

DO YOU SEE WHAT I SEE?

THE MYTHIC LANDSCAPE IN THE IMMEDIATE WORLD¹

Frog

Abstract: This paper approaches relationships between visual and verbal aspects of performance in the rites of the *tietäjä*, an ethnic ritual specialist, recorded in Archangel Karelia. The focus is on the manipulation of motifs in the activation of mythic images which utilize features of the natural landscape. It will take a ‘thick corpus’ approach, attempting to contextualize these rites as much as possible within broader systems of cultural activity. Two examples of ‘power’ gathering (*luonto-raising*) rites will be treated in detail, considering their relationships to ‘tradition’ and the understanding of the informant.

Key words: incantation, motif complex, mythic image, oral tradition, performative action, ritual specialist

We step into every situation with a conceptual framework according to which we interpret what we perceive and can determine how to respond to it, interact with it, or perhaps avoid or ignore it entirely (cf. Kamppinen 1989: 17–36; Van Dijk 1980; Lotman 1990). When we approach a particular tradition, it is very important to remember that how we understand and deal with the world and its phenomena may be extremely different from the culture we wish to study (Siikala & Siikala 2005: 132–54; Siikala 1992). This contrast becomes more pronounced when we approach ritual or magical practices associated with ethnic folk belief, in which the semiotic systems, strategies for their application, and their range of functions may be remarkably different from the conceptual systems in which our lives are embedded. We very easily fail to recognize the culturally loaded significance of words, sounds, images or sequential progressions in live performances, let alone in archived documents such as will be discussed here. If we wish to see some rite even as it has been seen, then it must be approached through what Lauri Honko (2000) has described as a ‘thick corpus’, firmly contextualized within the tradition ecology.

The concept of ‘tradition ecology’ has developed from Carl von Sydow’s (1948: 11–12) biological metaphor for the description of relationships between variant forms of a particular folklore phenomenon (e.g., folktales) on the model of typologies of organism. Von Sydow proposed this as an alternative to the manu-

script stemma model of the Historical-Geographic School. Consequently, the biological metaphor invites adaptation and change to be approached as ‘evolution’ rather than ‘corruption’. This biological metaphor was developed into the more dynamic metaphor of approaching relationships between types of folklore ‘organisms’ within social and cultural environments on the model of an ecological system.² The framework of a tradition ecology highlights interrelationships between folklore phenomena, and the ability for a change in one narrative, genre or mode of expression to affect changes in others.

Honko’s ‘thick corpus’ approach belongs to the shift in emphasis from ‘text’ to ‘performance’ in folkloristics. A thick corpus is intended to provide a strategy for approaching, identifying, distinguishing and interpreting different types of variation. Honko (2000: 16) states: “The multiplicity of data is not the only criterion of a ‘thick’ corpus. The commensurability and comparability of the data are just as important.” The basic principles underlying a thick corpus are that oral traditions are characterized by variation, and that concentrated collections of data are required in order to be able to identify and interpret variation. Concentrated collections of data include both information related to individual performances and information relevant for contextualizing individual performances in relation to the tradition or traditions which they reflect or represent and for contextualizing the tradition or traditions more generally within the tradition ecology. The definition of a ‘thick corpus’ remains relative to the phenomenon under discussion (e.g., a single incantation or magical practices more generally) and the scope of discussion and comparisons (e.g., the repertoire of a specific individual, village, or the phenomenon’s cultural activity across a broad region or internationally). A corpus may be considered ‘thick’ if it is able to fulfil the function of providing “a solid field of observation conducive to the understanding of prime ‘causes’ or sources of variation” (Honko 2000: 17). Practically speaking, a thick corpus is intended to provide a body of material which makes it possible to approach how both performance and variation are used in the construction of identities and meanings.

A thick corpus is essential in approaching the semiotics of performance, but developing a thick corpus normally concentrates on oral aspects of performance. The focus here will be on relationships between the visual motifs of oral performance and visual motifs which utilize the landscape, ‘props’, and physical actions in the rite techniques of the *tietäjä*, a Finno-Karelian ritual specialist and otherworld intermediary. Whereas John Miles Foley (1992; 1995) has established the theory of ‘word power’ for the loaded systems of values, associations and implications which words, formulae and meters can develop through their regular patterns of application in traditional contexts, Honko (1998: 96–97; 2003: 113) proposed the term ‘image power’ for the corresponding systems

with which images become loaded by tradition. It is this ‘image power’ which is manipulated by the *tietäjä* in the combination of visual motifs expressed verbally and physically for the activation of mythic images, generating an identity between the immediate world and the mythic landscape of cosmological proportions. It is only within a thick corpus that it gradually becomes possible to see this landscape as it was seen by the *tietäjä* in performance.

