The Displaced Bard

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Abstract
Riiko Kallio (1869–1942), from the Archangel Karelian village of Pirttilahti, left a faint but many-sided impression in the margins of Finnish history. Through various personae—namely, legendary sage, last male singer of epic poetry, model and hired hand to painter Akseli Gallen-Kallela, refugee, guerilla, spy, and political kulak—he played a minor role in shaping cultural history. Unraveling the story of a man with many names is an exercise in microhistory, an analysis of the symbolic exchange taking place between popular culture and the culture of the national elite. As the ideological struggle over the heritage of the *Kalevala* and the kalevalaic culminated in the fight for Karelian autonomy, Kallio served as a mediator and a liminal figure both on the battlefield and in folklore collections.

The story of building Finnish national identity through the *Kalevala* has been repeatedly told, varied upon, and contested. In this essay, I will approach the representation of the kalevalaic universe of meanings from the margins, by telling a tale of one man operating on the border zone between two cultures. His is a story about contextualizing traditions. The scene is the quintessential locus of representing the kalevalaic: Archangel Karelia, the area near Finland's eastern border in the northernmost Russian Karelia, where most of Lönnrot's sources for the *Kalevala* were collected.

Riiko Kallio, also known as Smötky's Riiko, Risto Tapionkaski, and Grigor Kallijeff (1869–1942), was born in the village of Pirttilahti, in the Archangel parish of Vuokkiniemi. Locally he was—and continues to be—renowned as a sage (*tietäjä*). The sage was a ritual specialist whose practice was based on incantations and magic procedures aiming at direct communication with the otherworld. The sage was turned to in any individual or collective crisis: for healing the sick, exposing thieves, finding lost cattle, reuniting estranged couples, and for acting as spokesperson during wedding rituals. The sage played a vital role in maintaining social structure and welfare in the community. (Siikala, 2002, pp. 76–84; Tarkka, 2005, pp. 43, 83–86). Riiko was considered "the world's greatest sage in these parts" and his ability to communicate with the supranormal world accorded him a singular kind of prestige. Riiko was "something of an otherworldly person … as if he didn't exist here at all" (Virtaranta, 1978, p. 121; PA Runolinna 1995).

In 1911, the prominent Karelian rune collector Iivo Marttinen managed to note down two lengthy incantations from Riiko, a sage who was reluctant to reveal his knowledge. Much to the regret of folklorists to come, these two texts were long the only documentation on the legendary sage (Niemi, 1921, pp. 750, 1049, 1171–1172; Kaukonen, 1984, p. 38; Vuoristo, 1992, p. 114). In 1994, while completing the corpus for my research on kalevala-meter poetry in Vuokkiniemi parish (Tarkka, 2005)[1], I came across some sound recordings at the Folklore Archives of the Finnish Literature Society. They dated from 1920–1921 and originated in Pirttilahti, though recorded in Ruovesi, central Finland. The performer, who was called Risto Tapionkaski, sounded spurious with his decidedly un-Karelian name. The recorder, Akseli Gallen-Kallela, was well known, for he was Finland's leading national romantic painter and vice president of the Kalevala Society, a cultural society established in 1919 to promote Finnish national culture and cherish the heritage of the *Kalevala*.

Because the recordings were technically inadequate, previous attempts at transcribing them had ended in frustration. What is more, incentive was diminished by the aura of inauthenticity hanging over the poems—had they been real, they would have been too good to be true. Kalevala-meter poems dating from the 1920s are indeed rarities. Documents showed that on their arrival at the Kalevala Society, Gallen-Kallela's recordings were set aside, deemed irrelevant, and forgotten in a safe (SKSÄ Gallen-Kallela, 1921; GKMA, 1921). The indignant artist did not live to hear the verdict. Only in a memorial essay on the late Akseli Gallen-Kallela in 1932, the ethnomusicologist A. O. Väisänen wrote that Riiko had "lost the pure sociolect of his home region" and that his poems "seemed to be learned mostly from the *Kalevala.*" The poems were "a mixture of loans and idiosyncrasies." According to Väisänen, if Riiko had relied on tradition instead of "his own head," he would have been "an able rune-singer," one of the last singers of epic poems in the

[1] The English translation of this research will appear in 2010 in the series Folklore Fellows' Communications (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica). A monograph on Riiko Kallio, including a critical edition of his poems, will be published in 2011 (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society).

kalevala meter. (Väisänen, 1932, pp. 175–176). Ideally, national culture was constructed on traits of vernacular culture by transferring them from the periphery to the center and assigning to them symbolic values of traditionality and authenticity. Tapionkaski appeared to have failed on both counts.

