

6. THE SHIP SPIRIT KOTERMANN

The stories of Kotermann was common folklore among North Atlantic and Baltic seafarers from the 17th century (Buss 1973), and it is thought that Kotermann-related lore may have reached Estonia through north German or Dutch seafarers in the 19th century because the name Potermann is a newer Low-German loanword (Loorits 1951: 272). Reinhard Buss and Oskar Loorits associate Kotermann with older mythological creatures and images such as tree and building (house) fairies, although Buss does not find a connection between the Estonian Kotermann and the tree spirit.

Estonian transcripts, though, represent the rural and urban environment of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, reflecting Estonian seafarers' service on European ships whose international voyages took place in the Atlantic Ocean and Baltic Sea, although sometimes in more distant waters as well.

Scientists and storytellers alike are unanimous in the opinion that each ship has its own protective spirit (or several), whose task is to monitor the ship and sailors. In particular, in several motifs, Kotermann, either on his own ship or on a foreign ship, leads sailors to help a foreign ship in distress or calls for others to help the sailors.

In the northern European distribution area of Kotermann stories, features that distinguish this ship spirit and building spirits, most notably the house spirit, merged, which Stith Tompson marks in his international list of folk tale motifs under number F485. The ship spirit (Klabautermann, Kabonterken) is similar to the house spirit in several regions (we find common features with German, Finnish and Danish folklore, and, for example, further parallels in Bassett's (1885) edition of maritime legends and beliefs published in the USA); however, in Estonia, the presence of a house and ship spirit under the same name is a rare feature of coastal folklore.

The Kotermann tradition has common features with other older beliefs, for example, the spirit who predicts people's fate (Mardus); we also find stories about the human soul, its shape and its journeys. Folk views on the doppelgänger soul and the free soul are important in maritime heritage, but there are similarities with stories of the restless dead and the revenant, as well as ghosts. Folklore bearers attribute nightmarish qualities to the Kotermann, associating it with the Kratt (treasure bearer) and other mythical creatures' behaviours (for example ERA I 5, 12 (6) < K uusalu, 1935).

Kotermann comes to the ship of its own accord or is made by someone as part of the story. Kotermann is characterised by a large variation of names in the areas where it is known.

Kotermann leaves his ship on the eve of its demise, although in certain tales he also visits a city and is seen arriving on the ship after having fun, later jumping from

the ship into the water. In any event, apart from working and protecting the ship directly, one important function is to predict shipwreck and/or the risk to seafarers' lives.

Estonian lore is characterised by the ability of mythical creatures to transform from objects to people. An anthropomorphic spirit appears as a man, often in the form of a shipmate. More often zoomorphic spirits appear in the form of a dog or cat. Metamorphoses are rare, as are legends of a more complex structure, where visual and auditory experiences are often combined, although auditory experiences (tapping, making noise, sounds accompanying work) sometimes occur. This audibility is also found in some legends, including migratory legends (Kotermanns quarrel over their rights, Kotermanns discuss the characteristics of a ship, for example, its rotten mast). Tactile experiences are almost non-existent.

Instead of a German funny man in colourful clothes who loves to break into song, or a sailor, in the Estonian stories we meet a different character who is heard talking about the problems of the ship at night, a talker and, above all, a workman in sailor's clothes.

There are fantasies in the folklore of the 19th and 20th centuries in the form of didactic and humerus sailors' folklore, for example, Kotermann stories were used to keep newcomers in order (the captain deliberately places an object under the mast that makes a creaking sound).

The history of the research is short: as a religious being, it was previously observed by Oskar Loorits (Loorits 1929–1931,¹ Loorits 1951: 272–273), although the creature was generally overlooked in more modern folk religion. Matthias Johann Eisen has a dozen lines for the ship fairy, and specifically Kotermann, in *The Estonian Mythology*. He considers the ship fairy to be a close relative of the house fairy, mentions an anthropomorphic exterior, and that it lives alone or as part of a couple on a ship. Eisen considers Kotermann a ship spirit with local (island) distribution (Eisen 1919). Loorits also observed Kotermann in Livonian folklore and folk religion (Loorits 1926: 202-210).

Ivar Paulson does not mention Kotermann in *The Religion of the Estonian People*, and Uku Masing, in his publications and in *The Estonian Religion* based on Finnish material, refers to the connection of the Finnish ship spirit with the house spirit and the spread of this association in Finland but does not refer to Estonia (Masing 1995: 139). Mare Kõiva's articles focus on Kotermann's external appearance, his dialogues and the changes in the social milieu that influenced storytelling (Kõiva 1999), highlighting the main story motifs (Kõiva 2019).

¹ In his review of the years 1929 to 1931, Oskar Loorits used Livonian material, his own collected material, which he marked with the letter L, and material collected by the Estonian folklore archive (see Loorits 1929–1931: 76).

In his first treatment, Loorits emphasises that all Estonian material was collected under his instigation and direction, admitting that Eisen had previously published some texts. In fact, individual texts had also been received by Jakob Hurt, although they would hardly have found attention. Loorits' passionate research was associated with the desire to prove that a large amount of traditional material survived to this day in the conservative memory of the people, especially in the milieu of the isolated coastal inhabitants (Loorits 1929; 1931: 76). Let us note that after Loorits' gathering actions, a lot of data accumulated, expanding the earlier view of this aquatic creature that associated it with the fate of ships and sailors.

The Kotermann tradition has been used in fiction, films, songs, etc., and as a result, the tradition, and therefore the mythical creature itself, though extinct are still present in everyday language and occupy an important place in professional art.

1. NAMES

A separate interesting aspect is formed by the names of the ship fairy, the variation in these names, and other linguistic data.

Belonging to the male occupational tradition limited the renown of the narratives, and while the names are variable, the amount of individual name development is greater. The name Kotermann came into Estonian through German (Klabautermann '*kopsija*'). Dialect dictionaries offer several names and dialect variations, such as *koter* and *poter*: Kotermann in Mustjala; Kottermann in Kuusalu; Kuterman in Anseküla; Potermann in Anseküla (EMS 1994-).

A small dialect dictionary (VMR 2012) shows that Kotermann (kuterman) is less popular than Potermann (putermann), the spread of which is much wider (Kuusalu, Jämaja, Anseküla, Kihelkonna, Püha, Muhu, Emmaste, Pühalepa, Kihnu, Häädemeeste, Risti) and extends from the western islands to Pärnumaa (see Map 1). Using the corpus of folk tales, an even wider picture of terminological variation can be obtained.

The islands and the coastal areas have greater variation, from which there are also more inscriptions over nearly a hundred years, from both local correspondents and professional folklorists. Although Kotermann remained active in the literary language and in art, the story also expanded in dialect compared to the time of Loorits (Loorits 1929: 87-88). Especially in northern Estonia, Kotermann also referred to a house spirit.

2. ORIGIN OF KOTERMANN

Beliefs about the protector of small boats differ from those related to the protector of larger sailboats and steamboats. Kotermann, whose origin and behaviour have different explanations, is also associated with longer sea voyages.

Hermann Sergo, a writer on maritime history, generalises the meaning of the ship spirit as follows:

Ta on laeva vaim, laeva hing, sest alus pole hunnik rauda ja puitu, vaid elusolend. Puust laevale ilmub Kotermann juba siis, kui ehitusplatsile emapuu maha pannakse. Rauast alusele aga esimeste põhjaplaatide kokku neetimisel. Ta on laevale kaitsevaimuks ja heaks hoidjaks. Kuid ainult nii kaua, kui mehed teda au sees peavad. Aga hoidku jumal, kui ta vihastab!

He is a ship spirit, the soul of the ship because the foundation is not a pile of iron and wood, but a living being. Kotermann already appears on a wooden ship when the keel is laid down at the construction site. Or when riveting the first bottom plates together on an iron base. He is a protective spirit and a good guardian of the ship. But only as long as men honour him. But God forbid if he gets angry! (RKM I 23, 108 (1) < Käina, 1988)

Matthias Johann Eisen confirms (1919: 70, 77; 1901) that in Estonia Putermann is found on Hiiumaa, but also across the coast among the entire older generation of seafarers, who bring them from foreign ships. He is sure that it is almost an international legend of Norwegian (or Scandinavian) origin, a popular figure among sailors, known in our country and elsewhere for centuries.

No ship is without Kotermann, the storytellers and collectors from different decades say in essentially all transcriptions through a long collection history (cf. ERA II 192, 86 (25) < Kuusalu, 1938; ERA II 34, 143 (26) < Karma, 1931; ERA II 191, 38 < Muhu 1938; RKM II 86, 302 (1) < Karja, 1959; KKI 7, 108 (7) < Kihnu, 1948; KKI 7, 405 (3) < Kihnu, 1948, RKM II 10, 161 (2) < Kihnu, 1946; ERA II 40, 452 < Noarootsi, 1930; ERA II 16, 216 (84) < Karuse, 1929; E 84723 (2) < Pärnu, 1933).

Kotermann is “also, as it were, a protective spirit created by God” (KKI 7, 108 (7) < Kihnu, 1948), each ship has its own angel, this is Kotermann (Ariste 7, 28 (18) < Kihnu, 1933; KKI 10, 140 (8) < Mustjala, 1949), it is also called “some kind of spirit” (ERA II 55, 313/4 (20) < Ridala, 1932; ERA II 16, 216 (84) < Karuse, 1929), “some kind of ghost” (RKM II 74, 353/4 (36) < Kihelkonna, 1958), an “unseen person” (KKI 10, 370 (1) < Mustjala, 1949), a troll (E 60189 (21) < Noarootsi, 1927), an outcast. Kotermann was also considered the summoned,

invited spirit of the ship, that is, one of the owners must summon him (ERA II 1, 672/3 (4) < Reigi, 1928).

Kotermann was believed to be associated with a ship from the moment the timber was felled, or from the time the keel was laid down. Creatures seen on felled timber and visions seen beside logs were associated with Kotermann.

The above examples point to Kotermann as resembling nature spirits, although he could also sometimes be man-made. Another set of beliefs is in a shipmaster or ship captain who could or had to, make a Kotermann or a model of him from wood chips. There were one or three chips (i.e. an odd number), and the individual message had an inscription with a name:

The shipmaster takes the first three wood chips from keel wood, puts them in his trouser pocket and makes Kotermann out of them because then the work on the new ship will progress quickly and Kotermann will become the real master of the ship (6 texts): E 32522/4 (2) < Jämaja, 1897; E 36541/2 (3) < Jämaja, 1898; ERA II 8, 645/7 < Püha, 1928; ERA II 70, 151 (1) < Kihnu, 1934; KKI 10, 13 9/40 (7) < Mustjala, 1949, Eisen 1995: 49).

Kotermann arises from the first wood chip, which is placed under the mast or keel (5 texts): E 74655 (4) < Jämaja, 1931; ERA II 158, 165 (7) < Jämaja, 1937 ; E 84029 (194) < Mustjala, 1933; E 84030 (196) < Mustjala; 1933; KKI 10, 3 92 (15) < Mustjala, 1949.

The master took the first wood chips to the sauna stove and warmed them there, then he took them back to the ship. With those chips, the ship spirit came to the ship (1 text): E 85997/8 (14) < Kihnu, 1934.

Individual reports mention the importance of the lunar phase (new moon), as well as the magical drip of three drops of blood on the wood chips, which in the older tradition shows a contract with the devil (*...pidäde laevatüe juurõs esimese luastu võtma, vassaku käe nimetissõrmõst pidäde kolm tjõlka verd piäle tjõlgutama ning luastu siis laeva panõma* [...]) [one must take the first wood chip that comes from working on the ship, three drops of blood must be dripped from the forefinger of the left hand, and then the chips put on the ship [...]] (ERA II 70, 151 (1) < Kihnu, 1934)

The next set of beliefs is associated with establishing physical contact between a person and a creature in which, aiming to obtain a Kotermann, the owner or captain keeps the first wood chip at his chest until the ship is completed and “hatches Kotermann” (E 84030 (197) < Mustjala, 1933; ERA II 21, 611/5 (1) < Häädemeeste, 1930; ERA II 59, 539 (1) < Kihnu, 1933).

