



Heidi Haapoja-Mäkelä

Silencing the Other's Voice? On Cultural Appropriation and the Alleged Finnishness of Kalevalaic *Runo* Singing

Abstract

Kalevalaic *runo* singing is a Baltic-Finnic tradition of metered oral poetry. In Finland, *runo* singing and the national epic *Kalevala*, which is based on this tradition, are often seen – especially in public speech – as nationally significant symbols of Finnishness. In this article, I examine how the idea of Finnishness has been constructed in relation to traditional *runo* songs in the changing paradigms of studying and performing folk music and oral poetry in Finland across the last hundred years, and how the concept of cultural appropriation relates to this construction. I concentrate on early Finnish folk music studies as well as the contemporary Finnish folk music scene. I tie these fields together by following the circulation of an Ingrian *runo* song theme called *Oi dai* after it became part of archived folklore collections in Finland in 1906. Places, ethnicities and individuals are othered and silenced in the processes, but as the article shows, the complex questions of authority, originality, collectivity, and copyright cannot be fully explained through the essentialist concept of cultural appropriation.

Keywords: cultural appropriation, Finnish folk music, Kalevalaic poetry, *Runo* singing

© Heidi Haapoja-Mäkelä

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5372-9290>

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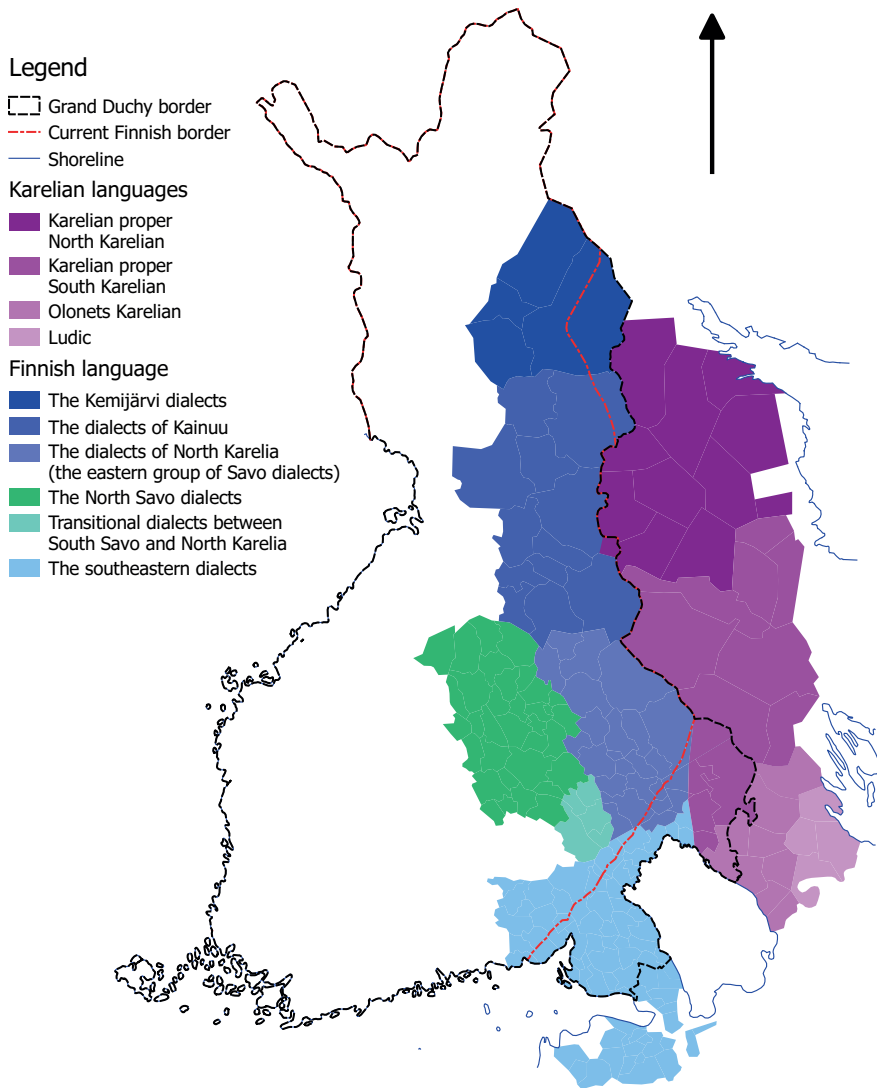
Introduction

Finland is often regarded as a nation-state that is an outsider when it comes to colonialistic power relations. Furthermore, it has been noted that Finland's historical position has been peripheral to and oppressed by the Swedish and Russian empires from the Middle Ages to the long nineteenth century. Indeed, Finland has not had any colonies during its more than 100 years of independence, and the “master narrative” of Finland tells a story of a “good state” that has provided equality and welfare for its inhabitants (e.g. Keskinen 2019). However, neither the “dreaming glances” that have been directed to certain areas in Russian Karelia (e.g. Nyysönen 2013, 105; Harle & Moisio 2000; Lehtonen & Löytty 2007; Paasi 1997; Stepanova, in press) nor the hegemonic power relations that include the subordination of indigenous groups inside the state's borders have been considered worth mentioning, especially in public. For instance, the oppression of the Sámi area and culture has not been discussed or even studied until recently (Lehtonen & Löytty 2007, 106–110; Nyysönen 2013; see also Kuutma 2006, 31–33).

In this article, I examine one of the dimensions of the Finnish “colonialistic glances”¹ and the power relations attached to it by scrutinizing the process in which the Baltic-Finnic metered oral tradition—*runosong* (*runolaulu*), or *Kalevalaic poetry* (*kalevalainen runous*, cp. Kallio et al. 2017)—has been made “Finnish” and has formed part of the construction of “Finnish culture” in the context of Finnish folk music and folklore studies during the 20th century. The idea that the *runo* singing tradition could *not* be Finnish has been relatively imperceptible in these fields, mostly because of the historical and nationalistic paradoxes this idea includes in the context of Finnish discourses.

The *runo* singing tradition had a very important role in the Finnish nation-building process: vast archival material (e.g., *runo* texts, transcriptions, recordings) was collected during the Russian period (1809–1917), and a strong political agenda of Finnishness was attached to it (Anttonen 2005 & 2012; Siikala 2012). The national epic, Elias Lönnrot's *Kalevala*, was indeed based on collections of poetry, but the source poems used in the publication were collected from areas that shared multiple ethnic and linguistic identities. Among those were Russian Karelia and Ingria, located outside the borders of today's Finland. It is also often repeated that the *runo* singing tradition is Finnish-language, which could be seen as an overstatement, considering the linguistic variety in the areas where the collections of *runo* songs originated (Tarkka et al. 2018; see Picture 1).

