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Summary

This paper analyzes the archaic Sami yoik texts based mostly on the archives of the Institute of Musicology at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (yoiks collected by Szomjas-Schiffert). These lyrical texts were studied only marginally, as they many times contain mostly – sometimes solely – “nonsense” elements. These can hardly be studied with the methods of ethnomusicology or literature. Pragmatic view is very important during this kind of analyzing process, as it is also necessary to use the methods of the communication theory, linguistics and other sciences like semiotics, language philosophy etc. The conclusion is that there is a very important meaning level of these nonsense words used in yoiks, which can not be easily defined with a method of only one or two disciplines.

“Few words are sung in it”
Questions of Methodology in Studying Sami Yoik Texts

Introduction

After looking into general definitions and problems of classification of the yoik, this paper concentrates on the textual level of this genre. The corpus of my analysis is based on the western type of yoiking tradition, consisting mainly of short sentences squeezed in between filler syllables and particles. These linguistic panels were studied only marginally, as they are composed mostly – sometimes solely – from “nonsense” elements. In general as well, such elements can hardly be studied only with the methods of ethnomusicology or literature. Pragmatic view is very important during this kind of analyzing process, as methods of the communication theory, linguistics, semiotics, language philosophy etc. In its conclusion this paper points out that the three semiotic levels (rhythm, melody and lyrics) are ruled by strict hierarchy, in which textual elements have a subservient role. Further more by examining the cultural contexts we will demonstrate that textual elements, just as melodies, are very much controlled by the community.

1. Definitions of the yoik

It is difficult to give a brief definition of the Sami yoik, taking the diversity of its applications and functions in account. According to the briefest description, yoik is the archaic folksong of the Sami people. The category ‘folksong’ is used here in a broad term, approximately the same way Lajos Vargyas defined it. He describes Hungarian folksongs this way: “(...) everything belongs to the category of Hungarian folksongs that is accepted [as a folksong] and varied by the Hungarian people in a creative way, or is created by them entirely. Everything the community accepted and developed [in this genre] as its own” (Vargyas 2002). What follows are some generally accepted definitions and descriptions of the yoik as introduced by musicologists, folklorists and literary critics.

According to Israel Ruong “The traditional yoik is remembering someone or something. (...) It is by no means a mechanical learning process, since the yoik is always associated with expressions of feeling, which is often forceful and impressive.” (Ruong 1969: 38)

“In the Sami milieu yoik is a necessary method of expression in everyday life and is used when there is something to tell that would otherwise sound brusque or awkward or is completely inexpressible.” (Jernsletten 1978: 116–118) Here a reference is made to an alternate system of communication beside speech.

According to Matti Vainio: “There is definitely something in yoiks preserved from the most archaic music of mankind, or at least from the musical traditions of arctic peoples. It applies mostly to the style of performance (...) For the outsider, it’s almost impossible to repeat an archaic yoik however simple and straightforward it sounds. (...) the Sami songs are depictive in the musical sense (...) and are mostly pentatonic in nature. Sami songs always have some strictly defined subject matter which is depicted from the point of view chosen by the author and the performer (...) But it is not simply about depiction: the Sami singer aspires to encompass the whole of his song’s subject: he does not sing about the mountain, but he grasps the essence of the mountain with his song. Sami songs reflect the close, intimate relation between the Sami and the nature that surrounds them (...) Sami songs are musical miniatures. The performer portrays his subject with words, tunes, rhythm, facial expressions, bodily movements and the style of the performance. (...) The text of the yoik is of little significance. A typical feature is the use of repetitive, sometimes meaningless words, fictitious syllables or nonsense words (nun-nun-nun, lul-lul-lul)”. (Vainio 1991: 55-56) Apart from further emphasizing the peculiarity of the language, another significant piece of information is revealed in this definition. The yoik is never about anything or anyone in general. It is assigned to a designated subject in every instance, since precise expression is a basic feature of this genre.

“Yoik is the most peculiar lyrical genre of Sami folklore. Regarding its use it is the most prevalent and ever productive form of improvisation. It represents the most archaic layer of European folksong tradition. The Sami singer expresses his emotions and thoughts, the subject of which in this improvisational genre can be animals, plants, humans, objects or events. (...) In yoiks, the verbal text is (...) less relevant. The real message, the code to the meaning is conveyed by the rhythm of the yoik, and the melody consisting of [mostly] small musical intervals, which should be taken into account when contemplating the communicative functions of this genre. It is for that reason that with respect to the preservation of this tradition the singing style, the peculiarities of tune and rhythm take priority to the text itself. This way the yoik remains a genre open for improvisation by virtually anyone.” (Domokos 1995: 171–172) Although I will question the argumentation about the significance of the

texts in this tradition, this definition is very thorough and precise. The communicative function comes into focus again. Furthermore, we can see that out of the three semiotic levels featured in folksongs (verbal speech, poetic meter and musical melody), the latter one takes on the primary role in conveying and expressing the message.

