Aili Nenola

The Units of Comparison in the Study of Baltic-Finnish Laments

Laments (*itkuvirret* or *itkut*) have been part of the tradition of the Baltic-Finnish peoples since pre-Christian times. Composed and performed mostly by women, lamenting songs were originally connected with death, and presumably developed gradually out of spontaneous expressions of grief on the death of a loved one. But in later times laments have also been sung in connection with with marriage rites and recruitment. The language of laments—crowded with colorful, emotionally charged metaphors—their subject matter, melodies, and manner of performance (from which comes the term *itkeä äänellä*, to weep with melody) go a long way back to a tradition which varies regionally, although the regional traditions display certain common features. Tradition, however, is merely a starting point for the creative work of individual *lamenters*, which could be called improvisation on learned folk expressions and motifs.

The Karelians, the Veps, the Izhors, the Votes, and the Setu Estonians had an original lament tradition of their own. The Ingrian Finns, the Äyrämöinen, and the West Ingrian Finns most probably borrowed the art of lamenting and laments themselves from their neighbors, the Izhors and the Votes, after arriving in Ingria in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Although the church tried to root out what it considered to be a pagan custom, it actually played an important role in the development and preservation of lament tradition: the popular rites and beliefs surrounding death and the teachings of the church gradually merged into a uniform cult in which women's dirges stood virtually on a par with the ecclesiastical formulae. Even today the dirge tradition of the Baltic Finns reflects a very early concept of death and the kingdom of the dead, *tuonela* or *manala*. But alongside these old folk concepts of the underworld, we also find Christian images of heaven and paradise, the Redeemer and saints.

Dirges were performed in death rituals and other memorial rites at certain points dictated by custom: while washing and clothing the body,

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after placing it on the bier, on the morning after death, while placing the body in the coffin, on leaving home, on the way to the graveyard, on approaching the grave, beside the grave, and so on. Dirges may thus be called *ritual laments* that both express and control the feelings of the bereaved in a communal crisis caused by death.

The same applies to the custom of lamenting at weddings, which the Baltic-Finnish peoples very likely borrowed along with certain other wedding customs from their neighbors, the Russians, several hundred years ago. Nevertheless, the Baltic-Finnish wedding laments themselves are for the most part original and based on the dirge tradition. In the course of a rite performed at the bride's home, wedding laments were sung by either the bride (in Ingria) or by some older woman on her behalf (in Karelia). The bride's mother and certain other women might also sing their own laments. Through wedding laments, the bride took leave of her parents, her family, her friends, and her home; but in them she also expressed amazement at her parents' "selling" her to strangers, and asked what she had done to deserve such treatment. Wedding laments were a means of handling relationships between the bride and her own family.

Funerals and weddings lasted for many days, and the transition of a member of the family from one state or family to another was conducted strictly according to custom. Laments expressed the experiences, beliefs, feelings and hopes arising at such moments of change. Outside such rituals women would compose laments about their own everyday troubles, misfortunes or fate in life. By means of these *occasional laments* they also would have kept up and developed their skills at lamenting. Since the eighteenth century, laments were also being sung at ceremonies preceding the departure of a son or husband for the army or war. These recruit laments, known all over northern Russia, were a sort of intermediate form between ritual wedding and funeral laments and everyday occasional laments. In earlier times, the leave-taking in recruit laments, too, was often final: if the son or husband was not killed in battle, he would die from the strain of his many years in the army (5-20 years).[1]

The Finnish study of laments from Lönnrot to Haavio

In his *De poesi Fennica* H. G. Porthan, one of the greatest Finnish scholars in the eighteenth century, presented and analyzed Finnish poetry, both written and oral. His examples of Kalevala metric poetry—epic, lyric, and charms—were mostly taken from earlier publications. But it is known from his correspondence that he had quite a collection of folklore in his "archives," and that texts of Karelian laments were among

the manuscripts sent to him by his former students at Turku Academy. (Unfortunately, the manuscript collection was destroyed by the Great Fire in the city of Turku in 1827, some twenty years after Porthan's death.) Porthan never commented on the lament texts in his studies, but he mentioned Vote laments in an 1802 newspaper article on Vote folk customs, based on descriptions compiled by a former student: "They [the Votes] bury their dead in the woods where they have made and consecrated their burial ground. They cover the grave with a great stone. After that they wail for the deceased by singing some strange songs, which they compose for this occasion and call by the name of *Loilotuxet*."[2]

