et al. 2023; Mäkelä & Kallio & Janicki 2024).

SHARED SONG TYPES IN ESTONIAN AND FINNISH INDICES

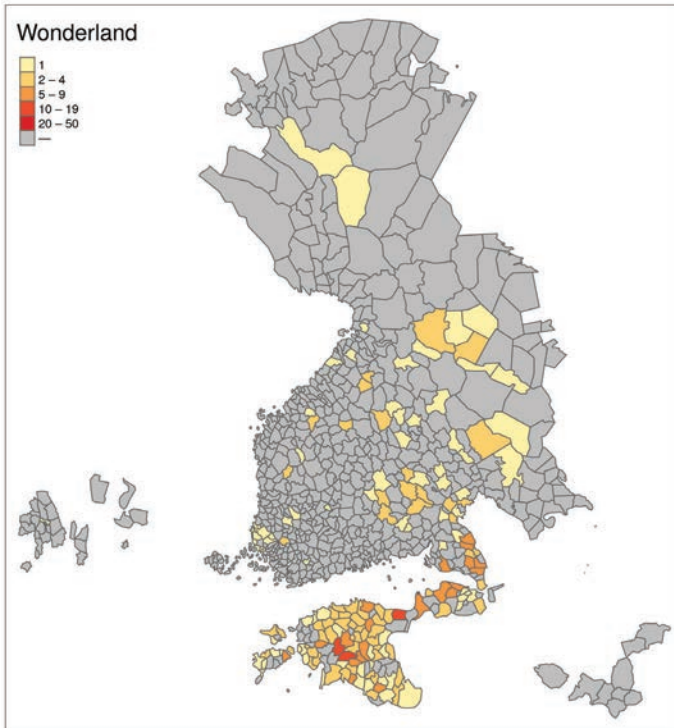
The comparison and typologization efforts of Finnish (Karelian, Ingrian, and Finnish) and Estonian materials have a long and intertwined history. The late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century perspectives to folklore emphasized the need for international comparisons, and folklorists in Estonia and Finland – citizens of the same Russian Empire – also had personal ties. At the end of the nineteenth century the geographical-historical method developed in folkloristics, with the main aim to discover the original form and place of folklore types by comparing text variants. Finnish researcher Julius Krohn was the main developer of the method, and his son Kaarle formulated the methodological guidelines for its application, runosongs being an important focus of interest for both. The method had a considerable impact on collecting folklore, also in Estonia, pointing to the necessity of meticulously writing down also quite similar versions of poems and tales, and to paying attention to the details of expression. Although many basic premises of the theory have since been questioned, it has produced a wide range of comparative literature on the variations of Finnic poem types (see, e.g., Frog 2021; Hautala 1954).

The geographical-historical method also called for international comparisons of runosongs and led to cross-Finnic research initiatives (Krohn 1903–1910, 1931). The Soviet period brought the collaboration to a halt, but already in the 1980s, Ülo Tedre and Matti Kuusi discussed the subject and even did some preparatory work for a wider project (Kuusi & Tedre 1979; SKSÄ 2023:3; SKSÄ 2023:30; Virtanen 1987: 32). Leea Virtanen (1987) summarized the research done in the second half of the twentieth century (mostly outside of the Soviet Union though) about the relationships of different Finnish, Karelian, Ingrian, and Estonian folklore genres. In the early 2000s, both Estonian and Finnish collections were digitized by Arvo Krikmann and his team within a collaboration project in Tartu, with an idea of enabling also further comparative work (Harvilahti 2013, 2019; Saarinen 2006; Sarv & Oras 2020; SKSÄ 2023:3; SKSÄ 2023:30).

The recording efforts, indexing of the archival materials, publication projects, and the research of Finnic runosongs were tightly interwoven, and this work still echoes in the typologies currently in use. In the ERAB, the current harmonized index mostly follows the typology by Ülo Tedre and others in the anthology of Estonian runosongs *Eesti Rahvalaulud: Antoloogia* (1969–1974), with mainly thematic categorization principle. In the SKVR, criteria are distinct for different genres: lyrical poems are analysed by quite small motifs, ritual poems by ritual context and motifs, and charms by the function, if the knowledge is available. The epic index derives closely from the older indices, and is

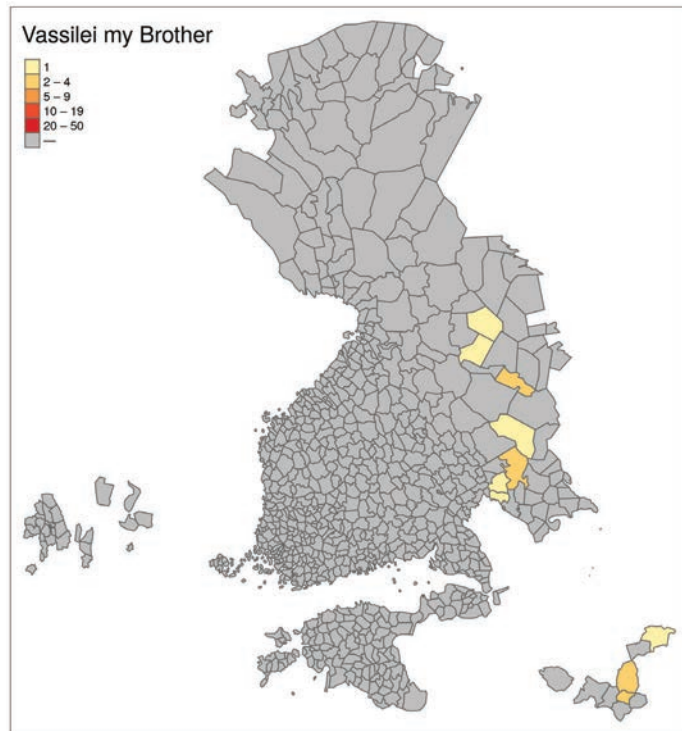
analysed as wider plots and themes. Thus, besides the complex oral variation, the internal variation of the typology poses challenges to the computational approaches. At the same time, the work of earlier scholars of comparing and organizing the data into publications and card files with type indices is the groundwork enabling further analysis.

After bringing the Finnish and Estonian data into a joint database, our first experiments in finding similar poem types and motifs between the SKVR and ERAB were simple and half-manual, just combining a list of the most frequent poem types and starting to go through a small part of it with the experts of both corpora, looking for potentially similar types, such as “Big Oak”, “Four Maidens”, or “Wonderland”. We also used earlier research and checked potential candidate pairs with text and metadata queries (with both direct SQL queries and Octavo interface; see Kallio & Mäkelä 2019). This kind of work has the potential to also identify similarities that do not occur at the level of verses or formulas but are vaguer and more thematic. Individual poem types may have very different reaches and warrant future research (see Fig. 5.).

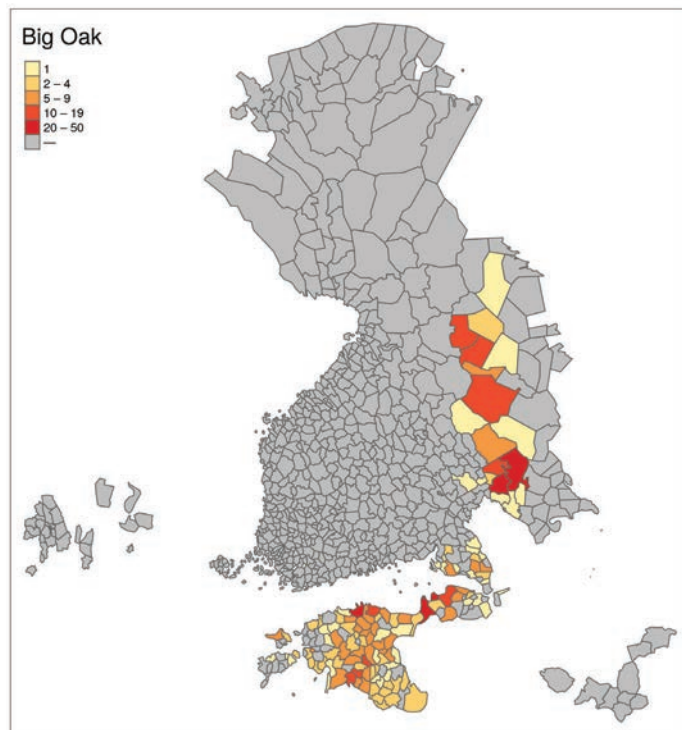


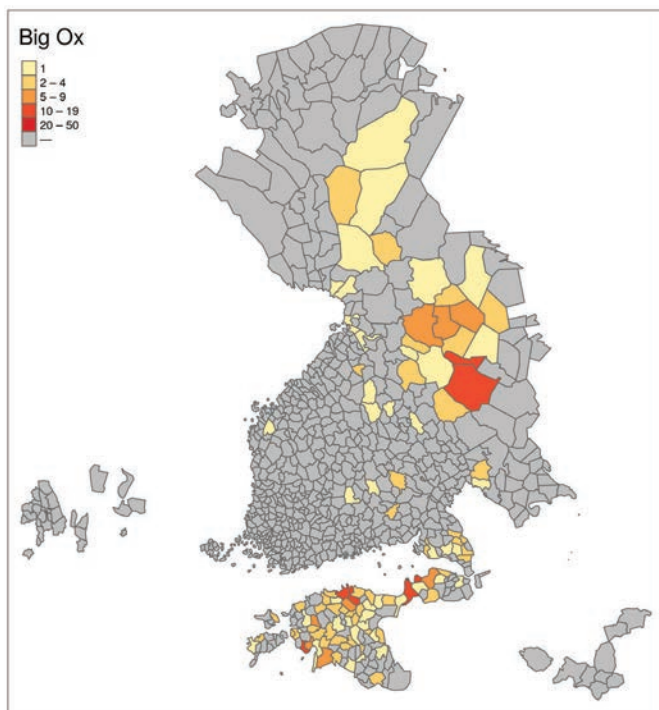
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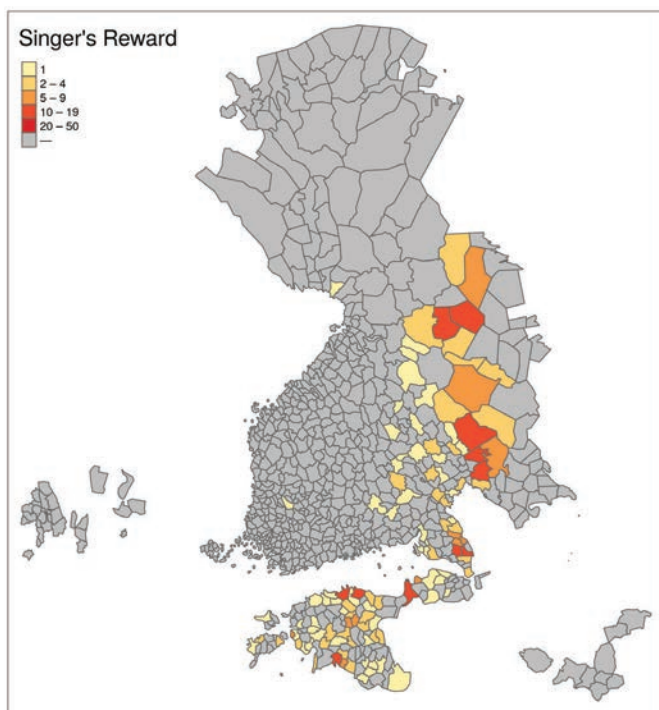


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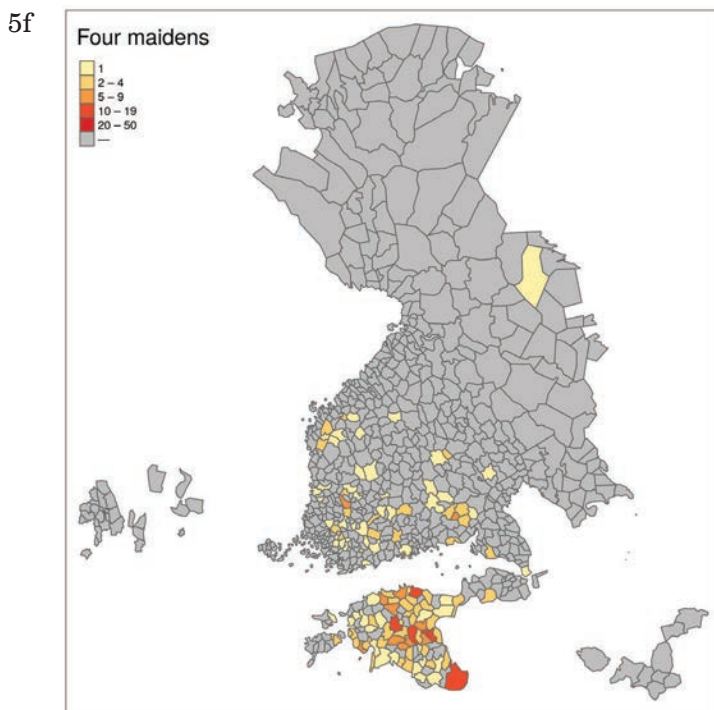
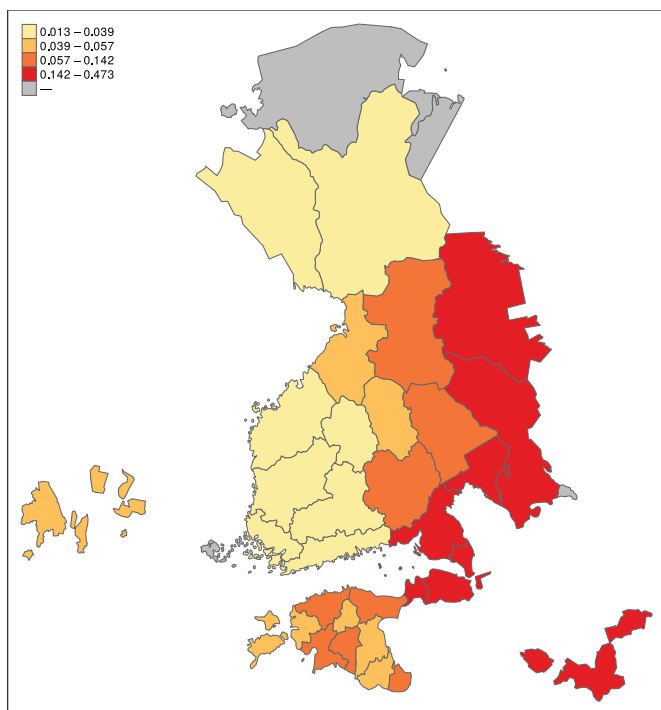
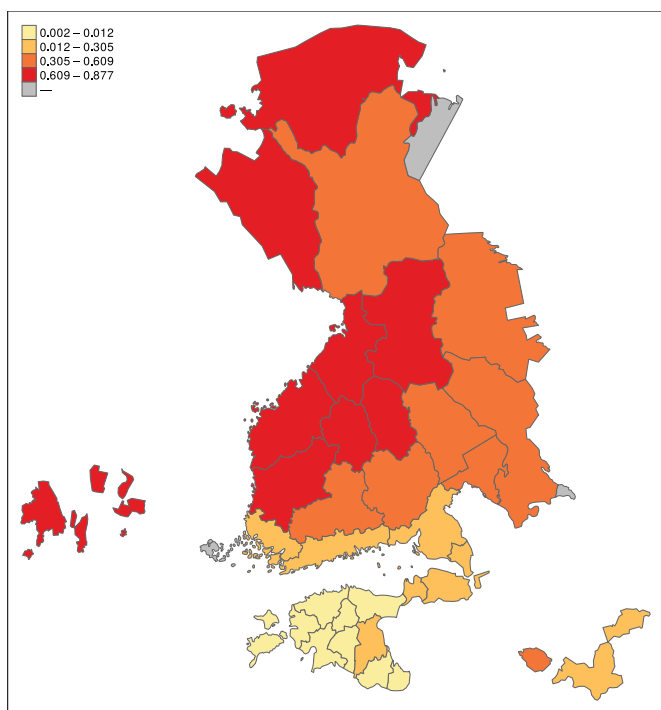


Figure 5. The texts with parish-level place information indexed in the ERAB and SKVR with the title a) “Wonderland”; b) “Vassilei My Brother”; c) “Big Oak”; d) “Big Ox”; e) “Singer’s Reward”; f) “Four Maidens”.

The poem type distributions may cover parishes in all the main language areas (e.g., Fig. 5a) or be limited to one language area only (e.g., Fig. 5b) or to some parishes in the case of more local poem types. For the types shared across the Northern-Southern Finnic linguistic border, the spreads most often include Estonia, Ingria, and Karelia (e.g., Fig. 5c): this probably relates to different processes linked to Christianization, Lutheran Church, literarization and modernization in Finland, and the wide popularity of Lutheran hymns and popular rhymed songs there in the nineteenth century. Yet, in many cases (e.g., Fig. 5d, 5e) the densest collections or longest versions come from Estonian, Ingrian, and Karelian language areas, but cases from the area of contemporary Finland show the type has been in use also there. Some poem types (e.g., Fig. 5f) are recorded mostly from western Finland and Estonia, or in some other regional combinations.

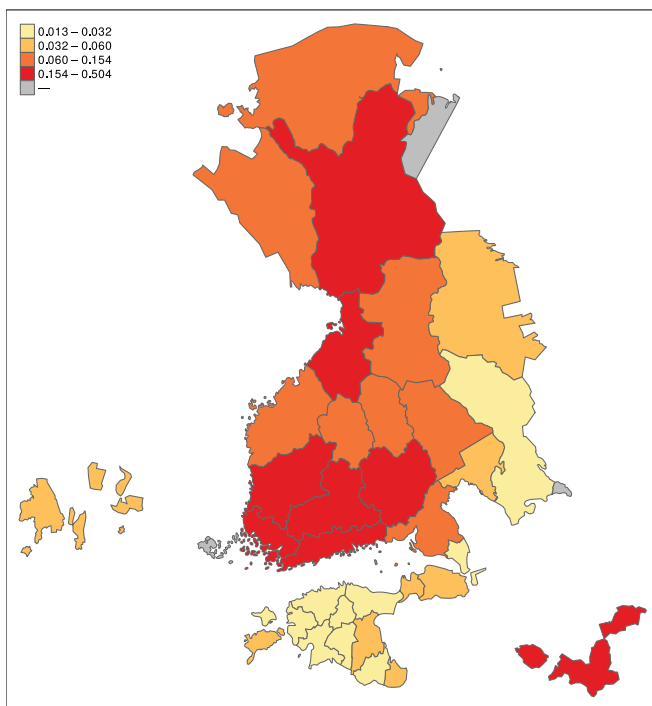


6a



6b

6c



6d

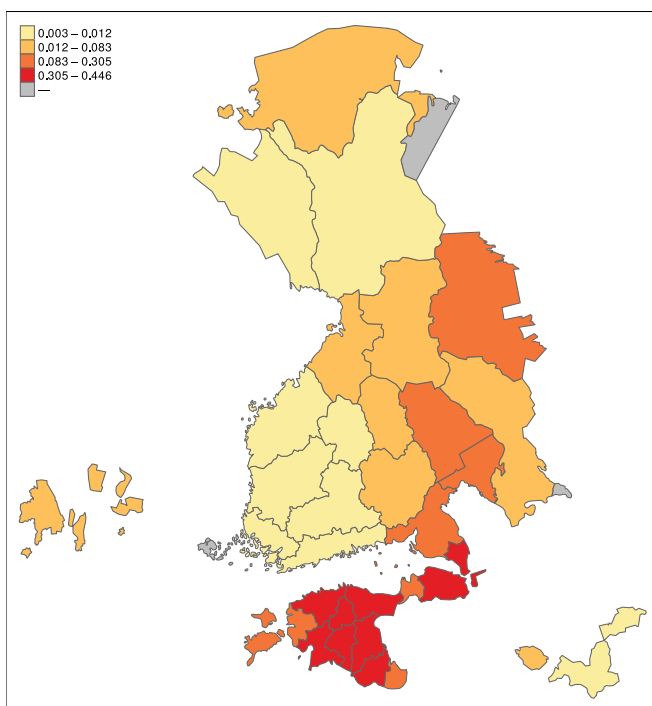


Figure 6. Shares of the genres by counties: a) narrative songs; b) charms; c) children's songs; d) lyrical songs. The maps are created by combining similar categories with different names in the Estonian and Finnish indices.

The comparison of geographical distributions of the main categories of the indices gives an overall view of the regional variation of oral cultures and the collecting history. Yet, one category of the index may contain various kinds of poems. For example, charms can have very different characteristics in different runosong regions or within them, ranging from Christian to pre-Christian, from very short to very long, from prose to verse, from a short order or spell to complex negotiations, narratives, and prayer-like texts. Likewise, other categories may contain very heterogenous characteristics. In Figure 6, we give the shares of a) narrative songs, b) charms, c) children's songs, and d) lyric songs in relation to the whole amount of data by counties in the ERAB and SKVR.

Considered by counties, the main genres of the indices, and the whole recording period of the corpora, narrative songs especially dominate the collections from Russian, Tver, and southern Karelia, Karelian Isthmus, and Ingria (Fig. 6a). The share of charms is biggest in western Finland and Scandinavian Finnish-speaking areas. Most of these charms are short compared to the long mythologically dense charms in Karelian-language areas and eastern Finland. In Ingrian and Estonian collections, charms in runosong meter are not as prevalent as in other areas (Fig. 6b). As with charms, the prevalence of children's songs in western and northern Finland is mostly explained by intense collecting activities in the area at the beginning of the twentieth century by students, schoolchildren, and some individual collectors, such as Jenny and Samuli Paulaharju. Unlike other genres, short charms and children's songs were still widely known and available at the time. The number of children's songs, especially from the 1920s and 1930s, is also high in the Estonian archival materials, which have not been added to the ERAB and are thus not visible in the map (Fig. 6c). It is also well known already from earlier research that at the time of recording, the number of lyrical songs and motifs was highest in Estonia, Ingria, and southern parts of Karelia (Fig. 6d; see, e.g., Siikala 1994).

DETECTING COMMON VERSE TYPES IN NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN FINNIC LANGUAGES

The common Finnic database offers possibilities to get a better overview of the whole runosong tradition and to find ways to bring together similar song texts, motifs, and formulas. The evident issue is linguistic variation – the similar verses in different languages and dialects do not match exactly but have several, and in some cases a considerable number of slightly (or more heavily) variable versions. In many cases, it is practically impossible to figure out all the possible dialectal, orthographic, and poetic variations of even one word

for text searches. We have, e.g., Väilämöinen, Viänämöinen, Vainämöinen, Wäinämöisen, Väinämöizen, Väinämyösen and over 200 other variants for the old sage Väinämöinen known in the Northern Finnic area.

In order to handle this variability and to bring together similar but slightly variable verse lines in the database, Maciej Janicki developed a method based on bigram vectors, treating verses as if they were words. Our aim was to recognize ‘verse types’, which we define here as the clusters of such poetic lines that contain the same content words across different dialects but may vary at the surface level and in the use of grammatical words or morphological endings. The method is based on computing the cosine similarity of the lines’ character bigram frequencies, and algorithmic clustering based on this similarity measure, and was tested with some common poem types from the SKVR corpus of Northern Finnic languages (Janicki & Kallio & Sarv 2023). The method also often recognizes shorter than line formulas. Yet, the bigram similarity method does not always capture more distant variants of the same verse type. This is not surprising, since the stems, grammatical words and morphological endings in Finnic dialects vary on a regular basis. Between more distant languages – or languages that have been written down in very different orthographies – the similar line level formulas or line types are often not recognized.

In order to detect the commonalities in Northern and Southern Finnic songs computationally, we proceeded with the verse clusters that contained verses from both corpora, altogether 1,844 verse clusters, ordered by size.

The hits at the beginning of the list were part of large clusters, and were mostly not exactly what we were looking for, but clusters consisting of verses from:

1. various sets of similar alliterative or other sound patterns with no content similarity (these may be used further in poetic analysis);
2. refrains, often with many sound repetitions, with potential to help to recognize the refrains in the SKVR corpus where the refrains have not been tagged;
3. a common word or word beginning repetitions, such as “laula laula”, “laula laulujani”, “laulab laulust” (‘sing sing’, ‘sing songs’, ‘sings of song’) or “kuku kuku”, “kukkus kukku”, “kuk kuk kuku” (‘call, call’, ‘called call’, ‘ca-ca-call’, often about the sound of the cuckoo), which tell a great deal about the importance of songs, singing, and cuckoos in these traditions. For the scope of this article, these connections are often too vague, not helping in finding closed counterparts;
4. Ingrian poems included in both corpora, sometimes even recorded from the very same singers such as Mikko Pukonen or affected by the folk song publication *Pieni runon-seppä* (Europaeus 1847). The presence of

Ingrian poems in the ERAB is an important observation, but for further experiments in finding the connections between Southern and Northern Finnic language areas – rather than corpora – we exclude these by leaving out the whole small category of Estonian *välismaa* ‘foreign country’ category (1840 texts);

5. verse types from similar poems and motifs in Southern and Northern Finnic materials.

The main observation from this experiment is that in this type of a computational approach, meaningful similarities at shorter than line and line levels, and poetic or sound repetition similarities are not distinguishable – but can be processed further by close reading of the cases.

Case 5 of actual similar poems and motifs in Southern and Northern Finnic materials offers some really nice results, such as some key verses from the “Singer’s Reward” and “The Maiden to Be Ransomed” or from some motifs used in different regional contexts, such as ‘In the cloud, there are water drops’ used in “Big Oak” in Karelia, in “Making of the Zither” in Ingria, and in “Sacred Grove, Gold Burns” in Estonia, or “It’s Good to Be Married to a Crippled One”, used in several poem types in Estonia, Ingria, Karelia, and Finland, and also as a short proverb.

Among the closely similar poem type pairs are some interesting loans like the verse “ehittelin, kengittelin” (in poem type “Killer of the Daughters”, also used in some other types). In Ingrian and some Estonian versions the verse has a clear meaning of ‘putting on nice clothes, putting on shoes’, whereas in many Estonian variants the last word has lost its meaning and transformed to something similar by sound but obviously less meaningful (*epitelin, kenitelin, kehitelin*). Also there are several Estonian–Ingrian verse parallels that in Estonia are known only or mostly on the northern coast which, historically, had closer contacts with Ingria (e.g., *mies vihane vitsikkosta* ‘an angry man [came] from the bushes’). Using close reading of the verse pairs, we also detect some rare shared poem types, for example “Mis viga Virus elada” / “Saarella hyvä elää” ‘It’s good to live in Viru / It is good to live in Saari’, with a bunch of similar lyrical motifs about good life.

