

Summaries

Myths and Ideologies of Regilaul. *Foreword*

The series of article collections on *regilaul* was initiated in 2000 with a University of Tartu publication entitled “Kust tulid lood minule...” (‘From where did the songs come to me’). The same year also saw the beginning of a biannual conference series on *regilaul* that has been held to this day at the Estonian Literary Museum. In addition to the initial publication, three conference collections have also been published (in 2001, 2004, and 2006). The present, fourth volume, gathers articles based on papers given at the conference “Myths and Ideologies of *Regilaul*” that was held at the Estonian Literary Museum in the autumn of 2006.

One of the purposes of the conferences on *regilaul* has been to offer an outlet and forum to all the researchers of *regilaul* and thus, in their choice of the subject, the contributors have been invited to approach the theme of a conference as if it were a subtle hint or an indicator of direction rather than a limiting prescription. The extent to which the contributors have been faithful to the conference theme has depended

on their research interests; at the same time it also serves as an indication of the felicity and topicality of the choice of the theme.

The title of the present collection may be misleading in a way since none of the articles is directly concerned with myths and ideologies reflected in the contents of *regilaulud*. As is characteristic of modern research trends, the studies rather focus on myths concerning *regilaulud* and the ideological context which has shaped and grounded the ways in which, throughout the times, *regilaulud* have been collected, introduced, published, re-worked and re-created anew, as well as the biases that have been held with regard to *regilaulud* and their singers, and how these attitudes have changed over time. In this collection, it is not *regilaulud* that are in the foreground, but the stories of their collection, as well as their uses, to whom and for what reason these songs were necessary, what they could be employed as, and through what lens they have been looked at in the past as well as in the present.

In the opening article of the first collection of the present series, Tiit Jaago (2000) observes that marked changes have occurred in the study of *regilaul*—if in the earlier period research focused on issues regarding the style and typology of *regilaulud*, and the description of the peculiarity of the Estonian *regilaul*, then in modern times, *regilaul* has come to be treated as a body of diverse material that has individual and regional peculiarities and allows many interpretations. Jaago prognosticates (*ibid.*, p. 12) that the study of *regilaul* will remain, in large part, a text centered affair in the future as well (quote: “The genuine *regilaul* may be reached through the texts, after all, and the present researches on songs”); however, judging by the present collection it may be said that the researchers of *regilaulud* have directed their focus from the *regilaul* to the study of *regilaul* discourse. On the one hand, this is doubtless the scholars’ response to issues raised in the conference call; on the other, this follows the approach that has been perceptible in world folklore studies for some time now, which is to pose questions regarding one’s discipline and its research matter through the respective narrative of its genesis, and likewise to study not so much the works themselves but the processes connected to them (see Kuutma 2010: 687-689). This perspective will open quite a few novel aspects in the research of *regilaul* as well; it will direct attention to the meeting of different social strata in

the practices of folklore collection, clarify the ideological background of the criteria by which certain material was chosen to be included in the archives and highlight the tendentiousness of interpretations. At the present moment it seems that the ability or habitual tendency to perceive that any derivative of tradition—be it recording, performance or interpretation—is always the product of some (ideological) choices will not disappear from future folklore studies. However, considering the logic of the evolution of scientific thought it may be presumed that the perspective of *regilaul* scholars as well will ever turn in new directions.

The Lyroepic Songs of Karuse from the Perspective of the Tradition's Continuity

Tiiu Jaago

This article introduces one phase of the research cycle on the *regilaul* tradition of Karuse parish that was initiated in 2000. If previously I have discussed the folk song tradition of Karuse within the context of population history (Jaago 2001) or analyzed older wedding songs (Jaago 2006), this time I would like to take a closer look at the region's lyroepic *regilaulud*. My article focuses on the lyroepic songs which were collected from Karuse in 1889 with the purpose of offering an analysis of these songs in the context of the continuance and change of the tradition. My other, more remote aim is to place the knowledge obtained from a close reading of the lyroepic songs into a more general description of the *regilaul* tradition of Karuse.