1 For a more detailed overview, see Keskinen 2019.



Picture 1. Map of Finland, Karelia and Ingria, the Finnish and Karelian language dialects, and the borders of The Grand Duchy of Finland, 1809–1917. Blues and greens are Finnish, and purples are Karelian. Finnish borders in 1860 according to Col. Georg Alftan are marked with a black line, and the current border with a red line. Sources: Institute for the Languages of Finland, www.vanhakartta.fi (Heikki Rantatupa, University of Jyväskylä), modified from source. Samppa Mäkelä 2017. CC-BY-SA 4.0.

In this article, I examine how the idea of the Finnishness of traditional *runo* songs has been (re)constructed in the changing paradigms of studying and performing folk music and oral poetry in Finland across the last hundred years or so, and how the concept of *cultural appropriation* relates to these constructions. I will concentrate on early Finnish folk music studies as well as on the contemporary Finnish folk music scene. I then tie these fields together by following the circulation of an Ingrian *runo* song theme called *Oi dai* after it became part of archived folklore collections in Finland in 1906.

In my study, I will discuss the circulation of *Oi dai* in relation to the concept of cultural appropriation, which is often used in negotiations of cultural ownership, exploitation, and colonial power relations. My aim is to test the concept's usefulness for folkloristic and ethnomusicologist discussions and, thus, to ask: Can the *Oi dai* case be described as cultural appropriation? What kinds of power relations and silences are intertwined in the circulation of this case? Furthermore, at a broader level, I scrutinize what kinds of processes of exclusion lie behind the construct of "Finnish tradition".

I begin my article by introducing the materials and methods and the theoretical background. I continue by contextualizing the phenomenon of Finnish folk music and Kalevalaic *runo* singing, which is followed by the analysis of the empirical cases. I conclude the article by scrutinizing the concepts of cultural appropriation, tradition, Finnishness, and silence in relation to the cases I analyzed.

Materials and Methods

The primary research material presented in this article consists of six recorded versions of *Oi dai* (see Finno-Balkan Voices 2015; FLS 1906; FLS 1961; Hedningarna 1992; Soome-ugri rahvaste laule 1979; Värttinä 1991). These recordings represent comprehensively the audio materials of *Oi Dai* in Finland. *Oi dai* is a short, traditional Ingrian (see map, Picture 1) *runo* melody type that consists of one poetic line sung by a lead (female) singer, then repeated by a (female) chorus, that adds an "oi dai" refrain.² Some of the recordings studied here are archived versions of *runo* song performances, while others are published recordings by contemporary performers.

2 On Ingrian sung oral poetry and its musical features, see Kallio 2011, 398–403. The meaning of the words "oi" and "dai" is rather ambiguous: the word pair was commonly used in Russian folk songs and other Izhorian songs (see Kallio 2013), and the lexicon of Izhorian language translates the word *dai* as a conjunction that connects clauses such as *Susi vimppais sen tütöin dai sai põlleleen*. *Dai* may also be a combination of Russian words *da* (yes) and *i* (and) (Nirvi 1971, 27). The word *oi* could be translated as "oh". However, "oi dai" might be described as a formulaic expression of Russian folk songs that has no other particular meaning than its conjunctive function.

In addition to the recordings, I analyze a notation of the *Oi dai* song by musicologist Armas Launis (see Launis 1910; Kallio 2013), as well as the CD cover leaflets of the contemporary recordings mentioned above. I will also scrutinize folk singer Emmi Kujanpää's master's thesis and correspondence with me (see Kujanpää 2016 & 2017). Furthermore, I examine three newspaper articles, which discuss those abovementioned recordings that include a version of *Oi dai* (Djupsjöbacka 2015; Kotirinta 1991; Kotirinta 1992).

My analysis brings together these materials to trace the features that shape the song's centennial circulation. I contextualize and scrutinize the recordings and other materials in a chronological order, concentrating on the power relations between ethnic groups, individuals, and geographical areas. Thus, I have carefully listened to the recordings and analyzed how they reference each other in order to understand the underlying tendencies to silence or heighten the voices of individuals or ethnic groups. Concretely, I have both listened to the physical sounds of the recordings and analyzed how the performances relate to each other through their musical structures, such as melody, rhythm, tempo, and phrasing. In addition, I have analyzed the voice quality of the singers and examined how these features refer to the earlier performances. Furthermore, I have read these features alongside the other texts described above and placed the performances in their social and historical contexts.

The Complex Concept of Cultural Appropriation

The concept of cultural appropriation is a highly fashionable, yet exceedingly undertheorized, construct (Matthes 2016; Rogers 2006). Broadly defined, the term means "the use of a culture's symbols, artifacts, genres, rituals, or technologies by members of another culture" (e.g. Rogers 2006, 474). In the arts, it has been described as "the depiction of minorities or cultures other than one's own, either in fiction or non-fiction" (Coombe 1993, 250), or "as 1) the representation of cultural practices or experiences by cultural 'outsiders' (sometimes called 'voice appropriation'); 2) the use of artistic styles distinctive of cultural groups by non-members; and, 3) the procurement or continued possession of cultural objects by non-members or culturally distant institutions" (Matthes 2016, 343). For the most part, the concept points to offensive acts of some kind: it includes the claim that "appropriation from another culture can cause profound offense to the members of that culture" (Young 2005, 135). When cultural appropriation is mentioned, it is often used in a critical and emancipatory meaning: the aim is to "reveal" and shed light on discourses of otherness and oppression, often in relation to questions of race, gender, ethnicity, and social class.

In Finland, the concept of cultural appropriation has not been used until lately. In the 2010s, the use of the term increased because of media discussions on Finnish literature, art, and Sámi culture (see e.g. Hubara 2016). When it comes to music, especially to Finnish folk music, the concept of appropriation is almost entirely absent in Finland, with the exceptions of some brief scholarly observations of ethnomusicologists, especially in the area of postcolonial studies (see Aaltonen & Kärjä 2010; Hill 2007 & 2009; Kärjä 2013).

The concept of cultural appropriation has been criticized for its tendency to fall into the problem of cultural essentialism (Matthes 2016; Rogers 2006). The first and most prominent problem related to essentialism is that “culture” is not a bounded entity or essence; it is not the distinctive, singular, clearly bounded, sovereign culture that is so easily conflated with the nation-state. Rather, “culture” is something that is radically relational or dialogic. The second problem is that the concept of cultural appropriation, and especially the related idea of “owning a culture”, seems to stem from the idea of liberal individualism. Hence, these may lead to the idea of cultures’ right to “stay pure” and “static.” The attributes of pure and static (or, in other words, “traditional” and “primitive”) are often associated with that of subordination, and the subordinated culture might be transformed into a fetish. At the same time, claims of cultural sovereignty and purity produce limited possibilities to examine different kinds of agency. (Rogers 2006, 489–490; 499–500.)