The institution and practices of the *tietäjä* have been studied extensively by Anna-Leena Siikala (2002a). Siikala’s treatment deals extensively with mythic images and their relationships to the conceptual system, the history of motifs and their significance within their cultural activity. Here I will address some applications of the knowledge and understanding of these culturally loaded motifs focusing on two primary examples of archived descriptions of *luontoraising* (i.e. ‘power-gathering’) rituals. This treatment will focus on accounts of *tietäjä* rituals which come from Archangel Karelia. The cultural activity of this region was well documented, and a treatment of the ritual activities of the *tietäjä* more generally would require addressing the significant range of regional variation, complicating the discussion unduly. The first example addresses a rite which appears to have been heavily loaded with a range of motifs around a central mythic image complex. The rite gives the impression that it has been loaded with as much ‘image power’ as possible, whether by the informant himself, or through what might be described as an accumulation of information in a long process of transmission. This offers the possibility of introducing the dynamism of the image complex which is central to both rites. The second example will treat the description of another power-gathering ritual which appears to be manipulating the ‘image power’ associated with a particular mythic event. This rite is unusual in several respects, as is the mythic event which appears to be its referent.³

THE MYTHIC WORLD

Before we consider the *tietäjä* rituals, it is necessary to place them in the context of the world in which they were applied. This world and its phenomena were understood very differently from our own. The landscape was filled with supernatural beings with their own invisible societies (Stark 2002b) and more ambient forces which could be potentially dangerous to people (Stark 2002a; Stark 2006). Every event could be attributable to some sort of agent, and every accident could be subject to an assignation of blame.⁴ The seen world was animated and affected by the unseen world and its inhabitants, as well as supernatural beings, witches and *tietäjät* who manipulated them. The appear-

ance of a bird could be a soul of the dead (Söderholm 1980) or the supernatural agent sent by a local adversary (Siikala 2002a: 226–228, 238–239, 265), and the appearance of a snake could constitute a supernatural attack (Stark 2006: 247–248). The immediate world extended from the immediate landscape into the topography of the mythic world without interruption – places like Pohjola and Tuonela as well as a world of gods above and a Hell somewhere below (Siikala 2002a).⁵ There is no reason to assume that for many or even most of the people who communicated knowledge of the mythic world (either accidentally in generic performance or more actively in conventional discourse), that the river of Tuoni (‘Death’) was any more or less real than the River Jordan (cf. Mansikka 1909). The mythic world was an organic part of the cultural worldview, extending from the extremes of cartographic space to the subtle semiotics and superstitions of everyday life.

THE *TIETÄJÄ* AS INTERMEDIARY

The *tietäjä* is a nearly extinct variety of ritual specialist who functions as an intermediary between the living human community and the population of the unseen or mythic world. The *tietäjä* had a number of functions in different social contexts, and his ability to fulfil these functions was often dependent on incantations. In these incantations, the *tietäjä* organized and manipulated images, motifs and even mythological narrative in verbal representations of power, the knowledge which gave him that power, and representations of relevant events or activities in the unseen world which he could activate, affect, or command directly (Siikala 1986; Siikala 2002a: 71–120). The *tietäjä* was inclined to develop a highly specialized knowledge and understanding of the mythic world, both in order to act as an intermediary for the living human community and also to be able to apply and manipulate his knowledge of this mythic world verbally in incantations (Siikala 2002a; Siikala 2002b; cf. Honko 1998). The majority of the *tietäjä*’s incantations have been documented as “librettos” without descriptions of how they were performed or any actions which may have accompanied them. Lauri Honko (1960: 57) and Martti Haavio (1967: 340) compare the *tietäjä*’s performance to a play, because the images of incantations and their manipulation cause and describe the effects which the *tietäjä* has on the unseen world through his performance, both in remote mythic locations and also immediate to the patient’s body: the incantation text is a “libretto” through which we can follow and interpret the sequence of the play’s action in both the seen and unseen worlds (Cf. Siikala 1986; Siikala 2002a: 93–120; Piela 2005). Comparison with a play becomes increasingly appropriate as we move

to the much more dynamic scene of the *tietäjä*'s performance in which the libretto is combined with the semiotics of action, objects and the landscape itself.

THE FIXED STONE IN PERFORMANCE

Within descriptions of *tietäjä* rituals in Archangel Karelia, there are numerous accounts of using a stone which is somehow fixed in the landscape.⁶ The stone is most often an *alakivi* (an 'earth-fast stone'),⁷ or a stone in a course of rapids.⁸ It becomes apparent very quickly that stones of this type have some sort of special associative significance.⁹ It is also apparent that the associations which give this stone value do not require a specific stone in the landscape – the earth-fast stone or stone in the course of rapids is not a particular socially acknowledged magical location with specific associations and values attached to it: as far as we can tell, it can be any stone appropriately fixed in the landscape which can be used to activate a load of 'image power'. We also observe that the stone provides a location, but that additional motifs are also associated with it in performance. For example, in power-gathering rituals, the first thunder of spring¹⁰ or Juhannus (i.e. Midsummer) night¹¹ often defines the time at which the ritual must be performed, water from a course of rapids may be incorporated into the ritual even when the stone is an earth-fast stone rather than a stone in the rapids,¹² it may involve wood from a tree split by lightning,¹³ burning wood,¹⁴ turning in a circle,¹⁵ and/or performance in the nude.¹⁶

THE 'BLUE STONE' MYTHIC IMAGE

One of the most powerful mythic images which is manipulated in Kalevalaic poetry is the image of a magic stone or mountain which has developed systems of associations within the tradition. This complex of images and verbal forms has been discussed by Siikala (2002a: 178–203), and in a much earlier treatment, Viljo Johannes Mansikka (1911) used the term 'Blue Stone' (*der blaue Stein*) to refer to the system of images. Mansikka's term is a translation of the expression *sininen kivi*, 'blue stone', from Kalevalaic verse. This distinctive expression appears more or less exclusively in representations of mythic images associated with this image complex, and Mansikka adopts it as a term for the image complex more generally. The term itself may belong to a very old and widespread tradition of the fixed stone which provides access to the mythic

world and finds manifestations in the immediate landscape (see further Ahlqvist 1995; Frog 2008).