In the early days of the collection and study of Finnish folklore nobody paid special attention to laments. Scholars and enthusiasts alike were most interested in Kalevala metric poetry, especially after the publication of Lönnrot's *Kalevala* in 1835, when many students started collecting "variants of the Kalevala's songs." Lönnrot himself encountered Karelian laments during his field trips in 1834 and 1835, and in 1836 he published a short article on "The Laments of Russian Karelia," illustrated by a couple of lament texts. But Lönnrot could not make head nor tail of them, and quoted a Karelian male informant who told him that the laments were just "women's talk." Lönnrot realized, however, that the laments were traditional and that "if more of them were collected, they could provide us with some knowledge about ancient times and perhaps be of some use to linguists, too."[3]

Lönnrot was not the only person who reacted negatively to the strange language and emotionally loaded performance of the laments. Many collectors who tried to write down laments had to confess, like Lönnrot, that it was almost impossible.[4] Still, the importance of collecting laments was understood at least by Lönnrot's most eager contributor, D. E. D. Europaeus, who himself wrote down some laments in southern Karelia and tried to persuade students who went to Ingria to do so too.[5] Thus, during the latter half of the nineteenth century, quite a number of both Ingrian and Karelian laments were deposited in the folklore archives of the Finnish Literature Society and some odd texts were also published. For a long time, however, general knowledge of laments was based on Lönnrot's brief introduction and a more elaborate article on Ingrian laments by Volmari Porkka published in 1883 (see below).

The scientific study of folklore began in Finland at about the time Porkka's article was published. Julius Krohn wrote his books at the end of the 1870s and the beginning of the 1880s and formulated the first drafts of the geographical-historical method. For several reasons, laments were not among the genres he focused upon. The language of the laments

made not only collecting but also analysis difficult. And because laments were—quite correctly—regarded as improvised songs, the method did not apply to them. This opinion is evident in Kaarle Krohn's statement in his *Folklore Methodology*: "The lament—metrically freer, perhaps even older [than runes], ornamented with alliteration and thought rhyme—already shows the weaknesses of improvised literature . . . ."[6] It is also possible that laments were not regarded as a very important genre for study because they did not induce national fervor. They were part of the private, not the public, sphere of life. The songs may have also been less interesting because the lamenters were solely women. In any event, the greatest obstacle to the study of laments was certainly the method itself. If there was no hope of finding the original forms of the tradition, why and how to study them comparatively?

After Volmari Porkka's lengthy—and excellent—introduction to Ingrian laments, based on his own field collections at the beginning of the 1880s, forty years elapsed before the knowledge of laments increased substantially. In 1924 Samuli Paulaharju published a description of Archangel Karelian funeral customs with texts of laments sung on different occasions, and in the same year V. J. Mansikka published an article on lament motifs describing *Tuonela*, the abode of the dead. In 1928 Mansikka published another article, this time on Old East Slavic dirges.[7] The next significant studies of laments were Martti Haavio's analysis of Zyrian wedding laments in 1930 and his survey of Finnish-Karelian laments published in German in 1934.[8]

While it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to ascertain how the gender of the lamenters affected those folklorists who basically were not interested in laments, it is easy to describe how it affected those who were. Some of them were carried away by their enthusiasm for the delicate, emotionally rich and lyrical nature of the language and themes of the laments, in which they saw a direct link with the essentially lyrical nature of women in general and of "Eastern"—Karelian and Ingrian—women in particular. This view, which I would like to call the *romanticizing* of laments and lamenters, appears most clearly in the writings of Samuli Paulaharju and Martti Haavio, and their followers. Paulaharju described Archangel Karelian laments in 1916 with gushing superlatives: "The most beautiful, profound and most sensitive of all our folk poems are laments, peculiar expressions of sorrow and sadness of mind. . . . Womenfolk, mostly old wives, widows who have seen hard times and other broken-hearted people sing them. . . . The harshness of men renders them incapable of such songs, although many of them, especially those emotionally more sensitive, like to listen to good singing of a lament."[9] Martti Haavio saw in the world of laments "an enormous assortment

of the nuances of a Finnish woman's psyche,''[10] and V. Tarkiainen, who otherwise was of the opinion that the form of the laments was more primitive than that of the strictly rhymed old runes (cf. K. Krohn!) and thus more interesting from the point of view of cultural history than of aesthetics, wrote that laments are full of ''tearful sentimentality and anguish in a decorative form.''[11]