Eric Hatala Matthes (2016) instead points out that the characteristic regime of discussions on cultural appropriation is the distinction between “insiders” and “outsiders,” which can also cause cultural essentialism. As he shows, there is no proper way to sustainably define cultural membership, which eventually hinders claims about cultural appropriation. He argues that the insider/outsider problematics should be left out of the picture, instead suggesting that studies on cultural appropriation should focus on “appropriative harms”, such as silencing and epistemic injustice (Matthes 2016, 350–354, 362).

I have chosen to scrutinize the concept of *silencing* in this article. Silence is closely related to the classical anthropological concept of *voice*, particularly the idea of *giving voice*. Voice may be understood not only as the embodied, physical locus of a sung performance, but also as a metaphor for difference, agency, and social position, or, in other words, as “an implicit index of authority, evidence, and experiential truth” (Feld et al. 2004, 341–342; Weidman 2014). The problem with these kinds of approaches is the question of who speaks and for whom: as a white, female scholar, my voice may be heard, for example, through this publication, but who am I to say something about others’ voices? As postcolonial feminist scholars often argue, the subaltern

cannot speak in the field of scholarly discourse that might be considered as my “home” (e.g. Ahmed 2000). Furthermore, studying silences may result in a teleological situation, where the dominant voices (such as the folklore collectors) are understood as powerful (“bad” or “inauthentic”) and the others as powerless (“good” or “authentic”). However, I do not consider that old archival recordings or traditional communities such as the Ingrian ones mentioned in this article are somehow more “pure” or “authentic” than the later contexts analyzed here. On the contrary, I rely on reflexive discussions in the field of folklore studies that have widely contemplated this point of view (e.g. Bendix 1997; Anttonen 2012; Chernyavska 2018). Moreover, I cannot deny my own multidimensional involvement in the processes I study: as I have graduated from the Sibelius Academy (University of the Arts Helsinki), I am strongly a part of these practices as a professional musician and a folklore scholar (Haapoja 2017a, 52–54). Thus, my aim is not to point at someone and accuse them of appropriation or exploitation. I rather trace the structures, discourses, and paradigms that reproduce and generate ways of acting that might be interpreted as “silencing”.

Contextualizing the *Oi dai* Case: Folk Music and *Runo* Singing in Finland

The concept of “Finnish folk music” was created during the 19th century, when Herderian language theory and German neohumanism were strongly supported by the Finnish- and Swedish-speaking academic and upper-class circles of the region (Kurkela 2012, 353–355; Wilson 1976; Hill 2014). The concept was put into practice during the last decades of the 19th century, when folk performers and their repertoires first performed at the largest cities’ song and music festivals. Furthermore, the ideology of popular education and those institutions related to this ideology— for instance schools, temperance societies, workers’ associations—were the main channels for institutionalizing the concept of folk music (Kurkela 2012, 362–365; Rantanen 2013, 80–81).

During the 19th century, the newly formed and still unbounded fields of folklore studies, linguistics, and musicology were somewhat intertwined and served the same nationalistic purpose in Finland: to create a “great national narrative” for a country that did not have a history. Folk poetry—that is, kalevalaic *runo* singing—was a prominent vehicle for this agenda, and it also provided a way to search for both “authenticity” and the “voice of the people” for all the disciplines (Anttonen 2005; Frog 2013; Koironen et al 2003; Rautiainen-Keskustalo 2015).

Since the oral *runo* tradition was sung, musicologically oriented researchers were interested in the melodic structures of *runo* songs. Following the paradigm of the historical-geographical method (also known as “the Finnish method”) (Krohn, K. 1971; see also Frog 2013, 18–23), researchers collected vast amounts of field notes and recordings from the mid-19th century to the beginning of the 20th century. Their aim was to create a “lexicographical” classification system for folk music, which was methodologically developed by Ilmari Krohn (1867–1960). The methodological approach was defined by the way the textualized songs were organized in groups: the place of a song in a collection was based on the nature of its melodic cadences, not its lyrics or the contexts of its use in traditional communities. Krohn published several editions of folk song collections based on this system (e.g. Krohn 1904). The method later strongly influenced European folk music research, which became known as comparative musicology. (Pekkilä 2006, 353–359; Koironen et al 2003, 116–125.)

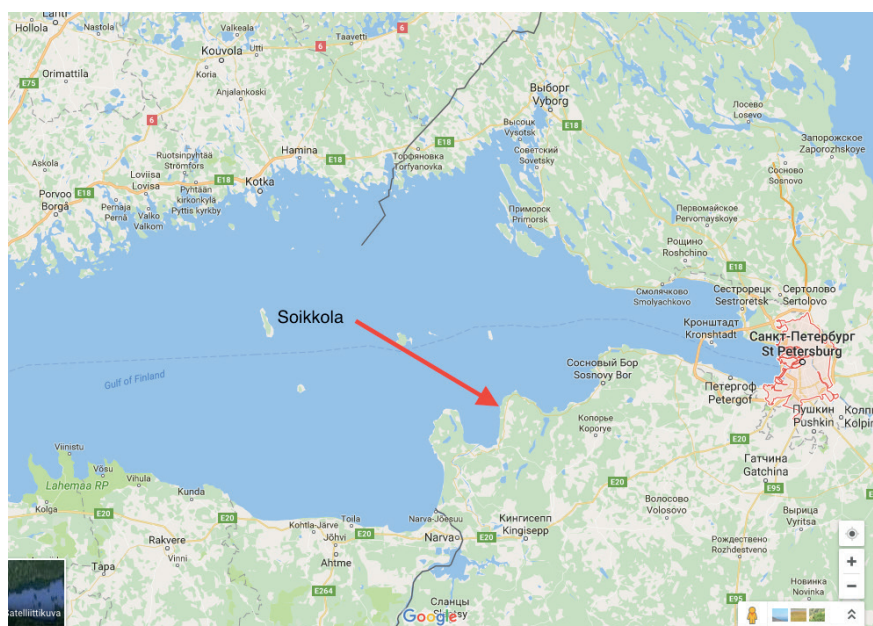
In Finland, these methodological approaches led to the creation of extensive archives of folk songs and poetry (e.g. the archives of the Finnish Literature Society), which then informed intensive Finnish folkloristic research and comparative musicology during the 20th century. Thus, the archived folk music collections and the heritage of comparative musicology have greatly influenced the folk music revival movement and the revivalist musicians, beginning at the end of the 1960s (Haapoja 2017a, 22–30; Hill 2007 & 2009 & 2014; Järviluoma 1990; Laitinen 1994; Ramnarine 2003). In Finland, the folk music revival movement can be seen as a complex process that was shaped and caused by urbanization, public education, and a longing for the old rural culture. It was also influenced by the international folk music revival movement as well as Soviet cultural policy (Haapoja 2017a; Laitinen 1994, 34). Today, the Finnish contemporary (or “new”) folk music is a professional field that mostly operates in the contexts of the conservatory stages, where Western classical music is performed. Finnish contemporary folk music can be described as a “world music fusion” that mainly took shape in the Finnish music educational system and was informed by education politics during the 1980s. Many musicians who perform Finnish contemporary folk music graduated from the Sibelius Academy Folk Music Department, established in 1983 (Haapoja 2017a; Hill 2007 & 2009; Suutari 2011, 139–140).