The results of my observations suggest that in the Karuse tradition, the lyric and the lyroepic, as two distinct song types, are indeed different in their methods of text production. The realization that Ülo Tedre arrived at when studying songs from Karksi parish that the repetitions of song elements are more obvious on the level of microstructure rather than that of the macrostructure has been confirmed (cf. Tedre 1964b). Repetitions can be detected both on the lexical and mental levels as well

as on the level of the structural scheme. In Karuse songs, lexical repetitions seem to be quite free from the viewpoint of the macrostructure. This is true of both lyrical wedding songs and of lyroepic songs. The mental level is more obvious in lyric songs—in the choice of images deriving from history or quotidian life. The repetitions of motifs and structural schemes characteristic of the local tradition (which are found in the repertoire of different singers) are characteristic of lyroepic songs and not the lyric. If the study of the songs from Karksi revealed that repeated verses occur in the beginnings of songs and new episodes, this does not characterize the Karuse tradition. Repeated verses can rather be found in the descriptions of situations or phenomena. As for the beginnings of episodes, verses that have become fixed in the tradition occur only in repetition songs, but a story (or a theme) is usually developed quite freely.

How are we to interpret the above insights in the context of the continuation of the tradition? For both the Finnish and the typological schools, variation on the level of macrostructure is an evidence of the diffusion of the tradition. But what are we to make of the continuance of the tradition on the microstructural level in this case? In order to answer this question we need to place this knowledge within the general system of tradition of the time when these songs were written down, and then evaluate which factors within the culture generally supported these or other choices in the tradition. The elaborateness of texts which vary considerably on the level of macrostructure does not allow one to consider as entirely valid the argument that the stability of the *regilaul* tradition can be gauged by the scarcity of variation on the level of the macrostructure.

Better Not to Have Been Born: The Kalevala and a Discussion of Family and Mothers

Niina Hämäläinen

The concept of the family changed significantly in Finland in the course of the 19th century. By and by one moved away from the pattern of a large, father centered family towards the modern ideal of a family in which mutual feelings and individuality were emphasized. Discussion of the family and its role in society was developed over a relatively long period of time (ca 1820—1860), employing among others the mediums of press and fiction. This new kind of family was seen as fulfilling a national mission as well: one of its objectives was to raise future citizens. In accomplishing this task, mothers were assigned a moral role as educators of children.

The period during which the family ideal was changing and actively debated was also the time when the *Kalevala* was compiled by Elias Lönnrot. In composing the *Kalevala*, Lönnrot had two aims: to follow, in the long epic, the example of folk poetry as truthfully as possible and present a popular worldview, and at the same time to meet the readerly expectations of a schooled and educated public. This article examines ways in which the aims and aspirations of the period influenced the compilation of *Kalevala*, and how this process was informed by the ongoing debate on the new role of the family, marriage and motherhood.

I will examine more closely the use of lyric *runo* songs in the *Kalevala*, or more precisely, the ‘worry songs’ where the singer enquires from his or her mother why she did not let him/her die when he/she was a baby of a few days old and thus save him/her from a wretched life. Lönnrot employs this folk song motif for the lyric self-expression of both Kullervo and Aino when they have fallen victim to insurmountable life circumstances: Kullervo has slept with his own sister without knowing it and Aino, against her will, has been promised in marriage to an old Väinämöinen. The songs of Kullervo and Aino are removed from the folk song and the input of Lönnrot’s own creativity can clearly

be perceived here. In their trouble, these characters turn to their mothers in order to obtain from them solace and comfort; and even though their addresses follow the example of folk song in terms of their mode of expression (verses, expressions, formulae), Lönnrot nevertheless grounds the psychological depiction of the characters in the conventions and moral values of the time.

Estonian Regilaul Tunes and Folk Music from the Perspective of Early Twentieth- Century Intellectuals

Taive Särg

This article analyzes ways in which the content of the term *rahvamusika* ('folk music') and that of its cognates, *rahvaviis* and *rahvalaul* ('folk tune' and 'folk song' respectively), has developed in the Estonian language, based on texts written by early twentieth-century intellectuals. Special emphasis is placed on the absorption of values and attitudes into these terms. This study is a continuation of my earlier research on the formation of the concept and idea of folk music in the Estonian language (see also Särg 2002, 2005, 2007). I divide individuals who wrote about folk music into the following groups according to their field of activity: folklorists (Oskar Kallas and Villem Reiman); collectors of folk tunes (Frieda and S. Talvik, Peeter Penna, August Kiiss and Karl Viljak); composers (Rudolf Tobias and Mart Saar); music theorists (Leenart Neumann) and others (educator Märt Raud and artist Kristjan Raud).

