

COUNTERINTUITIVENESS AND RITUAL EFFICACY IN EARLY MODERN KARELIAN HEALING AN APPLICATION OF THE RITUAL COMPETENCE THEORY

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This article¹ presents an application of Thomas E. Lawson and Robert N. McCauley's ritual competence theory in order to study two early modern Karelian sages and their rituals, especially their healing rituals. I analyse how this application presents ritual efficacy in archived healing narratives, and how such an efficacy affects interpretations of the rituals and their performers.

Keywords: Karelia, healing rituals, rituals, sages, counterintuitiveness, ritual competence theory

V članku je predstavljena uporaba teorije ritualne kompetence Thomasa E. Lawsona in Roberta N. McCauleya na primeru dveh zgodnjemodernih karelijskih modrecev in njihovih obredov, posebej zdravilnih. Avtorica analizira, kako ta raba predstavlja ritualno učinkovitost v arhiviranih zdravilnih pripovedih in kako učinkovitost vpliva na interpretacijo obredov in njihovih izvajalcev.

Keywords: Karelija, zdravilni obredi, obredi, modreci, protiintuitivnost, teorija ritualne kompetence

How does the human mind recognise rituals as special kinds of performances? How are the actions and spaces of ritual performances considered special? How is a healing ritual distinguished from another healing practice?

In this article, I approach these questions by concentrating on the ways of encountering and interpreting ritual efficacy. My perspective comes from studies of the human mind and cognitive science, as I study how ritual efficacy is evaluated by the ritual form and counterintuitive ideas. The term *counterintuitiveness* stands for the ideas or phenomena that the human mind does not recognise as part of the intuitively known ontological categorising system in the human mind. Instead, counterintuitive ideas include characteristics that violate the categories in the mind (see e.g. Boyer & Barrett 2005). In this context, these might include, for instance, spirits or gods – who resemble human beings but have some extra abilities or lack some qualities, such as a physical body. These kind of counterintuitive beings often have some kind of cultural meanings of belonging to some kind of opaque reality or otherworld, and sometimes they are considered as entities that affect ritual efficacy as well. In this sense, I find the term a suitable methodological tool for my analysis.

My research material consists of archived narratives on rituals and their performers in the early modern Karelian Isthmus. I examine how the narratives present ritual efficacy. The ritual performers in these narratives are sages (*tietäjä* in Finnish, literally ‘one who knows’). Folklorists have argued that typical Finnish-Karelian sages were authorised to perform their rituals by their special knowledge of the otherworld and opaque forces in

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this world, by their extraordinary personal power,² and by their knowledge of ritual techniques (see e.g. Siikala 2002). Sages were ritual specialists, and their responsibilities in the community included different ritual tasks, for instance, curing and preventing illnesses or afflictions, locating stolen or lost goods, and assisting in subsistence crises (ibid.: 79–84).

A great amount of the material analysed in this study is concentrated on healing practices. In the early modern Karelia, illnesses and afflictions were often thought to have a connection to the spiritual otherworld (ibid.: 85–92). Either they were sent by the forces of the otherworld or they represented the spiritual illness-beings themselves. The healing rituals of the sages were considered as battles between the sage and the illness-opponent. In these battles, the sage defeated the opponent with incantations, which describe the mythic world and, additionally, act as methods to conquer mythic opponents.

The main research question of this study is: when encountered personally, how have early modern Karelian informants interpreted the sages' ritual practices and, especially, what was considered efficacious in these rituals?

The analysis of this study uses Thomas E. Lawson and Robert N. McCauley's cognitive theory of ritual competence (1990) as a methodological tool to study efficacious counterintuitiveness in healing rituals.³ From this viewpoint, I can analyse different ways in which the counterintuitive ideas affect rituals and are involved in them, and I can present the variety of interpretations of these activities. I also consider the studies that concentrate on the form of ritual performance and its' influence to ritual efficacy (e.g. Barrett and Lawson 2001; Barrett 2002).

THE SOURCE MATERIAL RITUAL PRACTICES OF SIPRETTI AND THE OLD MAN OF KIVISTÖ

The material of this study is from the Folklore Archive of the Finnish Literature Society (henceforth FLS) in Helsinki, Finland. The material was collected by Ulla Mannonen from the Karelian Isthmus, Koivisto municipality, which is today part of Russia and known as Primorsk. Mannonen interviewed her neighbours and other elderly people, wrote down the information she heard, and sent it to the FLS. She was a local teacher interested in

² The sages were thought to have a special character, *luonto*, which brings them power. The *luonto* of the sage was thought to be strong and hard, as opposed to the *luonto* of other people. In rituals, the sage rises his *luonto* to action in order to perform his ritual tasks (e.g. Stark 2006: 262–266).

³ Lawson and McCauley call the counterintuitive agent a 'culturally postulated superhuman agent' (CPS-agent) (1990, 2002). According to them, this kind of CPS-agents exhibit various counterintuitive properties (2002: 8–9). However, in his later work McCauley uses the term 'counterintuitive agents' while considering religious beings, such as gods. (McCauley 2011). Also, Ilkka Pyysiäinen prefers the term counterintuitive agent over CPS-agent when considering Lawson and McCauley's theory (Pyysiäinen 2003). In this article, I follow Pyysiäinen's use of terms. The term counterintuitive has been launched to the cognitive science of religion by Pascal Boyer (see e.g. Boyer 1994a, 1994b, 2000).

Karelian folklore, and during the years 1935–1942 she sent thousands of folklore texts to the FLS. Her method was to write notes during the interviews, and later she transcribed the narratives into letters that were sent to the FLS. I have chosen to concentrate on her materials for the relatively great amount of context information she added to her collections. For instance, Mannonen wrote down the life stories of her informants whereas some other folklore collectors did not even mention their names.