***Oi dai* in Early 19th-Century Ingria**

The journey of *Oi dai* and its role in institutionalized Finnish folk music began in 1906, when the Finnish folk music researcher Armas Launis recorded a vari-

ant of its melody type in Soikkola, West Ingria (see Picture 2). Launis, a young, Finnish-speaking scholar, arrived in Ingria with his phonograph to do fieldwork in the area and to record kalevalaic *runo* songs. At the beginning of the 20th century, Ingria was a multicultural and multilingual area located between St. Petersburg and Estonia, where different Baltic-Finnic ethnic groups (including Votes, Izhorians, Ingrian-Finns, Finns, Estonians) interacted more or less with the Russians, Germans, Swedes, and Roma people in the area. West Ingria had the highest density of Izhorian villages: the Izhorian language was a small Northern Finnic group of the Uralic languages whose speakers were Orthodox, while the other Finnic groups were mostly Protestant (Kallio 2011, 394–395). Soikkolanniemi (the Soikinski Peninsula) in West Ingria, Launis’s destination, is located on the south coast of the Gulf of Finland. The peninsula separates Luga Bay from Kopor’e Bay, and today it is a part of the Kingiseppski District, Leningrad Oblast, Russia.

West Ingria was a place of interest for Launis, since he was convinced that there, he could find numerous “old and primordial” *runo* melody structures (Kallio 2013, 68–69). West Ingria was already known among folklore collectors as a place of lively female singing, and the kalevalaic *runo* songs of the area were considered rich and skillful (Harvilahti 1994, 93–95). Furthermore, Launis’s fieldwork grant was paid by the Finnish Literature Society (FLS), which was the stronghold of the Fennomans (pro-Finnish language) movement, and Ingria was one of the main targets of the FLS’s folklore collecting activities (e.g.



Picture 2. West Ingria and the Soikinski Peninsula. Source: Google Maps.

Anttonen 2005). In accordance with the nationalistic ideology of the time, Ingria was regarded as a part of the Finnish “we” because of the Finno-Ugric background of its inhabitants, despite its geographic remoteness, as it is located away from the Finnish mainland. This ideological approach can be read in Launis’s texts as well: he added the “deictic we” (e.g. de Cillia & Reisigl & Wodak 1999) that is expressed in Finnish through the possessive suffix *-mme*, when he wrote about “our primitive runo singing” (*primitiivinen runolaulumme*) in the draft of his autobiography (via Kallio 2013, 67).

Launis primarily made transcriptions of melodies during his time in the field, but he also recorded short examples of singing with his phonograph. In the village of Koskina, he met, among others, the singer Liisa Petrontytär, who sang 13 *runo* songs for Launis with a three- or four-member female choir. One of these songs, formally consisting of one poetic line sung by the lead singer Petrontytär and choral repetition of this line with an added refrain, was a variant of the *Oi dai* melody type. Apart from the name of her home village, no other information about Liisa Petrontytär was included in Launis’s notes. Following the paradigm of the time, Launis was not particularly interested in the performers of the songs (see also Kallio 2013; Jouste 2004).

Liisa Petrontytär’s performance is rather short: Launis recorded only the first two verses of the song *Oi dai* on his wax cylinders. His recordings were subsequently digitized, and these recordings are nowadays part of the Finnish Literature Society’s archival collections. The sound quality of these digitized collections is weak: from time to time, the pitch of the singing changes due to technical problems, and the recordings are colored by rasping sounds and distortion. Because of these technical problems, the Izhorian verses of Petrontytär’s version of *Oi dai* are somewhat challenging to comprehend. The transcription below is based on Launis’s textualization:

Lead singer (L): *otojani sizojani*
 Choir (C): *oi dai otojani / otojani sizoja- /*
 L: *oi otoi emoini lapsi /*
 C: *oi dai oi otoi vaa / oi otoi emoini la-*

L: Otoja, my sister
 C: Oi dai, Otoja, Otoja, my sis-
 L: Oh, Otoi, my mother’s child
 C: Oi dai, oh Otoi, oh Otoi my mother’s chi-

(FLS 1906: A 300/20c. Transcription Armas Launis/Author.)

In the Ingrian context, *Oi dai* belonged to the local tradition of Izhorian wedding songs. The melody type was used by young women who sang wedding po-

ems for the bride either during the proposal or on the eve of the wedding day. As in Petronyrtär's version, the beginning of the wedding poem of the *Oi dai* was addressed to the bride ("Otoja, my sister!"), and the poems often continued with different kinds of themes that belonged to the poetic wedding register of the peers of the bride (Kallio 2013, 306–309, 485). The *Oi dai* performance by Liisa Petronyrtär and the choir is characteristic of the female singing style of the area: the singers use a loud and resonating chest voice, and the scale and pitch refer to complicated local tonal systems. The local tonalities may sound "false", at least to the ears of a non-member of the society, and the songs' complex fabric of additive and divisive rhythms seems convoluted (Haapoja 2013).

After Launis recorded the performance, he transformed it into a prescriptive transcription that then became part of the folk music research paradigm of the time: Launis published the song and 900 other short transcriptions in his comprehensive collection of Ingrian *runo* songs (*Inkerin runosävelmät*) (Launis 1910). Some of the published transcriptions were his own, while others were completed by other collectors during the 19th century. Launis organized the short transcriptions according to the principles of the lexicographical classification system. In this collection, Liisa Petronyrtär's *Oi dai* version is placed in Section "III B 2 b", which, according to Launis, falls into the category of "Essential *runo* tunes – Lead singer's part two melodic lines – A poetic line is equivalent to two melodic lines – Four beat lines – The first type of minor" (Launis 1910, 258–259). Alongside the transcription, the name of the village Koskina is mentioned, as well as the wax cylinder number, but not Liisa Petronyrtär's name.

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Soikkola, Koskina. Launis (ph. 12 c.).

E: O - to - ja - ni si - so - - ja - ni, K: Oi dai
O i o - - toi e - - moi - ni lap - si, O i dai

o - to - ja - - - - - ni, O - to - ja - - ni
o - to - ja - - - - - ni, O i o - - toi e -

si - - - - so - - ja,
moi - - - - ni laps.

