

Ove Berg Russanen

Incantations of the Forest Finns
Skogfinske besvergelseser





Incantations of the Forest Finns

The recording *Incantations of the Forest Finns* was inspired by the old Forest Finnish incantations that were recorded on wax cylinders in Finn Forest, an area located in Norway and Sweden, in 1905 and 1926.

Ove Berg Russanen has studied the old traditions and has composed new music to reach out to modern audiences. The kantele, the Finnish national instrument, plays a key role in this context, as in earlier times the instrument was used by shamans to come into contact with their helpers. Research suggests that the kantele served the same function as the Sami runebomme (drum).

This ancient tradition was used by the Forest Finns to cure illnesses as recently as the 1960s. Most people are familiar with the idea of stemming blood flow, stopping the bleeding when someone has been seriously injured, but there are many other incantations against, for instance, impotence, boils and plague, illness, rashes, creatures of the underworld, snakebites, wasp stings and aggressive dogs.

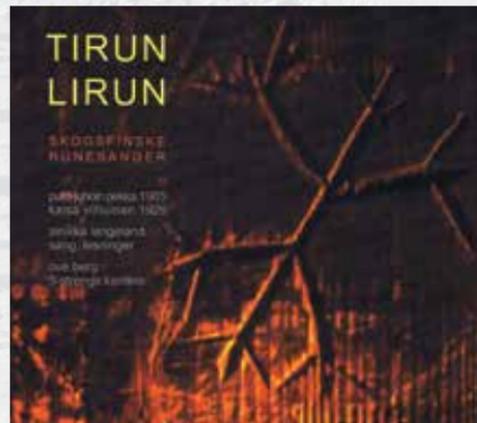
This is a unique form of cultural heritage that is worth preserving, and in this recording the old incantations have been given new packaging that still treats the tradition with the respect it merits.



Kaisa Vilhuinen (1855-1941) is the origin of most of the incantations on this recording. She spoke Finnish, and was thus a valuable source of knowledge about the old Finnish language that appeared in the border areas between Norway and Sweden when the Forest Finns arrived there in the 1600s.

A number of linguists visited Finn Forest in the 1920s and 30s, two of whom, Väinö Salminen and Lauri Kettunen, brought Edison phonographs with them in order to document the language, songs and stories they found on wax cylinders. Salminen was involved in these activities as early as 1905. The recordings that this release is based on were made mainly by Lauri Kettunen in 1926, and here Kaisa recited several incantations with great intensity and conviction. These original recordings were released on Tirun Lirun, which is available from most streaming services.

SKVR: "Suomen Kansan Vanhat Runot"





1 Kukk reis deg! / Incantation Against Impotence / Kulill Luku

Luring incantation against impotence

Kukk reis dæ
Pekk bli steinhard
Itte se så dum og dau ut
Vaka over blaute sprækken
Drøm om sleipe trånge trauget
Stekk'n inn seint i kveillinga
Bruk harde stakan heile nætta
Og lé det gå nér sola står opp

Nouse noukka, kasva kulli
Lämpöisille lähteillen
Karvaisillen kaukaloillen
Iltäyöstä istumaan
Poulyöstä pistämään
Uamuyösta astumaan

Up with your nose
The cock becomes horny
Watch over the hot springs
Over hairy, narrow troughs
Push in at midnight
Stick the pole in late at night
Let it go at dawn.

Up with your beak
The cock becomes thick
Grow, now, over hot springs
Lift yourself up over hairy boats
Stay awake late at night
Stay awake half the night
Up with your head
Remember your job
Don't look stupid and dead

Kaisa Vilhuinen believed implicitly in the effects of the ritual, and commented after having recited this incantation: "Then the men woke up properly."

2 Rollota, Rollota / Besvergelse mot røyk / Incantation Against Smoke

This incantation was used by the Forest Finns when they wanted to air the smoke out of the house.

