

INTRODUCTORY SURVEY OF THE SOUTH ESTONIAN LANGUAGE ISLANDS

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Abstract. The South Estonian language islands – Leivu, Lutsi, Kraasna – are three historically South Estonian-speaking exclaves located not only beyond the borders of Estonia, but also geographically separated from the main body of South Estonian speakers for at least several centuries. Two of these communities – Leivu and Lutsi – were located in present-day Latvia. The third community – Kraasna – was located near the northernmost Lutsi communities – only about 35 kilometres distant across the present-day Latvian border in Russia. This article acts as an introduction to the studies in this volume by describing the history and current state of the communities at its focus. It gives an overview of the location of the language island communities, their origins, linguistic status, and self-identity as well as provides a survey of their research history dating from its beginnings in the late 19th century to the present.

Keywords: endangered languages, minority languages, language contact, Finnic languages, South Estonian, Leivu, Lutsi, Kraasna

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1. Introduction

The South Estonian language islands – Leivu, Lutsi, Kraasna – are three historically South Estonian-speaking regions located not only beyond the borders of Estonia, but also geographically separated from the main body of South Estonian speakers for at least several centuries.

Two of these communities – Leivu and Lutsi – were located in present-day Latvia. Leivu was spoken in a group of villages near the small communities of Lejasciems and Ilzene in northeastern Latvia. Lutsi was spoken in several dozen villages in the countryside to the

north, south, and southeast of the town of Ludza in southeastern Latvia (in the Latgale region). Both Leivu and Lutsi existed in relatively diverse linguistic environments. The Leivus lived in contact with speakers of the Latvian subdialects of the Malēnija region and show traces of possible ancient contact with Livonian. The Lutsis lived in close contact with speakers of not only Latvian and Latgalian, but also Russian, Polish, Belarusian, and Yiddish.

The third community – Kraasna – was located near the northernmost Lutsi communities – only about 35 kilometres distant across the present-day border in Russia. The Kraasna villages extended primarily to the south of the town of Krasnogorodsk. Other communities beyond just these three may have existed – and likely did exist – either as part of or separate from them. Researcher Paulopriit Voolaine, for example, wrote about a community of people also mentioned by Kallas (1903: 8) – by then almost entirely assimilated into local Russian speakers – who lived in the village of Sapohnovo near Vyshgorodok (Latvian: Augšpils) north of the Kraasna region and remembered their ancestors coming from Kolpino Island on Lake Pihkva/Pskov (Voolaine 1938: 6). Figure 1 shows a map of the South Estonian language islands and the South Estonian dialect areas in Estonia. See Section 3 for detailed maps of all three language island communities.

This article provides an overview of the history and current state of the South Estonian language island communities. Section 2 describes the origins of these communities, Section 3 gives information on their location and includes maps of their villages, Sections 4 and 5 describe the nature of the languages spoken by each community and their identities, Section 6 describes the current state of each language, Section 7 provides an overview of the research history of each community, and Section 8 gives some concluding remarks.



Figure 1. The South Estonian language islands (Leivu, Lutsi, Kraasna) and the South Estonian dialect areas in Estonia (Source: Iva & Pajusalu 2004).

2. Origins

The origins of the language island communities are not precisely known, may not be the result of any single known event for the Lutsis, or perhaps no migration at all for the Leivus (for more on the historical development of the South Estonian language islands see Valk 2021 in this volume).

There are a number of theories on the origin of the Leivus. One is that the Leivus are – like the Lutsis – descendants of South Estonian-speaking settlers (see Jansone 2021 and Stafecka 2021 in this volume). Another is that the Leivus are indigenous to Latvia and represent a community which formerly was connected with South Estonian speakers further north but was, in time, separated from them due to settlement by Latvians in the area (see Vaba 2021 in this volume). A third possibility

is that they are descendants of another ancient undocumented Finnic language (e.g., the Atzele language (see Valk 2021 and Kallio 2021 in this volume)). In popular culture, the Leivus have sometimes been connected with the Livonians or been conjectured to be Livonians themselves, but due to the considerable differences between Leivu and Livonian, this theory is unlikely to be true.

The earliest known Lutsi origin account was published in 1877 by Mihkel Veske in “Bericht über die Ergebnisse einer Reise durch das Estenland im Sommer 1875” and is recorded from two workmen Josef Antonof and his relative Petra whom he met in Estonia but who were from the Pilda region south of Ludza in Latvia (Weske 1877). These men shared one of the same stories recorded later by Kallas, namely that their ancestors had come from “Sweden” or the “Swedish king’s land”, i.e., Estonia during the period of Swedish rule. Other theories recorded include the Lutsis’ ancestors fleeing a war (see, for example, the story “Eestlastest Lutsimaal” (About the Estonians in Lutsimaa) in Mets et al. 2014 from Lutsi speaker Ossip Jakimenko), which is understood to be the Great Northern War, or avoiding forced conversion from Catholicism to Lutheranism in Estonia during Swedish rule.

Other stories mention Lutsi ancestors coming to the area after it was decimated by plague or coming to Latgale in exchange either for property or other peasants. In the course of his work, researcher Uldis Balodis has been shown land deeds dating to the 19th century by Lutsi descendants, which, along with memories of a more recent arrival, could also point to some movement of people from Estonia to the Ludza area more recently (Balodis 2020: 91–93). These different accounts along with the existence of variation in the South Estonian variety spoken by the Lutsis, suggests that the Lutsis may be the product of several population movements over the last centuries motivated by different events. The overall similarity and intelligibility of Lutsi to South Estonian varieties still spoken in Estonia may indicate either that the separation of the Lutsis from other South Estonian speakers is no more than a few centuries in length or perhaps that contact between the Lutsis and South Estonian speakers was regular and intense enough to affect the continued development of Lutsi. Kristi Salve (2021) also explores Lutsi origins in this volume. She analyses Lutsi folk songs and compares them to folk songs in South Estonian-speaking areas of

Estonia, showing various common features between Lutsi and South Estonian folklore.

