

## SECRETLY THROUGH SALATSI: PLACE NAMES IN ESTONIAN RUNIC SONGS RELATED TO LIVONIAN SETTLEMENT AREAS

**Kristi Salve**

*Estonian Literary Museum*

**Abstract.** The article searches for an answer to the question whether Estonian runic songs contain references to Livonians. Using the materials from the database of Estonian runic songs, the article observes some names of countries, rivers and towns. The name of Courland proved to be extremely popular; it appears, however, in very different contexts. Thus, concrete place names have been used as generalisations for distant lands. Among town names, both Riga and Võnnu (Latv. Cēsis) are obviously centres of the Teutonic Order like the Estonian towns mentioned in parallel verses. As hydronyms are generally ancient, the names of rivers (Salatsi, Latv. Salaca; Koiva, Latv. Gauja; Väina, Latv. Daugava) proved to be the most interesting. First, their distribution area is concrete and expressive: The Salatsi is known in South-West Estonia, the Väina in South-East Estonia. The Koiva is like a connecting link, as it appears as the parallel word of both the Salatsi and the Väina. The names of these three rivers have been used in clearly mythical songs where they denote dangerous places connected with the otherworld.

**Keywords:** Estonian, Livonian, runic songs, historical onomastics, toponyms

**DOI:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.12697/jeful.2016.7.1.04>

### 1. Introduction

It seems probable that, after a long break, the Estonians became aware of the Livonians – their linguistic relatives and earlier neighbours – only in the 19th century through the printed word. When the Estonian national movement gazed into the more distant past, especially at the conquest of the country by the crusaders, the Livonians inevitably came into view.

During the intervening centuries, however, sporadic contacts could also have taken place between these two Baltic-Finnic peoples speaking closely related languages. Particularly during wars, people often fled, and Livonians from the Salatsi (Latv. Salaca) region could have reached

Pärnu County in Estonia. A fishing boat may have landed on a foreign shore in a storm, and in this way, the Livonians of Courland could have arrived in Saaremaa. Such incidents could have left a trace in local oral heritage, but the stories, for example, about strong Peeter from Courland or the magic powers of Jaan from Salatsi may have faded through generations with their deeds coming to be associated with new names.

Have the ancient and later contacts with the Livonians, however, not left any traces on Estonian folksongs? The form of the runic song has favoured the preservation of old-fashioned language forms and archaic words. As the epic element in Estonian runic songs is very weak, one cannot expect to find direct references to (tribal) wars or other concrete historical events. To answer this question, let us examine place names occurring in runic songs – the names that denote objects situated in or near former Livonian settlement areas.

The material originates from the Estonian runic songs database (<http://www.folklore.ee/regilaul/andmebaas/>) which includes texts of songs written down in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These comprise the oldest and also the largest part of all the written materials, a total of 78,408 texts. The older collections are typologically richer; the newer ones, however, contain more lullabies and children's songs, certain kinds of calendar songs, etc. Thus, the database can be considered sufficiently representative. In some cases, the database *SKVR tietokanta*, which is based on the major publication *Suomen Kansan Vanhat Runot*, has been used for comparison. This database contains Finnish, Karelian, Izhorian, and Votian runic songs. The opening page of the Estonian runic songs database includes a link to the Finnish runic songs database (*Soome runolaulude andmebaas*).

This database of runic songs has been the source used for finding toponyms related to the Livonian settlement areas. When a word (in the present case a toponym) is entered into the database, it gives a list of songs where this toponym occurs. The database can also display all the corresponding texts in their entirety, which makes it possible to follow the context. This is very essential, as this way information can be obtained not only about the frequency of one or another place name but also more substantial aspects, e.g., the stereotypicality of verses containing the place names we are interested in or their relation to a certain type of song, possible religious motifs in songs, etc.

Naturally, one should take into consideration that songs are not ordinary texts and that instead they represent a secondary symbolic system, a figurative language that is regulated by principles differing

from everyday language. In songs based on initial rhyme and syntactic parallelism, the choice of words is predetermined in several ways. The significant features are the number of syllables, initial sounds of the words, the counterparts of the selected word in the parallel verse(s). For the same reasons, a successfully selected word or toponym could persist even if the singers did not know its connotations anymore.