The Fight over Karelia

The late 1910s and early 1920s, spurred by the First World War and the fall of tsarism, was a time of crisis for Archangel Karelia. Conflicting political ideals and military powers convulsed the local culture, splitting the community into factions. Although the great majority of the people remained politically passive, impartiality on the border zone was impossible. The awakening of a national sense of identity and aspirations for independence were supported by Finnish right-wing military expeditions determined to "liberate" Archangel. These expeditions were aiming at creating a "Greater Finland" that would unite all Finno-Ugric "tribal brothers." Some Karelians worked for Karelian autonomy as a part of Finland; many joined the Karelian Regiment of Murmansk seeking to prevent Finnish and German intervention. These forces clashed with the Bolshevik power that had gradually reached the Russian periphery. When the regiment armed and led by the Allies dissolved, its supporters and soldiers were split between the Bolsheviks and the pro-independence Karelians. The Archangel Provisional Commission was established to advance the cause of independence, improve local conditions, and fight the Reds. (Churchill, 1970, pp. 13–128, 156–159; Jääskeläinen, 1961, pp. 194–200, 253–255, 268–270; Kuussaari, 1957, pp. 125–160; Vahtola, 1988, pp. 107–123, 289–294, 364–368).

In March 1920, the Bolshevik troops took over the commission's main headquarters in Uhtua. Under the surveillance of Bolshevik troops, the first Provincial Assembly of Karelia (March 21, 1920– April 1, 1920) declared independence from Russia and elected a provisional government (Churchill, 1970, p. 158; Jääskeläinen, 1961, p. 269). Warfare between the Bolsheviks and the volunteer army of 600 men assembled by the government lasted throughout the summer of 1920. When the Bolshevik troops took over Vuokkiniemi in June 1920, E. A. Aaltio, a Finnish lawyer and the secretary of the provisional government, helped Riiko Kallio and two of his children escape across the border. Riiko's wife Jouhki stayed at home with their youngest child (PA Runolinna, 1957). By September, the government army finally withdrew to Finland. Karelians who had fought for or supported the government faced imprisonment and banishment. The "nationally-minded" men had to flee with the government's troops to Finland or take refuge in forest hideaways. Families were torn apart and households were left without providers (Kuussaari, 1957, pp. 133–162).

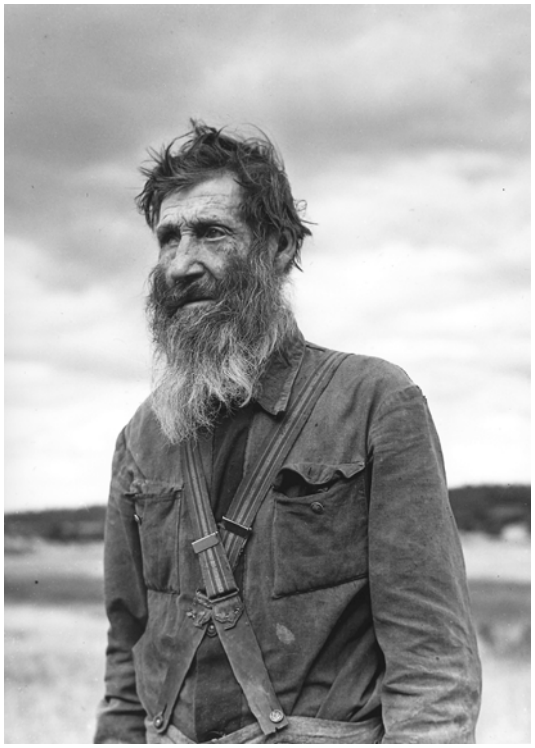

Figure 1. Riiko Kallio, alias Rist Tapionkaski, in 1941 (The Finnish Defense Forces SA-photo 36879).

On October 14, 1920, by the Treaty of Tartu, Finland was ordered to relinquish all claims vis-à-vis Eastern Karelia. In the peace agreement the Soviet government granted Karelians self-determination, a parliament of their own, and official status for the vernacular language. Yet even during the peace negotiations it had become apparent that the Bolshevist policy in the area defied the spirit of the peace treaty. The Soviet interpretation of Karelian self-determination was the Karelian Workers' Commune (since 1923 the Autonomous Socialist Republic of Karelia), which had been established well before the peace negotiations. The new regime took coercive measures against local resistance to collectivization (Jääskeläinen, 1961, pp. 283–285, 298–299; Kuussaari, 1957, pp. 157–160).

