

FROM LAMENT TO LAMENTING SONG: MUSICAL MODELS, MEANINGS AND EXPRESSION IN SETO SOLO AND CHORAL FUNERAL LAMENTS

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ABSTRACT

The distinctive ancient culture of the Seto (south-eastern Estonia) is of special interest, among other things, for its rich lament tradition which survived until the recent past. Unlike the laments of other Balto-Finnic peoples, which are an exclusively solo genre, some Seto laments – all the bridal laments and the funeral laments for a deceased maiden – are performed by a group of lamenters as a kind of polyphonic lamenting song. The unusual practice of choral lamentation raises important questions about the functions and meanings of laments in traditional culture, the specificity of the lament genre as a form of expressive behaviour, and the relationship between the genres of lament and song in Seto culture. This article explores these and some other questions by means of musical analysis of Seto lament tunes and attempts to place the Seto lament tradition in the context of the laments of linguistically and geographically related peoples.

KEYWORDS: funeral laments • Seto traditional culture • solo laments • choral laments • musical analysis • lament vs. song

The genre of lament, one of the oldest phenomena in many traditional cultures worldwide, is also known to many Balto-Finnic peoples such as the Karelians, Vepsians, Votes, Izhorians and Seto, as well as to their neighbours the East Slavs and Balts and their distant linguistic relatives the Volga Finns. This article focuses on the lamentation tradition of the Seto people, a small ethnic group living in south-east Estonia and characterised by a very distinctive traditional culture, in the context of geographically and linguistically related peoples.¹

The laments of the Seto, like those of their related peoples, were traditionally connected with three ritual situations, defined in ethnology as ‘rites of passage’ (van Genep 1960 [1909]) – the funeral, the wedding and the departure of soldiers or recruits. The laments were also performed at the cemetery on memorial days and on other occa-

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sions. Non-ritual ('occasional') laments are not known among the Seto. In all cases, the lamenters were almost always women, and the lament was usually a solo genre. One of the specific features of the Seto lamentation tradition is that in Setomaa ('Setoland') certain kinds of lament – mainly bridal laments – were performed by a group of singers as a kind of polyphonic lamenting song. As a rule, Seto funeral laments were performed solo, except in the case of choral laments sung for a dead maiden and on some other special occasions. The unusual practice of choral lamentation raises questions about the functions and meanings of laments in traditional culture, the specificity of the lament genre as a form of expressive behaviour, and the relationship between the genres of lament and song.

The answers to these questions should be sought in the cultural context of Seto laments, in the content and structure of their texts, and in the musical properties of the lament tunes and their performance. While the first two aspects have already been studied quite thoroughly by Estonian ethnologists and folklorists (Tampere 1960; Pino and Sarv 1981; 1982; Hagu 2000; Pino 2000; Salve 2000; Sarv 2000; Arukask 2011), the musical side of both solo and choral laments needs much deeper and more detailed research than has been done so far. The aim of this paper is to fill this gap in the study of the Seto lament tradition and to address the questions raised above about the functions, meanings and relationships of solo and choral forms of lament performance on the basis of the information that can be provided by musical analysis of the tunes of the Seto funeral laments.

SETO FUNERAL LAMENTS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE GENRE

The concepts of lamenting and singing are clearly distinguished in many traditional cultures. The separation of laments (especially funeral laments) from other forms of vocal expression is due to the criticality of the life situations in which they are sung and the specificity of their emotional, ritual and social functions. The distinction between lament and song is usually reflected in folk terminology. Peoples who have a tradition of laments usually do not refer to their performance as singing, using other emic terms: for example, *itkeä iänellä* ('to cry with voice/tone/sound') among Karelians, *luetella* ('to recite', 'to read') among Karelians and Izhorians, *voikta änel* ('to cry/groan with voice') among Veps, *prichet'* ('reciting', 'reading'), *plakaniye golosom* ('crying with voice') and *golosheniye, voi, vop* ('yelling') among Russians (Chistov 1960: 5–6; Niemi 2002: 708; Razumovskaya 2012: 93; Zhukova 2015: 13; Silvonen and Stepanova 2020: 207). The Seto refer to lamenting with the term *sõno ikmine* ('cry with words') (Pino and Sarv 1981: 20). These emic terms aim not only to separate lament from song, but also to separate formalised crying (crying with voice or with words) from physiological crying. In this connection the Seto say *mehe ikva silmi, naise ikva sõno* ('men cry with eyes, women cry with words'), meaning that men cry in the ordinary sense of the word (Hurt 1907: 240; Tampere 1960: 209; Honko 1974: 27; Pino and Sarv 1981: 20).² The emic idea of crying, as conveyed by folk lament terminology, thus emphasises the important properties of lament – the obligatory nature and importance of the verbal component and specific types of vocal production, weeping/crying or reciting/reading, which are different from the vocal quality of song. Among the lamentation terms of different peoples there is also

a mention of 'voice' ('cry with voice'), which clearly indicates the musical component of the lament genre, i.e. the presence of a specific tune, since the folk term 'voice' very often has the double meaning of 'voice' and 'tune'.³ The latter arouses interest in the search for emic models of lament tunes.

The genre of lament is multifunctional, but usually, and apparently with good reason, researchers first mention its **emotional and psychological** function of expressing personal grief and sorrow (e.g. Chistov 1960: 6–7; Yefimenkova 1980: 3; Silvonen and Stepanova 2020). Martti Haavio (1935: 210) summarises the meaning of the genre as “the sorrow of all people”, while Lauri Honko (1974: 9–10) describes lament as the “poetry of final parting”. However, the formalised and symbolised nature of all aspects of the lament – its text, tune and manner of performance – also points to its **social and ritual** function. Lamentations were originally performed in the context of collective rituals and the lamenters realised and considered the presence of relatives and other community members who, in a sense, were the living addressees of the ritual lament (Chistov 1960: 12). In connection with the social functions of the funeral lament, Viliina Silvonen and Eila Stepanova (2020: 206) point out that “the lamenter expresses not only her own emotions but also those of the whole community”, while Elizabeth Tolbert (1990: 97) says that the lamenter “as ritual leader of the wedding or funeral must orchestrate the collective expression of sorrow”. Silvonen and Stepanova (2020: 209; cf. Nenola-Kallio 1982: 262) also say that one of the purposes of the lament is “to maintain or re-establish social order in the community”. Many authors also investigate the **ritual-magical** functions of funeral laments and their connection with ancient pagan beliefs about death and the dead. The magical component of laments is evidenced by mythological motifs, specific taboos and elements of incantations in their texts (Honko 1974; Nenola-Kallio 1982; Stepanova 1985; Tolbert 1990; Tolstaya 1999; Pino 2000; Salve 2000; Arukask 2011; Mišarina 2011). There is, however, an opinion that the magical function of the lament can also be deduced from the musical structure of the tune (Zemtsovsky 1987). The **aesthetic** function is not obligatory in laments, especially when it comes to their tunes; nevertheless, in poetically developed lament traditions (for example, in Karelian and North Russian laments, which have a rich metaphorical language and a kind of epic quality – see for example Chistov 1960: 41), as well as in the presence of outstanding (including professional) lamenters, the textual side of laments, at least, undoubtedly acquires aesthetic value (Chistov 1960: 6–7; Honko 1974: 18; Yefimenkova 1980: 14–15; Stepanova 1985; Danchenkova 2005: 238). In Seto funeral laments, both solo and choral, all the above-mentioned functions of laments are manifested; the correlation of these functions is a separate issue that merits discussion.

The specificity of lament as a genre is usually vividly manifested in its verbal texts, about which many studies have been written (the content and structure of lament texts are analysed and discussed in many of the publications mentioned above). There are typical features common to the laments of different peoples. The most universal among these are dialogue, an abundance of appeals, and rhetorical questions. The deceased is spoken to as if he/she were alive, in the belief that he/she can hear the lament: the lamenter asks why the deceased died, reproaches him/her, complains about the difficulties of their future life; there are many other characteristic motifs (Chistov 1960: 12; Honko 1974: 12, 43; Yefimenkova 1980: 16; Tolbert 1990: 86; Pino 2000: 39; Arukask 2011: 139, 141). The content of the text and the intensity of the emotion depend on the place

of the lament in the ritual (Chistov 1960: 38–39; Yefimenkova 1980: 16–19; Pino 2000: 38). The texts of laments often contain magical and mythological motifs. Thus the Seto address the deceased with a request to come home as a fly or a butterfly, to preserve the fertility of farmland and cattle, etc. (Pino 2000: 40). Among mythological motifs, Seto laments mention the land of death, Tooni (Toonela) and Mana (Manala), and describe the life of the dead in this land (Salve 2000: 61–66). The general magical function of the funeral lament as a part of a rite of passage is to ensure the deceased's safe passage to the netherworld of death.

The lament can also be recognised by its specific poetic language and by the metrical organisation of its text. In this respect, Seto laments are very different from Karelian, Ingrian, Vepsian and Votic laments, which have more in common with each other (Honko 1974: 20; Salve 2000: 57). At least two principal differences should be emphasised here. Firstly, in the traditions of what may be called the “Karelian-Ingrian-Vepsian-Votic group” the texts of laments and songs differ radically in their metrical form – while songs are based on Kalevala metre, laments have no regular metre (Honko 1974: 20; Silvonen 2022: 366). The texts of Seto laments, on the contrary, are very close to songs in terms of poetic metre, despite the somewhat looser verse structure in laments than in songs, the metrical form of laments remains quite close to the Kalevala metre (Honko 1974: 20; Oras et al. 2021: 41). Secondly, in Seto laments we do not find the kind of rich metaphorical language that is such a striking feature of Karelian-Ingrian-Vepsian-Votic group laments. In the latter the use of metaphorical substitutions creates a kind of ‘secret language’ of lament, which is very different from both spoken and song language. This stylistic feature is connected, among other things, with the magical taboo on kinship terms (Nenola-Kallio 1982: 33; Stepanova 1985: 12–13; Tolbert 1990; Zhukova 2015; Silvonen and Stepanova 2020: 210).⁴ The Seto do not have such restrictions, which is why the style of expressing thoughts in Seto laments is more straightforward.⁵

However, leaving aside the verbal component of lament, how can this genre be recognised by its sound, by the properties of tune and performance? One of the most characteristic features of lament performance are the so-called ‘icons of crying’ described by Greg Urban (1988: 389–391) – sobbing, croaky voice, voiced inhalation, falsetto voice register, etc. (cf. Tolbert 1990: 86; Silvonen and Stepanova 2020: 214). Through cross-culturally intelligible icons of crying we also perceive the bodily component of the performance (embodiment), which has a great potential for emotional contagion, which is important both in terms of the psychological and social functions of lament.⁶ Among the specifically musical qualities of the tunes of laments, the descending movement of the melody, associated with the sighs and intonation of crying, is usually mentioned (Yefimenkova 1980: 48; Tolbert 1990: 87; Röötel 2000: 288; Niemi 2002: 714; Silvonen 2022: 366; and others). The descending movement can cover different sections of the form, from quite long phrases, such as in Karelian laments, to short motifs in Votic laments (Niemi 2002: 717; Silvonen 2022: 373–374). Meanwhile, the general pitch level (‘tonality’) of a lament often rises throughout its performance along with an increase in emotional intensity (Tolbert 1990: 99; Röötel 2000: 287; Razumovskaya 2012: 95; Silvonen 2022: 367; and others). Another typical feature of the performance of laments is the instability of vocal intonation, which often makes it impossible to determine the exact structure of musical scales (Tolbert 1990: 87; Röötel 2000: 285; Niemi 2002: 713; Razumovskaya 2012: 95; Silvonen and Stepanova 2020: 219). The relationship between text and tune is usually syllabic, i.e. one syllable corresponds to one note of the melody.

