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Memory, Heritage, and Tradition in the Museum Exhibition *Ingrians – The Forgotten Finns*

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In this article we explore relations between personal, collective, private, and public dimensions of remembrance in the context of the *Ingrians – The Forgotten Finns* exhibition presented at the National Museum of Finland in 2020 by analyzing it through the lenses of memory, heritage, and tradition. We argue that while promoting remembrance of allegedly absent pasts and experiences of a forgotten group of people, the exhibition simultaneously relied on and reinterpreted earlier nationalistic projects related to heritage and folklore connected to Ingria. Moreover, while the National Museum of Finland enabled the heritagization and mobilization of the exhibition's message, the exhibition reciprocally supported the message of transformation that the museum arguably wished to convey about itself.

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Introduction

Between January 24 and July 26, 2020, the National Museum of Finland presented a multimedia exhibition entitled *Ingrians – The Forgotten Finns*. Ingrian Finns – sometimes called just "Ingrians" or "Finns" – are a Finnish-speaking historical minority of Russia and the Soviet Union who used to live along the eastern and southern shore of the Gulf of Finland in the historical area of Ingria. During the twentieth century, they experienced various forms of Soviet repression and forced and voluntary migrations. Simultaneously with the Soviet Union's disintegration at the beginning of the 1990s, people with Finnish ancestry began (re)migrating to Finland. Between 1990 and 2016, over 30,000 Ingrian Finns and their close relatives migrated to Finland (Finnish Immigration Service 2016). Today, people with Ingrian Finnish backgrounds live primarily in Finland, Russia, Estonia, and Sweden.

Ingrians – The Forgotten Finns was presented in the National Museum that was originally founded in 1893 as The State's Museum Collections and named the National Museum of Finland in 1916, a year before Finland's independence. The exhibition's script was written by Ingrian Finnish journalists Lea and Santeri Pakkanen, a daughter and a father who migrated from Russia to Finland at the beginning of the 1990s. Santeri Pakkanen was also one of the leading figures of Ingrian Finns' ethnic mobilization in the Soviet Union during the 1980s. The exhibition's contemporary photographs were created by Meeri Koutaniemi, a friend of Lea Pakkanen as well as an award-winning and critically reviewed photographer and celebrity known for her works focusing on human rights and minority issues. The exhibition explored collective memory, silence, and identity in the context of Ingrian Finns' history and present. In particular, it discussed memories of Soviet repression, resulting movements of people, and the consequences of these movements. The exhibition's apparent objective was to spread information and awareness about Ingrian Finns' history and Ingrian Finns as part of the Finnish people.

The exhibition strongly interlinked personal and collective memory and highlighted memory's relation to identity. Moreover, it involved an explicitly autobiographic dimension; scriptwriters Lea and Santeri Pakkanen's personal experiences with oblivion and silence framed the narrative. In a video component of the exhibition, Santeri Pakkanen explained how they decided to explore their family's past. Four years earlier, during a visit to Santeri's birthplace in Russian Karelia, the daughter-father pair went to the river and saw a sauna that Santeri had once built. On the sauna's wooden door, Lea had as a child written a goodbye note to her grandmother, before the family moved to Finland. At the emotionally touching moment of seeing the door again, Lea and Santeri decided to learn more about their traumatic past. After this, they

traveled in Siberia, Russian Karelia, Ingria, and Finland with the photographer Meeri Koutaniemi, documenting places and people, and gathering stories from Ingrian Finns with different backgrounds. The exhibition is a result of their trips.