Picture 3. Launis's transcription of Liisa Petronyrtär's *Oi dai* version in *Inkerin runosävelmät*. (Launis 1910, 258–259).

Inkerin runosävelmät was published by the Finnish Literature Society as part of the collection, “The Tunes of the Finnish Folk.” The book series was edited by professor of musicology Ilmari Krohn, and his ambitious goal was to publish a comprehensive collection of all the folk tunes in Finland. What “Finland” and “folk” meant in this context was colored by national-romantic and nationalistic aims. For example, the scholars of the time merged Izhorian cultural elements into general Finnishness without questioning considerations of local meanings, belongings, and identities, which were left aside during the process. (e.g. Anttonen 2005; Siikala 2012.)

Oi Dai in Ingria during the Soviet Period

After the turmoil of the early 20th century (e.g., the rise of the Soviet Union and the independence of Finland 1917), the borders to the East were firmly closed to Finnish scholars and folklore collectors, and living Ingrian songs that served as sources for Finnish folklore and folk music studies dried up, with the exception of some sporadic cases. Instead, beginning in the 1930s, Soviet researchers initiated systematic fieldwork, for example, in the areas of Viena Karelia and Ingria (e.g. Stepanova 2014, 15–21). During this period, Finnish folklorists and folk music researchers were directed to the older, pre-existing collections and fieldwork areas inside Finnish borders (e.g. Rautiainen-Keskustalo 2015, 6–10).³

In the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic (1940–1941, 1944–1991), the construction of a “Finno-Ugric identity” became a significant cultural marker in a political situation in which the “Estonian identity” was regarded as threatened. This led to extensive scholarly work on Finno-Ugric folk culture, according to Kristin Kuutma:

Artists, musicians and creative writers who could not address Estonian identity directly found a means of actively creating, constructing and promoting a cultural identity that could manifest a counter-selfhood as opposed to the levelling Soviet cultural ideology. Finno-Ugrianism was adopted into Estonian professional and folk culture as a means of expressing the oppressed national identity, and as an aspiration of providing one's people with an original, countercultural context in opposition to the mainstream Soviet reality (Kuutma 2005, 55–57).

³ The only exception to this are the years of the war between Finland and the Soviet Union (1941–1944), when the Finnish occupying administration ruled parts of the borderlands in Karelia. During this period folklorists worked actively in the occupied area. (e.g. Tarkka 2013, 483–484.)

Against this background, Estonian researchers were also attracted to studying Ingrian *runo* singers and their repertoire. The linguist Arvo Laanest was especially interested in the Izhorian language, and he ended up in Soikkola at the beginning of the 1960s. In the village of Voloitsa, he met Ekaterina Aleksandrova (born in 1902), who sang Izhorian *runo* songs for him. One of the recorded songs was a version of *Oi dai*, sung without any accompaniment. Aleksandrova's version is addressed to a bride, as well, and the singer reminds the bride of their former agreement not to engage with any men. The tragic poem, full of fear and even deadly wishes against the male sex, is typical of the Ingrian female wedding register (Timonen 2004):

maarojani sizojani
oi tai maarojani sizoja
kuin miä saoin tän kessooja
oi dai kuin miä saoin kuin miä sa- tän kessooja
 [...]

(FLS 1961: SKSÄ A 283/20. Transcription: Author)

Maaroja, my sister,
 As I said to you this summer:
 Let us build a castle
 to which no man can enter,
 no one will ask for our hands.
 You answered:
 "I have a sword,
 I have a shield,
 I will kill all the men."

(FLS 1961: SKSÄ A 283/20. Translation: Author)

Compared to Launis's recordings, Laanest used newer recording equipment, which was able to record with a better sound quality. Also, Aleksandrova's voice could be emphasized in greater detail: she could sing as many verses as she liked, and after the song Laanest interviewed her on the tape. Aleksandrova opened up the local meanings of the poetic theme, describing it as a song sung by girls who walk through the village and sing loudly for the bride (SKSÄ A 283/20).

During the 1970s, Aleksandrova's singing was recorded by other Estonian researchers. The ethnomusicologists I. Rütel, O. Kõiva, and M. Jallai recorded another version of her *Oi dai* performances in 1976, and the recording was published in Estonia in the record series *Soome-Ugri rahvaste laule* (Songs of

the Finno-Ugric Folk) on the record *Vadja ja isuri rahvalaule* (Votic and Izhorian Folk Songs). In this recording, Aleksandrova's *Oi dai* is called "Neiu linn / kosjalaul" (Maidens' Castle / A Proposal Song), and it is placed under the heading "Pulmalaulud" (Wedding songs). On the cover text of the LP, Aleksandrova's name, year of birth, home village, and a reference to the original recording are mentioned. The ethnomusicologist Ingrid Rüütel describes the song in the accompanying note: "Tune I [*Neiu linn*] is used only in certain wedding songs, especially tragic narrative songs. K. Aleksandrova is one of the last prominent Izhorian folk singers mastering various kinds of folk songs" (*Vadja ja isuri rahvalaule*. English text original).

The recording *Vadja ja isuri rahvalaule* was also available in Finland, especially spreading among Finnish researchers and amateurs of folklore studies. In the 2010s, the recording was available in the collections of the University of Helsinki's Department of Folklore as well as the private library of the Sibelius Academy Folk Music Department, which has influenced the circulation of the recording among contemporary folk musicians in Finland.

***Oi dai* in the Contexts of Contemporary Folk Music in Finland and Sweden in the 1990s**

After the Second World War, research on kalevalaic poetry was mostly conducted by folklorists who studied textual archival materials in Finland; thus, *Oi dai* only lived in an archived and notated textual form inside the borders of Finland. Following the changing paradigm of ethnomusicology and music anthropology (see Rautiainen-Keskustalo 2015), musicologists were no longer exceedingly interested in the lexicographical classification system. Consequently, collections of *runo* songs were left aside for a significant time. However, these collections were re-discovered in the 1970s and 1980s by musicians who, instead of holding specific nationalistic interests, were enthusiastic about finding "authenticity," "creativity," "ancient times," and "voices of the past folk" in the archived material (see Haapoja 2017a; Hill 2014; Järviluoma 1990).

In this context, Launis's collections were regarded as sufficient representations of these notions, and his notes, recordings, and notations re-entered the field of Finnish folk music research. This time, scholars approached the collections with an artistic orientation. When the Sibelius Academy Folk Music Department was established in 1983, the music making was colored by the interplay between the historical archival collections and the aim to create new, creative, and artistically ambitious music based on this material. Thereby, the ideological constructions of Launis's paradigm were intertwined with revivalist ideologies of innovation and cultural activism. (Hill 2014.)