In terms of the qualities of melody and performance, three types of laments can be distinguished: lament-cry, recitative and song-like laments. The lament-cry, found, for example, in north-western Russia, is very dramatic and characterised by large changes in tessitura: falsetto singing in a high register contrasting with recitation and sobbing in a low speech register (Danchenkova 2005: 237, 241; Razumovskaya 2012: 95). The tunes and type of performance of Balto-Finnic and Volga-Finnic laments range between recitative and song-like lament, and the recitative style, which Jarkko Niemi (2002: 708, 719) aptly calls “tonal speech”, is particularly characteristic (cf. Pino and Sarv 1981: 25; Tolbert 1990: 87; Silvonen 2022: 379). The unstable pitch of the scale notes, already mentioned above, is most pronounced in recitative laments, and also depends on the situation of performance: laments recorded during a ritual are understandably more emotional and intonationally unstable than those performed on request. The musical form of the lament tunes is usually improvisational to some extent, although in this respect gradations are possible within very wide limits. In some laments the lines of the tune have different lengths, a feature which might depend on the degree of emotional tension (Tolbert 1990: 101; Silvonen and Stepanova 2020: 207), while other laments are less improvisational and are closer to song form, with a more clearly articulated tune model (Yefimenkova 1980: 46; Niemi 2002: 709). However, even in the case of a very free form, the spontaneity of the tune still implies a generalised melodic model that can be analytically described (Tolbert 1990: 88; Silvonen 2022: 374–375).

The tunes of Seto solo laments are clearly more improvisational than those of Seto songs both metrically and melodically, but it is not very difficult to determine the underlying patterns. The tunes of choral laments, on the other hand, at least within a single performance, are as stable as those of the songs. The manner in which solo Seto laments are sung varies between lamenters and in different situations, but can generally be defined as recitative. Since the characteristics of the tunes and manner of performance of Seto laments are the subject of the present research, this topic will be discussed in more detail in the analysis and discussion sections.

Finally, in terms of the performance form, one can distinguish between solo, collective and choral laments. The solo form, as mentioned above, significantly predominates over the choral form and, in a sense, is a characteristic feature of the genre. I use the terms ‘collective’ and ‘choral’ lament here in different meanings to distinguish between two fundamentally different modes of performance. By collective lament I mean the simultaneous performance of solo laments by several participants in the rite. Among Seto and many other peoples such a situation can occur at funerals and on memorial days at the cemetery. In this case we are dealing with the simultaneous uncoordinated sounding of several solo laments (Boyarkin 1988: 33; Razumovskaya 2012: 96), which refers to the phenomenon of polymusic (with regard to this concept see Pärtlas 2020). A choral lament involves the coordinated performance of a lament by a group of singers as a kind of lamenting song. Choral lamentation is a very rare practice, and it is found among the Seto in the case of bridal laments and girls’ laments for a deceased maiden. Among the Balto-Finnic peoples, only the Seto have choral lamentations.⁷ Wedding choral lamentations are also known among Russians in northern Russia, the Volga region, the Urals and Siberia; in these regions it is usually a case of a special form of performance, where the bride’s solo lament is superimposed on the choral lament of her female friends (Yefimenkova 1980: 13, 26, 57–59; Danchenkova 2005: 235, 241;

Dorokhova 2005: 212–213). Regarding funeral choral lamentations, as far as I am aware, this Seto practice is unique in the broad region of interest.⁸

The inclusion of choral laments in the funeral rite is associated among the Seto with the penetration of wedding elements into funerals. The funeral of a maiden was traditionally associated with a wedding, since in both rituals the girl left her home, although in the case of the funeral it was, in a sense, a marriage with death (Pärtlas 2018). During the funeral, the girls mourning their dead companion fulfilled the role of bridesmaids with as many of them as bridesmaids at a wedding; they wore festive clothes as at a wedding, and were even called *podruskid* ('bridesmaids', the Seto loan word from the Russian folk term) (Pino and Sarv 1981: 20).⁹ There are reports that at a maiden's funeral girls also sang a specific wedding song, *hähkämine*, which is usually sung at an important moment in the wedding ritual when the bride leaves her home to go with the groom to the church (ibid.). A choral funeral lament could also be sung during the wedding, when the orphan bride asked for the blessing of her deceased parents in the graveyard.

The presence in the Seto lament tradition of two forms of lament performance, solo and choral, poses specific questions for the researcher. The most intriguing question, which is beyond the scope of this paper, is the historical origin of the tradition of choral laments. The only hypothesis in this respect is a connection with the aforementioned Russian choral wedding laments, but the Seto are separated from these traditions by great geographical distances. This study aims to give a systematic description of the musical structure of Seto solo and choral funeral laments – their musical scales, tune form, melodic contours and harmonic structure –, and on this basis determine the musical models from which the Seto lamenters proceed and the variant possibilities of their realisation. Another important aim of the study is to compare the two forms of lament performance, revealing their emotional, social and magical functions and meanings through comprehension of the differences between the genres of lament and song.

The material for the analysis includes the two-volume edition of Veera Pino and Vaike Sarv (1981; 1982), which contains 73 notations of recordings of Seto solo funeral laments by 37 different lamenters in 29 villages (the longest lament has 193 lines),¹⁰ and 16 sound recordings of choral funeral laments from the Estonian Folklore Archives, which are the only available examples of this rare genre. In addition to a structural analysis of the lament tunes, I will attempt to place them to some extent in the context of lament traditions of linguistically and/or geographically related peoples; however, comparisons will be made only within the framework of the results of previously published studies (see references above).

THE MANNER OF VOCALISATION AND 'ICONS OF CRYING' IN SETO LAMENTS

Almost all the recordings of Seto funeral laments were made at the request of collectors, i.e. outside a ritual context. Folklorists claim that it was always more difficult to persuade singers to perform funeral laments than wedding (bridal) laments as the latter were and still are the favourite genre of Seto women (Pino and Sarv 1981: 6–7). The reasons for the reluctance to perform funeral laments are understandable. They are

related to both the emotional and functional aspect of this genre, in particular to folk beliefs that impose restrictions on the performance of funeral laments (ibid.). Funeral laments became somewhat easier to collect when the function of the genre weakened and it fell out of active use. Possibly, these circumstances account for the fact that in the sound recordings of Seto funeral laments we find relatively few of the aforementioned 'icons of crying', which give the performance the features of physiological crying. Such features are either absent or only slightly marked. The manner of vocalisation in Seto solo laments oscillates between fairly calm recitative and singing. The vocal register is almost never falsetto, although there is a tendency to perform laments slightly higher than songs.

A striking exception among the recordings I have listened to is the lament of Palaga Karulaan (b. 1906), which was recorded during her sister's funeral in 1980 (Pino and Sarv 1982: No. 57; sound recording RKM, Mgn. II 3371 (2)). Karulaan laments with a high voice very emotionally and pitifully amidst the sobs of the other women. The icons of crying in this recording include falsetto, sobs between lines and occasional breaks in the crying. This is clearly not a question of the ritualised symbols of crying, but of sincere grief, which the lamenter barely manages to contain within the limits of the ritual genre. The latter factor is also evidenced by the unusually high level of spontaneity and by the disordered text and tune structure, which is in great contrast to the laments recorded in an interview situation. Despite this notable single example, it would seem that the relative emotional restraint and structural stability inherent in most of the recorded Seto solo laments is not accidental and to some extent reflects the tradition and cultural attitudes, especially if we consider that the highly emotional performances of laments of some other ethnic traditions were also mainly recorded outside the ritual context.

There is evidence that the emotional degree of lamentation was different at different moments of the funeral; it obviously differed also at the funeral and on the days of commemoration. The manner of performance also depends on the individual character of the lamenters. Thus Maria Sirel (b. 1904) and Helene Sõrmus (b. 1927) lament in a recitative manner, in a quiet, sad voice, but there are no icons of crying in their performance (Pino and Sarv 1981: No. 13 and 18; sound recordings KKI, RLH 72:4 (1) and RKM, Mgn. II 2322 h). The outstanding Seto singer Kreepa Pihlaste (b. 1892) sings in a sonorous chest voice, similar to that of her lead singing in the choral songs; her manner of vocalisation is confident and emotionally restrained, and the intonation fairly stable (ibid.: No. 1 and 2; sound recordings EKRRK, Fon. 23 (3) and RKM, Mgn. II 1633 e). In Pihlaste's voice there is sometimes a hint of a weepy, nasal timbre; in one of her laments she also occasionally suggests restrained icons of crying, but this is more a demonstration of custom for the collector than emotional involvement. In the performances of another famous singer, Anne Vabarna (b. 1877), there are recordings of a lament for her mother from 1936 (Tampere et al. 2016 [1970]: No. 53) and a lament for her father from 1949 (Pino and Sarv 1982: No. 31; sound recording KKI, RLH 49:3 (6)). In both cases her performance gives the impression of being emotionally neutral and song-like, although there is a small difference in the timbre of the voice in that the former lament is sung with the chest voice usual for songs, whereas in the latter her voice is a little higher and softer and has a vibration that can be interpreted as a very restrained icon of crying (although the reason could be explained by her age – in 1949 Vabarna was 72 years old). In both performances the structure of the tune is very stable.¹¹

Speaking about the manner of singing, one more phenomenon should also be mentioned: the gradual rise in pitch level, which is a characteristic (but not obligatory) feature of the lament genre.¹² In Seto laments, such a rise in pitch is usually present, but is not an attribute of the genre since a noticeable rise in pitch is also a feature of Seto choral songs. Since the Seto use the regular descending ‘modulations’¹³ called *kergütämine* in both songs and laments (Pärtlas 2021a), a rise in pitch does not lead to a great intensity of emotion in the laments.¹⁴

In general, it can be noted that in the situation of performing funeral laments outside a ritual context, most Seto lamenters show emotional restraint, sing in a recitative or even song-like manner and do not use icons of crying as an obligatory element of the genre. In this way, the Seto lament tradition stands out from the traditions of many related peoples, whose laments are very emotional even in the situation of performance on request.