Our need to find ways to computationally manage the repeating words, word parts, and sound patterns led to further experimenting with clustering to tune the similarity calculations. In plain calculation of bigrams for verse similarity assessment (*default* method in Runoregi), the sound repetitions – essential to the poetic system of runosong – often bring together the verse lines with similar alliteration patterns instead of similar content. This is useful for studies on poetic and semantic structures and connections created by sound patterns. Yet,

as our present interest is to diminish this, we tested with the versions with square root of the count of each bigram (*sqrt*) and just listed the occurrence of different bigrams without counting them (*binary*). Currently, the *default* clustering method often brings false positives, *sqrt* and *binary* clustering less so – but tighter settings may also leave out more potential positives.

A good example of the difference of these methods is the clustering of the verse *tii-tii tihane* ('ti-ti, tit') known mostly in children's songs from Estonia and Finland.

- a) The *default* method brings together Estonian and Finnish verses from this poem type, but the repetition of the *ti*-syllable causes also the other verses containing the same alliteration pattern *tii-tii* (*tiiti, tiiti, tengan löysin* 'dingle-dangle, I found money' or *aja tii tiigi poolõ* 'make your way towards the pond') to cluster together with the main verse, altogether 665 cases in the database.
- b) The *sqrt*-method clusters together 463 cases of Estonian and Finnish poem types (*tii-tii tihane, tii-tii tianen*) along with some sound repetitions in other types (*ti-ti-tiit, ti-ti-tiit*).
- c) The *binary* method is not able to bring together the main Estonian and Finnish versions of the verse, and clusters them separately (with 191 and 135 cases respectively) with plenty of smaller neighbouring clusters of the variations of the same verse type.

In this case, the *sqrt*-method captures the idea of 'verse type' most reliably, but depending on sound patterns, orthographies, and morphological variation, this may be different in the case of other verse types and language areas.

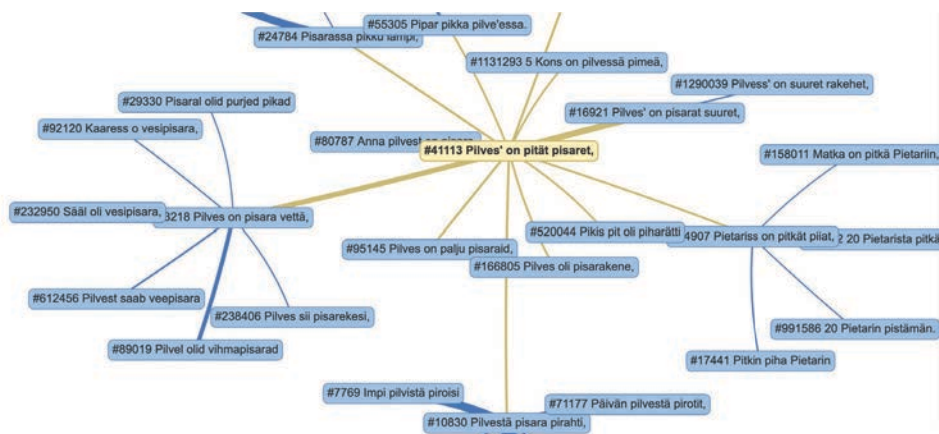


Figure 7. Network of nearby verse clusters for the cluster that contains the line “Pilves’ on pität pisaret” (‘There are long water drops in the cloud’), characteristic of the poem type “Big Oak” in Karelia and other song types in Ingria and Estonia.

Experimenting also led to various developments of the similarity recognition interface Runoregi to help with close reading and assessing the computational results. A relevant addition in terms of the present paper, resulting from the notion that the regional verse type versions often get into nearby clusters, was to add a neighbouring verse clusters view (Fig. 7). This helps the users to quickly estimate the relations, coverage, and quality of different clusters.

LOWER VERSE SIMILARITY THRESHOLD OF SEVERAL VERSES

From earlier research and our manual experience with the corpora we know that the list of similar verse pairs presented above does not cover all the relevant verse type or motif similarities between Northern and Southern Finnic languages. Thus, here we develop the method further, using a low similarity threshold for verse similarity detection (with *default* method), demanding several lines of a poem pair to indicate some similarity, and grouping these similar poem pairs by corresponding poem types, one from the Estonian and the other one from the Finnish index. The similarity threshold is so low that, as such, it would produce more false positives than is feasible to sort out manually. Yet, requiring several slightly similar verses per poem pair raises the probability of finding relevant cases. Here, we first describe the method and then take a look at the top 20 results.

Using the FAISS library for efficient similarity search in sets of vectors (Johnson & Douze & Jégou 2017), we were able to identify pairs of lines with a similarity higher than 0.75 across the entire corpus, which was enough for identifying lines with the same content. The similarity measure could also be used to compute linewise side-by-side alignments of texts using the weighted edit distance algorithm (Janicki 2022).

Experiments with alignments have shown that the same character bigram-based similarity measure could be used for recognizing commonalities crossing the Northern-Southern Finnic boundary, if only the similarity threshold could be lowered to around 0.5 (see Table 1). A looser threshold would allow the detection of similar verses despite language differences (for example in morphology) as the shared verse types are often similar not only in meaning, but also in sound patterns, using cognate words and similar metrical structure. For these reasons, when we experimented with machine translation, it turned out to be of little use as it does not preserve euphonic features and does not manage the non-standard language sufficiently.

The similarity value of 0.5 is still higher than the average for a random pair of lines, but many unrelated lines can achieve it due to coincidence and similarity of sound patterns only. Thus, finding and listing all verse pairs with such similarity did not seem feasible. Instead, the similarity recognition needed to aim at poems

containing several such line pairs in a sequence. A model example of this was a set of versions of the song “The Maiden to Be Ransomed”, a well-known poem in a transitive form between the old runosongs and stanzaic songs, which follows an unusually fixed structure preserved across languages (Table 1; see Kemppinen 1957).

Table 1. *Fragment of an Ingrian-Finnish and Estonian version of the song “The Maiden to Be Ransomed”, showing the possibility of cross-lingual alignment. The similarity values above 0.5 are shown in bold. Based on the vocabulary (aik’ oli ikäv, reissivanna, vällaa), this Ingrian version is probably translated quite directly from Estonian, which partly adds up to the similarity.*

Ingrian-Finnish	Estonian	translation	sim.
Lilla istu kamperissa,	Lilla istus kammeris,	The girl was sitting in a chamber,	.79
Aik’ oli ikäv uottaa,	Tal aeg oli igav oota.	It was a sad time waiting.	.46
Näki vennan reissivanna	Ta nägi venda sõudema	She saw a brother [travelling / rowing]	.20
Pitkin mere rantaa.	Seal üle mereranna.	Along the seacoast.	.45
“Rikas venna, rakas venna,	“Kulla venda, rikas venda	‘Rich brother, [dear / golden] brother	.64
Lunast minnuu täältä vällää!”	Lunasta mu südant!”	Ransom [me / my heart]!”	.31
“Millä mie lunassan,	“Kellega ma lunastan,	‘How can I ransom you,	.41
Kui miull’ ei ole varraa?”	Kui mul ei ole raha.”	If I don’t have money?”	.73
“On siull’ koton kolme miekkaa,	“Sul on kodu kolmi mõeka,	‘You’ve got three swords at home,	.66
Pane niist’ yksi pantiks!”	Pane üks neist pandiks.”	Pawn one of them!”	.74
“Enne mie luovun siusta	“Ennem mina lahkun õekesest,	‘I’d rather give up [you / a sister],	.36
Kui omast’ kolmest’ miekast’.”	Kui oma sõjamõegast.”	Than my own [three / war] sword[s].’	.44

A breakthrough was achieved by optimizing the weighted edit distance algorithm to work with many poem pairs simultaneously (Janicki 2022, 2023), which allowed for computing the alignment between all poem pairs in the corpus, using any similarity threshold. The decision on whether to keep a poem pair as a result could thus be made based on its alignment. Right now we simply put a threshold on the total similarity of aligned lines, but in the future, the possibility to take into account their distribution in the poems (roughly contiguous passages vs. single scattered lines) will be studied as well.

We have deliberately set thresholds to low values so that as many similarities as possible could be captured. Due to that, the precision of the method is low, i.e., many pairs are in fact unrelated (false positives) and only look similar due to similar sound patterns or coincidence. Thus, the results need to be verified by close reading and cannot readily be used for quantitative summaries. The planned future work on analysing the distribution patterns of similar lines in the texts might help filter out the false positives computationally.

The computation produced over 41 million poem pairs recognized as containing sufficient similarity, of which there are 55,910 pairs of a poem from the SKVR and a poem from the ERAB. To facilitate the analysis of the results, they are grouped by type names according to SKVR and ERAB type indices. Each group relating to a particular pair of poem types in the Estonian and Finnish index may thus contain different kinds of similar verse pairs. The user interface Runoregi is used to browse the examples as either pairwise or multiple-sequence alignments, which helps to spot the passage that the similarity is based on (Fig. 8). We also generated a map link to quickly see the areal distributions of grouped poems.

Sais se marja muille [maille], Lintu muille liivakoille,	100 Kui sai marja muilla maila, Mind sai mari muile maille	Tina venna tierajala. Nüid sain mari muile muale,	Saab aga marja muilla maila
10 Kala muille kallajille, Kana muilla kallaila.	Ani muile arma'aile Kana muile kaevuteele Mind sai muile liikumale Tedre teisile pesile	Ani muile allikalle, Kana muile kallastelle,	Ani muilla allikaila
Tuommos toisille vesille, Ei suvuttu survomaan, Rinnalla rihtä tappamaan. En maksa maasta rohta, 15 En olke unnikosta.	Nüüd ei maksa maasta rohtu Maasta rohtu, puusta rohtu	Tedre teisije vedeje;	Nüüd ei maksa seda muada, Siis ei maksa maasta rooja

Figure 8. Fragment of a multiple-sequence alignment of some similar texts from Western Ingrida (Narvusi and Kattila) and Northern Estonia (Virumaa and Harjumaa) in the poem type “At Paternal Home and at Husband’s Home”. Detail of a larger view generated by Runoregi.

To help in close reading, the table also includes links to the poem types in Runoregi, to a map projection and to a set of 2–15 most similar texts in an

aligned view. The present table has 7,502 rows and includes similarities of 1,838 different song types and 13,295 individual texts. Thus far, we have checked a few dozen most similar type-to-type relationships in more detail (with text and metadata search interface Octavo and Runoregi functionalities) and done random checks to different parts of the table. Table 2 gives a short description of the first 20 cases.

Table 2. *First 20 rows of the low threshold similarity calculation by poems organized by poem types.*

	Finnish type name	SKVR	Estonian type name	ERAB	Connecting feature
1	Kips kilo karjaan	21	Kits kile karja!	229	Children's chain song ¹¹ of shared origin (Goat go to the herd)
2	Tiiri liiri linnun poika (...)	30	Tii, tii, tihane	34	Common starting formula in some children's songs ("ti ti tit")
3	Kello yks – muna kyps	77	Kell üks	25	Children's rhyme with counting the hours, details vary (One o'clock, the egg is cooked)
4	Laulajan palkka	80	Laulikule palka!	58	Overlap in short motif: "I am not singing without the wage" (Singer's reward)
5	Tiiri liiri linnun poika (...)	69	Liiri-lõõri!	78	Overlapping elements of chain song of shared origin with onomatopoetic type name
6	Avioitumisajan tiedustelu käeltä	9	Kägu kukub	89	One similar line ("call call cuckoo") in two poem types about the cuckoo
7	Lunastettava neito	94	Lunastatav neiu	40	Very similar poems also in structure, probably rather recent spread (The Maiden to Be Ransomed)
8	Tanssituvan pyyntö	23	Ori lahkub	52	A common verse pair addressing the host and hostess used in different poetic contexts (here in these two poem types)

9	Lauloin ennen lapsempana	27	Laulikule palka!	52	Overlap in some verses about singing and a short motif about rewarding the singer
10	Lapsen maitohampaan (...)	38	Hambasõnad	4	Short children's spell about changing a tooth of shared origin (Words of the tooth)
11	Pakeneva	5	Kits kile karja!	175	Two different poem types with some common chain song elements
12	Eliniän tiedustelu käeltä	14	Kägu kukub	85	One similar line "call call cuckoo" in two different poem types
13	Tanssituvan pyyntö	25	Orja palk	54	A common verse pair addressing the host and hostess, two different poem types
14	Käeltä pyydetään onnea (...)	4	Kägu kukub	51	One similar line "call call cuckoo" in two different poem types
15	Varas vie koristeet	78	Hobune varastatud	18	Similar song structure, where a theft of jewellery or a horse happens, and the story will be re-told to the parents who comfort the poetic I: shared elements and formulas, but different poem types
16	Laulan lapselleni (...)	5	Suude sulg	167	Verse variations containing alliterative word pair about singing and child, two different poem types
17	Tii tii tiainen	1	Tii, tii, tihane	34	Shared starting formula of a children's song about birds
18	Kiletoivirsi	22	Ori lahkub	35	A common verse pair addressing the host and hostess used in different poetic contexts (here in these two poem types)
19	Kolme käkeä	20	Kägu kukub	26	One similar line "call call cuckoo" in two different poem types

20	Käärmeen sanat	98	Ussisõnad	17	Very similar variations of snake charm all over the Finnic area
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The table includes very different types of similarity, geographical spread, genres, and styles. Similarity may occur at the level of the whole poem types or some elements of them, or a motif or only one shared verse type. The most recurrent cases in the first twenty rows are short songs or sayings for children with two or several similar lines, including one wider set of interlinking poem types (“Tiiri liiri linnun poika”, “Tii tii tihane”, “Liiri-lõõri”, “Tii tii tiainen...”) with examples also further down the table. Similar cases are also short 2–3-line formulas about rewarding the singer or greeting the host and the hostess, characteristic of particular poem types but also used elsewhere. “The Maiden to Be Ransomed” presented already above makes a special case in terms of structural similarity of the versions. The song groups sharing one-line formulas about the cuckoo or singing often contain plenty of false positives due to word and sound repetitions, but also some shared line types. Two rows present two different narrative song types that yet share similar motifs, structures, or parts. The “Snake Charm” of the last row exhibits some surprising similarities across the whole runosong area.

Although the Gulf of Finland and the waterways were important contact routes, it is natural that most sets of similar line types occur between regions located next to each other, especially between Virumaa parish of Estonia and Narvusi parish of western Ingria. In our table of recognized poem or line-level connections between the Estonian and Finnish corpus, the poems from Western Ingria dominate (1,996 cases), and southern Karelia (1,356) and Virumaa (1,027) also provide over a thousand texts each. The fewest similarities to the Estonian corpus are found in the most faraway places, in Länsipohja/Västerbotten (5), and in the seventeenth-century migration areas of Tver Karelia (13) near Moscow, and Finnish speaking Värmlanti (25) in central Sweden. Also the Olonets Karelia (83) is underrepresented. Part of this basic setting may relate to the differences in orthography, part to linguistic or cultural differences, and part to the relatively small recordings made from these areas.

Most of the texts that are detected as similar also contain false positives due to our chosen low similarity threshold. It is possible that further experimenting with similarity methods and thresholds to reduce false positive verse pairs helps to sift the most relevant results. Further, if one poem text is given several type names, the similarity results are given for each of these types, making some results repeat.¹² The first complete false positive case comes already at row 22 of the results, connecting many Estonian and one southern Karelian

poem based on word and sound repetition relating to cuckoo and singing, with no shared verses proper. Yet, also the very end of the table still contains some relevant results. The last relevant case, a closely related formulaic line pair (“there comes a big eater, a big eater, a big drinker”) in one Estonian and one Ingrian lyrical poem, appears at the rows 7433–7449.

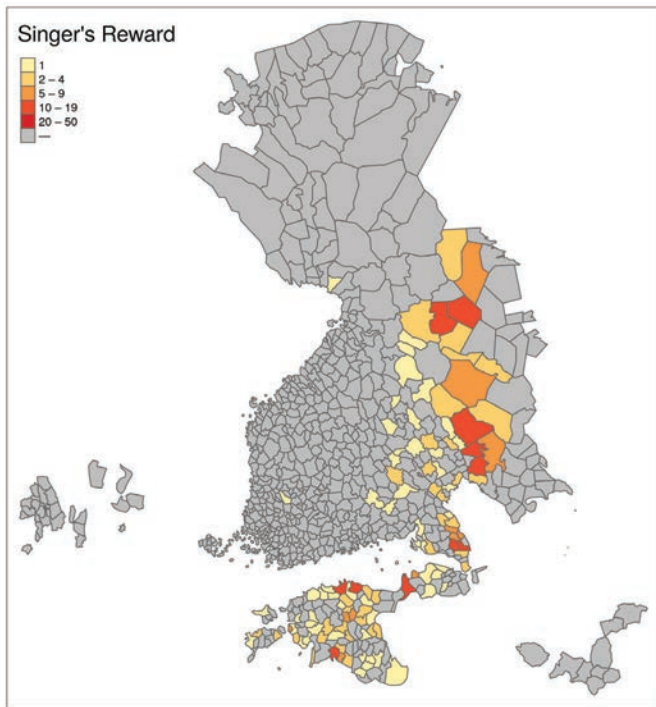
COMPARING DIFFERENT METHODS: SINGER’S REWARD

Due to the great and multilevel variation of oral poetry, different methods available for recognizing similarity in the corpus of Finnic oral poetry yield different reaches, and not everything is yet computationally recognizable. Although methods also function variously with different kinds of verse types, formulas, motifs and poem types, we approach this variability here via one example from the cases above. The one-line formula “I won’t sing without the wage”, often added with “use my mouth without gold” is indexical of the poem type “Singer’s Reward”, and found in all the language areas of the corpus except for the less documented and endangered Votic and Ludic.

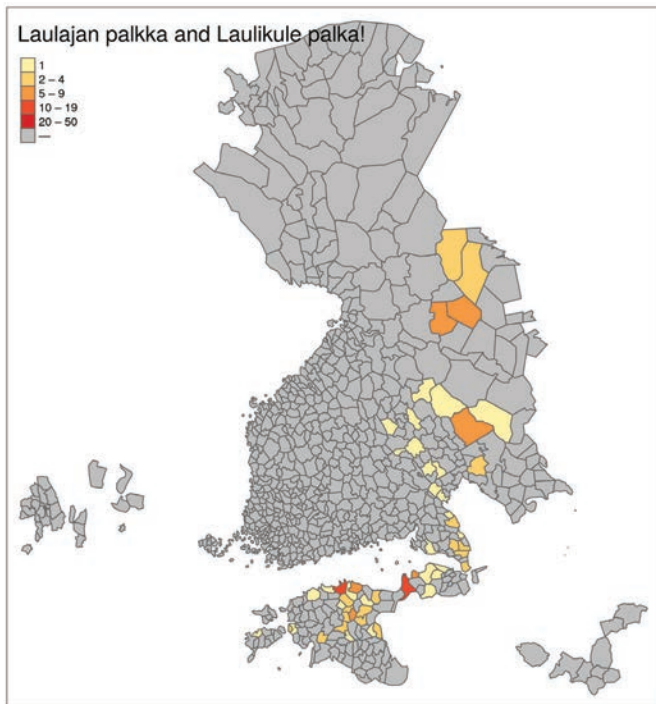
Within the scope of available methods, the manually created poem-type indices typically cover the widest geographical spread and include the greatest number of the material as is the case also here (Fig. 9a). This is natural: the type covers much more than the key formulas, line types, or motifs – not all the similar poems include all the key formulas. The cases in our similarity recognition table have surprisingly similar spread (Fig. 9b) with the simple manually created formula search of the most stable part of the key verse “sing without money” (Fig. 9c): both are narrower than the spread of the poem type indices. Comparison with the relatively rare key formulas that have *not* been indexed to the “Singer’s Reward” (Fig. 9d) indicates that in the indices, the formula is probably understood to strongly index the poem type, and that the formula does not often appear in other kinds of poetic contexts. Yet, not all the texts indexed to the type include the most evident forms of the formula (e): similar ideas about rewarding the singer can be expressed in different ways, and some texts are only short fragments.

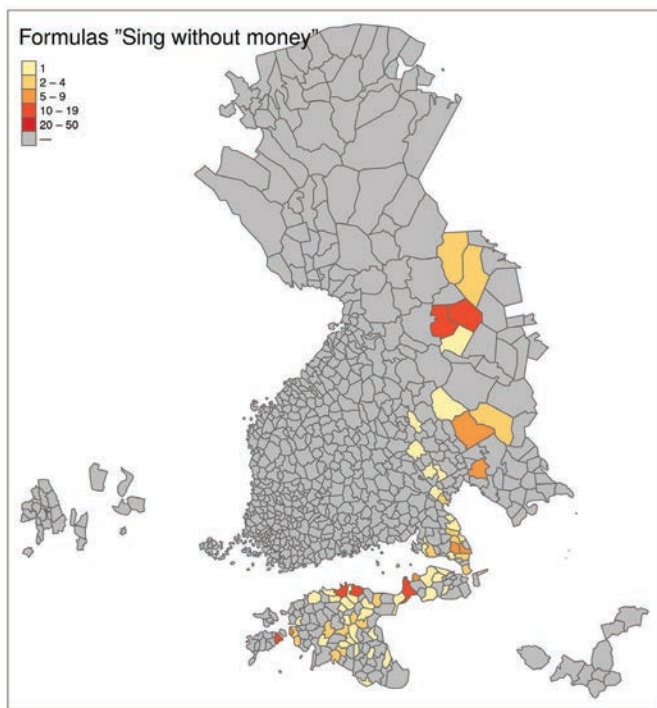
In this case and in many others, the manually created poem type index gives the widest reach. In the Finnish poem type index, the lyrics have been indexed at a detailed level closer to shorter motifs than poem types. Yet, even here, in terms of the verse similarity, the poem type is not defined by the key motif(s) at the level of the line types only, but of the key content. The aim has apparently been to include all the poems mentioning the singer’s reward. Thus, the key motif may be “I won’t sing without the wage / gold”, or, for example, “I am not asking

9a

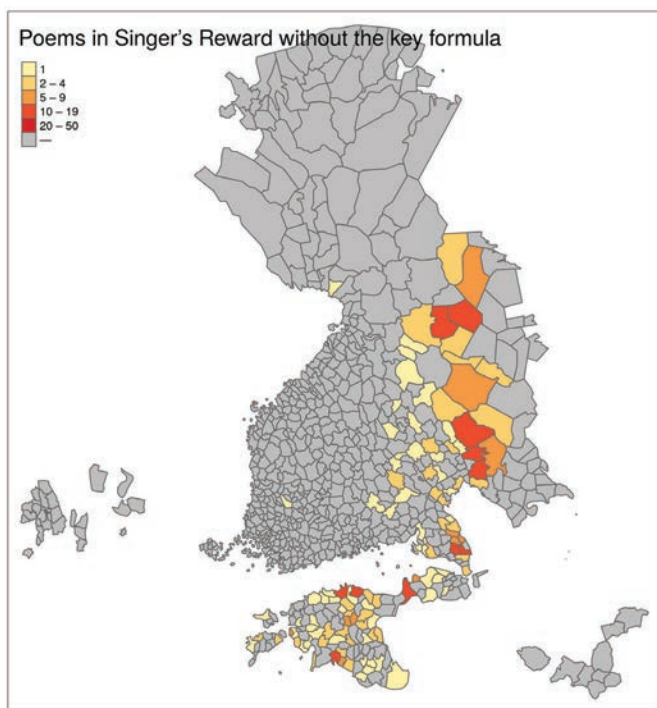


9b





9c



9d

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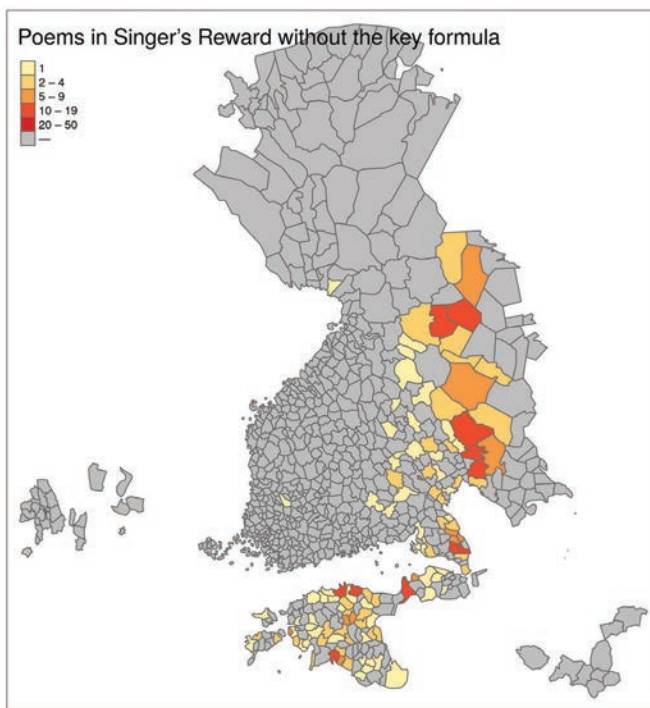
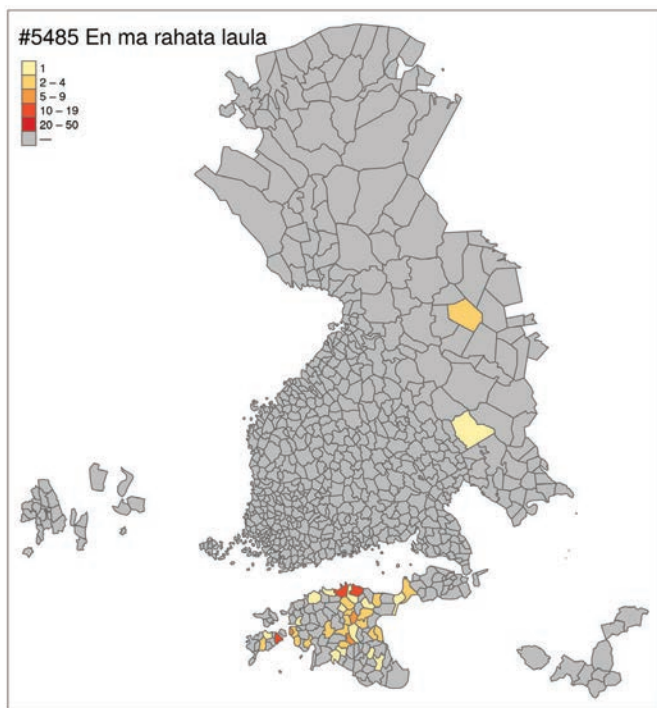


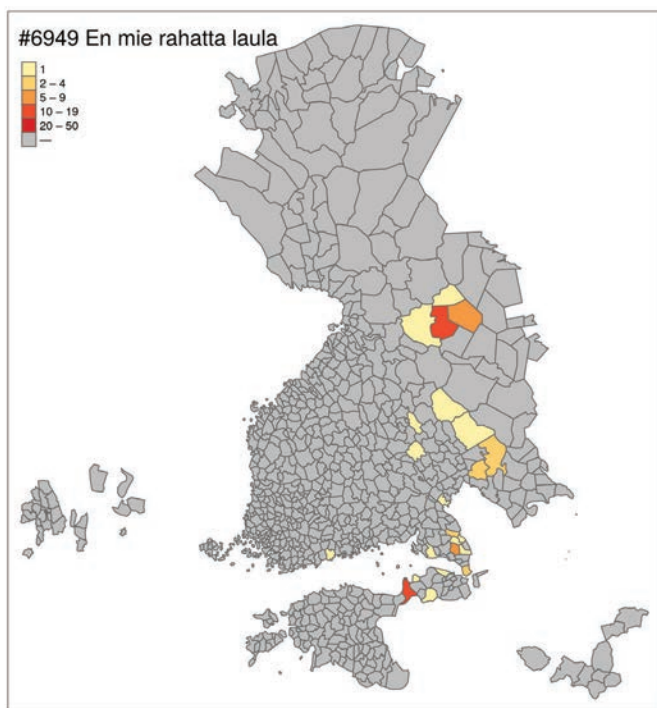
Figure 9. a) The poems indexed to the poem type “Singer’s Reward” (Est. & Fi.), b) poems recognized by the similarity calculation (row 4); c) the formulas “sing without money” (manually made query, false positives excluded);¹³ d) formulas “sing without money” that are not indexed into “Singer’s Reward”; e) “Singer’s Reward” poem types which do not include the most evident forms of the formula “sing without money”.

much: one [Russian] kopeck for a whole word [=line], half for half a word, one öre [Swedish penny] for a movement of the tongue”, or “My tongue won’t sing without festive pies, my mind without black mead, my lips without hop water”.