Riiko Kallio (See Figure 1) provided intelligence for pro-independence Karelians and their Finnish allies throughout the various stages of the battles. He traveled numerous times across the border between the government's headquarters and Archangel, carrying

information, messages, and money. Riiko himself said that during the Tartu peace negotiations, the government—"our government"—forced these duties on him and he simply followed orders (SKSÄ Gallen-Kallela, 1920-1921, 509.6b–10.1). In the words of Gallen-Kallela, Riiko served "as a guerilla in Karelia" (GKMA, 1920). Civilians were used in intelligence operations by both sides in the battle, but few of them were voluntary. Some—but not all—were paid for their services. (Pentikäinen, 1987, p. 61; KA SA HSA P. Aunus; KA SA HSA Itä-Karjala). Participating in intelligence operations across the border was one way of maintaining contact with family members left at home.

Images of Tapionkaski

When I was working on the Gallen-Kallela tapes, a woman by the name of Sirkka Runolinna paid a visit to the Folklore Archives. Mrs. Runolinna turned out to be the granddaughter of Risto Tapionkaski. A dedicated family historian, she had been seeking information on her grandfather for years. She revealed Risto Tapionkaski's true identity: he was Riiko Kallio, the legendary sage of Pirttilahti. The tapes were immediately recontextualized: they were firmly bound to the Karelian sage institution, folk belief, and mythology. They were the real thing, after all.

In the summer of 1920, like many other Karelians, the old man had taken a Finnish name to replace the official Russian name Grigori Kallijeff (Tarma, 2002, vol. 10). Aaltio, also a writer of historical poems enlivened by national romanticism, was active in crafting a new identity for Riiko. For him, Riiko did more than simply deliver strategic messages from across the border: he was a herald of the kalevalaic past. (SKSÄ Tarkka, 1995, I–IIa). The new name alluded to the ancient forest spirit Tapio, the king of the forest, that is, the bear, and to fertile burn-beaten land. It established an imaginary genealogical link to the heroes of the *Kalevala* and turned the Karelian guerilla into a primordial Finnish aristocrat. To create political and kalevalaic credibility for himself, Aaltio adopted a Karelian pseudonym, Huotari Joutonki, which he used in his nationalistic and anti-bolshevist writings (Tarma, 2002, p. 4). With this mediating identity, he prepared himself for intensive and confidential communication on the field.

In November 1920, Aaltio began writing down Riiko's repertoire at government headquarters. The result was remarkable: Aaltio recorded eighteen poems, one of them the longest kalevala-meter poem ever to be written down, *Lemminkäinen's Song* of 587 lines (KA Aaltio, 1920a; Tarkka, 1999, pp. 54–55). An excerpt from one of the poems was published in a Christmas bulletin by the government, under the title "Post-Kalevala singing according to the Pirttilahti rune-singer, Riiko Tapionkaski" (Härkönen, 1920).

While Riiko was staying at the headquarters, the Kalevala Society and the artist Akseli Gallen-Kallela stepped into his life. The artist, who was working in his remote studio in Ruovesi, Kalela, was asking around for a farmhand and a suitable Karelian to serve as a live model for heroes of the *Kalevala* (Väisänen, 1932, p. 171). The Society had contacts with Finnish activists in Karelia, and it turned to the provisional government for help. Aaltio suggested Riiko because he was "the best type of all here," "an interesting native of Archangel," and politically appropriate for the purposes of the patriotic artist. Moreover, Riiko's fame as a sage made him especially fit to model as Väinämöinen. Riiko's journey to Ruovesi began on November 12, 1920. On his arrival, Riiko was hailed by Gallen-Kallela as a "fortunately complete analphabet" and a faultless representative of his race, "a pure Karelian type" (GKMA, 1920; KA Aaltio, 1920b; KRA Salminen, 1920).

Figure 2. Risto Tapionkaski (left) and Akseli Gallen-Kallela (right) in Kalela, 1920 (KRA Salminen 1920).