## 2. Methodological difficulties in research of toponyms in runic songs

Using the database for research of toponyms in runic songs also involves some technical difficulties. Generally, the following could be mentioned:

- a) The search may not yield the names that have been written in a very irregular way with respect to their orthography or perhaps even have been performed in a distorted way. On the contrary, the search results may also contain irrelevant words/toponyms.
- b) It is not always clear which place the toponym denotes – names with the same form can exist in both the Livonian areas and, for example, in Estonia.
- c) Sometimes one should first decide whether a word is a toponym at all or perhaps an appellative.

A few examples to illustrate these difficulties. Three verses from a song found using the search word “Salatsi”:

Koda tee sina kuiva peale,  
 Saun tee Salatsi jõeale,  
 Rehi Riia uulitsale. (H I 7, 725 (3) <Hää)  
 (Build your house on the dry [place] / make the sauna on the Salatsi  
 River / the threshing barn on a street of Riga)

It is obvious that the word *kuiva* (dry) has been used instead of the Koiva (Latv. Gauja) River, which would be an appropriate counterpart to the Salatsi (Latv. Salaca). It is impossible to establish afterwards whether the word was pronounced this way by the singer, or whether the writer misheard it, but apparently, it was not considered a place name. When searching for the word *Koiva*, this song cannot be found. It is still quite likely that the Koiva River was the intended meaning, as the Salatsi is used in the parallel verse.

In the next example, in the case of *Kuura*, questions about the location of the object denoted by the toponym may arise.

Ann läks Kuura sepale.  
 Kuura sepp, mu kullake!  
 Võtke mu paater parandada  
 E 13921/2(26) <Audru  
 (Ann went to see the Kuura smith / Kuura smith, my dear! / Take my necklace to be repaired)

Although some villages named Kuura exist in Estonia, they are located in distant counties. As other songs mention the Kura smith with a short vowel, one can presume (but not be absolutely certain) that a reference to a distant and famous smith from Courland was the intended meaning.

In an excerpt from another song it is possible but very doubtful that the Kuura River in southeastern Estonia is the intended meaning.

Kuu tõusis Kuura jõesta,  
 Päe tõusis Pärnu lätesta  
 EKS 11, 2/3(2) <Helme  
 (The Moon rose from the Kuura River, / The Sun from the spring of the Pärnu)

The Kuura is a small river that could hardly have been known anywhere far away; therefore, obviously, a river in Courland was the intended meaning. (Kura and Kuura constantly alternate in the database.)

The third main problem – whether a toponym or an appellative has been used – is primarily related to the name of the Väina (Latv. Daugava) River (*väin* means ‘strait’ in Estonian). As with the previous examples, a more or less truthful answer can be found considering the context. In many cases, an appellative use is clear at first glance, as in:

Muhu väina künneti (E10505(2) <Tõs  
 (Muhu Strait was ploughed)

The following example is more complicated:

Sõitse üle Soome silla,  
 Soome silla, väina nurme (E41008<Rõu)  
 (Drove across the bridge of Finland / the bridge of Finland, the meadow of the strait)

As we can see below, the Bridge of Finland often appears in parallel verses with Courland. Therefore, in this example, the use of names of more distant places, such as the Väina River, might be expected. Another argument for a toponymic use is the fact that this song variant originates from the region where the main occurrences of the name of the Väina River are concentrated.

### 3. Overview of Livonian toponyms in Estonian runic songs

Let us now turn our attention to the use of concrete toponyms – those referring to larger regions (Kuramaa / Courland), rivers (Salatsi / Salaca, Koiva / Gauja, Väina / Daugava), and towns (Võnnu / Cēsis, Riia / Riga) in runic songs. The main emphasis is on hydronyms; towns are mentioned rather infrequently.

Regarding the names of countries, it should be first mentioned that the name of Livonia (*Liivimaa* – whatever it meant in different historical periods) is unknown in runic songs. Mauno Koski has already discussed this, though relying on far fewer materials (ErlA, register of names) (Koski 2011, 70).

It should be stated that Estonia does not fare better, as the self-designation *eestlased* (Estonians) and the name for their country – *Eesti*, *Eestimaa* (Estonia) – became fixed only as late as the second half of the 19th century. Its rare occurrences in the database date from newer, transitional, or end-rhymed songs, and therefore, cannot be taken into consideration. On the contrary, the old names of Estonian counties are very widespread.