Verbally, the parallelism in the poetic tradition leads to an ability to refer to most things in at least two different ways – for example, *kirjavan kiven kolohon, voaran rautasen rakohon* ‘into a hole in a colourful stone, into a crack in an iron mountain’.¹⁷ Parallelism is then coupled with repetitions and variation within a performance, between performances, and between individuals, increasing these patterns of association. The verbal patterns of representation rely on both verbal and visual memory, each of which may draw up sets of associations.¹⁸ Either or both of these may also bear additional conceptual associations, for example related to meaning or function and contexts of application. The individual develops these patterns of association in relation to conceptions about the mythic world and its appearance, content and the applications of this information. The networks of association are therefore neither necessarily constant nor consistent across all individuals participating in the tradition. In many cases a mythic image such as the Blue Stone is applied without verbally identifying it with a specific (i.e. named) location or feature in the mythic landscape, opening its relationship to the otherworld topography and other applications of the same or related images to interpretation. However, the images continue to retain powerfully loaded associations through the process of their cultural activity.

These systems of associations appear to center around two highly developed mythic images. First, these images and formulae are strongly associated with a location to which pains and illnesses are banished, and these often appear to be connected to or reflections of the more complex banishment location referred to as *kipuvuori*, ‘pain mountain’, and its synonyms,¹⁹ the terms for which may have been variously interpreted as descriptions or proper names for specific definable locations in the otherworld topography. This pattern of applications identifies the location as a point of access to or in the supernatural world and more generally with traditions of the world mountain and *axis mundi*. It is worth mentioning that this system of associations included the image of a mill, and the term *alakivi* which is used to refer to the stone fixed in the earth and associated in several examples with rotation is the word used for the lower stone in a mill (*Karjalan Kielen Sanakirja* 1968–2005: s.v. ‘alakivi 1’). The images are also associated with the stone at the creation of the world, where it becomes identified with the world tree image, such as *Iso Tammi*, ‘the Great Oak’, and a source of creative power. However, it should be stressed that the complex relationships between verbal expression and image lead to a plurality of images which are loaded with powerful associations rather than their reduction to a single unified form.

The variation in these relationships is almost certainly augmented by their intimate connections to magical practice and their use in incantations. The incantations and rituals of the *tietäjä* were transmitted as a highly specialized and often ‘secret’ knowledge (Piela 2005; Siikala 2002a: 76–79; Tarkka 2005: 86–87; Stark 2006: 177–180). This means it passes along what can be referred to as ‘closed conduits of transmission’:²⁰ it is not generally available to the community and not subject to the same constraints as, for example, narrative poetry on mythological subjects which were open to community discourse in terms of interpretation, variation and criticism. These closed conduits of transmission also increase the degree to which each individual *tietäjä*’s internalized understanding of the mythic world is more strongly influenced by the specific authorities from whom he learns his art, and that his understanding of the values and applications of the images he wields will be at variance with *tietäjäs* who learned from different authorities: A *tietäjä* must be exposed to the secret knowledge of other *tietäjäs* in order to be influenced by it.

APPROACHING THE SEMIOTICS OF PERFORMATIVE ACTION

The use of stones in the landscape indicates that they were somehow significant in magical performance. When a *tietäjä* positioned himself on an *alakivi* or a stone in a course of rapids, the activated load of ‘image power’ somehow influenced or made possible his access to the mythic world, or his ability and authority to affect the forces and inhabitants of the mythic world. Our sources for ritual activity only offer descriptions of the use of the stone in the landscape and the incantations performed there. In other words, we can see that the earth-fast stone and the stone in the rapids had significance and value within the semiotics of space and performative action, but the sources do not offer clear explanations for why or how these semiotics were understood – how or why the stone was significant or valuable and what kinds of associations were connected to it in performance. It is necessary to approach these performances in relation to the content of the incantations which are performed and contextualize them in the thick corpus or broader patterns of association within the tradition ecology.