When Riiko appeared at Kalela, Gallen-Kallela and the Kalevala Society were engaged in two projects: illustrating the epic and planning a new edition of its text to avoid copyright costs payable to the Finnish Literature Society (KA Setälä, 1920). Gallen-Kallela had agreed to paint an oil painting to be sold for funding the project. The painting, *Lemminkäinen on the River of Fire*, pictured a scene from the twenty-sixth poem of the *Kalevala*, and it was completed in December of 1920 (Wahlroos, 2009, see Figure 4). Immersed in his kalevalaic visions, Gallen-Kallela used an innovative method for recording folklore. He first sought to inspire Riiko by reading aloud passages from the *Kalevala*—a method widely used by post-1835 rune-collectors. As this made no impact, the artist showed Riiko his paintings, some "*Kalevala* sketches" and "the poems started to flow" (KA Aaltio, 1920). The scene pictured in *Lemminkäinen on the River of Fire* appears in Riiko's rendition of *Lemminkäinen's Song*, recorded on February 1, 1921 (SKSÄ Gallen-Kallela, 1920-1921, 510.2–3a). Only a week after Riiko had performed his first kalevala-meter poems in Kalela on the day of his arrival, Gallen-Kallela asked the Kalevala Society to send him recording equipment (KSA, 1920). The outcome was a substantial collection of kalevala-meter poems: thirty-two poems, making up approximately 2,300 lines. Riiko sang and recited incantations, charms, epic poems, ritual and lyric songs, lullabies, children's rhymes, and an autobiographical poem (SKSÄ Gallen-Kallela, 1920-1921, 508.12–511). His healing incantation of 539 lines is the most extensive kalevala-meter text ever recorded (SKSÄ Gallen-Kallela, 1920-1921, 508.14–509.1). Gallen-Kallela framed Riiko's performances by announcing the name of the singer in addition to recording or writing down contextual data. He appears to have tried to weave the texts into an epic of sorts, a *tableau vivant* incorporating all aspects of a life within the kalevalaic fictive universe, in the manner of the *Kalevala* (cf. Kaukonen, 1990, p. 174). This was his edition of the epic.

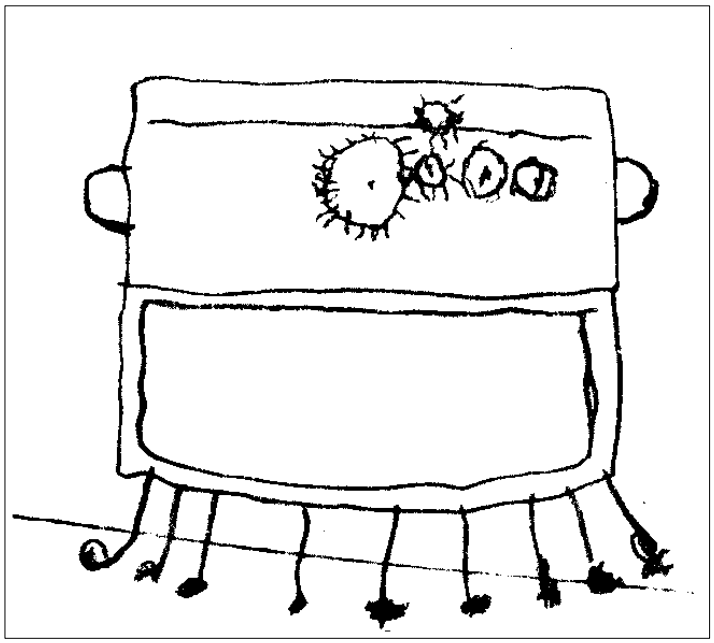

Figure 3. The Sampo, drawing by Risto Tapionkaski (Väisänen, 1932, p. 178)

The dialogue of visual and textual representation did not end here. Though Gallen-Kallela had spoken of using Riiko as a model, the only identifiable image of Riiko is a sketch on a letter to the folklorist Väinö Salminen. Gallen-Kallela incorporated an illustration of the recording session with the two men smoking, deep in conversation (see Figure 2), into his request for additional recording equipment (KRA Salminen, 1920). For the artist, Riiko above all embodied the kalevalaic spirit or "type"—not an individual whose features warranted visual rendering on canvas (Okkonen, 1949, p. 832). Gallen-Kallela, who saw ancient wisdom and magic crystallized in the *Kalevala*, was eager to learn the sage's art: "The fact that he is a sage makes him more valuable to me, and I hope to gain […] access to his magic, even if he is dignified and reticent to start with" (KA Aaltio, 1920b).

Gallen-Kallela had long been intrigued by the connection between the rune-singers' imagination and visual representation. Indeed, as an artist he faced the same dilemma when trying to give visual form to images such as the *sampo*, the mythical symbol of wealth and fertility, or characters such as Väinämöinen. The artist asserted that his aim was not to merely "illustrate the Kalevala." He believed that even for the rune-singers, the sampo was an abstract symbol, not an object. Playing with this notion, Gallen-Kallela devised a test for Riiko. He gave the rune-singer a pencil and paper, and asked Riiko to draw some objects and characters from the *Kalevala*. Gallen-Kallela timed him. Riiko did not hesitate in drawing the sampo, and the task took him thirteen minutes. (See Figure 3).The drawing shows that Riiko was familiar with the mythical sampo even if the *Sampo-Poem* was not part of his repertoire. Furthermore, Riiko's drawings are the only emic visual representations

of the world of kalevala-meter poetry ever to be documented. Picturing the sampo as a machine, Riiko renders the abstract aspects of the mythical image concrete. The miraculous power that generates wealth and growth is depicted as a set of rack wheels endlessly rotating to turn out "products" (Väisänen, 1932, pp. 177– 181). Gallen-Kallela himself decided not to depict the image of the sampo in his work, instead he chose to veil it in symbolic expression. When the linguist E. N. Setälä tried to replicate the drawing test by asking the artist for a detailed sampo-image, he resolutely refused to demystify the symbol (Setälä, 1932, pp. 362-363).