The current Runoregi interface applies a higher similarity threshold than our experiment in this paper, and often does not reveal similarities between the Estonian and Finnish collections, or between more distant languages or dialects. It is also typical for the interface that one line type can – due to dialectal, poetic, and orthographic variation – distribute into several line clusters (see Fig. 10) with different regional spreads. Interestingly, the biggest three Runoregi clusters of the line type “I won’t sing without the wage” have wide and partly overlapping spreads, and the first of them even connects line types in the Estonian and Finnish corpora. It looks like the line type is not only stable and widespread but also has such a bigram structure that it gets recognized easily and, computationally, does not merge with lines with other content.



10a



10b

10c

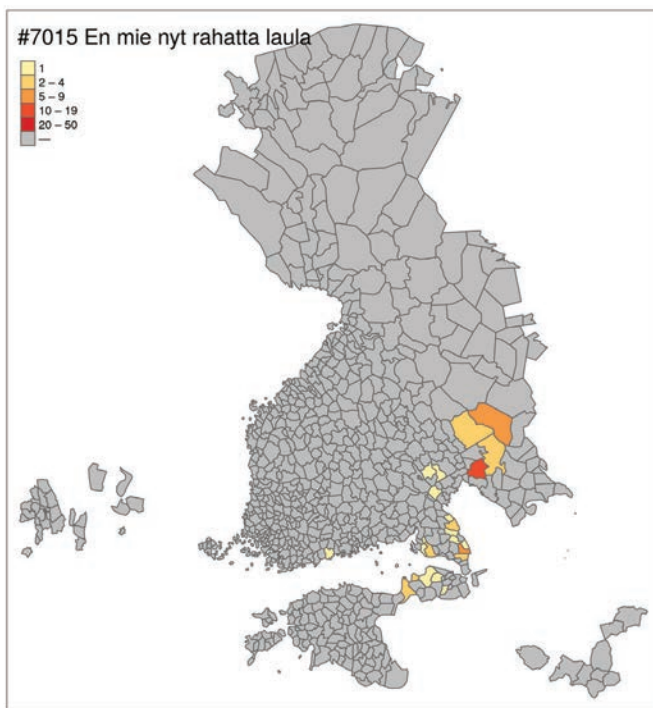


Figure 10. Three biggest line clusters (default clustering) in Runoregi of different sub-cases of the line type “I won’t sing without the wage”. Clusters contain different variations of the line type. These maps also include cases from the JR corpus.

CONCLUSIONS

The variation of oral poetry is complex and takes place at various levels of content and form. This means that no single computational method or toolbox is able to track all the aspects of it, especially in a corpus that represents small non-standardized dialectal language variants.

It is evident that only part of the Finnic data has been treated in earlier scholarly analysis. Particular genres, poem types, and regions have attracted most of the attention, often treated in separate studies. Thus, we do not know how common and significant the different patterns of variation at the level of the whole data are, and cannot be sure that the research has noticed everything that is relevant in terms of less studied parts of the data. This means that the data-driven approaches have a true potential to reveal new things, especially

if combining computational or quantitative methods with close reading and qualitative interpretation.

In this article, our approach has been to explore the similarities of two corpora in related languages computationally, also close reading of the results, projecting them to a map, and comparing the results to one another and to the manually created poem type indices. The similarity calculation methods presented here help to recognize connections in the wide corpus of oral poetry and are relevant also across the linguistic and cultural border of Estonian and Northern Finnic languages (Karelian, Ingrian and Finnish). The results are noisy and need human interpretation to sort out the relevant cases. The methods may also be used for purposes other than the ones in this article: our first experiments bring up many cases of similarity at the level of sound repetitions (e.g., alliterative patterns and refrains) rather than verse types or content.

Yet, based on earlier research and on our own manual comparison of some poem types in the ERAB and SKVR indices, it is also evident that our similarity recognition method – even the fine-tuned one – does not catch all the similarities. In some cases, this is due to different phonetic forms in different related languages resulting in too different word forms and too different bigram structures, even if the human reader may recognize the lines to be very similar in form and content. In some cases, this same happens because the two versions share similar content but are told with different words and formulas (see, e.g., cases in Krohn 1931). Computational recognition of texts with similar content but totally different word stems and formulas would necessitate tools that are not yet available for our historical poetic and dialectal data with plenty of variations.

It is not a trivial task to bring together the shared features in different linguistic areas computationally. In our experiments, especially the borderline between Southern and Northern Finnic languages has been difficult to cross, although it is yet to be analysed how much we are able to recognize similarities of data, e.g., in Votic or Livvi (Olonets) Karelian languages in relation to other Finnic areas. Here, the problems arise from intertwined linguistic (morphological, lexical, and orthographic) and poetic or cultural differences. Words, formulas, line types, motifs, and poem types may take different forms and be used in different ways and contexts, which is in line with what has been thought of the variation of regional song cultures, e.g., by Anna-Leena Siikala (1994). Typically, both the content and form of poems are the more distant the more there is linguistic or geographical distance between the instances (see Sarv & Kallio & Janicki 2024). Yet, the cases revealed in our exploration, such as

“The Maiden to Be Ransomed” or “Snake Charm”, signal that there may be interesting exceptions to this.

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NOTES

- ¹ *Regilaul* ‘regi-song’ in Estonian (< *Reigenlied* ‘dancing song’ in German), *runolaulu* (runo-song, poem-song) in Finnish and Karelian (< *rūnō* ‘secret’, ‘magic sign’, ‘knowledge’, ‘wisdom’ in Proto-Germanic) or, traditionally, just *laul*, *laulu* (song), or *virsi*, *vers* (‘poem’, nowadays ‘Lutheran hymn’) in Finland, Ingria, and Karelia, or descriptively, “old folk poems”, “Kalevalaic poems” or “poems in Finnic alliterative tetrametric trochee” (see Kallio & Frog & Sarv 2017).
- ² For discussions on Kalevipoeg as an epithet or character in Finnic oral poetry and as a main character especially in prose stories, see, e.g., *Elias Lönnrotin kirjeenvaihto: Elias Lönnrot > Emil Sachsendahl*, 4.1.1851; Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald > Elias Lönnrot, 20.2.1851; Krohn 1903–1910).
- ³ See Kundozerova 2022 about the situation in Russian Karelia.
- ⁴ “Formulaic intertextuality, thematic networks and poetic variation across regional cultures of Finnic oral poetry”, funded by the Research Council of Finland, 2020–2024, at the Finnish Literature Society and University of Helsinki, in close collaboration with the Estonian Folklore Archives; see <https://blogs.helsinki.fi/filter-project/>, last accessed on 21 October 2024.
- ⁵ Structured Query Language.
- ⁶ Runoregi is currently available at <https://runoregi.rahtiapp.fi/> (last accessed on 21 October 2024), and will be maintained at least for some years after the project. The similarity calculation method, codes and computational pipeline for setting up Runoregi with FILTER or other data are published on GitHub (Janicki 2024a, 2024b).
- ⁷ It is also supplemented by some literary works in runosong meter, which are not analysed in this article.
- ⁸ Optical Character Recognition.

- ⁹ On the one hand the high number of types with a single text is normal; Arvo Krikmann has shown that Zipf's law known in linguistics, which describes the distribution of word use in text (very few very frequent words, very many very rare words), also applies to the type distribution of archival collections of various folklore genres (Krikmann 1997). On the other hand, part of the variation may be attributed to the variability of type names rather than types due to the decades-long copying process.
- ¹⁰ The coloured version of the figure is available in the online publication.
- ¹¹ Chain song means the poem mostly builds on interlinked verses where the lines repeat one word or word pair of the preceding line (see Saarinen & Janicki & Kallio forthcoming).
- ¹² Although we have experimented with this, we are not able to reliably sort the line types by poem types. This is caused by both the complexity of oral poetry, where one line type can be used in different contexts and sometimes even in different meanings, and the heterogenous and partly subjective character of the type indices.
- ¹³ Octavo query: ("raha* laula*" OR "raho* laula*" OR "laul* raha*") (collection:skvr OR collection:erab) -(type_id:erab_002001041 OR type_id:skvr_t020100_1040) -"võerad ju omasse" -(e000197980000 OR e000848800000 OR kvr13040160 OR h23201240022 OR ve0301800000 OR h33002960000 OR h20908090095 OR e000848800000 OR e000555340011) -rahasäk*.

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EXPLORING THE SEMANTICS AND STRUCTURE OF VOCATIVES IN UKRAINIAN FOLK SONGS

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Abstract: Ukrainian folk songs, as repositories of national cultural heritage, contain a significant collection of linguistic features, particularly in the realm of vocatives. Utilizing computational methods, this study examines the semantics and structure of the vocative case in Ukrainian folk songs to explore its role in social communication, shaping interpersonal relationships, conveying emotional nuances, and reinforcing cultural identity within lyrical narratives. Through the analysis of vocative structures in the corpus of folk songs from Podillia region, this research reveals their linguistic functions in folk songs – naming the addressee, expressing emotions, and evaluating various aspects of the addressee's identity. The study identifies common structural types across semantic groups, showcasing the skilful use of repetition, interjections, and parallelism to enhance emotional intensity and stylistic dimensions.

Keywords: Ukrainian folk songs, vocatives, computational analysis, part-of-speech tagging, structural types

INTRODUCTION

Ukrainian folk songs not only serve as a captivating expression of national cultural heritage but also encapsulate a linguistic treasury awaiting careful study. Among the various linguistic elements that weave the lyrical narratives, vocatives stand out as a distinct and culturally resonant feature. Vocatives as linguistic expressions addressing or calling specific individuals play a crucial role in establishing interpersonal relationships, conveying emotional nuances, and reinforcing cultural identity within lyrical contexts.

Previous research on vocatives, including works by Holubovska (2004), Slukhai (2005), Kosmeda & Plotnikova (2010), and Zahnitko (2017), delves into the anthropological and cultural aspects of linguistic categories within Slavic oral traditions. These studies recognize linguistic expressions as creative products of ethnicity, which contribute to the broader linguistic worldview (Siroka 2013; Wierzbicka 1992). Several researchers (Kononenko 2008; Radziievska 2007; Selivanova 2008; Skab 2002, 2007) have explored the extensive array of cultural concepts in the Ukrainian language, emphasizing the crucial role of oral poetry in the transmission and preservation of cultural identity.

Some works on the syntax of the Ukrainian language during the Soviet period (Bilodid 1972a: 225; Zhovtobriukh & Kulyk 1972) state that addresses are expressed in the vocative form¹ as it was then called (1), or nominative case (2).

(1) *A kudy letysh, **holube**?*²
'Where are you flying, **dove**?'³
(Petrovych 2024: 825,⁴ line 2)

(2) *Ne yid, **Vasyl**, u Krym po sil,
Bo zastanesh nezdorovoii*
'Don't go, **Vasyl**, to Crimea for salt,
Because you will find me ill'
(Petrovych 2024: 616, line 4)

It is worth noting that occasionally in texts, addresses can be expressed by nouns resembling the nominative case. However, according to modern Ukrainian linguistics it is more appropriate to consider them a vocative case with homonymous inflections to the nominative case (Zahnitko & Myronova 2013:

91). In such instances, the component of the indicated sample is characterized by a specific vocative intonation. This vocative case involves using nouns in a way that mimics the nominative case while serving the function of address, which can be seen as a stylistic or syntactic choice.

This concept of determining the vocative form instead of the vocative case was a result of political factors, such as the prohibition of the Ukrainian language under the Russian Empire, with two crucial periods of change in the vocative's grammatical qualification: after 1933 and after Ukraine's independence in 1991 (Masenko 2017). The grammatical status of the vocative case in the Ukrainian language was under threat because the Ukrainian language was expected to closely resemble Russian. Hence, the vocative as a separate form (but not case) was canonized under the influence of Russian linguistics. However, numerous Ukrainian linguists (Bezpoiasko & Horodenska & Rusanivskyi 1993: 22; Vykhovanets & Horodenska 2004: 57; Horpynych 2004: 70; Hryshchenko 2002 [1993]: 306; Kostusiak 2012: 72; Pliushch 2005: 99; Skab 2002) have consistently defended the grammatical category of the vocative case, the loss of which would have resulted in the disappearance of a unique feature preserved over centuries. Consequently, the vocative case in Ukrainian is primarily used for addressing people directly, and it is distinct from the nominative case, which typically indicates the subject of a sentence. This distinction is crucial for understanding the role of vocatives in both regular speech and in the specific context of folk songs.

Ukrainian ethnographer Rylsky and linguist Ponomariv highlighted the importance of vocatives in preserving linguistic integrity and noted potential threats to the vocative case, particularly due to the shift towards recognizing the vocative as a form rather than a case (Ponomariv 2000: 202–203). Rylsky (1987) has highlighted the widespread use of the vocative case in the Ukrainian language. This is confirmed by Ukrainian folk songs and other folklore genres, in which the vocative case is consistently used, as in (3) and (4).

(3) *Horobeichyku, shpachku, shpachku,*

Chy buvav zhe ty v nashim sadku,

Chy vydav zhe ty, yak kopaiut na mak?

'Little sparrow, starling, starling,

Have you ever been to our garden,

Did you show how they eat poppies?

(Petrovych 2024: 139, lines 1–3)

(4) *Pozhdy, doniu, do ponedilka,*

Bude shuba i fartushynka

‘Wait, **my daughter**, until Monday,
There will be a fur coat and an apron’
(Petrovych 2024: 54, lines 5–6)

Address serves as a typical component of folk song texts (Shulzhuk 1969; Yermolenko 1999; Chabanenko 2002; Danyliuk 2011). Researchers have noted that the expressive qualities of keywords in folk songs are enhanced by their use in the vocative case, which highlights the addressee and emphasizes emotional and interpersonal connections. This use of the vocative case, compared to the nominative, adds a layer of intimacy and directness, thereby intensifying the emotional resonance of the songs. Shulzhuk (1969) studied vocatives as a distinct semantic and syntactic unit in his PhD thesis. He notes that vocatives are a prominent grammatical-stylistic device in folk songs, with their emotional expressiveness enhanced by the lexical meaning of words, subjective evaluation suffixes, explanatory words, particles, interjections, repetition, and parallelism. These findings highlight the multifunctional nature of vocatives and their importance in enriching the communicative and emotional depth of language.

This study aims to provide a comprehensive computational examination of the semantics and structure of vocatives in Ukrainian folk songs, particularly from the Podillia region. Podillia, a historic region in Ukraine, emerged as a distinct area in the mid-fourteenth century. This early recognition highlights its importance in the historical landscape of Ukraine. The region’s status as a “land” or “duchy” under various rulers, including Hungarian, Polish, Lithuanian, Turkish, Russian, and Soviet empires, underscores its strategic and cultural significance (Yakovenko 2008–2009: 489). This historical complexity has cultivated a diverse array of cultural influences, making its folk songs a reflection of various historical epochs and cultural interactions. The Podillia dialect of the southwestern dialect group played an important role in the formation of standard Ukrainian, providing a diverse range of examples for studying how vocatives function in the Ukrainian colloquial language (Matviias 2008: 8). Additionally, the alignment of Podillia’s folk songs with standard Ukrainian offers insights into how regional linguistic features, such as vocatives, have influenced and integrated into standard Ukrainian.

Unlike previous research, this study employs computational methods to analyse specific linguistic nuances of vocatives, such as their frequency, semantic and syntactic structures, morphological variations, and the emotional and pragmatic functions they serve within the texts.

The specific research questions guiding this study are:

- How are vocatives employed in Ukrainian folk songs, and what patterns emerge in their usage across different song structures and themes?

- What are the semantic, grammatical, and stylistic nuances of vocatives in Ukrainian folk songs, particularly those from the Podillia region?
- How do the frequency, syntactic functions, and morphological variations of vocatives contribute to their emotional and pragmatic roles within these songs?

This research explores the meanings and cultural significance of vocatives, providing insights into the interplay between language, folk song, and cultural identity, and highlighting their role in social communication and the transmission of emotions within the oral tradition. The study contributes to the understanding of the linguistic aspects of Ukrainian folk songs and introduces interdisciplinary methodologies to the field, combining linguistics, folklore, and computational analysis.

VOCATIVES AS MORPHOLOGICAL, SYNTACTIC, AND PRAGMATIC-SEMANTIC CATEGORY

The Ukrainian term for vocative expression is *zvertannia*. *Slovnnyk ukrainskoi movy* (Dictionary of the Ukrainian Language) (Bilodid 1972b: 465) and *Velykyi tлумachnyi slovnnyk suchasnoi ukrainskoi movy* (Great Explanatory Dictionary of Modern Ukrainian Language) (Busel 2005: 445) define *zvertannia* as follows: (1) the meaning of the action is to address; (2) a statement, opinion, request, etc., addressed to someone. Ukrainian linguists traditionally define vocatives as words or phrases that name a person or object who the speaker is addressing (Zahnitko & Myronova 2013: 91; Karaman et al. 2011: 435; Ponomariv 2000: 202; Danyliuk 2011).

While all languages possess vocatives and vocative phrases, some, like Ukrainian, additionally feature a vocative case. For example, in English, which has lost the vocative case, vocative phrases include *John* in “*Hey, John!*” and *Mary* in “*Please, Mary, come here.*” These examples illustrate how English uses specific phrases and intonation to address someone directly. The vocative case in the Ukrainian language, which Kachurovskyi (1994: 100–101) described as “under threat of extinction”, has seen a significant decline in everyday usage in the late twentieth century. By the early twenty-first century, its occurrence in spoken language had become increasingly rare. Ukrainian scholars attribute this decline primarily to the strong influence of the Russian language during the Soviet era, which led to the frequent replacement of the vocative case with the nominative in oral speech (Radevych-Vynnytskyi 2008: 91). Despite this decline, the vocative case remains organically inherent in Ukrainian folk song

texts, where it continues to exhibit predominant usage. For example, in the folk song “Oi Petre, Petre i Ivane” (Oh Peter, Peter and Ivan), the line *Koly v tebe, Yavdokho, vesillia?* ‘When is your wedding, **Yavdokha**?’ (Petrovych 2024: 514, line 14) uses *Yavdokho* as a vocative form to directly address Yevdokiia (colloquial Yavdokha).

In-depth investigations into the discourse manifestations of vocatives broaden their conventional definition to include various types of address (Svennung 1958). Hill (2007: 2078) emphasizes that addresses can be direct, involving the identification of the interlocutor (e.g., *Kudy yidesh, **Romane**?* ‘Where are you going, **Roman**?’ (Petrovych 2024: 214, line 5)), or indirect, where the interlocutor remains unidentified. For example, an indirect address might be, “Someone should take care of this mess”, where it is clear that someone is being addressed, but no specific individual is identified (see Zavalniuk 2002 on indirect addresses in Ukrainian texts). However, it is noteworthy that no examples of indirect address are found in the corpus of Podillia region’s folk songs.

The syntactic structure of vocatives has been discussed by Zwicky (1974), Moro (2003), Hill (2007, 2013, 2014), and Slocum (2016). Hill (2014: 6) contributes to this discourse by offering a taxonomy that distinguishes vocatives from other frequently occurring sentence-initial elements. This taxonomy includes a differentiation between forms of address, which encompass vocatives, and exclamations that do not reference the addressee. For example, exclamations such as “Oh my god, I can’t believe it!” express emotions or reactions but do not directly address or reference any specific individual.

Zwicky (1974) and Slocum (2016) delineated the distinction between calls and addresses. Zwicky (1974) categorizes vocatives into calls and addresses based on the pragmatic functions they serve. According to Zwicky (1974: 787), calls are “designed to catch the addressee’s attention”, whereas addresses aim to “maintain or emphasize the contact between the speaker and the addressee”. Additionally, Ameka’s work on interjections (1992, 2006 [1994]) provides further insight into the pragmatic functions of vocative-like expressions. For instance, conative interjections are expressions directed at an auditor with the intention of eliciting a response or action. Examples include “sh!” to request silence or “hey!” to call for attention (Ameka 2006 [1994]: 743–745). These interjections are essential for understanding how speakers use linguistic forms to manage interactions effectively.

Furthermore, vocatives can serve the purpose of initiating communication even when the speaker is uncertain about receiving a response. For example, calls may be employed to ascertain the presence of the addressee, with the presence itself being a prerequisite for successfully capturing the addressee’s attention.

Ponomariv (2000: 203–204) divides vocatives into two groups: proper address (predominant in dialogic and polylogical speech) and rhetorical address (more characteristic of monological speech). Proper addresses denote a specific person to whom the speech is directed and are intended to elicit a reaction from that person, as in (5).

- (5) A: *Kudy yidesh, **Romane?***
'Where are you going, **Roman?**'
R: *Na yarmarok, **mii pane***
'To the fair, **my lord**'
(Petrovych 2024: 214, lines 6–7)

Proper addresses can be characterized by imagery and expressiveness, acting as a means of expressing the speaker's feelings and their attitude towards those to whom the vocative expression refers. Proper addresses are usually directed to people, less often (in the case of personification) to other living beings: animals, birds, and in some cases (also when personified) – to inanimate objects (Masiukevych 1966: 18).

The main characteristic of rhetorical addresses is that they are not intended to elicit a response from the object to which they are addressed. Instead, they primarily serve to express the feelings of the speaker or author, to portray events in an imaginative, emotionally charged way, and to create an appropriate attitude in the reader or listener towards the content. For example, the rhetorical address in (6) expresses a sense of longing and wistfulness. In (7), *vitresenku*, a diminutive form of *viter* 'wind', conveys a sense of endearment and gentleness, expressing a tender attitude.

- (6) *Oi ty, **zorko, ty, vechirniaia,***
Chom ty rano ta i ne skhodyla?
'Oh, **you, star, you, evening star,**

Why didn't you rise early?'
(Petrovych 2024: 581, lines 1–2)

- (7) *Oi povii, **vitresenku,** z vyshnevoho sadu*
'Oh blow, **little wind,** from the cherry orchard'
(Petrovych 2024: 657, line 5)

Vocatives primarily serve the function of capturing the interlocutor's attention and are commonly expressed through first names, patronymics, surnames, kinship terms, and abstract or collective concepts. In folk songs, vocatives not only

name a certain object of address but also play a significant role in conveying the speaker's emotions, expressing his/her attitude, and creating a profound sense of personal communication, as in (8) and (9).

(8) *Ustan, ustan, **moia matinko**, ranenko,*
Ta polyvai rutu-miatu chastenko
'Get up, get up, **my mother**, early,
But water the rue-mint often'
(Petrovych 2024: 562, lines 7–8)

(9) *Oi chekai, ne striliai,*
Ty, mii ridnyi brate
'Oh wait, don't shoot,
You, my own brother'
(Petrovych 2024: 347, lines 25–26)

Vocatives, in terms of their compositional structure, can be classified based on the number of words they comprise, and divided into two main groups: extended and non-extended (Zahnitko & Myronova 2013: 91). Non-extended vocatives consist of a single word, typically a noun or any substantive part of speech, without accompanying dependent words, as in (10). This group also includes vocatives preceded by interjection *oi* 'oh', as in (11).

(10) *Oi vstavai, **dytia**, pora tobi vstavaty*
'Oh, get up, **baby**, it's time for you to get up'
(Petrovych 2024: 354, line 3)

(11) *Oi Romane, Romanochku,*
Pusty zh mene dodomochku.
'**Oh, Roman, Romanochka**,
Let me go home.'
(Petrovych 2024: 563, lines 14–15)

A vocative may incorporate explanatory words, often definitions, and be termed extended. The additional components in extended vocatives aid the reader or listener in envisioning the person or subject of the address (12), understanding the speaker's positive (13) or negative attitude towards the addressee, and distinguishing individual character traits, event reproductions, descriptions of the surroundings, etc.:

(12) *Oi ty, molodaia divchynonko, chom sumuiesh, zazhurylasia?*

‘Oh you, young girl, why are you sad, sad?’

(Petrovych 2024: 636, line 2)

(13) *Mamtsiu zh moia mylaia,*

Shcho ya budu kazaty?

‘My dear mom, what will I say?’

What will I say?’