As compared to the toponyms mentioned above, it is noteworthy that Latvia (*Läti*, *Lätimaa*) and the Latvian language (*läti keel*) do occur in runic songs, although not that often, though still forming a certain tradition nevertheless. It can be supposed that due to the linguistic difference (the language of Estonia versus the Latvian language), Latvia came to denote the whole area to the south of Estonia.

Due to the initial rhyme, Latvia (*Läti*) can be replaced with Läänemaa (a county in western Estonia) in different variants of the same song or vice versa:

Soomemaa soolapuhujad,  
Lätimaa läbinägijad (H III 14, 779(32) KJn)  
(Witch doctors from Finland, / clairvoyants from Latvia),

but

Oh teie kura kuratid,  
 läänemaa läbinägijad EÜS VII 490(288)  
 (Oh, you devils from Courland, / clairvoyants from Läänemaa)

Latvia also occurs in long parallelism groups in wedding or party songs where the wedding table is praised because of the distant origin of foods:

Toonu rua Roodsi maalta  
 Toonu vie Vene maalta  
 Laia lavva Läti maalta (H II 5, 100/1(82) <Hls  
 (Brought the meal from Sweden / Brought the water from Russia / The  
 broad table from Latvia)

Some occurrences of Latvia (*Läti*) in runic songs may not refer to the name of the country but instead to the names of certain Estonian villages or farms. This problem was mentioned at the beginning of the article.

Although Latvia appears tens of times, its occurrence is still extremely modest compared to that of Courland.

In total, the forms *Kuramaa*, *Kura*, *Kuuramaa*, and *Kuura* occur approximately 750 times in the database. This can be compared to the frequencies of the names of the most popular Estonian counties – Viru (more than 1500 times) and Harju (more than 1200 times). In the names of the Estonian counties, too, the forms without the *-maa* ‘land’ component are predominant (Koski 2011, 53).

It is typical that in many cases, but by far not exclusively so, that the choice of *Kuramaa* is determined by the initial rhyme as in the example given above (kuu tõusis Kuura jõesta). A few more pairs of words where *Kura* (*Kuura*, *Kuramaa*, *Kuuramaa*) is in the initial rhyme with some other word: *Kuramaa* kuused ‘spruces of Courland’, *Kuramaa* kuratid ‘devils of Courland’, *Kuramaa* koerad ‘dogs of Courland’, *Kuramaa* kuningad ‘kings of Courland’, *Kuramaa* kume pasun ‘the sounding horn of Courland’, *Kuramaa* kulla laevad ‘Courland’s ships of gold’, *Kura* kangaste kudujad ‘weavers of Courland’s fabrics’, etc. Those and several other pairs of words appear in a more or less definite context. The devils and dogs of Courland are used in songs to disparage the opposite side at a wedding. The spruce of Courland carries a positive meaning, symbolising the bridegroom, particularly

his height. Unspecified gorgeous young men (who can actually be quite close acquaintances) are compared to the kings of Courland, etc. Here, it cannot be ignored that the Estonian language has a particularly large number of words beginning with *k*; this may be one of the reasons why Courland is so popular in initial rhymes.

However, in one of the most frequent groups of verses where *Kura* occurs, the choice cannot have been determined by the initial rhyme.

Sõitsid Soome silda mööda,  
Kuramaa mägesid mööda. H, Ostrov 107/8(47b)<Lai  
([They] drove along the bridge of Finland, / along the hills of Courland)

The lines in this example originate from a song resembling a legend; usually the traveller is just a nice young man. In this example, the initial rhyme occurs in the phrase *mägesid mööda* ‘along the hills’, therefore, instead of *Kuramaa* ‘Courland’ any other land (*maa*) could have been used. This suggests that there was still some kind of (perhaps obscure) knowledge which has kept this pair of verses intact across nearly all of Estonia.

In a few texts, instead of the bridge of Finland (*Soome sild*), the bridge of *Sõrve* (a region in the island of *Saaremaa*) is used:

Sõidab Sõrve silda mööda,  
mööda Kuura maa mägesid. H II 1, 533(2) <Vig  
(Drives along the bridge of Sõrve, / along the hills of Courland),

also:

Kuramaa mäed kumavad,  
Sõrve silda nõksatille. E 43493/4(13)<Hag  
(the hills of Courland are shimmering, / the bridge of Sõrve jerked).