Mythical explanations include Kotermann growing from a rooster's egg (E 8403 1 (200) < Mustjala, 1933); compare, for example, Kratt or the flying serpent's connections to a rooster's egg (cf. Kõiva & Boganeva 2022; Loorits 1952)

In addition, the wooden figure onboard the ship is identified with Kotermann and the God of the sea:

Potermann – see on merejumal, kuju pidand olema igas laevas vanal ajal. See võis olla inimese kuju. Olen näind ka, omal oli üks, aga sõjad olid üle käind, tohi ma'p öelda mette, kus ta on saand. Puukuju oli, seisis laevapäras, üle meetri pikk, puust heaste välja nikerdud mehe kuju. Ta pidi laeva hoitma. Kihelkonnas Niitsoode majas oli üks, olid ju kaptenid puhas. Kui jumalale laevas möni äpardus juhtus, siis tuli laevale õnnetus. Ehk oli kuulda jälle vaikse ilmaga laevas mõnda salakohinat, siis oli karta, et õnnetus tuleb varsti.

Potermann – this is the god of the sea; his statue was supposed to be on every ship in the old days. It could have been a human figure. I have also seen it, my own ship had one, but the wars were over and I cannot tell where he went. The wooden statue was, standing in the ship's stern, over a meter tall, the figure of a man carved out of wood. He had to monitor the ship. There was one house in the parish of Niitsoode, after all, where the men were ships' captains. If the spirit suffered a mishap, there would be an accident onboard. Perhaps there was some secret rustling noise on the ship in quiet weather, then it was feared that misfortune would come soon. (KKI 10, 212 (13) < Kihelkonna, 1949)

Other methods include placing silver or gold coins under the ship's masthead, which was reported up to the 1970s and, at the same time, was quite popular in the earlier narrative tradition (RKM II 229, 627 (13) < Haljala, 1966/7; RKM II 34, 392 (15) < Tallinn < Keila, 1949; ERA II 158, 87/8 (12) < Anseküla, 1937; RKM II 37, 222 (17) < Häädemeeste, 1950; RKM II 37, 223 (20) < Häädemeeste 1950; ERA II 70, 1 51 (1) < Kihnu, 1934).

Money was placed under the masthead as a salary for Kotermann to pay for his future maintenance of the ship (ERA II 8, 647 < Püha, 1928; Haarma, Emmaste 2020; RKM II 37, 259/60 (55) < Häädemeeste, 1950), so that the ship would be rich (E 60293 (21) < Noarootsi, 1927), and that the ship would have good luck (RKM II 34, 392 (15) < Tallinn < Keila, 1949; RKM II 229, 627 (13) < Haljala, 1966/1967). The general expression “older money, longer life” illustrates the need to use old coins as the essence of the life of the ship (ERA II 8, 647 < Püha, 1928; RKM II 37, 259/60 (55) < Häädemeeste, 1950), as well as older coins having a higher content of precious metal. The placing of money occurs in the tradition of shipwrights in one way or another even without the Kotermann connection. Marta Mäesalu's writing presents a view of the 1950s:

Praegu on meie Merikulla kalurikolhoosis käsil kakuaamipaadi ehitamine, töö algas 14.03.50. Eile küsisin ühelt paaditööliselt, kas nad potermanni ka tegid, ja sain järgmise seletuse.

“Potermanni küll es tee, aga midagi me pannime küll – seda on enne meid tehtu ja me tegime kah, – vanaaegse hõberaha, mis 116 aastad vana on. Otsisime, kellel on kõige vanem raha, ja saime selle. Vanaaegne piab sellepärast olema, mida vanem, seda parem, et sis on paadil ka pikk iga. Ja vanaaegne on täishõbe, eestiaegne es ole päris hõbe. Hõbe piab sellepärast olema, et kala on ka rohkem hõbedavärvi.” (Nikolai Abaja, snd 1880. a).

Currently, the construction of one boat is underway at our Meriküla fishing collective farm, work began on 14 March 1950. Yesterday I asked one of the boatbuilders if they also made a potermann and got the following explanation.

“We will not make a Potermann, but we did something – it was done before us, and we did it too. Old-fashioned silver money, which is 116 years old. We looked for someone who had the oldest money, and we got it. It must be old-fashioned because the older the better, then the boat will live long. And the old silver is full silver, Estonian-era silver is not real silver. It must be silver because fish are also silver-coloured.” (Nikolai Abaja, b. 1880).

Various coins have also been found on ships by today’s shipwrights, for example, the builder of the schooner Hiiu Ain Tähiste says that in the old days, a gold coin was placed under the ship’s mast, and in the Estonian era a two crone nickel coin. Tähiste found a tsarist-era silver coin under the mast of the Hiiu Angel and a silver coin from the Republic of Estonia under the Lisette’s mast (Roosna 2020, Albri 2018).

There are also stories of a Kotermann being made, or played by a sailor, to terrify novices, and other playful techniques that, in their own way, are part of the initiation rites and the traditions of the profession (FAM 36 (64) < Kihelkonna, 19 93; RKM II 463, 153 (20) < Viru-Nigula, 1994; ERA II 21, 611/5 (1) < Häädemeeste, 1930).

Sometimes the connection between the shipwright, and the character of Kotermann is emphasised, for example, if the shipwright is a good person the spirit of the ship is also good, but if he is evil, then Kotermann is also evil (ERA II 111, 473 (42) < Kuusalu, 1935).

Offerings to Kotermann are mentioned in rare reports, for example, the three wood chips from the mast could be thrown into the sea (ERA II 111, 473 (42) < Kuusalu, 1935). There are individual reports about the feeding of the ship spirit, which Hermann Sergio formulated in an idiosyncratic way:

Et kotermani heal tuulel hoida, peab talle õhtuti peli taha või mõnesse muusse varjulisse kohta panema toitu. Ta ei ole nõudlik, aitab tükist kuivikust või lihasuutäiest, kuid ära unustada teda ei tohi.

In order to keep Kotermann downwind, he must be given food to eat that is hidden behind the anchor windlass or in some other shadowy place. He is not demanding, a piece of rusk or a piece of meat is enough, but you must not forget about him. (RKM I 23, 108 (1) < Käina, 1988)

Kotermann's **place of residence** is generally unspecified, but, for example, he may live in an empty room, in a cabin, or in a hold between the outer and inner walls of the ship (ERA II 40, 463/6 < Reigi, 1930).

3. THE APPEARANCE AND ATTRIBUTES OF KOTERMANN

Kotermann's external appearance is variable, as it generally is with aquatic beings, and can occur in all conceivable forms, although there are fewer phenomena and inanimate objects than in other forms.

3.1 Visual experiences

a) Inanimate objects

- A white waterfall-like phenomenon that, as it moves away from the ship, disappears as a red dash;
- fire: the spirit is seen as a fire (1 text): ERA II 40, 447/8 (1) < Tallinn, < Kuusalu, 1930;
- a wooden wheel rolling on the water (1 text): E 84031 (198) < Mustjala, 1933;
- a red trap-like thing (1 text): ERA II 187, 331 (14) < Herd, 1938;
- a haystack with a sharp squealing voice (1 text): ERA II 130, 128/9 (1) < Muhu, 1937;
- something falls off the mast (1 text): Ariste 7.6 (18) < Kihnu, 1933 = RKM II 10, 166 (18) < Kihnu, 1933.

b) A living being

In the case of **living beings**, there is a significant variability in appearance and a greater number of variants; individual texts are rare. Kotermann sometimes appears as birds of different colours, or they appear as foreign animals on the ship.

Sometimes Kotermann is interpreted as a bird or animal that exhibits unusual behaviour. The frog is feared above all as a malevolent creature and a milk thief and appears in this corpus in the role of house spirit. According to popular belief, rats

leave the ship before a disaster, and likewise, there are reports in the Kotermann corpus that rats sometimes had the role of ship spirit.

Animals were also classified as Kotermann because they were not generally allowed on board, for example, there are records of a cat scratching a mast and meowing miserably (ERA II 40, 174 < Tallinn < Reigi, 1927) and a black dog jumping overboard (ERA II 1, 708 (55) < Reigi, 1928). In some cases, two animals (a black cat and a black dog) are defined as Kotermann, (RKM II 454, 113 (1) < Saaremaa, 1992).

More common, however, is behaviour inappropriate to the species, which leads to the assumption that the animal is a Kotermann, cf. the following example texts:

— every sailor has seen him. Anyone who has noticed a seagull at the top of the mast, looking down from there with its head tilted, has also seen Kotermann. An ordinary seagull flies over the wake after the ship: RKM I 23, 108 (1) < Käina, 1988;

— a strange dog jumped overboard from a ship into the sea, it happened for several days: ERA I 3, 302 (6a) < Pühalepa, 1930;

— in Aberdeenshire, Scotland, we were on watch on a large sailing ship. An English ship stood near us, Kotermann went to the mast in the form of a squirrel, made a great rumble in the room; our men were horrified, fell ill: ERA II 158, 87/8 (12) < Anseküla, 1937;

— there is a goat on board a barge, it began to foam at the mouth: *vätsat, vätsat, vätsat*: RKM II 75, 167 (3) < Mustjala, 1958.

Fish

— Kotermann can turn himself into a Fish (1 text): RKM I 23, 108 (1) < Käina, 1988.

Amphibian

— Frog, a house spirit, not a ship spirit (1 text): When the old big frog went by, people said: “See, potermann goes into the house!” (ERA II 34, 143 (26) Kaarma, 1931.

Birds

— Bird (2 texts): RKM II 18, 387/8 (42) < Pöide, 1949; ERA I 3, 376 (17) < Pühalepa, 1930;

— little black bird (1 text): E 84031 (201) < Kihelkonna, 1933;

— black bird (1 text): E, StK 39, 33/4 (26) < Kihelkonna, 1926;

— grey bird (2 texts): ERA II 164, 121 (10) < Kihelkonna, 1937; ERA II 189, 340 (35) < Pühalepa, 1938;

— hawk (rebukull) (1 text): E 36541/2 (3) < Jämaja, 1898;

— large hawk (1 text): E 32522/4 (2) < Jämaja, 1897;

- seagull (1 text): RKM I 23, 108 (1) < Käina, 1988;
- crow (1 text): E 74630/2 (3) < Jämaja, 1931.

Animals

- Like an animal (1 text): ERA II 70, 149 (7) < Kihnu, 1934;
- the beast climbs the mast and disappears there (1 text):
E 32524/5 (11) < Jämaja, 1897;
- rat (2 texts): ERA I 6, 783 (2) < Haljala, 1940; ERA II 191, 143/4 (4) < Muhu < Pöide, 1938;
- a rat jumps overboard, a tow with which the ship is tarred, in the mouth (2 texts):
RKM II 40, 412 (1) < Kihnu, 1954; RKM II 339, 264 (1) < Käina, 1979;
- grey rat (3 texts): ERA II 40, 442/3 < Tartu 1 < Varbla, 1930; KKI 10, 370 (1) < Mustjala, 1949; KKI 10, 508 (1) < Mustjala, 1949;
- seal (2 texts): EFA I 7, 109 (5) < Valjala, 1995; ERA II 40, 175 < Tallinn < Reigi, 1927;
- cat (4 texts): ERA II 1, 672/3 (4) < Reigi, 1928; RKM II 18, 387/8 (42) < Pöide, 1949;
ERA II 40, 175 < Tallinn < Reigi, 1927; ERA II 40, 174 < Tallinn < Reigi, 1927;
- like a young cat (1 text): ERA II 59, 551 (4) < Kihnu, 1933;
- black cat, black dog (1 text): RKM II 454, 113 (1) < Saaremaa, 1992;
- dog (1 text): ERA II 40, 447/8 (1) < Tallinn < Kuusalu, 1930;
- a strange dog scrambled overboard, so it had been for several days (1 text): ERA
I 3, 302 (6a) < Pühalepa, 1930;
- big dog (1 text): ERA II 1, 540/1 (28) < Pühalepa, 1928;
- black dog (4 texts): ERA II 1, 551 (9) < Pühalepa, 1928; ERA II 1, 708 (55) < Reigi, 1928 (vrđl RKM II 454, 113 (1) < Saaremaa, 1992); E 4548/9 (7) < Tõstamaa, 1893;
- red dog (3 texts): ERA II 40, 448 (2) < Kuusalu, 1930; ERA II 1, 601/2 (2) < Reigi, 1928; ERA I 3, 113 (6) < Pöide, 1930;
- brown dog (1 text): ERA II 1, 547 (1) < Pühalepa, 1928;
- squirrel (1 text): ERA II 158, 87/8 (12) < Anseküla, 1937;
- squirrel-like white animal (1 text): ERA II 16, 344/5 (7) < Kihnu, 1929;
- a goat (fighting with a goat from another ship) (1 text): ERA II 130, 189/90 (9) < Muhu, 1937;
- a goat that makes a strange sound with its mouth (1 text): RKM II 75, 167 (3) < Mustjala, 1958;
- a calf (in a meadow) (1 text): ERA II 158, 87 (11) < Anseküla, 1937.