The romanticizing view of lamenters as women full of sad and sentimental feelings and their laments as some kind of ''flower language,'' as one student put it,[12] was, of course, connected with the general romanticizing of the people, ''the folk,'' in earlier studies of folklore in Finland. This attitude can best be understood as an effort to raise the image of the Finnish people to the level of other civilized European nations by giving it highly esteemed qualifications and characteristics: noble-mindedness, profoundness of thought, creative power, delicacy of mind and behavior (especially) in women, etc.[13] Whatever the consequences of this effort to ennoble the folk might otherwise have been, in the study of laments—and, for that matter, in the study of folklore at large—it produced an unrealistic view of the nature of tradition and its connections with everyday life. Unable to see through the metaphorical world of laments into the reality of the lamenters, scholars sometimes seem to have remained within their own ''flower language.'' This orientation also entailed the individualization of tradition: explanations for traits in the collective heritage were sought in the individual psyche and mind, and vice versa, an individual psyche was abstracted from the sentiments expressed in laments and then called, according to Martti Haavio, ''the Finnish woman's psyche.''

One effect of the romanticizing of lamenters is evident in the shock students of tradition experience when they realize how easily a lamenter can change from one emotional register to another, and that a female lamenter does not wander around watery-eyed and ready to lament at the slightest provocation. Armas Launis, who was interested in the music of laments and recorded Ingrian laments at the beginning of this century, describes how surprised he was when the women he had invited to his lodgings for a recording session arrived full of laughter and talk, as if they were coming to a wedding. ''I looked at them, stunned: were these really wailing women?''[14] But he learned, like many before and after him, that the suggestive language and performance of a lament can turn a houseful of laughing women into a sobbing and crying crowd.

A new start

Having been virtually forgotten after Haavio's 1934 article, research into laments got off to a new start in Finland and in Soviet Karelia in

1963 when Lauri Honko published his inspired survey of Baltic-Finnish lament poetry. Honko had first become acquainted with laments in Tver Karelia (now part of the Kalininskaja oblast) in 1958, when he visited the region in the company of the Karelian language expert Pertti Virtaranta. Having also been introduced to the laments of Olonetsia in 1966, Honko embarked on a research project to study and publish Ingrian laments, to chart the Baltic-Finnish lament tradition as a whole, and to create lament archives for use in research. In the early 1970s, the Finnish and Soviet lament researchers began to cooperate through the exchange of materials, the organization of joint symposia (such as in Tallinn in 1973 and Petrozavodsk in 1979), joint publication projects, and visits by researchers. Lauri Honko and Pertti Virtaranta in particular have participated in the recording of Karelian laments in the Karelian parts of the Soviet Union. The Finnish researchers have been especially interested in the laments of Tver Karelia, and the extensive material collected during the 1970s includes laments taped by collectors during interviews, and also films of authentic lament performances at funerals and memorial festivals. Cooperation between lament researchers in recent years has been extended to North Russian laments too.

Soviet Karelian folklorists began systematic collection of the lament tradition in that area in the 1950s, aided by the introduction of tape recorders. The Karelian folklorists have charted the distribution of laments over the Karelian regions and tried to make a systematic study of the number of active tradition bearers still performing laments themselves and passive bearers who still remember the tradition.

Particularly notable work on Karelian laments has been done by Unelma Konkka and Aleksandra (A. S.) Stepanova, who in their numerous studies have described and analyzed special aspects of the Karelian lament tradition. In 1976 A. S. Stepanova published the first scientific collection of Karelian laments together with the musicologist Terttu Koski.[15] The introduction of the work *Karelskie prichitaniya* is the widest investigation so far in the history of collection and research into Karelian laments, and provides invaluable information on the present state and future of the tradition. Stepanova has also written a thesis on the system of the metaphorical names in Karelian laments.[16] Unelma Konkka's study *Ikuinen ikävä* [The Eternal Longing] on the ritual background to Karelian laments was published in Finnish by the Finnish Literature Society in Helsinki in 1985.