Probably, in the regions where it was known that the distance between Courland and *Sõrve* is relatively short, the more distant Finland was replaced with *Sõrve*. According to the rules of parallelism, the bridge of Finland and the hills of Courland together may denote distant extremes, not concrete places. From the viewpoint of Estonia, they signify the northern and southwestern borders. Courland is known in Estonian runic songs all over the country, even in northern Estonia. This is an essential difference from the hydronyms discussed below. Courland does not occur in the database created on the basis of

the SKVR, although the bridge of Finland (Suomen silta) appears in a number of cases in western Ingrian songs (Suomen silta notkahteli ‘the bridge of Finland jerked’ – SKVR III 1, 801).

In fact, hydronyms, as researchers of toponymics have observed, are very constant. Baltic-Finnic hydronyms have been found to the east and south of the present-day settlement areas of the Baltic-Finnic population. In the present Baltic-Finnic areas, however, hydronyms originating from earlier languages can be found.

Let us now examine the names of three rivers, the first of which gave this article its title.

**Salatsi** (Latv. Salaca) does not appear frequently in runic songs (only 32 cases in the database). Its spread, however, is quite noteworthy. Almost 90% of occurrences come from the area of the Mulgi dialect, primarily from the Karksi and Halliste parishes, which are notable for the conservatism of their folk culture in several other fields as well. The remaining two have been recorded in Pärnu County and one in the southern part of Tartu County. One has been written down in the northern part of Tartu County, but its language form and other indirect data point to the south, possibly still to the area of the Mulgi dialect (in this region also lived farmers from Mulgimaa).

Salatsi occurs most often in two types of songs. Particularly noteworthy is one of them – “Hiie noormees” (Young Man of the Sacred Grove) – where the main character is clearly a mythical being. Salatsi occurs in this song as a counterpart of the sacred grove (*hiis*) in parallel verses.

Lääme illut iite kaudu,  
Sala me Salatsi kaudu (E 45971/2(4) <Krk  
(We go furtively through the sacred groves, / Secretly through Salatsi)

Numerically, Salatsi is even more often represented in another song, which, in its essence, is a purely lyrical song of girls, a play of fantasy:

Me tees kua koeva pääle  
sanna tees Salatsi pääle  
rehe tees Riia uulitses. E 46013(19) < Krk  
(We would make the house on the Koiva / would make the sauna on the  
Salatsi / would make the threshing barn on a street of Riga.)



Here, it is noteworthy that the paradigm Koiva–Salatsi–Riga involves all the parallel verses. It might be presumed that they were seen as belonging together, and were not used merely because of the initial rhyme.

Salatsi and Koiva appear together in a few wedding songs, as well:

Sai ma kokku koeva pääl,  
sai järgi Salatsi pääl. (E 31011/2 (4) < Hls  
(I met you on the Koiva, / caught you up on the Salatsi.)

That these are not some obscure, fossilised place names is shown by the fact that their counterpart in the first verse of the parallelism group can be water:

Visas üle viie vee,  
viie vee, kuue Koeva,  
üle ma sa'a Salatsi. H II 23, 568/70(42) < Krk  
(Threw across five waters, / five waters, six Koivas, / across a hundred Salatsis.)

Interesting counterparts in parallel verses are Russia–Courland–Salatsi:

Viis meid viidi Venemaale,  
kuus meid viidi Kuramaale,  
seitse Salatsi jõe (E, StK 14, 198 < PJg)  
(Five of us were taken to Russia, / six of us were taken to Courland, / seven to the Salatsi River.)

Here, through parallel verses, the Salatsi River acquires the meaning of a distant place.

The name of the second river, **Koiva** (Latv. Gauja), appears in the database considerably more frequently – 120 times. This is to be expected, as part of the Koiva River forms the border between Estonia and Latvia even in the present day. However, the spread of the corresponding songs shows that the present ethnic and state borders are not of primary significance.

The connections in parallel verses with the Salatsi River have already been referred to in the previous examples. As a result of this, the Koiva is also known in the area of the Mulgi dialect. In the Mulgi dialect area, the Koiva River can also seldom be associated with the Väina:

Tule kodu Koiva kaudu,  
 Veere kodu Väina kaudu. H II55, 206(4) <Trv.  
 (Come home by way of the Koiva, / Roll home by way of the Väina.)