In his monograph on Kraasna, Oskar Kallas (1904: 23–24) notes that the Kraasna people remembered their origins as being brought from the area of Petseri/Pechory (i.e., Setomaa) and that they still had some contact with people there. Pajusalu et al. (2020) date the arrival of the ancestors of the Kraasna community in the area near Krasnogorodsk beginning with the late 16th century though this was followed by later waves of migration (see also Weber 2021b in this volume).

3. Location

This section shows detailed maps of the villages inhabited by the three language island communities. The data for all three maps are taken from the online version of the *Eesti kohanimeraamat* (EKR; The Dictionary of Estonian Place Names; Kallasmaa et al. 2016). For the Lutsi and Kraasna maps these data are further cross-referenced with those given by Kallas in his monographs on the Lutsi (Kallas 1894) and Kraasna (Kallas 1903) communities. This removes a couple of villages from the Lutsi map that are mentioned in the EKR and adds a village to the Kraasna map – Kriskohv (Griškovo) – mentioned by Kallas but not listed in the EKR. Additionally, the location of two Leivu villages mentioned in the EKR – Aavašilla and Lügäbä – is uncertain or unknown and therefore these villages are not shown on the Leivu map. Ojansuu (1912: 13) places Aavašilla in Ilzene parish; however, its Latvian name and specific location are not known¹. Ojansuu (1912: 14) places Lügäbä in Kalncempji parish and the EKR gives “Liğupi” and “Liğubi” as two possible Latvian names for this village.

1 The Institute of the Estonian Language place name archive (*Eesti Keele Instituudi kohanimkartoteek*) gives an alternate form for Aavašilla – Haavasilla (<https://www.eki.ee/kohanimed/index.php?lei=1&po=haavasilla+k&liik=>). The ending *-šilla* ~ *-silla* ‘bridge.gen’ corresponds to Latvian *-upe* ‘river’ in the Leivu village name Pajušilla (Kärklupe). As *haava* is likely the genitive form of *haab* ‘aspen’ (Latvian: *apse*), a possible location could be near a river called Apšupe or Apšupīte. While there is no such river in Ilzene parish, there is an Apšupīte relatively nearby to the northeast at the boundary of present-day Alsviķi and Jaunlaicene parishes. This could provide a clue to the location of Aavašilla.

The maps show the maximum known extent of these communities. However, members of these communities also lived in other towns and villages (see, e.g., a description of this for Lutsi in Kallas 1894: 12) either as a result of marrying into non-Estonian families, purchasing property elsewhere, work, or any number of other reasons. And as the historical record of these communities begins only relatively recently, there quite possibly could have been other villages inhabited by members of these communities.

The Lutsi map shows the village names as recorded by Kallas but written in the orthography used in Balodis (2020). The Leivu and Kraasna maps use the Estonian-based spelling of the village names found in the EKR. All names are given with equivalents in Latvian – for Leivu and Lutsi – and Russian (in Cyrillic and transliterated into Latin script) – for Kraasna. Important cities and towns are also shown on the map, while the villages are each identified with a numerical index corresponding to the village name in the key (Tables 1–3) following each map. Place names shown on the map are given in Leivu, Lutsi, or Kraasna with the corresponding Latvian or Russian name given in parentheses.

Latvia's administrative divisions underwent extensive changes during the Soviet occupation. The lowest-level administrative division – the (civil) parish or *pagasts* – was eliminated in 1949 in favor of the Soviet-era *ciema padome* or village soviet (after 1984 simply called *ciems* or village) administrative division. Modern parish boundaries developed from these Soviet-era administrative divisions and were renamed *pagasts* or (civil) parish in 1991 following the restoration of Latvia's independence, but with boundaries differing considerably from those of the pre-1949 parishes and sometimes with a historical and modern *pagasts* having the same name but somewhat different boundaries (e.g., there is both a pre-1949 and post-1991 Pilda parish). Leivu and Lutsi villages are described with reference to both historical and modern divisions, as historical divisions can be indicative of, for example, finer language differences between groups of villages (and are still used today for describing Latvian subdialects in Latvian linguistics), while modern divisions are more useful for describing the location of villages on contemporary maps. Historical subdivisions referenced in Kallas's 1903 monograph and modern subdivisions are also given for the Kraasna villages.

The Institute of the Estonian Language place name archive (*Eesti Keele Instituudi kohanimetarkartoteek*; <https://www.eki.ee/kohanimed/>) often lists the historical parish on place name slips and was the main source for determining Leivu historical parish locations. For some Leivu villages, historical parish locations had to be extrapolated using their position relative to other villages and landmarks on maps showing historical parish boundaries. Leivu modern parish locations are taken from the EKR. The main sources for Lutsi historical and modern parish locations are Kallas (1894) and Balodis (2020) (as well as associated research by its author). Kraasna historical parish locations are taken from Kallas (1903), while modern parish locations were extrapolated using a variety of sources including the articles on and maps of each district and volost in Russian Wikipedia as well as the detailed map of Pskov Oblast at the MapData site online (<https://mapdata.ru/pskovskaya-oblast/>). For some Kraasna villages, modern parish locations also had to be extrapolated based on their location relative to other nearby landmarks or villages. Also note that the prime (') in the subdivision designations in Tables 1–3 is used to indicate a modern parish or volost, which has the same name as a historical parish or volost, but with different boundaries.

Despite changes in parish boundaries, most Leivu villages are located in a modern parish, which has the same name as the historical parish where they were located prior to 1949. In general terms, the largest cluster of Leivu villages was in Ilzene parish with smaller clusters in Lejasciems parish to the south and Kalncempji parish to the east.