From the very beginning of the professional contemporary folk music movement, the gaze of the musicians was directed to the Finno-Ugric areas. However, in contrast to the Estonian means of expressing oppressed national identity through “Finno-Ugrianism,” the Finnish musicians emphasized general “tribe-ness,” affinity, and shared historical roots with the other Finno-Ugric people as a justification in their search for authenticity (Haapoja 2017a, 128–135; Hill 2007). The use of Launis’s publication, the *Inkerin runosävelmät* collection, comports seamlessly with the idea of shared Finno-Ugric roots: this idea justifies both the use and the right to refer to the Ingrian songs as contemporary folk musicians’ “own tradition.” Additionally, Launis’s publication has been popular among contemporary musicians because it is in Finnish and, therefore, rather easy to use for native speakers. Moreover, the short, prescriptive transcriptions distance the older performance contexts in a rather stimulating way: they give more opportunities and free space for imagination and for contemporary musicians to create new innovative arrangements (see Haapoja 2017a).

This can be demonstrated in the circulation of *Oi dai*. In 1991, the Finnish contemporary folk music band Värttinä achieved great popularity in Finland with its album *Oi Dai*. The album included a song “Oi Dai,” which was listed as “trad., arr. Värttinä” on the cover texts of the album. Värttinä’s “Oi Dai” has different lyrics than Liisa Petrontytär’s version, but the melodic structures can be clearly identified as the same. Värttinä’s version seems to refer especially to Launis’s published transcription (see Picture 3), since the second and third voices are exactly the same and the time signature resembles the choices Launis made in his transcription. The references to Liisa Petrontytär’s archival recording are vague, and Värttinä’s version differs from the recording’s performance, especially in its rhythmic structures: Värttinä’s version is divisive instead of having Petrontytär’s additive rhythm.

The Värttinä album received positive reviews in the Finnish media. *Helsingin Sanomat* published a major review of the album in June 1991. The author, Pirkko Kotirinta, emphasized the general “Eastern-ness” of the songs and sounds on the record:

The new LP *Oi Dai* is an extraordinary mixture of things. The lyrics of the songs that come from the eastern lands of Fenno-Ugric relatives amusingly represent old-fashioned dating culture, but the arrangements have an entirely unique life of their own. The arrangements do not represent authentic style. That is why the outcome is fresh. The record sounds new and original. [...] Now, it is time for the voices of the East. Thus, if the Bulgarian female singing of the world music markets interests Finnish people, could it be possible that they would be interested in polyphonic Mordvian songs or the

graceful Seto music of Estonia as well? Karelia nostalgia brings its own flavor to this mixture. [...] (Kotirinta 1991. Translation: Author)

In the review, the notions of “Easternness” and “Eastern lands” are emphasized as contexts and origins for *runo* singing. “Easternness” is a notion that seems to be a general mixture of “Karelia-nostalgia,” “voices of the East,” and some specifically named places, such as Bulgaria, Mordovia, and Seto on the border of Russia and Estonia. Easternness is something that is mythical, flexible, and mostly located somewhere “behind the border,” that is, somewhere in Russia or other Eastern European countries (Haapoja 2017a, 135). In Värttinä’s case, Easternness was something “just exotic enough” (see Kaminsky 2014), particularly given the political situation in which the collapse of the Soviet Union made the “Eastern” question rather delicate. Easternness was simultaneously politically frightening, admired for its “authenticity,” was part of Finnishness and the roots of the “Finnish family,” and remote enough to be exotic (see Ramnarine 2003, 88–114).

The *Oi dai* theme and its past Ingrian voices disappear behind the walls of the context of Easternness. The name of Liisa Petrontytär and even the place Soikkola are hidden behind the expressions of “the voices of the East” and “trad,” and they have been transformed into general Otherness. Interestingly, this process is somewhat negotiated in the album review: the journalist Pirkko Kotirinta notes the author with the general marker “traditional” on the album cover and speculates whether it would have been appropriate to mention where the traditional songs come from. She uses the Finnish expression “*miltä suunnalta*” (“from which direction”), which implies that she is especially interested in the geographical origins of the songs. The problematic questions of ownership, authorship, and copyright are not considered. The discussion of *who* sang and *why* are left in the background.

The following year, in 1992, the *Oi dai* theme continued to circulate, as it was published on another contemporary folk music record. The Swedish-Finnish band Hedningarna gained a great deal of attention in Finland, Sweden, and internationally when the album *Kaksi!* was released. The record was a compilation of folk instrument experiments by the Swedish musicians, minimalist electronic beats, and the vocal sounds of two Finnish professional female singers from the Sibelius Academy Folk Music Department. The record contains several *runo* song themes that were published in Launis’s *Inkerin runosävelmät*, among them *Oi dai*, this time given the name “Grodan/Widergrenen.” The lyrics of the song do not come from the Ingrian context but from *Kanteletar*, which is a set of lyric kalevalaic folk poetry compiled by Elias Lönnrot (1840). The lyrics refer to a poem “Hauki syöpi sammakonki” (Lönnrot 1997 [1840], 210–211), which is an old Karelian lyric poem that was textualized

and translated into Finnish by Lönnrot. On the cover of the Hedningarna CD, no background sources are mentioned apart from the general “trad., arr. Hedningarna/A. Stake” information about the arranger.

Lönnrot’s textualization of the old *runo* songs has been studied by Finnish folklorists in great detail (see e.g. Kaukonen 1984), and it is known that these processes mirrored the national-romantic ideologies of the time as well as the ideology of Finnish language standardization (see Tarkka et al 2018). What is relevant for the song “Grodan/Widergrenen” is that the *Kanteletar* poem is primarily meant for literary contexts and was translated into Finnish from Lönnrot’s own field notes, which were gathered by listening to *runo* singers who came from the Karelian or Karelian dialect areas:

*Oisi aikoa iässä
Valitenki vaimo naia,
Tuten neiti tunnustella;
Mielellänsä mies tekevi,
Tahallansa naisen naipi,
[...]*

(Lönnrot 1997 [1840], 210–211)

It would be good for a man to choose a wife;
he marries a quarreler,
because a man is happy to marry anyone, even a bad woman
after being a week without company.

(Lönnrot 1997 [1840], 210–211. Translation: Author)

Without detailed background work on these verses, one cannot say who performed the verses and to what extent they were modified or even constructed by Elias Lönnrot. This emphasizes the absorption of Ingrian, Karelian, or “Eastern” cultural elements into Finnishness in the context of Hedningarna’s song: the same processes of the hundred-years oppression of Ingrian and Karelian contexts can be identified in the lyrics as well as the musical material. As in Värttinä’s version of *Oi dai*, Hedningarna’s song refers to the musical choices Launis made in his publication; thus, the Izhorian contexts and meanings of Liisa Petrontytär’s song are absent.