Humans

Externally, Kotermann's most frequent manifestation is a human, a man who, in many stories, is not specified in any way (this also includes human-like and man-like creatures); sometimes he is a fleet officer. The colour and presence of clothing or beard are remarked upon, as are his height, which is small, his age, and in a few texts marine clothing and paraphernalia are present, for example, a long, black, raincoat and a "tarboosh" (hat), as well as a scruffy black beard and an indescribably ugly face (ERA II 40, 165 < Tallinn, 1927). Kotermann is also noted as being a small old man with grey clothes, a wide Russian axe on his belt, a large grey beard down to his belly and a southwester on his head (ERA II 40, 467 < Reigi, 1930). Or he is an old man dressed in grey, with a grey beard, wearing sea boots with a Russian axe and a sou'wester on his head; he is about the height of a small water bucket made of sailcloth (ERA II 40, 463/6 < Reigi, 1930). Or he is an Englishman dressed in grey with a black hat (E 81766/8 (1a) < Jämaja, 1932), or he is dressed in grey clothes with half-moons woven into them (ERA II 130, 322 (9) < Muhu, 1937). However, in most cases, the stories do not go into such detail, rather they just call him a man, or, for example, a grey man or a black man.

Less often, two men or two captains are active in the story, and individual stories highlight the presence of Kotermann in official fleet-related clothes (six texts). In only nine stories of the entire corpus is the character a woman, and although Kotermann's short stature is mentioned repeatedly, there are only three stories where the character is a boy.

Unconventional behaviour is also characteristic of the Kotermann in human form (for example, jumping overboard). Strangeness is also present in his short stature, disappearing without a trace, or his talking at the railing. Disappearing without a trace or jumping into the sea predicts the death of a sailor. This can relate to one sailor or to multiple, as in the following examples:

Teise korra nägime Ameerikast tulles, kuuvalge öö oli, inimest oma laevas. Arvasime oma meheks, otsisime teda taga, aga ei näind, kolm meest nägime korraga.

The second time, coming from America, it was a moonlit night, we saw a person on our ship. We thought it was our man, we looked for him, but we couldn't find him, we were three men at once. (1 text): ERA II 158, 87/8 (12) < Anseküla, 1937;

Üks võõras mees tulnd üle teki ja hüpand merde. Madrus mötelnud: "Nüüd ikka tuleb midagi." Natukese aja pärast tulnud kapten ise välja ja hüpand säält samast kohast merre.

A stranger came over the deck and jumped into the sea. The sailor thought, “Now something is coming”. After a while, the captain himself came out and jumped from that same place into the sea: ERA II 1, 650 (3) < Reigi, 1928.

Näinud võõrast tuntmatut meest laua taga – istus ja kirjutas.

We saw a strange unknown man at the table – sat down and wrote: ERA I 5, 12 (6) < Kuusalu, 1935;

Kapteni taoline mees tulnud välja ja karanud üle parda merde. Mehed läinud vaatama ja leidnud, et kapten istub kajutis. Pool tundi hiljem tulnud aga kapten tõesti kajutist välja ja karanud üle parda merde otse samast kohast ja samal viisil kui puttermann pool tundi varem.

A man like the captain came out and jumped overboard. The men went to look and found the captain sitting in the cabin. Half an hour later, however, the captain really came out of the cabin and jumped overboard from the same place and in the same way as the Puttermann half an hour earlier: ERA II 40, 474/5 < Reigi, 1930.

The list of all forms of appearance is as follows:

- Human (6 texts): E 32522/4 (2) < Jämaja, 1897; ERA II 158, 191/2 (103) < Jämaja 1937; RKM I 23, 108 (1) < Käina, 1988; RKM II 37, 224/7 (23) < Häädemeeste, 1950; E 36762 (3) < Pärnu, 1898; ERA II 40, 447/8 (1) < Tallinn < Kuusalu, 1930;
- human-like (6 texts): E 36541/2 (3) < Jämaja, 1898; ERA II 158, 212 (22) < Jämaja, 1937; ERA II 191, 96 (1) < Muhu, 1938; KKI 10, 392 (15) < Mustjala, 1949; E 84476 (2) < Pärnu, 1933; E, StK 43, 210/2 (38) < Jämaja, 1927;
- a person with a bag on the back (1 text): ERA II 114, 586/7 (19) < Kuusalu, 1935;
- someone, a bag on the back (1 text): E 84563 (11) < Kihelkonna, 1933;
- black human-like being: acts, rolls objects, jumps into the water (1 text): E 81000/2 (1) < Jämaja, 1932;
- a black human figure (2 texts): ERA II 254, 461/2 (6) < Reigi, 1939; ERA II 189, 83/4 (65) < Emmaste, 1938;
- a man (11 texts): ERA II 158, 87/8 (12) < Anseküla, 1937; E 50266/7 (8) < Kuusalu, 1917; ERA II 161, 280/1 (17) < Kuusalu, 1937; RKM II 1, 408 (6) < Kihnu, 1948; E 84035 (211) < Mustjala, 1933; ERA II 40, 359/60 < Reigi, 1928; ERA II 16, 342 (4) < Kihnu, 1929; ERA II 34, 138 (38) < Kaarma, 1931; ERA II 1, 708/9 (56) < Reigi, 1928; ERA II 1, 674 (6) < Reigi, 1928; ERA II 1, 709 (57) < Reigi, 1928;
- men (1 text): RKM II 2, 311/3 (2) < Kihelkonna, 1946;

- a stranger (6 texts): ERA II 1, 650 (3) < Reigi, 1928; ERA I 5, 12 (6) < Kuusalu, 1935; ERA II 221, 605/6 (11) < Kuusalu, 1939; ERA I 5, 26 (40) < Kuusalu, 1935; ERA II 254, 497/8 (21) < Reigi, 1939; ERA II 164, 380/2 (2) < Kihelkonna, 1937;
- a black man (2 texts): RKM, Mgn. II 2703 b < Jämaja, 1975; ERA II 111, 476 (48) < Kuusalu, 1935;
- grey men (1 text): E 85997/8 (16) < Kihnu, 1934;
- a man with a grey beard (1 text): ERA II 59, 497/9 (2) < Kihnu, 1933;
- a man in underwear believed to be a ship's hunter (1 text): ERA II 164, 380/2 (2) < Kihelkonna, 1937
- a strange man with red hair (1 text): EKRK I 5, 82/3 < Kõpu, 1954;
- two unknown men (disappearing under the bed) (2 texts): ERA II 40, 172 < Reigi, 1927; ERA II 254, 462/4 (7) < Reigi, 1939;
- two men in grey clothes, fighting among themselves (1 text): ERA II 83, 589 (3) < Kihnu, 1935;
- two gentlemen in the common dwelling of the crew, hooves on their heads (1 text): ERA II 83, 589 (3) < Kihnu, 1935;
- two men in blue clothes, sit on the gunwale and tell stories (1 text): E 83180/1 (2) < Pärnu, 1923;
- man with a grey beard (1 text): ERA II 59, 497/9 (2) < Kihnu, 1933;
- old man (1 text): ERA II 158, 165 (7a) < Jämaja, 1937;
- bearded old man (1 text): ERA II 40, 468/71 < Emmaste, 1930;
- grey old man (1 text): ERA II 40, 175 < Tallinn < Reigi, 1927;
- grey man (1 text): ERA II 70, 189/91 (5) < Kihnu, 1934;
- an old man with a grey beard (1 text): ERA I 6, 782 (1) < Haljala, 1940;
- big man (1 text): EKRK I 3, 47 (1) < Kihnu, 1952 = EKRK I 3, 134 < Kihnu, 1952;
- a big man in a black English raincoat with a rain hat on his head and a black beard has an indescribably ugly face (1 text): ERA II 40, 165 < Tallinn, 1927;
- a short stranger wearing a short half-coat, a sou'wester on his head, high sea boots on his feet, a beard down to his trousers (1 text): ERA II 40, 455/7 < Tallinn, 1930;
- a very tiny man (1 text): RKM II 2, 471 (3) < Kihelkonna, 1947;
- little man (2 texts): RKM II 148, 227 (16) < Kihelkonna, 1962; E 84033 (206) < Mustjala, 1933;

- little grey man, big bag on his back (4 texts): E 84723 (2) < Pärnu, 1933;
ERA II 275, 476/7 (46) < Jämaja, 1940; RKM II 4, 525/6 (6) < Püha, 1946;
E 84032 (204) < Mustjala, 1933; E 84691/2 (14) < Pärnu, 1933;
- a man with a grey beard, wearing a large bag (1 text): E 84691/2 (14) < Pärnu, 1933;
- little grey man, grey clothes, grey beard, jumps into the sea (1 text): E 84691/2
(14) < Pärnu, 1933;
- a little old man with grey clothes, a wide Russian axe on his belt, a large grey
beard reaching to his stomach, and a sou'wester on his head, leaping into the
sea (1 text): ERA II 40, 467 < Reigi, 1930;
- a grey-dressed, grey-bearded old man with sea boots on his feet, a Russian axe
between his belts, and a swallow, and himself about the height of a bucket of water
from a sailcloth (1 text): ERA II 40, 463/6 < Reigi, 1930;
- man dressed in grey (1 text): ERA II 40, 157 (164) < Pühalepa, 1927;
- an Englishman with a black hoof dressed in grey leaps into the sea (1 text):
E 81766/8 (1a) < Jämaja, 1932;
- in grey clothes into which crescents are woven (1 text): ERA II 130, 322 (9)
< Muhu, 1937;
- little dwarf man, axe under the armpit (1 text): ERA II 40, 442/3 < Tartu 1 <
Varbla, 1930;
- short man the size of a boy (1 text): ERA II 8, 447/51 < Blackfoot, 1928;
- a man in oil clothes looks with binoculars (1 text): ERA II 79, 439/41 (1) < Kih-
nu, 1934;
- female (2 texts): ERA II 55, 258 (4) < Ridala, 1932; ERA II 192, 126 (50) < Kuu-
salu, 1938;
- white-clothed woman (2 texts): E 74630/2 (3) < Jämaja, 1931; ERA I 5, 176 (4)
< Kuusalu, 1935;
- woman with white hair (1 text): ERA II 21, 611/5 (1) < Häädemeeste, 1930;
- miss, shawl around shoulders, jumped into the sea (1 text): ERA II 59, 499/501
(3) < Kihnu, 1933;
- miss (1 text): ERA II 1, 672/3 (4) < Reigi, 1928;
- young maiden (1 text): ERA II 40,157(164 < Pühalepa, 1927;
- an old woman dressed in grey, wrapped in a grey shawl (1 text): RKM II 454,
114 (2) < Kose, 1992;
- boy (1 text): ERA II 164, 301/2 (4) < Parish, 1937;
- little boy (1 text): KKI 7, 404/5 (2) < Kihnu, 1948;

- a black boy, firewood under his armpit, disappeared overboard (1 text): E 81768/9 (2) < Jämaja, 1932;
- red clothes (1 text): Ariste 7.28 (18) < Kihnu, 1933 = RKM II 10.188 (18) < Kihnu, 1933;
- unknown military officer (2 texts): ERA II 40, 448 (5) < Tallinn < Kuusalu, 1930; ERA II 40, 448 (5) < Kuusalu, 1930;
- captain (2 texts): ERA II 192, 160/1 (18) < Kuusalu, 1938; ERA II 40, 474/5 < Reigi, 1930;
- captains (1 text): E 51387 < Kuusalu, 1921;
- second mate (1 text): ERA II 40, 447/8 (1) < Tallinn, < Kuusalu, 1930;
- cook (1 text): E 50264/6 (7) < Kuusalu, 1917;
- stoker (1text): ERA II 164, 295 (19) < Kihelkonna, 1937.