(Petrovych 2024: 33, lines 3–4)

METHOD AND DATA

In this paper, the corpus of folk songs is based on the collection *Pisni Podillia: zapysy Nasti Prysiashniuk v seli Pohrebyshche. 1920–1970 rr.* (Songs of Podillia: Records from Nastia Prysiashniuk in the Village of Pohrebyshche. 1920–1970) (Myshanych 1976). This collection consists of 850 songs, 13,005 lines and 78,888 tokens. Vocatives were manually selected from the corpus and compiled in a database. This approach was chosen due to the difficulty of distinguishing vocatives in Ukrainian, as the vocative here has special inflections depending on the declension of the noun (there are 4 declension groups), belonging to a hard, soft, or mixed group, singular or plural (in the plural, the ending often coincides with the nominative), which adds to the complexity of accurately identifying vocatives.

Vocatives in Ukrainian folk songs were analysed using the R programming language (version 4.4.1) along with RStudio (version: 2024.04.2+764). The text corpus and R scripts for the analysis are available at Zenodo (Petrovych 2024).

The research conducted in RStudio encompassed a range of text analysis techniques, including tokenization, context extraction, part-of-speech (PoS) tagging, frequency analysis, and classification of semantic groups and structural types.

The algorithm for computational research in RStudio involved several key steps. First, the corpus file in .csv format was read into a data frame and tokenized. The analysis included counting the number of songs with varying counts of vocatives, the percentage ratio of vocatives in refrains and verses, and examining the relationship between song length and the frequency of vocatives. Vocative expressions that are repeated in the refrain, which is repeated several times within a song, were counted as multiple instances. The vocatives were differentiated into non-extended vocatives (consisting of a single word) and extended vocatives (incorporating explanatory words or definitions), with

counts for each group. The Ukrainian UDPipe model was applied for PoS tagging of the vocative expressions, and the occurrences of each part of speech were counted. The percentage of folk songs containing vocatives was counted across different genres. The number of songs containing vocatives within each genre was calculated. Additionally, the vocatives were categorized into several semantic groups based on previous studies and the investigation of the folk songs corpus. These groups include addresses with proper names, kinship terms, age-related terms, social positions, religious and ritual origins, professions and occupations, places of residence and origin, birds and animals, and inanimate objects. The vocatives were also classified into structural types according to their grammatical structures. The results of these analyses were visualized, using appropriate tools in RStudio.

VOCATIVE STRUCTURES IN PODILLIA REGION'S FOLK SONGS: DISTRIBUTION AND LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

Using text and frequency analysis, we investigated the distribution of vocatives within the corpus of Ukrainian folk songs. R and RStudio were used to perform data analysis. Specifically, we read and processed the corpus data, counted the number of vocative lines per song, and categorized the songs accordingly. We then visualized the results using a histogram. Figure 1 illustrates both the number of vocatives and the corresponding frequency of songs with the same quantity of vocatives in their lyrics. This histogram offers a comprehensive overview of the distribution patterns of vocatives in Podillia region's folk songs.

The distribution pattern in Figure 1 reflects the variability in the use of vocatives across different songs. The prevalence of songs with 0 or 1 vocative suggests instances where the lyrical content may not require direct address, while an increase in the number of vocatives could indicate a more expressive or dialogue-driven narrative. However, this distribution could be influenced by the length of the songs. This potential bias towards song length suggests that shorter songs have a smaller chance of containing an overabundance of vocatives, simply due to their brevity.

Figure 2 explores the relationship between the song's length (measured by the number of lines) and the number of vocatives present in the song. This figure highlights that longer songs tend to incorporate more vocatives, potentially due to their more complex narratives and richer character interactions. However, some short songs may be densely packed with vocatives. For example, Figure 2 shows that vocatives are most frequently used in folk songs with up to 30 lines, typically ranging up to 5–10 vocatives.

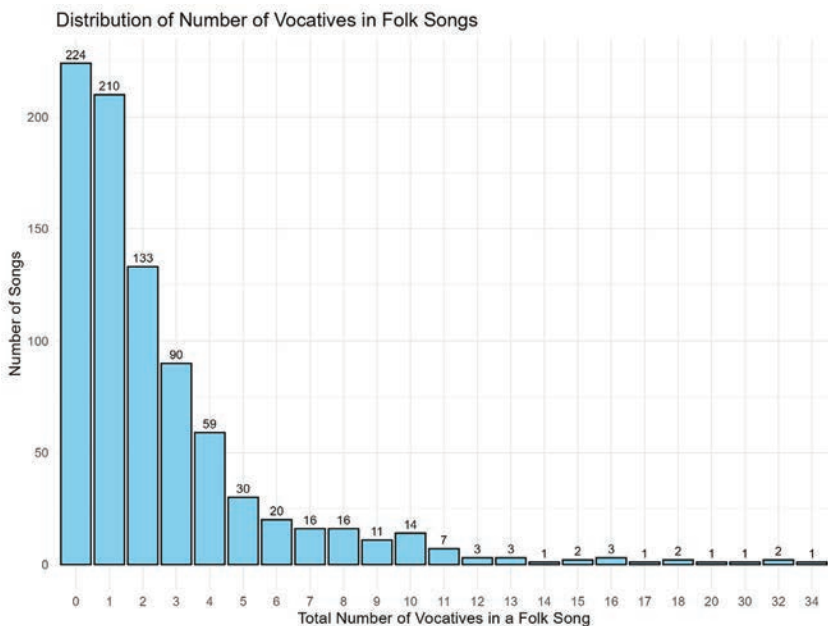


Figure 1. Distribution of the number of vocatives in the corpus of Ukrainian folk songs.

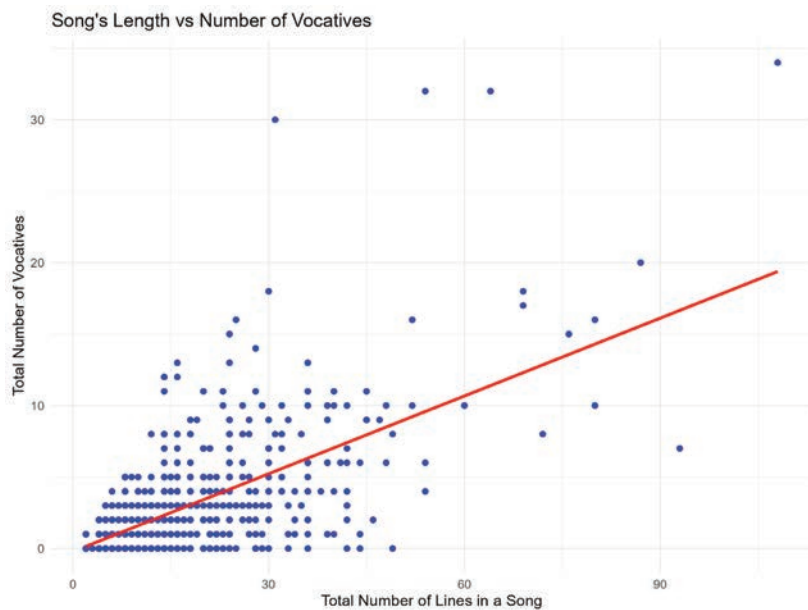


Figure 2. The correlation between song length and the number of vocatives in the corpus of Ukrainian folk songs.

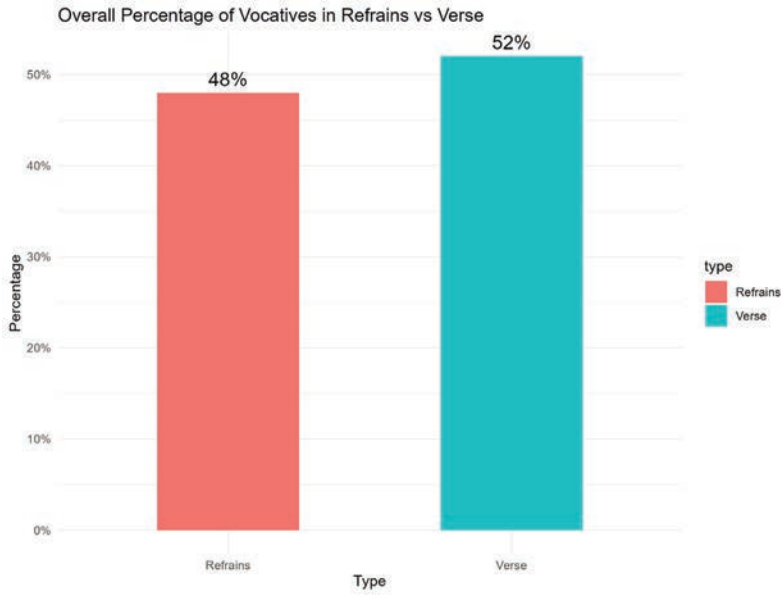


Figure 3. The distribution of vocatives in refrains and verse in the corpus of Ukrainian folk songs.

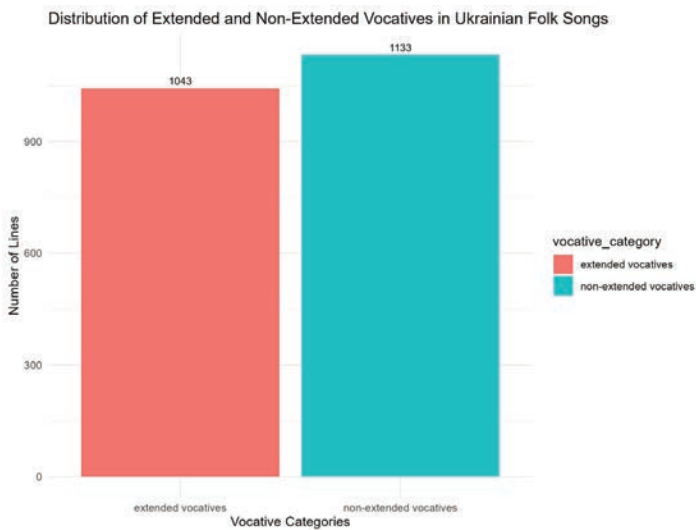


Figure 4. Distribution of extended and non-extended vocatives in the corpus of Ukrainian folk songs.

Figure 3 presents the overall percentage of vocatives found in refrains versus verse, with 52% of vocatives in verse and 48% in refrains. This near-equal distribution indicates a balanced use of vocative expressions in both structural components of the songs. The use of vocatives in refrains suggests a repetitive and emphatic nature, reinforcing the emotional or narrative impact, while their presence in verse points to their role in advancing the dialogue or addressing specific characters or entities within the song. The distribution across songs, the relationship with song length, and the balance between refrains and verse reveal the nuanced ways in which these linguistic elements contribute to oral tradition of the Podillia region.

As a result of calculating the distribution of extended and non-extended vocatives in Podillia region's folk songs, we found that their numbers are nearly equal, with extended vocatives making up 48% and non-extended ones 52% (Fig. 4). This balance in the distribution could be influenced by various factors, including traditional linguistic patterns that are characteristic of the region. However, without comparing this data to folk songs from other parts of Ukraine, we cannot determine whether this distribution is unique to Podillia.

The observed balance between extended and non-extended vocatives likely reflects the complex interplay of linguistic, cultural, and musical factors within Podillia's folk traditions. The selection of vocative structures may be influenced by the thematic content, rhyme schemes, and rhythmic patterns of the songs. For instance, extended vocatives might be more prevalent in songs that emphasize emotional or descriptive addressing.

In examining the distribution of each part of speech within vocative structures in the corpus, we observe distinctive patterns that highlight the semantic and grammatical roles of these elements. Following Shulzhuk (1969: 3, 20), we acknowledge a specific correlation between addresses in the vocative case and the parts of a sentence. The vocative construction most often consists of a noun in the vocative case, as in (14).

- (14) *De ty, **bido**, rodylasia, shcho ty meni sudylasia?*
'Where were you, **misfortune**, born, that you were destined for me?'
(Petrovych 2024: 541, line 7)

Adjectives, pronouns, ordinal numerals, and participles can also function as vocatives. Unlike nouns, these parts of speech do not possess distinct vocative case inflections and typically use the same inflections as the nominative case. In such instances, these words are substantivized and take on the meaning of objectivity. For instance:

(15) *Chekai, **mylyi chornobryvyi**, khoch malu hodynu,*
Nekhai zhe ya pohoduii maluiu dytynu!
‘Wait, **dear black-browed**, at least a little hour,
Let me feed the little baby!’
(Petrovych 2024: 376, lines 25–26)

To analyse parts of speech in vocative expressions, we employed computational tools such as the Ukrainian UDPipe model for part-of-speech tagging. Figure 5 provides a breakdown of the occurrences for each part of speech within the vocative structures presented in the corpus.

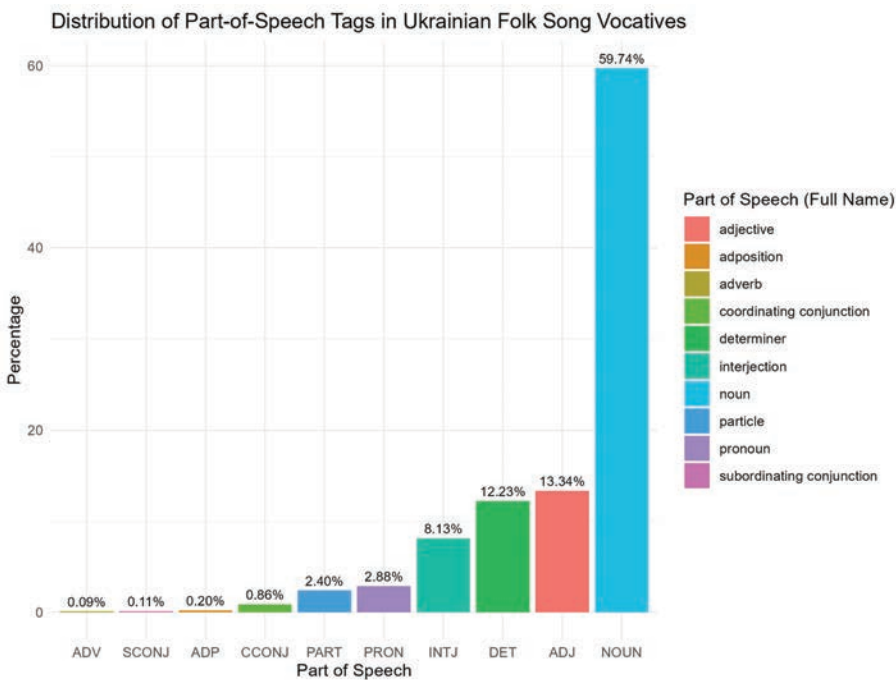


Figure 5. Distribution of parts of speech in Ukrainian folk song vocatives in ascending order.

The choice of a part of speech in vocative structures significantly influences the semantics and overall expression within a folk song context. Nouns can convey a sense of familiarity, respect, or emotion depending on the specific noun chosen. For example, addressing someone as *prymache* ‘daughter’s husband who lives with her parents’ carries different connotations compared to *synonku* ‘dear, beloved son’. The address *prymache* may suggest a hierarchical relationship,

implying dependency or a lack of autonomy within his wife's family. In contrast, *synonku* expresses affection and a close relationship, highlighting tenderness and a deep emotional connection. Occasionally, even a son-in-law might be addressed as *synonku* to reflect a positive attitude toward him.

Adjectives, whether substantive or as a part of a vocative phrase, add descriptive qualities to the address, emphasizing certain characteristics or emotions. For instance, addressing someone as *sertse kokhaneie* 'beloved heart' or *nevirnyi druzhe* 'unfaithful friend' brings a nuanced and emotionally charged dimension to the vocative.

Determiners, in our case possessive pronouns, play a role in personalizing and expressing ownership or familiarity in vocatives. In the context of vocatives, these possessive pronouns do not merely indicate possession but serve to personalize and establish emotional and relational context. For example, *moia nenko* 'my mother' or *nasha pannochko* 'our lady' use possessive pronouns *moia* 'my' and *nasha* 'our' to convey a sense of belonging and familiarity rather than literal possession.

Interjections in vocatives express strong emotions, reactions, or exclamations, conveying surprise, joy, dismay, or other intense feelings. Examples include *oi bozhe, bozhe* 'oh god, god' or *hei, koniu* 'hey, horse'. Personal pronouns *ty/vy* 'you (SG/PL)' create a sense of intimacy or immediacy, directly engaging the listener or reader, e.g., *oi ty, synochku mii, ty, dytyno moia* 'oh you, my son, you, my child'.

Coordinating conjunctions may connect elements in the vocative, contributing to a sense of unity or relationship, e.g., *bozhe, bozhe, i otets, i maty* 'god, god, and father and mother'.

Particles in vocatives serve various functions, such as emphasizing, mitigating, or expressing attitude, contributing to the overall tone and mood of the address. In our corpus, we identified emphatic-selective particles (*i⁵, da, ta, zh(e)*) used for reinforcement, categorical emphasis, and special highlighting of the entire message or its parts. For example:

- emphasizing endearment and emotional connection: *Oi synochku mii, dytyno i moia* 'Oh my son, my child' (Petrovych 2024: 516, line 4);
- highlighting and adding charm to descriptions: *Okh, vyshenka, vokh da i chereshenka* 'Oh, little cherry, oh and sweet cherry' (Petrovych 2024: 671, line 1);
- reinforcing affectionate addresses: *mylyi, da mylyi chornobryvyi* 'dear, oh black eyebrow beloved' (Petrovych 2024: 701, line 2);
- categorically emphasizing a specific address: *Oi ty, divchynonko ta i zaruchenaia* 'Oh you, little engaged girl' (Petrovych 2024: 520, line 4);

- specially highlighting fragrant objects: *Vasylechky ta zapashnii* ‘Fragrant little basils’ (Petrovych 2024: 105, line 1);
- expressing a lamentation with emphasis: *oi bidna zh moia ta holovonka* ‘oh my poor head’ (Petrovych 2024: 661, line 5);
- intensifying an exclamation: *Oi mede zh nash, mede* ‘Oh our honey, honey’ (Petrovych 2024: 463, line 1).

The examples above highlight how vocatives can be enriched with particles, producing emotional, expressive, and stylistic effects. The presence of particles and interjections alongside other parts of speech in vocative constructions contributes to the complex interplay of linguistic and emotional elements, enhancing the overall impact and meaning of the addresses.

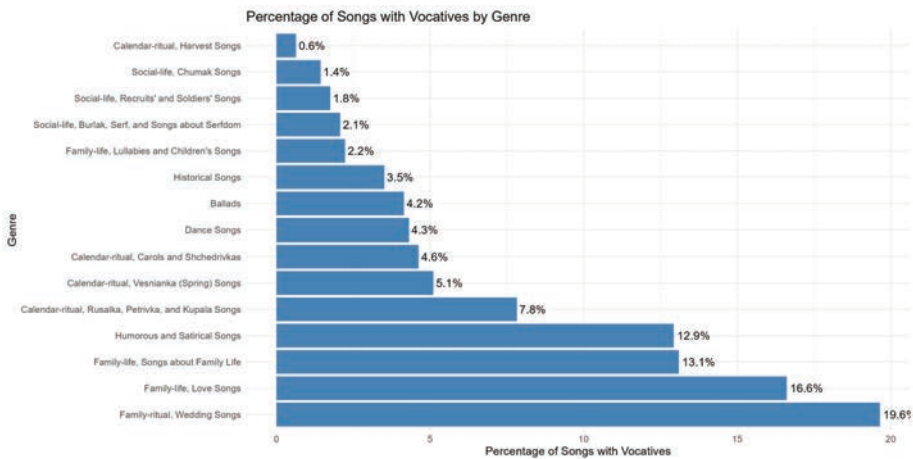


Figure 6. The percentage of songs with vocatives for each genre, sorted in descending order by percentage, with percentage labels.

Having analysed the parts of speech in vocative expressions, we now shift our focus to the frequency of vocatives across different song genres. Figure 6 presents a genre-based analysis of folk songs, highlighting the prevalence of vocatives within each category. It provides an overview of how frequently vocatives appear in different types of folk songs, reflecting their stylistic and thematic functions.

Family-ritual, wedding songs (19.6%) have the highest percentage of songs with vocatives. This likely reflects the importance of direct address in ceremonial contexts and the expressive nature of such songs. The next highest percentage is observed in love songs (16.6%), suggesting that vocatives are commonly used

to convey personal emotions and intimate sentiments. Songs about family life (13.1%) also show a significant use of vocatives, highlighting their role in addressing family members and depicting everyday interactions and relationships.

In contrast, calendar-ritual songs, which are closely tied to the agricultural calendar and seasonal rituals, show lower percentages of vocative usage. Subgenres within this category, such as *rusalka*, *Petrivka*, and *Kupala* songs (7.8%), *vesnianka* (spring) songs (5.1%), and carols and *shchedrivkas* (4.6%), all exhibit relatively modest use of vocatives. Particularly notable is the extremely low presence of vocatives in harvest songs (0.6%). This can be attributed to the communal nature of these songs, where the focus is often on collective action and celebration rather than individual expression. Thus, the rarity of vocatives in these songs aligns with their purpose of fostering a collective identity and prioritizing shared narratives over direct address.

Historical songs (3.5%) and social-life songs, including *burlak*⁶ and serf songs, and songs about serfdom (2.1%), recruits' and soldiers' songs (1.8%), and *chumak*⁷ songs (1.4%), exhibit low percentages of vocative usage. This pattern likely reflects the narrative nature of these genres, where the emphasis is on storytelling, recounting historical and social events, and portraying the hardships of life in these social strata, rather than on personal engagement or direct address.

Overall, Figure 6 highlights the varying importance and frequency of vocatives across different folk song genres. Genres with higher percentages of vocatives typically reflect more personal – ceremonial or intimate – contexts, whereas genres with lower percentages often focus on broader social or communal themes.

SEMANTIC GROUPS AND STRUCTURAL PATTERNS OF VOCATIVES IN PODILLIA REGION'S FOLK SONGS

Semantic grouping and structural patterning of vocatives in folk songs can be approached from different angles. Previous studies have presented several groupings of vocatives based on their functions or formal features. Schaden (2010) identifies three basic functions of vocatives: to identify the addressee(s), to predicate something on the addressee(s), and to activate the addressee(s).

Biber et al. (1999: 1109) demonstrate the diverse forms that vocatives can assume, providing examples such as endearments (*honey, darling, sweetie pie, dear*); kinship terms (*Daddy*); familiarizers (*guys, dude, bud, bro*); first name familiarized (*Johnny*); first name full form (*John*); title and surname (*Mr. Smith*); honorific (*Sir*); nickname (*Speedy*); impersonal vocatives (*Someone*

get that phone, will you!); and even elaborated nominal structures (*those of you who want to bring your pets along*).

Karaman et al. (2011: 436–437) and Shulzhuk (2004) differentiate vocatives based on their semantics into various groups: 1) surnames, first names, patronymics, pseudonyms and nicknames of people; 2) names of people according to their family relationships (kinship); 3) social position, class or social status, rank, title, etc.; 4) profession, specialty of a person; 5) nationality of the person, place of residence; 6) names of different parts of the body; 7) names of demonological and mythical creatures; 8) names of animals and birds and their nicknames; 9) names of plants; 10) names of natural phenomena; 11) geographical names; 12) abstract concepts (moral qualities, experiences, mental state, feelings, etc.); 13) references to some sort of group or collective; 14) commonly known concepts of culture and art.

Considering the classifications mentioned above and drawing on an investigation of the folk songs corpus, we identify the following semantic groups of vocatives: 1) addresses with proper names; 2) addresses by kinship; 3) addresses by age; 4) addresses by social position; 5) addresses by religious and ritual origin; 6) addresses by profession and occupation; 7) addresses by place of residence and origin; 8) addresses to birds and animals; 9) addresses to inanimate objects. Figure 7 illustrates the percentage distribution of these semantic groups within the corpus in ascending order.

The observed distribution of semantic groups, illustrated in Figure 7, can be explained by several factors. First, the prominence of kinship terms reflects the cultural significance of family ties and relationships within the context of Podillia region's folk songs. Terms like *myla* 'darling', *mamo* 'mother', *synu* 'son', *brate* 'brother', etc., convey various social and emotional nuances beyond mere kinship. These terms serve a dual function: they denote literal family relationships (16) and are used metaphorically (17) to express affection, respect, or familiarity. This duality highlights the singer's social or emotional authority, even in the absence of a direct kinship relation, enriching the semantic versatility of these terms and providing deeper insights into social and cultural dynamics.

(16) *Ne plach, ne plach, **stara maty**, ta i za mnoiu*
'Don't cry, don't cry, **old mother**, and for me'
(Petrovych 2024: 803, line 4)

(17) *A zroby meni, **brate, virnyi tovaryshu**,*
Z klen-dreva trunu
'And make me, **brother, faithful comrade**,
A coffin from a maple tree'
(Petrovych 2024: 754, lines 19–20)

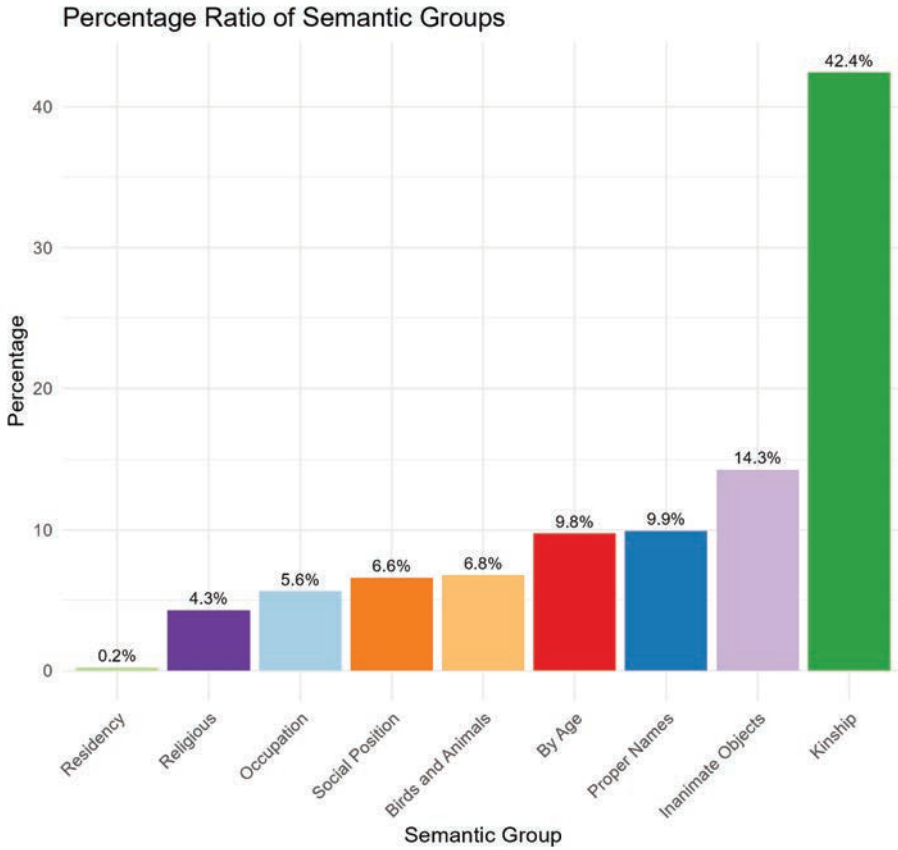


Figure 7. Percentage ratio of semantic groups of vocatives in the corpus of Ukrainian folk songs in ascending order.