Rollota, Rollota
Lakea myöten
Torvesta sisällen
Lakeisesta pihallen

Rollota, Rollota
Up, up under the roof
Roll yourself out of the hole
And high over the house

Røykstua, which was the main house of the Forest Finns, had a large stone hearth without a chimney, and the only way the smoke could escape from the house was through a hole in the roof. Sometimes the smoke could not find its way out through the hole, and then this incantation would have been used.

In more recent times this incantation has worked for people who want to quit smoking.

In the old Forest Finn smallholding “Askogsberget”, where my grandmother Anna Larsen grew up, one of the few intact open hearths in Finn Forest can be found. The simple cabin with its open hearth was restored in 2020 with the aid of funding from the Directorate for Cultural Heritage. I and Henning Holt, the current owner, are the eighth generation to be connected with Askogsberget. We are also relatives of Kaisa Vilhuinen through the family at Askogsberget.

Ove Berg Russanen by the open hearth (røykovnen) at Askogsberget.



3 Blodstemming / Incantation to Stop Bleeding / Seiso Kuin Seinä

Blod, stå stille som veggen	Stand still blood
Blod, stå stille som gjerdet rundt stugua	As still as the wall
Hauil dæ i ro	As still as the fence around the farm
Slik som Jævel'n sitter fast i hælvet	Keep still as the devil
	The blood must stop flowing
Je maner dæ langt neri svarte jorda	Like the water stopped in the Jordan River
Og da du kommer teill hælvetesporten	When Moses walked over it
kastes det imot dæ blod som har levre	and struck the stone tablets
blod som har stivne og	
blod som har stærne	Seiso ku seinä
	Asu kun aita
Blodet skær stoppe	Pitele kuin perkele
Slik som vatne stoppe i Jordan-ælv	Veren pitää stanata nikun
Da Moses gikk over og slo	Ves stanas Jordani
på steintavel'n	Koskessa kun Muusakki
	Siitä yltä kulk ja taululla löi

If a wound did not stop bleeding after an accident, the Forest Finns used an incantation to stop it. The use of such incantations here in Finn Forest has been documented from as recently as the 1960s.

Karl Persson also says that his mother Kaisa told him “the real incantation to stop bleeding is so foul that I never recite it”, but Karl knew a few lines of it, and said at the end “the rest is worse, because then they mix together heaven and earth to complete the prayer”.

4 Besvergelse mot vepsestikk Incantation Against Wasp Stings / Ampiaisen Lumonta

Historical incantation

Ampienen pimpienen	Ampienen pimpienen	Ampienen pimpienen
Liten fugl	Little bird	Pien lintu
Stekk nasan i sotet	Stikk your snout in the soot	Pistä pikkis pilon
Bit i bærk og bit i ved	Sting the bark and sting the wood	Noukkais nokeasen
Meinn bit itte mæ	But don't sting me	Karankois kallion rakon



Anna Langbråten (1871-1959) recorded the incantation against wasps in 1948, and I have used her version as a basis for my interpretation on this recording.

Journalist and writer Sven R. Gjems told me a story that Anna once saved someone who had been cut badly and was about to bleed to death. A young boy was told to run quickly to Anna for help, but when he jumped over the fence at her home she was already standing on the front steps, shading her eyes. She said, “You can stop running now, because the bleeding has stopped.”

Incantations used in daily work.

My grandfather, Olaf Larsen (1889-1987), told me that when he was a child at Havukota (Barskjula), Brandval Finnskog, he saw incantations being invoked.

An old Finnish woman, Poso-Kaisa, was helping him to prepare leaves for the sheep. My grandfather warned her about a large wasp's nest he had seen in a mound of stones. The old woman wasn't worried about it. She just recited a long string of words in Finnish, and the wasps buzzed around her without stinging her at all.

The next day she had an accident and cut her hand with the knife or scythe she was using, and it bled heavily. But the Finnish woman recited something in Finnish, and spit on the wound. The blood stopped flowing immediately. My grandfather told me: "I saw it with my own eyes".

Perhaps incantations similar to tracks 3 and 4 were used?