CONNECTIONS WITH MYTHOLOGY

Several of the appearances in the corpus bear similarities with visions or apparitions, which were long-standing topics of research in the 18th and 19th centuries (cf. Tyrell 1942/2020; Ferrair 1813) but also remained relevant in later studies of the human psyche and paranormal phenomena. This is also reflected in the numerous ghost stories in the folk tradition. For example, in stories about Kuusalu, a sailor suddenly sees a hand at the door, or in another story, when entering the cabin the steersman sees a hand on the table and a trace of someone sitting on the sofa.

As a sub-category of Kotermann's visual form, we encounter the appearance of a dead person to the living in the form of a black human figure in the engine room who is associated with the spirit² of a man who died there.

There are also texts that include the *doppelgänger*, where the soul of a living person is seen performing normal tasks removed from their location. For example, the steersman and the captain see a man mark a route on the map, they follow it to a sinking ship, where the man turns out to be the captain (ERA II 40, 172 < Reigi, 1927; ERA II 70, 189/91 (5) < Kihnu, 1934, etc.). The *doppelgänger* can also change the route without appearing in the second location in order to bring help to his ship (ERA II 70, 189/91 (5) < Kihnu, 1934), which is an example of bilocation as well as moving to a second location, as in the first example.

Relationships between a ship and its name are also found in some texts, for example if, because of the opposition of the owners, the master of a ship cannot use a name seen in a dream, then the ship cannot set sail. In this case, there can also be frequent visions on the ship, the ship's cargo might move from one place to another, 2 Loorits (1929: 92, 98) also mentions the relationship between a dead person and Kotermann.

men could be seen coming on board or vanishing, noises can be heard, etc. (ERA I 40, 449 (7) < Tallinn < Kuusalu, 1930).

The list of external features includes special features of clothing and paraphernalia. In addition, popular belief includes the dichotomies **naked – dressed**, **empty-handed – holding objects**, which symbolically predict doom or salvation. Lefebvre (1972: 109) defines naked in these oppositions as a metaphor for the exposed self. Attention is neither attracted by physical description or detail nor by moral issues but by the irrational. Nakedness and leaving empty-handed ignore stratifications and highlight the connection with the soul – the soul leaves, which means the death of the ship and/or sailors (ERA II 130, 361/2 (88) < Muhu, 1937; Ariste 7, 6 (18) < Kihnu, 1933 = RKM II 10, 166 (18) < Kihnu, 1933). We can find some generalisations: “If a naked person goes from the ship, then no one escapes. If you have something in hand, you will be saved” (ERA II 16, 352 (17) < Kihnu, 1929).

The same generalisation applies to Kotermann leaving empty-handed, i.e. it predicts doom, while taking something with you (a pack or backpack) represents the salvation and survival of sailors (ERA II 158, 211/2 (21) < Jämaja, 1937). The wording varies, but the content and general opposition remain unchanged.

A sure omen of doom is also Pottermann/Kotermann jumping overboard, which predicts the death of a sailor or, less often, a shipwreck. (ERA II 40, 175 < Tallinn < Reigi, 1927).

List of apparitions, visions, mythical beings:

- hand in front of the door (3 texts): ERA I 5, 63 (2) < Kuusalu, 1935; ERA II 111, 474 (44) < Kuusalu, 1935; ERA II 40, 448 (4) < Kuusalu, 1930;
- ghost: shifting objects, ghostly men arriving on the ship, etc. (1 text): ERA II 40, 449 (7) < Tallinn < Kuusalu, 1930;
- home wanderer, a ghost with a bloody head: the spirit of a sailor who died (1 text): ERA II 40, 458/9 < Tallinn, 1930;
- home wanderer-deceased (1 text): ERA II 164, 295 (19) < Kihelkonna, 1937;
- doppelgänger: a young woman revealed three days before her death (1 text): ERA II 158, 212/3 (23) < Jämaja, 1937;
- an unknown man writing at the table, the captain of the sinking ship confesses the handwriting is his own (1 text): ERA I 5, 12 (6) < Kuusalu, 1935;
- turns out to be the person who went to plot a new course for the ship (4 texts): ERA I 5, 19 (19) < Kuusalu, 1935; ERA II 40, 172 < Reigi, 1927; ERA II 254, 462/4 (7) < Reigi, 1939; ERA II 70, 189/91 (5) < Kihnu, 1934;

— Kratt - treasure bearer spirit (1 text): ERA II 158, 387 (24) < Mustjala, 1937.

3.2 Auditory experiences

Meeting the supernatural is a psychic experience in which something is usually seen and certain sounds are heard. Auditory experiences in the corpus are divided into the sound generated by Kotermann, and the voices heard in response to his work, conveying conveying information about the state of the ship.

Rarely, realistic explanations are presented for the sounds heard. For example, **rumbling** behind a wall on closer inspection turns out not to be Kotermann but rats that have gnawed a hole in the side of the ship and gone ashore. This becomes a bad omen in one case in Tallinn where the steersman drowns (ERA II 188, 363 (5) < K äina < Emmaste, 1938). Other sounds are associated with, and predict, accidents, for example knocking is an important portent of death, and footsteps are associated with ghostly episodes and death. (Ristolainen 2003)

In texts about Kotermann, voices are associated with predictions of death and perdition. The most commonly reported are voices that “rumble”, “fumble”, and “make noise”. Relatively fewer texts contain voices, including stories about Kotermann being in an office, often these are stories related to work processes.

Kotermann’s vocalisation is associated with sad emotions: he screams on the ship, squeaks, yelps, makes a grunting sound, moans, whines, laughs, giggles, cries. Sometimes men can be heard singing. Several vocalisations resemble the singing or chanting of animals and birds: a great cry, screaming like a cat, a bird’s voice screaming and wailing, a bird singing with a strange clear voice at the top of the mast, croaking like a grey bird, singing like a bird. A separate sub-category is verbal communication, for example Kotermann laments, crying, where he lives when the ship is wrecked (ERA II 192, 126 (50) < Kuusalu, 1938). Verbal communication and direct speech are a frequent element in legends, along with curious other significant sounds, all of which we will consider in the following section.

— knocking (1 text): RKM II 434, 157/8 (40) < Nissi, 1990;

— footsteps on the deck (4 texts): ERA II 161, 382/3 (25) < Kuusalu, 1937; ERA II 79, 441/3 (3) < Kihnu, 1934; ERA II 40, 175 < Tallinn < Reigi, 1927; ERA II 40, 449 (7) < Tallinn < Kuusalu, 1930;

— someone hums, squeals, sobs, stings, makes noise in the ship (21 texts): ERA I 3, 302 (6a) < Pühalepa, 1930; ERA I 3, 302 (6c) < Pühalepa, 1930; ERA I 3, 302 (6b) < Pühalepa, 1930; E 74522/30 (5) < Jämaja, 1931; E 81766/8 (1) < Jämaja, 1932; E 32527 (13) < Jämaja, 1897; ERA I 3, 163 (4) < Kure ssaare, 1930; ERA II 79, 441/3 (3) < Kihnu, 1934; ERA II 1, 620 (8) < Reigi, 1928; ERA II 21, 617 (1) < Häädemeeste, 1930; ERA II 40, 175 < Tallinn < Reigi, 1927; RKM II 4, 523/5 (4) < Püha, 1946; RKM II 37, 301 (1) < Tartu, 1948; EKRK I

- 27, 360 (2) < Anseküla, 1960; ERA II 254, 461/2 (6) < Reigi, 1939; ERA II 189, 83/4 (65) < Emmaste, 1938; ERA II 16, 342 (4) < Kihnu, 1929; ERA II 21, 611/5 (1) < Häädemeeste, 1930; ERA II 40, 449 (7) < Tallinn < Kuusalu, 1930; RKM II 1, 504 (5) < Kihnu, 1948; E 8° VI, 34 (144) < Kihelkonna, 1929–1931;
- working voices around the boat (1 text): RKM II 37, 224/7 (23a) < Häädemeeste, 1950;
 - someone throws things (3 texts): ERA II 79, 441/3 (3) < Kihnu, 1934; ERA II 40, 450 (9) < Kuusalu, 1930; ERA II 130, 594 (10) < Pöide, 1937;
 - ropes and blocks whine in the night (1 text): ERA II 114, 365/6 (16) < Kuusalu, 1935;
 - voice of hammering in the heating room (1 text): RKM II 4, 523/5 (4) < Püha, 1946;
 - someone squealed, as if struck with a hammer, a sound like repairing the shaft of a machine (1 text): ERA II 21, 611/5 (1) < Häädemeeste, 1930;
 - the chains of the ship's anchor rattle so that the ship rumbles (3 texts): E 4548/9 (7) < Tõstamaa, 1893; RKM II 75, 164/5 (1) < Mustjala, 1958; ERA II 161, 382/3 (25) < Kuusalu, 1937;
 - sound of an anchor thrown into the water (1 text): RKM II 75, 164/5 (1) < Mustjala, 1958;
 - pumps (2 texts): ERA II 40, 164 < Reigi, 1927; ERA II 40, 463/6 < Reigi, 1930;
 - sound of a coal thrown into the oven (1 text): E 84033/4 (207) < Mustjala, 1933;
 - voices as if someone is throwing a load on the other side of the ship (1 text): Ariste 7.6 (18) < Kihnu, 1933 = RKM II 10,166 (18) < Kihnu, 1933;
 - sounds of water (1 text): RKM II 353, 70/3 (1) < Jämaja, 1980/1981;
 - voice of jumping into the water (1 text): ERA II 40, 442/3 < Tartu I < Varbla, 1930;
 - someone hears his name being called (1 text): ERA II 40, 442/3 < Tartu I < Varbla, 1930;
 - sound of a small bell in the water beside the ship (1 text): E 4548/9 (7) < Tõstamaa, 1893;
 - a bag falls down with a sound (2 texts): ERA II 217, 412 (58) < Haljala, 1939; EKRK I 27, 360 (2) < Anseküla, 1960;
 - three slaps like gunshots (1 text): RKM II 2, 311/3 (2) < Kihelkonna, 1946;
 - screams on the ship (2 texts): E 74522/30 (5) < Jämaja, 1931; EKRK 5, 72 < Kõpu, 1954;
 - squeaking (1 text): ERA II 254, 389 (3) < Reigi, 1939;
 - sad noise (1 text): EKRK I 27, 362 (6) < Anseküla, 1960;

- a roaring voice, like a man, from deep within his throat (1 text): E 74522/30 (5) < Jämaja, 1931;
- groans (1 text): RKM II 3, 445 (5) < Püha, 1947;
- whining (1 text): ERA II 188, 415 (70) < Emmaste, 1938;
- cries as if the ship is sinking (3 texts): ERA II 192, 126 (50) < Kuusalu, 1938; ERA II 16, 352 (18) < Kihnu, 1929; RKM II 1, 504 (5) < Kihnu, 1948;
- mutters (1 text): ERA II 40, 358/9 < Reigi, 1928;
- ugly laughter (1 text): E 84031 (198) < Mustjala, 1933;
- men sing (1 text): RKM II 2, 311/3 (2) < Kihelkonna, 1946;
- a great cry of distress, screaming like a cat when a barge sinks (1 text): E 74516/7 (2) < Jämaja, 1931;
- a bird's voice screaming and lamenting (1 text): E, StK 39, 182/92 (16) < Kihelkonna, 1926;
- the bird sang in a strange clear voice at the top of the mast (1 text): ERA I 3, 376 (17) < Pühalepa, 1930;
- like birdsong (1 text): ERA II 171, 566/7 (1) < Pühalepa, 1938;
- throbbing like a grey bird (1 text): ERA II 189, 340 (35) < Pühalepa, 1938.

3.3 Tactile experiences

Mention of tactile experiences usually form the smallest group among belief tales, and the same applies to Kotermann. Among the few examples are stories where Kotermann gives an instruction to change course (E 32524/5 (11) < Jämaja, 1897; E 36541/2 (3) < Jämaja, 1898; RKM II 1, 408 (6) < Kihnu, 1948; E 84035 (210) < Mustjala, 1933) and, in case of disobedience, gives a slap (ERA II 1, 674 (6) < Reigi, 1928); here, too, the experience can be accompanied by verbal interaction.