A corresponding action appears in the Kalevalaic tradition where we hear of singing on an *ilokivi*, ‘joy-stone’, on a *kirjava kivi*, ‘colourful stone’.²¹ The formula *alasti alakivella*, ‘naked on an earth-fast stone’, is strongly associated with magical practice²² as well as defence from magic.²³ *Alakivi* only rarely appears in the parallelism of Kalevalaic poetry in Viena Karelia,²⁴ although the term is associated with the network of Blue Stone images. For example, in

one instance, *alakivi* is the word for the stone in a fiery course of rapids at the creation of the Great Oak.²⁵

In many of the rituals, the performative action of the ritual appears to have a direct relationship to the content of the incantation. For example:

Tietäjä varustaa itsejään parantamaan lähtiissään, siten että otetaan riehtilä ja kolme viikatetta ja vanha sotamiekka. Sittä mennään kosken kivelle, riisutaan itsensä alasti, pannaan se riehtilä kivelle ja viikatteen riehtilän päälle ja siinä sillä miekalla kolmesta kohti itsen kierretään ympäri ja kiertäissä luvetaan että:

*Tämä on kumma kuulijalle,
Ihme ilman istujalle,
Missä miehet meikaroivat,
Kussa uhmovat urohot?
Päällä rautasen kallion,
Alasti alakivellä
Rauta paitoihen paneksen,
Teräsvöihin telkitseiksen;
Rauta paijois' on parempi,
Teräsvöissä tenhosampi,
Pohjan noitien sejassa,
Tasapäässä tappelussa,
Ettei pysty noijan nuolet,
Eikä velhon veitsi rauvat,
Eikä ampujan aseet.
(SKVR I₄ 473a)*

When he goes out to cure someone, a *tietäjä* equips himself by taking a frying pan and three scythes and an old war-sword. Then he goes to a stone in a course of rapids, strips himself naked, puts the frying pan on the stone and the scythes on the pan and he turns himself around three times there with the sword and while he is turning he recites:

This is strange to the listener
A wonder to the one sitting
Where do men *fight with swords*
Where are heroes *defiant*?
On top of an iron cliff
Naked on an *alakivi*
Putting on an iron shirt
Securing a steel belt;
It is better to be iron-shirted
More glorious in an iron belt
In a mix-up with sorcerers of the north
Head to head in battle
That the sorcerers' arrows are not effective
Nor the wizard's iron knives
Nor the shooter's weapons.

The words of the incantation appear to associate the stone in the rapids on which the *tietäjä* performs with an *alakivi* in the incantation, and this *alakivi* takes on the mythic proportions of an 'iron cliff'.²⁶ At the same time, the lines *missä miehet meikaroivat, kussa uhmovat urohot?* translated here as 'where do men fight with swords, where are heroes defiant?', become interpretable through the context of performative action and introduction of visual motifs in performance. The verb *meikaroida* is not etymologically connected to *miekka*, 'sword', although it appears to be associated with the sword used in perform-

ance in conjunction with other battle imagery in the incantation itself. *Meikaroida* means to be busy, ‘bustling’, or working at doing something, and although *uhmo-* words may be connected with ‘defiance’, they may also be more generally understood as intense, swift and possibly agitated action.²⁷ The *riehtilä*, ‘frying pan’, into which the scythes are placed is particularly interesting as a visual motif introduced into the performance because *kipuvuori* or ‘pain mountain’, which participates in the system of Blue Stone images, often incorporates images of *kivutar*, ‘pain-maiden’, boiling or cooking pains and illnesses in a pot or pan,²⁸ and in one instance in Viena Karelia, we even find *alakivi* as the stone on which pains are cooked in a pan by the supernatural woman.²⁹

In this performance, the *tietäjä* goes to the stone with a sword and applies the imagery of battle and armour to secure himself against *noijen nuolet*, ‘witches’ arrows’. Although the exact function of the images which the *tietäjä* is manipulating in his performance is unclear, his position on a stone in the course of rapids becomes loaded with associations of cosmological proportions related to both the Great Oak, which is the source of magic shot (Honko 1959: 132–135; Krohn 1917: 164–177; Franssila 1900: 446–476), and also with locations such as ‘pain mountain’, where pains and illnesses are sent to suffer or be destroyed. It is unclear how the performer understands these images – whether he has a developed conception of their relationships and values – because this understanding is subjective. This example is interesting because the performer appears to be loading the scene with a full range of motifs associated with Blue Stone images in an almost ambient activation of ‘image power’: priority appears to be placed on loading the performance with as much ‘power’ as possible rather than attempting to generate a coherent relationship with any single aspect or conception of the Blue Stone image complex. This can be compared to calling on a full range of both Christian and non-Christian figures for aid in incantations, composite incantation strategies which appear to apply the *tietäjä*’s full arsenal in order to insure success, incantations which present more than one banishment location or load, for example, a full spectrum of Blue Stone images in a single composite location (cf. Siikala 2002a; Frog 2008).

In Viena Karelia, the rituals in which the *tietäjä* positions himself on a stone are often associated with raising *luonto*, ‘personal internal power or spirit’, and accompanied by an incantation with couplet, *nouse luontoni lovesta, haon alta haltijani* – ‘rise, my power, from the hole, from beneath the log, my spirit’.³⁰ In Viena Karelia this couplet was regularly accompanied by the couplet, *haon alta hattu peässä, kiven alta kinnas keässä* – ‘from beneath the log, hat on head, from beneath the stone, mittens in hand’.³¹ There appears to be an established association between the log and stone within these incantations, an association which extends into the poetry more generally.³² The ver-