The Koiva River, however, is also mentioned in the east, in songs originating from Võru and Setu counties, where the name of the Salatsi is not known. In these regions, the counterpart of the Koiva in the parallel verse(s) is mostly the Väina but also the Narva River and the sea.

A great part of the paradigms where the Narva and the sea can occur belong to the group of songs of finding a wife from afar, which is one of the central themes in archaic epics. The corresponding Estonian songs can also contain elements of myths.

Lätsi mina Koiva kosjuele,  
 Väina vai naista võttemaie.  
 Koiva tütar ära koolu,  
 Väina tütar väikene. H II, 31, 581(32) <Ote.  
 (I went to the Koiva to make a proposal, / to the Väina to marry a wife. /  
 Koiva's daughter had died, / Väina's daughter was little.)

It is quite obvious that no ordinary courting trip to the banks of the Koiva or the Väina rivers was meant, as it is, for example, in the following:

Lätsi ma koiva kosjuele. EÜS V, 118 (140) <Kam.  
 (I went to the Koiva to make a proposal.)

In such cases, the choice can be supposed to have been made purely because of the initial rhyme (*Koiva* and *kosja*). Therefore, in variants, some other place names beginning with *ko-*, e.g., *Koigi*, have been used instead of *Koiva*.

The earlier example concerning the courting trip to the Koiva and the Väina is rather like an excursion to the otherworld where personified rivers really have daughters. The journey is difficult and full of misfortunes; either the bride is dead, or the suitor loses his horses.

Ma lätsi Koiva kosjulle,  
 Narva naista võttema.  
 Hoppen mull vässe Väina pääle  
 Tõne kooli Koiva pääle. EÜS I 765 (60) <Hrg  
 (I went to the Koiva to make a proposal, / to the Narva to marry a wife. /  
 My horse got tired on the Väina, / another died on the Koiva.)

In southeastern Estonia these verses more frequently appear in the opposite order:

Hopõn iks kooli Koiva pääle,  
Tõne vässü Väina pääle. EStK 9, 124/5(6) < Hrg.  
(The horse died on the Koiva, / another got tired on the Väina.)

The last pair of verses sometimes also occurs in some context other than courting.

The Koiva also occurs in verse groups with, most probably, an entirely realistic content. For example, when stating that one lives by the water.

Meil on meri õue all,  
Koiva koa nurga all. H, Peet 74/5 (79) <VIJ  
(We have the sea behind our yard, / the Koiva under the corner of the house.)

The following example reveals concrete geographical knowledge:

Liigu, laeva, linna alla,  
Enne päeva Pärnu jõkke,  
Enne koitu Koiva suhu. EÜS VI, 482 (70) < Hää.  
(Move, the ship, under the town, / Before the daybreak to the Pärnu River, / Before the dawn to the mouth of the Koiva.)

In turning to the brother in the “Venna sõjalugu” (Brother’s War Campaign) type of songs, the Koiva River also expresses something quite different from its everyday meaning. Like in the motifs of the distant courting trip, the Koiva (and other bodies of water mentioned in the parallelism group) are frightening and dangerous. In the example below, the brother is being warned:

Ära tule mere kaudu,  
Meri on täis meeste päida!  
Ära tule Narva kaudu,  
Narv on täis naiste päida!  
Ära tule Koiva kaudu,  
Koiv on täis kooluida. E 8251/3 (34) < Pst  
(Don’t come by way of the sea, / The sea is full of men’s heads! / Don’t come by way of the Narva River, / the Narv is full of women’s heads! / Don’t come by way of the Koiva, / the Koiv is full of dead bodies.)

The area where the Koiva is mentioned turns out to be considerably broader than that of the Salatsi, covering the whole of southern Estonia from the west to the east.

Compared to the Salatsi and the Koiva, the occurrence of the third river – the **Väina** (Latv. Daugava) – seems rather high at first glance (almost 100 cases), but this impression is deceptive. A closer look at the songs reveals that a great part of occurrences are appellatives. As an appellative, *väin(a)* (Est. strait) appears primarily in the songs recorded in the western areas of mainland Estonia and on the islands but also elsewhere, even in some southeastern Estonian songs, although just in this area Väina is known as the name of the river. This region comprises Setu and Võru counties and some parishes in the southern part of Tartu County. For example, in the case of Otepää and Sangaste parishes, linguistic and folk cultural affinity with Võru County is stated.