2. Classification of the yoik

2.1. On the basis of its topic and function

Yoiks lack a generally accepted classification of genres and subgenres. Classification on the basis of topics defines four main groups: the majority of these songs are about humans, but there are also animal-yoiks, nature-yoiks and ritual songs. Classification on the basis of function has also been attempted. In general, it can be claimed that the principles the classifications are based upon are extremely heterogeneous. Many authors have considered the possibility of classifying primitive lyric genres, but unfortunately it is not possible to go into details now. Regarding the yoik, it can be stated that the categories of literature or the lyric genres of folklore are inapplicable. Even categories aimed specifically at primitive lyric genres cannot work in general, as they are only adapted to a particular culture. Greenway's model is an excellent example of that. In his 1964 book, *Literature among the Primitives*, he differentiates the following five subgroups of lyrical forms:

1. simple exclamation
2. descriptive poetry (the poet depicts a subject that had affected him emotionally, in order to recreate the same experience in his audience)
3. narrative poetry (description of an event, in which the epic element is subordinated to conveying the mood)
4. lyrical expression of an idea
5. euphonic poetry (poem, in which the words are – partly or wholly – meaningless, the pleasant sounding and onomatopoeia expressing the emotions)

Although at the first glance the category of euphonic poetry might seem appropriate for the yoik to be placed in, functionally it is not acceptable; none of the distinguished five categories fit the yoik properly. The same incompatibility appeared when trying to apply the theory of the “sacral and profane” (e.g. Elkin's, Meletinsky's or Eliade's works), the so called “functional typology” of Tibor Bodrogi, or the theory of Vilmos Voigt concerning classification, based on “occasions of performing the kinds of genres”. The emic categories may also be utilized while processing

the material, as many researchers do, following the principle that states “at the description of the oral tradition of a people, the most evident approach is to use the categories inherent in their culture.” Unfortunately, the Sami did not provide this particular aid.

2.2. On the basis of its topography

The *juoiggos* ‘yoik’ is a collective term well known in this field of study and while the ability of “yoiking”, the performance of the yoik is expressed with many different verbs, evaluated with a multitude of adjectives, no other ways of categorization – apart from the previously introduced three geographically distinct terms – exist in either of the Sami dialects. The aforementioned approach on the basis of topography of tradition and the passing on of tradition might be more successful in producing suitable categories. Although the *vuolle*, *luohti* and *leudd* imply material differences as well, as it has been stated previously, these are rough categories with considerable stylistic overlaps. This emphasized the need for a more precise categorisation, the opportunity of which I found while analysing the process of passing down tradition.

2.3. On the basis of its geneology

Based on the process of passing down tradition, I distinguished three groups of yoik: (1) yoik folksongs, i.e. the yoiks passed down from one generation to the next (yoiks connected to the belief system, personal yoiks of people who passed away, nature- and animal-yoiks, yoiks connected to special occasions), (2) personal yoiks (of living people), (3) improvised yoiks. The yoiks of the first group behave as folksongs in the community, have many variants and are geographically widespread. These are passed down through generations mostly in fixed forms, often conveying general knowledge important for the whole community. There are personal yoiks the subject of which is no longer known by anyone, such as the Gabin Aslak personal yoik from the Szomjas-Schiffert collection, which is a “song well known near and far” (Szomjas-Schiffert 1996: 34). The preservation of yoik folksongs throughout generations is also supported by the fact that the meaning of certain words and expressions are unknown even to the singers, but they sing the songs the same way their parents and grandparents did (Szomjas-Schiffert 1996: 47). The group of personal yoiks is a transitional genre, both unalterable and changeable.² On one hand, it has to stay unaltered for the community to unambiguously recognize the person in the yoik; on the other hand, personal yoiks live and change along with their subjects. When a child gets his first yoiks, the *mánáidvuodaluohties*, his personality is immature

and unsteady. Even these yoiks are descriptive to a certain extent, but their primary role is to help the child acquire the ability to yoik. As the child matures and his personality develops, new yoiks are made for him based on the previous ones, until he becomes a fully matured adult (Demant-Hatt 1913: 53; Edström 1978: 102; Jernsletten 1978, Järvinen 1999).

3. The textual level of the yoik

3.1. Some indigenous parallels

We have to be aware that no typical texts are assignable to the categories discussed here; categorisation on the basis of lyrics is impossible, apart from on the basis of the proportion of meaningful and nonsense elements in a given yoik text. Since the yoiks presented in this study are from the western part of the tradition just like the Szomjas collection, no epic texts are discussed here. Almost the entire corpus consists of short sentences at the most, squeezed in between filler syllables and particles.

Following the introduction, it should no longer be surprising that the text is always in free verse, not constricted by meter and rhyme (Vainio 1991, 56). The text (either the panels or the meaningful parts) is subordinated to the rhythm of the song. Usually there is no congruence between the cyclically repetitive melodic motifs and the textual elements. The texts, often overly compact and semantically incomprehensible for the outsider, carry complicated meanings within the community, conveying multitudes of stories. Many of the texts do not even contain words of denotative meaning. Introversion such as this can be found in other musical cultures as well; according to Nettl for instance, the translation and interpretation of the songs of the Blackfoot-Indians is practically impossible (Nettl 1989, 89.). Numerous examples of syllables complementing or punctuating the lyrics are to be found in Ob-Ugric, Samoyed and Mordvinic folklore as well. It is for this reason that in the first phase of processing the material, I searched for similar textual tradition. I was looking for texts consisting entirely of, or dominated by panels; the existence of these is implied in Greenway's collective term of euphonic poetry. The aforementioned example by B. Nettl as well as a Kwakiutl boat-song collected by Boas fits the requirements (Rockenbauer 2002: 178):

Aw, ha ya ha ya há
 ha ya he ya á
 he ya ha ya á
 A, ha ya ha y ahá
 aw, ha ya he y ahá
 he ya ha ya hei
 y ahá
 h áhá wo wo wo.