The ideological potency of images was acknowledged by the Karelian Provisional Government. In the summer of 1920, Gallen-Kallela had been asked to design the national flag and the coat of arms for the independent Karelia and its "people of Kalevala." In the eyes of the artist's close circle, this exchange was mutually profitable: the artist "took from Archangel Karelia its old knowledge and know-how," simultaneously "giving with his other hand a valuable gift to the tribe that had preserved the Kalevala-poems" (Väisänen, 1932, p. 181). The symbols were effectively used to rally Karelians around the traditional or ideological connotations provided by the *Kalevala*: the bear, slash-and-burn agriculture, and the Great Bear. Both Aaltio and Riiko gave Gallen-Kallela first-hand testimonies on the enthusiasm aroused by the inauguration of these short-lived national emblems (KA Aaltio, 1920b; GKMA, 1920).

F*igure 4. Akseli Gallen-Kallela: Lemminkäinen at the River of Fire 1920. Pastel. The Gallen-Kallela Museum. Photo: Katja Hagelstam/The Gallen-Kallela Museum.*

The Refugee's Song

The corpus recorded by Gallen-Kallela includes an autobiographical poem by Riiko that is framed with prose narration describing "conditions in Karelia beneath the yoke of the bolshies" (SKSÄ Gallen-Kallela, 1920-1921, 509.6b–510.1). Väisänen points out that although Riiko's "occasional poem" is in some places "natural," it is corrupted by "literary loans" or "influences" (Väisänen, 1932, p. 176). The poem exhibits a striving towards the kalevalaic idiom, but both its poetic meter and traditional style are stilted; indeed, at times the poem can be characterized as prose emulating verse structure (Tarkka, 1999, pp. 58–59, 86–87). Riiko had worked on the poem since the summer of 1920, whose events the work describes, to January of 1921, when the poem was recorded. In the spring of 1922, Riiko composed a sequel to the poem, employing some of its formulaic expressions (KSA, 1922).

The poem begins with the traditional opening formulae presenting the singer and pondering on the tradition of poems and the theme of the song—the diasporic experience of displacement and otherness. The narrative account of exile opens with a description of Riiko's sense of relief after having crossed the border. The poem's "self," the speaker, expresses a sense of being enveloped by sympathy. Riiko depicts suggestively a celebration that was held on October 29 for the Karelian refugees; the program included nationalistic speeches, Lutheran choral singing, piano recitals, and recitation of Aaltio's patriotic poem composed for the occasion (Tarma, 2002, vol. 20, 21). The sense of joy and togetherness was nevertheless tainted. The refugee likens himself to the landscape; both are "wretched" and estranged, pushed beyond an existential borderline. In Riiko's words, the essence of exile is simple enough: he has been displaced, removed from his own place, and translocated. Within the refugee's specific historical circumstances the sense of being on the other side of a border is concrete. The "eternal oppressor" is historical and real: Lenin's Bolshevik troops, whose advance to Karelia is described stage by stage, from Olonets to Archangel, and finally to the Kola Peninsula. The poem's collective ego, "the poor boys," "moves" and "flees" out of the way of the enemy troops.

The antagonist is described with epithets denoting the demonic otherworld: "the eternal oppressor" is metonymically portrayed as an eagle related to the mythical opponent in kalevala-meter epic poetry, the long-clawed Mistress of the North, a being capable of transforming into a bird that destroys the wealth-generating *sampo*. The eagle has other meanings, too: the Russian imperial eagle turned Red, the very same eagle used by Finnish tribal activists in their rhetoric, by Riiko in his *Lemminkäinen's Song*, and by Gallen-Kallela in his *Lemminkäinen on the River of Fire*. Gallen-Kallela's painting (see Figure 4. below) has been interpreted as an allegory of the courage demonstrated by the White army and the Finnish tribal warriors in challenging the formidable enemy. For Gallen-Kallela, Lemminkäinen was the paragon of the tribal warrior, the personification of the ancient "warrior spirit" (Gallen-Kallela-Sirén, 2001, pp. 414–415; Gallen-Kallela, 2002, p. 80). Riiko and Gallen-Kallela appeared to agree upon the ideological significance of the long-clawed eagle and the imagery of the otherworldly adversary. The Bolsheviks were threatening the core values, heritage and symbolic capital of the community—local or national.