Laments from other Baltic-Finnish areas are also being recorded and studied in the Soviet Union. Since the late 1960s Estonian researchers have recorded Vepsian laments, few of which had been previously documented. In the 1950s E. N. Setälä and J. H. Kala published certain

notes on Vepsian laments in Finland; Vepsian texts were last published in a collection of examples of the Vepsian language in Leningrad in 1969.[17] The study of Vepsian laments is only in the initial stages; so far an analysis of their melodies by Ingrid Rüütel and Mart Remmel has been published in Tallinn.[18]

Closely related to the Vepsian tradition are the Setu Estonian laments. Large numbers of these were deposited in the folk archives in Tartu and Tallinn at the end of the nineteenth century. A selection of Setu laments was published in Finland as early as 1904, in Jakob Hurt's collection *Setukeste laulud.* Setu laments have also been recorded on tape in recent years. Proof that research into these laments is becoming more lively is the selection *Setu surnuitkud I-II* (Tallinn, 1981-82), edited by Veera Pino and Vaike Sarv. This work includes lament melodies along with the texts, as well as documented information on other eastern Estonian lament traditions that died out before collection began.

Honko's 1963 article on lament poetry is not only a general treatise on the distribution and nature of laments among peoples other than the Baltic Finns, but also represents a new outlook. Whereas Haavio's 1934 article mainly described the content and types of Baltic-Finnish laments, Honko, relying on archive and literary sources, also describes the contexts of Karelian dirges and Ingrian wedding laments. But Honko additionally goes beyond content analysis to identify the functions and significance of lament performance by connecting laments with the custom complexes on which they rely—the rites of passage, such as funerals, memorial festivals, and weddings. His application of rite-of-passage theory has proved to be a useful and fruitful starting point for the analysis of lament contexts.[19] The other questions Honko deals within this article—concerning the language, style, execution, and performers of laments—are the same as those raised by other lament researchers. Honko has subsequently concentrated on the problems of producing laments, which were of central importance in his fieldwork in Tver Karelia at the end of the 1970s. With reference to Ingrian dirges, he has also analyzed in more detail an idea mentioned in his 1963 article, that of the lamenter as a guide to the dead person's soul, i.e., as a psychopomp.[20]

The language of Karelian laments has aroused the interest of Pentti Leino, who on several occasions has analyzed the alliteration of Karelian laments as a stylistic device and a factor influencing the singer's choice of vocabulary. In his most recent contribution, which surveys the problems of investigating the language of Baltic-Finnish laments,[21] Leino emphasizes the importance of examining and describing the language used by each individual lamenter in order to permit more precise description of the variation within and between lament areas. In Leino's

opinion it is vital to study the language of laments—a hypothetical closed-system of lament language—from the point of view of etymology, structure, and in particular the stereotypical paradigms of phrases.

So far the most detailed analysis of lament language has been written by A. S. Stepanova, whose thesis (1985) on the functions of the system of metaphoric substitutes in Karelian laments contains an analysis of the metaphoric substitutes in Karelian laments both as a system and from the point of view of their formation, their lexical and semantic content and functions. This study also pays attention to variation among individual lamenters and is an excellent starting point for the comprehensive description of the language of Baltic-Finnish laments. I myself contributed to this with my analysis of the naming system of Ingrian laments in 1971.

Less attention has been paid to the study of the motifs of laments begun by V. J. Mansikka, who dealt with images of the underworld in Karelian laments. The study of lament motifs requires a command of the lament language, which takes a long time to achieve. It is hoped that lament research will be able to produce such future aids as glossaries and lament language dictionaries. The study of motifs also calls for increasing cooperation with Russian lament researchers, because, in addition to comparison of rite contexts and elements of lament language, study of the history of motifs is one of the main paths for determining the relations between the Baltic-Finnish and the Northern Russian lament traditions.

The aspects of lament research listed here—the language, motifs, performers, contexts and ritual backgrounds, and the problems of creating laments—are of central importance to the study of texts. Through them it should be possible to answer many of the questions concerning the origin, development, functions, distribution, internal and external relations of Baltic-Finnish lament poetry. As this list of subjects indicates, research into lament texts must draw on the theories and methods of both linguistics and folkloristics. Analyses of the ritual backgrounds in particular may further exploit the theory and methods of cultural anthropology and the study of religion.