In the case of Hedningarna, the question of Easternness was highlighted in the complex geographical and cultural East-West dichotomy that shaped and still shapes the discourses of Finnishness in Finland. The collaboration between Swedish and Finnish musicians on Hedningarna’s record was introduced in the Finnish media as a kind of battle between the two countries:

The heathens [*Hedningarna* (swe) = The heathens] come from Sweden—but they are strongly supported by Finnish singing and tradition. Sweden has usually led Finland in the case of internationalizing their popular music. Even their amusements and jazz orchestras were more international after the war, experts on jazz say. The Swedes have succeeded in Eurovision Song contests as well. We do not have Abba or Roxette. Instead, we have Kalevala, tango, Sibelius, and [the conductor and composer Esa-Pekka] Salonen. Finland is part of the East, Sweden is part of the West, if one exaggerates a little. Who knows how many shared roots there are in the pagan cultures of ancient times? (Kotirinta 1992. Translation: Author)

Thus, as also happened in the Värttinä case, here, *Oi dai* and its earlier voices and localities are hidden behind the idea of general Easternness. Overall, this tendency to oppress the Ingrian (and Karelian) minorities in the context of the Finnish media is an ongoing process, especially in speech that is related to Finnish folklore and folk music. The constructed “we-ness” of the old archival material is rather paradoxically and coincidentally transformed into temporal, corporal, and geographical otherness (see Haapoja 2017a; Stepanova, in press).

***Oi dai*, Contemporary Folk Music in the 2010s, Hybridity, and Reflexivity**

During the 2010s, Finnish political speech has been increasingly shaped by discourses of populism, right-wing nationalism, and anti-immigration, as in other European countries and the US (e.g. Jungar & Jupskås 2014). In the field of contemporary folk music, this has aroused more detailed discussions and reflexivity on the concepts of Finnishness, authorship, and ownership as they relate to the genre of folk music. Many contemporary folk musicians have openly supported multiculturalism and liberal views on globalization, cultural hybridization, and mobility (see Haapoja 2017a). However, at the same time, the discourses on kalevalaic *runo* singing are paradoxically twofold: the liberal views of the contemporary folk musicians are intertwined with historically nationalistic ways of speaking that are inevitably inherent in the ways *runo* singing has been discussed in Finland since the 19th century.

The last example of *Oi dai*'s circulation brings forth this change in reflexivity on Finnishness and ownership, shedding light on the complex intersections of the new liberal and old nationalistic discussions. The last *Oi dai* case, “Maarojani,” was published in 2014 on the record by the band Finno-Balkan Voices. The vocal group consists of four Finnish and four Bulgarian professional singers. According to their website, they “form a line-up which combines two strong singing traditions. Their repertoire includes folk songs, commissioned pieces and songs written by the members of the ensemble” (Finno-Balkan Voices 2020).

The song “Maarojani” consists of the traditional melodic structures of *Oi dai*, but the arrangement includes rhythmic variations and new voice parts. Interestingly, the melodic material in this recording seems to refer to Ekaterina Aleksandrova’s recording instead of Launis’s transcription. The lyrics are the same, and the second tone of the scale is flat, which refers to the Aleksandrova performance, in which the second tone varies in pitch. The rhythm type is slightly modified in the Finno-Balkan Voices version as compared to Aleksandrova’s version. For example, the simple time signature of Aleksandrova’s first musical verse is changed to the complex 7/8 time signature. The arranger of the song, the singer Emmi Kujanpää, describes this process in detail: “The modified time signature of the [“Maarojani”] arrangement is “balkanized”—it [the metric structure of the melody] began to sound like 7/8 and 11/8 in my head.” (Kujanpää 2017. Translation: Author)

The complex 7/8 time signature is a typical index of Balkan traditional music—as Kujanpää herself describes it, the rhythm type is “balkanized.” Juniper Hill calls these kinds of “exotic” yet familiar-sounding musical indexes “recognizable world music markers” (Hill 2007, 69). She also adds that “when borrowing from more distant and unrelated cultures, Finnish [contemporary folk] musicians typically adopt instruments, vocal and instrumental techniques, and arranging styles, and incorporate them in such a way that they add new timbres and sounds, arrangements and soundscapes, without fundamentally altering the Finnish/Nordic/Finno-Ugric material” (Hill 2007, 69–70).

The singer Kujanpää reflects the process of borrowing in her master’s thesis (Kujanpää 2016). Kujanpää’s artistic approach to and emphasis on hybridity is typical of artistic approaches among contemporary folk musicians in Finland. For her, the process of borrowing means a dialogical approach, which she describes as a “dialogue between traditions”:

For me as a musician, combining elements of Finnish and Bulgarian folk music has been a significant artistic method during the last seven years. [...] I do not think that my motivation to create new artistic hybrids is a longing for exoticness. On the contrary, the motivation is the need to find new ways of expressing oneself and one’s love of adventure. (Kujanpää 2016, 55–56. Translation: Author)

In the case of Finno-Balkan Voices, the geographical origin of the *Oi dai* theme is mentioned on the CD cover; otherwise, the information about the earlier performers of the song is hidden behind the general “trad.” notion, as in other contemporary *Oi dai* cases. On the cover of the album, the authorship is divided between “trad.” and the arranger: “Comp./lyrics trad. Ingrida, arr. Kujanpää.” However, the fact that the geographical location of the song is

mentioned and that the archival recording, instead of Launis's transcription, is used as background material mirrors the change in reflexivity in the field of contemporary folk music. The background of the archived material receives greater consideration, which results from discussions of conservative nationalism. The singer/arranger Emmi Kujanpää notes in her master's thesis that she has faced these discussions, which led her to increasingly consider the historical, political, and ideological backgrounds of the notion of folk music:

I understood [...] how strongly folk music, politics, and national symbols such as [the instrument] *kantele* are intertwined. A folk music performer and teacher is not free from the questions of nationalistic ideologies or historical or political developments, even though my own artistic work would be based on equal dialogue between cultures and arts. (Kujanpää 2016, 63. Translation: Author)

The tendency to emphasize hybridity, "equal dialogue", and artistic freedom over questions of ownership, authorship, and nationalism in the context of contemporary folk music is a natural continuation of the revivalist discourses stemming from the 1970s and '80s. However, the spirit of comparative musicology is still inherent in the ways a performer of an archived folk song is treated in the field of contemporary folk music: the melodic structure in an archival recording is seen as a representation of a general Finnish folk song, and it is regarded as shared property, not the performance of an individual. As Kristin Kuutma notes in the case of Estonian Seto singing, "We could say that the autochthonous category of performing 'another singer's' repertoire has become confused and shifted. Due to the folkloristic collections and publications, Seto songs are no longer 'personal properties' but function in the public domain of general dissemination" (Kuutma 2010, 36). In the case of contemporary folk music in Finland, the situation is the same: the voices of the earlier performers have become blurred, almost forgotten, but at the same time, the songs are disseminated and used to re-create and negotiate new Finnishnesses in the changing and controversial political atmosphere of 2010s Europe.