Mannonen collected a myriad of narratives concerning several sages in the Karelian Isthmus. I have chosen to concentrate on two of them in this study: Sipretti and the Old Man of Kivistö (*Kivistön ukko* in Finnish). The reasons for this selection are:

1. There are several archive units concentrating on these sages,
2. There are more than one informant remembering the sages,
3. The materials present relatively detailed descriptions of their ritual tasks in the community,
4. There are also eyewitness descriptions of their ritual practices.

These terms ensure that the sages were relatively known in their living area and that they had the status of a sage in their communities. The terms also make sure that the material presents detailed enough descriptions of the rituals for the analysis to be completed, and that these rituals were actually performed in practice.

Both sages, Sipretti and the Old Man of Kivistö, lived in Koivisto, around the late 19th century or the early 20th century. Sipretti lived in the village of Römpötti and the Old Man of Kivistö was from the village of Kivistö. The archive material consists of narratives on their healing practices as well as other kinds of magical practices, and they were deposited in the FLS archive between 1935 and 1939, except for one that is from 1955. Both of the sages were already long dead during the collection period.

The material on Sipretti comprises 33 archive units (altogether ten informants) including:

- Three descriptions of his healing practices (KRK 128:55, 805, 4896) (Informants: A. Muuriaisniemi, A. K. Lohman),
- Four descriptions of his hunting magic (510, 5027, 5028, 10147) (Informants: A. K. Lohman, A. Kurki),
- Two instructions how to deal with pests in the house (803, 804) (Informant: A. K. Lohman),
- Seven narratives how he transformed brooms to horses (KRK128:56, KRK129:788, 509, 2072, 3480, 5890, 5891) (Informants: A. K. Lohman, H. Muuriaisniemi, K. Rousku, M. Stark),
- Nine narratives that describe his way of living in the community and his rumoured relationship with the devil (KRK128:54, 508, 560, 5862, 5868, 5879, 6716, PK51.9277, 12279) (Informants: A. K. Lohman, A. M. Asikainen, E. Haltia, H. Muuriaisniemi, U. Kallonen),
- Seven narratives describing his death (KRK128:89, 254, 520, 523, 5029, 7775, PK51.9278) (Informants: A. Muuriaisniemi, A. K. Lohman, E. Haltia, H. Jalkanen, H. Muuriaisniemi, M. Stark),

- One life story of his niece, the main informant recalling Sipretti (4558) (Informant: A. K. Lohman).

Approximately half of the narratives on Sipretti (14 archive units) are told by his niece Anna Katrina Lohman, who was born in the 1880s or in the 1890s. She often stresses that Sipretti was her aunt's husband, and this is why she knows so much about him.

The following narrative is the only eyewitness narrative on Sipretti's rituals.

Material example 1⁴

*Bathing away the wrath of the fire*⁵

I once saw when a sage bathed away the wrath of the fire. When my sister was young, she burnt her leg in the sauna porch. She could not get any relief from the pain, so they went to get Sipretti. He took my sister to the sauna and bathed her leg with ears of rye. The pain ended for the wrath of the fire was erased with those ears.

(Koivisto. Ulla Mannonen 805. 1936. A. K. Lohman.)

The other materials concentrating on Sipretti's practical ritual methods are not similar eyewitness descriptions of a precise situation but more like overall descriptions and belief legends. Lohman for instance remembers a fragment of an incantation Sipretti had used.

Material example 2

Words for sealing the blood

The husband of my aunt, that Sipretti of Rämpötti, of whom I have already told, he did indeed recite the words of the fire and words for sealing the blood, but I do not remember them precisely, it was something like

*“The hornet of Hiisi⁶,
Honeybee the airy man,
Gladly carry us honey,
Bring mead with your wings,
From six tips of blossoms,
From seven heads of heys,
To the beaten by the iron ---”*

(Koivisto. Ulla Mannonen 4896. 1937. A. K. Lohman)

⁴ This narrative and all of the following material examples are translated by the author.

⁵ The 'wrath of the fire' (*tulen vihat* in Finnish) indicates an illness that is transmitted from fire, heat or hot objects to a wound or burn, and worsening wound. Iron tools, animals, stones, water or wood, for example, were also thought to transmit their 'wrath' to patients with open wounds, if the patients were not carefully prepared for them. The wraths were also considered as a part of the entity's magical, dynamic *väki*-essence (Stark 2006: 257, 275–277).

⁶ A mythic place or a mythic being (Siikala 2002: 162–164).

This example presents that Sipretti was familiar with the incantation tradition typical to Finnish-Karelian sages, and he used the incantations as well. However, the example does not present the practical context in which the incantations were performed – the title of the incantation indicates that the incantation was used in healing situations but there are no details informing, for instance, how or with what instruments the incantation was used.

In the material, there is also one narrative on Sipretti's healing practices told by a non-related villager, A. Muuriaisniemi. In this narrative, the informant tells that an ill man, who was advised by Sipretti, goes to the church in the middle of the night, but he does not get healed there for he did not follow exactly the instructions of Sipretti (KRK128:55). The informant does not indicate having known the patient or Sipretti in person, and the narrative itself does not present much descriptions of the healing methods of Sipretti.

A contract between Sipretti and the devil is a common theme in the materials on Sipretti – in Lohman's narratives as well as the narratives told by non-related villagers. The materials suggest that Sipretti had derived his mighty healing powers from the devil, but on the day of his death the devil comes to get him (e.g. 254, 510, 520, 523, 5027–5029, 5879).

In the materials, there are also other narratives concerning Sipretti's magical performances. However, they differ from the healing ritual narratives in several ways. For instance, the form of these narratives resembles more the form of belief legends not concerning personally known events. In addition, the narratives do not consider the usual ritual tasks of the sages in their community (Siikala 2002: 79–84). Therefore, there are less personal connections between the informants and the events presented in these narratives. This is why I consider these materials as context materials in this study. The context materials include some interpretations on the sages as well, and these are taken into consideration in the following analysis though they are not especially concentrated on.