As an exhibition focusing on the personal and collective remembrance of a minority's past held at the premises of a national museum, the *Ingrians* exhibition can be seen as linking to a paradigm shift in museum practice and theory after the 1980s, also labeled the *new museology* (see, e.g., Vergo 1989; Macdonald 2003). As part of this shift, many cultural history museums have begun to transform from institutions that house collections and exhibit artifacts into facilitators of affective remembrance through displays of (personal) narratives, memories, and performances (e.g., Arnold-de Simine 2013). Instead of promoting monumentalizing master narratives of a nation state or an empire, a new breed of museums aims at offering democratic and inclusive approaches to the past by presenting divergent voices related to marginalized groups, often difficult, violent, or traumatic memories, and personal and contested narratives, ideally evoking empathetic reactions in museum visitors (Arnold-de Simine 2013: 1–2; see also, e.g., Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998; Smith 2021). Along with this paradigm shift, museums have transformed from repositories of material traces of history to agents in civil society that actively participate in processes of solving contemporary societal challenges through their displays, pedagogical work, and audience engagement (e.g., Vergo 1989; Witcomb 2003; Jõesalu & Kõresaar forthcoming 2022).

This paradigm shift in museum theory and practice has occurred simultaneously with a broader "mnemonic turn" (Kõresaar 2014) within the humanities in which multidisciplinary research fields of cultural memory studies and critical heritage studies have emerged alongside (and within) established disciplines of folklore studies, ethnology, history, and archaeology, to mention a few. This shift can also be seen as one from history and tradition (or folklore) to memory and heritage as organizing concepts for describing and analyzing representations and roles of the past in the present (e.g., Macdonald 2013).

By analyzing the exhibition *Ingrians – The Forgotten Finns* through the partly overlapping lenses of memory, heritage, and tradition, we attend to the articulations and interconnections mobilized by the exhibition between personal, collective, private, and public dimensions of remembering. Our research questions are: In what ways did the exhibition demonstrate and participate in contemporary museum practices connected to the new museology, and how did it reflect earlier practices associated with monumentalizing national narratives? What meanings did the National Museum as a national cultural heritage institution insert into the narrative presented by the exhibition, and vice versa?

Our empirical data consist of the *Ingrians* exhibition and related materials. The exhibition was set up in three rooms on the National Museum's ground floor; it included material artifacts from several collections, text panels presenting both personal narratives and general information on the history of Ingrian Finns, old and new documentary photographs, photographic portraits of Ingrian Finnish individuals, and a few videos – different elements that produced meanings both together and independently (Moser 2010; Potinkara 2020; see also Kratz 2011). In addition to the actual exhibition, source materials also included a short presentation of the exhibition on the website of the National Museum. As our analysis focuses on the meaning potentials of the exhibition itself, the empirical data do not include interviews with the scriptwriters, museum curators, or visitors.

We visited the exhibition several times and documented its visual contents in detail. More than 150 photographs taken in the exhibition space as well as an introductory video published on the museum's YouTube channel enabled remote analysis while the exhibition was closed from March 2020 to the beginning of June 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Our analysis involved attending to the interactions of verbal, material, and (audio)visual elements of the exhibition and examining its narrative strategies (e.g., Mason 2006: 26) in relation to the domains of memory, heritage, and tradition, which are the central analytical concepts that structure this article.

Inspired by folklorist Dorothy Noyes' (2009) conceptual disentanglement of the notion of tradition, we perceive memory, heritage, and tradition to be terms that are used in referring to processes of mediation and transmission as well as in objectifying properties and products. Examples include formulations of memory as a narrative related to a certain past event or experience, heritage as a valued material artifact, or tradition as a folklore item. As such, memory, heritage, and tradition are metacultural notions through which conceptions about culture itself and temporal ideologies are constructed and negotiated. Using them in this sense enables us to analytically conceptualize various elements of the exhibition, and to interpret these examples and the exhibition in relation to, and as reflections of, certain kinds of modes of remembrance. Our analysis of the exhibition comprises three parts; first we focus mainly on memory, second on heritage, and third on tradition.

Ingria and Ingrian Finns

Ingria refers to a historical province inland from the Gulf of Finland's easternmost coastline, between the Narva River and Lake Ladoga. Its borders were first established when the Swedish Empire annexed the area from Russia during the Ingrian War in 1617, though its geographical definition has changed many times over the course of history.