The topography of *The Refugee's Song* resonates with images of ethnic identity, the border, and the devastation wrought by the war. Riiko outlines the overwhelming sense of foreboding and estrangement experienced by the person in exile. The loss of home invariably meant loss of identity and human dignity. The poem portrays the refugees as forest animals caught in a state of limbo: they wander endlessly in the wilderness. The images of ruins, homes burnt to ashes, starvation, and the "fall" and "annihilation" of an entire people are evocative, even though the poetic meter falters.

The "literary" influences noted by Väisänen in his review (Väisänen, 1932, p. 176) are most apparent on the ideological level. Echoing the rhetoric of Finnish nationalists, Riiko names Karelia as the *Kalevala*'s homeland. For example, Aaltio's poem recited in the celebration described at the beginning of *The Refugee's Song* represents the people of Archangel as "the root of Kaleva's people" (Tarma, 2002, vol. 20; see Wilson, 1976, p. 145). *Kalevala*-derived identity terms suggest a dual relationship to tradition; they are not emic expressions. Living in exile, with a sense of being both inside and outside the group, Riiko constructed his identity from the outside in.

Throughout Riiko's poem, mythical history, that is the intertwining of historical consciousness and mythological tradition, is politicized. In accordance with the rhetorics of the Greater Finland, the people of Finland and Karelia are defined as close kin. The poem's helping figure is the "sheltering" "tribal brother," a "companion of childhood," a child of the Mother Finland. The enemy is "the bolshie," "the eternal oppressor," the eagle or Russia set "with her long bayonets." Yet Riiko's poem is not overtly ideological or patriotic: he never

articulates a clear position on the question of Karelian self-determination. The poem underscores the status of Karelia's own ethnos, a people living spiritually separate from both Russia and Finland. According to the poem, the "site" and "place" of one's own is "on eastern land" and "in old Archangel," whereas "the great cape of Finland" is "a strange village" and "an alien country." While calling his homeland "Far-Karelia," Riiko once again changes position. The epithet suggestive of the periphery, "far," only characterized Archangel from the point of view of the administrative centers, the outsiders fighting over its destiny. Calling Archangel Far-Karelia manifests the same geo-political orientation as the concept of a "Greater Finland" and *Kalevala*-derivatives.

The Uprising

Riiko left Kalela and returned to Archangel in April 1921 (KA VALPO, 10888). In October, the Karelians who had fled the villages once again mobilized themselves into an army supported by the Finnish tribal warriors, naming their troops the Karelian Forest Guerillas (Kuussaari, 1957, pp. 172–173; Kilin, 1998). The leaders, Jalmari Takkinen, a Finn, and Vasili Levonen, a Karelian, were immediately drawn into the "kalevalaic people's" mythical history with their code names Ilmarinen and Väinämöinen (Pälsi, 1922, pp. 123–134; Jääskeläinen, 1961, p. 319). The concentration of Soviet troops in the areas occupied by the guerillas quickly brought the uprising to an end. The Finnish volunteers and the guerilla troops evacuated the local population as they retreated. The border was closed in February 1922, leaving 11,000 Karelian refugees in Finland (Nygård, 1980, pp. 75, 79).

After taking part in the uprising, Riiko once again took refuge in Finland. He spent years with his daughter Tatjana and his son Tero, supporting himself by working at odd jobs. In March 1922, he applied for money from the Kalevala Society. With the letter, he enclosed a sequel to the *Refugee's Song*, an account of the uprising. In December 1925, he was granted amnesty. Soon after his arrival in Pirttilahti, Soviet officials began harassing him. Riiko was accused of having contacts across the border and of spying for the Finns. During the interrogations, the illiterate man was duped into signing a contract to spy for the Russians. When he was forced to visit his son Tero in Finland to recruit him as well, Finnish officials made plans to use both men as double agents. Tero withdrew from the endeavor, and after being interrogated by the secret police, Riiko was taken into custody and sent back to the Soviet side of the border. (KA VALPO 10888, 10857.) According to oral history, Soviet officials caught Riiko at the border zone after a failed attempt to turn invisible—an ankle unaffected by his magic led to the sage's capture (SKSÄ Tarkka, 1995, Ib).