In early twentieth-century Estonia, the older traditional culture was gradually replaced by a new culture that was formed in conjunction with western-style social and economic developments; and the old Baltic-Finnic folk song, the *regilaul*, which is based on initial rhyme, was replaced by newer end-rhymed stanzaic songs representing European aesthetic. The intelligentsia of Estonian extraction that had emerged by

the beginning of the 20th century continued to fashion European culture in Estonia, as it had been doing since the national awakening. Educated Estonians had already removed themselves from village life and also adopted the European, idealized and distanced view of folk artistic production, which meant that folk music was expected to be old, ethnic and valuable, constituting as such the foundation of modern national art music.

The term 'folk music' entered the language at the beginning of the 20th century, most probably under the influence of foreign languages. In the beginning, however, the concepts 'folk song' and 'folk tune' were more commonly employed; one also wrote about '*regilaul* verses' and their 'tunes', and less frequently about 'folk musical instruments' and 'folk dances'. The treatment of music by single categories also shows that attention was directed towards musical texts, and that music was not perceived as an integral system which operates in a particular context. The author of a sole theoretical piece of writing of the time, Leenart Neumann (1913), elucidated the terms *rahvalaul* ('folk song') and *rahvalik laul* ('popular song'). Neumann directly drew from central European theories. For instance, his description of the form of folk songs follows rather European folk songs, or what in the context of Estonia are rhymed stanzaic songs, while the *regilauls* are not discussed at all.

Early twentieth-century writings about folk music mainly concern collecting. The recurrent themes which were addressed by recourse to downright Biblical rhetoric included: 1) the need for a rapid collection of folk tunes and 2) the selection of the pure and the valuable. It was in fact in the course of the folk music collecting oeuvre of 1904 to 1916 under the direction of Oskar Kallas that the question of defining the concept of folk tune was raised most insistently. Having arrived at a treatment of folk music which is based on the context and is free from value-judgments, Kallas distinguishes himself as a man who possesses an inquisitive mind and open attitudes. His advice was to collect all musical styles found in the people's tradition along with a description of their contexts irrespective of the fact whether these fit with someone's idea of a folk tune or not, and to proceed in this work by also taking interest in *people's musical life* at large. For Kallas, it was most important to collect old *regilaul* tunes, but he also included newer popular

songs among folklore, as these also enhanced one's understanding of the peculiarities of a people and their artistic production.

Due to their quotidian and at times sentimental and obscene content and a western form, many educated Estonians considered rhymed stanzaic songs aesthetically and morally low and foreign in terms of their style. Karl Viljak, who thought highly of *regilaul* songs, contemptuously referred to rhymed stanzaic songs as street songs (evidently prompted by the German 'Strassengasse'). It was debated whether the newer music which was spread among the contemporary country people could be considered folk music, and if it could, whether it was Estonian music and thus, valuable enough to collect. It was hoped that one can arrive at correct Estonian music only through the reworking of folk songs, and in scholarly articles, this future music of dreams is described more enthusiastically than the actual music. Several individuals recommended the creation of Estonian music of merit, principally choral music, and the teaching of it to the country people. Back then it did not occur to any of the collectors of folk tunes that some *regilauls* or folk dances could be learnt from villages so that practical musical skills and living examples of the style might be carried into the future. Thus instead of the continuation of the song tradition one was more enthused by the idea of creating high art to boost national prestige.

To conclude, in the discussion of folk music and folk tunes, we can discern two strands: a scholarly one which sought objectivity and respected people's actual musical tradition and an aesthetic-ideological, evaluative strand. The first strand is represented by folklorists and tune collectors who had been in close contact with the living tradition, while the representatives of the second included first and foremost composers in need of ethnic "raw material". A distancing had taken place in society between country people who were acquiring a newer musical tradition and educated individuals who idealized, collected and reworked the old folk music. Of the latter, many considered the people's taste to be corrupted and emphasized their expertise on the subject of folk music. There were no theoretical works published that were of any consequence, and endeavors in the sphere of folk music focused on collecting.