In this region, the Väina mostly occurs in parallelism groups where one of its most fixed counterparts is the Koiva. One might say that the Koiva is the connecting link between the Salatsi on the one side and the Väina on the other.

The Väina actually occurs most often in the courting motifs mentioned earlier in relation to the Koiva. In those, motifs related to the otherworld may also be discerned. In addition to the hydronyms, Riga can also appear as a destination of the courting trip. Actually, such a sequence may represent a later merger: initially one went to Riga to court a rich bride only after the mythical courting trip to the daughters of the rivers had failed. The courting trip fails because:

Kuival tütar ära koolu,  
väinal tütar väikene  
Narval tütar naisa saanu. HI 6, 80/1 (2) <Vas.  
(The daughter of the Koiva has died, / the daughter of the Väina is little, /  
the daughter of the Narva has become a woman.)

At any rate, in both war and courting songs, the Koiva, the Väina, the Narva, the sea, and other water bodies represent places bordering on the realm of death.

In a rare but interesting occasion, the Väina is associated with the bridge of Finland:

Sõitse üle Soome silla,  
Soome silla, Väina nurme. E 41008<Rõu  
(Drove across the bridge of Finland, / the bridge of Finland, the meadow  
of the Väina.)

Considering how well the Väina is known in Setu songs, one should recall the significance of the Väina waterway as a mediator of eastern cultural elements, which already was emphasised by O. Loorits (1957).

Let us also briefly dwell on the names of towns.

**Võnnu** (Latv. Cēsis) occurs in the database more than 300 times. A relatively large part of these are cases where Võnnu may denote a place in Estonia (a parish in Tartu County, a village in Läänemaa County); in the case of some others, nothing definite can be said.

Võnnu as Cēsis, which may have been settled by Livonians (Zemitis 2011, 77), has obviously been meant in songs where the parallel verses include the names of places like Riga, Tallinn, and Põltsamaa. Primarily, such a line is characteristic of the song type “Riia rikkumine” (Damaging of Riga), which has historically been particularly well known on the northern coast of Estonia and in the area of the Mulgi dialect (ERLA IV, p. 173/4 1061). It is possible that the song has spread from the Mulgi area to the north. The song seems to be merely playful boasting by young women who claim the following about themselves:

Me lääme Riiga rikkumaie,  
 Võnnu kinni võttemaie,  
 Tallinat taantamaie. E 11921/2(12) Pst.  
 (We are going to damage Riga, / to seize Võnnu, / to reduce Tallinn.)

The verbs are changeable, and often the fourth member in this paradigm of towns is Põltsamaa:

Olgu Riiga rikkumata,  
 Tallinna tappemata,  
 Põltsamaa põletamata,  
 Võnnu kinni võttemata. ERM 142, 13/4 (6)  
 (Riga shouldn't be damaged, / Tallinn shouldn't be killed, / Põltsamaa shouldn't be burnt, / Võnnu shouldn't be seized.)

It is also noteworthy that in the Mulgi area the song merges with the aforementioned “Hiie noormees”, which gives insight into the ancient religious world. Considering the tendency of runic songs to merge and combine motifs, it is more probable that “Riia rikkumine” reflects a later historical viewpoint.

As the more or less obvious cases, where Võnnu means the Latvian fortress or town of Cēsis, comprise a third or at least a quarter of occurrences where Võnnu is mentioned, its frequency can be considered very high. Along with Võnnu and Riga, the other Latvian settlements mentioned in a few cases are Ruhja (Rūjiena) and Koivaliin (Gaujiena). In parallel verses, Ruhja is mostly associated with Paide, which is also a medieval fortress and town.

**Riia** (Latv. Riga) is by far the most frequent town name in Estonian runic verses (more than 1800 occurrences in the database). In addition to this enormous material, Riga appears repeatedly in different forms of prose heritage (Salve 2008).

In runic songs, Riga is primarily depicted as a town, which is large, rich, desirable, and worth fighting for.