The Politics of Rune-Singing

Risto Bogdanov, a folklore collector and native of Vuokkiniemi parish, prepared a report on the state of rune-singing in the late 1920s. He pointed out that changes in the worldview and demographic structure, as well as literacy, and the influence of Finnish songs all had contributed to the rapid decline of the rune-singing culture (*Kymmenen vuotta Neuvosto-Karjalaa*, 1930, p. 279). Bogdanov, a famous partisan and a true Soviet hero, did not regard collectivization and ideological indoctrination as causes for the devastation of the social structures constitutive of the rune-singing culture. Nevertheless, a new day for kalevala-meter poetry was dawning. In the 1930s, when Maxim Gorky, the father of socialist realism, contrived the notion of folklore figures as positive socialist heroes, the Soviet regime initiated the deployment of folklore in the building of socialist culture. A new kind of tradition was invented just as Stalin's terror against the "nationalistic" elements of the population accelerated (Jalava, 1990, pp. 24–25, 39; Oinas, 1978, pp. 78–79).

New poems were fabricated to extol the Soviet system. The party pressure was both explicit and indirect, but it primarily functioned by granting rewards for ideologically appropriate compositions in the kalevala meter and new "class-conscious" interpretations of old poems (Alin, 1988, p. 50; Oinas, 1978). Kalevala-meter poems such as *Thanks to the Party* and *The Hero of Socialist Work* only survived in the written media—for example, in the anthology *Laulu Uudesta Sammosta* [The Song of the New Sampo] (Perttunen, 1959). Many of the Soviet-inspired composers of epic poetry were natives to the kalevala-meter rune-singing culture (Alin, 1988, p. 62; Kaukonen, 1980, p. 225; Leino, 1975, pp. 43–44).

Riiko, blemished by his history of western contacts and stigmatized as a political kulak, did not qualify as a representative of the people. Oral history indicates that Riiko and his wife spent the years of Stalinist terror at labor camps in northern Archangel and Siberia (PA Runolinna, 1957; PA Tarkka, 1997). Returning home in the late 1930s, they found their house in ruins. Three of their children were now residing in Finland, but the youngest, Paavali, had matured into a notable cultural figure: he operated the village movie projector (PA Runolinna, 1957; SKSÄ Tarkka 1995, I).

During the Second World War, or the Continuation War between Finland and the

Soviet Union, the parish of Vuokkiniemi was occupied by Finnish forces for two years, from the summer of 1941 to the summer of 1943. Paul Sjöblom, a war correspondent of the Associated Press, landed in Pirttilahti with the first troops. When he happened upon some people making hay, a man with a bushy beard acted as the villagers' spokesman, introducing himself as Riiko Kallio: "Back in the old days, I was the painter Gallen-Kallela's handyman on the Finnish side. He used me as a model, too…" (Sjöblom, 1993, p. 27). Even though the old identity was relevant in the new context, the name Tapionkaski was long forgotten.

Figure 5. Riiko Kallio at the Kalevala Day celebration in Vuokkiniemi, 1942. The coat of arms designed by Gallen-Kallela on the right (The Finnish Defence Forces SA-photo 75140).

The occupying administration's bureau of education collaborated closely with folklorists (Wilson, 1976, pp. 192–194) and had a clear policy on tradition. The purposeful cherishing of traditions was intended to unify the tribal brothers and to underscore the greatness of the past. The Karelians had to be weaned of the "crawling serf mentality" characteristic of the Slavs, because only members of a tribe proud of their nationality were ready to join their brothers (KA SA ItäKarSE, T 3013, T 3017). It was precisely the notion of shared traditions and the *Kalevala* that was used in advancing the mission of spiritually uniting the Finns and Karelians, and the bureau of education dedicated itself to organizing celebrations for Kalevala Day. In the quest for "talent" to serve the purposes of propaganda, folklore performers were ranked hierarchically: the most important sang kalevala-meter epics about "Väinämöinen, Ilmarinen, and Lemminkäinen, our nation's ancient heroes and gods," the least important were "folk healers and magicians," that is to say, sages (KA SA ItäKarSE, T 3016, T 3013). By contrast, the local reputation of those well-versed in tradition such as Riiko, depended on magical and healing skills, not on epic singing (Borenius, 1904, p. 475; PA Tarkka, 1997).

In their search for men and women representing the people and embodying its heritage, the officials also found Riiko Kallio. The documents consistently refer to Riiko with the same epithet: he is a "rune-singer," a bard of epic poems, not an inconsequential sage (KA SA ItäKarSE, T 3013). Riiko was recruited to perform at the Kalevala Day celebrations organized in Vuokkiniemi on February 28, 1942. Judging by the photographs taken on that occasion, Riiko appears to have been a guest of honor (see Figure 5). Once on stage, he "made an attempt at rune-singing, but his memory had already begun to fail him" (KRA Kaukonen, 1943, p. 3). The failed performance was not documented in the army's report.