Photo: Barskjula 1914. My grandfather with bicycle, Lars Larsen with fiddle and Mentz and Sigurd Martinsen on the stairs.

Listen to "Reinlender etter Lars Barsjulet": Recording: "Puken i kjerketårnet" track 21.



5 Besvergelse mot byller / Incantation Against Boils / Paiseen Luku

Å du ækle svarte byll
Je maner dæ
Inn i illsint kjerringfytte
Inn i gammal gubbeskrætt

Je maner dæ innunder svarte
krisheisters harde høver
Neri deinn stygge, svarte fossen
Ner teill dauingens kale kne
Og inn i heite hælvet

Dér som kukken pløyer skogen
Dér som pekken hærver rugen
Dér som stakan rører rundt

I invoke you, you ugly boil
Inside an ill-tempered woman's cunt
There where the cock ploughs the forest
There where the prick harrows the rye
There where the rod stirs about
I invoke you deep inside an old man's body
Invoke you deep inside the ugly,
black waterfall
I invoke you on wild paths
To the painful, warm place
Inside the heat of hell

Illustration from a German Bible 1411



By anonymous source from Grue, Norway. Carl Axel Gottlund, Fryksände 13.10.1821.

6 Besvergelse for å stoppe blod Incantation to Stop Bleeding / Raudan Jälgeä

Origing incantation to stop bleeding

Stakkars jern i gyldne skjold
Du var itte blank og vakker
Da dom drog dæ opp tur myra
Grov dæ fram frå gjørmehæle'
Braut dæ laus frå bærjesprækken
Rann' frá ungjiinta's raue brøst
ifrå rosenraue knupper
Hulua teill skaparverket
I Faderens, Sønneren og Den hellige ånd's navn

Poor iron in a golden shield
You were not shiny and beautiful
When they pulled you out of the bog
Dug you out of the muddy ditch
Broke you loose from the crevice in the cliffs
Dripped from the breast, a maiden's chest
From rose-red buds
The cave under the arm of the Creator
In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit

This must be pronounced slowly.

Tirun Lirun Track 15. Puro-Juhoin Pekka. Recording: Väinö Salminen 1905. SKVR VII₅ Nr. 169.

7 Besvergelse mot anfall Incantation Against Seizures / Kohtaaksen Luku

Historical incantation

Je ser at anfallet kommer
Jesus såg på sønn' sin
Han gikk heile tråppa opp, trinn fær trinn
Og stod teill slutt ved skaparens klosterport
Dér alle gode løftes opp
Dér alt det vonde trækkes nér
Dér de nyfødte får komma ut



I look at the seizure
Jesus looked at his son
Believe in the stairs, the steps
Stood at the gate of the Creator's cloister
Where everyone good is lifted up
All the evil ones are pushed down
Where the newly born can be taken out

Edison Phonograph. Nordic Sound Collection.

8 Besvergelse mot hoggorm Incantation Against Snakes / Kärmeej Jälk

Prayer incantation after a snake bite

Slu og ækkel vart du født
Ein sleiping var du dér du voks opp
Dér du sneik dæ milla røtter
Tværs igjønno tære tuer
Je maner pæst og plager på dæ
Så du rætner neri svarte jorda
Så du smuldrer opp som visne laublad
Færsvinner inn i rætin stamme
Inn i djupe stubbehæle'
Og inn i heite hælvet

Minä manoan sinut ruttoon
Ja rumaan korpeen
Lehel lankiemen ala
Heiluvaan helvettiin
Koppeloss' on kotis
Lahokannoss' on kartanois

Sly and cunning you were born
Gloomy it was where you grew up
Crept and crawled among the roots
Straight through dry earth
Calling forth pest and plague
Rotting in tainted valleys
Under trees, in muddy ditches
Crumbling among withered leaves
Into the heat of hell
Your home in a hole in a stump
House in a rotten trunk

The snake plays many roles in the Baltic-Finnish and Sami traditions. It has been the shaman's helper in the underworld, which is why shamans kept the remains of snakes in their magic pouches.