Interpretations Drawn from a Collector's Experiences: Armas Launis, Runo Melodies and Ingria

Kati Kallio

As a young student, the composer and scholar Armas Launis (1884–1959) collected folk melodies from Kainuu, Ingria, Border Karelia and various parts of Lapland. In the course of his fieldwork, Launis also became interested in the background and use of the songs. His descriptions of the singing practices and circumstances, which enjoyed a central position in his field journals and articles written for a wider audience, were only marginally represented in his scholarly writings, e.g. in the introduction of his dissertation. However, his changing of interpretations of the melodies heard during fieldwork in different manuscripts and publications suggests that there was an interaction between Launis's field experiences and theoretical thinking.

In this article, I discuss Armas Launis's collection trips to Ingria which he undertook in 1903 and 1906 and the various ways in which the results may be interpreted. After sketching Launis's biography and fieldwork endeavors, I will focus on how Launis recorded oral songs, converted them into texts, and interpreted them. I discuss in greater detail the contradiction between the "ancient" and the aesthetically enjoyable which crops up in his writings and the impact of this contradiction on the interpretation of that which Launis heard during fieldwork. It is principally Launis's first trip to Ingria that offers ample possibilities for an analysis of the processes of the genesis of materials since there exist miscellaneous archival sources related to that trip: Launis's personal journal, field notes, a fair copy of these notes and the published travelogue. We do not have any manuscript materials from Launis's second trip, but he did record on wax rolls melodies that he took down by hand during his first trip.

Launis's preference of melodies with a wide range and clarity of intonation as well as the nascent musicology's call for the collections of material which would be voluminous, clear, classifiable and interna-

tionally comparable variously impacted Launis's methods and results of his recording. His objective during the first trip was to write down, as comprehensively as possible, the types of melodies used in western Ingria. The employment of a phonograph in 1905 for sound-recording melodies by the Finnish Literary Society radically changed musicological thinking. The purpose of Launis's second trip to Ingria was to sound-record the songs from Soikkola and Hevaa, which were considered to be two of the more predominant song regions. That trip served dual purposes: while the recording provided an opportunity for an illustrative documentation of the manner of singing and its preservation for coming generations, it first and foremost provided an opportunity for taking scientifically more accurate notations.

Requirements for notations and background data continually increased, but after 1906 it was no longer vital to work in the field: the editor of a collection of melodies and the composer of a dissertation could only express regret over the scientifically inadequate collections of collectors who worked before the introduction of a phonograph, including he himself. For instance, the archived materials seemed fairly limited from the perspective of researching polyphony or examining the relation between music and movement. In contrast to his notion of the *runo* song, with its narrow range and varying melodies, as an echo of ancient tunes that have been forgotten and forsaken, which Launis entertained as a student who was only beginning his collection efforts, the mature Launis, writer of the dissertation, considered it to be the oldest and most original of melodies. Still he did not regard these attributes as aesthetically pleasing, and even in his dissertation, Launis interpreted heterophony, which was based on variation and departed from the ideals of art music, as errors of the singers.

In Finnish musicology of the early 20th century, international comparison and classification of melodies held center stage. Launis too contributed to this discussion with the melody collections he had edited and his dissertation which focused on *runo* melodies. Observations regarding the singing customs, closer contexts and meanings which are of interest to contemporary researchers were incorporated only as general descriptions in Launis's travelogue, more wide-ranging articles and the dissertation's introduction. Launis's interest in these topics does not seem so much to stem from any theoretical position, as it rather seems

to derive from the experiences gained during his trips and from the conversations he held with the people he met, especially the Sami Piera Helander.

Who does the Seto Tradition Belong to? The History and Reception of Samuel Sommer's Collection of Folk Poetry

Andreas Kalkun

In 1922 *Piirimaade Selts* (the Society of Marginal Regions) began receiving national support for the collecting of Seto folk poetry. The initially modest collecting endeavors directed by Samuel Sommer rapidly transformed into a monumental campaign that enrolled numerous correspondents. Soon Sommer was publishing in the newspapers triumphant stories about the successful results of the mammoth collecting project as well as collection reports, just as his guide, Jakob Hurt, had done before him. According to the initial plan, Sommer's collection was supposed to become a more complete collection of folk poetry than those of Hurt or Eisen. In addition to the tradition, Sommer's collection was expected to include the photos and biographies of the singers as well as miscellaneous data concerning the songs and stories.