Although several examples have been found, none of them were accompanied by analysis, leaving only the documentation to rely on. The descriptions mention that despite their lack of specific lyrics, these songs convey a multitude of stories to initiated ears. However, the question is not whether nonsense texts like these are also to be found elsewhere – the obvious answer to that is yes. The main question is in what proportion are these texts present in the song repertoire of a given community.

3.3. The concept of the linguistic panels

The texts of Sami yoiks frequently contain elements that are linguistically difficult or even impossible to comprehend, even finding a name for them presented a problem. Firstly, the conceptual confusion had to be cleared up. This leads the introduction of the term “panel” as the need for a collective term seemed necessary. It refers to words recognisable from spoken language belonging to different word categories that had lost their meaning and function, as well as to unrecognisable phonological formations. The admittedly scant academic material concerning this subject is conspicuously vague in regard to their naming, categorisation and the discussion of their function. There were several attempts to categorize seemingly meaningless sound sequences and the words distanced from their everyday meaning and function that structure the text of the yoik – most of these categorisations were not linguistic –, but each of these has a weak point, which is why they will not be used here. A collection of the most frequent names for the panels is presented here: “nonsensical words” (Vainio 1991), “syllables; particles and linguistically unidentifiable elements” (Valkepää 1984), “particle” (Nickel 1994), “filler word, refrain” (Keresztes 1983), “filler syllables” (Szomjas-Schiffert 1996), “filler words” (Kovács 1996), “refrain, refrain-particle; filler element, syllable” (Hajdú 1975, 1982), “rhythmical filler word” (Steinitz 1975 [regarding the similar phenomena in Ob-Ugric folklore texts]), “stressing particle, particle” (Domokos 1995). In the Sami vernacular, panels are called *smávvasanit*, “small words”. Labels

emphasising meaninglessness are inappropriate as being devoid of meaning is not a general feature of these words. In fact, many of them are real and meaningful words (even if they are distanced from their original meaning or lost it entirely). Even the words seemingly lacking semantic content bear a communicative role within the initiated community (even if, in the dimension of the perceptive-comprehensive process the information is interpretable in the field of association only). Labels like refrain and particle are also inadequate, and despite their originating in two different fields of study, both can be rejected on the same ground: they fit only a subset instead of the whole of the studied objects. Generally, the use of filler words is dictated by the need to support prosody, or other metrical-rhythmical and/or stylistic requirements of a genre. However, in the case of the Sami yoik their role is more significant. Labels that include the word 'filler' are problematic since the elements discussed here are not simply metrical or stylistic material to fill the cracks in a wall consisting of real word “bricks”. Rather, they are panels replacing bodies of text that can take on the role of creating the lyrics of the yoik without the involvement of denotative words. This, as a linguistically formed message, is also part of the transmittable, recallable oral tradition. However, in the name of practicality, a distinction is desired between this and yoik texts consisting of the meaningful words of the vernacular (as the Sami themselves consciously draw a distinction between the two kinds of texts, the *dajahus* < *dadjat* 'say' and the *smávvásanit*). The text filler and complementary panels are incorporated into the texts, they do not exist independently. The use of the former is the most comparable to that of the modal particles; the use of the latter is similar to that of the refrains. The triple partitioning is functional, it does not imply a material distinction, which means that the same panel can fulfil the role of text replacement, filler or complement, depending on the context. (Tamás 2003)

3.4.1 Linguistic panels in the yoik

The origin of linguistically identifiable panels featuring in the texts can be particles, clitics, conjunctions, adverbs, copulas, onomatopoetic verb forms, but the majority of the panels consist of elements that are linguistically hardly or not identifiable. (Kantola 1984: 61) This proportion is exemplified by the following text:

Na Inkuna kandda ko lul-lun-ko-lul-lu	Na Inkun boy ko lul-lun-ko-lul-lu
ko Skadjavarri iea pahcam ko juo de	when he left Skadjavarri ko juo de
čirodit dam ko Inkuna kandda ko	they mourned ko for that Inkun boy ko
lu-lin ko lul-lu ko vuordašit juo ko	lu-lin ko lul-lu ko they waited juo ko
nun de čabbah- ko mojih vel juo ko	nun de for his beautiful smile vel juo ko
Inkun-kandda ko lail-lail-lail-lu.	Inkun-boy ko lail-lail-lail-lu.
Na vaibamehtun ko njolgi leä maid ko	Na tireless as the reindeer calf is ko
Inkuna kandast ko lul-lul-lul-lu.	Inkun boy's ko lul-lul-lul-lu
Na uhca Skaiddaško keäčist keähčai	Na small Skajdda run around
leä njolgalam juo ko vaibbah-čerabmak	back and forth ko reindeer calf got tired
ko lul-lul-lul-lu ko lul-lul-lul-lu	ko lul-lul-lul-lu ko lul-lul-lul-lu
ko lul-lul-ah juo ko mojik čabbok	ko lul-lul-ah juo ko the smile will be beautiful again
ko Inkuna juo ko oidno vel juo	when we can see Inkun yet juo
ko luil-luil-luil-luil-lu ko luil-luil-luil-lu.	ko luil-luil-luil-luil-lu ko luil-luil-luil-lu

Markings

Framed: panels with original meanings that are insertable into the text, but their use differs from that of the vernacular (in word order, redundancy)

Half bold: panels

Linguistically identifiable panels in the text, and their general use:

go 'when, while, as, if, because' (subordinating conjunction); interrogative particle

de 'really, certainly' (sentence initial particle, generally precedes a positive answer to a polar question)

e.g.: *Máhhtágo son sámegiela?* 'Does he speak Sami?'