As a genre, laments call for a multi-disciplinary approach. Combining various approaches into a unified theory for laments—such as linking folkloristic or linguistic research with the study of lament melodies—is not yet possible. The analysis of lament melodies may supplement and prove or disprove hypotheses achieved by the study of lament texts on such questions as the internal variation of traditional areas or the permanence and development of tradition. Furthermore lament melodies, an extremely archaic musical expression, may provide answers about the

development of music in different areas in general. In recent years, Soviet and Hungarian ethnomusicologists in particular have studied the melodies of laments; in Finland the pioneer of this research was A. O. Väisänen before and after the Second World War. So far, folklorists and ethnomusicologists have studied laments separately, but future researchers must seek a common language, so that students of the texts and melodies may draw on each other's research results in order to define laments as a genre of folklore and folk music and to decide what form and stage of culture they represent.

Thus, after a slow and difficult beginning in the nineteenth century, lament studies seem to have entered a promising new phase, although there are not too many researchers who can overcome the difficulty of understanding the complex language of laments. After the enthusiasm of the 1960s and 1970s, students of laments are now trying to make the most of the materials collected so far, in order to be able to ask the unanswered questions during the next fieldwork period. But at present it is important for the tradition to be recorded and studied in the live context of performance; the field will not be there forever, for laments—like many other old genres—are dying out.

Problems in the comparative analysis of Baltic-Finnish laments

Following this somewhat lengthy introduction to Baltic-Finnish laments and the history of their study, we may now proceed to raising questions of comparative analysis. To do this we must start with the statement quoted above that laments are improvised songs. While true enough, this characterization does not reveal the whole truth about their nature. Each lament is a result of improvisation in its setting: a lamenter composes a new lament for each performance, and therefore no two laments, even by the same lamenter, are ever quite the same. So the final form and totality of each lament is new at each performance. But, and this is important, the materials of laments are traditional: phrases, cliches, motifs. In 1883 Volmari Porkka expressed the opinion that even the "main points" of a lament suitable for a specific occasion are known beforehand. His description of the performance of a lament is still worth quoting:

> When . . . a lamenter begins, she throws her arms round the neck of the person she is singing to and begins her song in a strange, monotonous tone. Very soon she is overcome by emotion and after almost every line she bursts out into noisy, agonized weeping, but at the same time thinking about the next line. This being so, there may sometimes be a slight confusion in her train of thought, which is not surprising. But in general it is a wonder that, in the grips of wild frenzy, lamenters can order their

> thoughts so well, especially since laments are in their way improvisations, songs born of the moment. . . . That laments do not have any poetic meter proper is explained by the fact that as I have already mentioned, they are born of the moment of lamenting. The main points are, of course, known beforehand and the direction itself determined, but the lament does not take on its açtual form until it is sung.[22]

"It does not take on its actual form until it is sung or told" could, I think, be said about any item of folklore. So what makes the improvisation in laments different from other genres? Or is it any different? As I see it at the moment, there are differences, but these do not have to be restricted to laments only. The main difference is the level on which the improvisation takes place. To illustrate this, we might compare folktales and laments. A storyteller may tell a folktale and use individual terms and vocabulary, even new names for the persons in the tale, and yet we can recognize the plot as being such-and-such a tale type. To put it simply: the same story may be told in different languages and codes. What the lament singer does is precisely the opposite: using the same language and code over and over again she always tells a new story—or maybe we should not speak of stories in connection with laments. But, anyway, a lamenter does tell a different thing every time. This difference between folktale and lament is, of course, basically the difference between epic and lyric at large, except that the code or metaphorical language of laments seems to allow even less improvisation than that of folk lyrics.

The special language of laments consists of metaphorical substitutes for everyday terms. All things, real or abstract—especially those connected with death (in dirges) or weddings (in wedding laments)—have their own name in this language. But the most important feature of this metaphorical language is the metaphorical substitutes for kinship terms. Ideally, laments do not use everyday names for people, but rely on metaphorical names. These names are not, however, improvised freely and they form a system that a lamenter must master to be able to produce a lament. Comparative analysis of Karelian and Ingrian laments has revealed that although there are differences between lament areas (or communities), the basic structure of the lament names is the same throughout Karelia and Ingria.