As a region, Ingria has been fundamentally heterogeneous in terms of its ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups. The oldest known ethnic groups in the area are the Baltic-Finnic Votes and Izhorians. During the seventeenth century, Lutheran Finnish-speaking people moved to Ingria from the Karelian Isthmus and Savo, areas that also belonged to the Swedish Empire at the time. By the end of the century, they constituted the majority of the area's population. Their descendants are called "Ingrian Finns" – or "Ingrians" or "Finns" (Matley 1979: 1–3).

During the Great Northern War of 1700–1721, Ingria became part of the Russian Empire, and the city of Saint Petersburg was founded at the area's center in 1703. The Russian population increased, and in the late eighteenth century, Finns became a minority in Ingria; nevertheless, they maintained their Finnish language and Lutheran religion in the Russian-speaking, Eastern Orthodox environment. They remained the area's second-largest ethnic group into the 1920s (Lallukka 2000: 64–65; see also Matley 1979: 3–5). Up until 1861, Ingrian Finns belonged to the serf social class. Later, they were mostly independent farmers.

In 1809, Finland became an autonomous grand duchy of the Russian Empire. After the abolishment of serfdom in Ingria, fashionable romantic-nationalistic ideas started to emerge, supporting connections between the intelligentsia in Ingria and Finland. This resulted in the establishment of Finnish-language secular cultural and educational institutions in Ingria that operated alongside the Evangelical Lutheran Church. For example, a seminary for Ingrian teachers was founded and Finnish-language newspapers began to appear. After the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, Estonia and Finland became independent and the Russian Civil War broke out. The Reds won the war, and the Soviet Union was established in 1922. Villages inhabited by Ingrian Finns remained within Soviet Russia (e.g., Nevalainen 1991: 234–253; see also Nevalainen 1996).

Repression of Finns and many other ethnic minorities and social groups who were living in the Soviet Union began in the late 1920s and peaked at the end of the 1930s. It included deportations to elsewhere in the Soviet Union, imprisonments, and executions. In Ingria, schools which previously taught in the Finnish language were integrated into the Soviet Russian school system, and Ingria's Evangelical Lutheran churches were closed. At the turn of the 1930s, the first mass deportations were linked to the Soviet Union's transitioning to full-scale socialism and the related collectivization of agriculture and industry. Deportees were mostly independent farmers who opposed collectivization, religious authorities, and their families. The second wave of deportations that started in the mid-1930s was linked to the Soviet Union's need to secure its border areas. An estimated 45,000–60,000 of the approximately 130,000 Finns living in Ingria at the time of the revolution

were deported, killed, or imprisoned between the world wars (Matley 1979: 9–10; Nevalainen 1991: 254–260; Davydova 2003: 56).

During the Second World War, Germany occupied parts of Ingria. Over 63,000 of the people living in the occupied area – mostly Ingrian Finns – were displaced to Finland, which was allied with Germany and at war with the Soviet Union (Nevalainen 1991: 267–275). After Finland lost the so-called Continuation War to the Soviet Union in 1944, most of the displaced Ingrian Finns returned to the Soviet Union. Some were forced to return while others returned voluntarily due to dissatisfaction with life in Finland, fear of possible Soviet occupation of Finland, and pressure by Finnish authorities (Nevalainen 1991: 278–288). Only approximately 8,000 Ingrians remained in Finland; half of them eventually migrated to Sweden, partly out of fear of being forced to return to the Soviet Union. The returning Ingrians were not allowed to continue their lives in Ingria but were relocated mostly to the areas of Tver, Yaroslavl, and Ivanovo located near Moscow, and Pskov, approximately 100 kilometers south of Ingria. Many of them eventually moved to Soviet Karelia and Estonia, areas located closer to their former home region, as returning to Ingria was not possible before 1954 (Nevalainen 1990; Nevalainen 1991: 267–292; Flink 2010; on Ingrian Finns' migration to the Soviet Karelia, see Davydova 2003: 57). At the time of the so-called *perestroika* process of the late 1980s, Ingrian Finns began to organize. Several organizations were founded to promote Ingrian Finnish culture, interests, and rights. This mobilization was acknowledged in Finland, leading to media attention, aid projects, and the (re)establishing of transnational relationships (Nevalainen 1991: 292–296).