THE SOUND MATERIAL OF SETO LAMENTS

One of the fundamental signs of the historical and ethnic origin of musical phenomena in traditional cultures is their ‘sound material’ or, in other words, musical scales.¹⁵ Ethnomusicological analysis therefore usually pays considerable attention to this aspect. Lamentations, being a very ancient genre in which it is possible to find relics of early musical thinking, enable us to glean information about the oldest style layer of folklore tradition. In view of the aims of this research, a comparison of the scales in the solo and choral Seto laments would enable us to ascertain the relationship between and the continuity of these two forms of expressive musical practice. In particular, it would help to answer the question as to whether the choral laments are just polyphonic variants of the tunes of the solo laments or whether they represent a special genre.

Starting with solo laments, as a presumably earlier phenomenon, it should be firstly noted that the interval structure of their scales can be very variable and unstable. This is revealed both when comparing different performances and often even within a single performance. The pitch flexibility of scale notes is a general feature of early vocal intonation, including laments belonging to the stage of development of musical thinking at which the interval structure of scales has not yet been established (Alekseyev 1986: 35–39). The peculiarity of the Seto musical tradition is that pitch instability is characteristic not only of laments, but also of many polyphonic songs of the old and even relatively late style. It should be emphasised that although some variation in the scale structure is found in the songs of many peoples, this feature is unusually strong in the Seto songs, to the point that the same tune can be sung with several essentially different types of scale (Pärtlas 2004). This indicates not only the rare persistence of an ancient style layer and archaic type of musical thinking in Setomaa, but also the processes of style mixing that took place in the history of Seto song culture (Pärtlas 2012).

Analysing the musical transcriptions of the solo laments in the Pino and Sarv collection,¹⁶ over 30 different scales have been identified, most of which occur only once.¹⁷ If only the intervallic structures that occur more than once are considered, we find a significant predominance of scales with a small number of scale notes – trichords (53 performances) and tetrachords (40 performances); pentachords, in comparison, are

represented by only five performances. This result confirms the assumption regarding the ancient origin of the Seto lament tunes.

Such an unusual variety of scale structures in the solo laments is connected both with the pitch variability of ancient modal systems and with recitative intonation and improvisational performance. Amid all this diversity it is nevertheless possible to identify some regularities. The common feature of all the solo laments' scales is the special structural role of the trichord, which I will call here the **central trichord** and designate conventionally by notes as G-A-B. This trichord can be either an independent scale or a part of a wider scale. The pitch of the notes of the central trichord can vary, forming the interval structures G-A-B (in semitones 2-2), G-A-Bb (2-1), G-Ab-Bb (1-2), G-Ab-B (1-3), and even G-Ab-B# (1-4)¹⁸ (see the scale variants provided in Figure 1), as well as intermediate structures. Variants of the central trichord emerge in the context of the broad pitch zones of the realisation of the scale notes characteristic of archaic vocal intonation and musical thinking. The important structural role of the central trichord in the tunes of Seto laments is manifested in the obligatory presence of this trichord in the scale (it constitutes its minimal structure), in the trichordal motifs in the melody, as well as in the position of the modal centre ('tonic')¹⁹ on the lower note of this trichord, which is a distinctive feature of Seto funeral lament tunes. Upper and lower scale notes can be added to the central trichord, whereas the lower added note is usually a relatively wide interval away from the tonic – often a minor or major third –, while the upper added note most often forms a semitone with the upper note of the trichord (see the bracketed notes in Figure 1).

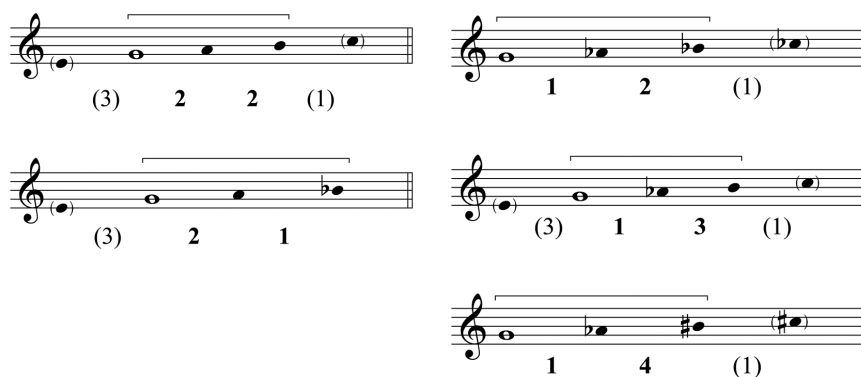


Figure 1. The scales of the solo funeral laments: variation in the central trichord.

The intensity of scale variation differs from performer to performer. Some lamenters stick to one interval structure, at least throughout a single performance, while there are also performances with very unstable scales. Not much material is available to compare different performances by the same singer, but the available data give the impression that skilful lamenters, whom the collectors recorded repeatedly, varied the scales to a considerable extent. Thus in the laments of Maria Pähnapuu (b. 1914) we find the structures 1-3, 2-2-1 and 1-2-1 above the tonic, to which various lower 'sub-notes'²⁰ are added (see Pino and Sarv 1982: No. 44, 62, 69, 71).

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to conclude that the variation of scales in Seto lamentation is chaotic and that the resulting structures are random. In the multitude of specific scales of Seto laments, one can distinguish the interaction of three principles, **three types of modal structure** that are clearly of different origin: 1) unstable pre-diatonic scales²¹ consisting of tones and semitones, for example, G-A-B-(C) (2-2-(1)), G-A-Bb-(C) (2-1-(2)), G-Ab-Bb-(C) (1-2-(2)), and others; 2) the anhemitonic tetrachord E-G-A-B (3-2-2); and 3) the specific one-three-semitone scale consisting of semitones and three-semitones, for example, G-Ab-B-(C) (1-3-(1)) (examples of lament melodies with scales of these three types are given in Figure 2). These three modal types can interact, as many interval structures are easily transformed into each other by shifting one or two scale notes. However, even in the performances with unstable pitch intonation, it is usually possible to notice the lamenter's adherence to one of the three modal systems.

a) pre-diatonic



b) anhemitonic



c) one-three-semitone



Figure 2. The solo funeral lament tunes with the three types of scale (Pino and Sarv 1982: No. 33; 1981: No. 7, 11).

The one-three-semitone mode deserves special attention, as it is the most peculiar stylistic feature of the Seto polyphonic songs of the old stylistic layer (Sarv 1980; Pärtlas 1997; 2006; Ambrazevičius and Pärtlas 2011). In choral songs, this unusual scale reaches a maximum range of six notes, forming a symmetrical structure of 1-3-1-3-1 (in musical notation D-Eb-F#-G-A#-B).²² The tonic of this mode can be located on the middle or lower note of the central trichord F#-G-A# (1-3), which is the minimum form of the one-three-semitone scale. It is the trichord 1-3 that is one of the two most common scales in solo laments.²³ In funeral laments with a central trichord 1-3, the modal centre is usually on its lower note, which is a distinctive feature of the funeral tune type (in Figures 1 and 2, trichord 1-3 is written by notes G-Ab-B, where the tonic is G). The principle of the structure of the one-three-semitone scale consists in the regular alternation of narrow and wide intervals, the size of which is only approximately equal to a semitone and three semitones. In lamentations, the variation of narrow and wide intervals is particularly strong: in relation to the 1-3-1 structure, the size of the wide interval may narrow to form the 1-2-1 structure (G-Ab-Bb-Cb) or expand to form the 1-4-1 structure (G-Ab-B#-C#).²⁴

Another scale type found in solo laments is the anhemitonic tetrachord E-G-A-B (3-2-2) and its extended anhemitonic-diatonic version E-G-A-B-C (3-2-2-1). These scales are also characteristic of Seto polyphonic songs, where they interact with the one-three-semitone scale. For the mutual transformation of these two scales it is only necessary to change the pitch of the scale note A (E-G-Ab-B-C (3-1-3-1)). In solo laments no such interaction has been observed, but the anhemitonic tetrachord E-G-A-B is often modified into the peculiar structure E-G-A-Bb (3-2-1), which is also characteristic of Seto shepherd songs (Pärtlas 2017).

Of the previously mentioned variants of pre-diatonic scales, only G-A-B-(C) is found in Seto choral songs, and usually as a part of other scales. The variants G-A-Bb-(C) and G-Ab-Bb-(C) do not occur in polyphonic songs at all. Thus it can be concluded that variable pre-diatonic structures are a distinctive feature of the ancient tunes of solo laments. The one-three-semitone and anhemitonic scales, as indicated above, are common in both solo and choral genres, but in solo laments (as well as in shepherd songs) they usually occur in their narrower forms. It is an open question, however, whether the one-three-semitone and anhemitonic scales were originally present in solo laments or whether they were brought to these later from songs.

The scales of choral laments are less diverse and do not basically differ from the scales of choral polyphonic songs. Here the one-three-semitone scale dominates, and the pitch of its scale notes varies within the limits of “microalteration” usual for Seto songs (see Figure 3). Sometimes in performances of choral laments one can find a tendency towards diatonisation of the one-three-semitone mode, which is also observed in choral songs (Pärtlas 2012: 190). In the case of laments, it is difficult to say whether this is a consequence of the late influence of diatonic scales, as is evident in the songs, or whether it is related to the pre-diatonic scales frequently used in solo laments.

1. Sõb-ra - kõ - nõ, sõb - ra - kõ - nõ, sin - no vee-meks mi väl - lä vii - mä - tse - stä,
 sõb - ra - kõ - nõ, sõb - ra - kõ - nõ, sin - no vee-me mi väl - lä vii - mä - tse - sta.

Figure 3. Funeral lament, performed by Elena Laanetu and choir in Suure-Rõсна village in 1973 (RKM, Mgn. II 2423 a).