De máhhtá. 'Certainly he does.'

jo, juo 'yes, of course' (this particle is originally the same as the adverb *juo* 'already', the function of which is to emphasize, and usually appears together with other particles)

e.g.: *Váldde juoba gáfe!* 'Drink your coffee already!'

Na juo! 'Ah! Of course!'

na 'so, well, yes, of course' (sentence initial particle, gives the sentence a kind of „upbeat”)

(K-P. Nickel 1994)

As it has been referred to in the introduction, part of the panels creating, filling or complementing the texts is borrowed from everyday speech (e.g. particles, modal particles, copulas and onomatopoetic verb forms that facilitate discourse). In the yoik the meaning and function of

these words is often modified, and may even differ entirely from that used in everyday speech.³ Particles that can, according to their context, also be interpreted in multiple ways in everyday speech, i.e. meaningful words and filler words, are the most frequently used elements of the yoik texts that favour ambiguity.

Panels can otherwise be meaningful words that lost their substance in regard to the song, or words of neutral meaning. Occasionally onomatopoeic verbs are also used in similar function in folkloric texts. In the next excerpt, the verb *šuvvat* ‘to hiss, moan, howl’ fulfils the role of complementing the text and providing its continuation as a refrain would do so words *nu* and *go* are also recognizable, which were also introduced through vernacular examples and are used here as panels.

Nu-jaja nuu-nu, nu-jaja nuu-nu	Nu-jaja nuu-nu, nu-jaja nuu-nu
Nu-jaja nuu-nu, nu-jaja nuu-nu	Nu-jaja nuu-nu, nu-jaja nuu-nu
Go nu-jaja nuu-nu, nu-jaja nuu.	Go nu-jaja nuu-nu, nu-jaja nuu.
Giddat jo viimmat, jiekŋa lea mannan.	Finally it’s spring, the ice is gone.
Johnson nu hurada fatnas geahčen.	The Johnson [motor] thus roars in the back of the boat.
Go hurada hurrá. Hurada nuu.	It hummily hums. Humming nuu.
Šuvada šuvva. Šuvita šuvva.	Hisses, howls. Hisses, howls.
Šuvada šuvva. Šuvita šuvva.	Hisses, howls. Hisses, howls.
Go šuvada šuvva. Šuvita šuu.	How it hisses, howls. Hisses sss.

(Järvinen 1999: 59)

I did not consider the last three lines of the text to be panels as they seemed to be meaningful verbs fitting into the context. Having checked these verb forms in the dictionary, it became apparent that the entire refrain is a verbal play creating associations. The word ‘go’ at the beginning of the second line has entirely lost its meaning and features as an element providing upbeat among the text complementary panels. Despite the similar function in the sixth line the original meanings are filtering through.⁴

Péter Hajdú has recognized the variations of grammatical morphemes in Yurak epic songs. The pre-existent melody and rhythmic structure integrating the words of the song is a typical feature here as well. As the lines of melody are longer, the expansion of the lines of text is provided by filler elements. These are the following:

- filler words particles
- filler syllables

- vowel alternations
- reduplication of word
- distortion or omission of the grammatical morphemes of the text (Hajdú 1982: 421)

Lappalainen in one of his studies draws attention to the irregular word forms in yoik lyrics, e.g. the orderly grade alteration form of *vivva* 'son-in-law' is *viva*, which can appear as *vivasa* and *vivasasa* in the yoik lyrics, too. The form *vivasa* might have been modelled after the grade alternation of odd-syllable nouns, though even-syllable nouns cannot take this form in the spoken language. In the case of *vivasasa*, reduplication can be found, which, as a grammatical category, is missing from the Sami language. These extra syllables over the normal syllable count results in the unusual richness of vowels in the yoiks compared to the ordinary language (Lappalainen 1984: 55–60).

In poetry, it is common that “the poet takes away nonexistent stems from real words, sometimes combining them; he adds nominal suffixes to verbs, verbal suffixes to nouns, without all of this disturbing the grammatical correctness of sentences. (...) furthermore, through the splitting and combining of a few words, through the mixing of syllables, new and surprising sound sequences appear, the meaning of which are accessible to an open mind.” (Hajdú 1982: 409)

In the development of the use of panels, the semantic circumstances in which they found their places must have played a significant role. Based partly on the Saussurian theory, Lévy-Strauss claims that “linguistic signs are arbitrary a priori, but not a posteriori. ... It is not at all certain, whether ... the arbitrary phonetic choices, compared to the designatum, will have an effect later, if not on the general meaning of words, but on their places in certain semantic circumstances.” (Lévi-Strauss 2001: 81) In other words: if “we accept that certain sound groups are not a priori predestined to refer to certain objects, it is still possible that these sound groups, once accepted, start to influence the semantic content with their unique tones.” (Lévi-Strauss 2001: 82) This determinism presents itself on phonetic and vocabulary levels. As the studies of synaesthesia on the level of phonetics discovered, we associate sounds with colours and shapes spontaneously. Poetry makes instinctive use of this phenomenon, as, for example, Mallarmé was known to complain about the French words *jour* 'day' and *nuit* 'night' having opposite phonetic values to their meaning. The synaesthesia working on a phonological level may provide basis for a singer to choose certain particles he finds fitting to the topic and melody of his yoik. This phonological synaesthesia becomes obvious

examining the following poems, as we look at some literary examples of the different methods of poetic language creation.