bal expressions interact with the visual motifs in performance, and a hole, crack or cleft in or at the stone is part of the broader Blue Stone image-complex, although it tends only to be reflected verbally.³³ There appears to be some sort of connection between the *lovi*, ‘notch, hole or cleft’, of these incantations and the stone in ritual performances. Considering that an individual’s *luonto* was not normally considered separable outside of these crystallized expressions in verse connected with *lovi*,³⁴ and the idiomatic expression for falling into an unconscious trance was *langata loveen*, ‘to fall into a *lovi*’, it is at least possible that these crystallized and largely idiomatic expressions with ritual-specific applications may reflect the persistence of the semiotics of shamanic soul-journeys and the more widespread conception of the world tree or *axis mundi* connecting a layered conception of the cosmos (cf. Siikala 2002a: 263).³⁵ The couplet *nouse luontoni lovesta, haon alta haltijani* is extremely interesting because the *hako*, ‘log of a fallen tree’, is not present in the semiotics of action except in cases where the fragments of a tree felled by lightning are brought by the *tietäjä* to the stone on which he performs. However, we find the same couplet in a power-gathering ritual in which the *tietäjä* climbs down under the roots of a tree which had been felled by a storm, placing himself in some sense *haon alle*, ‘beneath the log’, in the *lovi* created by the uprooted tree, although there is no stone.³⁶

Tietäjällä luonto nousee, kuin ottaa kolmesta yksikantaisesta pihlajasta kappaleen ja myrskyn kaatanoan puun sijalle tekee tulen ja niitten pihlajan kappaleitten toiset päät panee tuleen, ja kuin ne palavat, niin toisesta päästä vesi tirsuu, niin sitä vettä otetaan senlaiseen astijaan, johon ei tuuli käy. Ja sittä kuin keväillä ensikerran ukkonen kuuluu, silloin menee myrskyn kaataman juurikan alle ja siellä juopi sen vein ja lukee että:

*Nouse luontoni lovesta,
Haon alta haltijani j. n. e.*

niin sittä tulee niin luonnokkaaksi, että sairaita päästäissä tauti pakenee paljasta luontoakin. (SKVR I₄ 17)

A *tietäjä*’s power rises when he takes three pieces from a single-trunked rowan and makes a fire at the side of a tree felled by a storm and places one end of these pieces of rowan in the fire, and as they burn, then water will seep from the other end, then this water is collected into a sort of container that wind can’t get into. And when thunder is heard for the first time in the spring, then he goes down under the roots of the tree felled by the storm and there he drinks that water and recites that:

Rise my power from the hole,
From beneath the log my spirit, etc.

so then he becomes so powerful that when treating the sick, the illness will flee from his power alone.

When we have descriptions of performance activity associated with these incantations, we observe that there are strong associations with Ukko, the god of thunder, on whom the *tietäjä* relied heavily for support (Siikala 2002a: 203–208; Haavio 1967: 331–333), evident both in the explicit expressions in incantations and also in the significance of the sound of thunder and trees felled by lightning or during a storm in ritual performance. The latter is particularly apparent in the description of this ritual: the potion is made from the sap of a rowan tree, the tree of the thunder god (Setälä 1912: 199–208; Krohn 1932: 40–46) which in some contexts appears to have alternated with the wood of a tree split by lightning (cf. Krohn 1932: 45–46); the potion is prepared at a tree felled by a storm, or the activity of Ukko; the first thunder of spring, or Ukko's first activity in the year, marks the time when the *tietäjä* should return to this tree felled by a storm, climb beneath its roots, and drink the potion reciting a 'rise, my power, from the hole, from beneath the log, my spirit' incantation.

The performative action of this rite appears to be a much more focused activation of specific conceptions of the Blue Stone as a source of power at the beginning of the world. It appears to relate to a specific mythic event which was associated with magical performance and incantation *historiolae* rather than epic, and its transmission as 'secret' knowledge, and more specifically as 'secret' knowledge which deviated from conventional epic sequences, may be largely responsible for the very few variants which were recorded (cf. Frog 2008). In this form, the Blue Stone is broken open and contains beer or a magic potion. The mythic event describes Väinämöinen, the cultural model for the *tietäjä*, breaking open the stone at the conclusion of the creation of the world rather than passing into the epic Sampo cycle. Inside, he discovers an adversary drinking the beer, destroys the adversary, and the Great Oak, a world-tree image, grows up out of the Blue Stone as a result. The Great Oak must be chopped down because it has stopped up the heavens, and magic shot is created from the fallen tree's fragments,³⁷ which is why the mythic event provides a relevant *historiola* in incantations for curing magic shot.

In the ritual, the stone is not physically present in the landscape, but it may be present in some sense in the images activated through the incantation. The *tietäjä* situates himself in the location of this magic potion in the cosmogonic event, within the broken Blue Stone beneath the felled world tree reflected through his position in the hole – in the *lovi*, beneath the log, of the opening lines of the incantation. The association of the essential motifs of the rite with Ukko in conjunction with this cosmogonic Blue Stone image may betray an identification of Ukko with the figure who chops down the Great Oak. Within the incantation tradition, the Great Oak is chopped down by a small man from the sea whose 'original' identity is obscure (cf. Haavio 1967: 352–353), but he is

referred to as *ukko*, literally ‘old man’ (the conventional term for the thunder god), and occasionally the diminutive form *ukkonen*, ‘thunder’.³⁸ It is very probable that this figure was sometimes interpreted as the thunder god or his representative due to the significance of this figure to the institution of the *tietäjä* and the obscurity of the figure in the broader tradition.³⁹ This power-gathering ritual appears to have developed on the same mythic model in which the coveted ‘beer’ is in the stone beneath the felled world tree, and the associations of the primary motifs in the performance with Ukko imply that the cosmogonic event which was being activated in the landscape was attributable to Ukko as well. The ‘image power’ which is loaded into this performance as a system of visual motifs and associations with Ukko appear intended to activate a specific mythological narrative as a referent, generating an identity between the mythic and ritual events.