There are two different types of metaphorical substitutes for kinship terms. The first and probably the older type consists of deverbal agent names such as *synnyttäjä*, ("bearer"), meaning mother, and participle names such as *synnytetty*, *synnyttämä*, ("born one") meaning child. The deverbal names stem from verbs that refer to the relations of a mother and her child, mostly to some action upon a child by its mother, such

as "to bear," "to cherish," "to swaddle," "to rock," etc. Starting with the names for "my mother" and "my child" it is possible to address any relative or non-relative by changing either the possessive suffix or the agent telling whose child the lamenter is talking about. I have described the Ingrian system as follows:[23]

Substitute names from the verb *liekuttaa* = to rock a baby

FORMULA	NAME	OBJECT
1) Agent	*liekuttaja* = rocker	mother, father, parents, godmother, godfather, godparents
2) Attribute + agent	kylän *liekuttaja* = rockers-of-the-village	women of the village
	vieraat liekuttajat = strange rockers	parents-in-law
3) Participle form	*liekutettu* = rocked one	child, daughter, son
4) Agent + participle form	*liekuttelijani, emoni, mammani, äitini liekutettu* = rocked one	my mother's sister, brother
	ämmöin liekutettu = mother's rocked one	grandfather and his siblings mother's siblings
	ämmäni or *vanhempien liekutettu* = mother-in-law's rocked one, my parents-in-law's rocked one	husband
	lankoni liekutettu = my kinswoman's rocked one	wife of uncle or brother, daughter-in-law
	naisen liekutettu = women's rocked one	other people, non-relatives
	tatini liekutettu = my aunt's rocked one	members of age group, e.g., girls of the village

Using the above formula, it is possible to form new names by substituting another suitable derivative for the derivative of the verb *liekuttaa*. Some sixty verbs are used in Ingrian laments as derivatives for substitute names. The system of deverbal names is chiefly the same in Karelian laments, as A. S. Stepanova has stated, though the verbs used as derivatives coincide only partly.

The other type of substitute names consists of metaphorical and metonymical *denominal epithets*, which refer to some implicit or explicit feature of the person in question: to his/her size, age, outlook, dress, etc. These are names such as *tammihartiainen*, "oak shoulder" for a grown man,

avvaaroaanuainen, "wide skirt" for a grown woman or *karpaloinen*, "cranberry" and *omena*, "apple" for a child.

The colorfulness of the lament names is not produced by these "simple" types alone but also by the use of attributes, that further define the object of the name. The use of attribute names is most extensive in Archangel Karelian laments, where the deverbal or denominal core of the name may be totally swallowed up by many adjectives and other attributes. To take just one example: "Mintäh valkoalet, *valkieni sorsaseni, miun vallan hulluista vaklonimyön alkuista voalimaistani, valkeijen ilmojen malttamatonta?*"

There are two substitute names in this sentence, which I have italicized. *Valkieni sorsaseni* ("my white wild duck") represents the second type of lament name, with its core metaphor taken from nature to refer to a woman; the other name consists of the deverbal core *voalimaistani* ("my cherished one"), which means a child, and of a number of attributes: *miun vallan hulluista vaklonimyön alkuista*, which is impossible to translate but means "my tiny baby maiden", and *valkeijen ilmojen malttamatonta*, which means "lacking understanding of the world". The meaning of the whole sentence is "why do you, my good woman, wash my baby girl?" and the context of the question is a situation where a mother is watching an older woman wash the body of her dead child. The etymology of some words may be unclear but their affective character is always comprehensible.

The statement that substitute names in Karelian and Ingrian laments belong to the same basic types is itself an abstraction and a result of comparison. As such it does not say much about the relations between these lament traditions: the same types of metaphorical names have also been used in Kalevala metric poetry in both areas, even if not as consistently and in such complicated form, and the same types also appear in Russian laments, where the substitute names are, however, fewer and do not form such a closed system as in Baltic-Finnish laments. But substitute names can be used as units of comparison in different ways: we may compare the vocabulary used in different areas, the role of the substitute names in the formation of the "lines" or periods of the laments, or their role in forming alliterative series, etc.