At the beginning of the 1990s, concurrent with the Soviet Union's disintegration, Ingrian Finns began to move to Finland as migrant workers, and in April 1990, Finland's president Mauno Koivisto stated in a television interview that they could be considered returning migrants. Finnish immigration officials introduced requirements for Finns living in the Soviet Union to prove their ethnic Finnish background or connection to Finland. This opportunity for people to receive residence permits as returning migrants when the Soviet Union disintegrated resulted in the migration from Russia and Estonia of a significant portion of those with Ingrian Finnish descent to Finland. During the twenty years of remigration, over 30,000 people, most of them Ingrian Finns and their relatives, migrated to Finland (e.g., Finnish Immigration Service 2016). Over these 20 years, the qualifications for returning migrants became increasingly restrictive, and at the beginning of the 2010s the application queue was closed (e.g., Varjonen, Arnold & Jasinskaja-Lahti 2013; Mähönen et al. 2015; Prindiville & Hjelm 2018).

After this brief and inevitably reductive description we are obliged to remark that labels such as "Ingrian Finn," "Ingrian," and "Finn," as well as their links to identities, are somewhat ambiguous and bound to socio-historical contexts (e.g., Anepaio 1999; Hakamies 2004; Varjonen, Arnold & Jasinskaja-Lahti 2013; Mähönen et al. 2015; also Raudalainen 2004). In the Soviet Union, the Finnish-speaking population – including people living in Ingria – were typically labeled and self-identified as "Finns." Earlier, Ingria's Finnish-speakers also self-identified as either Savakkos, who were descendants of the people who migrated to Ingria from Savo, or Äyrämöinens, who were descendants of people from the Karelian Isthmus. Today, some people with ties to historical Ingria's Finnish-speaking population identify themselves as Ingrian Finns or Ingrians, while others self-identify as Finns, Russians, Estonians, or members of other ethnicities (e.g., Teinonen 1999: 111; Zadneprovskaya 1999: 90; Anepaio 1999; Miettinen 2006; Mähönen et al. 2015: 131). Recognizing the complex, ideological, and contextually bound nature of such labels and the dangers of essentialism related to their use, in this article we use the term "Ingrian Finn" to refer both to historical Ingria's Finnish-speaking population and to people who identify themselves as Ingrian Finns today.

Heritagizing Forgotten, Difficult, and Personal Memories

The exhibition *Ingrians – The Forgotten Finns*, held at the National Museum of Finland in 2020, explicitly aimed at telling the story of Ingrian Finns. Of the central analytical concepts of this article – memory, heritage, and tradition – the exhibition explicitly referred only to the concept of memory. The National Museum of Finland's website states that the exhibition "tells a story about identity and the importance of collective memory" (Kansallismuseo [n.d.]c). In addition to promoting remembrance of especially Stalin's terror and forced migrations from the 1920s to the 1950s, the exhibition also discussed silence and oblivion on personal, collective, private, and public levels.

Visitors entered the exhibition space by walking amid cloth hangings suspended from the ceiling. Printed on the cloths were photographic portraits depicting people of various ages as well as their personal accounts of painful experiences and forced, harmful silence. Older persons who had lived through the times of terror and fear referred to their own experiences, whereas individuals aged 24–44 narrated the lack of knowledge about Ingrian Finns or their own family histories, their search "for missing pieces," and the importance of passing knowledge of the past on to younger generations.

Figure 1: Entrance of the exhibition. (Photo: Nika Potinkara).