In the choral lament for a maiden provided in Figure 3, the tune is based on the scale F#-G-A#-B (1-3-1), which is also found in solo laments (there it was notated as G-Ab-B-C). An important feature of the funeral tune here is the location of the tonic on the lower note of trichord 1-3 (in Figure 3 it is the F#), as in the solo laments. As will be shown further on, the location of the modal centre determines the difference between Seto funeral and wedding laments, which have the same modal system – the one-three-semitone scale in its pure or (partially) diatonised form. The most important difference between funeral and wedding laments is that in the latter the tonic is always on the middle note of trichord 1-3 (i.e. the G note of the trichord F#-G-A#).

Comparing Seto solo and choral funeral laments, we can thus conclude that the sound material of solo laments is far more diverse and varied. It includes both the scale types known from Seto choral songs of the old style – anhemitonic, anhemitonic-diatonic and one-three-semitone – and apparently even more ancient, unstable pre-diatonic scales (Pärtlas 1921b: 83–84). A common component of solo and choral laments is the use of the one-three-semitone scale; in both cases the tunes are based on the central trichord 1-3 and the tonic is located on its lower note. At the same time, since the one-three-semitone scale is also very characteristic of the tunes of Seto polyphonic songs, it should be recognised that choral laments do not differ significantly from choral songs in this respect. Thus, the modal system of Seto choral funeral laments has common features with many solo funeral laments, but also fits quite well into the modal system of the early-style choral songs.

Based on the comparison of the scales of Seto laments and those of other Balto-Finnic peoples (as described in the literature mentioned above), several distinctive features of Seto lament tunes can be identified. Firstly, apart from the unstable pre-diatonic structures (often tetrachords) prevalent in Karelian, Ingrian, Vepsian and Votic laments, Seto laments clearly contain the anhemitonic style layer associated with the laments and songs of the Mordvins and north-western Russia (Boyarkin 1988: 34; Zemtsovsky 1987: 67; Razumovskaya 2012: 94–95),²⁵ as well as the very unusual one-three-semitone mode. Secondly, the Seto laments clearly manifest the trichordal basis of scales, which also finds parallels among Mordvins and Russians (Yefimenkova 1980: 70; Boyarkin 1988: 34). Thirdly, unlike Karelian, Ingrian and Votic laments, whose scales have predominantly a minor third above the tonic,²⁶ in Seto laments a major or neutral third is more frequent than a minor third. The trichord with major (occasionally neutral) third is also characteristic of Mordovian laments (Boyarkin 1988: 34). Moreover, according to László Vikár (1972), the major trichord is typical of the ancient layer of Finno-Ugric folk music in general. As for the major third in diatonic scales, it is also predominant in Estonian runic song (Lippus 1988: 97–98).

TUNE MODELS OF SETO FUNERAL LAMENTS

Lament is by definition an improvisational genre. For lament texts, this is a mandatory feature. In Seto laments the texts are improvisational regardless of whether they are sung solo or in a group, because in choral laments the chorus repeats the text of the lead singer without constraining her improvisation. Owing to this kind of performance, some improvisation of the text is also inherent in Seto choral songs (not to mention the genre of improvised songs for particular occasions so highly valued among the Seto), but in these the song text tends to be more clearly prescribed, and the lead singer does not so much improvise as vary the traditional text.

The purpose of this section of the article is to reveal to what extent the improvisation of the verbal component of Seto funeral laments is accompanied by the improvisation of their musical form. The previous section has shown that the sound material of solo laments – their scales – is characterised by a much greater variety and variation of interval structures than that inherent in songs. Choral laments turned out to be closer to songs in this respect. Let us now focus on the form of the tunes and their rhythmic and

melodic patterns, and examine whether improvisation is also present in these aspects of the musical structure of laments.

Initial observations on the musical form of Seto lamentations suggest that lamenters have quite a definite idea of the structure of the tune – it is a certain mental model, which lamenters realise with more or less variation during one performance or across several performances. On the other hand, different models of the lament tune can be found in the tradition which differ both in terms of their formal structures and melodic contour. All these models are identified by the bearers of the tradition as ‘death tune’ (*surnu ääl, koolja ääl*), which is strictly fixed to the rituals of funerals and commemoration of the deceased, unlike many song tunes, which are polyfunctional. ‘Death tune’ is an emic model of a lament tune that exists in the thinking of the bearers of tradition as a certain “unit of musical conceptualisation” (Nettl 2015: 109). The task of this study is to describe this model using etic (i.e. ethnomusicological) analytical techniques. Among the questions to answer are whether there is a generalised model that unites the different forms of Seto funeral laments, what the limits of its realisation in the variants are, and how solo and choral laments relate to each other in this respect.

Basic Formal Components

One of the specific formal components of the Seto lament verse and tune is the **addressing formula**, which determines to whom the lament is addressed. The rest (and the main) part of the tune and text is a specific musical and poetic structure, which I will call here the **main line**, referring to it as part of the melostroph, or the **lament line**, pointing to its special structure. The Seto lament line is a peculiar variety of Estonian runic verse. Its metrical properties are described in detail in Oras et al. 2021 using choral laments as an example. My study focuses on the musical structure of the lament line and its verbal component will only be mentioned when necessary and in a simplified manner.

Vaike Sarv (2000: 150), in her book *Seto Lament Culture*, points out that a lament line usually consists of 9 to 12 syllables. Since in Seto laments each syllable usually corresponds to one note of the melody, and since we are primarily interested here in the musical aspect of the laments, the term ‘syllable-note’ will be used hereafter.²⁷ According to Sarv’s (ibid.: 150) statistics, there is a significant predominance of 11-syllable-note lines in laments (68.8 %); 10-, 9- and 12-syllable-note lines were found in 17.4 %, 8.9 % and 4.4 % of cases respectively. In Seto songs and laments, syllables are united in so-called ‘stress groups’: groups that begin with the stressed syllable of the word and consist mainly of two or three syllables (in notations, the syllable-notes belonging to one stress group are usually beamed together, see Figures 2 and 3). A lament line can consist of four or five stress groups; according to Sarv (ibid.: 152), lines of five groups predominate significantly, accounting for 74.2 % of cases.

Musically, the lament line is divided into two half-lines. The structure of the first half-line, consisting of two stress groups, is more or less stable as a 2+3 syllable-note structure, whereas the second half-line might have two or three stress groups, which form 2+2+2, 2+3, 3+2 or 2+2 syllable-note structures (see the scheme of the lament line in Figure 4, where the half-lines are designated by the letters *a* and *b*).²⁸ The three-syllable

stress group in the first half-line is formed by extending the two-syllable group, common in runic verse, with an extra syllable or a one-syllable word (see the words *sa*, *mul* and *nu* in the text samples in Figure 4), which is another typical feature of the form of the lament line. It should be noted, however, that stability of the metrical model is characteristic of choral laments, whereas in solo laments the structure of the lament line can be freer (for example the first stress group may sometimes have three syllables, see Pino and Sarv 1981: No 11).

Main line (lament line)		
A		
a	b	
2 + 3	2 + 2 + 2	<i>Võtit / perüs sa // mino / pere- / mehe</i>
	2 + 3	<i>Kohe / tulõ mul // kanal / kalduda</i>
	3 + 2	<i>Kaihho / olõ_i mul // kellegi / kaibad</i>
	2 + 2	<i>Arro / lätt õks nu // atra / kandma</i>
Addressing formula		
r (short)	4 syllables	<i>maamakõnõ</i>
R (long)	6 syllables	<i>kuku maamakõnõ</i>

Figure 4. Formal components of the lament: the main line and the addressing formula.²⁹

A very characteristic part of the lament tune's structure is the addressing formula, which acts here as a kind of refrain. The addressing formula is mainly a 4-syllable word in a diminutive form. Depending on who laments for whom, it can be the word *maamakõnõ* (mother), *tätäkene* (father), *vellekene* (brother), etc. Maidens mainly address their dead companion as *sõbrakõnõ* (the diminutive of 'friend'). In the solo funeral laments, the 4-syllable addressing formula is sometimes extended by adding a 2-syllable word, for example *kuku maamakõnõ* (gentle mother) (see Figure 4).³⁰ Such extension does not occur in choral bridal and funeral laments.

Formal Structures of Solo and Choral Funeral Laments

The two components of the form described above, the main lament line and the addressing formula, can be used to create different formal structures of lament tune. These differ mainly in the location of the addressing formula, which can be before, after, or within the main line. There are also structures without an addressing refrain, consisting of a single, repeated or (in only one tune model) extended main line. In this case, the addressing is contained in the text of the lament (it could take a whole line), but does not constitute a specific section (addressing formula) of a melostrophe. The addressing formula can be short or long; a short formula can be repeated. Another possibility is two-line tunes, where the lines differ in the final tone. A total of 12 different formal

structures were found in the material under study, which indicates a great variety in the realisation of the lament model in Seto tradition. A separate question, which will be discussed later, is whether we should speak here of different tunes or of variants of one tune or tune type.

The different tune structures and the frequency of their use in solo and choral performances are presented in Table 1. The following symbols are used to describe the tune form: *A* for the whole line; *a* and *b* for the half-lines; *r* and *R* for respectively short (4-syllable-note) and long (6-syllable-note) addressing formulas. In solo laments ten different formal structures were found; in choral laments five. Of these, three structures coincide in solo and choral performances. The data in the table indicate a significant predominance of the form designated as *arb*,³¹ which means the embedding of a short addressing formula inside the main line. This formal structure was found in almost half of the solo performances (37 out of 75 cases) and in more than half of the choral performances (9 out of 16). It is worth mentioning that this *arb* structure is the only one on which all Seto wedding (always choral) laments are based. The formal structures *rA* (9 cases), *A* (8) and *RA₁RA₂* (8) are the second most common in solo laments; the structures *A₁A₂*, *RA*, *AR* and *aRb* (2-4 cases) are less frequent; the structures *AA* and *aRb₁aRb₂* occur in single performances only.³²

Table 1. Formal structures of solo and choral funeral laments.

tune structure		solo	choral
solo lament	choral lament	performances	performances
A		8	0
A ₁ A ₂		2	0
	<A <A	0	2
AA	AA AA	1	1
rA	rA rA	9	1
RA ₁ RA ₂		8	0
RA		2	0
	rrA rrA	0	3
AR		3	0
arb	a(r)b arb	37	9
aRb		4	0
aRb ₁ aRb ₂		2	0

In considering the above statistics, it should be noted that due to the small volume of material analysed, some results depend on random factors. Thus, all eight performances with a two-line melostrophe and a long refrain (*RA₁RA₂*) belong to one singer, Matrjona Suuvere (b. 1898) from Tonja village in Järvesuu district (the laments were performed in different years in the 1972–1978 period). Two laments with the structure *RA* were performed by Jevdokia Vabarna (b. 1901) from the same village. Of the three cases where the long refrain was after the main line (*AR*), two of the performances are by the same Jevdokia Vabarna and the other by Maria Vabarna (b. 1920). Since all of

these performers are from the same village and, moreover, belong to the family of the famous singer Anne Vabarna mentioned above, we can assume that these tune structures, as well as the use of the long addressing formula (*R*), may be manifestations of a local tradition as we have no evidence of their wider dissemination. Anne Vabarna's own solo laments have a unique $aRb_1 aRb_2$ form, a two-line tune with an embedded long addressing refrain (see Figure 5). However, there are two instances where the long addressing formula has been found in other parts of Setomaa – the structure aRb , which was recorded in Meremäe and Petseri districts. The third performance with this melostrophe structure is by Jevdokia Vabarna.