The Old Man of Kivistö was a less-known sage, or at least the number of informants remembering him is smaller than those who recall Sipretti. The materials on The Old Man of Kivistö comprises seven archive units (altogether three informants) including:

- One detailed description of his healing practice (4901) (Informant: S. Pulli),
- One description how he alights the land for slash-and-burn with incantations (4907) (Informant: S. Pulli),
- One narrative describing that he used to know how to magically summon back a lost cow from the forest's cover (*metsän peitto* in Finnish) (5867) (Informant: A. M. Asikainen),
- Three narratives about his daughter, S. Kankaanpää, who was also a healer, and who tells that she has learned her methods from him (KRK129:1114, 2260, 3545) (Informant: S. Kankaanpää),
- One life story of one main informant, Simo Pulli (2264) (Informant: S. Pulli).

Only one of Mannonen's informants, A. M. Asikainen, knew stories about both of the sages, Sipretti and the Old Man of Kivistö.⁷ The main informants for the Old Man of Kivistö are his daughter S. Kankaanpää, who was also a known healer, and S. Pulli, one of his patients.

The following narrative is Pulli's story of how the Old Man of Kivistö healed him. The role of the informant here is more important than that of an eyewitness: as the patient, Pulli was actually part of the healing process.

Material example 3

The wrath of the fire

You always recited the words of the fire to the one who has burnt him- or herself. I remember when I was a young boy, I burnt my leg and it ached. It was said that the Old Man of Kivistö in Kurkela knows how to recite the words of the fire. My father harnessed the horse and drove to Kurkela to get him here. When he came, he took cold, melted tallow and recited the words of the fire into that. And with that tallow he oiled my burns. I do not remember precisely, but I heard when he uttered that:

*“Men fell from the clouds,
into a boiling, bubbling kettle,
Brass vat on every man's back,
with cold and snow from Northern ground,
the cold restrains the wrath of the fire”*

And then he cursed the fire with words like:

*“Why did thou burn the boy,
Why not rocks and stubs? ...”*

There were a lot of those words. And he put the recited tallow⁸ on my burnt skin and oiled it with it, and it seemed to take the aches and pains away. I wonder whether those words were that effective. Nowadays people do not believe in it. And because of their disbelief, nothing can affect them. If anything happened to them, they would go straight to a doctor. In the old days, the sage was always called and he or she could treat the patient just as well.

(Koivisto. Ulla Mannonen 4901. 1937. S. Pulli)

In the materials on the Old Man of Kivistö, there are also two other narratives that present the Old Man's ritual tasks in the community, although they do not consider healing rituals. The other one of these narratives is also an eyewitness narrative. Therefore,

⁷ 5862: How Sipretti used to whistle to his pet snakes to summon them. 5867: How the Old Man of Kivistö magically summons back a lost cow from the forest's cover.

⁸ In Finnish *luetu tali*, this means tallow to which the incantation was recited.

I consider these comparable to the healing ritual narrative above, and I present them here. The other eyewitness narrative is told by S. Pulli as well.

Material example 4

Setting alight the land for slash-and-burn in the old days

There were much to know in setting alight the land for slash-and-burn in the old days. The land was alighted from two places at least, it was said that “let’s put the fires fight each other”, and it became really intense, and someone old, who knew incantations, recited the incantation so the fire would alight properly. I also remember, when I was a young boy, that we went to find the Old Man of Kivistö from Kurkela for he could recite the incantations to the slash-and-burn, and he uttered that

“I hit the light, the fire, --

O Ukko the supreme God,

Give us fire from thy heavens,

Burn the swamps, burn the lands,

Burn the trees of this slash-and-burn land –”

There sure were more than that but one could not hear them all precisely for those men uttered the words so quietly, the sages did not want to express their incantations to the others.

(Koivisto. Ulla Mannonen 4907. 1937. S. Pulli)

There is still one other material example concerning the Old Man of Kivistö’s ritual methods. It is not an eyewitness description but more like an overall description of his methods in cases of mysteriously lost cows.

Material example 5

Released from the forest’s cover

Here in Kurkela used to be a man, the Old Man of Kivistö, and he was that kind of a sage who could release a cow from the forest’s cover, as soon as he found out that a cow was lost in the forest’s cover and could not be found, the Old Man of Kivistö took the cow’s collar to the sauna, smoked it, and who knows what he uttered, and so the spirit of the forest let the cow go, for he cursed this spirit like “why did it keep the cow from going.”

(Koivisto. Ulla Mannonen 5867. 1938. A. M. Asikainen)

According to S. Kankaanpää, the Old Man of Kivistö was a sage who was known for his incantations, which he also taught to his daughter (2260, 3545). The other informants, S. Pulli and A. M. Asikainen, also remember that the Old Man used incantations to perform different kinds of magical practices, and Pulli even recalls that he did not want the others to hear the incantations completely. Then again, Kankaanpää claims, that she

cannot recite lightly the incantation words her father taught her, or teach them to anyone who is older than she, or the power of the words will not be effective with her any more (KRRK129:1114; 2260). She also explains that the incantations will stop working for her the moment she loses even one of her teeth.⁹ According to these narratives, the incantation words are magical, and they must be protected.

In this study, the materials concentrating on the life of S. Kankaanpää and S. Pulli are considered as context materials because they do not describe the ritual tasks of the Old Man of Kivistö. Nevertheless, they present some information on the informants and the sage. Thus they are also taken into consideration in the analysis, although they are not especially concentrated on.

The five material examples presented above (1–2 on Sipretti, 3–5 on the Old Man of Kivistö) describe the methods of the sages when they are performing their ritual tasks. Only examples 1, 3 and 4 are eyewitness narratives, and two of them (1 and 3) describe healing rituals. This is why I give these examples and the theme of healing special emphasises in the analysis and in the theory applications which follow later.