The oldest song type might be “Riia rajamine” (The Founding of Riga), the spread of which is concentrated in the area of the Mulgi dialect (ErlA IV, 230). It claims to remember the time

kui ju tetti Riia linna,  
koeti kümme kiriku,  
vana Talina tahuti,  
vana Vil'lānt vitsutati EÜS XI 325 (146) < Hls,  
(when the town of Riga was made, / when ten churches were knitted, /  
when Tallinn was hewn, / old Viljandi was hooped)

Although the historical background of runic songs is extremely obscure, these events seem to date back to the era of the Crusades. What is depicted in the song type “Sõda Riia all” (War under Riga) seems to come from a later time:

Sõda meil sõidab Riia alla,  
tapelus Tal'lna alla,  
Rootsi koerad Ruhja alla. H II 22124/5 (64) < Hls.  
(War moves under Riga, / battle under Tallinn, / Swedish dogs under Ruhja.)

It should be mentioned that Riga is also known in the material of the SKVR. Primarily in Ingrian songs, Riga mostly occurs as the counterpart of Tallinn:

Käykää rinnoin Riian neijot,  
Tassoin Tallinnan kannast. SKVR III 2, 1582, Soikkola  
(Walk abreast, maidens of Riga, / evenly, chickens of Tallinn.)

#### 4. Conclusion

The form of the runic song is very old, but because of its lyrical essence, it does not reflect concrete historical events. Therefore, the occurrence of toponyms from the Livonians' settlement area in runic songs also shows an imprint on historical memory.

The name of Courland proved to be extremely popular; it appears, however, in very different contexts, which are often determined by alliteration. Often, Courland appears in the same parallelism paradigm with names of other countries. Thus, concrete place names have been used as generalisations for distant lands. One of the most interesting associations is mentioning the hills of Courland (*Kuramaa mäed*) as the parallel concept of the bridge of Finland (*Soome sild*).

Among town names, Riga is extremely frequent. Both Riga and Võnnu (Latv. Cēsis) reflect the situation after the Teutonic conquest – they are obviously centres of the Order like the Estonian towns mentioned in parallel verses. The songs mention troops moving around them, or more frequently, girls' joking threats to destroy these towns. The newer depiction of Riga shows it as a symbol of a big and rich town. Apart from Riga and Võnnu, other towns located in the territory of Latvia almost never occur in songs.

As hydronyms are generally ancient, the names of rivers (Salatsi, Latv. Salaca; Koiva, Latv. Gauja; Väina, Latv. Daugava) proved to be the most interesting. First, their distribution area is concrete and expressive: The Salatsi is known in South-West Estonia, the Väina in South-East Estonia. The Koiva is like a connecting link, as it appears as the parallel word of both the Salatsi and the Väina. Accordingly, its distribution area is the most extensive, covering the whole of South Estonia from the west to the east. Contentwise, it is noteworthy that only in a smaller part of songs these river names denote concretely known, although distant places. Much more often, the names of these three rivers have been used in clearly mythical songs where they denote dangerous places connected with the otherworld. The counterparts of the Väina and the Koiva in parallel verses can also be the Narva River and the sea; all of them are personified. For example, they have daughters, but wooing them fails, as they represent a world that is alien to humans.

Something should be said to conclude. What, however? The answer is difficult because of the initial rhyme and syntactic parallelism central to the structure of runic songs. The runic verse is a perfect example

of a poetic system in which “what” and “how” are extremely tightly intertwined. Nonetheless, it is obvious that the place names discussed above would not have been preserved only because of the initial rhyme, although over time much in them has become obscured and merged. (See, for example, the aforementioned cases where going on a courting trip to the Koiva has changed in some variants into going to Koigi or some other concrete village or community.) Sometimes a distorted name form has been used which has no real counterpart at all. As could be expected, such cases are relatively frequent. However, the fact that mostly the Koiva has been preserved as a meaningful name and in parallel verses certain place names occur in logical connections is more significant.

Moreover, the mythical allusions in a great part of songs under observation show that the songs date from the distant past. Perhaps the most expressive is the geographical spread of the place names under discussion, particularly the names of the rivers. The spread of hydronyms related to the Livonians is in great part similar to the spread of the more rare Salatsi-Livonian vocabulary in Estonian dialects (Pajusalu, Krikmann, Winkler 2009).

Hopefully, this essay has showed the persistence of memory and explained that the part of this memory hidden in runic verses and place names is worthy of further study.