3. Mul - lõ_ks üt - le viil, ku - ku tä - tä - ke - ne, sa üt's sõ - na - kõ - nõ,

4. töö - nõ_ks üt - le viil, ku - ku tä - tä - ke - ne, sa sõ - na poo - lõ - kõ.

Figure 5. Funeral lament with the $aRb_1 aRb_2$ structure, performed by Anne Vabarna in Tonja village in 1949 (Pino and Sarv 1982: No. 31).³³

Turning to analysis of the form of choral funeral laments, we notice that all formal structures other than the aforementioned arb are represented by only one or two performances (see Table 1). The structure labelled $\langle A$, where the main line is extended by the repetition of the first stress group, was recorded by Anne Vabarna and her choir twice, in 1934 and 1936 (ERA, Fon. 433 c and ERA, Pl. 26 A2, see also Figure 6). Anne Vabarna also used this tune for the lyrical “War Song” (*Sõalaul*). Vabarna’s funeral lament and “War Song” have in common references to a friend (sister) (*sõbrakõnõ*, *sõbrakõsõ*) in the text. A feature characteristic of funeral laments to be found in this tune, besides the lament line structure, is the *fermata* at the end of the first motif and at the end of the whole line; an atypical feature is the location of the tonic on the middle scale note of the central trichord (the scale note G in the trichord F#-G-A#). The tonic on the scale note G is characteristic of all wedding laments and many choral songs.

2. Hal - lõ_ks hal - lõ sin - no meil lii - tä lii - va sis - se,

hal - lõ, hal - lõ sin - no meil lii - tä lii - va sis - se.

Figure 6. Funeral lament with the structure $\langle A$, performed by Anne Vabarna and choir in Tonja village in 1936 (ERA, Pl. 26 A2). The main line (ML) has a normative structure of the lament line (2+3)+(2+2+2).

The position of the tonic on the middle note of the central trichord is found in two other performances with structures AA and rrA . The melostrophe AA , a two-line tune with-

out addressing formula, was performed by Olga Ohtla (b. 1903) with a choir in Mikita-mäe village in 1972 (RKM, Mgn. II 2240 e). The *rrA* structure was recorded three times in very different versions – in 1913 (Harka Kati, b. ≈1873, Vedernika village; see Tampere 1960: 395), in 1973 (Elena Laanetu, b. 1909, Suure-Rõsna village, see RKM, Mgn. II 2423 a), and in 2006 (Leiko choir, Väraska village; see ERA, DH 17 (44)). In the first case the tonic is on the middle note of the central trichord; in the other two cases it is on the lower note, as is usual in funeral laments (Laanetu’s performance was presented above in Figure 3). The *rA* form has been recorded in choral performance only once, by Elena Laanetu (RKM, Mgn. II 2423 b). From the above data we can see that the variability in the tune form of choral funeral laments is very high relative to the small number of available recordings. Since many variants are found only in single performances, it is difficult to judge how widespread they were in the tradition. The only tune form that is represented in many performances (nine recordings from several different choirs) is the *arb* form with internal refrain.

The *arb* structure merits a separate description because not only does it predominate in funeral choral laments and occur in half the solo laments, it is also the only structure present in bridal laments. This form is peculiar in that the addressing formula is embedded in the middle of the line, forming an integral structure with it. This is achieved by a special technique in which the addressing refrain is placed before the additional third syllable of the second stress group. This technique is particularly clear in choral laments, as the lead singer usually performs only the main line, while the addressing refrain appears in the choral part. Thus, Figure 7 demonstrates that in the lead singer’s part the second stress group has the text *lääde sa*, while in the choral part the addressing refrain *tsids’akõnõ* (sister) is placed between the two-syllable word *lääde* and the additional syllable *sa*.

2. Mää-nest lää-de sa kjau-ki kjau-ma-he, mää-nest lää-de, tsi-ds'a-kõ-nõ, sa kjau-ki kjau-ma-he.

Figure 7. Funeral lament with the *arb* structure, performed by Maria Sirel and choir in Serga village in 1982 (KKI, RLH 72:5 (1)).

In solo laments, the same principle is usually followed, as shown in Figure 8, where the refrain is inserted between the words of the stress group *inne ma* (Pino and Sarv 1981: No. 14). However, deviations from this rule are also possible, for example the addressing formula can be preceded by a second stress group in its full three-syllable form, and after the addressing another additional syllable is added (Pino and Sarv 1982: No. 45, 53).

3. Kui iks in-ne, maa-ma-kõ-nõ, ma ku-na-ko-do-tul-li.

Figure 8. Funeral lament with the *arb* structure, performed by Emilie Kasak (b. 1915) in Küllatuva village in 1972 (Pino and Sarv 1981: No. 14).

The specificity and prevalence of the *arb* structure allows us to conclude that it is the most characteristic form of Seto lament; however, this does not mean that it is the oldest one. It is possible that the widespread use of this form in funeral laments could be the result of the influence of bridal laments, which throughout the 20th century were performed much more often than funeral laments and are still quite popular among Seto women. It is difficult to judge to what extent the specificity of this formal structure is due to the ritual functions of laments, although it seems that the *arb* formal structure has a special expressive value. The interruption of the main line by an addressing formula conveys well the confusion and discontinuity of the emotional speech; the characteristic mournful stops (*fermatas*) at the end of the motifs also correspond to the physiology of crying (see Figure 7).

In general, in the context of lament traditions of linguistically and/or geographically related peoples, a distinctive feature of the structure of Seto lament tunes is the structural and melodic separation of the addressing formula, which is regularly used in every melostrophe as a kind of refrain and can change its location relative to the main lament line. It seems that Seto lamenters are aware of the structural elements of the melostrophe form and may vary it in solo laments (see the notation of laments in Pino and Sarv 1981; 1982: No. 10, 12, 13, 16, and others), which could be an expressive rhetorical device. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the addressing formula is not just freely combined with the main line, but is firmly embedded in the tune, as is typical in song tunes, something that is especially evident in the *arb* form most common in funeral and wedding laments.

Melodic Contours in the Solo Laments

The above analysis suggests that the ritual and emotional functions of the Seto laments are expressed both in the spontaneous variation of the scales and formal structures of the tunes, and in the very features of the formal structures themselves. This section of the article continues the search for musical elements that on the one hand express the lament function of the tunes, and on the other hand determine the identity of the tunes for the bearers of tradition. This time the focus is on the melodic characteristics of the tunes of solo funeral laments, since the melodic contour is often a feature that determines the tune type in monophonic genres (Rüütel 1980: 3) and at the same time has great expressive power.

The observations on the melodic contours of solo funeral laments are summarised in Table 2. In order to summarise the large and varied material of the analysis, I have reduced the variety of actual melodic patterns to sequences of scale notes of the central trichord, to which one note is added from below. This method of analysis is consistent with the trichordal principle of melodic movement in the lament tunes. The scale note that can be added to the trichord from above, as a rule, does not play an independent role, being adjacent to the third as an auxiliary note, so it was removed from the schemes for the sake of clarity. The scale note below the tonic is taken into account, however, as it is structurally important in some versions of the lament tune. The scale notes are indicated by the numbers 1, 2, 3, and -2. The numbers 1, 2 and 3 denote the central trichord (conventionally G-A-B) in all its interval variants described above (thus

these digits can also denote the structures G-A-Bb, G-Ab-Bb, G-Ab-Bb, G-Ab-B and others). The number -2 most often corresponds to the scale note E, but it can also be Eb, and even D, as in all these cases we are essentially talking about variants of the same ‘sub-note’. The letters *a*, *b*, *r* and *R* designate respectively the first half-line, the second half-line, and the short and the long addressing formulas, which, as mentioned above, constitute the basic elements of the lament tune structure. The colour indicates descending, ascending and descending-ascending motifs.

Table 2. Melodic contours in solo funeral laments.

a	b	a	r	x	b
3---1---3	3 3 2 (2) 1 1	1-----3	3 2 1 1	x	3 3 2 (2) 1 1
3---2---3	3 2 1 (1) 1 1	-2-----3	3 3 2 1		3 2 1 (1) 1 1
1---2---3		3-----3			
		3-----1			

r	a	b
3 2 1 1	3---1---2	3 3 2 (2) 1 1
3 3 2 1	3---2---3	3 2 1 (1) 1 1

r	a	b
3 3 2 2 1 1	1-----3	3 3 2 (2) 1 1
3 2 1 1 - 2 - 2		3 2 1 (1) 1 1
		3 2 1 (1) - 2 - 2

descending
ascending
descending-ascending

The most noticeable pattern revealed by the schemes in Table 2 is the great predominance of descending motifs. In most cases we are dealing with a descending stepwise movement through the notes of the central trichord to the tonic (designated by number 1); in some cases (more precisely in long refrains and at the end of the first line of two-line tunes) the descending movement continues down to ‘sub-note’ -2 (an example of such a two-line tune with a long addressing formula is provided in Figure 5). Another significant pattern is that descending motifs are clearly associated with certain elements of the tune form, namely the addressing formula *r* and *R* and the second half-line *b*, i.e. with the melodic cadence of the tune. It should also be noted that the descending motif can reach the modal centre (scale note 1) earlier or later: thus, for a four-syllable refrain *r*, sequences 3 3 2 1 and 3 2 1 1 have been found, while in the 5-6-syllable cadential half-line *b* the tonic can be on the second, third or fourth syllable-note from the end. In tunes with an embedded refrain (the *arb* form), the additional syllable-note located after the refrain, which fulfils the function of the transition to the second half-line, can be realised in different ways and, since it does not belong to either the preceding or the following motif, it is designated in the scheme by the letter X.