Second, different song genres and themes also influence the use of vocatives across various semantic groups, particularly kinship and inanimate objects. For instance, kinship terms like *svaty* ‘parents-in-law’, *ziatiu* ‘son-in-law’, *nevistko* ‘daughter-in-law’, etc., are prevalent in wedding songs, reflecting the familial context of these occasions. This genre-specific usage contributes to the higher overall percentage of addresses by kinship, which dominate the corpus at 42.4%.

Addresses to inanimate objects (14.3%) are rhetorical and not intended for a response; they primarily express the singer’s feelings, provide a figurative, emotionally intense depiction of events, and create a corresponding attitude towards the song’s content, as in (18–19).

(18) *Povii, vitre, ta i z pivnochi,*
Rozpliushch, vitre, meni ochi
‘Blow, **wind**, from the north,
Open my eyes, **wind**’
(Petrovych 2024: 603, lines 17–18)

(19) *Diakuiu vam, porohy,*
Shcho zbyvaly khloptsi nohy
‘Thank you, **rapids**,
For bruising the boys’ legs’
(Petrovych 2024: 662, lines 67–68)

The use of inanimate object vocatives varies significantly across different genres, with some genres showing a marked preference for this semantic group of vocatives. For example, vocatives of this group are most commonly found in songs about family life and love songs, where they often serve to heighten the emotional resonance of the lyrics. They are also prominent in calendar-ritual songs, particularly rusalka, Petrivka, and Kupala songs, where the symbolic and emotional power of inanimate objects is often invoked to reflect the thematic and ritualistic elements of the songs.

Third, the use of certain semantic groups may be tied to cultural symbolism, often through parallelism, as in (20):

(20) *Zelenyi dubochku, choho pokhylyvsia?*
Molodyi kozache, choho zazhuryvsia?
‘**Green oak tree**, why did you bow down?
Young Cossack, what are you upset?’
(Petrovych 2024: 193, lines 1–2)

Many addresses to birds and animals or inanimate objects in Ukrainian folk songs hold deep symbolic significance, reflecting cultural traditions (Koval 1987: 252; Danyliuk 2011: 37–38). These symbols often represent human qualities: the eagle or falcon embodies manliness, power, beauty, courage, and freedom; the dove signifies femininity; and the viburnum tree symbolizes a girl, etc., for example:

(21) *Ne zhuryvsia, yavoronku, ty shche zelenenkyi,*
Ne zhuryvsia, kozachenku, ty shche i molodenkyi
‘Don’t worry, **little sycamore**, you are still green,
Don’t worry, **young Cossack**, you are still so young’
(Petrovych 2024: 749, lines 4–5)

(22) *Ty zh mii sokolonku, syvyi holubonku,*
Oi da liuli, syvyi holubonku
'You my falcon, my grey dove,
Oh, da liuli, my grey dove'
(Petrovych 2024: 512, lines 7–8)

These symbolic addresses primarily retain their literal connection with the birds and animals or inanimate objects they refer to. It is only through close reading and deeper analysis that one can discern the parallelism and symbolic associations with human beings.

Finally, addresses by kinship and symbolic addresses to birds, animals, and inanimate objects tend to resonate more strongly with the target audience of folk songs compared to other semantic groups, such as those based on religious and ritual origin or place of residence, thereby enhancing their emotional and cultural impact.

Addresses with proper names (9.9%) reflect regional preferences in the use of popular names. For example, there are noticeable shifts to names that were popular in the Podillia region at the time, such as Oksana among female names (e.g., replacing the name Mariika as in 23) and Petro among male names (24).

(23) *Oi choho plachesh, choho zhaluiesh, **moloda Oksanochko?***
'Oh, why are you crying, why are you sorry, **young Oksanochka?**'
(Petrovych 2024: 263, line 14)

(24) *Poid, poid, **mii Petruniu,** vid mene,*
Mozhe naidesh krashchu divchynu za mene.
'Go, go, **my Petrunia,** from me,
Maybe you will find a better girl than me.'
(Petrovych 2024: 453, line 16–17)

While the grammatical structures of vocatives vary across different semantic groups, some common patterns persist. Figure 8 illustrates the most frequent structural types that exhibit similarities across various semantic groups. There are some limitations in abbreviation because we applied the Ukrainian UDPipe model for PoS tagging in RStudio. For instance, "DET+NOUN" represents possessive pronoun + noun (refer to section 3a below); "ADJ" stands for substantive adjective (see section 4a below); "DET+ADJ" signifies possessive pronoun + substantive adjective, as seen in section 4b below; and "ADJ+ADJ" indicates a combination of substantive adjective + substantive adjective (see section 4c below).

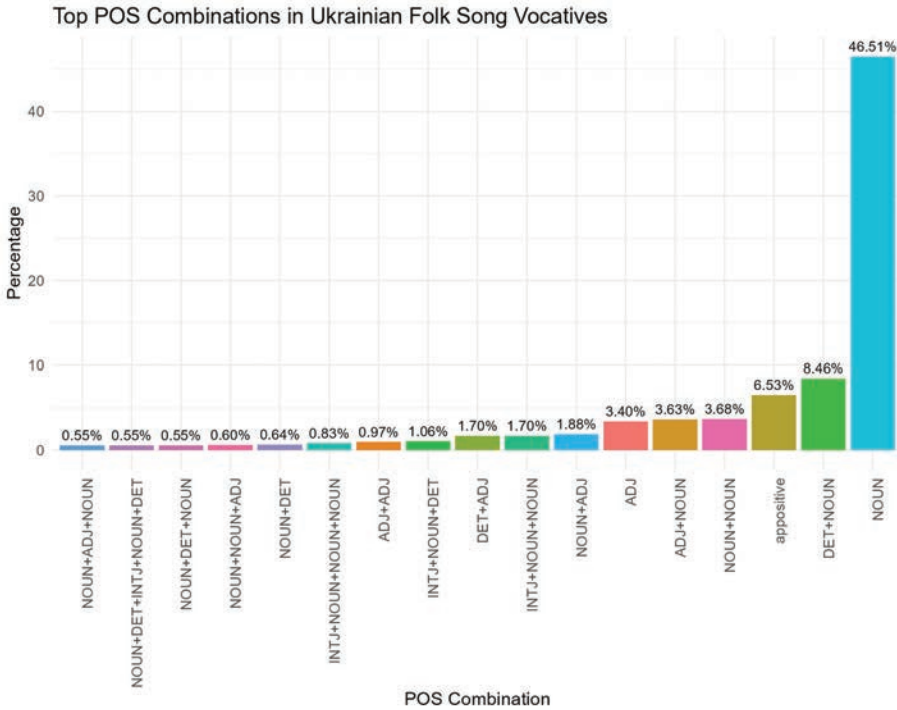


Figure 8. Percentage ratio of the most frequent structural types of vocatives in the corpus of Ukrainian folk songs in ascending order. The abbreviations in legenda are as follows: ADJ = substantive adjective, DET = determiner (possessive pronoun in our case), INTJ = interjection, NOUN = noun.

A computational analysis in RStudio identified 176 distinct structural types of vocatives in Podillia region's folk songs, of which Figure 8 displays the 17 most frequent ones. The following section provides a detailed overview of the structural types, categorized by their grammatical and morphological characteristics.

1. Nouns form 46.51% of all structural types; four main types of nouns are identified:

a) Non-derivative, i.e., basic forms without additional morphological changes: *otche* 'father', *ziatiu* 'son-in-law', *vdovo* 'widow', *dytia* 'child', *hospodariu* 'owner' (respectful address), *khaziaine*⁸ 'owner', *vorohy* 'enemies', *bozhe* 'god', *zhenche* 'reaper', *boiary*⁹ 'boyars', *rekrute*¹⁰ 'recruit', *koniu* 'horse', *vitre* 'wind'; proper nouns: *Romane*, *Mykolo*, *Olekso*, *Maksyme*, *Parasiu*, *Semene*, *Petre*, *Ivane*.

Occasionally, a noun can be repeated and/or a synonymic noun can be added (e.g., *oi pane, pane ta i hospodariu*¹¹ 'oh lord, lord and owner').

b) Inflectional, i.e., nouns formed with various suffixes and prefixes: *svatove* 'parents-in-law' (archaic form of the word *svaty*), *svekrukho* 'mother-in-law', *komisar* 'commissioner', *prykazhchyk*¹² 'bailiff', *harmonist* 'accordionist', *horlyku* 'a wild pigeon'.

c) Derivatives, i.e., nouns formed with diminutive suffixes *-un-*, *-us-*, *-ink-*, *-ts-*, *-yn-*, *-ochk-*, *-onk-*, *-enk-*, *-yts-*, *-echk-*, and *-k-*. These suffixes often change the meaning or connotation, giving the nouns a positive connotation and indicating the speaker's favourable attitude towards the addressee: *synuniu* 'son', *matusiu* 'mother', *matinko* 'mother', *kumtsiu* 'godmother', *dytyno* 'child', *podolianochko* 'little girl from Podillia', *cheliadonko*¹³ 'young people', *vorizhenky* 'enemies', *chumachenku* 'chumak', *rybchyno* 'fish', *verbytse* 'willow'; proper nouns: *Petruniu*, *Mytruniu*, *Ialynko*, *Haliuniu*, *Nastuniu*, *Petrusiu*, *Levkunechku*, *Stepanku*, *Varochko*.

d) Compound nouns among addresses by religious and ritual origin: *panimatko* 'priest's wife' (< *pani* 'mistress' + *matka* 'mother (arch.)'), *panotchenku* 'priest' (*pan* 'mister' + *otets* 'father').

2. Appositives (6.53%), i.e., nouns or noun phrases that rename or provide additional information about a noun next to them:

a) "Noun + noun": *Vasyliu-khlopche* 'Vasyl boy', *Oksanochko-divo* 'Oksanochka, the virgin', *kumtsiu-liubtsiu* 'godmother, the darling', *pan-matusiu* 'mother, the lady', *otamane-pane* 'otaman, the lord', *khryste-tsariu* 'Christ the King', *tsyhanochko-vorozhechko* 'gypsy, fortune teller', *khloptsi-rybolovtsi* 'guys, the fishermen', *sokole-orle* 'falcon-eagle', *susidochky-holubochky* 'neighbours, the doves', *makivochky-holubochky* 'poppy, the doves'.

b) "Interjection + noun + noun": *oi matinko-zore* 'oh mother, the dawn', *oi did-lado*¹⁴ 'oh, grandfather, Lado', *oi shchuko-rybo* 'oh pike-fish', *oi vyshenka-chereshenka* 'oh cherry-sweet cherry'. At times, these addresses are intensified by interjection + personal pronoun *ty/vy* 'you (SG/PL)' separated by a comma (*oi vy, khloptsi-rybolovtsi* 'oh, you guys, fishermen').

c) "Noun + noun + noun": *derevo, klen-derevo* 'tree, maple tree'.

Appositives can be amplified by a conjunction (e.g., *a dochky-holubochky* 'and daughters, the doves').

3. Binary word combinations formed according to the following formulas:

a) "Possessive pronoun + noun" (8.46%) and inversions "noun + possessive pronoun" (0.64%): *mii Romane* 'my Roman', *Oksano moia* 'my Oksana', *moie sertse* 'my heart', *moia dushko* 'my soul', *mii koniu* 'my horse', *peche zh nasha* 'our oven'. These combinations can be intensified by interjections (1.06%): *oi divchyno moia* 'oh, my girlfriend'. Additionally, such formulas can

be repeated and amplified by interjections between repetitions, like “noun + possessive pronoun + interjection + noun + possessive pronoun” (0.55%), as in *zhaliu mii, hei, zhaliu mii* ‘my sadness, hey, my sadness’.

b) “Noun + noun” (3.68%): *pane Ivane* ‘lord Ivan’, *panno*¹⁵ *Ialynko* ‘lady Ialynka’, *divko Motruniu* ‘girl Motrunia’, *pan Kanovskyi* ‘lord Kanovskyi’. This formula can also be amplified by interjection (1.7%): *oi kozle, kozle* ‘oh billy goat, billy goat’, *oi zhuravko, zhuravko* ‘oh crane, crane’, *oi bratiku, sokolonku* ‘oh brother, falcon’.

c) “Adjective + noun” (3.63%) and inversions “noun + adjective” (1.88%): *Baido molodenkyi* ‘young Baida’, *molodyi kozache* ‘young Cossack’, *male dytia* ‘small child’, *bidna syrotonko* ‘poor orphan’, *vrazhyi synu* ‘hostile son’ (abusive negative address), *hzheshnaia panno* ‘sinful lady’, *saryi zhandar* ‘old gendarme’, *syvaia zozulenko* ‘grey cuckoo’, *bila berezo* ‘white birch’.

4. Substantive adjectives are common for addresses by kinship, age, social position, and addresses to birds and animals according to the following formulas:

a) “Substantive adjective” (3.4%): *prekhoroshyi* ‘very good beloved’, *myla* ‘dear’, *kokhana* ‘beloved’, *molodesenka* ‘young lady’, *saryi* ‘old man’, *mala* ‘small girl’, *bidna* ‘poor girl’, *bahata* ‘rich woman’, *voronyi* ‘raven horse’.

b) “Possessive pronoun + substantive adjective” (1.7%): *mii mylenkyi* ‘my dear’, *moia liuba* ‘my darling’, *moia chornobryva* ‘my black eyebrow girlfriend’.

c) “Substantive adjective + substantive adjective” (0.97%): *mylyi chornobryvyi* ‘black eyebrow beloved’. This formula can be amplified by interjection or conjunction + personal pronoun *ty/vy* ‘you (SG/PL)’ separated by a comma: *oi ty, myla chornobryva* ‘oh you, black eyebrow beloved’, *a ty, mylyi chornobryvyi* ‘and you, black eyebrow beloved’.

5. Tripartite addresses formed according to the following formulas:

a) “Interjection + noun + noun + noun” (0.83%): *oi vesno, vesno, vesniano-chko* ‘oh spring, spring, spring’, *oi Petre, Petre, Ivane* ‘oh Peter, Peter, Ivan’, *oi verbo, verbo, verbytsse* ‘oh willow, willow, willow’, *oi dole, dole, dole* ‘oh fate, fate, fate’.

b) “Noun + noun + adjective” (0.6%): *yavore, yavoronku zelenenkyi* ‘sycamore, green sycamore’, *bozhe, bratyku ridnenkyi* ‘god, dear brother’, *bozhe, bratovonka myla* ‘god, cute brother’s wife’.

c) “Noun + possessive pronoun + noun” (0.55%): *doniu moia, Bondarivno* ‘my daughter Bondarivna’, *zolutarchyku, mii holubchyku* ‘goldsmith, my dove’.

d) “Noun or substantive adjectives + adjective + noun” (0.55%): *brate, virnyi tovaryshu* ‘brother, faithful comrade’, *myla, holubko syva* ‘darling, grey dove’.

The remaining structural types of vocative phrases can be generalized according to their function and construction, particularly in relation to kinship, age, social position, religious origin, profession, and residence. These vocative formulas are skilfully crafted using repetition, personal pronouns (*ty/vy* ‘you (SG/PL)’), possessive pronouns, interjections, and conjunctions. The formation of these structures is based on several principles, including such as:

a) Repetition for emphasis or emotional effect. This involves repeating nouns or the head of the noun phrase, often accompanied by different adnominal elements such as possessive pronouns or interjections. This repetition serves to emphasize or intensify the emotional impact of the address. Examples include *kumo, kumo, kumochko ty moia* ‘godmother, godmother, you my godmother’; *matinko moia, holubko moia* ‘my mother, my dove’; *oi tatu, nash tatu, oi tatu ridnenkyi* ‘oh dad, our dad, oh dear dad’.

b) Use of personal and possessive pronouns. Personal pronouns (*ty/vy* ‘you (SG/PL)’ and/or possessive pronouns are employed to address or refer to the addressee, adding a layer of personalization and connection. Examples include *oi vy, chumachenky, oi vy, liudy hozhi* ‘oh, you, chumaks, oh you, good people’, *oi didu mii, didu, ty, syvaia boroda* ‘oh, my grandfather, grandfather, you, grey beard’, *doniu moia, doniu moia, doniu moia hozha* ‘my daughter, my daughter, my beautiful daughter’. This category can also encompass indirect references or criticisms, as seen in *oi ty, hrafe, hraf Pototskyi, ty, prevrazhyi synu*¹⁶ ‘oh, you, Count, Count Pototsky, you, a very hostile son’.

c) Interjections for emotional intensity. Interjections are frequently used to add emotional intensity and are a consistent feature in vocative constructions, reflecting the affective nature of these addresses. Examples include *oi myla zh moia, druzhyno virna* ‘oh, my dear, faithful wife’, *oi bozhe mii, bozhe, z vysokoho neba* ‘oh my god, god, from high heaven’, *oi hei, voly, oi hei, voly, ta i voly polovii* ‘oh hey, oxen, oh hey, oxen, those light-red oxen’; *hop moi hrechanyky, hop moi yashni* ‘hop my buckwheat cakes, hop my barley ones’.

d) Conjunctions for cohesion. Conjunctions play a crucial role in linking related entities or attributes, thereby contributing to the cohesion of complex vocative structures. Examples include *dity moi, dity, syny i vnuchata* ‘my children, children, sons and grandchildren’.

e) Complex structures. Some vocative phrases are constructed using a combination of adjectives, nouns, adverbs, and emphatic-selective particles, creating intricate and expressive addresses. An example is *molodaia*

molodytse shche i molodychenko ‘a young, young woman, and cute young woman’ or *zeleneie zhyto shche i oves* ‘green rye and oats’.

A noticeable feature of vocative structures is inversion, a syntactic phenomenon where the usual word order is reversed or rearranged, typically placing the adjective after the noun or altering the expected sequence of words. It contributes to the expressiveness of the performance, increases the emotional saturation, and contributes to the folk song rhythm. These aspects are essential for understanding the overall aesthetic and auditory appeal of the folk lyrics, which are significant factors in their oral transmission and reception. For example: *shtany moi syni, syni* ‘my pants are blue, blue’, *choloviche mii mylenkyi* ‘my dear husband’, *synok zhe mii naimenshenkyi* ‘my youngest son’, *sertse kokhaneie* ‘beloved heart’, *oi shyttia moie bilesenke* ‘oh, my white sewing’, *oi ty, dube zelenenkyi* ‘oh you, green oak’, *oi ty, misiats, oi ty, yasnyi* ‘oh you, moon, oh you, bright’. In many cases the choice of vocative structures, influenced by rhyming, demonstrates the intricate relationship between form and function in folk song texts.

While the specific lexical choices, prefixes, and suffixes may vary across semantic groups, these common structural types provide a foundation for constructing vocatives in diverse linguistic contexts. The similarities in these structural elements suggest shared patterns in the expressive use of language across different semantic groups.

CONCLUSIONS

Vocatives in Ukrainian folk songs serve as linguistic tools, expressing emotions, establishing interpersonal connections, and enhancing the narrative’s depth and vividness. Through our computational analysis of vocatives, we have illuminated their semantic, grammatical, and stylistic nuances, showcasing their integral role in the cultural and linguistic functioning of Ukrainian folk songs, particularly in the Podillia region.

Our study reveals that vocatives in folk songs are multifaceted, with functions that include naming the addressee, attracting his/her attention, expressing a range of feelings and emotions such as love, endearment, gentleness, longing, grief, joy, affection or anger. The relatively equal distribution of vocatives between refrains and verses, alongside a correlation between song length and vocative usage, underscores the importance of vocatives in the overall structure of the songs. Moreover, the balance between extended and non-extended vocatives suggests a deliberate choice in their deployment, tailored to the emotional and narrative needs of each folk song.

The analysis highlights how different parts of speech – nouns, adjectives, pronouns, interjections, and particles – contribute their own semantic nuances, thereby enhancing the emotional and expressive depth of vocatives.

Vocatives are more prevalent in family-ritual (wedding songs) and family-life songs (love songs, songs about family life) compared to historical and social-life songs. This distribution suggests that the personal and emotive nature of lyrical songs makes them a more conducive genre for vocative expressions. Calendar-ritual songs, while less frequent in their use of vocatives, employ them in a manner that underscores their ceremonial function, often invoking deities or natural elements to enhance their ritualistic impact.

The computational analysis reveals a diversity in the structural types of vocatives, identifying a total of 176 distinct types. This structural diversity ranges from simple, single-word expressions to complex, extended types incorporating multiple linguistic elements. Among the 17 most frequently occurring structures, certain patterns emerged as particularly preferred, including nouns (non-derivative, inflectional, derivative and compound), appositives, binary word combinations, substantive adjectives, and tripartite addresses. Nouns alone account for nearly half (46.51%) of all vocative structures, highlighting their central role in the Podillia region's folk songs.

Vocatives serve a wide array of functions, from expressing intimacy and familiarity to marking respect, authority, or social status. They also provide evaluative commentary on various attributes such as appearance, age, or occupation. For instance, repetitive structures often emphasize affection or urgency, while the use of personal and possessive pronouns personalizes and intensifies the emotional connection between the speaker and the addressee. Interjections further amplify emotional intensity, and conjunctions create cohesion in more complex phrases.

While certain common structural types persist, specific formulas vary based on semantic groups of vocatives (addresses with proper names, addresses by kinship, age, social position, religious and ritual origin, profession and occupation, place of residence and origin, addresses to birds and animals, inanimate objects). The analysis of vocative structures reveals the skilful creation of addresses through the repetition of nouns, adjectives, and interjections, as well as the strategic use of possessive pronouns, conjunctions and emphatic-selective particles.

Inversion in vocatives contributes to their rhythmic and melodious qualities. Vocatives, forming expressive repetitions, serve as guides for introducing substantive and emotional elements into folk song texts. Additionally, the consistent use of parallelism as a compositional technique further elevates the stylistic and text-creative dimensions of vocatives in folk songs.

Similarities in vocatives originate from the common practice of using proper names and diminutive forms to convey familiarity and affection. Differences arise from the flexibility in constructing vocatives using various linguistic elements to create nuanced expressions of personal relationships.

Looking ahead, this research lays the groundwork for further exploration of vocative structures in other regional folk traditions, potentially expanding the scope to include comparative analyses across different linguistic and cultural contexts.

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NOTES

- ¹ The vocative form – instead of the vocative case, which is present in Ukrainian but absent in Russian – was canonized as a separate “form” outside of the Ukrainian case system due to Russian linguistic influence (Skab 2002: 88–89). It gained prominence during Soviet times and was institutionalized in the *Ukrainskyi pravopys* (1929: 28–44), aligning Ukrainian with Russian. Traditional academic grammars continued this separation (Bilodid 1972a: 225; Zhovtobriukh & Kulyk 1972).
- ² Transliteration of Cyrillic is done in accordance with the requirements of the current legislation (CMU Resolution No. 55 of 01.27.2010 “On streamlining the transliteration of the Ukrainian alphabet in Latin”; <https://czo.gov.ua/en/translit>).
- ³ Hereinafter, unless otherwise indicated, the translation is done by the authors.
- ⁴ Hereinafter this shows the number of the song.
- ⁵ In this context, “i” functions as an emphatic-selective particle rather than a conjunction. Although “i” is commonly known as a coordinating conjunction used to link clauses or words of equal syntactic importance, its role here is distinct. As a particle, “i” serves to emphasize or highlight specific elements within the address, contributing to the reinforcement and special highlighting of the message. This dual functionality illustrates the polysemy of “i”, where its meaning and grammatical role are determined by the context in which it appears.

- ⁶ Man employed in dragging ships upstream.
- ⁷ *Chumaks* were travelling merchants who delivered goods (salt, fish, grain, and others) for sale over long distance on carts (wagons) pulled by oxen. *Chumak* was a historical and traditional wagon-based trading occupation in the territory of modern Ukraine in the late medieval and early modern periods of history (Proskurova 2013).
- ⁸ *Khaziain* ‘owner’ carries a negative connotation, referring to ‘a wealthy and cruel owner’.
- ⁹ *Boiary* are friends of the groom at the wedding.
- ¹⁰ *Rekrute* ‘recruit’ means a soldier. In Ukraine, at the end of the eighteenth century, after the destruction of Zaporizhzhya Sich and all the remnants of Ukraine’s autonomy, Russia introduced recruitment on Ukrainian lands. It was a way of manning the Russian army by force. A similar phenomenon occurred in Western Ukraine – the recruitment of Ukrainians into the Austro-Hungarian army. At that time, service in the army was practically lifelong: if the recruit did not die in the war, he returned home very old or crippled (Kolessa 1983 [1938]: 96). In the nineteenth century, recruits served in the army for 25 years. Since 1884, recruitment was replaced by general military service, and the name “recruit” was replaced by “soldier”. Service in the Russian tsarist army led to the appearance of new folk genres – soldier and recruit songs as subgenres of historical songs (Lanovyk & Lanovyk 2005: 350).
- ¹¹ Here *pan* is a respectful address to a man, an owner.
- ¹² *Prykazhchyk* is a hired employee of a landowner who supervised some part of his household, performed various economic tasks or managed the household (Bilodid 1976: 631).
- ¹³ *Cheliadonko* is a diminutive form from *cheliad*. It means: (1) the population of a feudal estate in the Old Russian state, which was in various forms of dependence on the feudal lord; (2) people who lived and worked in the landowner’s estate, manor servants; people who held a low official or public position; (3) youth; wedding guests of the bride; (4) women, girls; (5) members of the same family (Bilodid 1980: 292; Hrinchenko 1958: 450).
- ¹⁴ In the Ukrainian pre-Christian beliefs *Lado* and *Lada* as the male and female hypostases are the gods of a truthful married couple. They were addressed to have a happy marriage in wealth and love (Voitovych 2002: 442; Metropolitan Ilarion 1992 [1965]: 110). Mykola Kostomarov (1817–1885), Ukrainian historian, publicist, and writer, argued that in Slavic mythology, Lada symbolized nature, the basis of life; she was the mother of the Sun in its incarnation and the goddess of love, harmonious relationships, and welfare (Voropai 1958: 29). The calendar celebration of Lado and Lada lasted for a month, from the 25th of May till the 25th of June (O.S.).
- ¹⁵ *Panno* is a respectful address to a woman.
- ¹⁶ *Prevrazhyi synu* here means an abusive negative address, ‘enemy’.