Weöres Sándor: *Sound groups*

(a) *Soft, hot sounds*

Ange amban ulanojje
balanga janegol
mó hítula e mante
u kuaháj imanan...

(b) *Quick, bubbling, joyous sounds*

Vikulili hejriri sziggaga
mukofoki kupukájlili vikufuja...

(c) *Surging, radiating sounds*

Khunáj áfháiszt hái mengoh
álkén ovái láí!

Aldo Palazzeschi: *E lasciatemi divertire*

V. Kamenszkij: *Zsongljor (Zsonglör)*

Tri tri tri

Zgara – amba

fru fru fru

Zgara – amba

ihu ihu ihu

Zgara – amba

uhi uhi uhi!

Amb

(...)

Sar, sor, sür, sir,

Fara fara fara fa

Csin, drah, tam, dzzz.

tara tara tara ta

para para para pa

lara lara lara la!

(...)

In the works created by linguistic playfulness and cleverness, occasionally a kind of quiet irony manifests itself, which is why these examples were chosen. The Sami often employ this attitude about the yoik, as the playfulness, the parody and irony is often implied in their yoik texts distanced from their everyday language. According to Juhan Högman, reindeer herder, yoik is a caricature in which not only good characteristics are presented but the bad are ridiculed: “yoik is like the fur coat turned inside out. At first, only the nice, smooth fur is visible on

the surface. But as fur coats are, if turned inside out, there is no fur at all on the other side.” (Järvinen 1999: 162) In the personal yoiks, ironic, satiric and parodic characterisations are favoured. Exaggeration and hyperbolism is allowed, as within the community the meaning of these poetic tools will not be misunderstood: “everyone knows and feels how things really are” (Saarinen 1990: 81). Yoiks belong to small communities: the members of the group know each other, they are in constant contact, they grow up and live in the same milieu, so they always know how to interpret the lyrics, and the ironic depiction and parody is not a cause to take offence. (Ruogto 1981: 28)

3.4.2 Spoken language, prosody and the yoik

The instinctively practical choice of using panels independent from spoken language should also be discussed in a phonological-phonetic framework, since these phonological formations (which are not real words or forms derived from those) consist predominantly of the vowels *a*, *o* and *u*, and the consonants *l*, *j*, and *n*. In the panels chosen from the spoken language, the dominance of these sounds is also a typical feature, e.g. *na*, *nai*, *jo*, *juo*, *vuoi*, *lea*, *lei*. In the sonorancy scale of speech sounds, these are at the top. (Kassai 1998: 127) Thus the meaning of instinctive practicality refers to the way the Sami people form the panels from sounds that carry further, enhancing their ability to communicate through great distances in the tundra. This is supported by singing in deep tones, as deeper sounds are more perceivable in the distance with more overtones during singing. It is noteworthy that the ideal of yoik-singing is associated with deep sounds for the Sami, the male voice thus being more suitable for the task. The yoik was an extremely important communicative tool between Sami men shepherding in great distances from each other, so the “panels of report” had to be consisting of phonemes able to cover that distance. According to Nils-Aslak Valkeapää, Sami poet and writer, not only the individual semantic properties of the words take part in conveying the message of the yoik, but the entire prosodic structure. The linguistically unidentifiable elements composing most of the panels – e.g. *valla-valla*, *vaja haja*, *lai le*, *loilo*, *loilá*, *lolai*, *loo*, *lolloloo*, *lul-luu*, *reiun loilo*, *na*, *nuu-nuu nunnu*, *njollo* ... – are possibly there to ensure the continuity of the melody. These “syllables” create the clear base of the musical structure. (Valkeapää 1984)

This reasoning by Valkeapää proposes questions about prosody. The word prosody is meant as the connection of melody and lyrics. The adjustment of text and melody can be examined from two viewpoints: (1) what kind of melodies go with what kind of texts; (2) how the melody

adjusts in minute details to the text attached to it, that is, prosody⁵ (Vargyas 2002: 131). Yoik texts, much like the genre of laments, are improvised. Thus, as the text is not the starting point, the melody is not forced on the text, but a text is developed for the preciously set rhythm and melody structure of the yoik. What further complicates the problem from the point of view of the text is that the *dajahus* is constantly interrupted by particles. After studying the music sheets and the lyrics, as well as listening to numerous recordings, György Szomjas, ethnomusicologist, and myself reached the conclusion that the Sami yoik often ignores the natural stress patterns of the language. As it is, the musically and rhythmically stressed sounds do not fit the places of stress in natural speech, while the normally unstressed syllables often get unusual length and emphasis. (Tamás 2001: 302–303)⁶ All of this indicates that the interjection of panels between real pieces of text does not facilitate the correct placing of stress. On the contrary, it dislocates stress from its intended place. In comparison with other peoples’ folklore, it seems to be a feature unique to the Sami. According to Éva Schmidt, “Quite a complicated set of tools – the majority being filler syllables – ensure the harmony of stresses belonging to the musical, linguistic and metrical levels. The placing of filler syllables is not by any chance incidental or arbitrary.” It is important to note that this is a topic waiting for processing, as – according to my present knowledge – there is no study examining this feature of the yoiks.