The freest element of the tune is the first half-line *a*. In view of the abundance of specific melodic patterns in this half-line, I have reduced their variety to a limited number of generalised schemes that show the general direction of melodic movement (in the

schemes of the motif *a*, numbers show the beginning and ending notes of the motif, and, if there is one, the most characteristic intermediate note). Thus the ascending movement can cover the distance between scale notes 1 and 3 or -2 and 3, and can be unidirectional or deviated. The descending-ascending contour usually has scale note 3 as its starting point, but it can develop further in different ways. Table 2 demonstrates that a purely descending melodic movement for the initial motif of the lament line is rather uncharacteristic, and ascending or descending-ascending motifs predominate. The upward movement at the end of the first half-line is clearly due to the logic of connecting this line with the descending second half-line or refrain that follows it. An analysis of the melodic contour of the tunes of solo laments reveals that they are united not only by common features in their rhythmic and formal structure, but also by melodic regularities. It seems that all these elements together identify the 'death tune' in the Seto culture.

The predominance of descending melodic movement is consistent with the ritual and emotional function of laments and is quite as expected in the context of what is known about the lament genre among other peoples. A peculiarity of Seto laments is that here we are dealing with short descending motifs, which are assigned to certain elements of the form – the addressing formula and the second half-line. One can also find specific similarities between Seto laments and the melodies of South Vepsian and Ingrian laments, where researchers have noticed the opposition between two main melody notes – the upper tone ('climax', 'peak tone') and the tonic ('final tone') –, while the intermediate tone ('mediating tone') is a less significant passing tone (Rüütel 2000: 285–286; Niemi 2002: 717–718).

Harmonic Rhythm in the Choral Funeral Laments

The descending motifs in addressing refrains and melodic cadences that characterise the solo laments are also characteristic of the choral funeral laments. They can be found both in the lead singer's line and in the choral section, in its lower main part *torrõ* (see Figures 3 and 7). However, my previous investigations have revealed that in Seto polyphonic songs the tune type is determined not so much by the melody as by a specific structural feature that can be called "harmonic rhythm" (Pärtlas 2021b). Harmonic rhythm is a peculiar phenomenon of the Seto musical system that underlies many structural processes in polyphonic songs such as the formation of a tune's rhythmic form, the building of the polyphonic texture, and melodic variation. Harmonic rhythm is the rhythm of alternation of two functional complexes of scale notes, which arises from the binary harmonic system of Seto polyphonic tunes. This rhythm, with its considerable stability and individuality, is the main representative feature of polyphonic tune types. It would therefore be interesting to ascertain to what extent it identifies the 'death tune' of choral laments in its various versions.

To demonstrate harmonic rhythm analysis, the example of the choral funeral lament previously given in Figure 7 can be used. In Figure 9 the harmonic rhythm symbols are marked below the notation of this lament.

2. Mää-nest lää-de sa kjau-ki kjau-ma-he, mää-nest lää-de, tsi-ds'a-kō-nō, sa kjau-ki kjau-ma-he.

X o X x... X o X x... o X x O x x...

Figure 9. Analysis of harmonic rhythm in the funeral lament performed by Maria Sirel and choir in 1982 (KKI, RLH 72:5 (1)).

In the analysis of the harmonic rhythm the two functional complexes are designated by the symbols O and X, which are chosen because of their graphic contrast and because they do not have constant specific meanings.³⁴ Thus, the final complex of the tune, which accordingly fulfils the 'tonic' function, can be denoted in different cases both as O and as X. The decision is made each time depending on the task and the method of analysis. In this case, the purpose is to compare the lament tunes and to search for common features in their harmonic rhythm patterns. Since these tunes are based on the central trichord (in its various modifications), the harmonic complexes are marked in such a way that the lower note of the trichord corresponds to the symbol X, and the middle one to O. In Figure 9, the scale notes F# and A# belong to the X complex, and the note G to the O complex (here the O complex is represented by only one scale note, but in tunes with wider scales the complexes can consist of two or three scale notes – D-F#-A# and Eb-G-B). In this tune, all three motifs of the choral section (*a*, *r* and *b*) have a similar model of harmonic rhythm, which begins and ends with the X complex (generalised model X-O-X).

As mentioned above, in Seto polyphonic songs the harmonic rhythm is a very stable representative feature of the tune type, which varies little in different performances. Therefore, it would be worthwhile to compare in this respect nine performances of choral laments with the *arb* formal structure. The harmonic rhythm schemes in Figure 10 display a level of variability very unusual for Seto polyphonic tunes. Five patterns of harmonic rhythm are found for the first half-line *a*. These patterns are quite different, yet some similarities can be found in them, for example most of the patterns begin and/or end with the X complex. The addressing refrain *r*, which occurs in three variants, can begin with either the harmonic function O or X, but always ends with X, followed by an additional (connecting) syllable-note with an optional function. Finally, the second (final) half-line *b* always uses the same harmonic rhythm formula – Xx O(o) Xx. Thus the harmonic rhythm of the lament tune version *arb* stabilises towards the end of the melostrophe. A similar tendency was also observed in the melodic contours of solo laments, though in these the stability was also characteristic of the refrain (cf. Table 2).

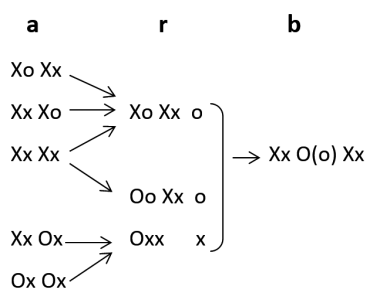


Figure 10. The harmonic rhythm in choral funeral laments with *arb* structure.

Despite the great variability of the harmonic rhythm of choral funeral laments with the structure *arb*, it nevertheless seems reasonable to see them as belonging to the same tune type, which is characterised by the ending of all three motifs on the function X. This feature is emphasised by the manner of performance – the lengthening of the last syllable-note of the motifs. From this point of view it is interesting to compare the harmonic rhythm of choral funeral laments with that of wedding laments, which in their formal and rhythmic structure fully coincide with choral funeral laments with an *arb* structure. A comparison of the harmonic rhythm in funeral (Figure 9) and wedding (Figure 11) laments reveals far more fundamental differences than we have seen in different performances of funeral laments (Figure 10). The main difference in the wedding tune is its ending on the harmonic function O, which is here the modal centre. Moreover, the fact that the harmonic rhythm of wedding laments, as opposed to funeral laments, is very stable in different performances is important, since it brings wedding laments closer to songs. These factors allow us to conclude that funeral and wedding laments have different tune types, despite the great similarity in their formal structure and rhythmic model. This is confirmed at the emic level, as the bearers of the tradition never confuse wedding and funeral tunes, although they are structurally similar. The manner of performance also differs. Unlike funeral laments, which have two or three *fermata* stops during the melostrophe, in wedding laments singers slightly prolong only the last syllable-note of the addressing refrain, and, on the contrary, speed up the tempo at the end of the melostrophe.³⁵

3.sul - lō_{ks} kal - lu, vel' - lo - kō - nō, nu kaa - la ümb - re - le,
 sul - lō kal - lu, vel' - lo - kō - nō, ma kaa - la ümb - re - le...
X x X o X o X x x X o X o o

Figure 11. Wedding lament, performed by Anne Vabarna in Tonja village in 1936 (the notation and sound recording in Tampere et al. 2016 [1970]: No. 52).

As mentioned above, the tunes of choral funeral laments with other formal structures are recorded in very few, often single, performances, so we cannot judge how stable their harmonic rhythm is in different performances. Figure 12 presents models of the harmonic rhythm in tunes with the structure $r(r)A$, ending in the function X . Here we again see the stability of the cadence motif $Xx O(o) Xx$ characteristic of funeral laments, the similarity of the refrains beginning and ending with the function X , and the greater variability of the first half-line (motif a).

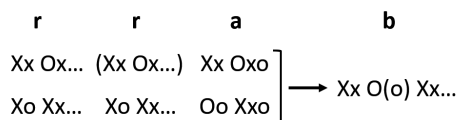


Figure 12. The harmonic rhythm in choral funeral laments with $r(r)A$ structure.

Finally, Figure 13 provides the only model of the harmonic rhythm of the main line found in tunes with a tonic on the middle scale note of the central trichord (scale note G in the trichord $F\#-G-A\#$; harmonic function O). This is found in three tunes represented in the available materials by single performances only. Interestingly, the harmonic rhythm of the main line coincides in these tunes, despite their different formal structures – $\langle A, AA$ and rrA .

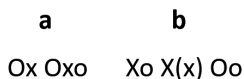


Figure 13. The harmonic rhythm in choral funeral laments with a tonic on the middle note of the central trichord.

The position of the tonic, atypical for both choral and solo funeral laments, the stability of the harmonic rhythm and the absence of an addressing refrain make these three tunes stand apart from other funeral laments and suggest that here we may be dealing with song tunes adapted to the text of a funeral lament. The possibility of such a use of song tunes is provided by the correspondence of their rhythmic structure to a typical lament line.

FROM LAMENT TO LAMENTING SONG: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

From the emic point of view, a lament always remains a lament as long as its ritual and emotional functions remain relevant, or at least not forgotten. However, the degree of intensity and the correlation of these functions can be different, as is manifested by the different proportions of lament and song genre features in performance. In the Seto tradition, the presence of solo and choral forms of lament performance makes the ‘lament and song’ theme particularly important. What does the musical analysis of the Seto lament tunes tell us with regard to this?

It would be natural to assume that the lamenting style of performance implies a pitch-unstable recitative close to emotional speech and physiological crying, whereas

the song would be supposed to have a more melodic and pitch-determined mode of vocalisation. However, in the case of the Seto tradition, this dichotomy is not so obvious. The fact is that in Seto choral songs the lead singer usually sings in a very recitative and intonationally unstable manner, and the pitch of the scale notes is established more definitively only in the choral part of the melostrophe. Moreover, even the choral part of the songs is characterised by greater pitch instability and an abundance of (micro)alteration than can be found in other song traditions. If we compare the manner of vocalisation in Seto songs and laments, the difference can certainly be perceived (especially in the context of other musical features); however, it is not as fundamental as between the songs and laments of many other peoples. In fact, the performance of both songs and laments varies in the Seto tradition between recitative and singing and the result often depends on the personality of the singer/lamenter.