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CORPUS-BASED RESEARCH OF SEMANTIC ASPECTS OF *LAUL*-STEM WORDS IN ESTONIAN, FOCUSED ON PAST NEWSPAPER TEXTS AND FOLK SONG LYRICS

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Abstract: This study examines conceptions of singing across various Estonian cultural spheres through corpus-based analysis of the singing-related vocabulary. The words with the stem *laul* ‘song’/‘sing’ are analysed in five linguistic corpora, with a detailed focus on two of them: the Estonian Media Corpus (EMC), comprising 1890s newspaper texts from the Corpus of Written Estonian (Eesti Kirjakeele Korpus: 1890ndad; see CWE 2018), and the Regilaul corpus from the Estonian Runosongs’ Database (Eesti Regilaulude Andmebaas, ERAB). Our methodology combines quantitative word analysis with qualitative examination of lexical categories and semantic associations. The analysis reveals differences in the usage and frequency of the singing-related vocabulary between the two main corpora, offers new insights into singing in Estonian society and shows how distinct conceptualisations of singing and modes of expression in oral and written traditions are reflected in the vocabulary.

Keywords: computational folkloristics, historical media analysis, singing concepts, ethnomusicology, corpus linguistics

1. INTRODUCTION

Scholarly discourse on singing traditionally provides insights into music history primarily from an academic perspective. A large proportion of the scholars receive Western art music education, which influences their analytical frameworks. The twentieth century saw the emergence of disciplines like ethnomusicology and popular music studies, broadening the scope of musical scholarship. However, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the ways and roles of singing in society, it is valuable to explore alternative discourses that exist outside formal academic boundaries.

Various texts can offer alternative viewpoints and valuable insights into attitudes toward singing. Textual analysis, especially if combined with documented music examples, helps delineate concepts of singing across different social and cultural contexts. A group's musical concepts encompass their ideas about and attitudes towards music. Text corpora representing various social discourses, including those peripheral to music, can shed light on these diverse conceptions of singing. While Estonian folk and national music are quite well-studied, the scholarly writing on people's everyday music habits (e.g., Raud 1912; Vissel 2004; Lippus 2006, 2012; Särg 2009, 2023), subcultures (Davidjants 2022, 2024) and grassroot perspective remains more limited. In the case of the *regilaul* tradition, the “common” singers' perspective has received greater attention (Kõiva 1964; Kalkun 2014; Kalkun & Oras 2018; Oras 2008, 2017; Rüütel & Tiit 2005–2006; Rüütel 2013; Saarlo 2023). The semantics of the folk song vocabulary has been studied earlier in not numerous but thorough works (Peegel 2004; Labi 2006; Saarlo & Sarv & Mett 2022).

Large text corpora require the development of methodologies to examine their semantic content. Computational linguistics provides methods like vocabulary analysis, discourse analysis, and corpus analysis to extract information from texts. Teubert (2009: 53) articulates the goal of corpus linguistics: “to find out what a text, a text segment or a lexical item means in a specific context, at a given time”.

This study draws on the works of ethnomusicologist Allan Merriam (1964), scientific cognition theorist Keith Taber (2019–2024), and linguist Wolfgang Teubert (2009). Concepts are mental constructs that label and describe phenomena, simplifying the diversity of the world through generalisations (Rickert 1902 [1896]: IV, 32–33). Taber distinguishes between concepts, conceptions, and the words that designate them. A concept is a general idea shared by a group, while words serve to identify the concept. The words used more specifically within a discipline become terms. Taber uses the word ‘conception’ to refer to an individual's interpretation of a concept.¹ He also notes that concepts are

relational – our understanding of a concept involves its associations with other linked concepts² (Taber 2019–2024).

Merriam introduced the ‘concept of music’ in ethnomusicology, drawing on Vinigi Grottanelli’s idea of an “underlying system of conceptions” in visual arts (Merriam 1964: 34). Within the framework of cultural relativism, music is seen as a universal human activity that manifests in culturally specific ways, shaped by a group’s underlying concepts.³ Concepts, being mental entities, can be studied indirectly through their manifestations in sounds, speech, and writing. While the existence of song and singing concepts is evident in the words themselves, their content and meaning – how people perceive singing and relate it to other aspects of music and life – require further study.

Concept study is central to cognitive linguists like Richard Langacker (2002 [1990]) and is a key task in linguistic semantics (Teubert 2009: 36). Teubert stresses that meaning is social and emerges through communication, discoverable only in text collections: “An approach to language from a social perspective will analyse a discourse as a collective mind” (ibid.: 47). Our study explores singing concepts in Estonian text collections representing various social discourses.

Historical music in Estonia can be broadly categorised into two main parts reflecting societal structure: 1) Estonian peasants’ traditional music with Finnic cultural roots, and 2) art, church, and folk music used by the local upper class of Indo-European origin. These two categories interacted, with Western music influencing local Estonian music.

The Estonians’ ethnic groups have been inhabiting the Baltic shores for at least 2,000 years, and likely blended in with the earlier population of this area (Saag et al. 2019). Estonians consider themselves indigenous (*põlisrahvas*; *põline* ‘traditional, indigenous, age-old’) due to their long-standing presence and close relationship with the local environment, despite cultural and genetic influences over time.⁴ Estonian tribal territories were conquered by Northern Crusaders by 1227, leading to the baptism of the people, gradually depriving locals of their political and economic right to self-determination and culminating with the development of serfdom under foreign landlords by the eighteenth century. The Estonian territory was ruled by various imperia, including the Russian Empire (1710–1919) with Baltic German landlords maintaining privileges over Estonian peasants, and later the Soviet Union (1940–1941/1944–1991).⁵

For centuries, the population on the Estonian territory was divided primarily by ethnicity and language, with Estonians being a lower class. Estonians maintained a blend of pagan and Christian beliefs, along with the ancient Finnic *regilaul* tradition, into the early 1900s and partially to the present day. Nevertheless, local traditional music interacted with neighbouring musical traditions and Western folk, church, and art music, with Baltic German music

exerting a significant influence. In the nineteenth century, society in Estonia started to modernise, influenced by broader economic and social changes across Europe. Serfdom was gradually abolished with the reforms between 1816 and 1868, while national consolidation began in the 1860s. During this period, Estonians' ancient community practices and singing traditions diminished, while choral singing gained central importance in the formation of modern national identity. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw both extensive folklore collection and the establishment of modern Estonian-language culture. These processes culminated in the formation of the independent Republic of Estonia in 1918.

This article presents a collaborative study by ethnomusicologist and folklorist Taive Särg and language technology researcher Kaarel Veskis, examining the evolving concepts of singing throughout Estonia's cultural history. As native Estonian speakers with advanced philological training, we bring a nuanced understanding of both contemporary and historical language use to this research. Our complementary backgrounds in musicology further inform our analysis. The following chapters introduce Estonian singing-related vocabulary (Ch. 2), our research methodology and selected text corpora (Ch. 3–4), and present the results of a detailed analysis of two text corpora (Ch. 5–6) with a further comparison (Ch. 7).

2. THE CONCEPTS OF SONG AND SINGING IN ESTONIA

In many indigenous cultures, including Estonian, singing and instrumental music were distinct activities, with no generic term for 'music' until the nineteenth century (cf. Blacking 1995: 224). In Estonian colloquial language, the term *muusika* (music) still remains more closely associated with instrumental music, as illustrated by this media quote: "We believe that through music and singing, a child's soul can be made to sound" (Mamma Mia).⁶

The ancient Estonian verb *laulma* 'to sing' remains common and serves as the root for derivatives such as *laulmine* 'singing', *laul* 'song'⁷, and *laulja* (singer). Historically, *laulma* belongs to the Finno-Samic stems (Metsmägi & Sedrik & Soosaar 2013: 318). However, the practices and sounds denoted by *laul* vary considerably. Some archaic vocal styles (e.g., laments, herding calls) were not considered 'songs' or 'singing' even by practitioners (Rüütel 1998), while outsiders and even the Estonian intelligentsia sometimes questioned whether *regilaul* was a proper song (Jannsen 1857: 111), or occasionally using pejorative terms like 'screamy singing' (e.g. Schlegel 1831: 144).

Similar phenomena exist in other cultures, particularly for styles where lyrics predominate. For instance, early Welsh descriptions portrayed the singing style of hymns as pleasant and harmonious, while the strongly declamatory style of bards was disparagingly termed ‘jogging’ (Kinney 2015 [2011]).

While *laul* appears in all dictionaries and encyclopaedias, some studies on musical terminology focus exclusively on art music (Vahter 2003; Lock 2019). *Eesti keele seletav sõnaraamat* (EKSS; The Explanatory Dictionary of the Estonian Language, 2019) offers comprehensive entries for singing-related terms, reflecting their diverse uses and meanings. It defines *laul* as: 1) human vocal musical expression and characteristic bird sounds, as well as sounds from other living and non-living sources; 2) a piece of vocal music, singing, and (in older Estonian) poetic writing; 3) a component in various idiomatic expressions with metaphorical meanings beyond those mentioned above.

The historical derivative *laulik* can denote both a person (‘singer’ or ‘poet’) and an object (‘songbook’) (EKSS). In oral tradition, a *laulik* functioned as both the (re)creator and performer of songs. With modernisation, these roles diverged, and *laulik* came to denote only a poet or a collection of written songs. A new compound, *rahvalaulik*, was coined for ‘folk singer’, defined as “a mediator of folk song tradition, a talented improviser, a creator of simple folk songs and verses, and a beloved poet of the people” (EKSS). In poetic language, *laulik* can also mean ‘songbird’. The dictionary definitions reflect two distinct concepts of creation: “folk songs in a simple form” are “created”, while “folk song tradition” is “mediated” and “improvised” (EKSS).

Another derivative for a ‘singer’, an agent noun *laulja*, is defined without a reference to song creation. *Lauljanna*, a neologism denoting a female singer, incorporates the newer gender suffix *-nna* (EKSS).

Ingrid Rüütel has provided an overview of singing-related terms in Estonian traditional music, concluding: “The Balto-Finnic peoples regard as a song (*laulu*) in general a vocal genre which consists of a poetic text and a melody with a certain structure. The word *laulu* is common to all Baltic Finns who know the runo-song” (Rüütel 1998: 36).⁸ She brings out that several song genres, such as laments, spells, herding calls, recitative children’s songs and incantations were not referred to as songs, nor was their performance called singing, but they were designated by special, often descriptive linguistic expressions, e.g., *huikama*, *hellatama*, *itkema*, *lausuma*, etc.⁹ (ibid.). The sounds of certain birds and their imitations are also called songs (ibid.).

In conclusion, ‘song’ and related terms encompass a broad semantic field. We are interested in how singing-related words are used in their original contexts and what information they provide about songs and singing.

3. METHODOLOGY

Given that concepts are mental constructs, we employ indirect methods to study them, specifically analysing the meanings of song/sing-stem words in texts. In linguistics, ‘meaning of the word’ encompasses both the underlying idea or intention and the referent of a linguistic unit. Semantics examines the basic, literal meanings of words, while pragmatics focuses on their practical usage (Riemer 2010: 2, 22). Meaning is a broad category, related to the concept of lexical field as “a structure formed by lexemes”, and semantic field as “the underlying meaning which finds expression in lexemes” (Wylter 1992: 30; cf. Nordquist 2019b). For the concept of singing, the underlying meaning may manifest in sounds, as well as in synonyms, descriptions, and other linguistic elements. Meaning interpretation involves generalising from the specific meanings words acquire in unique contexts (Teubert 2009: 5). Words related to music (singing) represent cultural agreements within a language community. The same term, when used by different individuals or communities, may have varying relationships to its object and carry diverse aesthetic connotations or attitudes.

Text corpora are primarily used to investigate word frequencies, lexical and grammatical pattern distribution, neologisms, diachronic changes, meanings, collocations, lexical-semantic relationships, example sentences, translations, definitions, terms, and expressions (Koppel 2020). Research questions and methods for meaning analysis should incorporate semantic considerations. Teubert explains that according to principles of corpus linguistics “[t]he constitution of meaning is the result of linking together words in a given context, repeating what has been linked together time and again in the discourse, and thus in the corpus” (2009: 19). Bennett (2010: 1–4) notes that corpus linguistics is well suited for comparing different corpora, such as spoken versus written language, or for contrasting a specific text corpus with a standard language corpus.

Ulrike Oster (2010) highlights the advantages of applying specific corpus-based analysis procedures, such as combining lexical approaches with metaphorical pattern analysis and incorporating concepts like semantic preference and prosody, particularly for analysing emotion words. This approach enables exploration of a search word’s context within large text volumes to delineate a concept’s semantic field. Analysing meanings in text corpora seeks a balance between rapid automatic processing of big data and result interpretation, often requiring close reading, comparing, and reasoning.

The analysis’s effectiveness also depends on the specific words and text corpus, considering factors such as dialectical and spelling variations.

We will examine different text corpora to uncover how singing-related words were used, what they reveal about historical singing practices, and any

additional contextual or other information embedded in these words. We extract and quantify singing-related word classes, compounds, and collocations, compare their normalised frequencies across various corpora, and analyse the information revealed through word associations. Frequent primary words are often considered more common and “less marked” compared to “marked” terms such as compounds¹⁰ (Nordquist 2019a). An example of a marked term is the aforementioned archaic word for a (folk) singer, *laulik*, which evolved into the more specific ‘folk singer’ (*rahvalaulik*) in the era of literary culture.

The word *laul* was selected for analysis due to its musical significance and linguistic structure. *Laul* serves as 1) a fixed stem derived from the verb *laulma* (to sing), with *-ma* as the infinitive marker; 2) a productive element in compounds such as *rahvalaul* (folk song) or *laulupidu* (song festival); 3) a common word across all social strata; and 4) a historical Estonian word with minimal dialectal and historical variation.

The verb derivative *laulatama* (to wed in a Christian ceremony) and its noun form *laulatatus* (church wedding ceremony) were excluded, as their current meanings no longer primarily relate to singing. This word reveals the historical connection between singing and ecclesiastical marriage in Estonian. The word is likely derived from the historical verb *laulama*, with the addition of the suffix *-ta-*, which renders it transitive.

We focused on texts representing both written and oral culture, as well as the transitional period between Estonian oral and literary culture in the latter half of the nineteenth century. For our initial analysis of song/sing-stem words, we selected four distinct historical text corpora and counted the frequency of song/sing-stem words for them. The next steps were extracting sentences (or verse lines) containing the stem *laul*, categorising parts of speech, analysing derivatives and compounds, counting various word frequencies, and conducting comparative analysis across corpora. Words were analysed by four categories: 1) root word *laul*, 2) derivatives, 3) compounds of various structures, and 4) verb *laulma*.

4. THE STATISTICAL COMPARISON OF THE FOUR TEXT CORPORA

This article presents statistical data on the four corpora, with a more in-depth analysis of the corpus of Estonian media from the 1890s and the corpus of the Estonian *regilaul* (‘runosong’) texts from the Estonian Runosongs’ Database.

1. The Estonian Runosongs’ Database (ERAB) was developed in collaboration with the Finnic runosongs’ database SKVR-Tietokanta. This corpus reflects ancient Estonian poetic language, with the older parts of *regilaul* predating written Estonian.

2. *Vana Kirjakeele Korpus* (The Corpus of Old Literary Estonian, VAKK) encompasses written texts from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries. It includes all extant texts from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, most printed texts from the seventeenth century, and a selection from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This corpus uniquely represents written texts from this period, reflecting the early stages of written Estonian, but also some aspects of folk life.

3. The 1890s Estonian Media Corpus (EMC) consists of selected Estonian newspaper texts and is a part of the larger Corpus of Estonian Literary Language (CELL 2018). It was compiled by researchers at the University of Tartu (Hennoste et al. 2001). We accessed the texts of the EMC through the KORP query interface,¹¹ which was managed by the Center of Estonian Language Resources (CELR).¹²

4. Folklorists from the Department of Folkloristics of the Estonian Literary Museum created a text corpus from calendars published between 1854 and 1938. These calendars served both educational and journalistic functions for rural populations. The texts were selected to the corpus based on folklorists' interests, including both folklore pieces and writings about folklore.¹³

5. For comparative purposes, a joint Estonian National Corpus (containing 1.5 billion words as of 2019) serves as a reference average corpus (Koppel & Kallas 2020).

Table 1. Frequency of laul-stems in five Estonian text corpora. Percentages are calculated based on total tokens and/or words, depending on corpus characteristics. Ø indicates unavailable data. M = million, B = billion.

	Regilaul corpus	VAKK	EMC	Old calendars	Estonian National Corpus 2019
Laul-stems	29,140	895	514	749	849,297
Total of tokens / words	8.9 M / 7.5 M	2.7 M / Ø	227,365 / 193,000	Ø / 961,419	1.83 B / 1.5 B
Percentage	0.33% / 0.39%	0.03% / Ø	0.22% / 0.27%	Ø / 0.08%	0.05% / 0.06%

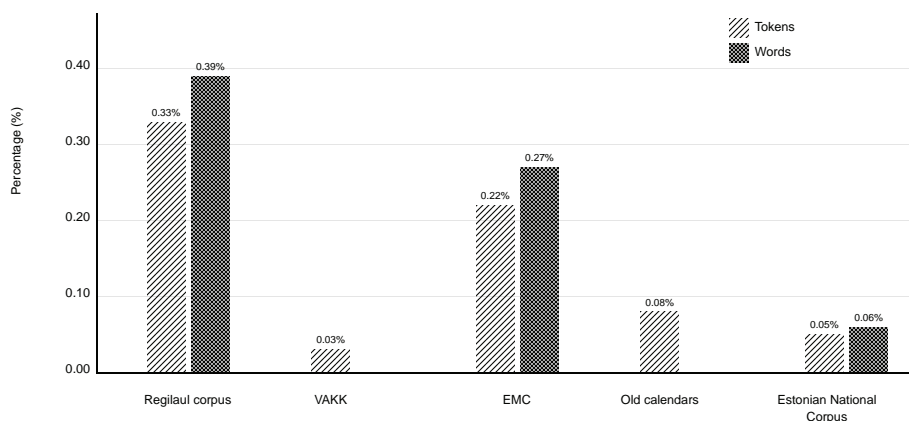


Figure 1. Frequency of laul-stems in five Estonian text corpora.

Laul-stems frequency in a corpus indicates the prevalence of singing-related topics and may reflect curators' selection criteria. The total volume of material in the corpora was reported differently by their maintainers, either as word count or as token count. Furthermore, the definition of what constitutes a token varied across corpora.¹⁴ Nevertheless, the data remain comparable as corpora reporting both metrics show minimal difference in the proportion of song/sing-words between token and word counts (Table 1, Fig. 1). *Laul* percentage in old literary texts (0.03% of tokens) and calendars (0.08% of words) approximates the Estonian National Corpus average (0.05% of tokens, 0.06% of words). As shown in Figure 1, the frequency of *laul*-stems varies across the five text corpora. The percentage of *laul* is approximately 6.5 times higher in the Regilaul corpus (0.33% of tokens, 0.39% of words) and 4.4 times higher in the EMC (0.22%) compared to the Estonian average (0.05% of tokens, 0.06% of words). Consequently, we selected these two corpora for a more detailed analysis.

5. THE 1890S ESTONIAN MEDIA CORPUS

5.1 Overview of the corpus and the 1890s media

Our study of the singing-related vocabulary in late nineteenth-century Estonian texts must be viewed within a broader context of Estonia's national awakening. This period saw efforts to build a modern society, written culture, and arts aligned with European standards. These developments were crucial for

improving the rights and economic conditions of native Estonians, who had long faced economic and cultural marginalisation under colonial rule.

The evolution of European musical culture was pivotal in this modernisation. Three all-Estonian song festivals in five years (1890, 1894, and 1896) underscore the role of choral singing in national identity formation (Kuutma 1996). Concurrently, Estonia, following a broader European trend, began the systematic collection of folklore, viewing it as a foundation for national culture. These activities occurred against intensifying Russification efforts by the Russian Empire in the 1890s.

The Estonian-language press played a key role in spreading democratic and enlightening ideas to the largely rural lower-class Estonian population. Anu Pallas wrote that by the late nineteenth century, the Estonian press became “the centre of promoting public education and social life. ... At the same time, showing loyalty to the tsar was completely natural in the circumstances at that time and characterised all the editors of the people’s newspapers” (Pallas 2000; see also Lauk & Pallas 2008).

The EMC reflects this multifaceted historical context with several local news about choir concerts and social life that Mart Laar (2001) claimed to have been crucial in promoting a shared Estonian identity.

The KORP web page’s KWIC (Keyword in Context) interface, which we used for the analysis, references a subset of the text sources that are available online.¹⁵ Through this resource, we were able to verify the inclusion of the following 1890s newspapers in the corpus: *Postimees* (est. 1857), *Eesti Postimees* (1864–1905), *Olewik* (1882–1915), *Valgus* (1880–1906), *Sakala* (est. 1878), *Ristirahwa Pühapäewaleht* (The Christian Sunday Newspaper) (1875–1919), *Wirmaline* (1887–1898). It is worth noting that, in line with the journalistic practices of the era, most newspaper articles from this period were published anonymously.

5.2 *Laul*-stem words in the EMC

Analysis of singing in newspaper texts began with creating concordances from the texts of the EMC, using the KORP interface, followed by automatic quantitative analysis and manual content analysis. The *laul*-stem words were classified into lexical categories. First, we examined words neighbouring *laul*, many of which expanded our list of compounds. In Estonian, the distinction between solid (combined) and separate writing is often subjective and variable. As a result, certain text units can be interpreted either as a noun with its attribute or as a compound word. Due to unstandardised orthography in the corpus, words with the same meaning appeared in different forms (e.g., *kirikulaul* and *kiriku laul*

for ‘church song’). We standardised them according to modern orthography.¹⁶ We ultimately identified six-word classes, which are presented in Tables 2 and 3.

The EMC contains 501 *laul*-stem words, after excluding *laulatama*-words and a typographical error from an initial count of 514.¹⁷

Table 2. *Laul-stem words in the Estonian Media Corpus.*

Word	Word class	Frequency	Examples	Meaning	Total	% of all <i>laul</i> -words	% of all <i>laul</i> -words
<i>laul</i>	primary word	164		song, poem, activity	164		32.7%
	compound, second <i>-laul</i>	73	<i>tänu laul, soolo-laul, naljalaul</i>	thanks-giving song, solo song, joke song	207	14.6%	41.3%
	compound, first <i>laulu-</i>	114	<i>laulu pidu, laulukoor, lauluhääl</i>	song festival, singing choir, singing voice		22.8%	
	3-part words of different structure	20	<i>laulu- ja käsiraamat</i>	song- and handbook		4.0%	
<i>lauluke</i>	diminutive	3		little song		3	
<i>laulmine</i>	gerund	16		singing	18		3.6%
	compound, second	2	<i>kokku-laulmine</i>	singing together			
<i>laulja</i>	agent noun	38		singer	40		8.0%
	compound, second	2	<i>kunst-laulja</i>	classically trained singer			
<i>laulik</i>	agent noun	11		poet, bird, songbook	12		2.4%
	compound, second	1	<i>laste-laulik</i>	children’s songbook			
<i>lauljanna</i>	agent noun	2		female singer, songstress	2		(0.4%)
<i>laulma</i>	verb	54		to sing	54		10.8%
Total					501		

Laul denotes both poem lyrics and songs in the language of the time. The diminutive form *lauluke* occurs rarely (3) and is used exclusively to refer to poems. For example: “Only for the sake of good, he tied some little songs that had arisen in the course of time, into a bundle”¹⁸ (interpreted as: “The poet completed a book of poems”).

The term *laulik* in Estonian covers two English terms: ‘poet’ (*luuletaja*) and ‘singer’ (*laulja*), as discussed earlier (Ch. 2). When describing Estonian authors (11 times), and one Latvian author, *laulik* is used to mean ‘poet’. It also serves as a synonym for ‘poet’ in texts where the word *luuletaja* is used, regardless of the author’s nationality (10 times). However, in the four cases where only *luuletaja* stands for a ‘poet’, and *laulik* is not used, the texts were about non-Estonian authors. Additionally, *laulik* once used to denote a ‘bird’ as ‘nature’s singer’.

Laulik, when referring to a poet, carries emotive and romantic connotations. For example, a reviewer writes about the Estonian poet Jakob Tamm (1861–1907): “When reading the poem ‘Ärkvel’ [Awake], it’s hard to believe that the beautiful and poetic idea did not captivate the singer more than it did.”¹⁹

Laulja primarily refers to choir singers (34 times), rarely to singers in general (4). *Lauljanna* refers to a female classically trained solo singer (2). The suffix *-nna* was invented in the nineteenth century, influenced by Indo-European languages, where the female prominent person was linguistically distinguished. Feminine nouns with this suffix are rare in Estonian, while derivative suffixes for the masculine gender do not exist (Kasik 1996: 128; 2015: 243). Thus, *lauljanna* is a marked novel word in Estonian.

Words meaning ‘singer’ (54 times) comprise 10.8% of the studied vocabulary. Among the compounds, notable obsolete terms such as *kunstlaulja* ‘classically trained singer’ and *salmilaulja* ‘psalm chanter of the Orthodox Church’ were found.

The compounds and collocations (Table 3) mostly refer to various song genres and the phenomena related to choral singing: *laulupidu* ‘song festival’ (40), *laulukoor* ‘singing choir’ (30), and *lauluselts* ‘singing society’ (7). Similar longer word combinations are also associated with choral singing, such as *laulu- ja mängupidu* ‘song and music festival’ and *kokkulaulmine* ‘singing together’, among others.

The press primarily covers the social aspects of singing, such as choral song festivals and events in singing societies, often organised to raise funds for local purposes, such as obtaining instruments for an orchestra. Art music – solo songs, organ concerts, and opera – are described with respect, as if they were representing the highest branch of music. Multipart choral singing was promoted as it was associated with the development of local cultural standards: “We fervently wish that the awakening and guidance from the major song festivals

inspired learning and lead aspiration in our villages and homes” (Postimees 1897). Several compounds, such as *laulukevade* (song spring) and *lauluõpetus* (singing tuition) reflect Estonians’ growing alignment with Western music.