4. Examples

Now we shall have a look at two specific examples from the collection of the Hungarian scholar György Szomjas-Schiffert. My goal is to exemplify that the panels are not there to assist the metric balance and harmonizing of stresses. This phenomenon is an important feature of the Sami performing style, which may include the deliberate weakening of text, keeping the attention of the audience, playfulness and virtuosity on the part of the performer.

The prosodically problematic sequences have been circled, and their texts are taken out to the margins of the musical notes.

juoiggastán

oainnán

dieđán áhte

oainnán

dieđán áhte

oainnán

Jouni Aslakpoika Jomppanen
TRE A-K 543 /1961 SKNA 1340

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Juoig - gas - tan mun vel jo loo go dop - pe meah - cis

vuo - ja - san ja oain - nán njoammi - la loo lo loo go

loo lo loo lo lo lo loo te de mun dieđán ah - te

dat eai manna heaittoge beaivi bar - gu loo loo loo loo lo

loo lo lo ja go mun njoammi - la oainnán de lee mun gai le

vuonán vuojan - hear - gi manan de nuu nu nu nuu nuu nuu nuu

nuu nu nuu nu nuu nu nuu nu Muht go mun oainnán dan oam

nuoh - ta - min te de lee mun die - dāo - ah - te de meah - coe -

bohccuid gáiv - nan nu nuu nu nuu nu nuu nu nuu nu

nuu nu Ja go mun oainnán dan dáve - oizáa gulán lávluđeamin de le

(score: Szomjas-Schiffert 1996: 96)

In this example the word *oainnán* ‘I can see, I notice’ is sung with both $1/8 - 1/4$ and $1/4 - 1/8$ rhythm pattern. Of course, the closure of the thought might play a role in the first case, i.e. a rhythmically strong closure signals the end of the thought. In the second case it continues, i.e. a quaver shows upbeat or continuity. The different rhythm pattern of the *dieđán áhte* ‘I know that’ parts of text would be hard to explain: $1/8 - 1/4$ in the 3rd line; $1/8 - 1/4 - 1/4 - 1/8$ in the 8th line.

Our second example

den Vuor-ko-duod-da-ra dat lei jo gū lu tō-u lul lū gu













lū gu lu lū lu lū ul lū lul lū gu lul den áhk-kū dat

juos mūm juoig-gās-tán dovd-da-las Die-raš-Mik-ká-la

ū lu lū-u lu lū lul lū gu lul ū man jōn ie-tun ea mi-da vu

(score: Szomjas-Schiffert 1996: 96)

In the following matrix I compare the prosodically correct and incorrect forms of the words in the previous yoik. Marks: [ˈ] means primary stress, [ˑ] means secondary stress, [U] means short syllable, – means long syllable.

Intonation and word-stress of the words in the marked text ⁸ and the proper beat	Dictionary form ⁹	Meaning	Case and suffix	Stresses, placed inappropriately onto the second syllable in the Yoiks
 Vuosko - duoddara ” ” ’ – ∪ – ∪	Vuosko-duottar	Vuosko baldhill	Cx Sg. acc.-gen.	 Vuosko-duoddara ” ”
 Áhkku ” – ∪	Áhkku	grandmother	–	 áhkku ”
 juoggastan ” ’ – – ∪	Juoggastit	yoiks a little, starts to yoik	Vx Sg./1.	 juoggastan ”
 Bieraš-Mihkála ” ” ’ – ∪ – – ∪	Bieraš-Mihkál	(a person's name)	Cx Sg. acc.-gen.	 Bieraš-Mihkála ” ”
 iežan ” – ∪	Ieš	you (formal)	Px Sg. Acc.-gen.	 iežan ”
 eamida ” ’ – ∪ ∪	Eamit	wife	Cx Sg. Akk.-gen.	 eamida ”

Thus, the panels are not there to assist the metric balance and harmonizing of stresses. This phenomenon is an important feature of the Sami performing style, which may include the deliberate weakening of text, keeping the attention of the audience, playfulness and virtuosity on the part of the performer. Part of the panels in Sami yoiks may be a heritage of shamanist practises, as is the entire genre of yoik. Ancient magic words, exclamations summoning gods live on in interjections, their derivatives, in the refrains of folksongs and the permanent parts