Because the healing practices and other tasks described in the material examples are performed by sages, the practices themselves do not qualify as ordinary in nature. We can treat them as rituals for several reasons.

Rituals are often connected to changes in life, either enabling or preventing them, and a healing practice is an attempt to undo a harmful change in a person's health. Catherine Bell, for instance, argues that healing rituals are affliction rituals (Bell 1997: 115–120). In these healing practices, the most important point directing the interpretation of ritualistic form is the appearance of the sage. Sages were known to have special knowledge and great power to perform ritual practices, which worked via an opaque causality understood only by specialists. They had a keen connection to the mythic otherworld. The incantation words were also special, for they were thought to affect the beings and forces of the otherworld (for more on the ritualistic nature of sages and incantations see Siikala 2002).

The narratives presented above should actually be considered memories of rituals. They are narrated representations of rituals. Nevertheless, they include valuable information on the subject: they indicate the ideas on the nature of the illness or affliction, the ritual practice, and performances of these two sages.

⁹ The idea of a sage losing his/her power if they lost their teeth was well known in other parts of Finland as well (Stark 2006: 280).

RITUAL EFFICACY AND THE RITUAL COMPETENCE THEORY

The competence theory of religious rituals is one of the first theories developed in the field of cognitive science of religion. It was presented by Thomas E. Lawson and Robert. N. McCauley in their study *Rethinking Religion* (1990). The theory was inspired, among other things, by cognitive linguistics, and it presents ritual behaviour from the viewpoint of the human cognition system. The first basic postulation of the theory is that the cognitive mechanisms involved in ritual actions are the same ones as those involved in human actions generally. To be precise, Barrett and Lawson (2001) further theorised that the cognitive mechanisms involved in ritual actions are those of the social cognition system i.e. the cognition that considers how intentional agents act to motivate others to act. The second basic postulation in Lawson and McCauley's ritual competence theory, and the most significant difference between everyday actions and (religious) ritual actions, is the involvement of special counterintuitive agents,¹⁰ who affect or participate in the action (henceforth CI-agents).

People naturally recognise that rituals are special kinds of actions and not everyday actions. Generally, actions include one or more participants: at least one agent and possibly a patient or patients. The act itself is also a part of the action complex, and it might be qualified with, for instance, some required instruments.

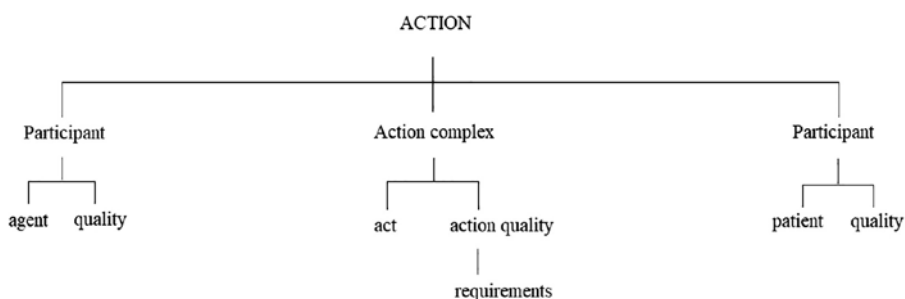


Figure 1. The generic form of structural descriptions of actions with an agent and a patient.

According to Lawson and McCauley, the action could be considered a religious ritual, if at least one action role or the action instrument is connected to CI-agents. The participant might be a CI-agent itself or a representative of the CI-agent.

The term counterintuitive comes from the cognitive science of religion. The human mind has certain core ontological categories about the world. Humans have intuitive knowledge of the members of the categories: we know that a cat, a member of the ‘cats’ or

¹⁰ In Lawson and McCauley's 1990 and 2002 studies, these are referred to as “culturally postulated superhuman agents”. See footnote 3.

‘animals’ category, needs to eat and drink in order to stay alive, and we know that an adult human is capable of intentional actions and communication (about intuitive ontologies see e.g. Keil 1979). Phenomena and ideas violating the boundaries of intuitive categories are counterintuitive (see e.g. Boyer and Barrett 2005). For instance, a speaking dog violates the ‘dog’ category, for we have not learned that dogs can speak. Technology has also created phenomena that are counterintuitive to most humans, at least when they are first launched. An automatically opening door, for instance, is a counterintuitive phenomenon, if a person has encountered only ordinary doors before.

This article considers mostly counterintuitive ideas of religious (or other symbolic-cultural) systems. Gods and spirits, who are thought to have their effect on ritual efficacy, are such counterintuitive ideas. They are, for example, persons without a material body, beings who live although they have died, or persons with abilities to ignore physical laws.¹¹ In Lawson and McCauley’s theory of ritual competence, these kinds of counterintuitive, religiously interpreted beings involve ritual actions and make them efficacious, and this separates them from everyday actions. Thus, I call these beings CI-agents.

According to the theory, CI-agents might affect the participants of ritual actions or instruments of the act. In Christian marriage ritual, the priest is a representative of God, so the CI-agent is connected to his quality in ritual action, making the ritual a special-agent ritual. In sacrifice rituals, the CI-agent is the patient, the receiver of sacrificed goods, making the ritual a special-patient ritual. Lawson and McCauley hypothesise that when the CI-agent acts as the ritual agent or is connected to the quality of the ritual agent (i.e. when the ritual is a special-agent ritual), the ritual is more central in a given ritual system than special-patient or special-instrument rituals.

In Lawson and McCauley’s theory, the efficacy of special-agent rituals is highlighted in other ways as well. They suggest, following Harvey Whitehouse’s ritual frequency theory (Whitehouse 1995, 2000, 2004), that special-agent rituals also involve high sensory pagentry and emotional arousal (McCauley and Lawson 2002). They furthermore suggest that special-agent rituals produce permanent consequences, so the rituals are performed only once in the patient’s lifetime. The gods do not need to do their work twice. This hypothesis has been discussed by, for instance, Ilkka Pyysiäinen (2003: 93) and Risto Uro (2016: 85–87). They note that not all special-agent rituals have a permanent effect, although these rituals are performed quite rarely upon the same ritual patients. For instance, the ritual hugging of Indian guru Amma is a special-agent ritual in which patients can participate several times.