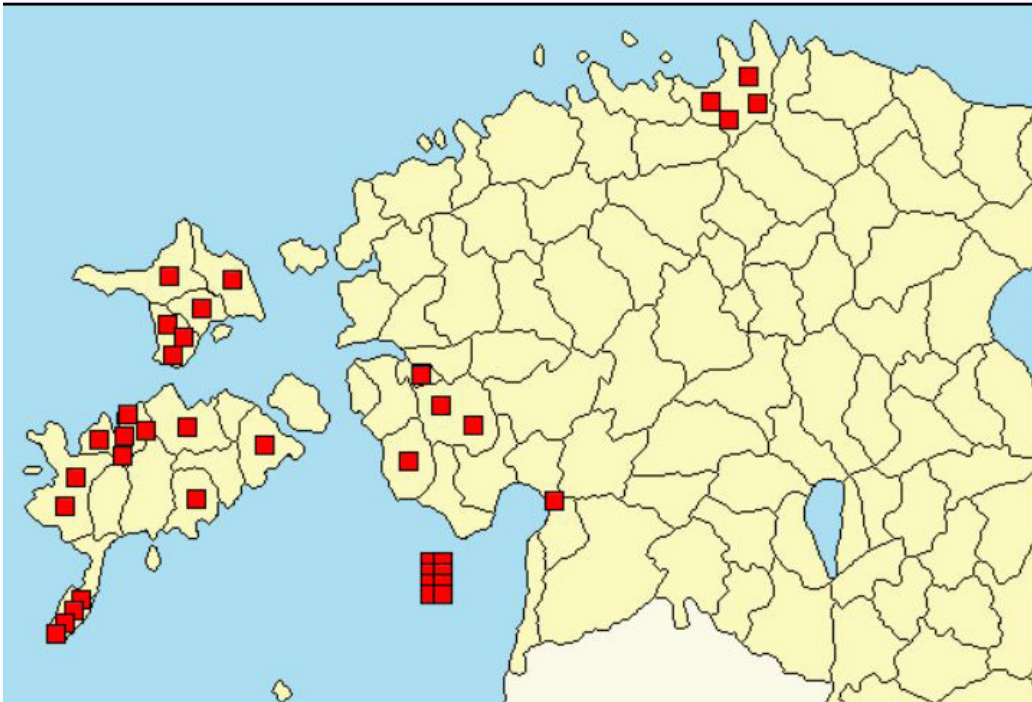
4. COMMUNICATION: MONOLOGUE AND DIALOGUE

Among Kotermann records there are more episodes of communication and direct speech than usual for belief narratives (in 370 texts, more than 110 utterances are found), classifiable as initial, medial, and final utterances. Dialogues are focal, adding tension and conveying messages. Most often, messages from belief beings are a sentence or a few words long. Longer monologues are rare in belief stories, and when there are longer rounds of speech these are probably under the influence of written discourse or printed literature.

Dialogues between supernatural beings are overheard accidentally by a person who, in this way, receives knowledge of the situation on the ship. The dialogue is prophetic, and by checking its validity the hearer can act wisely to avoid an accident. A rotten mast is discovered, or, less often, a leak is repaired saving the ship and its crew. In some variants the warning is not heeded, and the delay causes the mast to fall or the ship to sink. The “Kotermann holds the mast” and “Conversation between two Kotermans” story types have analogues in Swedish folklore (Klintberg H 71: Kotermann holds the mast, H 72 Conversation between two Kotermans).

Texts “Kotermann holds the mast” (37 texts from the western part of Estonia and Kuusalu parish in the north):

E 51387 < Kuusalu, 1921; ERA II 110, 96 (8) < Kuusalu, 1935; ERA II 111, 473 (43) < Kuusalu, 1935; ERA II 192, 217/8 (26) < Kuusalu, 1938; ERA II 229, 630/2 (4) < Emmaste, 1939; EKRK I 86, 524 (3) < Emmaste, 1987; RKM II 339, 427 (15) < Emmaste, 1979; RKM II 299, 91/4 < Kirbla < Lihula, 1973; ERA II 188, 363/4 (6) < Käina, 1938; ERA II 40, 424 < Pühalepa, 1928; ERA II 40, 173 < Tallinn < Reigi, 1927; ERA II 40, 442/3 < Tartu I < Varbla, 1930; E 32525/7 (12) < Jämaja, 1897;



Map 7. Kotermann holds the mast. Mare Kõiva 2022.

E 69462 (4) < Jämaja, 1930; E 76555/6 (6) < Jämaja, 1931; ERA II 275, 485/6 (56) < Jämaja, 1940;

ERA II 276, 226/7 (49) < Karja, 1939; RKM II 2, 311 (1) < Kihelkonna, 1946; RKM II 148, 227 (17) < Kihelkonna, 1962; ERA II 130, 183 (26) < Muhu, 1937; ERA II 191, 120 (31) < Muhu, 1938; E 84035 (210) < Mustjala, 1933; E 84033 (205) < Mustjala, 1933; ERA II 8, 385/7 < Mustjala, 1928; ERA II 158, 447/8 (24) < Mustjala, 1937; KKI 10, 139/40 (7) < Mustjala, 1949; ERA II 40, 74/5 (10) < Põide, 1925; ERA II 8, 641/3 < Püha, 1928; E 85997/8 (15) < Kihnu, 1934; ERA II 58, 369 (39) < Kihnu, 1932; ERA II 59, 487/9 (2) < Kihnu, 1933; ERA II 70, 149/51 (8) < Kihnu, 1934; ERA II 70, 189 (4) < Kihnu, 1934; ERA II 79, 441 (2) < Kihnu, 1934; ERA II 83, 589 (3) < Kihnu, 1935; KKI 7, 195 (3) < Kihnu, 1948; E 83180/1 (2) < Pärnu, 1923.

The “Who is older” story type (32 texts) also has parallels in Sweden (see Klintberg H 73). In Finland a battle between ship elves takes place on a keel board before the construction of the ship (Jauhiainen G 1011), which is not known in Estonia. Rather, in Estonia the Kotermans argue about who was the first inhabitant of the ship and who has greater rights. The captain is invited to resolve the dispute and is guided by pragmatism in the decision – his decision is based on whoever’s departure would cause least damage to the ship. The loser leaves with the mast. This story type has relatively wide distribution across northern Estonia from Kuusalu and Haljala inland to the western islands and western Estonia.

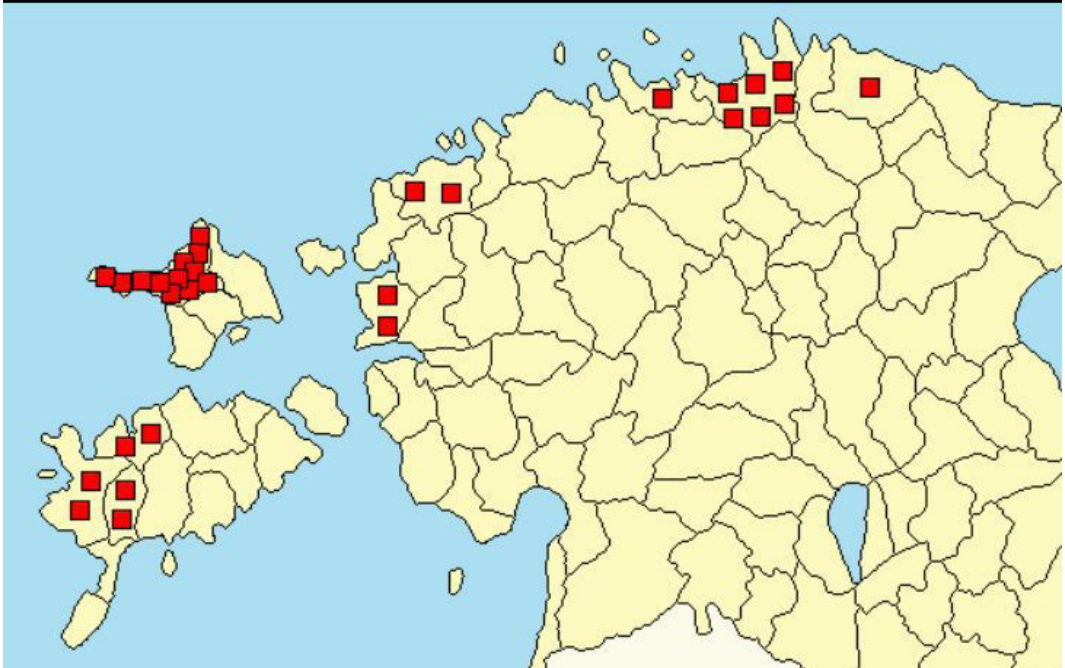
In the story of the Kotermans’ quarrel, there is direct speech in three sentences.

Kapten küsind: Kumb teistest enne oli? Teine ütlend: „Ma tuli siis, kui looskiil pandi.“ Teine ütlend: „Ma tuli siis, kui vöormast pandi.“ Kapten andis sellele õiguse, kes siis tuli, kui looskiil pandi. Teine läind tükkis mastiga minema

The captain asked, “Which one came before the other? One said, “I came when the false keel was laid down.” The other said, “I came when the foremast was placed.” The captain gave the right to he who came when the false keel was laid. The other went away with the mast. (ERA II 1, 673/4 (5) < Reigi – P. Ariste)

Topography of the texts:

E 6492 < Haljala, 1894; ERA I 5, 25 (35) < Kuusalu, 1935; ERA II 40, 448/9 (6) < Tallinn < Kuusalu, 1930; ERA II 110, 28 (42) < Kuusalu, 1935, ERA II 111, 351/2 (45) < Kuusalu, 1935; ERA II 114, 547/8 (55) < ?, ERA I 5, 25 (35) < Kuusalu, 1935; ERA II 114, 547/8 (55) < Kuusalu, 1935; ERA II 18, 263/4 (2) < Jõelähtme, 1929; AES, MT 146, 36/7 < Risti, 1935;



Map 8. “Who is older” (32 texts, one of them without topography). Map by Mare Kõiva 2022.

ERA II 1, 601 (1) < Reigi, 1928; ERA II 1, 648 (1) < Reigi, 1928; ERA II 1, 673 (5) < Reigi, 1928; ERA II 40, 475/6 < Reigi, 1930; ERA II 254, 390 (4) < Reigi, 1939; ERA II 254, 496/7 (20) < Reigi, 1939; ERA II 55, 134/6 (12) < Ridala, 1932; RKM II 2, 313 (3) < Kihelkonna, 1946; ERA II 304, 464/5 (12) < Kärla, 1941; RKM II 75, 166/7 (2) < Mustjala, 1958; AES, MT 146, 36/7 < Risti, 1935; ERA II 1, 601 (1) < Reigi, 1928; ERA II 1, 648 (1) < Reigi, 1928; ERA II 1, 673 (5) < Reigi, 1928; ERA II 40, 475/6 < Reigi, 1930; ERA II 254, 390 (4) < Reigi, 1939; ERA II 254, 496/7 (20) < Reigi, 1939; ERA II 55, 134/6 (12) < Ridala, 1932; RKM II 2, 313 (3) < Kihelkonna, 1946; ERA I 304, 464/5 (12) < Kärla, 1941; RKM II 75, 166/7 (2) < Mustjala, 1958.

In the “Kotermann asks” story there is communication between a man and a spirit, with questions playing a central role. The ship fairy asks questions, and the further development of the story towards either a catastrophe or a favourable solution depends on the answers. The structure of this legend is closer to the older type of folklore, riddle, or tales of fate or chance. The captain is asked about further action. If he does not understand the symbolic message of the question, then after being asked for the third time, he gives permission to do what the voice wants; by understanding the meaning of the question he manages to avoid the worst of what could happen. For example, during a storm, permission to let out sail is sought three

times from the mast. The captain suggests letting out sail at the third time of asking, at which the mast falls into the sea (ERA II 40, 443 < Tartu < Varbla, 1930).