The Lutsi villages divide into three geographic groups based on their historical pre-1949 parish. The villages to the north of Ludza were located in Mērdzene parish (called Mihalova parish until 1925), the villages to the south of Ludza and west of Nirza were in Pilda parish, and the villages east of the train line running south from Ludza were in Nirza and Brīgi (called Janovole parish until 1925) parishes. While Lutsi dialect differences have not yet been fully researched, the division of the villages by historical parish is reflected in some differences within Lutsi, for example, the preference for the *-h* inessive ending in Pilda parish Lutsi villages and the *-n* inessive ending in villages in other parts of the Lutsi-speaking area (see Balodis forthcoming).

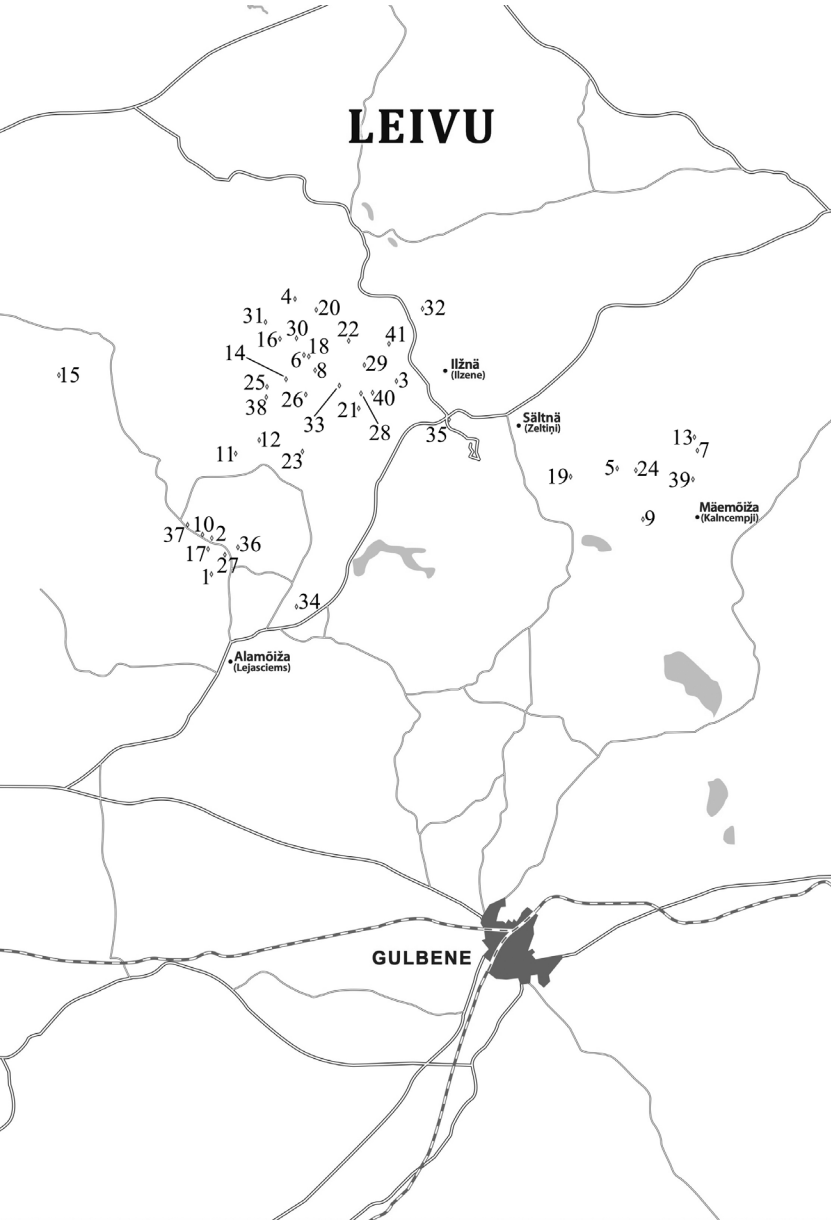


Figure 2. Map of the Leivu villages (Map created by Meeli Mets).

Table 1. Leivu and Latvian names of villages shown on Figure 2. (H = historical (pre-1949) parish, M = modern (post-1991) parish, D = Dūre, I, I' = Ilzene, K, K' = Kalncempji, L, L' = Lejasciems, V = Vireši, Z, Z' = Zeltiņi).

	Leivu	Latvian	H	M
1	Allikülä	Aļļi	L	L'
2	Andrini	Andriņi	L	L'
3	Andu	Onti	I	I'
4	Bullikülä	Buļļi	I	I'
5	Gotlōba	Gotlupi	K	K'
6	Gutapōllu	Gutapuri	I	I'
7	Järllaana	Jerlāni	K	K'
8	Katrōmōtsa	Jaunčonkas	I	I'
9	Kelle	Ķelles	K	K'
10	Kibakülä	Ķibas	L	L'
11	Küllekülä	Kuļļi	D	L'
12	Küpärmäe	Cepurkalni	I	L'
13	Laudikülä	Lauķi	K	K'
14	Laudumāe	Lubukalni	I	I'
15	Leivekülä	Līves	I	I'
16	Leivu	Līves	D	V
17	Majanikülä	Mājani	L	L'
18	Mustura	Melnupes	I	I'
19	Mōtspalži	Micpalži	Z	Z'
20	Mōtsšlāga	Mežslokas	I	I'
21	Mäekülä, Bruunja	Brūniņi	I	I'
22	Paikna	Paiķēni	I	I'
23	Pajušilla	Kārklupe	I	L'
24	Pulgikülä	Puļķi	K	K'
25	Pöllupi	Pilupes	I	I'
26	Riikštakülä	Riekstiņi	I	I'
27	Salaga	Salaki	L	L'
28	Seivadži	Siveci	I	I'
29	Soosaare	Sūzari	I	I'
30	Soursuu	Lielpuri	I	I'
31	Šikksālgākülä	Āžmuguras	I	I'
32	Šlāagakülä	Ezerslokas	I	I'
33	Tsangukülä	Čonkas	I	I'
34	Tšipati	Čipati	L	L'
35	Tuklikülä	Dukuliena	I	Z'
36	Töülüsta	Tīlani	L	L'
37	Tüüre, Töüremōiža, Duurōmōiža	Dūre	D	L'
38	Uibumāe	Ābeļkalni	I	I'
39	Uranužō	Uranaži	K	K'
40	Vaslō	Jaunzemji	I	I'
41	Väakali	Kalnvēji	I	I'