One of the leitmotifs in the history of Estonian folklore studies has been fear of losing our valuable collections of folk poetry or of their possible sale to foreign countries. When in 1930 Sommer discontinues the depositing of his collections in the Estonian Folklore Archives because of a disagreement with Oskar Loorits, rumors arise concerning Sommer's intention to sell the folk poetry that was collected with the state's money to foreign countries. Concerns were also expressed concerning the safety of the repositories of the collections. Both Loorits and Sommer publish critical accounts about each other in the newspapers, and both are sending out numerous requests for help as well as letters of complaint. To be sure, in the course of a couple of years the greater

part of Sommer's collections is handed over to the Estonian Folklore Archives in several installments but the conflict still rages. In 1935, upon the demands made by the Archives, all the collections remaining in Sommer's possession are taken under protection. Sommer takes the matter to court and wins the case: the Supreme Court reverses the decision of the Ministry of Education and Social Affairs by which the Seto collections were declared national heritage in need of public protection.

The occasionally rather heated disputes reveal a discussion of several highly interesting and still relevant themes concerning tradition and its essence. Symptomatically, these discussions overlook the Seto people whose tradition triggered the dispute, and the sole question is, whether the tradition belongs to its collector or the whole Estonian nation and the Archives. To be sure, one broaches the subject of copyright and heritage protection, but the people who are most closely linked to the tradition underlying the dispute by virtue of their being its creators and performers are left out of the discussion. Thus, this incident exposes, among other things, the process of the creation of the archive and archival tradition by which the performer is segregated from the performed folk poetry so that what a moment ago was connected to a specific person and place becomes a sacred tradition: a national treasure and a building block of the nation. It is likewise evident that the opinions regarding Samuel Sommer's collections of folk poetry must have contributed to the later, rather critical attitude towards this collection.

In conjunction with the conflict between Sommer and the Estonian Folklore Archives this paper traces some rhetorical devices and motifs which recur in the narrative of Estonian folklore studies; likewise it touches upon issues related to the genesis and creation of Sommer's collection of Seto folk poetry, and the lawsuit between Sommer and the Archives. I also discuss the problem of private collections of folk poetry as well as some more fundamental problems related to the Seto and the collection of their folk poetry.

From Kiissa Kaelu Anna to Anna Lindvere: The Star of Tradition and the Hero of Narrations

Liina Saarlo

Anna Lindvere (1878—1955) is a representative singer of Kodavere parish and an expert of its dialect. She is doubtless one of the most illustrious representatives of the cultural history of Kodavere. This article is first and foremost dedicated to her biography: how a poor yet innovative and self-cognizant village girl of Sääritsa, Kiissa Kaelu Anna, became Anna Lindvere, the most renowned expert on tradition in Kodavere.

From the life story of Anna the expert on tradition, her so-called career as an informant, one is tempted to draw parallels with the Cinderella story, or to put it into more modern terms, with the stereotypical biographies of American film stars. In 1909 Kiissa Kaelu Anna, a girl from a poor family, by chance happens to meet a foreign scholar, the Finnish linguist Lauri Kettunen whose attention she manages to captivate with her knowledge of dialect and expertise on tradition. Anna's experience as the dialect expert culminates with a trip to Helsinki. After this event the attention of folklorists and researchers of dialects will be concentrated on her. As a result of several collecting endeavors, the Estonian Folklore Archives includes more than 150 song variants that were recorded from her in the period from 1930 to 1950, including about one hundred *regilaulud*, and in addition to that 200 stories, about 500 reports concerning religion and rituals, 700 short forms of folk poetry and some other material. Apart from written records, 32 songs and stories were sound-recorded from her, and when making sound-recordings of Estonian folk music in 1938, she was chosen to represent the *regilaulud* of Kodavere. In 1948 Anna was one of the first persons to be tape-recorded on a tape-recorder, the newest sound-recording technology of the time. Due to the eloquent manner of her performance and impressive voice as well as her awe-inspiring personality, Anna became an icon/mascot of the Kodavere *regilaul* and tales: songs and stories collected from her have become the staple examples

of Kodavere (and eastern) dialect region, and her sound-recordings have become exemplars of the sound-recordings of Estonian tradition.