The questions posed are:

— a) **Name or mother** (answering with a name would mean the ship will sink, answering “mother”, i.e. mother tree or keel, means the ship is repairable): ERA II 18, 263/4 (2) < Jõelähtme, 1929, ERA II 222, 671 (7) < Jõelähtme, 1939; ERA II 222, 673 (10) < Jõelähtme, 1939; ERA II 222, 675 (12) < Jõelähtme, 1939; ERA I 5, 104 (3) < Kuusalu, 1935;

— b) **condemnation or demand** – the spirit lets the mast fall: ERA II 161, 279 (15) < Kuusalu, 1937; ERA II 58, 467/9 (136) < Kihnu, 1932; ERA II 235, 222/3 (42) < Kihnu, 1939;

— c) **Shall I throw?** – receiving permission, half of a dead horse’s head is thrown, the casting net is wound into a sphere and made loose again: ERA I 5, 29 (44) < Kuusalu, 1935;

— d) **With men or without men?** – the life of the sailors depends on the choice: ERA II 217, 411/2 (57) < Haljala, 1939.

This story type also has links to, for example, the treasure tradition, where a spirit asks whether the spirit will throw money.

In the “Change course” story, Kotermann forces the steersman, mate or captain to change course using various methods:

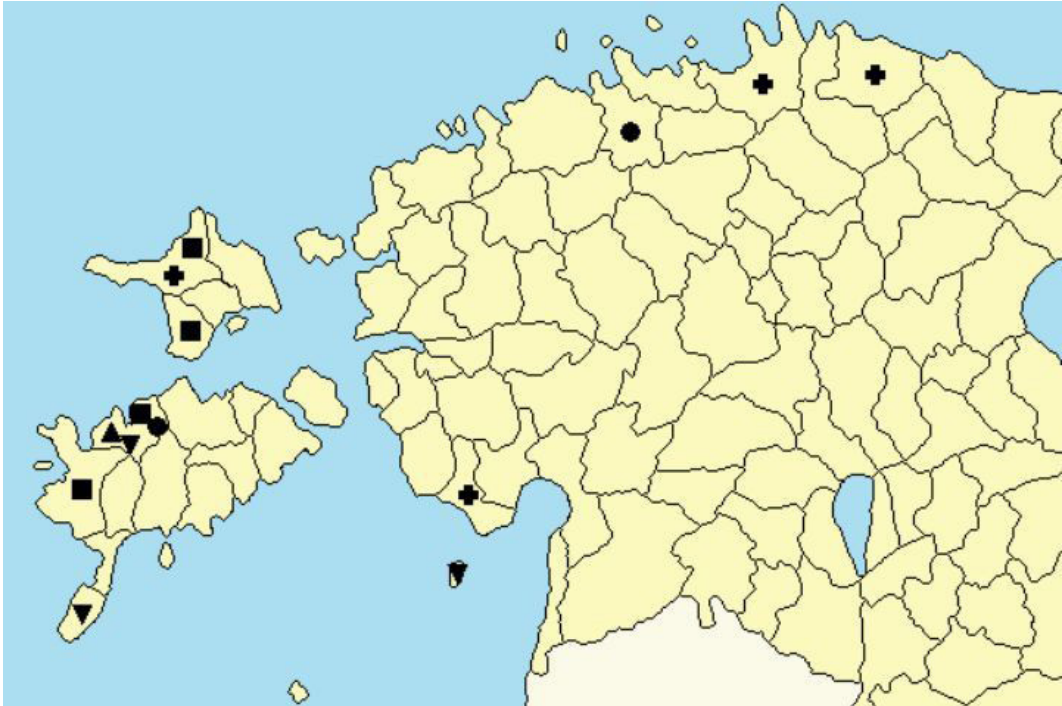
— a) **by helping the sailors escape when their ship is destroyed**: ERA II 8, 447/51 < Mustjala, 1928; ERA II 188, 476 (108) < Emmaste, 1938; ERA II 254, 497/8 (21) < Reigi, 1939; ERA II 164, 380/2 (2) < Kihelkonna, 1937; ERA II 40, 171 < Reigi, 1927;

— b) **the course change leads to the ship sinking**, from which the sailors or the captain are rescued: E 6490 < Haljala, 1894; ERA I 5, 12 (6) < Kuusalu, 1935; ERA II 40, 448 (5) < Tallinn < Kuusalu, 1930; ERA II 1, 708/9 (56) < Reigi, 1928; RKM II 176, 446 (9) < Tõstamaa, 1964;

— c) **Kotermann changes the course himself** (the consequences are not revealed in the story): E, StK 43, 210/2 (38) < Jämaja, 1927; E 84033 (206) < Mustjala, 1933; or

— d) **Kotermann orders the sails to be taken down**: ERA II 83, 511 (15) < Tartu, 1935.

These legends have similarities with those in which Kotermann orders everyone to leave the ship, saving the lives of the sailors who hear him.



Map 9. "Change course", map by Mare Kõiva 2022.

1. ■ Asks for a course change – the sailors escape
2. ● Asks for a course change – the ship sinks
3. ✚ Kotermann changes the course himself
4. ▲ Kotermann orders the sails to be taken down
5. ▼ Kotermann asks everyone to leave the ship

5. PLACE AND TIME MARKERS

The action usually takes place on board ship, on the deck, and around the mast and wheel; less often in the hold, boiler room, galley and cabins. The events sampled from the stories point to a wide geography of sea travel: the Estonian and Latvian coastal areas, Bothnia and the Gulf of Finland, the Danish Straits, the Baltic and North Seas, the coasts of England and Scotland, the Atlantic Ocean, the Spanish and Italian coasts and Australia. The list is not exhaustive as places specifically not defined by place names have been omitted from the list. The stories feature smaller sea routes close to important islands such as Vormsi, Saaremaa, Gotland, Åland Islands, etc., as well as some larger rivers such as Daugava, Pärnu, Severnaya Dvina.

Prediction of an accident can come at the beginning of a voyage and be fulfilled midway or at the end of the voyage before reaching port, in which case the story contains more information about the progress of the voyage.

Exact times are generally absent with evening or night apparent from the context. When Kotermann predicts a death, he can come during the day (immediately before the incident, or as much as three days before). He can be seen on several consecutive days, or he can come at intervals of several months meaning that the encounter and what happened after it can be associated retrospectively.

Seldom are the times given completely accurate. For example, at midnight: “Arvates kesköö ajal kuulen ma korruga miski kolinat all laevas.” (‘I think at midnight I could hear something rumbling down on the ship’, E 81766/8 (1) < Jämaja, 1932). Or with a time specified by the clock: “Vaatasime kellud ning see oli just kaksteist,” (‘We looked at the clock and it was just twelve’, RKM II 4, 523/5 (4) < Püha, 1946); “Kell puudus kümme minutit ühest öösel, siis laev jooksis grundi. See oli Rootsi rannas Bornholmi lähedal” (‘The time was ten minutes to one in the morning, then the ship ran aground. It was on a Swedish shoare near Bornholm’, ERA I 3, 376 (17) < Pühalepa, 1930).

It was a common belief that Kotermann accompanied a ship until it sank. However, if the spirit of the ship left, it sank after three days (E 84030 (197) < Mustjala, 1933).

Storms and certain places were known to be dangerous. It appears from a couple of stories that holidays (Christmas, New Year’s Eve, St. Martin’s Day) could be problematic for ship work because several work bans were in place and their violation was avoided (at least in the world of religious tales). In the following example, a serious warning (fried fish were found in someone’s net) is given for a violation of the ban, which is immediately followed by a shipwreck:

Muidu ei mindud mardiöhtul merele, sest üks saan küpsend räime vörku, et see on nõidus. Pärast seda pole mindud mardiöhtu merele. Seekord aga oli laev merel ning laeval “vana” öelnud, et öösel olnud kiunumine laeva ees, nüüd saame hukka. Ja läinud ka kõik jäädavalt.

Otherwise, on the evening of Mardi Gras they did not go to sea because one received a cooked herring in one’s net, this is witchcraft. Since then, I wouldn’t go to sea on Mardi Gras. This time, however, the ship was at sea, and the ship’s old-timer said that there was yelping in front of the ship at night, now we will die. And it happened. (EKRK I 27, 362 (6) < Anseküla, 1960)

Other places where stories from the corpus report danger could be found:

— Aberdeen: ERA II 158, 87/8 (12) < Anseküla, 1937;

coming from America: ERA II 158, 87/8 (12) < Anseküla, 1937;

— Antwerp: ERA II 229, 630/2 (4) < Emmaste, 1939;

— Arkhangelsk, river Severnaia Dvina: RKM II 353, 70/3 (1) < Jämaja, 1980-1981;

— in an Australian port: Ariste 7, 6 (18) < Kihnu, 1933 = RKM II 10, 166 (18)

- < Kihnu, 1933;
- in the Bay of Biscay, Spain: ERA II 1, 601/2 (2) < Reigi, 1928;
 - close to Bornholm: ERA I 3, 376 (17) < Pühalepa, 1930;
 - northern Gulf of Bothnia: ERA I 6, 782 (1) < Haljala, 1940;
 - north of the island of Gotland: E 81000/2 (1) < Jämaja, 1932;
 - in Grensmooth, England: ERA II 79, 441 (2) < Kihnu, 1934;
 - from Italy to Spain: E 36762 (3) < Pärnu, 1898;
 - Jaagarahu: ERA II 8, 447/51 < Mustjala;
 - stuck to rocks close to Kihelkonna: E, StK 39, 33/4 (26) < Kihelkonna, 1926;
 - on the route to Copenhagen: ERA II 189, 340 (35) < Pühalepa, 1938;
 - Kronstadt: ERA II 254, 464 (8) < Reigi, 1939;
 - Kugalepa Beach in Saaremaa: ERA II 55, 258 (4) < Ridala, 1932;
 - south of Courland: E 81768/9 (2) < Jämaja, 1932;
 - from Leeds to San Francisco: ERA II 275, 485/6 (56) < Jämaja, 1940;
 - near Liibau (Liepaja): ERA II 164, 301/2 (4) < Kihelkonna, 1937;
 - at the bank of Pank: RKM II 75, 167 (3) < Mustjala, 1958;
 - St Petersburg: ERA II 192, 160/1 (18) < Kuusalu, 1938;
 - in the North Sea, before the Toore banks: RKM, Mgn. II 2703 b < Jämaja, 1975;
 - on the Pärnu River: E 83180/1 (2) < Pärnu, 1923;
 - in the area of the beach farm in the sea near the village of Muratsi: RKM II 5, 555/6 (35) < Kaarma, 1947;
 - Riga River, Daugava: RKM II 428, 164 (8) < Pöide, 1988;
 - in the port of Riga: EKRK I 86, 524 (3) < Emmaste, 1987;
 - in the Gulf of Finland, above the island of the Netherlands: E 81766/8 (1a) < Jämaja, 1932;
 - cliff top in Finland: ERA II 161, 280/1 (17) < Kuusalu, 1937; ERA II 187, 331 (14) < Karja, 1938;
 - in the port of Suuremõisa: ERA II 40, 359/60 < Reigi, 1928;
 - from Swansea (England) to France: ERA II 40, 165 < Tallinn, 1927;
 - Danish Straits: ERA II 79, 439/41 (1) < Kihnu, 1934;
 - in Tallinn port: RKM II 454, 113 (1) < Kose, 1992;
 - in the vicinity of Tallinn: RKM II 4, 525/6 (6) < Püha, 1946;
 - Vemilgrav port on the Daugava: RKM II 447, 127/9 (1) < Torma, 1991;

— Vyborg: ERA II 188, 363 (5) < Käina, 1938;

— Vormsi: ERA II 1, 551 (9) < Pühalepa, 1928.

6. EMOTIONS

Emotions are underrepresented in ship spirit texts. Of the basic emotions, fear, sadness, surprise and wonder are reported, in addition to which laughter and singing are found as expressions of state of mind to different levels of intensity. Fear is an emotion in response to a threat or to the perception of threat. Fear causes physiological changes that can provoke behavioural reactions ranging from aggression to flight from danger.

Fear (21 texts)

Fear is an intense unpleasant emotion in response to the perception or recognition of a threat. People experiencing fear try to deal with it and act despite it, but it is characteristic that fear physiologically creates a state that can be followed by a behavioural reaction in order to escape danger. Fear can arise in response to a situation in the present, as well as in the future. In Kotermann stories, one of the causes of fear is the unusualness or novelty of a situation (new sounds, creatures, experiences) when it is perceived as a growing threat, and in this respect, dangers learned about through stories also have an effect. Since fear is part of the process of cognition and learning, maritime uses it, such as sailors performing as Neptune or Kotermann and the intimidation of novice sailors and children using stories about Kotermann. Irrational fear, or phobia, is encountered in one of the texts in which a sailor commits suicide. The sounds heard are characterised as scary, noisy, ugly.