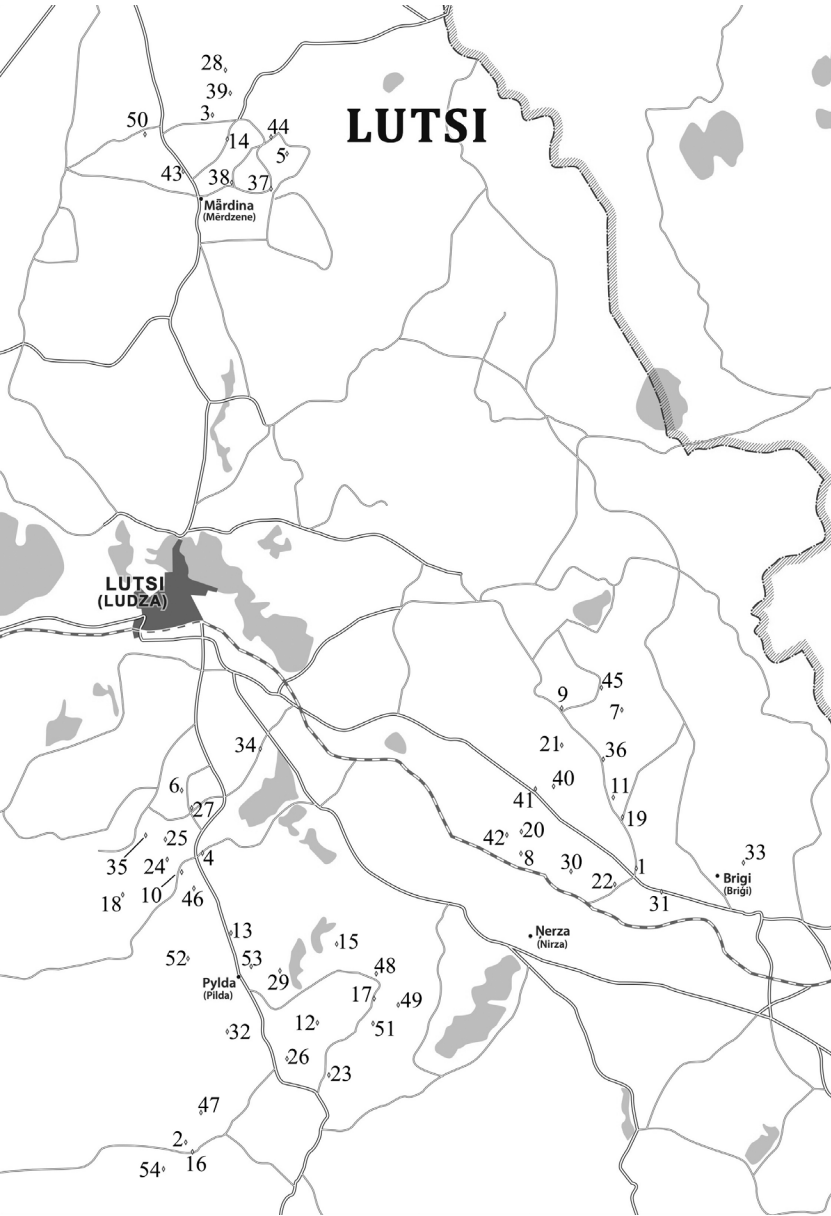


Figure 3. Map of the Lutsi villages (Map created by Meeli Mets).

Table 2. Lutsi and Latvian names of villages shown on Figure 3. (H = historical (pre-1949) parish, M = modern (post-1991) parish, B, B' = Briģi, C = Cibla, M, M' = Mērdzene, N = Nirza, Ņu = Ņukši, P, P' = Pilda, Pu = Pureņi).

	Lutsi	Latvian	H	M
1	Ala külä, Sūre-Pīkova	Lielā Pīkova	N	B'
2	Aļksenki	Aļoksinki	P	P'
3	Baranova	Baranova	M	M'
4	Belomoikino	Belomoiki	P	Ņu
5	Dektereve	Dekterova	M	M'
6	Dirgatsi	Dergači	P	Ņu
7	Dunduri	Abricki	B	C
8	Dūnaburi	Dinaburski	N	B'
9	Grēki	Greči	N	C
10	Inkina	Inkini	P	Ņu
11	Jertševa	Jerčova	B	B'
12	Kirbu külä, Kirbani	Škirpāni	P	P'
13	Kirivā- kidze külä, Rābakoza	Raibakozi	P	P'
14	Kitkova	Kitkova	M	M'
15	Kukli külä	Kukujeva	P	P'
16	Kulakovo	Kulakova	P	P'
17	Laizenaq	Laizāni	P	P'
18	Lōdi külä	Lociši	P	Pu
19	Lovodina	Jaunā Slobodka	B	B'
20	Lukodi	Ļukati	N	B'
21	Māgize külä	Barisi	N	C
22	Māe külä, Vāiku- Pīkova	Mazā Pīkova	N	B'
23	Mytsa külä	Germi	P	P'
24	Nitkova	Šņitki	P	Ņu
25	Paideri	Paideri	P	Pu
26	Paldatsi	Boldači	P	P'
27	Palo-kyrdzi külä	Baravuški	P	Ņu
28	Parsikova	Parsikova	M	M'
29	Paške külä, Barava	Borovaja	P	P'
30	Vāiku-Pīzeq	Pīzāni	N	B'
31	Poddubi	Poddubje	N	B'
32	Porkali	Porkaļi	P	P'
33	Prokori	Prohori	B	B'
34	Pūdniki	Pūdņiki	P	Ņu
35	Pūkeze külä	Pivkaiņi	P	Pu
36	Puntsuli	Puncuļi	B	B'
37	Rūzinova	Rūzori	M	M'
38	Salai	Šalaji	M	M'
39	Samuši	Samuši	M	M'
40	Skrīni	Skrini	N	B'
41	Sokani	Sokāni	N	C
42	Svikli	Svikli	N	B'
43	Sylogali	Silagaiļi	M	M'
44	Tabalova	Tabulova	M	M'
45	Tati külä	Ščastļivi	N	C
46	Toloni	Stoloni	P	Ņu
47	Tsirgu külä, Pūdinova	Putinova	P	P'
48	Sūre- Tsāpsiq, Jāni külä	Lielie Tjapši	P	P'
49	Vāiku- Tsāpsiq	Mazie Tjapši	P	P'
50	Vahtsene külä, Nova čerevna	Jaun- mihalova	M	M'
51	Vahtsetaloq, Saļnigi	Saļņiki	P	P'
52	Vārkali	Vorkaļi	P	P'
53	Vāhā külä	Veženki	P	P'
54	Zaļmona	Dzālmaņi	P	P'