### **Address:**

Kristi Salve  
Aardla 132–3, Tartu 50415  
kristi.salve@gmail.com

### **References**

- ErlA IV = *Eesti rahvalaulud. Antoloogia IV*. Edited by Ülo Tedre. Tallinn, 1974.
- Koski, Mauno (2011) “Mis on Liivimaa erinevatel aegadel olnud?” In Renäte Blumberga, Tapio Mäkeläinen, and Karl Pajusalu. *Liivlased. Ajalugu, keel ja kultuur*, 53–73. Tallinn: Eesti Keele Sihtasutus.
- Loorits, Oskar (1957) *Grundzüge des Estnischen Volksglaubens III:1*. Lund.
- Pajusalu, Karl, Arvo Krikmann, Eberhard Winkler (2009). “Lexical Relations between Salaca Livonian and Estonian Dialects”. *Linguistica Uralica*, 45, 4, 283–298.
- Salve, Kristi (2008) ““Rikas nagu Riia kikas”. Riia linn eesti rahvapärimumes.”



In Liivia Viitol and Karl Kello. *Sinu, minu ja meie Riia*, 28–38. Tartu: Vanemuise Seltsi Kirjastus.

Zemītis, Guntis (2011) “Liivlased. Vanim ajalugu (10.-16. sajand).” In Renāte Blumberga, Tapio Mäkeläinen, and Karl Pajusalu. *Liivlased. Ajalugu, keel ja kultuur*, 75–104. Tallinn: Eesti Keele Sihtasutus.

**Kokkuvõte. Kristi Salve: Salaja Salatsi kaudu: Eesti regilaulude kohanimed, mis on seotud liivlaste asualadega.** Artikkel otsib vastust küsimusele, kas eesti regilauludes leidub viiteid liivlastele. Kasutades eesti regilaulude andmebaasi, jälgitakse artiklis mõningaid maade, jõgede ja linnade nimesid. Kuramaa nimetus osutub väga populaarseks; see ilmneb siiski erinevates kontekstides, mis on sageli määratud alliteratsiooni poolt. Linnanimede hulgas on Riia äärmiselt sage. Kuna hüdronüümid on üldiselt iidsed, on ka jõenimede (Salatsi, läti Salaca; Koiva, läti Gauja; Väina, läti Daugava) esinemus eriti huvitav. Esiteks on nende levikuala kindlapiiriline ja tähenduslik: Salatsi on tuntud Edela-Eestis, Väina Kagu-Eestis. Koiva on nagu ühenduslül, sest see ilmneb paralleelsõnana nii Salatsi kui ka Väina puhul. Väina ja Koiva vasteks paralleelvärsides võib olla Narva jõgi ja meri; kõik need on isikustatud.

**Märksõnad:** eesti keel, liivi keel, regilaulud, ajalooline onomastika, kohanimed

**Kubbõvõttõks. Kristi Salve: Salliz Salāts kouṭi: Līvõ kūoṣnimūd ēsti vaṇīmis ro'vlōlis.** Kēra vōtšūb vastõkst kizzimizõn vōi ēsti vaṇīmis ro'vlōlis um tātõkši iḷ līvlizt. Ēsti vaṇīmist rovlōlõd dattõdbõžõ kõlbatõs kēras sõbõd vaṇõltõd mõd, jougūd ja jālgabõd mingizt nimūd. Kurmõ' nim um vāggi populār, kuigid se tulāb jeddõ ādsmingižis kontekstis, mis saggõld attõ lõvdõd alliteratsijst. Jālgabõd nimīst ātõ Riia 'Rīgõ' ja Võnnu (leṭkīel Cēsīs) ī'žkiz sagdizt. Ku viedkubūd nimūd iḷamīṇ attõ vāggi vanād, siz ka jougūd nimūd (Salatsi 'Salāts', leṭkīel Salaca; Koiva leṭkīel Gauja; Väina 'Vēna', leṭkīel Daugava) ī'žkiz interesant. Salatsi um tundtõd Lānd Ēstimõl, Väina Lõinag Ēstimõl, Koiva um neiku itõbpõsmõz, ku se um parālelsõnāks nei Salatsi kui Väina jūs. Nānt kuolm joug nimīdi um kõlbatõd sieldõ mītiližis lōlis kus ne ātõ tuoiz īlmaks sidtõd kārtabizt kūoṣõd.