These portraits and testimonies functioned as the initial introduction to the exhibition since the actual introductory text came after. The hanging pieces of cloth framed the exhibition with strong themes of suffering, persecution, and oblivion presented from the personal viewpoints of individuals with Ingrian Finnish backgrounds. The exhibition's actual introductory text began by noting that 2020 marked the thirtieth anniversary of the beginning of the Ingrians' remigration to Finland, and then stated that "[t]he history of the Ingrians has up till now been forgotten in the historical narratives told in both Finland and Russia." The text ended with a question: "What are the consequences of collective remembrance and forgetting?" The exhibition's aim was to overcome oblivion and silence, promoting the collective recognition of Ingrian Finns' experiences and histories in Finnish society (see Savolainen 2021). While claiming that the history of the Ingrians has not yet been recognized in Finland and Russia, the exhibition used the verb *to forget* as in its title *Ingrians – The Forgotten Finns*. Rather than nonexistence of memory altogether, the verb *to forget* refers to the alleged absence of this memory from "the historical narratives told in both Finland and Russia." However, as a verb, *to forget* can also be interpreted as implying an earlier existing memory, something that was forgotten later. In the context of the exhibition, we interpret *to forget* as referring to both Ingrian Finns' experiences and histories and to their Finnishness. In other words, in addition to recognizing difficult pasts, the exhibition promoted recognition of Ingrian Finns as Finns.

By highlighting the importance of remembering and the harm of oblivion, and by referring to forgotten memories, the exhibition adhered to a dominant understanding

of memory – at least in Western culture (Huyssen 2000). Memory studies scholar Ann Rigney (2005: 12) has called this kind of understanding of memory "the 'original plenitude and subsequent loss' model," which "involves looking at memory as something that is fully formed in the past and as something that is subsequently a matter of preserving and keeping alive." In both academic and popular contexts, memory discourses often relate to an agenda of promoting awareness of forgotten memories and silenced histories in order to restore memory's original plenitude. Anthropologist Sharon Macdonald (2013: 1) has stated that "Europe has become a memoryland – obsessed with the disappearance of collective memory and its preservation."

Moreover, these kinds of memory discourses have been emblematically linked to the aftermath of and reflection upon difficult, oppressive, traumatic, and often violent histories – the most iconic of which is the Second World War and, most importantly, the Holocaust (e.g., Huyssen 2000: 22–25; Levy & Sznaider 2002; Assmann 2007; Rothberg 2009). Such discourses are also associated with the establishment of the interdisciplinary research field of (cultural) memory studies, which understands memory as a dynamic process through which the past is made present, but also as a collection of representations of the past in the present (e.g., Erll 2011). The remembrance of difficult pasts characterizes the domain of memory to the extent that links between trauma and memory, as well as grievance and identity, have become naturalized (Rigney 2018: 269; Sindbæk Andersen & Ortner 2019). This ideology has also become powerful institutionally. Indeed, the remembrance of difficult pasts with an aim to learn from these histories plays a central role in European institutions and elites' self-understandings (Assmann 2007). Further still, this ethical imperative to remember is a hallmark of contemporary museum practice and theory (e.g., Arnold-de Simine 2013; De Cesari 2017; Jõesalu & Kõresaar forthcoming 2022; Kõresaar & Jõesalu 2021).

Many of the artifacts chosen for the exhibition *Ingrians – The Forgotten Finns* made manifest this understanding of memory as a collection of painful, frightening, or silenced pasts. One example of these artifacts was a memoir of exile and prison camps written on bedsheets and underwear by an Ingrian teacher, Amalia Susi (1898–1972). According to an accompanying text, her notes were sewn inside a child's mattress, "apparently to keep them out of the hands of the Soviet authorities." Eventually, the memoir was transported to Finland after the Soviet Union's disintegration, and it currently belongs to the National Archives of Finland. Although the actual contents of this memoir were not reflected on explicitly in the exhibition, the exhibition context and accompanying text enabled the bedsheets full of writing to serve as materialized memories of a difficult and silenced past as well as of Ingrians' fears and concerns during the period of the Soviet Union. Moreover, in this context, as an autobiographical account, the memoir makes manifest the interconnections between personal, collective, private, and public memory dimensions.