Although Anna Lindvere was interviewed on numerous occasions, collectors and interviewers never focused on her biography. In fact all biographical data about her derives from other sources. There are several aspects to her person and biography by virtue of which she can not be considered a so-called ‘classic *regilaul* singer’. In terms of her views and interests Anna was a person of modern orientation, her ‘bearing of the tradition’ was linked to a sense of mission – thus, in her own way, she was perhaps a typical bearer of tradition of the twentieth-century.

What is noteworthy is that Anna Lindvere herself became a character of folk tales. Her close collaboration with an educated foreign gentleman in the summer of 1909 elicited excitement and misunderstanding among the villagers. Thus befitting a ‘star’ and in accordance to the customs of Kodavere, Anna became a character in the narrations of Kodavere people for decades. Without doubt, Kiissa Kaelu Anna distinguished herself from the other peasant girls around her in several ways, but first and foremost because she behaved inappropriately for her social position: Anna was the only child of her parents and despite the poverty of her family she was not hired out to serve, but grew up at home. After her mother’s death she lived with her father and went fishing with him. Her worldview was modern; there were secular books at her home and other items that merited talk and disparagement. By nature she was also garrulous and loud. Such a personality and family difference tends to draw attention and be conspicuous, and transform into village tales, or in Kodavere, into personal narratives. The propagation of dialect language and folk poetry in the media and the collectors’ interest in her doubtless added fuel to these stories. Thus we can find narratives about Kiissa Kaelu Anna and her Finnish admirer in material written down even decades later. In their narratives, Anna’s contemporaries, or at least the people who knew her, ridiculed those who suspected her of romantic involvements; the school students who authored of a 2003 study in local history allude to the collaboration between Anna and the Finnish linguist as a romantic relationship, referring to it as “the story of a young Finnish linguist and a simple village girl”.

If Kiissa Kaelu Anna was the hero of disparaging stories, Anna Lindvere became a positive celebrity—her reputation as an expert on tradi-

tion and as a folk singer spread through the media. Despite her status as an icon, scholars have not paid sufficient attention to Anna Lindvere the person, the number of writings dedicated to her is in fact small. But still people remember her—the protagonist of rumors has become a ‘star’ of the local history; in 2002 a plaque marking the site of Anna Lindvere’s home was placed in the village of Sääritsa and an oak was planted there.

Scientific Paradigms and Musical Text: On the Changing Tendencies in the Notation of Setu Songs

Žanna Pärtlas

The notations of traditional music can be considered as ‘secondary musical texts’ which reflect the musical thinking of both the carriers of tradition and the musicologists-transcribers. The musical thinking of the latter depends, among other circumstances, on the theoretical ideas of the period in which the transcriptions were made and the way in which such music was transcribed earlier by other researchers. The comparative analysis of the notations of the Setu multipart songs, made by different researchers during the 20th century, and their comparison with the sound recordings, reveal changing tendencies in the ways of transcribing Setu songs and the dependence of the musical hearing of the transcribers on the musicological paradigms of their time.

This paper concentrates on two research questions. The first is the traditions of the notation of Setu multipart songs as they appear in the five-volume edition “Estonian Folksongs with Melodies” by Herbert Tampere (1956, 1958, 1960, 1964, 1965) and in published sources as well as archival transcriptions by Armas Otto Väisänen, Anatoly Garšnek, Jaan Sarv, and Vaike Sarv. The main attention is paid to the problem of transposing the tunes for analytical purposes and the way of notating the so-called ‘one-three-semitone mode’ which is one of the most original features of the Setu song tradition.

The second topic discussed in this paper is the problem of misrepresentations which occurs frequently in the notations of the Setu songs based on the one-three-semitone mode and creates a deformed picture of the real sound of the songs. These misrepresentations have a systematic character which reveals their connections with the theoretical ideas of the transcribers. The main conclusion of the analysis is that the one-three-semitone mode (D-Eb-F#-G-A#-B) is often heard and transcribed as a harmonic minor (D-Eb-F#-G-A-Bb), which results in that the sonorities of the major thirds (F#-A# and G-B) become minor thirds (F#-A and G-Bb) in the notations. The results of the aural analysis are confirmed by the acoustic measurements of the sound recordings of two songs by the outstanding Setu singer Anne Vabarna and her choir.