The Last Bard

The story of Riiko Kallio's death persists in the memory of Vuokkiniemi elders. While the demise of any sage was viewed as ominous, the circumstances of Riiko's death were particularly storyable: "the fierce wise man" drowned and was found entangled in fishing nets, shocking those who were raising the nets (Virtaranta, 1958, pp. 46-47). Riiko's funeral in August of 1942, the first Lutheran funeral service in the area, stirred great resentment among the Orthodox community (KA SA ItäKarSE, T 5695, T 5685, T 3013). Aino Lähde, of Pirttilahti, still recalls a dream she had as a little girl, just before Riiko's funeral: the deceased orchestrated his own funerary procession sitting on a carriage, singing and swaying rhythmically back-and-forward, like a caricature of kalevalaic rune-singing, marking the end of an era (PA Tarkka, 1997).

While still alive, Riiko was considered a liminal figure, "as if he didn't exist here at all." Even at his death he remained in a state of limbo: according to Karelian folk belief, those buried with improper ritual procedures became "placeless souls," trapped between two worlds, demarcating the border of the living and the dead (Pentikäinen, 1968). The concrete expression of statuslessness was the unremitting wandering of the soul, a diasporic experience taken to its

extreme. The connotations of displacement and placelessness resided deep in the mythical consciousness.

Väinö Kaukonen, who visited Pirttilahti after Riiko had already died, described him as "the last male rune-singer"—after him, only "the old grannies" sang kalevala-meter poems (KRA Kaukonen, 1943, pp. 3–4). Having lost its key cultural position in the local community, the rune-singing culture was pushed to the margins, the stages and ideological folklore publications.

Riiko was known as a reluctant performer unwilling to share his knowledge. His stance was characteristic of a sage, for something of the magical efficacy of incantations was diminished if conveyed to others. (SKSÄ Gallen-Kallela, 1920-1921, 509.2c; Perttu, 1978, p. 126). Riiko also revealed another reason for holding on to his knowledge: he refused to initiate his son Tero into a sage's secret knowledge, because he did not consider him "good enough as a human being" (PA Runolinna, 1995; SKSÄ Tarkka, 1995, IIa). The sage, because of his or her powers, was placed under extraordinary moral pressure whenever the community faced threats from within or without. Magical words were powerful weapons. Sharing the knowledge with outsiders that did not share the belief in the magical power of the word, however, was unproblematic. In exile Riiko's knowledge was recontextualized as something kalevalaic. It became an asset by providing him with a new status, shelter, and even work, albeit temporarily.

Riiko Kallio lived a life that was simultaneously emblematic and outstanding—"the exceptional normal," as the microhistorians would put it (Levi, 1994, p. 109; Ginzburg & Poni, 1991, p. 8). As a Karelian of his time, he had to face the lot of those on the frontier: endless waves of political pressure from the East and the West, resulting in exile. He witnessed the unraveling of his community and his family. He survived military campaigns, a civil war, a revolution, the gulag, and eventually two occupations by alien forces. We are today able to follow his tracks thanks to various members of the cultural elite, the soldiers, lawyers, artists, professors and interrogators who altered and documented the course of his life. As Carlo Ginzburg and Carlo Poni (1991) have written, "The thread of Ariadne that leads the researcher through the archival labyrinth is the same thread that distinguishes one individual from another in all societies known to us: the name" (Ginzburg & Poni, 1991, p. 5). In Riiko's case, the thread has many strands. His status changed along with the personal names and performer-denominations used by him and of him, indicating both a radical change in the culture he mastered as well as in the shifting relations between him and those addressing him. The name used by Karelians, Smötky's Riiko, was a derisive nickname that ran in the family of famous sages (Kaukonen, 1984, p. 38); Risto Tapionkaski was a kalevalaic bard and a guerilla; Grigor Kallijeff was a Russian and Soviet citizen.

Never fully accepted by the literate culture with its notions of authenticity, ambiguously situated in his own cultural environment, and politically trapped on the border zone as a potential double agent and considered suspect by both sides, Riiko embodies one of the dilemmas of folklore. Folklore is a symbolic construct mediating two cultural orders, the folk and the non-folk. As the romanticizing gaze is often directed from the centers of culture to the periphery, the romantic folk and its traditions are likely to be found on precarious border zones. In this mediating practice sensitivity to the aesthetic ideals and evaluations of the holders of tradition is the only way to avoid anachronism and colonizing our past, or the past of those we are studying. Riiko Kallio's corpus testifies that sticking to dichotomies such as literary versus oral, traditional versus individual, and authentic versus inauthentic prevents us from seeing the full scope of living, changing, and even dying traditions.

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