Rituals are always part of a ritual system. One ritual is enabled with a preliminary ritual and so on. Before a marriage ritual, there must have been a ritual connecting the CI-agent to the priest, i.e. initiate the priest to his work, and before that a ritual connecting the CI-agent to the one who initiated the priest, and so on. The first enabling ritual in this

¹¹ At least this refers to intuitive physical laws. Elizabeth Spelke et al. (1995) have provided evidence that there are some basic principles that even infants share about physical objects and their behaviour, such as that objects touching each other act upon each other.

continuation is a kind of hypothetical ritual in which the CI-agents themselves act and connect themselves to the following ritual agents. According to Lawson and McCauley's hypothesis, rituals with only a few preliminary enabling rituals are more central in the ritual system than those which require more preliminary rituals.

The competence theory of rituals and the ritual form hypotheses of Lawson and McCauley consider particularly rituals of symbolic-cultural systems. Institutionalised religions are the most usual examples of such systems. Anna-Leena Siikala (2002) has considered early modern Finnish-Karelian sage traditions as a kind of belief institution as well, and thus, I consider the sages' ritual tasks as religious rituals as well.

Lawson and Justin L. Barrett have further studied ritual efficacy, and they found out that the correct way of performing a ritual affects its interpreted efficacy as well (2001). Later Barrett (2002) suggested that the correct ritual performance is relatively important in ritual systems in which the CI-agents are considered as having fallible knowledge rather than being all-knowing gods, and thus these CI-agents are considered as possible to deceive as well. Barrett hypothesises that the correct ritual form is more important in these cases, because these "dumb gods" do not know the special intentions and qualities of the ritual performer, so they do not know in advance who performs the ritual and why. They need to interpret it from the ritual action. Thus, the role of a ritual agent, with right intentions or special qualities, is more central in the contexts of all-knowing "smart gods", and less important in cases of "dumb gods".

As mentioned earlier, in the early modern Finnish-Karelian context, illnesses were considered as some kind of mythic agents or caused by them, and the task of a sage was to defeat this illness-agent. Thus I consider these illness-agents as "dumb gods", who are possible to deceive. Also from this perspective, it is reasonable that I use the term *counterintuitive agents* rather than calling these beings *culturally postulated superhuman agents* as Lawson and McCauley suggest, for these beings do not seem to be that superior to humans.

In what follows, I interpret the involvement of the CI-agents in the sages' ritual actions presented in the material examples. In addition, I include the indications of the context materials to the analysis for they provide additional interpretations on the sages and their rituals. I analyse what the informants have said about Sipretti and the Old Man of Kivistö, and whether this reveals anything that will help us to recognise their interpretations of CI-agents' involvement or interpretations of ritual efficacy.

SAGES' RITUAL ACTIONS VIA THE RITUAL COMPETENCE THEORY

The ritual actions of Sipretti and the Old Man of Kivistö are presented in the following figures. The figures show how I believe people have interpreted the influence of CI-agents in the rituals presented in the narratives above. My suggestions follow the interpretations of the research material as well as previous studies by especially Anna-Leena Siikala (2002).

RITUAL ACTIONS OF SIPRETTI

a = agent
 q = quality
 aq = action quality
 p = patient
 (q or aq left blank if they have no specific meaning in the action)

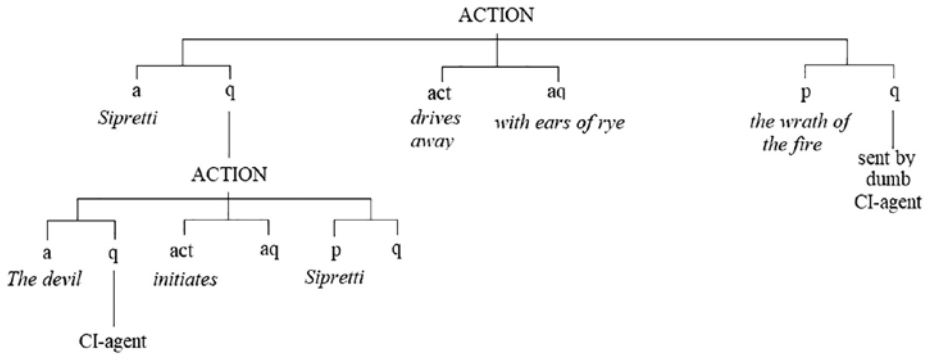


Figure 2. The structural descriptions of Sipretti's ritual action following the material example 1 (Bathing the wrath of the fire).

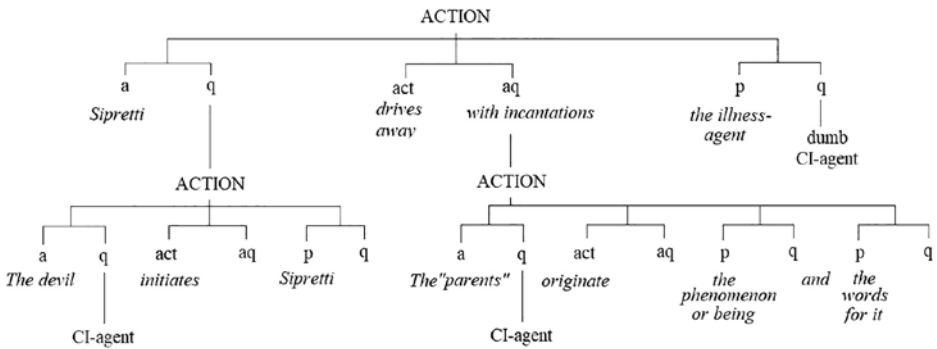


Figure 3. The structural descriptions of Sipretti's ritual action following the material example 2 (Words for sealing the blood).