Both of the examples outlined above underline the relationships between the verbal expression and physical action in a coherent ritual performance. These augment one another in the manipulation of mythic images and their ‘image power’, whether the activation is a manipulation of motifs which transform the performance into an event of mythic or even cosmological proportions (cf. Frankfurter 1995), or generating an identity with a recognizable cosmogonic event (cf. Tarkka 2005). The *tietäjä* can (apparently) use any stone fixed in the earth or tree felled by a storm that appears in the landscape, but through the application of images in the form of objects, motions and words, a stone will cease being just any stone and take on a cosmological identity.

INTERNALIZATION AND INTERPRETATION: MACROCOSM, MICROCOSM AND INTERPRETATION

The *tietäjä* activates this system of associations in order to connect his power to the power inherent in the creation of the world and the creation of the world order. However, it is important to recognize that the systems of application were in a continuous process of development and re-interpretation, and the process of closed conduit transmission associated with the knowledge of magic and ritual may have led to a broad range of understandings of identical systems of formulae and motifs – such as the identity of the little man from the sea who fells the Great Oak or the significance of the frying pan on the *alakivi*.⁴⁰ It is in fact impossible to distinguish the differences in how these images were understood by the people who used them, which cases are examples of individuals activating specific conceptions associated with the cosmology, and which cases are examples of individuals conservatively repeating inherited patterns

of performative action and verse, understanding the elements and the whole as having a loaded value and significance, but not understanding the semiotics of the performance itself or its relationship to a specific mythic event or image.

This is particularly true in the case of Blue Stone images, which were so flexible and had such a broad range of applications. It is also evident in the case of the couplet, *nouse luontoni lovesta, haon alta haltijani* discussed above: these expressions were verbally conservative but developed different interpretations and applications in different regions (Siikala 2002a: 250–260) – even within Archangel Karelia it is not entirely clear whether all of the performers understood it in the same way. In some cases it is unclear whether the performer or informant understood the incantation as raising *luonto*, in the sense of ‘a being’s inherent personal power’, or as a *haltija* in the broader sense of ‘a local guardian spirit’ – an issue augmented by the unusual objectification of the *luonto* which is nearly unique to these incantations.⁴¹ This subjective understanding of the parallel terms is accompanied by the subjective understanding of whether the *luonto* / *haltija* was raised by establishing an identity between a feature in the landscape and a mythic Blue Stone image, or it was actually a local inhabitant of a particular tree or stone in the immediate landscape (which might be correspondingly loaded with ‘image power’). The same is also true of banishment locations, where the more brief the incantation, the more ambiguous and more subjective the understanding of whether the illness agent is being expelled to a location in the mythic topography, to a stone in the immediate landscape, or whether perhaps the two were considered the same.⁴²

By approaching accounts of specific rites within a thick corpus, it becomes possible to shake off many of the assumptions which we may impose on examples of the traditions we encounter. A thick corpus provides a means for learning and interpreting ‘word power’ and ‘image power’ in the vernacular semiotic system, contextualizing examples within the relevant horizons of a tradition ecology. Research in folkloristics has exhibited an increasing inclination to shift emphasis from studying folklore phenomena in isolation to approaching specific phenomena within the broader contexts of their relationships to other material in the same genre and networks of relationships between genres, or genre systems. These networks of relationships participate in the development of the significance of elements which may carry ‘word power’ or ‘image power’. The emphasis placed on verbal aspects of performance traditions has eclipsed the significance of visual aspects of performance within these networks of relationships and how visual aspects of performance can be adapted and applied for the generation of meanings. This paper has attempted to show that visual aspects of performance participate in and interact with the semiotics of verbal performance. It is only within the context of a thick corpus that

the significance of these visual motifs emerge, and only within a thick corpus does it become possible to see the performance and the landscape itself even as it was seen – if only as through a glass darkly.

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NOTES

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² For an overview of the concept of tradition ecology, see Kamppinen 1989: 37–46. See also Honko 1981.

³ The mythic event is found in only two poetic variants collected in the region under consideration: *SKVR* I₁ 35 and I₁ 47. This event connects the creation sequence of the mythological Sampo cycle to the creation of *Iso Tammi*, the ‘Great Oak’. Although the tradition was rarely documented in the region, it was clearly known in some form as far south as Ingria (cf. *SKVR* IV₂ 1807, IV₂ 2105; IV₃ 4040, IV₃ 4241). See further Frog 2008: 151–153.

⁴ Stark 2006; 2002b; Siikala 2002a; Foster 1965; cf. Nietzsche, *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, “Was bedeuten asketische Ideale?”