The Journey of the Estonian Regilaul Verse into the 21st Century

Kanni Labi

In the developmental stages or stylistic stratifications of Estonian verse of the *regilaul* structure, five main groups can be identified:

- 1) the so-called ‘traditional *regilaul*’ which was largely written down in the 19th century, and in later times recorded from the ‘regilaul islands’: Kihnu and Setumaa;
- 2) the *regilaul* from the 19th century which possesses more individualized traits than average and which departs from the tradition to a certain extent;
- 3) the so-called ‘pseudo-*regilaul* verse’— these are *regilaul* imitations composed outside the tradition and in the nineteenth-century Romantic vein (including Kreutzwald’s “Kalevipoeg”);
- 4) later belletristic *regilaul* imitations;
- 5) the improvisational *regilaul* of the past few decades (mostly oral) and (mostly written) occasional poetry and comic poems composed in the *regilaul* verse.

The starting point for the examination of these groups in the present paper is the question regarding the status and nature of the *regilaul* verse in the respective cultural context.

For the monolithic group of tradition bearers (the first group or stratum), culture is unconscious, i.e. it is not possible to identify one's attitude towards it. Attitudes towards *regilaul* began to be articulated from the outside – by observers of predominantly German extraction. The evaluations that the latter gave were for the most part negative, and since they represented a prestigious sector of society, their taste prevailed over the course of time and the *regilaul* receded from active use. Echoes of this attitude can also be discerned in the opinions of modern Estonians. Faith in the value of the Estonian *regilaul* verse songs which at first was maintained among a much narrower circle of estophiles and later by cultural figures of the national movement originated from Herder who published *regilaul* verse songs along with Ossian's songs, and poems by Shakespeare and Sappho.

If we proceed from the verse corpus that was written down in the 19th century including its style, vocabulary, grammar and poetics, the following changes that took place in the subsequent strata were:

- in the second stratum, the themes and hence the vocabulary begin to change in accordance with the poetic canons of the new period;
- in the third stratum, an impoverishment of grammar and poetics takes place as the users of the *regilaul* language are not masters of that language; its style and vocabulary is exchanged for a sentimental-Romantic one;
- in the fourth stratum, the *regilaul* verse form is learnt anew by virtue of the scientific approach and a standardized *regilaul* language emerges;
- in the fifth group, the knowledge of the *regilaul* language has receded even further into the past and therefore has become almost non-existent; the style and vocabulary fluctuates between all the registers available in modern times.

However, in parallel with the recession of the idiomatic *regilaul* verse, this form has been used, since the end of the 19th century, as an intimation to the “genuinely Estonian”; it became an emblem of the Estonian identity as well as a means of the attainment and preservation of political and cultural self-determination. The form that alluded to

patriotic sentiments and the correspondence of the figurative language with the fashion of the period gave rise to pseudo *regilaul* verses, but this has also been an influence in the use of the *regilaul* verse form by modern poets. The special position of the Estonian national epic, “Kalevipoeg”, which has been written in the pseudo-*regilaul* key, is intimately connected with the formation of the status of the *regilaul* verse. However, this epic is also relatively little known among modern Estonians. At present the actual *regilaul* verse form no longer functions as a national symbol among people, but it is rather the concept of *regilaul* that serves this purpose, and it is rather the end rhyme that is perceived as a poetic device. When asked to name the primary attribute of the *regilaul*, one refers to the choir repeating the verses performed by a lead singer, which in actual fact is a quite irrelevant aspect and does not very much characterize the structure of the *regilaul*.

The contradiction between the encomium to the artistic merit of the *regilaul* and the perception of it as something stagnant and obsolete has persisted to this day. In the light of postcolonial theory, this could be seen as a sign of the self-colonization of Estonians according to Western models, from which Estonians have tried in vain to extricate themselves since the end of the 19th century. In order to feed their self-confidence and national pride, Estonians largely rely on culture: for those who value the *regilaul* equally with the verbal compositions of peoples with longstanding literary traditions, it is thus easier to take pride in their own nation.