of popular customs in other peoples' languages as well. The connection between yoiks and shamanic practices is taken for granted among researchers; despite this, however, no study has been made to examine the survival of this secret or sacral textual tradition among the panels, most importantly the particles. It is common in the sacral traditions of other peoples to summon spirits not only with words used in everyday speech, but with special interjections, as in a secret language. These mystic words and syllables were partly created to imitate animal noises. (Eliade 2001: 100–101) Others originated in real words which went through several transformations of meaning, though in a few cases their etymology can be determined. The “regös” mystery-collection of Gyula Sebestyén from Vas County (Hungary) reflects on the forgotten origins of the Hungarian interjection and filler word “haj”: “We’ve heard you have a daughter of age. Let’s *hajgat*, let’s *hajgat*, but who should we *hajgat* her for? Let’s *hajgat* her for the neighbour’s son!” (Pais 1975: 44) In the past magic words beginning with *haj* were used to bind couples together. *Haj*, though it is a word with onomatopoeic origin, it may even be related to the stem of *kiált* (meaning ‘shout’). This theory is supported by the verbal derivative *hajgat*. Similar etymology can be found by the Khanty interjection *kaj!* that lives on in its derivatives: *kajné xum* ‘shaman’, in other words ‘shouting man’, *kaj-saw* ‘kaj-word’, in other words ‘magic word’.

It’s worth to examine the panels with regard to the process of passing down tradition. “The multitude of panels in the lyrics of the yoik have a connotative overtone, the texts have a topic known by the singer and the audience as well, a ‘message’, in other words.” (Hajdú 1982: 426) This method of communication and the ability of decoding it need to be passed down to the next generation. Sami children have to learn which “words”, panels are associated with whom and in what circumstances they can or should be used in. In a given community certain panels convey sympathy, while others express indifference or antipathy. As T. I. Itkonen observed the yoik lyrics of the Inarian reindeer breeders (from Inari, Finland), it emerged that *lul-lu* expresses indifference, *lel-le* conveys boasting, and *nun-nu* expresses a wish to speak ill of the subject of the song but the singer chooses not to. (T. I. Itkonen 1948: 561–562) It has been observed that if an inappropriate panel is used in a yoik – or at least one of them belongs to a wrong “basic semantic unit” (*semantema*) – the other members of the community will correct the mistake. Obviously, these are not unified in the whole area inhabited by the Sami, but may vary from community to community.

5. Iconicity in the personal yoiks

It has been mentioned before how the Sami like to yoik ambiguously, playfully so that the subject of the song is not apparent to outsiders. Apart from secrecy, the reason for this is the Sami belief that specific words are essentially unsuited to convey any message. According to Matti Vainio, ethnomusicologist, the “syllables or sets of syllables” frequently appearing in the lyrics of the yoik aim to distance it from the spoken language, giving an opportunity for using the forms of musical communication in their entirety. (Vainio 1991: 56–57) Personal yoiks illustrate the professionalism of Sami musical miniatures perfectly. They relate to the person that is their subject closely, identifying with their subject, behaving as symbols. It is similar to what Éva Schmidt called “musical identity cards” when studying the Ob-Ugrian people. However, the simile is not quite accurate: they do not operate with musical depiction as they rather use the lyrics to convey personal information with melodies of low variability – as opposed to the Sami, whose main method of expression in their personal yoiks is music. Their talent of depiction and insight could be best illustrated with another simile: the Enigma-variations of the famous English composer Edward Elgar would throw light on the matter. He depicts his circle of friends and a dog in his music, portraying their appearances, characteristics, habits or remarkable events. It is the 1. and 9. variation that could be called musical portraits aiming for complete characterisation of their subject. There are two possible levels of interpretation. Originally, these works were aimed at a close circle of friends, since initiation is essential in this case to be able to fully appreciate the work. These pieces of music conveyed a multitude of information for the friends who knew each other intimately, which remain hidden from the outsider audience. For them, it can only be interpreted through abstraction and subjective association, while for the friends the circle of association is narrower, and we can even talk about transmission of specific information. Anthropological studies support the theory that it works the same way, and consciously so, in traditional Sami communities. As a case study states:

Children in the Vuolab family have learned each others’ yoiks, as well. Mainly during long trips, they repeated the melodies, one after the other. The parents were constantly correcting their mistakes, to help them learn how to yoik correctly. They had to learn the correct manner of articulation and intonation to achieve the ideal sound which makes the yoik what it is. With constant training of the vocal cords, they had to increase the volume more and more, uttering the guttural sounds with increasing force. Máret, during practising the yoiks of her siblings, had

to learn that the yoik is depictive, it reflects its subject. His father often reprimanded her if the characters of her siblings were not recognizable from her singing: “Don’t you know what it’s like when someone is skipping from mound to mound? Try to make it sound more effortless, because this sounds like someone dragging himself!” (Järvinen 1999, Jernsletten 1987: 152–153)

Besides learning to sing his brother’s yoik correctly, Máret Anna had to learn how to use the yoik and in what circumstances, how to build in her own messages and how to decode others’. She had to learn the proper intonation, the use of ornaments, the typical musical intervals, the handling of the rhythm and further necessary stylistic elements. After learning all that, she became able to produce new yoiks herself.