9 Besvergelse mot kornagn Incantation Against Barley Straw Cuts / Rikan Luku

Origin incantation

Bikkje rusk, bakke rask
Gubbe rusk, kjerring rask
Treetts rusk, steinens rask
Heile verdas ruskerask

Koir rikka, korver rikka
Veir rikka, muar rikka
Puur rikka, kiver rikka
Hiela mualimar rikka



Incantations

There are four different types of incantations:

Origin incantations
Historical incantations
Prayer incantations
Command incantations



In popular practice various features have been mixed, so there are no substantial differences between the types of incantations.

Finno-Ugric shamans used techniques resembling these incantations from the Stone Age onwards, but they gradually became familiar with the magic traditions of the Indo-Europeans, which were more aggressive.

A wizard did not seek advice and help in the same way as a shaman, but recited incantations directly so he was certain that what he wanted would come to pass. This often occurred through the use of rather harsh and aggressive incantations.

Incantations were presented in the form of both singing (“Rollota, Rollota”) and reading.

*Photo: Askogsberget. Lars Mathisen Holt (1865-1948) with family.
My grandmother Anna Larsen (1901-1970) to the left.*

10 Besvergelse ved skaping av mjølkepuke Para, Incantation for Creating a Dragon Doll / Para

Bli teill Para, Para bli født

Vil du itte vakne opp?

Vil du itte bli levanes?

Så trufast som du heinter
mjælk åt mæ

Så trufast skær je breinne i
hælvete fær dæ

Emerge, Para, be born, Para

Don't you want to wake up?

Don't you want to come alive?

As faithful as you fetch milk to me
So faithful will I burn in hell for you



Mjølkepuke / Dragon doll / Para

Old Lauri Lehmoinen explained how to make a Para.

A worn-out leather cap was filled with nine types of woollen yarn, and tied together with hooks and clasps so it resembled a hare. For the legs four large knitting needles made of maple were used, for the ears two smaller ones, and for the eyes two buttons from the family silver. The buttocks were formed of a twig from a linden tree.

Then the Para was finished, but the most important aspect remained: bringing it to life. The Para had to be whipped on nine Thursday nights from sundown to sunup, with twigs from nine different deciduous trees, and incantations had to be recited the entire time. If everything had been carried out correctly, the Para would come alive on the final Thursday and could be set to work running about and sucking milk from cows.

In olden times in Finn Forest, it was said that every sensible housewife had a Para to fetch milk for her.

Photo: Para / Mjølkepuke. Nordic Sound Collection 2021.

Sources:

Gunnar Turesson, "Värmländska kulturtraditioner Del III" s.91.

The tale of the Para was taken from the book "Fra Finnskogene i Solør og Värmland" by Olaf Lindtorp, published in the 1940s. A new edition was published by the Museum for Forest Finn Culture in Norway in 2017. (Norsk Skogfinsk Museum).

11 Turska-besvergelse mot sår / Turska Incantation / Turskan Luku

Historical incantation against wounds. “Turska” is a kind of demon.

Turska gikk langs vægen	Turska walked along the path
Dér møtt'n Jesus	Jesus came towards him
Han spurde hært'n skulle	Asked, where are you going?
<i>Teill bigda fær å knuse bein</i>	To the village to smash bones
<i>Få kjøtte' teill å rætn</i>	Make people's flesh rot
<i>Je vil drikke blo</i>	Drink blood
Dit skær du itte gå	Do not go there
Je maner dæ	I urge you
Unner tirirota	Under the pine root
I tre heile daer og nætter	For three days and nights
Je slæpper dæ itte ut att	I will not let you break away
Før je får hjelp tå nætt og dag	Until the night and day come to my aid
Da kanskje je kan heinnte dæ att	Then I will get you
Meinn du blir nukk væranes der leinge	You will stay there for a long time

After having recited this incantation, Kaisa Vilhuinen explained it as follows: “These are Turska’s words. Turska is the cause of the pain and burning of wounds.” The incantation uses a combination of Byzantine and pre-Germanic elements. According to a Russian-Karelian legend, Jesus and Peter were walking along a path when they encountered an evil spirit, Turska. They asked him what he was about to do, and when they heard his destructive plans Jesus recited an incantation to banish him to a place that was impossible for him to return from.