— Fear of seeing Kotermann or his actions: writer J. Oengo says that there is no fear of Kotermann's actions, but rather of events that will necessarily follow his appearance: ERA I 6, 783 (2) < Haljala, 1940; ERA II 40, 468/71 < Tallinn < Emmaste, 1930; E, StK 39, 182/92 (16) < Kihelkonna, 1926; ERA II 221, 605/6 (11) < Kuusalu, 1939; ERA II 110, 96 (8) < Kuusalu, 1935; there was still a little fear, too, but everyone did their duty: ERA II 40, 442/3 < Tartu < Varbla, 1930;

— Fear makes someone act: I threw a shovel into the oven with fear and rushed to the first master: ERA II 40, 165 < Tallinna l, 1927; the boy was scared stiff and went ashore: ERA II 221, 605/6 (11) < Kuusalu, 1939; someone destroyed a book because of fear: ERA II 40, 452 < Haapsalu < Noarootsi, 1930;

— Phobia: the Russian had heard a rumble in the ship and shot himself out of fear: ERA II 1, 602/3 (3) < Reigi, 1928.

— Intimidating others (a Neptune/Kotermann play was performed, young people and children were intimidated: FAM 36 (64) < Kihelkonna, 1993; RKM II 463, 153 (20) < Viru-Nigula, 1994; children are scared that Kotermann might take them away: ERA II 158, 65 (18) < Anseküla, 1937; ERA II 158, 129 (24) < Anseküla, 1937; ERA II 158, 192 (104) < Jämaja, 1937.

— Fear, a horrid rumble: ERA II 40, 175 < Tallinna I < Reigi, 1927; also furious, horrid sharp rumble: ERA II 8, 447/51 < Mustjala, 1928; the chain of the anchor rattles horribly: E 4548/9 (7) < Tõstamaa, 1893; horrid rattle and masts flew overboard: ERA II 110, 96 (8) < Kuusalu, 1935.

Fear, being afraid (14 texts)

In these texts, shades of meaning are represented by a slight fear; concern that something bad or undesirable could happen; sensitivity, susceptibility to something (ESS), an excuse, an expression of politeness. There is no morbid feeling of fear and anxiety developed into a phobia, which arises in front of a certain phenomenon or living being and is perceived as more dangerous than the actual one (Wikipedia). Most expressions represent movement on the scale of „I’m afraid – must be afraid – not afraid – I’m investigating the cause of the problem”. In general, fear appears in the narratives after the Kotermann’s vision, i.e., his death or the wreck of the ship, and it is also believed that you must fear Kotermann, but some observations lead to the decision that there is no reason to be afraid.

Interesting are the expressions “fear was inside” and the old belief-based “children’s blood is weak” as evidence of sensitivity, which points to the belief observation that persons of different ages and genders have different emotional and spiritual strengths – women and children are weaker (Paulson 1958); “afraid that others will laughter him out”– do not dare to speak in order to avoid an unpleasant situation (cf. EKSS 2009), or the common excuse “do not talkout of fear of losing time”. Kotermann was also used as a child scarecrow.

— A sailor is afraid for himself or for the ship: (KKI 10, 212 (13) < Kihelkonna, 1949; E 81766/8 (1) < Jämaja, 1932; RKM II 358, 544/5 (1) < Emmaste 1981; E 8 VI, 34 (144) < Kihelkonna, 1929); the situation can be characterised as fear being inside (ERA II 21, 619 (2) < Häädemeeste, 1930); fear came later, after what happened (E, StK 39, 33/4 (26) < Kihelkonna, 1926);

— the storyteller highlighted that the phenomena associated with Kotermann must be feared (RKM II 358, 544/5 (1) < Emmaste, 1982), and Kotermann is the children scare creature, children began to be afraid because their blood was weak (ERA II 158, 129 (24) < Anseküla, 1937);

— someone does not know how to be afraid, but examines the causes of rumbling (RKM II 4, 523/5 (4) < Püha, 1946; E, StK 43, 210/2 (38) < Jämaja); finds “no reason to be afraid” (E 8 VI, 70 (302) < Saaremaa, 1929; E, StK 39, 182/92 (16) < Kihelkonna, 1926);

— I haven’t dared to say anything to anyone, for fear that others would laugh at me (RKM II 4, 523/5 (4) < Püha, 1946; E, StK 43, 210/2 (38) < Jämaja);

— he doesn’t retell more than two or three stories for fear of losing time (ERA II 40, 453/4 < Tallinn, 1930).

Crying (7 texts)

Crying is associated in the texts with fear, while in the legends the weeping person is a ship spirit, in one case a house spirit and in one case a person, although here, too, the crying person is comforted by a supernatural being. The reason for the spirit crying is concern about the spirit’s fate after the destruction of their place of residence. A weeping creature may not always be visible, but both in a building and on a ship the weeping comes at the anticipation of misfortune. In one version, there are tearful letters of concern sent by a sailor on a voyage, which can be taken as a sign of accident.

—Ship spirit/fairy crying before accident: ERA II 16, 344/5 (7) < Kihnu, 1929; ERA II 192, 126 (50) < Kuusalu, 1938; house spirit, crying, leaves house: ERA II 8, 643/5 < Püha, 1928;

— crying can be heard at a construction site: ERA II 16, 352 (18) < Kihnu, 1929, or on a ship: RKM II 1, 504 (5) < Kihnu, 1948;

— when a person cries, they say: “What are you crying for? Go home; this thing will be done.”: ERA II 33, 197/200 (1) < Pühalepa, 1931;

— tearful letters: ERA II 21, 619 (2) < Häädemeeste, 1930.

Laughter (5 texts)

In the texts under investigation here, laughing does not express a sense of fun (see EKKS 2009 for various testimonials of laughter) but rather the spirit’s laughter as an expression of malice, sometimes because he is predicting a shipwreck. One text adds that the spirit jumped into the water laughing horribly. In another text, a man admits that he laughed a fear of his companion (“I laughed at Madis in the first place”) until he corrects his opinion when he finds himself in the same situation as Madis. There is also laughter specific to oral narration, which makes the case ambiguous and leaves open the possibility that laughter represents fictitiousness.

— Fairy laughs: The man turned away. Then the fairy began to laugh: “Th, ih, ih, I cannot go on him!”: ERA II 111, 353 (47) < Kuusalu, 1935; laughing before the death of the crew: ERA II 55, 134/6 (12) < Ridala, 1932; jumped into the water laughing horribly: E 84032 (204) < Mustjala, 1933;

— man laughs in fear of another person: ERA II 171, 566/7 (1) < Pühalepa, 1938;

— laughing in a performance situation: “when we came from Ruhnu [laughs]. I have not seen more”: EFA I 7, 109 (5) < Valjala, 1995.

Wonder (3 texts)

In one text those on watch are surprised that the officers who have gone to the city are back on the ship and are discussing the poor condition of the bottom of the ship. Upon checking the situation, the reports turn out to be true and repair work begins (E 51387 < Kuusalu, 1921). In another text, the noise made by Kotermann makes men listen in wonder (E 84033/4 (207) < Mustjala, 1933); in a third text, talk about the ship spirit makes sailors wonder (E 84035 (211) < Mustjala, 1933).

Sadness (2 texts)

They grieve for their fate (EKRK I 86, 524 (3) < Emmaste, 1987) or are sad because the situation is bad. The man in this situation is also sad (ERA II 33, 197/200 (1) < Pühalepa, 1931).

7. COLOUR

There is not a wide variety of colour in the texts, it is limited to a few primary colours: white and black are discussed, grey is more frequent, red is mentioned in some and blue is mentioned in one text. This means that the Kotermann stories do not feature bright buttons, colourful hats or waistcoats, etc., but rather the everyday outfits relevant to life at sea.

The frequency of colours in the texts is grey 36, black 17, white 13, red 7, blue 1, with the colours used to characterise: a) Kotermann as a being (the colour of his clothing is also sometimes given), b) the time of day, c) emotions, d) attributes. Colours can also be a part of a place name.

Colour to a certain extent contrasts with the characters. Female Kotermanns are white (grey in one text), while male Kotermanns are associated with grey, black, red, and blue. Since there are only nine female Kotermanns in total, no generalisations can be made.

Next, we will describe the occurrences of colour in more detail.

Grey (36 texts)

Grey is the dominant colour in the corpus. Grey is used to describe Kotermann's outward appearance as well as the appearance of animals and birds associated with him. In addition, when in human form, Kotermann is often characterised as a grey man (and in one text as an old woman in grey clothes). Male Kotermann often have a grey beard, grey hair, grey clothes, i.e., he is given the status of an old man. In two texts the whole ensemble is listed: a grey man with grey clothes and a grey beard. **1.**

The grey Kotermann appears as:

a) an animal:

— a1. a grey rat (1 Text): ERA II 40, 442/3 < Tartu < Varbla, 1930;

b) bird: a grey bird: (3 texts): ERA II 189, 340 (35) < Pühalepa, 1938; ERA II 164, 121 (10) < Kihelkonna, 1937; ERA II 189, 340 (35) < Pühalepa, 1938;

c) human:

— c1. with a grey beard (4 texts): ERA II 40, 468/71 < Tallinn < Emmaste, 1930; ERA I 6, 782 (1) < Haljala, 1940; E 84691/2 (14) < Pärnu, 1933; ERA II 59, 497/9 (2) < Kihnu, 1933;

— c2. Grey haired: ERA II 130, 322 (10) < Muhu, 1937;

— c3. A grey man/grey little man (1 text): E 84723 (2) < Pärnu, 1933;

— c4. A little grey man, crooked and stooped (7 texts): RKM II 447, 127/9 (1) < Torma, 1991; RKM II 4, 525/6 (6) < Püha, 1946; ERA II 40, 164 < Reigi, 1927; ERA II 8, 447/51 < Mustjala, 1928; E 84032 (204) < Mustjala, 1933; ERA II 18, 263/4 (2) < Jõelähtme, 1929; ERA II 33, 197/200 (1) < Pühalepa, 1931;

— c5. an old grey man (5 texts): E 85997/8 (16) < Kihnu, 1934; ERA I 6, 782 (1) < Haljala, 1940, E, StK 39, 137/43 (97) < Kihelkonna, 1926; ERA II 40, 175 < Tallinn < Reigi, 1927; E 85996/8 (14-16) < Kihnu, 1934;

— c6. grey clothes (4 texts): ERA II 130, 322 (9) < Muhu, 1937; ERA II 40, 157 (164) < Pühalepa, 1927; E 81766/8 (1a) < Jämaja, 1932; ERA II 229, 630/2 (4) < Emmaste, 1939;

— c7. a grey man, grey clothes, grey beard (2 texts): ERA II 40, 358/9 < Reigi, 1928; ERA II 40, 463/6 < Reigi, 1930;

— c8. an old woman dressed in grey (1 text): RKM II 454, 114 (2) < Kose, 1992.

2. Placename: Hallikari: ERA II 222, 672/3 (9) < Jõelähtme, 1939.

Black (20 texts)

Kotermann's appears as a black bird, animal (dog, cat) and person. Koterman can simply be described as black, or this can apply to attributes such as beard, hoof, clothes. In one of the texts, the character is a black boy.

1. Living creature:

a) a bird:

— a1. black bird (2 texts): E, StK 39, 33/4 (26) < Kihelkonna, 1926; E 84031 (201) < Mustjala, 1933;

b) an animal:

— b1. black dog (1 text): ERA II 1, 708 (55) < Reigi, 1928;
E 4548/9 (7) < Tõstamaa, 1893;

— b2. black cat (1 text): ERA II 1, 672/3 (4) < Reigi, 1928;

— b3. black dog and black cat (1 text): RKM II 454, 113 (1) < Kose, 1992;

c) a person:

— c1. black (human) (3 texts): E 81000/2 (1) < Jämaja, 1932; ERA II 254, 4
61/2 (6) < Reigi, 1939; ERA II 189, 83/4 (65) < Emmaste, 1938;

— c2. black man (3 texts): RKM, Mgn. II 2703 (b) < Jämaja, 1975; ERA II 111, 47
6 (48) < Kuusalu, 1935; ERA II 164, 295 (19) < Kihelkonna, 1937;

— c3. with black beard (1 text): ERA II 40, 165 < Tallinn, 1927;

— c4. with a black hoof (1 text): E 81766/8 (1a) < Jämaja, 1932;

— c5. (man) in black clothing (1 text): ERA II 40, 165 < Tallinn, 1927;

— c6. black boy (1 text): E 81768/9 (2) < Jämaja, 1932.