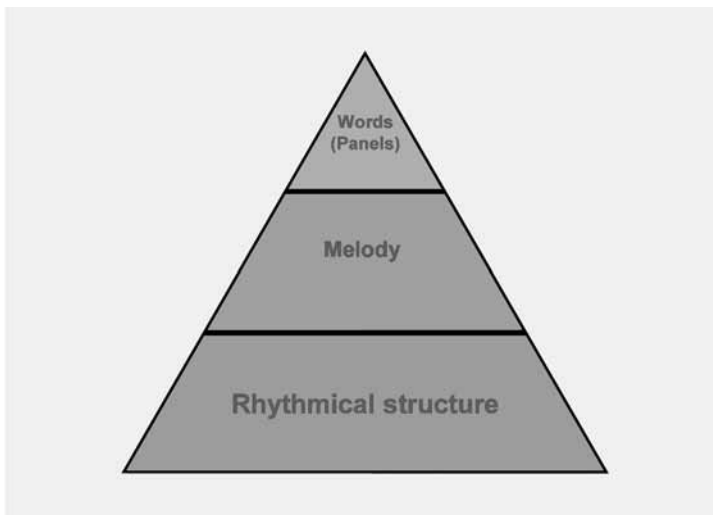
Both outer and inner characteristics are featured in the yoik. The lyrics, the melody, the rhythm and the performance attempts to capture the people in their entirety. It could be said that the yoik is customized, at least from the view of the singer and the community. A song depicting a slow, measured person is rhythmically slower and more sluggish, while about someone energetic a dynamic and powerful song would be sung. (Jernsletten 1978: 110) The Sami are clearly masters of painting with sounds and tones. According to Nils-Aslak Valkeapää, the yoik always aims to completeness of expression, and achieves it as well (Valkeapää 1968). In the words of an informant: “When creating a yoik ... you paint (depict) the person. You portray his walk, his nature, his beauty -, what he is like, quiet or impulsive... everything, everything is in the yoik.” (Järvinen 1999: 67)

Let us now make a return from musical portrayal to lyrics. As the Sami say, it is not necessary or even useful to always use „real” words, it is better to replace them with syllables and particles of differing emotional charge. Words can disturb the flow of thoughts. Let us go back to one of the definitions discussed at the beginning. As Jernsletten wrote: “In the Sami milieu, yoik is a necessary method of expression in everyday life, used when there is something to tell that would otherwise sound brusque or awkward, or be completely inexpressible.” (Jernsletten 1978: 116–118) At this point, we shall take a small detour into language philosophy. It is Wittgenstein’s saying that comes to mind: “What can be shown, cannot be said.” (Wittgenstein 1989: 35, 4.1212) After him, I can also argue that what can be yoiked, cannot be said (except with very complex tools, like panels). Sometimes – still borrowing the words of the excellent language philosopher – “we are unable to express what we want to ... the meaningless expressions are not meaningless because I have not found the right words but because their essence is their meaninglessness.

Because I wanted to use them to overcome the world, the language that conveys meanings. Something compelled me to run against the barriers of language...” (Wittgenstein 1998: 11) At this point we could again take frottage or gibberish poetry as an illustration. It becomes apparent that, just as these illustrious authors of Hungarian and world literature, the Sami favour surpassing the spoken language in their folklore poetry.

Conclusion

In the description of the different levels of of the yoiks it proves to be very important the differentiation of rhythm, melody and lyrics. These three semiotic levels are ruled by strict hierarchy, in which the text definitely has a subservient role:



The figure above shows that role of the text is less important than the dominant rhythm (rhythmical structure) and the melody. It is one of the reasons why the studies conducted so far have not paid much attention to the panels, resulting in the absence of a sufficient term for this category in scientific literature. In this study the role of verbal elements in the unique expression of the yoik were discussed. I attempted to prove that the panels could make an excellent subject for future research, even though their role is distanced from everyday speech and is mainly to support the message expressed by the language of music. Examination of the cultural context proved that panels, just as melodies, are controlled by the community. Authors do not have complete freedom in composing the lyrics, even if they use only panels.

According to Éva Schmidt, in the Khanty tradition the practice of composing songs was mandatory, and those not fulfilling their obligation were held in contempt. The same can be said about traditional Sami communities with the distinction that by the Khanty, composing is meant as being the author of verbal art (literature), while by the Sami it is rather a musical competence. Symbolically said, if a Khanty has to be a poet to be accepted in the community, a Sami has to be a musical composer.

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Notes

¹ From Paulus Utsi's poem *Juigosa birra* 'About the Yoik'

² It is important to note that change seldom affects the melody of the yoik, the lyrics is more prone to alteration.

³ The interpretation of particles and clitics is not an easy task in spoken language, either. Most linguistic encyclopedias are vague regarding both linguistic categories. (e.g.: *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics* [1994]). In Sami folklore texts the function of these words is to set the mood and express the feelings of the singer relating to his subject.

⁴ It should be noted that in everyday speech the word 'go' is not found in sentence initial position.

⁵ Prosody is the study of text and melody adjustment, the matching of the beats and stresses of music, their harmony with the text. The prosody of the yoik can be analyzed on three levels:

(1) the language, as it appears in speech (linguistic speech),

(2) poetry, as it is formed in metrics (poetic metrum),

(3) music, as long as it is related to the previous two (musical melody), Dezső

2001

⁶ Studies related to the question of prosody e.g.: R. Austerlitz 1975, Hajdú 1960.

⁷ The prosodically problematic sequences have been circled.

⁸ Some smaller orthographic differences between the text items under the score and the words of the chart derive from the differences between the notes of Magdolna Kovács and the new orthographic system of 1978. I have rewritten the words in the chart according to the new orthography.

⁹ Pekka Sammallahti 1993.