In terms of the metrical and rhythmic structure of the text and tune, Seto laments do not differ greatly from the songs of the ancient stratum. Honko (1974: 20) and Salve (2000: 57) argue that there is no fundamental difference between Seto laments and songs with regard to the verse structure and even to the content of the texts. Indeed, the Seto lament line is built according to the quite definite model (2+3)+(2+2+2).³⁶ The same model can also be found in some Seto choral songs: the exact correspondence is present in the harvest tune *lelotamine* and in the tune sung with the texts "Ivo from Härmä Village" (*Härmä Ivokõnõ*) and "Grandma" (*Vanaimäkene*); a rhythmically modified version of this model can be found in the Shrovetide tune (*mäe ääl*), in the tune of the recruit song "Recruit Song" (*Nekrutilaul*) and in the multifunctional tune that can be provisionally called "Rain" (*Vihmakõnõ*). In some of the above cases, the relation of the songs to the lament genre can be easily explained. Thus, the songs "Ivo from Härmä Village" and "Grandma" were originally a male parody of lament and the recruit song actually fulfilled the function of lament. The connection of the Shrovetide song with lament is rather indirect – in its text there is an appeal to a sister, which could be associated with the addressing formula in the funeral lament for a maiden. As for the lament line in *lelotamine*, lamentations during the harvest (labour laments) and an affinity between harvest songs and laments have been noticed among Russians and some other peoples (e.g. Zemtsovsky 1987: 68; Pashina 1998: 162). In any case, the very possibility of the transition of a lament line into a song genre shows that there are no fundamental differences in the metrical organisation of Seto laments and songs, and that there is no insurmountable barrier in an emic genre taxonomy.

One more intrinsic feature of lament as a genre is verbal and musical improvisation, which can be linked, but which can also occur independently. It is obvious that both song and lament always have underlying mental models. The model of the song tune usually implies less freedom of realisation, whereas in lament the performing variation can reach the level of improvisation. As far as the model of the Seto lament line is concerned, its structure is somewhat looser than in songs. In laments the number of syllables in the line and their grouping can be altered to some extent, and the musical duration of the line and its metrical structure change accordingly (it should be noted that the variation of the text structure in songs often does not affect the musical form). I have already mentioned that in laments the length and structure of the second half-line vary, which is generally not typical of Seto song tunes.³⁷ However, in solo laments, the first half-line can also vary to some extent (for example, a third syllable can be added to

the first stress group, which normally consists of two syllables).³⁸ The structure of the whole melostrophe can also vary by changing the position of the addressing formula and other techniques, which often happens even during a single performance.

Both metrical and structural variation are virtually non-existent in Seto choral songs, except for the solo parts of the lead singers, where they have more freedom. This suggests that the greater freedom of realisation of the tune model in laments as compared to songs can be explained not only by the peculiarities of the lament genre, but also by the difference between solo and choral forms of singing. Choral performance obviously requires a stricter adherence to the tune model because of the need for coordination between the singers. For this reason, variation of the formal structure does not occur in choral laments either. Nevertheless, the musical freedom of the lament genre is manifested in these through the plurality of existing melostrophic structures, which is not characteristic of the song genre.

Despite the greater variability of Seto solo laments as compared to songs, this difference is far from being as fundamental as in the traditions of Karelians and Izhorians. If we add to this the emotional restraint and relatively song-like manner of the lament performance (at least of the majority of performances that the collectors managed to record), we should recognise the relative closeness to song of not only choral but also solo Seto lamentations.³⁹ It is also noteworthy that the structure of the Seto lament line, which is the main musical feature of the genre, is very close in rhythmic organisation to the Seto songs of early origin (mainly ritual and labour songs) in general. This stylistic layer is easily recognisable through two features – rhythmic patterns consisting of two- and three-beat groups of short syllable-notes and the one-three-semitone scale. Both these features suggest that the tunes of solo and choral Seto laments belong to this layer, which mutually confirms the ancientness of both laments and songs.⁴⁰

The stylistic kinship of laments and songs leads to a discussion on the functions, meanings and age of the lament genre in Seto culture. Izaly Zemtsovsky (1987: 63), in his article on the Balto-Slavic funeral laments, puts forward the hypothesis that the features of ritual songs found in the lament tunes indicate the primary magical function of the latter. He emphasises that the magical (incantation) function of laments is more ancient than crying and expressing grief, since the attitude to death in the remote past may have been quite different (*ibid.*: 61; cf. Pino and Sarv 1981: 22). He also asks, “what was the music of magical laments and are there any traces of it in modern lamentations? And how can one prove the fact of the former magical nature of funeral melos?” (*Zemtsovsky 1987: 62*) In his search for traces of magical laments, Zemtsovsky mentions, for example, the narrow-ranged diatonic and anhemitonic scales with major or neutral thirds typical of Balto-Slavic and Finno-Ugric ritual songs that are also found in Seto laments and songs (*ibid.*: 63). From the above analysis it seems that Seto laments have even more similarities to ritual songs than the Balto-Slavic laments (the rhythmic model also coincides), which suggests that Seto lament tunes are among the oldest in the region.

Proceeding from the hypothesis that the predominance of the emotional function over the magical function in laments may be a historically later phenomenon, we can also assume that in some ethnic traditions, with the increase of the emotionality and of its manifestations in the manner of singing, the laments’ ancient incantatory tunes may have lost their originally clearer song-like outlines.⁴¹ The melodies of Seto laments, on

the contrary, are rather song-like in their structure, and since the use of cross-culturally comprehensible icons of crying among Seto lamenters is relatively small, it is sometimes even difficult for an outsider who does not understand the language to realise that it is a lament that is being performed.

One more feature which, according to Zemtsovsky, might point to the magical ritual function is “the fact of collective, choral performance of lamentations” (ibid.). In his opinion, “the image of the individual lamenter is more comprehensible to us than the image of collective wailing; the latter is clearly further from our psychological attitude, clearly closer to archaic rituals” (ibid.: 70). Seto choral laments, both funeral and wedding, are undoubtedly ritualistic, but it seems that here the social function prevails over the magical function. It should be also taken into account that the Seto choral laments, with rare exceptions, are linked to weddings, either directly, as bridal laments, or indirectly, as funeral laments for a maiden. It is also noteworthy that there are no solo bridal laments in Seto tradition. Thus, it can be concluded that the opposition between choral and solo laments corresponds to the opposition between wedding and funeral rites in Seto culture. On the other hand, there is a strict distinction between the tune types of laments at weddings and funerals, which does not coincide with the distinction between solo and choral forms of performance. As for the function of laments, a wedding seems to be a more social ritual than a funeral, where, in addition to mourning, magic is very important as communication with the other world, helping the dead and protecting the living. We have little data on how choral lamentations sounded at funerals, but apparently there was no very dramatic lamenting in choral form.

Seto choral laments are very similar to – and sometimes almost indistinguishable from – choral songs in terms of the stability of the tune model, scales, type of polyphony and form of performance. However, it is these similarities that account for the very existence of this rare genre. There are two reasons why the Seto choral lament can exist: firstly, the antiphonal way of performing Seto songs makes it possible for the lead singer to improvise the text, which is a necessary requirement for the lament genre; secondly, the closeness of the tune structure of solo funeral laments to the structure of song tunes makes it possible to perform the funeral tune in a polyphonic style.

A more complicated question is why the choral form of performing laments was socially demanded in Seto culture. It is possible that behind this lies the desire to avoid excessive emotionality on the part of the bride during the wedding, or it might be connected with the social function of psychological obedience of the bride, which, in particular, is expressed in her numerous repeated bows during the lament performance and even her falling to the ground. If this interpretation is correct, then the function of bridal laments was not only to give the bride the possibility to express her emotions, but also served as a psychological influence on the bride, who had to accept her new status and new family. From another point of view, it is noticeable that while among many peoples the bride is a very passive person in the wedding rite, the Seto have wedding laments in which the bride acts as lead singer, and this could be the place of her social activity in the ritual. The bride is given the word and everything she says has weight because it is repeated by the chorus. This seems a very different form of ritual behaviour from the usual lyrical solo bridal laments.

As a conclusion, it should be noted that although from an emic point of view the ritual function clearly separates the concepts of lament and song, in fact these genres

have several transitional gradations in the Seto tradition. Thus, already within the genre of solo funeral lament there are some performances that have more of the character of an emotional lament, i.e. they are spontaneous, make use of recitative and include icons of crying, and others that are more song-like and structurally stable. The funeral lament, when performed by a choir, with a stable tune and in an organised polyphonic texture, acquires the features of a lamenting song. Wedding laments are even closer to song because they have no solo counterpart; nowadays, when wedding laments are performed willingly outside a ritual context and without any notable elements of lamenting behaviour, the transformation of the genre towards song intensifies.⁴² The songs with lament content, such as the above-mentioned *hähkämine*, “Recruit Song” or “Grandma”, move even further away from true lamentation. Finally, there are some songs (for example *lelotamine*) based on the lament line, which have indirect links with the lamentations. The continuation of this transition can be seen in the songs of the old style, which are no longer connected with the lament line, but which have tunes and texts based on the same general principles including rhythmic system, musical scales and polyphonic texture.

A remarkable feature of the early layer of Seto traditional singing lies in its stylistic compactness and in the interrelations between all the genres, both in terms of tune structure and performance techniques. In this tradition, the tunes of laments are not stylistically dissociated from the main body of songs and pass smoothly to song genres. Taken as a whole, this provides vivid evidence of the unusual persistence and vitality of the ancient layer of Seto musical culture.

NOTES

1 The Seto people are a small ethnic group of Estonians living in south-east Estonia and within the adjoining border territories of Russia. The Seto name their region Setomaa (in Estonian *Setu* and *Setumaa*). The Seto tongue, a Võru-Seto dialect of Estonian, is spoken by about 12,500 people (see Census 2011) and belongs to the Finnic subgroup of the Finno-Ugric languages. The traditional culture of the Seto differs notably from the culture of other Estonians. Unlike most other Estonians, who are Lutherans, the Seto people are Orthodox. With regard to music, the greatest peculiarity of the Seto culture among the Finnic peoples is the ancient tradition of multipart singing – the so-called Seto *leelo*, which in 2009 was included in the UNESCO list of Intangible Cultural Heritage. The musical tradition of the Seto is one of the very few in Estonia that has been preserved in active use.

2 The same expression exists among the Karelians (Tolbert 1990: 81).

3 For example, in the statement recorded by Yelena Razumovskaya (2012: 93) in the region of the Russian-Belarusian borderland, “ours all cry with one voice, but the words are different”. The expression ‘with one voice’ means ‘to one tune’.