The comparative analysis of the language of laments cannot perhaps answer the question of the origin or the absolute age of the tradition. Even the question of the relative age of Karelian and Ingrian traditions may be difficult to answer, because the materials at our disposal are so recent: the oldest recordings are much younger than, for instance, the oldest recordings of Kalevala metric runes. As to the material that has been collected, our perspective on the lament traditions is only 150 years

old. But as in the case of runes, we may suppose that the tradition has existed for much longer, because, for instance, some elements in the language of laments seem to present older layers of spoken language. There are certain archaisms in the vocabulary, but perhaps even more important are certain syntactical archaisms, which have not yet been thoroughly analyzed.

Like the linguistic elements, stylistic devices can be used as units of comparison. The role and formation of alliterative patterns in laments has been recognized from the beginning; if correct, Pentti Leino's thesis on the role of alliteration in the choice of words may best explain some confusing elements in the vocabulary, so that we need not fabricate odd etymologies for them.

An example of the use of stylistic features as units of comparison is the way in which some Finnish scholars (such as Haavio, Tarkiainen, and Honko) have compared the use of alliteration, filling words, diminutive forms, etc., in Archangel Karelian laments with that of laments in other areas and concluded that Archangel Karelian laments represent excessive and thus late development in terms of these. Tarkiainen, for instance, writes:

> The clear comprehensibility of the sentences has been disguised by heaping strangely affecting poetic decorations, artificial metaphors and pictures, sweet diminutives and affected frequentative forms. And the rhythmic pattern has been filled with quite meaningless words (like *aimun*, *oimun*, *siumun*, *vallan*), which disturb the reader of a lament text, until he learns that they are contentless and have their function only in the improvisation by the lamenter.[24]

Haavio and Honko also seem to think that the words and devices that do not directly add to the meaning of the lament are a sign of "decadence."

There are grounds for objecting to this kind of reasoning. As to Tarkiainen, his literary (I would like to say *male* literary) aesthetic prejudices do not fit in with the development of lament language. The same prejudices—that the simpler and clearer is the more original and more beautiful—also seem to hover behind Haavio's and Honko's statements, even if not so markedly. Until we know—and we may never know—what the first laments were like, we may assume that the Archangel Karelian laments of the nineteenth century represented the authentic old lament aesthetics and that other traditions were already becoming more like the spoken language or other poetic languages in the area as a result of the slackening of belief, ritual and social control. A. S. Stepanova and Unelma Konkka have tried to make this point in stating that the Archangel Karelian lamenters have kept the system of

metaphorical substitute names intact longer than did lamenters from other areas.[25]

There are several special questions of language and style—some of them not yet resolved, some not even raised—where the answer is to be found only by comparative analysis. But comparison cannot be limited to laments only; the interaction of lament language and the spoken language must be taken into account, and so must the interaction between the language of laments and the language of Kalevala metric poetry. Some of the answers to the questions concerning the language of laments may be found in comparisons with the Russian traditions, which have lived for centuries side by side with the Baltic-Finnish laments. This is especially true when we start analyzing the ritual contexts of laments and lament motifs. The questions raised in such comparisons are, of course, questions about interaction between traditions. In other words, if there are similar features—as there are—can they be explained as original on the one side and as a loan on the other?

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Translated and corrected by Susan Sinisalo

NOTES

1. For more detailed information on the Baltic-Finnish laments, see Martti Haavio, "Über die finnisch-karelischen Klagelieder," *Journal de la Société Finno-Ougrienne* 47 (1934) and Lauri Honko, "Balto-Finnic Lament Poetry," *Studia Fennica* 17 (1974): 9-61.

2. H. O. (Heikki Ojansuu), "Henrik Gabriel Porthanin vatjalaisharrastukset," *Virittäjä* (1906): 1-15.

3. Elias Lönnrot, "Itkuvirsistä Wenäjän Karjalassa," *Mehiläinen*, (September-December 1836).

4. For instance, J. Länkelä in 1858: "It is difficult to get together any laments because no two are the same, and each one sings as she can. No woman wants to let us hear her laments, because there is a tear in her eye as soon as she starts. Despite all my attempts I got no more than 24 laments and those only with great trouble." From "J. Länkelän kertomus runonkeruumatkastansa Inkerissä v. 1858," in A. R. Niemi, ed., *Runonkerääjiemme matkakertomuksia 1830-luvulta 1880-luvulle* (Helsinki, 1904), p. 290.