Issues of identity – as well as various dimensions of memory – come together in the domain of memory in multiple ways. According to historian Pierre Nora (1989: 15), anxiety surrounding the disappearance of collective memory emerged in the West simultaneously with a rise in fascination with individual psychology during the late nineteenth century. Since then, research has extensively theorized, analyzed, and criticized the relationship between individual and collective memory. Moreover, anxieties about oblivion – as well as the related model of memory in which "original richness" can be "lost" over time – are also linked to what has been called "possessive individualism" (MacPherson 1962). Suggested as characterizing modernity, possessive individualism refers to the idea that subjectivity and personal identity require a sense of one's own or a group's past (also Radstone & Hodgkin 2003: 2–6). Through this process, memory connects to the politics of identity and recognition (Macdonald 2013: 11–12).

In the exhibition, the domain of memory was concretized most strikingly in the aforementioned wooden door from Russian Karelia. In addition to mentioning the door in the introductory video as an object that played a role in the process leading to Lea and Santeri Pakkanen's journey to Ingrian Finnishness, the door itself was on display in the exhibition, placed on the same wall as portraits of Lea and Santeri. As a testimonial object, we interpret the door as representing what Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer (2006) have labeled a "point of memory." Inspired by Roland Barthes's (1981) concept of "punctum," Hirsch and Spitzer (2006) use the term "point of memory" to analyze testimonial objects inherited from the past. They argue that, being concrete aspects of the past in the present, points of memory bring up fundamental arguments about memory that simultaneously reveal memory's transmission processes. Points of memory are intersections between past and present, places and times, and personal and collective memory, which is why they also have the strategic potential for making claims about to the consequences of the past in the present (Savolainen 2020).

Figure 2: The wooden door and portraits of Lea and Santeri Pakkanen by Meeri Koutaniemi. (Photo: Nika Potinkara).

Lea Pakkanen wrote her Russian-language farewell note to her grandmother on the door when the family had voluntarily chosen to move to Finland, many decades after Stalin's era of terror and forced migrations. However, in the context of the exhibition, the door became a symbol of the Ingrian Finnish past characterized by departures, transnational bonds and breaches, and the loss of many loved ones. As a testimonial object, concrete evidence, and strategic point of memory, the door spoke not only about the Pakkanen family's past and personal memories of how Lea Pakkanen became consciously aware of this past, but also about the traumatic and transnational history of Ingrian Finns. The door exemplified the symbolic metamorphosis of private memory into collective and institutional memory and promoted the acknowledgement of personal memories related to difficult pasts and transnational histories. Simultaneously, the door embodied a concrete relocation from Russian Karelia's countryside to the National Museum of Finland – an institution organically bound up with earlier museum practices and the creation of the Finnish nation. In addition to institutionalizing personal memories of Lea Pakkanen, the door thus represented not only a validation of allegedly forgotten collective memories of the Ingrian Finns' transnational history of suffering, but also of the museum's absorption of these memories into the idea of the Finnish nation.

Reframing Heritages

The fact that the exhibition *Ingrians* was held at the National Museum of Finland affected the meanings transmitted by the exhibition. According to the museum's webpages,

> We engage in multidisciplinary, national and international cooperation with several partners and authorities to ensure that cultural heritage is preserved and its significance is communicated and strengthened. [...] The National Museum of Finland contains the oldest and most comprehensive cultural history collections in Finland [...] The artefacts illustrate Finnish history, folk culture and the culture of Finno-Ugric peoples as well as world cultures from various parts of the world. The National Museum of Finland also documents contemporary culture in Finland. (Kansallismuseo [n.d.]d.)