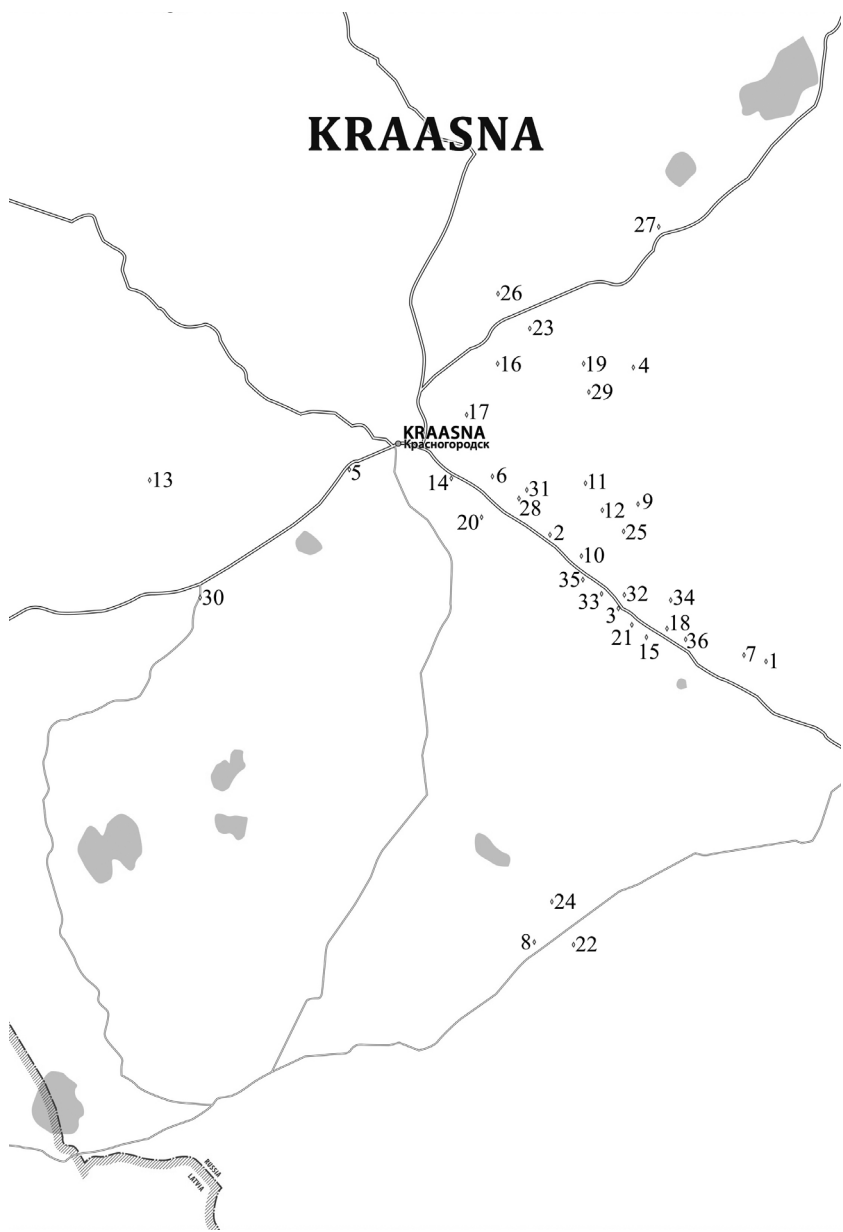


Figure 4. Map of the Kraasna villages (Map created by Meeli Mets).

Table 3. Kraasna and Russian names of villages shown in Figure 4. (H = historical (Kallas-era) administrative divisions, M = modern administrative divisions, B = Baryginskaja volost (Варыгинская волость), K, K' = Krasnogorodskaja volost (Красногородская волость), Pe = Petrovskaja volost (Петровская волость), Pg = Pograničnaja volost (Пограничная волость), Po = Pokrovs-kaja volost (Покровская волость), Pr = Prigorodnaja volost (Пригородная волость)).