Author Unknown

As shown above, the category of performer/author is problematic and confused when considering the circulation of the *Oi dai* theme. Yet, this quite often seems to be a question of power relations. The performer/author disappears when she is an "Other", when she comes from somewhere in the "general East," when she is a woman and belongs to the lower classes, and when her voice is in temporal terms too old and distant to hear. This disappearing stems from the paradigm of the 19th century, in which the context of the performer/author

was not interesting to the researcher; on the contrary, collectors of folklore attempted to capture the wide outlines, collective traditions, and the voices of Finnish communities. The problematic division between author/collective folklore is a classic folkloristic question; in the wake of the performative turn, the performer as a creative individual has gained a lot more attention than before. In the field of contemporary folk music, the question of performer/author is attached to discussions on copyright: a contemporary musician is regarded as an individual artist, as in other Western arts (Berge & Johansson 2014; Hill 2009). In this context, the performer/author question is related to the 2010s singer, since copyright law in Finland protects the 2010s arranger/composer/performer, but not the archived material itself.⁴

However, it is essential to notice that these processes are closely tied to views and interpretations on the concepts of folklore and tradition that were made during the 19th and 20th centuries. The characteristic features of folklore have often been “anonymity” and “collectivity”, and Western copyright laws tend to adhere to these interpretations. Copyright laws are created to protect “originals,” and thus folklore—when regarded as collective and anonymous—cannot be subject to protection. The idea of originality stems from Romantic norms, which, according to Valdimar Hafstein, “[have] little patience for cultural processes or with expressions developed in a more diffuse, incremental, and collective manner, where it is impossible to fix specific steps like invention or authorship at a given point in time or to assign them to one particular person” (Hafstein 2014, 18).

Thus, this confusing mixture of questions on authority, performer, ownership, originality, copyright, otherness, creativity, and folklore sheds light on the circulation of *Oi dai* and the multiple interpretations of its complex author. However, the Ingrian performers, for example Liisa Petrontytär and Ekaterina Aleksandrova, are the ones whose individual voices are only faded echoes here. In the stratified layers of *Oi dai* interpretations, the old claim of the collectivity of folklore continues to disregard their individual contributions.

Silencing the Finnish Other?

As Erich Hatala Matthes puts it, cultural appropriation is often described as harmful “because of the way in which it interacts with dominating systems so as to silence and speak for individuals who are already socially marginalized” (Matthes 2016, 349). As cultural appropriation may, in its exploitative meaning, seem too non-theoretical or light a concept in academic contexts, it might be useful for shedding light on the processes of silencing. To avoid cultural essentialism, Matthes suggests that one should focus on the construal of

4 See Finlex Data Bank.

the harm itself, leaving the insider/outsider question out of the frame (Matthes 2016, 364).

In the case of *Oi dai*, the insider/outsider question is indeed a very problematic one: who, in the end, is an insider when we follow the circulation of *Oi dai*? The *Oi dai* theme has been widely circulated, from 20th century Ingria to multiple contexts, and has been interpreted in many different frameworks. It simultaneously represents an intersection of local, national, multicultural, and transnational interpretations. Thus, it might be essential to ask whether it is meaningful to follow its circulation: instead of one circulating *Oi dai*, are there multiple *Oi dais*? Are the interpretations and meanings of *Oi dai* made more significant in their own contexts? As Rogers (2006) and other ethnologists and folklorists assert, cultures or traditions cannot be considered as solid units that can be blocked, sealed, or standardized. They always “leak” in some way. Thus, *Oi dai* cannot be seen only as a song of Ingrian women, even though it was theirs a hundred years ago. Like all cultural elements, its motion is perpetual, and it is hybrid and changing.

However, the idea of the hybridity and mobility of cultures and traditions cannot be routinely used to justify or sweep under the carpet processes of oppression. And here is the point where critical concepts like cultural appropriation become relevant: it is significant to scrutinize *how* dominating systems silence particular voices that are or become socially marginalized in these processes. If we call the processes of merging the *runo* songs into general Finnishness appropriations, we can identify many levels of “harmful silences” in the case of *Oi dai*:

1. **Silencing the Ingrianness.** In the paradigm of comparative folk music studies, the *runo* songs represented “ancient times,” “Finnish folk,” and “the Finnish past.” These were concretely found and experienced in the field in Ingria, Karelia, and other “general” Eastern places. In this process, the Izhorian language and culture were implicitly absorbed into Finnish cultural heritage but not recognized and valued as equal cultural realities: Ingria represented the past of the present-day Finnishness, but not the present day of Ingrianness (e.g. Tarkka et al. 2018).

2. **Silencing the place.** In the processes of publishing, studying, and performing the *Oi dai* themes, the area of the contemporary Finland has been the center of the dominant political system. Even though the area of Finland has itself been a battlefield between Russia and Sweden and their power relations, the Finnish micro-level “dreaming glances” have been directed to the peripheral areas of Ingria and Karelia. During the 20th century, these areas were absorbed into the general “Easternness” of Finnishness in Finnish discourses, which can be clearly seen in the discussions concerning the *Oi dai* theme.

3. **Silencing the individuals.** During the centennial circulation of *Oi dai* in Finland, it has been essential to mute the voices of the earlier performers, since the anonymity and collectivity of folklore have been significant factors in interpreting the tradition. This is still inherent in the discourses on *runo* singing: the melodic structures of *Oi dai* still represent “Finnish singing” more than, for example, Liisa Petrontytär’s or Ekaterina Aleksandrova’s voices. The earlier singers are considered as bearers of the tradition, not owners.

All these aspects of silence have led to a situation in which we find “a speaker’s inability to communicate as a knowledgeable person because prejudice and ignorance render the audience incapable of hearing her as such” (Mathes 2016, 350). If we consider, for example, Liisa Petrontytär as a speaker, the processes of re-interpreting her performance leave very little space for the audience to hear her voice and her interpretations. Even though the re-interpretations of her performance might not be misrepresentations as such, her voice almost disappears in Finland in the 2010s.

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AUTHOR

Heidi Haapoja-Mäkelä (formerly Haapoja), PhD, Mmus, is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Helsinki. Her research interests include intangible cultural heritage, folk music, “Kalevalaicity”, nationalism, and Finnishness. Currently, she studies the UNESCO inventorying of intangible cultural heritage in Finland. Every now and then she also works as a freelance flutist and singer in the fields of contemporary folk and early music.

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