4 Metaphorical substitutions of kinship terms are also characteristic of Northern Russian lamentations (Chistov 1960: 12–13).

5 Aili Nenola-Kallio (1982: 79) notes: “as we move south from Archangel Karelia towards Ingria and Setumaa (Setoland) in Estonia, the language of laments becomes steadily more simple, the series of alliterations grow shorter, the metaphorical components are reduced, and it is increasingly easy to distinguish ‘lines’”. Kristi Salve (2000: 57), however, argues that the poetic style of the Seto laments differs more sharply from the rest of the Balto-Finnic tradition: “If one compares the geographically more distant – the North Karelian and Setu – laments, it is obvious

that they are different lament languages, since in the intermediate area we encounter smoother transitions". Honko (1974: 20) also states that the Seto laments "clearly form a type of their own".

6 "The laments not only regulate the sorrow, but also force all those to grieve from whom this kind of reaction is traditionally expected" (Honko 1974: 44).

7 Niemi (2002: 709) erroneously states that the Mordvins (Moksha and Erzya) commonly perform laments chorally in the form of an antiphon "lead singer + polyphonic response from choir". In Nikolay Boyarkin's editions (1981, 1988), to which Niemi refers, there are many notations of solo laments, which is normal practice among Mordvins, with the exception of one Moksha funeral lament, which is performed collectively, i.e. as an uncoordinated superimposition of several solo laments according to the principle of polymusic (Boyarkin (1988: 33) describes this form also among the Erzya). Niemi (2002: 711) also ignores the existence of solo laments among the Seto.

8 This does not mean that choral polyphonic laments are not known in world folklore. A striking example of choral laments are men's polyphonic dirges, found in many regions of Georgia and mostly called *Zari*. According to Ketevan Baiashvili (2014), in West Georgian regions especially well-known are Svan, Rachan, Gurian, Megrelian, Imeretian dirges. Baiashvili (ibid.: 22) also notes that "in east Georgia group lamentation is basically performed by women. For instance, women's 'Zari' is known in Kakheti; in Kartli and Mtiuleti women's group dirge is called 'Banit tirili' (dirge with bass)".

9 Armas Otto Väisänen (1923) describes that on the way to the church and graveyard, the horse cart was decorated with the silk bands and the maiden's headdress of the deceased; the coffin was covered by her silk kerchief; and her silver chains and the Seto special silver brooch, *sõlg*, were also brought along. The *podruskid* ('bridesmaids') also used to carry the coffin.

10 I have partially verified the musical transcriptions by Vaike Sarv using the sound recordings available at the Estonian Folklore Archives. They seem to me quite trustworthy, although some details could have been interpreted differently. Furthermore, the recitative and pitch-unstable melody of the laments does not always lend itself to objective and accurate visualisation in Western staff notation.

11 Vabarna's version of the lament tune is very similar to the shepherd's tune, and there is only a slight difference in her manner of performing the two genres.

12 Thus, Eduard Alekseyev (1986: 97–98) provides in his book *Early Folklore Intonation* an example of North Russian lament recorded in the Vologda region, where a steep rise in pitch occurs, reaching by the end of the performance a range of almost two octaves; Frank Scherbaum and Nana Mzhavanadze (2020: 138) have observed "a strong gradual pitch rise of up to 100 cents per minute" in the three-voiced Svan funeral dirges *zär*.

13 The abrupt downward shifts in pitch level that occur at the beginning of a melostrophe several times during performance.

14 Interestingly, Vabarna, who made extensive use of *kergütämine* in her songs, used this technique only once in her lament for her father, which consists of 79 lines; the tonality in this performance was raised by no more than a semitone.

15 When calling scales 'sound material', I mean that they belong to the fundamental level of 'musical matter', being the basic elements for building melodic and harmonic structures. However, scales themselves have their own interval structure, which makes the scale notes capable of forming higher-level structures.

16 It would be interesting to study the early intonationally unstable scales inherent in Seto laments also on the basis of acoustic analysis. However, such an analysis would deserve separate extensive article focusing only on this issue, and due to the time-consuming nature of acoustic measurements, it would considerably reduce the volume of the research material. It is possible that such a study will be carried out in the future, but the topic of the present article has a much broader perspective and requires the coverage of all available material on Seto laments. There-

fore, in describing the structure of the scales of Seto solo funeral laments, I rely on their published notations (which are also quite revealing) and my own experience of acoustic analysis of the Seto choral songs having unstable scales (Pärtlas 2010; 2012; Ambrazevičius and Pärtlas 2011; and others). As for Seto funeral choral laments, elements of acoustic analysis were already included in the process of their notation; moreover, the regularities found in the acoustic analysis of Seto polyphonic songs also apply to them.

17 Scales were defined in individual melostrophes, but each scale was counted only once in a single performance. Statistics on the use of scales in solo laments are taken from an undergraduate student essay by Grete Kellamäe (2018), written under the supervision of the author of this article.

18 Structure 1-4 is written here as a variant of a trichord in the range of the augmented third, because it is related to the trichord 1-3. The origin of these variants of the central trichord is explained below.

19 In the following, the word 'tonic' will be used as a short synonym of 'modal centre'.

20 'Sub-notes' are scale notes below the modal centre.

21 By 'pre-diatonic scales' here I mean ancient scales of different structures, the common feature of which is that they consist of tones and semitones or rather of intervals close to tones and semitones, as these early scales are often intoned uncertainly and have unstable structure.

22 The notation of the one-three-semitone scale presents a difficult theoretical problem, as the frequently noted inconsistency of Western staff notation with the pitch structure of traditional music is particularly evident here. The variant of the notation presented here (with two augmented seconds) seems to be the most logical of the existing variants in research practice; however, for the comparison of interrelated varying scales I will sometimes have to use other note names while maintaining the same intervals between them.

23 The second most common scale is the pre-diatonic trichord 2-2 (G-A-B).

24 The 1-4-1 structure with an extra-wide interval between (also varying) semitones is found only in solo laments.

25 Niemi (2002: 714–716) finds intriguing anhemitonic motifs also in some generally diatonic tunes of Ingrian and Votic laments.

26 Silvonen and Stepanova (2020: 206) characterise the scales of Karelian laments as "minorish"; most of the examples of Ingrian and Votic laments in Niemi 2002 also have a minor third.

27 The method of analysing 'syllable rhythm' in vocal traditional music is a common method used in a number of Eastern European ethnomusicological academic schools since the early 20th century and is related to the more general method of structural-typological analysis (for an overview of the method, see Yefimenkova 2001).

28 The letter designations of the parts of the form (*a*, *b*, *r*, *R*) come from the structure of verbal text (see Figure 4), which, however, in runic songs and especially laments is inextricably linked to musical form. For a better understanding of the analysis here, it should be noted that the designations of the parts of the form are not related to their melodic content, so the parts designated as *b* (the second half-line) and *r* (short addressing refrain) might contain the same melodic patterns.

29 Text samples illustrating the structure of the main line (lament line) are taken from a lament for her husband performed by Anna Palatu (b. 1910) in 1978 (Pino and Sarv 1982: No 38).

30 In all musical examples of lament tunes, I separate the addressing formula with dotted bar lines (although this is usually only done for song refrains) so that the composition of the tune can be better seen.

31 In choral performance, the line, regardless of the tune form, is sung twice – first by the lead singer and then by the chorus. These repetitions are designated in Table 1; in the text I only show the structure of the choral section.

32 In Figure 2 (a, b, c) three different melostrophe structures are presented: *rA*, *RA* and *arb* with addressing formulas, respectively – *tätükene*, *kuku maamakõnõ* and *maamakõnõ*.

33 The second performance is published in Tampere 1960: 384–385.

34 Each symbol in the schemes of the harmonic rhythm corresponds to the duration of an eighth note, the basic rhythmic unit of the syllabic rhythm of Seto songs and laments; large symbols indicate the beginning of a stress group. The dots show the *fermata* at the ends of the motifs.

35 This is one further similarity to the manner of performance of Seto polyphonic songs.

36 For details see the analytical section of this article.

37 The variation of the length and structure of the tune according to the verbal text is observed in three Seto songs: the harvest song *lelotamine*, the wedding song *kaasitamine* and the game song *leigotamine* (see Oras et al. 2021: 41).

38 Salve (2000: 57) aptly observes that “in [Seto] lament the tune adapts to the words, but in song the opposite is true”. There is, however, a small but important exception to this rule: the obligatory three-beat structure of the second stress group in the lament line is, similarly to the three-beat groups of Seto song tunes, an element of musical structure for which an additional syllable is added to the text. This means that in the Seto lament, as in the songs, the runic verse partly adapts to the prescribed tune.

39 The observation that Seto laments are close to song not only in terms of text but also in terms of tune is not new. Pino and Sarv (1981: 23–24) have written about it, noting the “stable melodic pattern and form” of the tune, though without going into a more detailed musical analysis.

40 The pre-diatonic scales often encountered in solo funeral laments are probably even older than the one-three-semitone scale.

41 In this context, the researchers’ considerations about the comparative age of poetically simpler and more developed lament texts are interesting. Thus Salve (2000: 56) writes: “Among other Balto-Finnic laments, the Seto funeral lament is the closest to song, and we can assume that in its present form it is not so ancient, but rather boldly reformed only a couple of hundred years ago”. Borislava Yefimenkova (1980: 14), however, when discussing the texts of North Russian laments, proceeds from the opposite logic: “The development and fine differentiation of poetic techniques of the local lament testifies both to the long period of the genre’s production and to the relatively late formation of the texts known to us from the records of the 19th and 20th centuries”.

42 This applies to wedding laments performed at the request of collectors, on stage and for audio publishing. I do not consider here those rare and in many respects specific cases when bridal laments are included in modern weddings.

SOURCES

Collections at the Estonian Literary Museum’s Estonian Folklore Archives:

EKRK, Fon – Wax cylinder collection of the Department of Estonian Literature and Folklore, University of Tartu (1955–1989)

ERA, DH – Digital sound collection of the Estonian Folklore Archives (2003–...)

ERA, Fon – Wax cylinder collection of the Estonian Folklore Archives (1912–1948)

ERA, PL – Shellac disc collection of the Estonian Folklore Archives (1936–1938)

KKI, RLH – Sound recording collection of the Estonian Institute of Literature and Language (1941–1984)

RKM, Mgn – Sound recording collection of the Estonian State Literary Museum (1945–1996)

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