	Kraasna	Russian	H	M		Kraasna	Russian	H	M
1	Borodulina	Бородулино (Borodulino)	Pe	B	19	Poddubno	Поддубно (Poddubno)	K	K'
2	Gorbunova	Горбуново (Gorbunovo)	K	K'	20	Prentsi	Морозово (Morozovo)	K	K'
3	Hanikülä	Ломы (Lomy)	K	K'	21	Rumuli	Подсадница (Podsadnica)	K	K'
4	Hudjaga	Худяки (Hudjaki)	K	K'	22	Seeverik- ova	Северка (Severka)	Po	Pr
5	Issajeva	Исаево (Isaevo)	K	K'	23	Seipolo	Серполово (Serpолоvo)	K	K'
6	Ivatsova	Иванцево (Ivancevo)	K	K'	24	Selnika	Сильники (Sil'niki)	Po	Pr
7	Kostrova	Кострово (Kostrovo)	K	B	25	Sokolina	Сакулино (Sakulino)	K	K'
8	Kraine	Крайнево (Krajnevo)	Po	Pr	26	Sorokina	Сорокино (Sorokino)	K	K'
9	Kriskohv	Гришково (Griškovo)	K	K'	27	Sossedova	Соседово (Sosedovo)	K	K'
10	Käpäkülä	Усово (Usovo)	K	K'	28	Sülätüvä	Шутово (Šutovo)	K	K'
11	Makavina	Маковейково (Makovejkovo)	K	K'	29	Šagirjova	Жагорево (Žagorevo)	K	K'
12	Mihova	Мехово (Mehovo)	K	K'	30	Šerebina	Жеребино (Žerebino)	Po	Pg
13	Muldova	Мулдово (Muldovo)	K	K'	31	Tammõkülä	Сорокино- Чухонское (Sorokino- Čuxonskoe)	K	K'
14	Mõisa	Мыза (Myza)	K	K'	32	Suure- Tanka	Филеесеево (Fileleeevo)	K	K'
15	Nahakülä	Агафоново (Agafonovo)	K	K'	33	Väiku- Tanka	Приглутино (Priglotino)	K	K'
16	Paraskova	Барашкино (Baraškino)	K	K'					

	Kraasna	Russian	H	M		Kraasna	Russian	H	M
17	Piirova	Спирово (Spirovo)	K	K'	34	Tsertseva	Черницово (Černicovo)	K	K'
18	Poddub- naja	Поддубно- Агафоновское (Poddubno- Agafonovskoe)	K	K'	35	Tsesneva	Частилково (Častilkovo)	K	K'
					36	Tsähnova	Дяхновка (Djaxnovka)	K	K'

The majority of Kraasna villages cluster along the roads leading to the southeast and northeast from Krasnogorodsk. A handful of villages are also located further south and west. During Kallas's expedition, nearly all of the villages were in Krasnogorodskaja volost. Though some of the boundaries and names of administrative divisions may have changed, this is still generally the case today. Most of the villages are located in Krasnogorodskij District (Красногородский район) in Krasnogorodskaja and Pograničnaja volosts. A handful of villages are found in Baryginskaja, Pograničnaja, and Prigorodnaja volosts located in Oporeckij District (Опочецкий район).

4. Linguistic status

The language island communities exist in a space between speaking three subdialects of South Estonian and three unique languages. They have elements of both, but are somewhere in the middle between both ends of this continuum.

These three communities are not uniform, isolated groups of South Estonian-speaking people. There are also variations within the languages spoken by these communities (Pajusalu 2020). For example, in the aforementioned use of different inessive endings in Lutsi, which corresponds to similar variations seen within the South Estonian speech area in Estonia and may suggest, as noted above, that the Lutsi community originated from several migrations of people from different parts of southeastern Estonia.

At the same time, each of these three communities was a unique laboratory for language contact and responded to the different modern and historical influences of its environment developing, on one hand, new features – such as *stød* or broken tone in Leivu and Lutsi (Balodis, Pajusalu & Teras 2016, see also Norvik et al. 2021 in this volume) –

and new vocabulary, while, on the other hand, preserving grammatical archaisms – such as the inessive ending *-hn* in Lutsi – which are lost or less prevalent in the South Estonian varieties spoken in Estonia today.

And yet, while developing independently and separated from the main body of South Estonian speakers, the speakers of the language island varieties had some degree of contact with those speakers in Estonia. As noted by several of the authors in the current volume, this contact came through paths such as marriage, trade, manor lords moving South Estonian-speaking peasants between manors in the language islands and Estonia, or labourers venturing outside of their communities to work. This contact may also have at different points in time influenced the evolution of the three language island varieties.

5. Self-Identity

As with any community, the self-identity of the members of the three language island communities has evolved over time. Historically, members of these three communities predominantly saw themselves as Estonians and used self-designations also used historically or presently by Estonians in Estonia such as *maarahvas* ‘country folk’, *maamiis* ‘country person’, *eestlāseq* ‘Estonians’.

This same understanding of Lutsi identity is found among Lutsi descendants in the present day who generally see their ancestors as being *igauni* ‘Estonians’ rather than members of a separate Lutsi ethnicity. The terms *Ludzas igauni* ‘Ludza Estonians’ and *luci* ‘Lutsis’ are popular in Latvia as designations for the Lutsis for Lutsi language and culture events. *Ludzas igauni* is also often used in scientific research to refer to the Lutsis (Balodis 2020). The situation for Leivu is similar with the Latvian designation *leivi* ‘Leivus’ generally used at present to refer to this community and in names for its language, cultural elements, etc. It should be noted that *leivi* is also the term in the local variety of Latvian for the Livonians. It is also noteworthy that some Leivu descendants have given prominence to the connections they presume they have with the Livonians. While it is unlikely that the Leivus are descendants of any Livonian group, the perception by some Leivu descendants that their ancestors were connected with the Livonians or perhaps even were Livonians themselves has led to a transformation of their identity from being linked with the Estonians to instead being linked with the Livonians.

In Latvia, the Lutsis and Leivus are increasingly seen as being one of the unique historical ethnic groups of Latvia – along with the indigenous Latvians and Livonians and non-indigenous Krevin Votians (Latvian: *krieviņi*) near Bauska – rather than as a historical Estonian emigrant community. The situation for Kraasna in Russia and whether there is any modern designation used by descendants of the community for their ancestors is unknown.