Figures 2 and 3 present two action complexes following the material examples of Sipretti's ritual actions. The figures present the structural descriptions of the material examples 1 and 2 for they include enough details for this analysis, and the context material and previous studies are able to fill the gaps in the material examples.

The material example 2 presented in the figure 3 does not describe any actual healing situation. However, the narrative describes healing methods – it indicates that Sipretti knew the methods of incantation healing. The figure 3 presents a simplified idea of this kind of healing. Nonetheless, it should be noted that this simplified idea might not capture completely the interpretations on the incantation healing that specifically *Sipretti* performed to *his* patients.

The material examples 1 and 2 do not themselves include any information of ritual efficacy in the healing rituals: do the instruments or methods of the ritual enable healing or is it the power of Sipretti, the sage? Yet, I have presented in the figures that the devil is the original CI-agent behind Sipretti's personal power. Usually it was thought that a previous sage initiates the next sage (Siikala 2002: 83). However, the other materials told by Sipretti's niece Lohman, as well as the narratives told by the other villagers, emphasise that the origin of Sipretti's power comes from the devil (e.g. 254, 520, 523, 5879). None of the informants mention any previous sage. Therefore, I present that Lohman and the villagers thought that Sipretti had a direct connection to the CI-agent, the devil.

In the figure 3, there is another possible CI-agent involving the ritual action. The incantations were thought to possess their own efficacy in the healing situations. Siikala stresses that

The language of incantation diverges from everyday language in that its words are not merely signs indicating their referents, but are seen to have a “real” connection to their referents. Thus, words associated with supernatural phenomena and beings possess the magic force or *väki* of their referents. Correspondingly, the telling and retelling of mighty, *väki*-filled deeds or events makes these events actual in the present. (Siikala 2002: 71)

The incantations include different kinds of parts in which the sage retells the mythic origin of the illness or the one that caused the wound, drives away the illness from the patient, or in which the sage asks for aid from mythic helpers, etc. The origin-part especially is important because it was believed that knowing an entity's origin gives the sage dominance and control over it (Siikala 2002: 85–90). By knowing the origin the sage creates a connection to the mythic “parents” or the guardian spirits of the being or phenomenon in question, and these “parents” control all of their kind. The incantation words possess magical, dynamic *väki*-essence of the phenomenon or being, and *väki*-essence of their origin, and thus the incantation is connected to the “parents”, the mythic CI-agents in the otherworld.

The incantation of Sipretti does not present the origin words of the affliction but words for a mythic helper, the bee of Hiisi. However, the *väki*-essence of the bee is possessed by the incantation words as well, and thus there is a mythic connection between the words and the mythic helper.

In both of the figures, I have also considered the action patient – the wrath of the fire and the illness-agent – as a “dumb CI-agent” or sent by it, because the sage defeats this patient. In the material example 1 presented in the figure 2, the sage is driving away the wrath-essence and not an illness-agent itself. However, I consider that defeating the wrath also means defeating the CI-agent behind it, and therefore the connection is presented as direct in the figure 2.

The characteristics of the other CI-agents, the devil or the “parents”, are not similarly emphasised in the materials as the characteristics of the illness-agents are. Therefore it is not as simple to treat them as “dumb” or “smart” CI-agents. However, the significance of the “parents” in the mythic events of creating the world’s phenomena implicates that they are at least *smarter* than the illness-agents. The devil is usually considered as a powerful and smart CI-agent, but on the other hand, the devil is also deceivable in the Christian tradition, which also influences Finnish folklore.

RITUAL ACTIONS OF THE OLD MAN OF KIVISTÖ

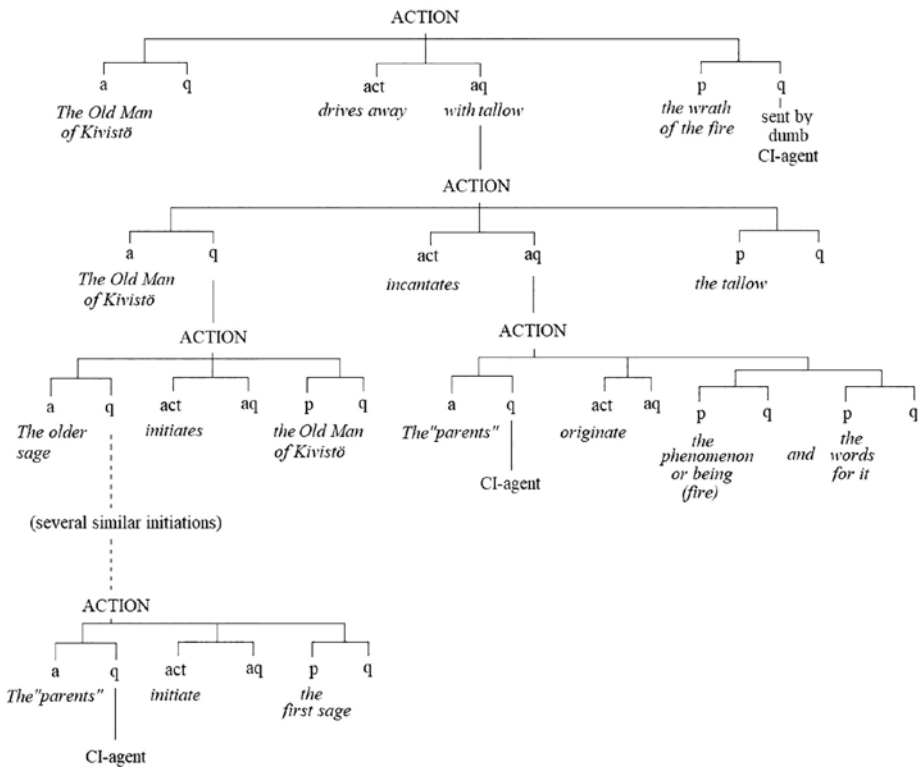


Figure 4. The structural descriptions of the Old Man of Kivistö’s ritual action following the material example 3 (The wrath of the fire).