⁵ Note that there was a range of variation in conceptions of the mythic world (or at least their representations), and that the conventions associated with the mythic world and its inhabitants are not entirely consistent across genres, if we compare, for example, epic, incantation, and lament.

⁶ In these rituals the *tietäjä* almost always places himself on the stone; for the animal on an *alakivi*, an ‘earth-fast stone’ *SKVR* I₄ 1683; I₄ 1683a; I₄ 1685; I₄ 1688; cf. I₄ 1589; I₄ 1690.

⁷ *SKVR* I₄ 9; I₄ 15; I₄ 16; cf. I₄ 1762.

⁸ *SKVR* I₄ 8; I₄ 473; I₄ 2066.

⁹ It is unclear whether this stone has any relationship to the *ukon multa*: cf. *SKVR* I₄ 4; I₄ 10; I₄ 16; I₄ 1959.

¹⁰ *SKVR* I₄ 16; I₄ 17; cf. *SKVR* I₄ 4; I₄ 10; I₄ 1752; I₄ 1959.

- ¹¹ *SKVR* I₄ 8; I₄ 2066; cf. *SKVR* I₄ 1309; I₄ 1760; I₄ 1761.
- ¹² *SKVR* I₄ 16; cf. *SKVR* I₄ 4.
- ¹³ *SKVR* I₄ 15; cf. *SKVR* I₄ 17; I₄ 638.
- ¹⁴ *SKVR* I₄ 9; I₄ 15; I₄ 17; cf. I₄ 1762.
- ¹⁵ *SKVR* I₄ 9; I₄ 473.
- ¹⁶ *SKVR* I₄ 15; I₄ 16; I₄ 473; I₄ 2066; cf. *SKVR* I₄ 18; I₄ 908; I₄ 1309; I₄ 1760; I₄ 1761; for the patient being stripped nude, cf. *SKVR* I₄ 648; I₄ 745.
- ¹⁷ *SKVR* I₄ 389, 8–9.
- ¹⁸ Lauri Honko (1998; 2003) places great emphasis on visual memory in epic reproduction much as Christine Goldberg (1997) has stressed its importance in folktale reproduction, and which has been discussed more generally in relation to oral traditions by David Rubin (1995). The relationship between verbal and visual memory is extremely complex (cf. Schooler & Engstler-Schooler 1990) and particularly difficult to address in the research of oral traditions in which the visual elements are developed on a highly subjective basis through the interpretation of verbal and other modes of representation, while the conventions of verbal representation (e.g., Kalevalaic poetry) may result in a degree of non-equivalence in the relationship between word and image in performance. These issues are too involved to be addressed in detail here.
- ¹⁹ Blue Stone images correspond to one of the seven categories of banishment location types proposed by Matti Kuusi (1963: 211–212). Kuusi’s location-types may be summarized as: sending the malignant agent 1) back to the one who sent it; 2) back to the element, object or place of origin in a real-world topography; 3) to the extremes of cartographic space, which includes locations in the mythic topography; 4) to a Blue Stone image; 5) to an animal spirit-helper; 6) to a place identified with death or the dead in the real-world topography; 7) to Christian images of Hell. Cf. Brummer 1908; Siikala 2002a: 178–194.
- ²⁰ Carl von Sydow (1948: 12) first proposed that traditions were carried along ‘conduits of transmission’; this theory has been extensively developed by Linda Dégh and Andrew Vázsonyi (1975; Dégh 1995: 173–212).
- ²¹ Cf. *SKVR* I₁ 200, 14–17; I₁ 284, 40–41; I₃ 1300, 18–22; I₃ 1304, 3–4; I₃ 1283, 1; for examples of *ilokivi* without *kirjava kivi* as a parallel expression, see *SKVR* I₃ 1286, 12; I₃ 1292, 5; I₃ 1295, 3; I₄ 1446, 20; I₄ 1873, 9; I₄ 2213, 1. The applications of *kirjava kivi* were far more dynamic, although it is interesting to observe that in the Sampo cycle of the Perttunen family, the *kirjava kivi* is applied as the location of Väinämöinen’s lament (cf. *SKVR* I₁ 54, 58; I₁ 58, 89).
- ²² *SKVR* I₂ 1025, 154–63 (*Lemminkäisen virsi*); I₃ 1290, 63–69; I₄ 479, 23–26; I₄ 630, 22–26; I₄ 671, 25–29; cf. Osmotar making beer in *SKVR* I₂ 787, 5; I₂ 791a, 10;
- ²³ *SKVR* I₁ 49, 11–17 [also I₃ 1466]; I₁ 124 [also I₃ 1467].