Other frequent singing-related compounds reflect dominant ideologies: *kirikulaul* ‘church song’ (12) and *lauluraamat* ‘hymnal’ (15) represent Christian influence, while *keisrilaul* ‘tsar’s song’ (16) and *Vene riigi laul* ‘song of the Russian state’ (2) denote the Russian Empire’s anthem. Both national movement leaders and ruling authorities deemed Christianity and its spiritual songs essential for rural populations, viewing religion as integral to European civilisation, order, and morality. A significant portion of the singing-related vocabulary derives from a lengthy article on the compilation of a new hymnal (*Uus Lauluraamat* 1900). The article’s author compares congregational and folk singing, stating: “Church song is the highest level of spiritual songs. ... A church song is to religious songs what a folk song is to secular songs”²⁰ (Olewik 1895a: 653). He argues that church songs are a fundamental need and should be comprehensible to “even the simplest person” (ibid.: 654). Realistically assessing church singing, he sees adapting songs as useful, noting that “everyone knows, how much physical strength it takes singing 8–11 stanzas in a row in a high voice” (ibid.).

The singing and playing of the Russian tsarist anthem are frequently mentioned in the late 1800s, particularly at state events, such as Nicholas II’s visit to Germany in 1896, tsarist family birthdays, and coronations. Given the period’s Russification efforts, both the performance and documentation of these anthems likely reflect attempts to appease authorities. Nevertheless, people may have been genuinely impressed by the uncommon sounds of large orchestras and choirs. Large musical ensembles are also praised for their impressive power in non-political contexts within the media. The anthem was also performed at anniversaries of various Estonian societies, including those of farmers and firefighters.

Table 3. Frequency of laul-stem compounds and similar word combinations occurring at least 3 times in the Estonian Media Corpus. Variant spellings have been consolidated under standardised forms.

Compound	Translation	Frequency	Longer word combinations with related meaning	Translation	Frequency
<i>laulupidu</i>	song festival	40	<i>laulu- ja mängupidu</i> 1 / <i>tänulaulupidu</i> 2 / <i>laulupiduline</i> 2	song and music festival / thanksgiving song festival / participant in the song festival	5

<i>laulukoor</i>	singing choir	30	<i>laulu- ja mängukoor</i>	singing choir and orchestra	7
<i>keisrilaul</i>	Tsar's song (Anthem)	16	<i>Veneriigi laul / Vene riigi laul</i>	Russian state song (Anthem)	2
<i>lauluraamat</i>	Hymnal	15	<i>laulu- ja käsiraamat</i>	song- and handbook (Hymnal with extra)	3
<i>vaimulik laul</i>	religious song	14			
<i>kirikulaul</i>	church song	12	<i>Ewangeliumi kiriku (koguduse) laul 1 / kiriklik ning ilmalik laul 1 / Jumalateenistuse (jumala teenistuse) laul 2</i>	Gospel / church song and secular song / song at the service	4
<i>lauluselts</i>	singing society	7	<i>laulu ja mänguselts 2 / muusika ja lauluselts 1 / laulu ja muusiku selts 1 / kasinuse ning laulu selts 1</i>	singing and playing society / music and singing society / singing and music society / chastity and singing society	5
<i>rahvalaul</i>	folk song	7			
<i>naljalaul</i>	humorous song	6	<i>naljakas laul</i>	funny song	1
<i>Eesti laul</i>	Estonian song	4	<i>Eesti algupäraline laul 1 / [eesti] algupäraline laul 1</i>	Estonian original song	2
<i>tundelaul</i>	lyrical poem	4			
<i>lugulaul</i>	epical song	4			
<i>lastelaul</i>	children's song	4			
<i>koorilaul</i>	choral song	3	<i>meestekoori laul</i>	male choral song	2
<i>lauluviis</i>	song melody	3			
<i>mõttelaul</i>	philosophical poem	3			

Estonia's future anthem was already known in the 1890s and sung "breath-takingly" at a choir's anniversary (Wirmaline 1892). Finland's national song "Maamme" (Our country) made news when sung at a Helsinki demonstration protesting the closure of *Päivälehti* newspaper (Postimees 1899b). The Latvian national anthem faced criticism for its German influence. A reviewer noted its similarity to German songs "Wenn ich ein Wöglein wär" and "Heil dir im Siegerkranz", suggesting Latvians create a new, more original melody based on their folk songs (Olewik 1895b).

The term *rahvalaul* 'folk song' (7 times), often represents a concept rather than actual singing. The sole direct reference to folk song performance describes it as a 'recital' at a gathering: "Mr. Orgusaar recited [*deklameeris*] several Estonian folk songs, eliciting enthusiastic applause and cheering from the audience" (Postimees 1896).²¹ It remains unclear to which performance style the news refers. While *deklameerima* 'to declaim' in Estonian typically refers to poetry recitation without melody, Orgusaar might have performed *regilaul* songs in their traditional recitative style, which the journalist may have perceived it as declamation rather than singing. Folk song collectors have also described the *regilaul* style as declaiming or reciting. For example, "It appeared that tunes did not feature in his [W. Servinski's] performance; he sang by reciting [*deklameerides*]" (Tampere 1935: 14; EÜS I 752; see also Ch. 6.1).

Performing Seto folk songs, likely on the stage, is mentioned in a description of a festive celebration at Navi school: "After several choral performances, the teacher humorously narrated Setu stories in dialect, interspersed with Setu songs" (Wirmaline 1892). This brief account does not clarify how (the traditionally multipart) Seto songs were actually performed.

Songs and folk songs were often characterised by their national or ethnic origin, with ethnonyms such as 'Estonian', 'Finnish', 'German', and 'Setu'. Notably, five out of six references to joke songs related to performances by a Russian theatre troupe, which highlighted ethnic tensions: a joke song about Jews performed by the troupe led to a lawsuit against the Jews who loudly protested (Olewik 1894).

The verb *laulma* 'to sing' appeared 54 times, the gerund *laulmine* 'singing' 16 times. Among these 70 references to singing, choral and spiritual contexts prevailed. An interesting obsolete verbal collocation, *ligi laulma* 'to sing close', meaning to sing together in a choir, was found. However, in a description of a *regilaul* performance a similar word, *ligilaulja* (lit. 'close singer', RKM II 94, 115 (2), not available in the ERAB), has been used for an echo singer – usually called *järellaulja*, who in the traditional way of singing repeats the lead singer's stiches.

In conclusion, the unqualified use of *laul* (song) in the EMC most frequently referred to choral songs or spiritual/church songs, each occurring about 50 times. *Laul* appears nearly 30 times in poetry reviews. However, the EMC does not cover all topics comprehensively; for instance, folk songs are rarely mentioned despite their prominence in oral tradition. This omission may reflect a lack of interest in folk songs among both journalists and corpus compilers.

6. THE CORPUS OF ESTONIAN *REGILAU*L LYRICS

6.1 About the corpus

This study utilises the Estonian Runosongs' Database (ERAB) and analytical tools developed by the FILTER project for Finnic folk songs (Janicki & Kallio & Sarv 2023). For the purposes of our analysis, we treat the texts from the ERAB as a corpus, which we refer to as the Regilaul corpus. This corpus is more extensive than the media corpus (Table 1), comprising approximately two-thirds of all *regilaul* lyrics (primarily older texts) held in the Estonian Folklore Archives at the time of analysis, in 2021. It also occasionally includes some Estonian folk songs of other styles.²² *Regilaul* language is variable, with singers often using irregular forms that blend diverse regional and historical linguistic features. A large amount of song lyrics was transcribed by various individuals during fieldwork in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, resulting in diverse orthography that resists complete standardisation through editing.

Estonian *regilaul* is part of the ancient Finnic runosong tradition, characterised by specific “Finnic” tetrameter, alliteration, parallelism, and content similarities. The primary structural unit is the verse line, sung successively without stanza formation, often alternating between a leader and a chorus (or echo singer). *Regilaul*, especially the leader's part, is often performed in a speech-like recitative style, with *ütleva* ‘to say’ used as an alternative term for singing (see, e.g., Sarv 2017; Tampere 1956; Rüütel 1998; Lippus 1995).

Several songs held ritual significance, accompanying activities such as farm work, weddings, and calendar traditions, while others were performed in various contexts. Song lyrics inhabit a poetic realm that reflects the real world through singers' perspective.

While folk songs about singing were not typically associated with specific activities, some appeared in ritual contexts, such as wedding singing contests. Folklorists classify *regilaul* lyrics into types based on content and function.²³ According to the preliminary statistics, some of the most prevalent song types

in the ERAB concern singing, including “Power of Song” (*Laulu võim*, 1000 variants), “From Where Songs Came” (*Kust laulud saadud*, 556), and “Mouth’s Quill” (*Suude sulg*, 480).²⁴ For comparison, other popular song types include calendar songs like St. Martin’s and St. Catherine’s songs (867 and 398 respectively), children’s songs like “Wirble-Warble, Small Lark” (*Liiri-lõõri*, 656), and narrative songs such as “Revenge to Manor Lords” (*Kättemaks sakstele*, 548). The prevalence of singing as a song topic suggests its popularity among both folk singers and collectors.

Folklore publications often prioritise songs about music, reflecting their symbolic importance. These songs start the volume of lyrical songs both of the Anthology of Estonian folk song lyrics (ERL 1970) and the collection of melodies (Tampere 1965).

6.2 *Laul*-stem words in the Regilaul corpus

The high linguistic variability of the Regilaul corpus has precluded automatic lemmatisation and grammatical unification. *Regilaul* lyrics preserve many archaic word forms due to their poetic meter, including the older two-syllable form *laulu*,²⁵ the stem of which varies dialectally (*laal*, *loul*, *laol*) and the final vowel appears as *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, or *õ*. Our analysis comprised the dialectal forms, and below, when writing about *laul*-stems and words in the Regilaul corpus, we include dialectal variants by default. For this study, Taive Särg manually lemmatised and standardised all song/sing-stem words, aligning them with contemporary literary Estonian. Key terms used in this analysis are the following:

- *laul*-stem: any word containing a *laul*-stem letter combination (including dialectal variants);
- *laul*-word: song/sing-stem word in its basic form (e.g., *laul*, *laulja*);
- surface form: original letter combination in the text;
- standardised form: standardised grammatical form of a *laul*-stem word (e.g., historical *laulamasta* standardised to *laulmast*, the elative case of the verb infinitive).

We initially conducted an SQL search across the entire corpus for the stems *laul*, *laal*, *loul*, and *laol*. This yielded 29,143 words containing these letter combinations, including 1,562 unique surface forms. We transferred these words to an Excel spreadsheet for further analysis which revealed several challenges requiring manual intervention:

- 1) eliminating surface forms identical to *laul* or its dialectal forms unrelated to singing;
- 2) differentiating homonyms, with particular attention to the abundant morphological homonyms among *laul*-words, though some remained incompletely defined (e.g., *laulu* and *laul* representing various grammatical forms);
- 3) contextually determining the meaning (basic word and case) of numerous surface forms;
- 4) correcting inconsistencies in formatting, standardisation, and editing, as well as errors in the original data.

We excluded several types of words: compounds containing *laul* or *laal* as mid-part (e.g., *laulinad* ‘hay barn sheets’, *samblaalune* ‘under-moss’), unrelated homonyms (e.g., *laale* ‘to the yard’, *lault* ‘gently’), names (*Laala*), meaningless words and refrains (e.g., *lallaallaa*, *vaat laali*), and errors. We also manually excluded *laulatama*-stem words (‘to wed’), as their forms can be identical to *laulma* verb forms, e.g., *laalat* as both ‘wed’ (attribute) and ‘you sing’ (second person verb).

Through this cleaning process, we removed 427 “false” *laul*-stems, leaving 28,716 *laul*-stems represented by 1,414 distinct surface forms. We lemmatised the rest of the material, consolidating words with different spellings, dialectal features, and grammatical forms. The poetic verb form *laulemaie* (~*laulemahe*), characteristic of *regilaul* language, was treated as an independent historical word rather than being reduced to the main verb form *laulma* ‘to sing’.

The main procedures were 1) implementing syncope and apocope (e.g., *laulijaksi* > *lauljaks*), 2) adding reduced vowels (e.g., *lauls* > *laulis*), 3) unifying the vowels, especially different stem vowels (e.g., *laal* > *laul*) and vowel harmony (e.g., *laulõlõma* > *laulelema*), and 4) removing morphological endings. There occurred a high variety of forms, including many problematic cases. The examples in the tables represent words already processed, e.g., the standardised verb form *laulelema* stands for the surface forms *laulõlõma*, *laulel*, *laulelma*, *laulelda*, *laaleldes*.

Table 4. Frequency of laul-words in the Regilaul corpus.

Word	Lexical category, occurrences	Examples	Total	% of all laul-words	Category total	% of all laul-words
<i>laul</i> song	primary word 5,271		5,271	18.4%	noun <i>laul</i> 8,204	28.6%
	compound, second - <i>laul</i> 442 (1.5%)	<i>kukelaul</i> 81 cockcrow	2,921	10.2%		
		<i>sõjalaul</i> 44 war song				
		<i>lustilaul</i> 43 amusement song				
compound, first <i>laulu-</i> 2,479 (8.6%)	<i>laululeht</i> 652 song sheet	2,479	8.6%			
	<i>laululind</i> 326 song-bird					
	<i>laulukool</i> 219 singing school					
<i>lauluke(ne)</i>	diminutive 227		227	0.8%	noun <i>laul-</i> derivatives 2,433	8.4%
<i>laulja</i> singer	agent noun 958		970	3.4%		
	compound, second 11	<i>vastulaulja</i> 7 responsive singer				
	compound, first 1	<i>lauljarahvas</i> 1 singing folk				
<i>lauljanna</i> female singer	agent noun 1		1	0		
<i>laulik</i> singer	agent noun 1,072		1,085	3.8%		
	compound, second 3	<i>ilmalaulik</i> 3 heaven/world/great singer				
	compound, first 10	<i>lauliklind</i> 5 singer-bird <i>lauliku-soost</i> 5 from singer's line				
<i>laulmine</i> singing	gerund 149		150	0.5%		
	compound, second 1	<i>linnulaulmine</i> bird's singing				
<i>laululine</i> singing-apt, song-rich	adjective 151		151	0.5%	adjective <i>laululine</i> 151	0.5%

<i>laulma</i> to sing	verb 15,001		15,001	52.2%	<i>laulma</i> verb and derivatives 17,940	62.5%
<i>laulemaie</i> to sing	poetic form	<i>laulemaie</i> (about starting) 2,776 <i>laulemahe</i> (about starting) 116	2,892	10.1%		
<i>laulma</i> to sing –derivatives	change of state	<i>laulanema</i> 15	47	0.2%		
		<i>laulenema</i> 5				
	repetitive action	<i>laulaskema</i> 8				
		<i>lauliskelema</i> 2				
		<i>laulatelema</i> 1				
		<i>lauletelema</i> 2				
		<i>laulelema</i> 11				
		<i>laulatamaie</i> 1				
		reflexive	<i>lauldema</i> 1			
	<i>lauldumaie</i> 1					
Total			28,716			

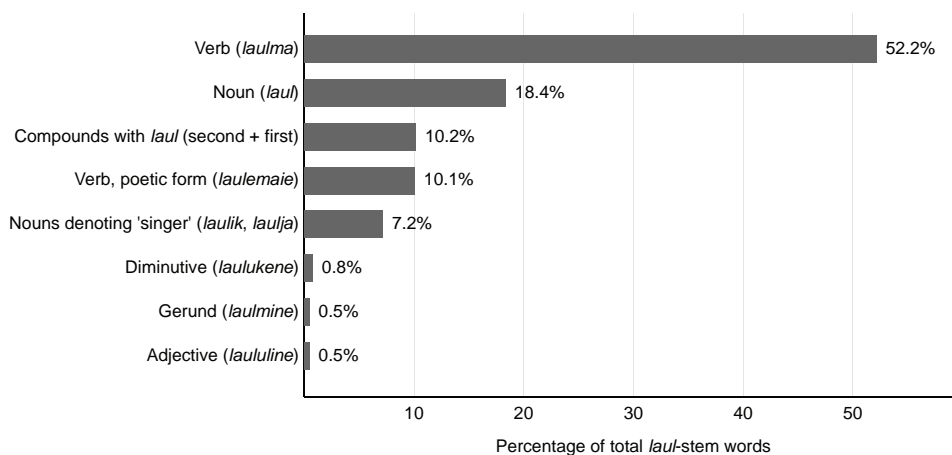


Figure 2. Frequency of laul-words in the Regilaul corpus.

Table 4 and Figure 4 summarise the results of the word-level analysis. The noun *laul* comprised 18.4% of all *laul*-words in the Regilaul corpus (5,271 instances). The most common *laul*-noun surface form (and the second most frequent among all *laul*-stems) was *laulu* (2,280). This form represents multiple grammatical cases (nominative, genitive, or partitive singular, and endingless nominative plural), which we did not differentiate. Including instances where the plural glottal stop is marked by an apostrophe (*laulu'*, 24), the total reaches 2,304. The next most frequent surface form is the regular plural *laulud* (1,285).

The two terms for 'singer' occur with similar frequency: *laulik* (1,072, and 1,085 including compounds) and *laulja* (958, and 970 including compounds), so 'singer' appeared 2,055 times (7.2% of *laul*-words total). Unlike in the EKSS dictionary and the EMC, these terms appear semantically indistinct in the Regilaul corpus. Despite their semantic similarity, these singer terms often associate with specific motifs in common song types. *Laulik* frequently appears in the "From the Line of Singers" (*Lauliku soost*) type, with typical verses like: "A singer [was] my father, a singer [was] my mother, a singer [was] my baby-swayer" (*Laulik isa, laulik ema, laulik lapse kiigutaja*) (EÜS VII 1682/3 (244) et alibi), "I come from the singer's line" (*Ma olen lauliku soosta*) (E 24031/2 (1) et alibi).²⁶

Laulja often appears in longer, pre-syncope surface forms retaining a historical stem vowel, most commonly as *laulija*, but also as *laulaja*, *laulõja*, etc. It features prominently in song types like "A Singer's Toil" (*Lauliku vaev*), "Pay to the Singer!" (*Laulikule palka!*), and "Drink for the Singer!" (*Laulikule juua!*), with characteristic verses such as "A singer has more toil [than]..." (*Enam on vaeva laulijalle; Inämb ol' l vaiva laulijal*), "Give money to the singer!" (*Andke raha laulijalle*), "The singer's palate is burning" (*Laulija lagi palasi*), and "Give vodka to the singer" (*Andke viina laulijale*).

In the poetic realm of *regilaul*, both *laulik* and *laulja* function as unmarked, primary words referring to ordinary singers. The potential association of *laulik* with a special blood lineage, as suggested by certain song types, warrants further investigation.

Traditionally, the gender of a singer appears from the context and from self-presentation, e.g., "this is a girl's singing voice" (*See on neiu lauluhääli*) or "[they are] listening to my words, a bad child's songs, a little boy's weavings" (*Kuulavad minu sõnuda, lapse halva laulusida, poisikese põime'eida*) (H II 25, 944 (3); H II 38, 189/90 (31)).

The gender of female singers is usually not marked. The modern term *lauljanna* 'female singer, songstress' appears only once in the corpus, specifically in a song from the newer end-rhymed layer of folk songs. Women constituted the majority of folk singers in recent memory (see, e.g., Kõiva 1964; Rüütel 2013; Oras 2008, 2017).

However, some male singers are also documented in *regilaul* tradition, suggesting that there may have been more in earlier times. The compounds for singers (Table 7) rather specify the male gender, such as *laulumees* ‘songman’ (25), or *lauluvennad* ‘song brothers’ (3), *lauluisa* ‘song father’ (1), and *lauluhärä* (1), *laulusaks* ‘singer of noble state’ (1); while the terms for ‘song child’ *laululaps* (8) and for female singers, *laulunaised* (4), are rarer. The singers’ traditional roles are denoted by terms such as *vastulaulja* ‘responsive singer’, *kaasalauljad* ‘co-singers’, and rather metaphorical *laululangukene* ‘singer-in-law’. In addition to people, birds are frequently mentioned as singers, with terms like *laululind* ‘songbird’ (326), *laulurästas* ‘song thrush’ (104), *laulukukk* ‘song rooster’ (8), and *ilmalaulik* ‘heaven/world/great singer’ (3).

Unlike the Media Corpus, the Regilaul corpus undergoes orthographic standardisation by its curators to align it with contemporary spelling rules. In relation to this standardisation, we analysed the existing compounds without searching for similar noun phrases.²⁷ Frequent compounds such as *laulukool* ‘singing school’ (219) and *laulukoor* ‘singing choir’ (13), refer to the modernising world and appear in similar contexts. By denying that they learned songs at school, in a choir, or at other modern literary institutions, the singers assert their connection with the local oral tradition, thereby affirming their singing power:

<p><i>See poiga õbissa olnud, seisand seppade pajassa, raamatmaakeri majassa, kirjatundija toassa, loalaulija eessa, laululaulija taganna. Mina aga kuulin vasta kostin: Ei ole õbissa olnud, [jne. ---]</i></p>	<p>This boy has got schooling, has been standing in the blacksmiths’ forge, in the bookmaker’s house, in the bookworm’s room, in front of the chanter, behind the cantor. I heard and replied: I have no schooling, [etc. ---]</p>
<p>(H II 38, 189/90 (31))</p>	

Some rare words, whose meanings were not immediately clear for oral tradition, were interpreted, using contextual clues, for instance, *lauluõpetaja* ‘song teacher’, *väljalaulja* ‘outsinger’, and *loalaulja* ‘chanter’[?]. It turned out that teaching was not connected with formal training, but the sister, from whom the songs had been learned, served as a ‘teacher’ here. Outsinger was a singer in the field.²⁸ *Loalaulija* ‘text chanter’, paired with *laululaulija* ‘cantor, song singer’ in the parallel verses refers to the church singers’ roles.

The diminutives *lauluke* or *laulukene* ‘a little song’, which are indistinguishable in inflected forms, occurred 227 times, while the gerund *laulmine* ‘singing’ appeared 150 times (0.8% and 0.5% respectively).

Verbs. The Regilaul corpus is rich in the number and variety of verbs, with verbs forming 62.5% of *laul*-words. In addition to the basic verb *laulma* (which appears in many archaic surface forms, such as *laulema*), the song lyrics also contain several verb derivatives. The forms *laule/le/ma* and *laule/ne/ma* might indicate: 1) singing as a continuous activity with *-le* as a frequentative suffix; 2) the state of singing with the subsistence suffixes *-le* and *-ne*; 3) the emergence of singing with the translative suffix *-ne*; 4) *laul/du/ma* and other verbs with suffixes *-u* and *-du* refer to self-reflexive activity (Kasik 2015: 116–142); and 5) *laulemaie* (*laulemahe*, *laulamaie*, etc.) is a special poetic form in *regilaul* language, used mostly in the phrase *hakkan laulemaie* (I begin singing). Grammatically, it represents a version of historical illative case (ending *-he*, *-je*) of the verb ‘to sing’ and seems to function as a crystallised poetic formula.

The verb *laulma* in successive parallel verses of *regilaul* was analysed in the dissertation of Kanni Labi, who found that *laulma* appeared more often in the first verse than in the second one within parallelism groups (66% versus 14%). The numerous parallel words (93 different words) had a wide range of meanings, such as ‘to poetise/versify/fantasise’, ‘let/shoot’, ‘roll’, and ‘tell’ (*luulema*, *laskma*, *veeretama*, *pajatama*). They include many onomatopoeic words for bird songs, especially ‘to cuckoo’ (*kukkuma*), and verbs that associate with moving (Labi 2006: 86–90).

The high proportion of verbs in *regilaul* texts emphasises singing as an activity, while “many songs” in lyrics refers to memorised motifs, plots, and improvisational skills. Some songs also refer to written notes (*laululeht* ‘song sheet’), which the singer could use as a memory aid (see Lintrop 2017).

Our analysis of neighbouring words for ‘song’ was limited to a smaller data set, focusing on attributes preceding the standardised diminutive form *lauluke(ne)* (227 times). The word pairs were identified and sorted automatically and then analysed. Adjectives for *lauluke(ne)* occur 45 times, the most frequent are *lahe* ‘cool, easy-going’ (28) and similar *lahke* (southern Estonian *lake*) ‘affable’ (7). Other attributes include ‘short’ (9), ‘long’ (1), ‘small’ (1), and *lõhmüksine* ‘made of linden’ (1).

The attribute can also refer to the “song’s owner”, i.e., the singer; “little songs” are most often sung by children – *lapse lauluke* (27). The analysis revealed that due to inversion, the adjective before ‘song’ might belong to the previous word, as in *lapse hullu laulukeisi* (silly child’s little songs).

Often, the attribute is a pronoun that emphasises the ownership of a song, such as ‘my’ or ‘our’ (each 8 times). The phrase *minu lauluke* ‘my little song’ is always paired with the antithesis *s(in)a laulad* ‘you sing’ and appears in the song type “Singer’s Abuse” (*Lauliku sõim*): “Why are you singing if you cannot? [Why are you] singing my songs, rolling my tunes?” (*Mis sa laulad, kui sa ei mõista, laulad minu lauluke, veeretad mu viisikesi?*) (E 7041).

Parallel words next to *lauluke(ne)* include a synonym *leelokene* (*leelokõnõ, lellokene*); similarly, after the conjunction *ja* (and) appears the word *louke* ‘little story’.

Before ‘little song’, the verb for singing *laulma* (14 times) appears, but also *laskma* ‘let, shoot’ (33), *lautama~laotama* ‘spread’ (5), *lahutama* ‘spread, release’ (3), *lautelema* ‘gradually spread’ (4), and *lööma* ‘strike’ (1).

The analysis of parallel words for ‘song’ was based on the parallelism in *regilaul* lyrics, where successive verse lines present and develop the content using similar words and syntax (see Sarv 2017). The semantic analysis of verbs in parallelism groups, conducted by Labi (2006), demonstrated the diverse semantic connections between parallel words. We compiled a frequency list of the words occurring in the “second” lines (i.e., those that followed the lines with the noun *laul*) and although the words were not lemmatised, the list still highlighted the most frequent parallel words for *laul*. At the top of the list was *viis* ‘tune, melody’, appearing at least 560 times.²⁹

Table 5. Examples of parallel verse pairs with words laul–viis ‘song–tune’.