This introduction highlights the museum's authoritative, official, and legally defined role as an actor within the cultural heritage field representing not just Finland but also other groups. Macdonald (2013: 12) has characterized heritage as "the materialized rendition of [a nation's] memory as property." Heritagization thus refers to a process whereby objects labeled as heritage are rendered as property and brought within the global heritage regime (e.g., Macdonald 2013; Bendix 2018).

The museum's tasks include not only preserving heritage and communicating its value, but also reinforcing its importance. Merely including an artifact in a national museum's collection constitutes a valuation and signification of that object as heritage, and the stories that museums tell through their exhibitions are generally perceived as reliable and important. Critical heritage studies focusing on the politics, ideologies, discourses, and uses of heritage have burgeoned in recent decades (e.g., Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1995; Smith 2006; Macdonald 2009; Kuutma 2012; Harrison 2012; Hafstein 2018; Lähdesmäki et al. 2019), and there has been a considerable amount of academic work emphasizing museums' performative qualities and political subjectivity as well as their contribution to creating national identities (e.g., Macdonald 2003; Aronsson 2010; Preziosi 2011; Aronsson & Elgenius 2015). Nevertheless, "public and professionals alike continue to imagine the museum as neutral, authoritative and trustworthy; an accurate rendition of the world as it ought to be understood" (Knell 2011: 4). With the exhibition on Ingrian Finns, the National Museum of Finland authorized the scriptwriters' narrative and simultaneously wove it into the national narrative of Finland.

In addition to showcasing the materials that Koutaniemi and the Pakkanens created and gathered for the exhibition, the display also included historical artifacts from the National Museum's own collections. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, collecting and preserving these kinds of artifacts tended to follow the paradigm of romantic nationalism. In Finland as well as other newly emerging nation states, "the establishment of national collections created pre-state institutions serving and presenting the developing nationalistic movement" (Aronsson 2011: 39). A national spirit inspired collections of material heritage and folklore not only among Finns but also among other peoples speaking Finnic languages such as Karelians, Izhorians, and Estonians. At the National Museum of Finland, domestic artifacts belong to "ethnological collections" reflecting "the life, trades and traditions of Finnish people" (Kansallismuseo [n.d.]a) while "[m]aterial cultural heritage of our language family members" (Kansallismuseo [n.d.]b) constitute "Finno-Ugric collections." The museum's early exhibitions already displayed both domestic and Finno-Ugric artifacts, though on separate floors. Artifacts from Ingria, including those that had belonged to Ingrian Finns, were placed in the Finno-Ugric exhibition on the museum's ground floor (Talvio 2016: 186; Sirelius 1924).

Placing Ingrian Finnish artifacts in Finno-Ugric collections instead of ethnological collections indicates that in assembling these collections, Ingrian Finns or people living in Ingria in general were not considered as "Finnish people" in the same way that Finns living in Finland were. However, the way that these collections have been described by the National Museum indicates that the connection between peoples, heritages, and traditions related to Finns and other Finno-Ugric peoples was considered organic.

Indeed, in the nineteenth century, this idea was mobilized for the purposes of the Finnish nation-building in many ways. One application of this idea was to absorb the smaller groups speaking Finnic languages (excluding the Estonians) and their traditions under the homogenizing construct of the Finnish people and heritage. This was important in order to represent the antiquity of Finnishness in the absence of pre-Medieval historical texts produced in Finland. Through this connection, Finns gained a history recognized by themselves and other nations. They also gained "modernity" in the form of nationhood, while other peoples speaking Finnic languages (except for Estonians) were deemed to stay in the past (Anttonen 2012: 347–348; also Tarkka, Stepanova & Haapoja-Mäkelä 2018: 21–23). During the first decades of the 1900s, ideas related to the connections between Finns and other peoples speaking Finnic languages such as Karelians developed further into irredentist ideologies, politics, and actions related to the creation of the so-called Greater Finland (e.g., Wilson 1976: 138–161; Lähteenmäki 2007).