- ²⁴ E.g., *Tuulen synty*, in which ‘beneath an *alakivi*’ is paralleled by ‘between two cliffs’ (*SKVR* I₄ 1003, 5–6; cf. *SKVR* I₄ 1005, 3–6, in which both lines appear but have been divided).
- ²⁵ *SKVR* I₄ 842; cf. *kirjava kivi* in rapids, *SKVR* I₄ 809 (see also I₄ 866) and fiery rapids, *SKVR* I₄ 807; I₄ 836, I₄ 867.
- ²⁶ Cf. standing naked on an *alakivi* as a defence against magic shot in *SKVR* I₁ 49, 11–17 [also I₃ 1466]; I₁ 124 [also I₃ 1467].
- ²⁷ I am thankful to Lotte Tarkka for discussing these lines with me.
- ²⁸ The word *riehtilä*, ‘frying pan’, does not normally appear associated with *kipuvuori* in Viena Karelia, although it does appear in other magical contexts – cf. standing on a *riehtilä* and turning for protection (*SKVR* I₄ 2083); and associated with protecting the bride or bridal pair (*SKVR* I₄ 1875; I₄ 1867c; I₄ 2509).
- ²⁹ *SKVR* I₄ 583, 22–28.
- ³⁰ *SKVR* I₄ 11; I₄ 12; I₄ 13; I₄ 14; I₄ 15; I₄ 16; I₄ 526; I₄ 630; I₄ 707; I₄ 750; I₄ 1754; cf. *SKVR* VI₁ 2971; VI₁ 2972; VI₂ 4216; VI₂ 6051; VI₂ 7346; VII₃ 145; VII₄ 1621; VII₄ 1741; VII₄ 1743; VII₄ 2822; VII₄ 2957; VII₄ 3020; VII₅ 4615; VII₅ 4682; VII₅ 4697; VII₅ 4737; VII₅ 4751; VII₅ 4905; IX₄ 3; IX₄ 4; IX₄ 6; IX₄ 13; IX₄ 902. See also Järvinen 1959; Siikala 2002a.
- ³¹ Cf. *SKVR* I₄ 11; I₄ 12; I₄ 13; I₄ 526; I₄ 630; I₄ 707; I₄ 750; see also Järvinen 1959. *SKVR* I₄ 16 and I₄ 17 record only the first couplet followed by *j.n.e.*, ‘etc.’ The regularity of the sequence of this collection of four formulaic expressions can be considered a variety of ‘multiform’ as described by Lauri and Anneli Honko (1998) because it appears that although the formulae have a conventional sequence, they can be expanded by being interspersed with additional lines.
- ³² This combination of stone and log appears in several contexts as a form of banishment location, both for illness agents (Brummer 1908), animals which threaten livestock (cf. *SKVR* I₄ 1676, 11–12), and also, for example, in the epic context of the singing competition between Väinämöinen and Joukahainen. In the latter contexts, *kynsin kylmähän kivehen, hampahin vesihakohon* is most often associated with Joukahainen’s dog (cf. *SKVR* I₁ 189, 37–39), in which case it seems probable that the application of the couplet in this context has at least some historical association with applications in the banishment of animals which threaten livestock (cf. Siikala 2002: 263; and also *SKVR* I₄ 11), observing that this is strictly regarding the image of the fallen log combined with the stone rather than the images of the mythic tree which stands or grows on the stone and has a different range of manifestations and applications. See further Frog 2008.
- ³³ Cf. *SKVR* I₄ 1690 in which the hole is physically made under an *alakivi*.
- ³⁴ Stark 2002a: 74–76: *luonto* is also sometimes said to have been ‘put’ in the *lovi* (*SKVR* I₄ 12) or to have lain there for a long time (cf. *SKVR* I₄ 23–24; and further Järvinen 1959: 18; Siikala 2002: 260; *SKVR* VII₃ 41; VII₁ 61; VII₅ 4905; XII₂ 5443; cf. *Vipusen käyntö SKVR* XII 65).

- ³⁵ On Elias Lönnrot's account of how a *tietäjä* could go on unconscious soul-journeys to distant locations after sitting on a stone and reciting incantations, see Siikala 1991: 202; cf. Järvinen 1959; Frog 2008; *SKVR* XII₁ 3520. On the persistence of the semiotics of shamanistic soul journeys in mythological epic poetry, see Siikala 2002a.
- ³⁶ Cf. *SKVR* I₄ 638, in which the tree felled by the storm appears and a hole is actually made beneath it while the mythic blue stone image appears in the verbal portion of the incantation; in *SKVR* I₄ 1690, the hole is physically made under an *alakivi*.
- ³⁷ The most commonly quoted variant of this event is *SKVR* I₁ 37, appearing with translation and discussion in Frog 2008.
- ³⁸ In Viena Karelia: *Ukko* – *SKVR* I₄ 799; I₄ 806; I₄ 835; I₄ 835a); I₄ 863; *Ukkonen* – *SKVR* I₄ 805; I₄ 861; I₄ 863; cf. Franssila 1900: 395–396.
- ³⁹ On tradition dominants see Honko 1981; on the range of representations of this figure across the cultural areas where the Great Oak myth persisted, see Franssila 1900.
- ⁴⁰ For an unusual application of several of the motifs discussed here applied in a wedding ritual, see Suurhasko 1977: 119.
- ⁴¹ Cf. *SKVR* I₄ 10 and I₄ 11 in which the informants refer to raising the *haltie* rather than the *luonto* in describing a rite in which the parallel couplet appears, observing that in both incantations *luonto* is referred to in the first line.
- ⁴² Cf. Siikala 2002a: 276–277; Reichborn-Kjennerud 1928: 14–15.

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