Tirun Lirun Track 12. Kaisa Vilhuinen. Recording: Lauri Kettunen 1926. SKVR VII₅ No.294.

12 Besvergelse mot de underjordiske Incantation Against the Creatures of the Underworld Muahisen Luku

Prayer incantation against rashes

Je ditter me' jord
Du som bor under bakken
Je trækker me' tærv
Du som fliger i véri
Dra dæ hemmat nå me' einn gong
Frå jorda har du kommi
Under jorda skær du færsvinne
Dra dæ hemmat nå me' det samma

I push with earth
You who live under the earth
Press with sod
You who fly in the air
Get home in time!
From the earth you have come
Under the earth you shall go
Get home in time!



Tirun Lirun Track 8. Kaisa Vilhuinen. Recording: Lauri Kettunen 1926. SKVR VII₅ Nr. 47.

The magical symbols

Crosses, pentagrams and similar symbols represent protective magical borders against evil powers – “here, but no closer”. These symbols are placed at sites where it was important to protect something, so they are often found on storehouses, barns and saunas. The pentagrams shown here are from the barn door on the Vesterhaug farm, owned by Mathis Mortensen Rusanen in the early 1700s. Rusanen is not a hereditary surname, but Mathis came from the Swedish farm Rosastorp and was called Rusanen after the Finnish name for rose, “ruusu”. My grandfather, Olaf Larsen, comes from this family.



The old barn at Vesterhaug, Brandval Finnskog.
Nature takes back, but the door with the pentagram used on this release is now safely placed at Norsk Skogfinsk Museum.

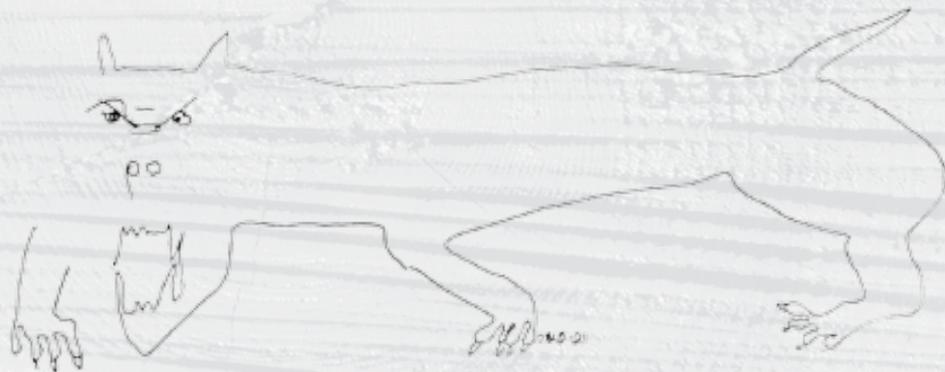


13 Besvergelse mot sinte hunder Incantation Against Aggressive Dogs / Hauka Koira

Sinte bikkje
Seik på logrerompa di
Bjeff på busteræva di
Dra klørn' inn i skinnen
Hauull tunga i strupen
Og teinna i tannkjøttet
Og bit itte mæ

Dog, bark at your tail
Bark at your furry behind
Pull your claws into your paws
Your tongue into your throat
Your teeth into your gums
And don't bite me

Karl Persson learned this incantation against aggressive dogs from his mother, Kaisa, but it was only for men. Women only had to lift the back of their dress.