2. Black colour Attribute:

— a. Witch's book with black paper and white letters (1 text): ERA II 40, 45
2 < Haapsalu < Noarootsi, 1930.

White (13 texts)

Only female Kotermann are associated with white colour. White light is also mentioned in the narratives. Artificial electric light is present in some texts, but also morning and moonlight, the latter indicating the action took place at night. The moonlit motif belongs to the same cluster as legends about the Devil, although this motif is also present in stories about other demonic beings. Moonlight gives strength to the one on whom it shines.

White coloured medicine is given to a young man shocked by a meeting with Kotermann (ERA II 40, 165 < Tallinn, 1927). Let us note that the young man had thrown his shovel into the oven before this and was in a state of fear. One of the

transcripts describes the face of a person experiencing a supernatural experience through the simile “a face as white as a birch bark” (ERA II 40, 463/6 < Reigi, 1930).

Different descriptions Kotermann appears as:

a) object, phenomenon:

— a1. white water (fall): E 84031 (198) < Mustjala, 1933;

b) living being, animal:

— b1. squirrel-like white animal: ERA II 16, 344/5 (7) < Kihnu, 1929;

— b2. white mice: ERA II 40, 442/3 < Tartu I < Varbla, 1930;

c) human, woman:

— c1. a woman in white clothes is in the engine room, steps to the stove, opens the door, looks in, and then immediately disappears again: E 74630/2 (3) < Jämaja, 1931;

— c2. white woman: ERA I 5, 176 (4) < Kuusalu, 1935;

— c3. woman with white hair: ERA II 21, 611/5 (1) < Häädemeeste,

2. Light:

— a) electric light (1 text): ERA II 21, 611/5 (1) < Häädemeeste, 1930;

— b) moonlight (2 texts): ERA II 158, 87/8 (12) < Anseküla, 1937; ERA I 5, 26 (4 0) < Kuusalu, 1935;

— b1. trial in moonlight (1 text): KKI 10, 18/20 (12) < Mustjala, 1949;

— c) morning light (time category): ERA II 164, 380/2 (2) < Kihelkonna, 1937;

3. Colour of medicine:

— a) added some more white liquid (1 text): ERA II 40, 165 < Tallinn, 1927;

4. Emotions:

— a) face as white as birch bark (1 text): ERA II 40, 463/6 < Reigi, 1930.

Red (7 texts)

Red is characteristic of Kotermann as an object or an animal. (Red is a feature of the supernatural or demonic dog.) Red is used in connection with a person in two individual accounts.

1. Special states of Kotermann:

a) object:

— a1. a big red thing ERA II 187, 331 (14) < Karja, 1938;

— a2. a red line: E 84031 (198) < Mustjala, 1933;

b) as an animal:

— b1. red dog (3 texts): ERA II 40, 448 (2) < Kuusalu, 1930; ERA II 1, 601/2 (2) < Reigi, 1928; ERA I 3, 113 (6) < Pöide, 1930;

c) as a person:

— c1. red-haired: EKRK I 5, 82/3 < Kõpu, 1954;
— c2. in red clothes: Ariste 7, 28 (18) < Kihnu, 1933.

Blue (1 text):

1. Special features of Kotermann:

a) a person:

— a1. In bluish clothes: E 83180/1 (2) < Pärnu, 1923.

8. PROTECTION AGAINST KOTERMANN

There is no need to act to against the Kotermann, because he is the ship gauardian. In some stories it is mentioned, reading Lord's prayers backwards to bring order in anxious situations.

In one story, the Kotermann gives a man a slap in the face and says "thank you" for reading the Lord's prayers backwards.

9. COMMON MOTIFS WITH OTHER MYTHOLOGICAL CREATURES

The Kotermann corpus has motifs that link it to many other mythological creatures, for example fairy, the home devil, the Devil, bogie, brownie, goblin, and boggard. Action occurring in common places and supernatural beings having common functions make such adaptations easy. Motifs that are found in various types of fairy tale, such as changing one's sleeping position and driving away from the sleeping place (from one's own path) are associated with the need for a warning, while Kotermann making noise is associated with portents of future home visits (ERA II 158, 448 (25) < Mustjala, 1937). Someone wrestling in the moonlight was often struggling with Kotermann, as according to belief a person who has the moon shining on his back gains strength. The ending of the Mustjala story is peculiar because there is no attempt to get rid of Kotermann consciously as he is still a protective fairy, while in this story the main character shoots a mythical opponent with a silver bullet (KKI 10, 18/20 (12) < Mustjala, 1949).

Kotermann is also known as a treasure carrier (or Kratt, bogie) who moves like a jet of fire across the sky and ejaculates upon seeing a naked backside. Bogie switches places with the devil Kratt, who can also move like a trail of fire and carry

treasure. The stories of kratt, as well as one of the stories from the corpus examined here, have a connection with the Seven Books of Moses. The owner of the powerful witch book also has a treasure carrying kratt in the form of Kotermann. The Kratt motif is exchanged in folklore and religious stories with that of the goblin, who can also move like a tail of fire and carry treasure. In this story, the goblin is associated with a bag of pure rye flour taken from the mill, linking this scene to a windmill (K KI 10, 622/3 (3) < Mustjala, 1949). Kotermann, who has emerged from a completely ordinary woodchip placed under a sternpost, and who seeks attention by banging, is also said to be a “great fortune carrier” in a variant from Häädemeeste (ERA II 235, 50/1 (53) < Häädemeeste, 1939).

In Estonian folklore, women and men, as well as several animals and various objects, appear as brownies. In tales about Kotermann a brownie can appear, in one story as a cat who puffs itself up and leaves, breaking the ship’s instruments, after receiving a few lashes from a man with a strap (ERA II 1, 672/3 (4) < Reigi, 1928). In the second variant, a woman comes into the cabin to moan at a sailor lying in bed. When the man turns away, the fairy pulls off his blanket and begins to laugh, because she is no longer able to moan at him (ERA II 111, 353 (47) < Kuusalu, 1935).

Although Kotermann has a close connection with ships and sailors, he generally leaves on the eve of a shipwreck. In one story, Kotermann watches over treasure on a ship that has sunk, as per a story from Mustjala in which a man wants to bring a copper bolt up from the ship but retreats because, although he can get to the bolt through a hole cut in the ice, the bolt grows larger and larger and will no longer fit (KKI 10, 393/4 (1) < Mustjala, 1949).

Kotermann when embodied as a house fairy has motifs in common with the home devil and the lake fairy. Local publisher Aadu Toomessalu recorded a story about a Potermann who left the house from 80-year-old Jaakup Peru:

In each house in ancient times still lived its own Potermann. When it left the house, the house burned down. Once upon a time a man came from the city and a wolf ran after him for a long time. The man looked back and saw: a large cod’s head is on top of his slege The man knocked it down from there, and the wolf immediately gobbled it.

The man went forward again, suddenly called out to the man:

“Take a message to Kiigu that Käägu has been broken.”

The man went home and did not know what these words meant. The man began to tell this story to others while eating at home. Suddenly someone said from the top of the stove:

“What have I got here – a few drops from a spoon!”

It was a house Potermann, this Kiigu. These people had been very parsimonious to treat to Potermann, had given nothing to it. (ERA II 304, 461/2

(10) < Kärla, 1941)

Kotermann also appears in several types of folklore and linguistic expression, from use as a surname (which is also found in Germany) to words with various meanings. For example, in 1928, Paul Ariste recorded Potermann as a meaning ‘ship’s ghost’, ‘big rat on a ship’, while boys were fighting among themselves (ERA II 1, 546 (1) < Pühalepa, 1928), another meaning is Koterpüks or ‘little man’ (ERA II 46, 13 < Ridala, 1932). As an adage, “Kotermann comes” is used when someone is dressed like a beggar (ERA II 158, 448 (26) < Mustjala, 1937). Other similar strains and meanings are also reported, for example a child scarecrow, ‘kotu’, from Saaremaa and Hiiumaa. Often a bag boy, *kotu*, is used to mean a shabbily dressed person. “Kotupusa comes”, which is associated with Potermann and Kotermann, is a child scarecrow on Saaremaa who leads children away (ERA II 158, 65 (18) and ERA II 158, 129 (24) < Anseküla, 1937; ERA II 34, 251 (2) < Mustjala, 1931). Several texts speak of men being intimidated by Kotermann, for example, in a story that includes the line “the old man is playing Potermann”, about a captain walking around at night (RKM II 23, 133/4 (25) < Häädemeeste, 1949), or when talking directly about a fear of the sea (ERA II 21, 619 (2) < Häädemeeste, 1930). A meeting with the unknown can also end up with hair turning grey in a instant moment: “... one boy went up the mast, and when he came down, his hair was grey. I don’t know what happened there.” (ERA II 130, 322 (10) < Muhu, 1937)

To a lesser extent, there are funny incidents, objections, and adaptations of longer stories and creative stories. One identifies Kotermann as a fantastic eagle: “By this name the great eagle is known in Pöidi. This eagle has flashing feathers. He is about the size of a sheep and has a large beak (about as big as a two- or three-pound iron hammer). He mostly destroys other birds. There are few of them left on Saaremaa.” (E, StK 42, 9/10 (12) < Pöide, 1927).

SUMMARY

If we compare the mythical sea creatures found in Estonian texts we can see that there are 7,600 narratives and beliefs (from micro-content to long stories), divided unevenly and including mermaids and water fairies living in springs, ponds, rivers, lakes, and the sea (6,800 texts), followed by texts mentioning Kotermann (350 texts), the Pharaonic people (170 texts), sea cattle (100 texts). The corpus investigated here also includes stories about sea devils, sea people and other water fairies, encounters

with ghost ships, the Flying Dutchman, etc. (ca. 180 texts), with stories about pre-determined drowning and other well-known motifs also represented.

Distribution maps show that mermaids were known throughout Estonia, while the Pharaonic people were primarily known on the islands and at the coast. Kotermann lore can be divided into corpora related to the fate of the ship and the fate of the sailors. Motifs known in the Baltic Finnic areas are also common in the Swedish tradition. At the same time, nations that do not have a maritime border do not know the lore associated with sea creatures, except for Karelian belief tales of the Pharaonic people: motifs related to Biblical literature propagate according to a different logic. The distinctive development of the Baltic Finns is notable for their link of the Pharaonic people to the seal, creating a new mythopoeic complex.

There are fewer marine heritage records in Latvia, although Livonians are well known for this sub-category of folkloric narrative and belief. The reason is not only the presence or absence of a maritime border, or even fishing as a livelihood, but also, for example, the timing of the collection work, denominational features, relations with the printed word (Livonian lore contains international motifs spread through popular fiction (Loorits 1926)). The Estonian material was cultivated by special acts of collection and the surveys of the 1920s to 1940s. The help of local collectors in finding data and economic and social circumstances also played a part here. The same applies to Estonian Russians, who collected 19,000 pages of folklore before the Second World War and have many motifs in common with Estonians.

Maritime folklore was also influenced by political circumstances, for example the 50-year ban on owning larger boats and ships and the ban on offshore sailing. In the closed and strictly controlled coastal and island areas of the western border of the Soviet Union, folklore was conserved.

Only through Livonian, Estonian, and Karelian lore can we trace how different the behaviour and appearance of mythical creatures are, implying that, from the point of view of the ontology of lore, it is important to analyse the lore of one Ethnos in addition to comparative and juxtaposed approaches.

Traces of Kotermann in the media and arts is a fascinating independent topic, which was inspired by the poetry of Marie Under:

*if a shipmaster built a ship,
it would be easy as a bird bone
allowing travel as far as
the other side of the sky.
When he made the last
wood shavings of the dense boom bar,
placing them all around,*

*then secretly something starts moving
in the pile of chips as in a den:
It was Kotermann.*