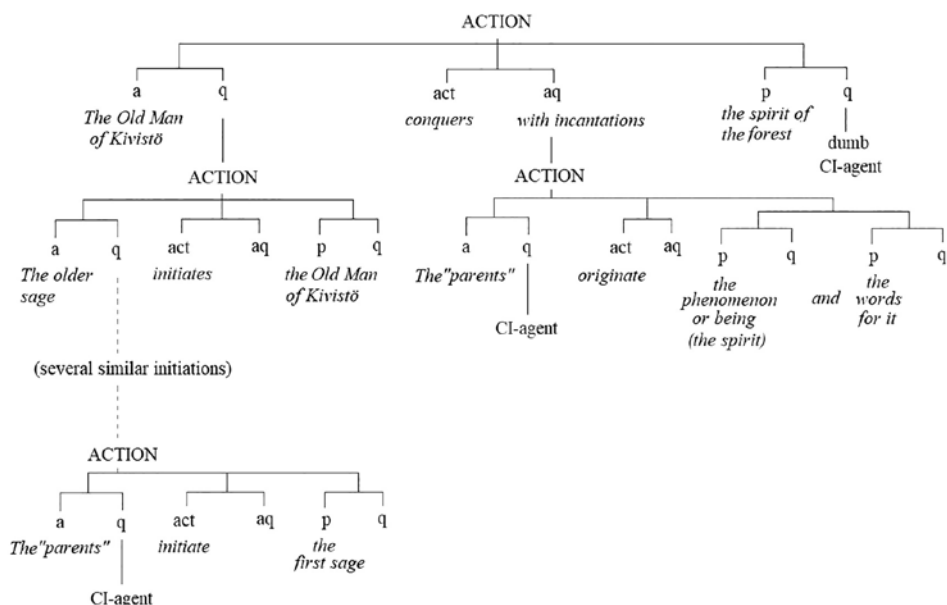


Figure 5. The structural descriptions of the Old Man of Kivistö's ritual action following the material example 5 (Released from the forest's cover).

The material example 4 (Setting alight the land for slash-and-burn in the old days) follows approximately the same structural descriptions than the material examples presented in the figures above. For the example 4, the uppermost sentence would be: "The Old Man of Kivistö (a) alights (act) with incantations (aq) the land (p)", and the previous enabling rituals would be connected to the quality of the Old Man of Kivistö and to the incantations in a similar way than in the figures 4 and 5. The closest CI-agent in this example would be connected to the incantation words. The patient of the action would not be considered as any kind of CI-agent.

Contrary to the ritual complexes of Sipretti, I have presented that the Old Man of Kivistö was initiated by a previous sage. Any previous sage is not mentioned in the research material but the Old Man's daughter S. Kankaanpää explains that his father had at least initiated her to the knowledge (Krk129:1114, 2260, 3545), so it is likely that he received his knowledge approximately the same way. The first sage, mentioned in the figures 4 and 5, stands for a sage in the far mythic past who was either present in the events of creating the phenomena and the beings in the world, or who was initiated by the "parents" themselves. In Finnish mythology, Väinämöinen is usually presented as this kind of sage.

The material example 3 presented in the figure 4 indicates that the incantated tallow, or the incantation itself, is the efficacious part of the healing: "And he put the recited tallow

on my burnt skin and oiled it with it, and it seemed to take the aches and pains away. I wonder whether those words were that effective.” As in the case of Sipretti’s incantations, the incantation words were thought to have a direct connection to the mythic CI-agents. The Old Man of Kivistö has a connection to the CI-agents as well but this connection is not as direct as the connection of the incantation, and thus the incantation is considered more efficacious in these rituals, according to the hypotheses of the ritual competence theory. In this sense, the material example 5 presented in the figure 5 seems to follow the same structure than the material example 3 in the figure 4, although it does not describe a healing ritual.

The action patient in both of the figures is considered as a “dumb CI-agent” or sent by it, just like the action patients were considered in the healing actions of Sipretti as well. The material example 5 presented in the figure 5 describes explicitly that the Old Man of Kivistö conquers the spirit of the forest with his incantations, and therefore also this spirit is considered as a “dumb CI-agent” as well as the mythic illness-agents considered in the other examples. Also the “parents” are considered similarly than in the healing actions of Sipretti.

HOW DO THE HYPOTHESES OF RITUAL EFFICACY WORK WITH THE APPLICATION RESULTS?

According to the application results and the previous research information on the general cultural context of sages’ ritual practices, it is possible to establish the following premises:

1. Illnesses were considered as some kind of CI-agents or their direct representatives, and
2. in this cultural context, these counterintuitive illness-agents could be deceived, and they can be considered as “dumb CI-agents”.
3. The application results suggest that Sipretti was considered as a special ritual agent, and additionally,
4. the application results carefully suggest that incantations were seen as Sipretti’s ritual methods. The carefulness comes from the fact that the material example behind this suggestion does not describe an actual healing situation, and the application is based on a simplified idea of incantation healing.
5. The application results suggest that incantations were seen as the Old Man of Kivistö’s ritual methods, and his rituals were considered as special-instrument rituals. The Old Man of Kivistö was considered as an efficacious healer for he was known to master the correct incantations, i.e. the correct methods used against these deceivable CI-agents. The Old Man of Kivistö was also well known for his incantations – and his daughter was well known for *his* incantations as well (2260; 3545) – and these healing incantations are explicitly considered as efficacious in the research material (KRK129:1114; 2260, the material example 4).