5. Aili Nenola-Kallio, *Studies in Ingrian Laments*, FFC No. 234 (Helsinki, 1982), pp. 18-19.

6. Kaarle Krohn, *Folklore Methodology* (Austin and London, 1971) pp. 121-22.

7. Samuli Paulaharju, *Syntymä, lapsuus ja kuolema* (Helsinki, 1924); V. J. Mansikka, "Itkujen Tuonela," *Mémoires de la Société Finno-Ougrienne* 52 (1924): 160-80, and "Zur altostslavischen Totenklage," *Mémoires de la Société Finno-Ougrienne* 58 (1928): 138-53.

8. Martti Haavio, "Syrjäänilaiset hääitkut," *Suomi* 5:10 (1930), and "Über die finnisch-karelischen Klagelieder," cf. note 1.

9. Samuli Paulaharju, "Vienan-Karjalan itkuvirsistä," *Otava* (Christmas issue, 1916), p. 535.

10. Martti Haavio, "Über die finnisch-karelischen Klagelieder," p. 37.

11. V. Tarkiainen, "Itkuvirret," in V. Tarkiainen, Hertta Harmas, eds., *Suomen kansalliskirjallisuus III* (Helsinki, 1943), p. 529.

12. I. K. Inha, *Kalevalan laulumailta* (Helsinki, 1921), p. 233.

13. Cf., for instance, Martti Haavio, *Viimeiset runonlaulajat* (Helsinki, 1948).

14. Armas Launis, "Kullervo-oopperan esihistoriaa," *Kalevalaseuran vuosikirja* 1 (1921): 172-73.

15. A. S. Stepanova, T. A. Koski, *Karelskie prichitaniya* (Petrozavodsk, 1976).

16. A. S. Stepanova, *Metaforicheskii mir karelskih prichitanii* (Leningrad, 1985).

17. E. N. Setala, J. H. Kala, "Näytteitä äänis- ja keskivepsän murteista," *Mémoires de la Société Finno-Ougrienne* 100 (1951); M. Zaicheva, M. Mullonen, *Obrasci vepskoi reci* (Leningrad, 1969).

18. I. Rüütel, M. Remmel, "Opyt notacii i issledovaniya vepskih prichitanii" [Some problems of notation and analysis of Vepsian laments], *Soomeugrilaste rahvamuusika ja naaberkultuurid* (Tallinn, 1980).

19. See, for instance, my analysis of the Ingrian wedding laments in *Studies in Ingrian Laments*, pp. 113-81.

20. Lauri Honko, "The Ingrian Lamenter as Psychopompos," *Temenos* 14 (1978). See also "The Lament: Problems of Genre, Structure and Reproduction," in L. Honko and V. Voigt, eds., *Genre, Structure and Reproduction in Oral Literature* (Budapest, 1980).

21. Pentti Leino, "The Language of Laments: The Role of Phonological and Semantic Features in Word Choice," *Studia Fennica* 17 (1974), and "Itämerensuomalaisen itkuvirsikielen tutkimusongelmia" [Research problems in the language of the Balto-Finnic laments], *Sananjalka* 23 (1980).

22. Volmari Porkka, "Inkerin itkuvirsistä," *Valvoja* (Helsinki, 1883), p. 200.

23. Aili Nenola-Kallio, *Studies in Ingrian Laments*, pp. 42-43.

24. V. Tarkiainen, op. cit., p. 530. See also Haavio, "Über die finnisch-karelischen Klagelieder," p. 39: "Unter diesen Umständen dürfte es sicher sein, dass der Gebrauch, Klagelieder vorzutragen, bei den Finnen uralt ist—wie alt, das ist vorläufig unaufgeklärt. Diese Behauptung ist darum berechtigt,weil die Klägeliedertechnik bei uns hoch steht: ihre Stilmittel sind weit ausgebildet, in *Archangel-Karelien, können wir sogar sagen, bis zur Dekadenz.*" Or Honko, "Balto-Finnic Lament Poetry," p. 32: "Highly abundant and extended alliteration can

be regarded as a decadent feature of a later stage, at least in its form in Viena, which favors the repetition of words."

25. Cf., for instance, Unelma Konkka, "Karjalaisen itkuvirsirunouden tutkimuksen ongelmia," *Virittäjä* (Helsinki, 1968), pp. 178-79.