6. Obsolescence to Extinction and Rebirth

Presently, none of the language island varieties are used as languages of daily interaction. Kraasna was probably the first of the three varieties to lose its last speakers – most likely by the mid-20th century, if not earlier (Mets et al. 2014: 14). Paulopriit Voolaine visited the Kraasna region in 1952 and 1966 and his notebooks stored at the Estonian Literary Museum show that some amount of Kraasna language knowledge still existed among Kraasna descendants. Figure 5 shows one of these individuals from Voolaine’s 1966 trip to the Kraasna villages.



Figure 5. Jegor, son of Vassiili, Vassiljev with his wife. Voolaine writes on the back of the photo: “Both were born in Mõisa village. Jegor V. is the only Estonian who remembers the word ‘Kraasna’. He also knows the most Estonian words compared to others, and even some short sentences.” (Photo: Paulopriit Voolaine, 1966, Mõisa (Myza), Russia, ERM Fk 1508: 138).

In 2004, University of Tartu researchers found some fragmentary traces remaining of Kraasna in the village of Ivatsova. Two families living there knew of their Estonian roots (see Harju 2004); one family had also given its dog a South Estonian name – *Musti*. Many historical Kraasna villages described by Oskar Kallas and other earlier researchers, are now partially or even mostly gone. It is unknown how much knowledge of Estonian roots remains among Kraasna descendants today.

The language island communities of Latvia survived longer and, as is discussed in several of the articles in this volume, influenced the sound and structure of local Latvian varieties. The last known fluent speaker of Leivu was Anton Bok (1908–1988) (Nigol 1988) from Pajušilla (Kārklupe) village in present-day Lejasciems parish. Figure 6 shows two Leivu speakers with Estonian linguist Paul Ariste.



Figure 6. Estonian linguist Paul Ariste (centre) with Leivu speakers Alfred Peterson (left) and Alide Peterson (right). (Photo: Valter Niilus, 1935, Paikna (Paikēni), Latvia, ERM Fk 724: 3).

Lutsi would have ceased being a spoken language nearly at the exact same time as Leivu were it not for the efforts of one of its last speakers – Antonina Nikonova (1898–1983). Though Mrs. Nikonova passed away

at just around the same time as the last speaker of Leivu, she had been an enthusiastic speaker of Lutsi and not only encouraged others to speak it, but also spoke it with her grandson Nikolajs Nikonovs (1944–2006) of Lielie Tjapši village (Lutsi: Jāni külā, Sūre-Tsäpsiq) who would end up being the last known conversational speaker of Lutsi and lived into the 21st century. Lutsi knowledge persisted beyond Mr. Nikonovs' lifetime as well. His wife Antoņina Nikonova (1949–2014), a partial speaker of Lutsi, had extensive knowledge of Lutsi vocabulary and even some phrases. Today some knowledge of greetings, numbers, and short phrases remains among the wider group of Lutsi descendants (Balodis 2020). Likewise, there is memory to a greater or lesser extent among both Leivu and Lutsi descendants of having Estonian roots. Figure 7 shows Estonian researcher Paulopriit Voolaine with the Nikonovs family.



Figure 7. Paulopriit Voolaine with the Nikonovs family. The last fluent Lutsi speaker Antonina Nikonova (second from the left) is standing with her great-granddaughter Anna, right of her is Antoņina Nikonova (Nikolajs' wife), Jezups Nikonovs (Nikolajs' father), Paulopriit Voolaine, and the last conversational Lutsi speaker Nikolajs Nikonovs. The identities of the others are uncertain. (Source: Antoņina Nikonova's photo album, Jāni külā (Lielie Tjapši), Latvia, late 1970s / early 1980s).

Currently, Lutsi is undergoing some degree of language revitalisation. In 2020, the first book on Lutsi written not only for researchers but also for a general audience was published in Latvia (*Lutsi kiele lementar | Ludzas igauņu valodas ābece* by Uldis Balodis) and local organisations in Ludza (the Juris Soikāns Ludza Art School, and the Youth Theatre “Azotē”) have undertaken their own Lutsi language activities, while several research symposia focusing on Lutsi and the Finno-Ugric heritage of Latgale have been organised at the Ludza City Main Library. Cultural activities are also underway with the release of a compact disc of Lutsi folk songs by the Cibla town folklore group “Ilža” and the opening of a permanent exhibit on the Lutsis in 2021 at the Ludza Local History Museum (Ludzas novadpētniecības muzejs).

There has been no consistent language revival effort as of yet for Leivu, though Leivu was included along with Lutsi in the Latvian national programme of events for the 2015 European Day of Languages and Lutsi and Leivu songs were included in the 2018 compilation of songs from Latvia’s Finnic communities released as the album “Jūrd. Saknes. Roots.” There is also a memorial in Mežslokas in Ilzene parish noting that this was a place inhabited by the Leivus and the location of one of their cemeteries.

7. Research history

The time depth of research into the language islands is somewhat shallower than that of other similar communities in and around Latvia such as Livonian and Krevin Votian where the first extensive documentation dates to the mid-19th century whereas the language island varieties only began to be documented in the late 19th or early 20th century.

The first reports of the existence of these communities, however, come earlier. In 1782, August Wilhelm Hupel noted the presence of several thousand Estonians (i.e., Leivus) living within Alūksne church parish (Hupel 1782, also Jansone 2021 and Vaba 2021 in this volume). Adolph Brandt, in 1845, and Gustav Manteuffel, in 1869, note the presence of approximately 3000 Estonians (i.e., Lutsis) living in Mihalova (present-day Mērdzene) and Janovole (present-day Briģi) parishes north and east of Ludza (Brandt 1845, Manteuffel 1869). A colleague of Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald sent him several Kraasna songs in 1849, which are the first record of this community (see Ernits 2021 in this volume).