I do not consider the rituals presented in the analysis as special-patient rituals, although there is a CI-agent directly connected to all of the analysed ritual actions. According to the ritual competence theory, the direct involvement of a CI-agent would be more efficacious than indirect involvement of a CI-agent. However, the healing of the patient – the pursued goal of the ritual – is due to the fact that the CI-agent cannot resist but submits to the sage and his incantations. The CI-agent is deceivable, a “dumb CI-agent”. Thus, these ritual patients cannot be considered as the most efficacious parts in the ritual actions, and consequently, the rituals in this analysis cannot be considered as special-patient rituals. From the perspective of ritual efficacy, the other CI-agents in this analysis – the “parents” and the devil – seem to be more significant in the rituals than the illness-agents.

According to Barrett’s hypothesis (2002), the correct way of performing a ritual is more important than the correct performer when the ritual belongs to a religious context of “dumb gods”. This hypothesis supports the application results in which the method of the ritual – performing the special incantation – would be considered as more efficacious than the performer’s personal powers or the power of the CI-patient. According to the application, Sipretti was considered as a special ritual agent, but maybe this status and his power were not that important in performing exactly these rituals in question. Perhaps the fact that Sipretti knew even somehow the incantation methods was more important in these cases. However, Sipretti’s personal power might have been considered more important than the incantation methods in cases of other rituals, which operate with the kinds of CI-agents that were considered “smart gods”, such as the supreme god Ukko.

CONCLUSIONS

The following states the conclusions and hypotheses of this study and the answer to the research question: when encountered personally, how have early modern Karelian informants interpreted the sages’ ritual practices and, especially, what was considered efficacious in these rituals?

First, I argue that the purpose and the type of the ritual affect the interpretations of its efficacious parts and performers. I suggest that the interpretations on Sipretti and the Old Man of Kivistö are influenced by the characteristics of the early modern Finnish healing rituals i.e. rituals involving interactions with “dumb CI-agents”. Following Barrett’s hypothesis on these kinds of CI-agents, I suggest that this is why the importance of the ritual instruments or methods – the healing incantations – is emphasised in the interpretations on both of the sages.

However, there is more. Although the descriptions on Sipretti’s rituals do not emphasise it, the context materials highlight that Sipretti was considered as a special ritual agent for his direct connection to a CI-agent, the devil. It might not have been emphasised in these

ritual descriptions, for the ritual method is probably considered more important in these rituals, but this special status seems to have been important part of his general ritual profile. This might indicate to the hypothesis that Sipretti's ritual repertoire was wider than the one of the Old Man of Kivistö, and consequently Sipretti was considered more powerful, and maybe more dangerous as well, than the Old Man of Kivistö. The hypothesis is supported by the fact that the number of informants remembering Sipretti (10) is higher than informants remembering the Old Man of Kivistö (3). Only one informant remembers them both but does not compare them to each other, and neither does the collector Ulla Mannonen.

Thus, although both of the sages lived in the same area at the same time, I hypothesise that these sages were not similarly respected in general, although most likely they both were considered to master the methods of healing rituals. What affect the interpretations on them and their rituals are the ritual purpose, form, and interpreted counterintuitive beings interacting in the ritual action, and behind these inflectors it is possible to find the processes of the human cognition system presented in the theories of this article.

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PROTIINTUITIVNOST IN RITUALNA UČINKOVITOST V ZGODNJEMODERNEM KARELIJSKEM ZDRAVLJENJU UPORABA TEORIJE RITUALNE KOMPETENCE

V članku je analizirana ritualna učinkovitost v zgodnjemodernih karelijskih zdravilnih obredih, ki so jih izvajali tradicionalni modreci. Koncept ritualne učinkovitosti je obravnavan z vidika človeškega mišljenja in kognitivne znanosti z analizo, kako nanjo vplivajo protiintuitivne zamisli in obredi. Izraz protiintuitivnost tu označuje zamisli ali fenomene, ki jih človeško mišljenje ne priznalspozna kot del intuitivno poznanega ontološko razvrščujočega sistema v mišljenju. Namesto tega protintuitivne ideje vključujejo značilnosti, ki kršijo kategorije mišljenja. V religioznem kontekstu so zgledi za takšne zamisli bogovi, duhovi ali nadnaravna bitja.

Za protintuitivna bitja se misli, da učinkujejo na verske obredne prakse, kar vpliva na ritualno učinkovitost. Teorija ritualne učinkovitosti Thomasa E. Lawsona and Roberta N. McCauleya (1990, 2002) predstavlja različne načine, kako protintuitivna bitja lahko učinkujejo na obrede in kako vplivajo na obredno obliko. Poleg tega Justin L. Barret (2002) postavlja podmeno, da koncepcija protiintuitivnih dejavnikov vpliva tudi na interpretacijo, glede na to, ali so ti dejavniki obravnavani kot vseznalski ali zmotljivi bogovi.

Članek predstavlja uporabo teorije ritualne kompetence in Barretovo podmeno. Avtorica analizira, katera protintuitivna bitja vplivajo na obredne prakse modrecev, kako so z njimi povezana in kako njihove značilnosti vplivajo na obrede. Raziskovalno gradivo so arhivirane pripovedi o dveh modrecih in njihovih obredih; zbrane so bile v pogovorih s starejšimi ljudmi v Kareliji na začetku 20. stoletja.

Analiza predlaga podmeno o razločkih med modrecema, ki sta sicer živela na istem območju v približno istem času. Pripovedovalci – njihovi bivši pacienti, sorodniki in sosedi – pričajo, da učinkovitost njihovih zdravilnih obredov izvira iz njunega specialnega znanja o obrednih metodah in njune osebne moči. Vendar oboje ni enakovredno, temveč se spreminja glede na ritualni namen in glede na protiintuitivna bitja, ki vplivajo nanju. Iz analize se zdi razvidno, da je veljal modrec z domnevno učinkovitejšo osebno močjo za močnejšega in da je imel večji obredni repertoar kakor njegov sodobnik.

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