<i>Küll mul laulusid kui ma laulan, küll mul viisisid kui ma viisin.</i>	I’ve got enough songs if I sing, I’ve got enough tunes if I care [to sing].
<i>Kui mina akkan laulema, viisi välja veeretama.</i>	If I start to sing, to roll out a tune.
<i>Laulaksin ma lugu kaksi, veeretaksin viisi kuusi.</i>	I’d sing two songs, I’d roll six tunes. (or: I’d roll five-six [tunes])
<i>Laulge, laulge, laisad neiud, virved, viisi veeretage!</i>	Sing, sing, lazy girls, sprouts, roll a tune!

<p><i>Otsas, otsas lauluke,</i> <i>otsas lauluviisike.</i> (E 60609 (5); H II 5, 1/2 (1); H II 35, 392/3 (236); ERA II 159, 239/40 (11) et alibi; H II 56, 350 (13); E A 790/2 (2) et alibi)</p>	<p>The little song is over, over, the little song's tune is over.</p>
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The word *viis* is newer than *laul* and is not part of the old Finnic vocabulary. However, its frequent use in alliterative collocations, such as *viisi veeretama* 'roll a tune', and in pairs with words like the place name *Viru*, or verbs like *viitsima* 'care' and *viima* 'take', demonstrates its successful adaptation into *regilaul* (Table 5). *Viis* is likely a loanword from Low German.³⁰ The German *Weise* and its variant *wīs(e)* in Middle High and Middle Low German originally meant 'mode' and are related to the English word *wise*. The Old High German *wīsa* was used for melody as early as the tenth century. In Old Norse, the related stem *visa* referred to song lyrics, meaning 'strophe, verse'. Traditional German expressions include *Art und Weise* 'in a way' and *Wort und Weise* 'text and melody' (DWDS).

In Estonian, the word *viis* carries both meanings, 'mode' and 'melody'. Songs about singing in their current form could not have been composed before contact with Germanic peoples. In folk songs, *laul* and *viis* often appear as a pair of parallel words in successive lines, with *viis* signifying a melody (Table 5). *Viis* can also imply singing 'in a way', so *linnu viisi* can be interpreted as 'bird's wise', which closely resembles the meaning 'with bird's tune'.

<p><i>Siis ma laulaks lagle viisi,</i> <i>teeksin healta tedre viisi.</i> (H II 15, 430 (10))</p>	<p>Then I'd sing a barnacle goose's wise; make a sound a black grouse's wise.</p>
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A variation of the preceding example includes expressions that clearly mean 'bird-like' or 'in birds' tongue':

<p><i>Siis ma laulas linnukeeli,</i> <i>tees ma hääli tedre muodi.</i> (TEM 4a, 6 (62))</p>	<p>Then I'd sing in birds' tongue, make a sound in a black grouse's way.</p>
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Additionally, the word *viis* carries further ambiguity because it has a homonym meaning 'five', as well as morphological homonyms with the verbs *viitsima* 'care, bother' and *viima* 'bring'.³¹

Scholars note that *regilaul* practitioners used terms like *toon* 'tone', *hääli* 'voice' and *mõnu* 'delight/pleasure' for melody, not *viis* (Rüütel 1998). The word *toon* might also be a loan from Low German or similar languages (Metsmägi

& Sedrik & Soosaar 2013). Although the analysis of *regilaul* lyrics offers insights into this topic, we will set this question aside for now.

Other frequent parallel words to ‘song’ include place names like ‘village’ and ‘home’, as well as birds such as ‘cuckoo’ and ‘duck’. For example, “Oh, what I cuckoo, a sad bird, or sing, a bad child” (*Oi, mis kukun kurba lindu, vői mis laulan halba lapsi*) (EÜS V 1088/9 (65)). Additionally, the analysis revealed verbs associated with *laul* and its parallel words, such as ‘to cuckoo’ and ‘to sing’ in the previous example (cf. Labi 2006).

Table 6. Most frequent compounds (occurring more than 10 times) with ‘song’ in the Regilaul corpus. The frequencies of the two types of compounds are presented in descending order on both sides of the table, with the columns arranged side by side according to the magnitude of the numbers.

Laul as the first part (modifier)	Translation	Occurrences	Laul as the second part (main word)	Translation	Occurrences
<i>laululeht</i> 652 / <i>laululeheke</i> 2	song sheet	654			
<i>laululind</i> 326 / <i>laululinnuke(ne)</i> 35	songbird	361			
<i>laulukool</i>	singing school	219			
<i>lauluhääl</i>	singing voice	189			
<i>lauluviis</i> 99 / <i>lauluviisike(ne)</i> 48	song’s tune	147			
<i>laululaud</i> 132 / <i>laululauake</i> 14	song’s board	146			
<i>laulurästas</i>	song thrush	104			
<i>laululugu</i> 79 / <i>laululookene</i> 3	song story	82	<i>kukelaul</i>	rooster’s crow	81
<i>laulukord</i>	singing turn	79	<i>sõjalaul</i>	war song	44
<i>laulusõna(d)</i>	song lyrics	56	<i>lustilaul</i>	amusement song	43
<i>laulupaelad</i>	singing ribbons	31	<i>linnulaul</i>	bird song	29
<i>lauluraamat</i>	hymnal	28	<i>kiigelaul</i>	swinging song	26
<i>laulumokad</i>	singing gobs	27	<i>rõõmulaul</i>	joy song	24
<i>laulumees</i>	songman	25	<i>kanalaul</i>	hen song	20
<i>laulusulg: -sule</i>	song quill ³²	16	<i>kirikulaul</i>	church song	17
<i>laulukoor</i>	singing choir	13	<i>leinalaul</i>	song of grief	15

<i>laulusuu</i>	singing mouth	11	<i>tänulaul</i>	song of gratitude	12
<i>laulupärg</i>	song wreath	10	<i>ilulaul</i>	beauty/joy song	10

Table 7. Compounds with laul-component, representing singers in the Regilaul corpus (frequency more than 4).

Word	Translation	Occurrences
<i>laululind</i> 326 / <i>laululinnukene</i> 35	songbird	361
<i>laulurästas</i>	song thrush	104
<i>laulumees</i>	song man	24
<i>laululaps</i>	song child	9
<i>lauluema</i>	song mother	7
<i>laulukukk</i>	song rooster	7
<i>vastulaulja</i>	responsive singer	7
<i>laulunaine</i>	song woman	4

Table 6 provides an overview of *laul*-compounds, while Table 7 lists the most frequent singer types. The compounds denoting vernacular song genres on the right side of Table 6 refer to various phenomena, such as *rooster crow* (81), *hen song* (20), *war song* (44), *amusement song* (43), and *bird song* (29). Roosters and chickens are frequently mentioned because the rooster's crow signifies morning. For example, "Thou shalt not hear the rooster song" (*Ära sina kuula kukelaulu*) (EÜS VI 1139/40 (19) et alibi) advised a maiden to rise early. The rooster's song also symbolised human habitation, so "Where thou do not hear the rooster song" (*Kus ei kuule kukelaulu*) (E 36877 (10) et alibi) indicated a remote uninhabited place. The hen's song '*kanalaul*' often appeared in a parallel verse.

There were 81 compounds of low frequency (less than 10 times), which included evocative types like oven-song, love-song, grove-song, silver-song, cook's song, gold song, blaming song, lament song, witch-song, whisk-song, etc. (*ahjulaul*, *armulaul*, *hiielaul*, *höbelaul*, *kokalaul*, *kuldalaul*, *laimulaul*, *nutulaul*, *nõialaul*, *vihalaul*).

Folk song and related terms appear infrequently in the corpus; single instances include *rahvalaul* 'folk song', *auk-laul* 'hole-song' or 'gap-song', *regilaul*, *leelulaul*, e.g., a controversial claim about the term 'regilaul': 'I have ancient verses, rhymed *regilauls*' (*Mul om muistese värssi, regilaulu riimilise*)³³ (H III 16, 355/6 (2)).

7. COMPARISON AND DISCUSSION

The corpus-based analysis of song/sing-stem words has revealed distinct conceptualisations of singing in the discourses of late nineteenth-century written media and traditional songs. Table 8 and Figure 3 below compare the proportions of different lexical categories among studied words in both corpora: the 1890s media corpus (EMC) and the Regilaul corpus. Given the differing character of texts and compilation methods of the corpora, the results may reflect these variations.

The noun *laul* ‘song’ constitutes 18.3% of all *laul*-words in the Regilaul corpus, about half the proportion found in the EMC, where it appears in 32.7% of the cases. The slightly less frequent use of terms for ‘singer’ in *regilaul* (7.2%) compared to the EMC (10.8%) may be attributed to the fact that the singer often serves as the poetic I.

Table 8. Comparison of the occurrence of different word classes with *sing/song-stem* in the Estonian Media Corpus and the Regilaul corpus.

Category	EMC (%)	Regilaul corpus (%)
Noun Forms		
<i>laul</i> as a root word	32.7	18.3
<i>laul</i> as main part of compound	14.6	2.7
<i>laul</i> as modifier in compound	22.8	7.5
<i>laul</i> in other compounds	4.0	-
<i>lauluke(ne)</i>	0.6	0.8
<i>laulja</i>	8.0	3.4
<i>lauljanna</i>	0.4	0
<i>laulik</i>	2.4	3.8
<i>laulmine</i>	3.6	0.5
Total Nouns	89.1	37.0
Adjective Forms		
<i>laululine</i>	-	0.5
Total Adjectives	-	0.5
Verb Forms		
<i>laulma</i> in various forms	10.8	52.2
<i>laulma</i> derivatives	-	0.2
<i>laulemaie (-mahe)</i>	-	10.1
Total Verbs	10.8	62.5

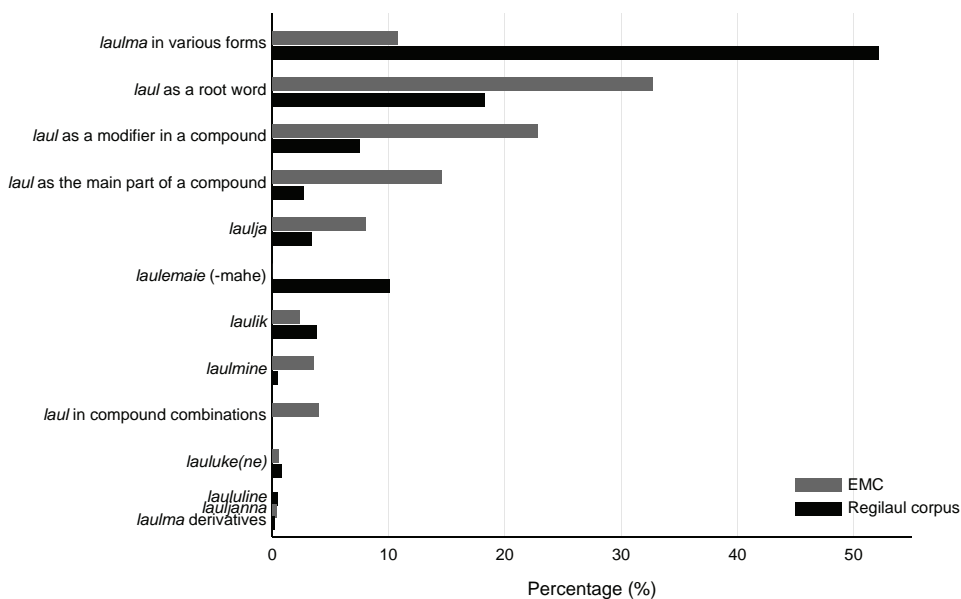


Figure 3. Comparison of the occurrence of different word classes with sing/song-stem in the Estonian Media Corpus and the Regilaul corpus.

Comparing the proportions of different word classes (Table 8), the most notable feature is the distribution of song/sing-stem nouns and verbs: nouns dominate in the EMC (89%), while verbs prevail in *regilaul* texts (62.5%). The noun ‘song’ appears significantly more frequently in the EMC compared to the Regilaul corpus (74.1% vs. 25.8%), both as a primary word (32.7% vs. 18.3%) and within compounds (41.4% vs. 10.2%).

The prevalence of the verbs among song/sing-stems in folk song lyrics emphasises singing as an activity, a process, with songs as objects appearing less frequently. The act of beginning holds particular significance, marked by the special introductory infinitive verb form *laulemaie (-mahe)*, used in the stereotypical verse ‘When I begin to sing’ (*Kui ma hakkam laulemaie*). This poetic form (excluding other inverted forms of the singing infinitive) accounts for approximately one-sixth of all singing infinitive verbs.

The abundance of singing verbs reflects oral tradition, where ideas manifest during performance, rather than as fixed songs. Mark Slobin characterises this practice, stating: „Folk music is not a set of songs and tunes; it is more a working practice. People take available musical resources and develop strategies to make good use of them” (Slobin 2011: 9; cf. Finnegan 1977; Honko 2000).

According to Labi, one more reason why the verb ‘to sing’ in *regilaul* is very frequent, is its referring to communication, with parallel words *üttelema*, *rääkima* ‘to say, to tell’ (Labi 2006: 86–90). The verb richness in *regilaul* is further evidenced by approximately a dozen derivations of ‘to sing’, such as *laulelema* and *laulanema*. The adjective *laululine* ‘songful’, absent in the EMC, appears in the *regilaul* texts.

The frequent compounds with a song-component in newspaper texts – song festival, singing choir, hymnal, ecclesiastical songs, and emperor’s song (anthem) – directly reflect the historical context and ruling ideologies. However, the scarcity of shared compounds of both corpora – only 14 – is notable (see Table 9, Fig. 4). The more frequent shared terms in both corpora relate to ecclesiastical music. Notably, terms for singing voice and melody are scarce in media texts but abundant in *regilaul*.

Table 9. The occurrence of joint compounds in the text corpora of the Estonian Media Corpus and the *Regilaul* corpus.

Word	Translation	Occurrences of <i>laul-</i> stems	
		EMC	Regilaul corpus
<i>laulukoor</i>	singing choir	30	13
<i>lauluraamat</i>	songbook, hymnal	15	28
<i>kirikulaul</i>	church song	12	17
<i>lauluviis(ike(ne))</i>	(a little) song melody	3	147
<i>lauluhääl</i>	singing voice	2	189
<i>laulupidu</i>	(choir) song festival	40	3
<i>lastelaul</i>	children’s song	4	1
<i>laulusalm</i>	song stanza	2	6
<i>laululõng</i>	song yarn	1	9
<i>kiidulaul</i>	song of praise	1	4
<i>laulumäng</i>	song game/dance	1	1
<i>laulumeister</i>	master of song	1	2
<i>söömalaul</i>	eating song	1	2
<i>tänulaul</i>	thanksgiving song	1	12

In the *Regilaul* corpus, ‘church song’ appears 17 times exclusively in the “Shepherd’s Sunday” (*Karjase pühapäev*) song type, metaphorically representing (pars pro toto) Sunday church services in contrast to the shepherd’s daily work in

the pasture: “I did not hear the church song, but the song of a gentle cow” (*Ei mina kuulnud kirikulaulu, vaid aga hella lehma laulu* (H, Mapp 1050/2 (4)).

Singing in a choir is frequently mentioned in the press and occurs in *regilaul* texts, albeit with differing attitudes. Journalistic sources value choral singing, whereas *regilaul* singers often proudly disavow choir participation, affirming their acquisition of the “true” oral tradition.

The most frequent song-related compound in *regilaul* – *laululeht* ‘song sheet’ – means a memory aid for a recreating folk singer and is possibly influenced by ecclesiastical song sheets. Its frequency is attributed to its presence in the wide-spread song type, “Mouth’s Quill” (*Suude sulg*), which was published already in the nineteenth century (Kreutzwald 1840). The second most frequent compound, *laululind* ‘songbird’, appears in general singing contexts, often as a positive synonym for the singer. The poetic imagery of birds also portrays a rich and joyful nature: *igas ladvas laululinnud* ‘songbirds in every treetop’ (E 8249/50 (32) et alibi).

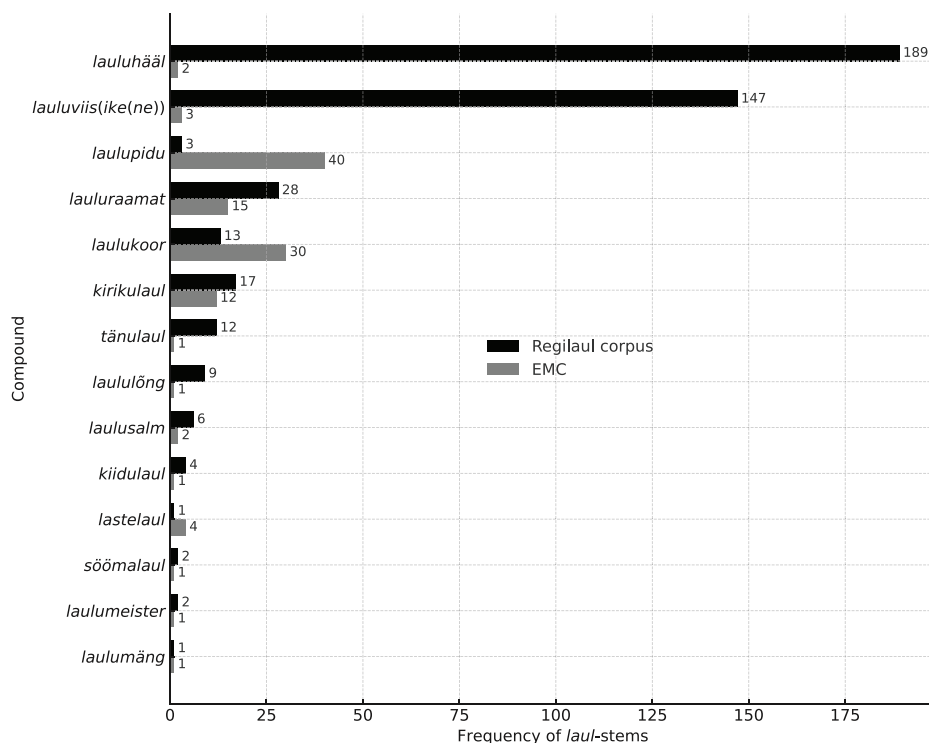


Figure 4. The occurrence of joint compounds in the Estonian Media Corpus and the Regilaul corpus.

The terms *laulja* and *laulik* ‘singer’ appear in both corpora. However, their usage differs: in *regilaul*, their meanings are hardly distinguishable, while written culture differentiates between *laulik* ‘folk singer, creator, poet’ and *laulja* ‘interpreter’.

Comparative analysis of words reveals how the Estonian Media Corpus and the Regilaul corpus represent distinct musical worlds. The EMC texts emphasise choral singing and its related social phenomena – societies, concerts, and festivals, while *regilaul* texts reflect the singer’s self-expression, communication in rural oral singing context. Both corpora show connections to Christianity and church culture.

CONCLUSION

This article employs text corpus analysis to explore Estonian concepts of singing across diverse social, cultural, and historical discourses. Focusing on the words with the stem *laul* ‘sing/song’, including its dialectal forms, across various Estonian corpora, we examined its frequency and semantic aspects, particularly in the 1890s media corpus (EMC) and *regilaul* (runosong) lyrics, which exhibit a significantly higher prevalence of *laul*-stem words compared to other corpora.

The EMC, while offering insights into choral and spiritual singing traditions, also provided a window into lesser-known communal singing practices, such as performances of the Russian Empire’s anthem and birthday songs at secular rituals. The analysis revealed how language patterns were related to national identity formation through culture.

The linguistically diverse Regilaul corpus required manual processing due to its complexity. The research involved the morphological unification of approximately 30,000 dialectal variants of *laul*-stem words, creating a list of nearly 1,500 standardised forms.

The verb-rich song corpus (63% of song/sing-stems) contrasts with noun-dominated (89%) newspaper texts. Our analysis also highlighted some Germanic loanwords in singing-related *regilaul* lyrics, especially *viis* ‘melody’, suggesting linguistic developments. The Regilaul corpus has a rich choice of compounds, while two corpora do not have many joint compounds, and among the existing ones the vocabulary related to church singing dominates.

This research shows the potential of corpus linguistics in folkloristics and ethnomusicology for analysing historical texts. It paves the way for further interdisciplinary studies in cultural and linguistic research.

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NOTES

- ¹ See <https://science-education-research.com/constructivism/>, last accessed on 29 October 2024.
- ² See <https://science-education-research.com/science-concepts/>, last accessed on 29 October 2024.
- ³ The idea that music is learned in a certain culture, together with cognitive and interpretive resources of music, emerged together with the field of comparative musicology (e.g., Ellis 1885; Hornbostel 1905), and has become a self-evident truth in today’s music philosophy (e.g., Levinson 1990; Ravasio n.d.).
- ⁴ The Estonian concept of *põlisrahvas* ‘indigenous people’ has evolved independently of the international definition of ‘indigenous’, which often refers to peoples living under foreign rule. This international definition does not fully capture the experience of Estonians, whose history has been characterised by long-standing inhabitation of their land and persistent struggles for independence against various foreign powers.
- ⁵ On Estonian history see, e.g., Kasekamp 2010.
- ⁶ The quotations from Estonian are translated by the authors of this article.
- ⁷ Verb-to-noun derivation or zero-derivation (Kasik 2012).
- ⁸ The word *loul* also occurs in Vepsian and Livonian, despite these languages lacking a documented runosong tradition. The same stem appears in Estonian dialects. A similar word also occurs in another Finno-Ugric language, Sámi: *lávlut* (ETY).
- ⁹ Approximate translations: to whoop, to call (special herding calls), to lament, to chant (a spell, an incantation).
- ¹⁰ The term “marked” has been contested (Haspelmath 2006), but it still seems useful in certain contexts.
- ¹¹ See <http://bit.ly/3zR8nJq>, last accessed on 29 October 2024.
- ¹² See <https://bit.ly/3BMsxEJ>, last accessed on 29 October 2024.
- ¹³ This corpus is not publicly accessible.
- ¹⁴ For example, only in the VAKK corpus the components of compounds are counted separately, e.g., *nelikümmend* ‘forty’ is two words *nelli+ +kümmend*.

- ¹⁵ See <https://www.cl.ut.ee/korpused/baaskorpus/1890/allikad/>, last accessed on 29 October 2024.
- ¹⁶ While the frequency of *laul* occurring independently versus in compounds is orthography-dependent and not central to our study, we provide these figures for both cases in Table 2 for reference.
- ¹⁷ However, this result was obtained through a word search conducted on the text file of the same corpus, because the KORP query interface does not support searches for partial words when variations in letters are present at the start or end of the word.
- ¹⁸ About the book of verses *Roosa kannel* (Pink Zither) by Rudolf Kallas in the editorial of *Postimees* (1899a).
- ¹⁹ Essay on the book of verses by Tamm, “Ärganud hääled II” (Olewik 1892).
- ²⁰ The author of the essay is likely Jaan Bergmann (1856–1916) – a pastor, poet, and folklore collector.
- ²¹ Jüri Orgusaar (1857–1912) was a playwright, teacher, and folk song collector.
- ²² The database contains about 6,000 transitional and end-rhymed songs.
- ²³ The type-index of the ERAB is incomplete. Many songs have preliminary type-names or lack classification data entirely. This should be considered when interpreting the statistics and categorisations of the ERAB. While the statistics of song types are not yet finalised, preliminary data demonstrate a significant number of songs that address the theme of singing.
- ²⁴ The song’s spread may have been aided by its publication in the popular book *Viina katk* (The Plague of Alcohol) (Kreutzwald 1840).
- ²⁵ Many Estonian words have lost their final vowel due to apocope, and word-internal vowel due to syncope (see Viitso 2003: esp. 183).
- ²⁶ Despite the data is based on observation, without statistics, the correlation between the words and song types is apparent.
- ²⁷ However, it is important to note that the editing process for the texts in the ERAB is still ongoing. Consequently, the number of compounds we identified may be lower than the actual count, as older transcriptions of folk song lyrics tended to favour separate word writing. Conversely, there is a possibility that modern editors, following the current trend towards solid writing, may have occasionally over-compounded words.
- ²⁸ *Välja* can function both as a noun (genitive form of *väli* ‘field’) and an adverb ‘outwards’.
- ²⁹ We counted only the most frequent forms, including *viis* (322), *viisid* (77), *viis* (41), *viisil* (22), and *viisisida* (19). There are also rarer forms, so the total count is higher.
- ³⁰ It is not always possible to distinguish between German, Low German, Old Norse, or Swedish loanwords in Estonian, coming into Estonian since about the ninth century (Metsmägi & Sedrik & Soosaar 2013). Numerous Low German loanwords are found in Estonian as well in *regilaul*, including *viis*, *kool* ‘school’, *raamatmaaker* ‘bookmaker’, and *saks* ‘noble, Saxon’.
- ³¹ Consider the verse “*Laulaksin ma lugu kaksi, veeretaksin viisi kuusi*”. Its primary interpretation, based on content logic and parallelism, is ‘I would sing two songs, would roll six tunes’. However, the choice of ‘six’ (*kuusi*) may be influenced by its proximity to ‘five’ (*viisi*). Consequently, an alternative interpretation of the second half could be ‘I would roll five-six [songs]’ (see Table 5).

³² *Laulusulg* – 1) presumably a small old-fashioned whistle (Oliver 2014; Lintrop 2017); 2) a long sickle-shaped feather on the tail of a cock (EKSS 2009).

³³ ‘Rhyme’ means firstly end-rhyme in Estonian, but in figurative and colloquial language it can probably also refer more generally to poetic means, similarly with the verb ‘to rhyme’, which can refer to creating poetry, and occasionally to improvising in *regilaul* style (see Kõiva 1964: 8).

ARCHIVAL SOURCES

Manuscript collections at the Estonian Folklore Archives of the Estonian Literary Museum

E – manuscripts of Matthias Johann Eisen

ERA – manuscripts of the Estonian Folklore Archives

EÜS – manuscripts of the Estonian Students’ Society

H – manuscripts of Jakob Hurt

RKM – manuscripts of the Folklore Department of the Estonian State Literary Museum, 1945–1996

TEM – manuscripts of the Estonian Museum in Tallinn

INTERNET SOURCES

CELL 2018 = The Corpus of Estonian Literary Language. Research Group of Computational Linguistics, University of Tartu. Available at <https://www.cl.ut.ee/korpused/baaskorpus/>, last accessed on 25 October 2024.

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On the cover: Young bride and maidens on Kihnu Island. Photograph by Ottilie-Olga Kõiva 1962 (ERA, Foto 6308).



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