Many of the same names appear in the history of the documentation of the three language island varieties. Oskar Kallas (1868–1946) carried out the first extensive documentation of Lutsi in 1893 and subsequently also of Kraasna. Kallas published monographs in Estonian on both communities in 1894 and 1903, respectively, also publishing a bilingual German-Estonian collection of Lutsi stories in 1900 which also included a description of the Lutsi community in German and a German version of his Kraasna monograph in 1904. Heikki Ojansuu (1873–1923) visited the Lutsi and Leivu communities in 1911, and the Kraasna community in 1911 and 1914, and left several hundred pages of handwritten language documentation and phonograph recordings of Kraasna, which are discussed in the present volume by Tobias Weber (2021b). Valter Niilus (1913–1978) focused his work on Leivu, publishing a volume in French containing texts in Leivu with translations and a description of the community as he found it during his work (Niilus 1937). Paul Ariste (1905–1990) also was involved in documentation of Leivu and Lutsi and appears in archival photographs from the 1930s with speakers from both communities.

In the interwar years, August Sang (1914–1969) and Paulopriit Voolaine (1899–1985) worked with Lutsi. Sang, who is also known for his Estonian poetry, was accompanied on his research expedition to the Lutsi villages of Pilda parish by Ariste and Niilus. Thanks to their work, there exist audio recordings of Lutsi² from the interwar years. Sang also wrote several valuable unpublished studies on Lutsi phonology (Sang 1936a) and Lutsi noun and verb morphology (Sang 1936b, 1936c). Sang also took many photographs of the Lutsi villages and their inhabitants during his work and kept a journal during his Lutsi expedition. These are stored at the Estonian National Museum.

While Sang's work with Lutsi lasted only a few years, Paulopriit Voolaine's work lasted much of his life. Voolaine also visited the Leivu and Kraasna communities, but his work and closest relationships were connected with the Lutsis. During Latvia's interwar independence, Voolaine carried out language documentation and took photographs in the

2 These are stored at the Institute of the Estonian Language. The Lutsi consultant is Meikuls Jarošenko from Lielie Tjapši village in Pilda parish. Meikuls and his wife Tekla Jarošenko were also the consultants for Sang's unpublished Lutsi studies mentioned later in this paragraph.

Lutsi villages; however, he also worked to strengthen Lutsi identity and tried unsuccessfully to have Estonian taught in a school in Filantmüiza in Pilda parish. During the Soviet period, Voolaine returned to the Lutsi villages and also helped serve as a contact and guide for expeditions conducted by linguists from the University of Tartu. He also maintained a close relationship until the end of his life with the Nikonovs family of Lielie Tjapši village, which included the last known fluent speakers of Lutsi.

In the mid to late 20th century, extensive language documentation was carried out by linguists from Estonia. Audio and text documentation for Lutsi and Leivu exists from this period. Prominent figures in this documentation include Salme Nigol, Salme Tanning, Mari Must, Aili Univere, Aino Valmet, and Paulopriit Voolaine. No significant Kraasna language documentation is known to exist from this period.

During the late 20th century and early 21st century, Lembit Vaba has researched Latvian loanwords in Leivu and Lutsi, language contacts and the history of Estonian habitation in Latvia, and has been the most prominent Estonian researcher of the South Estonian language islands (Vaba 1997, 2011). Tiit-Rein Viitso (2009) has compared Leivu to Livonian. Karl Pajusalu (2009, 2014) has described the position of the language islands relative to the rest of South Estonian. Pire Teras (2007, 2010) has studied the phonology of Leivu. Hannes Korjus has published extensively on the Lutsis and their history, and also carried out a survey (Korjuss 2001) of the Estonian habitation of Ludza District. Since 2013, linguist Uldis Balodis (2019) has documented the final remembered fragments of Lutsi among descendants as well as the present state of the historic Lutsi villages. Balodis has also carried out preliminary language revitalisation work with the creation of a Lutsi practical orthography (Balodis 2015) and publication of a Lutsi language primer (Balodis 2020). Enn Ernits and Tobias Weber are working on Kraasna linguistic materials (see, e.g., Ernits 2012, 2018, 2021, Weber 2019, 2021a, 2021b).

8. Conclusion

Our image of the extent of the language islands is in some measure a collection of snapshots of particular moments in time when the presence of Estonian speakers was either noted by local officials such as clergy or later periods primarily in the late 19th and 20th centuries when these

communities were the objects of serious scientific study. However, our understanding of the particular language island communities, their inter-relationship with each other and South Estonian speakers in Estonia, and the extent of South Estonian outside of Estonia is dynamic as more work is done to research other types of evidence for the presence of South Estonian in areas adjacent to Estonia. Further work, such as place name research and research of other historical records (revision lists, etc.), may provide additional insight into the history and extent of this presence. This volume brings together some of the newest studies on the language island varieties and is an effort to take this next step in describing the language island varieties, while perhaps also shining more light on their origins.

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Kokkuvõte. Uldis Balodis, Karl Pajusalu: Sissejuhatav ülevaade lõuna-eesti keelesaartest. Lõunaeeesti keelesaared – Leivu, Lutsi, Kraasna – on kolm ajaloolist lõunaeeestikeelset enklaavi, mis ei jää üksnes väljapoole Eesti piire, vaid mis on olnud Lõuna-Eesti põhialast eraldatud vähemalt mitu sajandit. Kaks nendest keelesaartest – Leivu ja Lutsi – asuvad tänapäeva Lätis. Kolmas keelesaar – Kraasna – paiknes teisel pool Läti piiri Venemaal, jäädes põhjapoolsest Lutsi asualast ainult u 35 kilomeetri kaugusele. Artikkel tutvustab sissejuhatavalt selle erinumbri artiklite teemasid, kirjeldades lõunaeeesti keelesaarte ajalugu ja praegust olukorda. Esitatakse ülevaade keelesaarte asendist ja päritolust, keelelisest staatusest, kõnelejate identiteedist ning ka uurimisloost 19. sajandist tänaseni.

Märksõnad: ohustatud keeled, vähemuskeeled, keelekontakt, läänemeresoome keeled, lõunaeeesti, Leivu, Lutsi, Kraasna