The five string kanteles used on this recording



The Finnish national instrument, the kantele, is mentioned in written records here in Finn Forest, but none of the original instruments are known to have been preserved. The oldest form of the instrument had five strings made of gut or horsehair, and was carved from one piece of wood. This type of kantele produces the distinctive muted sound that can be heard on tracks 4 and 9. On a modern instrument the strings are made of metal, and the body is built from several pieces. Eventually the kantele began to be constructed with 10 or 15 strings, and the modern concert kantele has 38 strings and a tuning system that resembles that of the concert harp. Since ancient times the kantele has been used in eastern Finland, Russia, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and is now also played in Finn Forest.

14 Ähky-besvergelse mot magesmerter

Ähky Incantation Against Stomach Ache / Ähkytaudin Luku

Historical incantation

Ähky-sønnen, gisper, stønner	Ähky's son gasps, moans
Deinn are sønnen puster og pæsar	The other son breathes, pants
Deinn tredje tetter og snører ihopes	The third one chokes, closes up
Gi mæ greina, bjønngrepe'	Give me the branch, the bear's grip
Brone labben, løinn klype	Brown paw, furred fist
River, røsskjer magasmærter	Tear away, pull away the stomach pain
Stekker sjukdommen i støkker	Stab the illness to death

Ørna kom frå svarte ælva	The eagle came from the black river
Deinn eine veingen sveipte vatt'ne	One wing swept over the water
Deinn are kløyvde himmelvælven	The other split the heavens
Hvasse klør på store fugl'n	The bird has sharp claws
Meinn kloa mi er hvassere	My claws are sharper

This is an archaic incantation against abdominal pain in children, adults, horses and cows. According to popular belief, the cause of the disease is an arrow shot out of a demon, the Mesopotamian demon Lilitu. According to Finnish tradition, there were nine demonic diseases and one of them was Ähky.

15 Besvergelse mot uhell og sykdom

Incantation Against Accidents and Illness / Pyhännenän Luku

Prayer incantation

Je maner dæ	Fie, fie, nasty scab
Du veisle, slimete dritt	Fie, aching, painful thing
som je itte kan se	I invoke you, I call upon you
	To go to the churning hell
Je maner dæ	Down into the sucking, gurgling source
Atteinner teill deinn raue dragen	Down into the throat
i det fjerne østen	of the mottled she-bear
	Into the angry cunt of the snake
Je maner dæ	Into the arse of the fine lady
Inn i illsint kjerringfitte	Into the beard of the old man
Inn i ræva på deinn fine frua	Over the trees, beneath the cemetery
	From hell you came
Je maner dæ	To hell you shall go
Neri deinn djupe kalkjella	Through the cloister of the Creator
på Ormbakkmyra	Where the good is lifted up
Da kan du itte skade mæ meir	And the evil is pushed down
Du ureine Ånd	So the newly born can emerge

If a person did not respect nature, nature could punish him with illness. If the disease could not be identified it was called "nenä" (nose). One could be infected by the wind, the forest, etc. This incantation is also used against the corona virus, therefore the Norwegian interpretation is presented a little more freely.

All tracks were composed, arranged and performed by Ove Berg Russanen, except the “Tirun Lirun” melody on track 2, which is “traditional from Finn Forest”.

Recording, mastering and cover design: Ove Berg Russanen, Nordic Sound.

The traditional Finn Forest incantations were translated into the “Solør-dialect” by Ove Berg Russanen based mainly on translations by Sinikka Langeland used on the recording “Tirun Lirun”, and some interesting suggestions from Google Translate.

English translation by Shari Nilsen.

Comments page 17, 19, 22, 28 & 29 by PhD Timo Leisiö.

“Aggressive dog” doodle, page 26, by Inger Brita Lange Ørmen.

“Para”, page 20, created by Ove Berg Russanen.

Photo credits:

Cover photo: O.B.Russanen, “Stubbe i Veltseterberget” with pentagram at Vesterhaug, Brandval Finnskog. Pentagram at Meldalen, Grue Finnskog, page 32. Russanen at Askogsberget, Grue Finnskog, page 3 & 9: Inger Brita Lange Ørmen. Kongsberg International Jazz Festival 2010, page 31: Arne Østvang. Kajas Vilhuinen page 22: Maija Juvas, 1932.

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