The *Ingrians – The Forgotten Finns* exhibition contained four objects from the Finno-Ugric collections: knitted gloves, a sleigh blanket, a headband called *säppäli*, and a regional folk costume connected to another sub-group of Ingrian Finns called Äyrämöinens. The artifacts were placed in glass display cabinets and accompanied by a brief text, a customary way of representing folk heritage. However, the mere inclusion of these objects in the exhibition created a meaning transfer which was reinforced through verbal framings. The objects were gathered together under the title "A dress that was hidden in the ground and Ingrian artefacts." According to the accompanying text, the donor of the Äyrämöinen costume "described how people hid their own old costumes during the Soviet era due to persecution. These clothes were also kept hidden in a pit in the ground until they were brought to Finland in 1943." The text about the sleigh blanket referred to a certain family's history by mentioning that the family had not spoken much about being Ingrian and had preserved the sleigh blanket, brought from Ingria, as an important heirloom. The headband and the gloves, on the other hand, were presented in a classically ethnographic way – without reference to their former owners or to Ingrian Finns' history of repressions and mobilities.

The exhibition thus partly reframed and re-signified objects from the National Museum's collections, transforming the artifacts from ethnological remnants symbolizing the folk heritage "of our language family members" (Kansallismuseo [n.d.]b) into allegedly absent, forgotten heritage of the Ingrians' difficult past experiences, a topic highly resonant with the ideals of contemporary museum practice. While claiming that Ingrian Finns or their pasts have been absent and forgotten, the exhibition utilized existing Ingrian material heritage belonging to the museum's collections. The existence of this heritage implies a connection between Ingrian and Finnish pasts, one

that informed earlier heritage collection and creation. In other words, the exhibition connected the products of an earlier nationalistic approach to contemporary museum attitude toward heritage. In that way, it achieved its goal of recognizing and incorporating Ingrian Finns' pasts into collective memory and national narrative in Finland.

Expanding Finnishness through Traditionalization

Historically, Ingria and Ingrians have been ascribed a role in constructing the Finnish nation by simultaneously relegating them to the domains of tradition and folklore. In this regard, tradition has been argued to be an inherently modernist notion, since it came to signify both modernity's own separation from and connection to the past. It has been associated with nationalistic projects in the nineteenth century as well as the emergence of the discipline of folklore studies (Bendix 1997; Anttonen 2005; also Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983).

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, members of the emerging Finnish intelligentsia wrote down an enormous amount of oral folk poetry in trochaic tetrameter – the so-called Kalevala meter. This folk poetry was collected mainly from singers in Karelia, a region located on both sides of the Russian-Finnish border, but it was also collected from Ingria. Elias Lönnrot, a physician, folklore collector, linguist, and journalist, used some of the collected folk song verses as material in constructing the national epic of Finland, the *Kalevala* (1835, 1849), as well as in a lyric poetry collection, the *Kanteletar* (1840). When creating the *Kalevala*, Lönnrot organized and edited the poems, merged some, and composed lines of his own in order to create a cohesive narrative. As a literary work, the *Kalevala* is a creation of Lönnrot. Rather than reflecting aesthetic and ideological understandings of the people who performed this oral poetry or those related to the folk poem singing, the *Kalevala* reflects nineteenth-century ideas about what a national epic should be (on the geographical distribution of the poetry that went into the *Kalevala*, see Kaukonen 1979: 154–155).

Although Lönnrot did not try to hide his creative input, and although the majority of the *Kalevala*'s poems were actually gathered from outside Finland's geographical area, Lönnrot's contemporaries as well as subsequent generations have often seen the *Kalevala* as a reconstruction of an ancient unified Finnish epic (see Tarkka, Stepanova & Haapoja-Mäkelä 2018: 19–23). At the time of its publication, the *Kalevala* was perceived as proof that a Finnish culture and nation existed separately from the Swedish and Russian empires that had until then ruled it, at precisely the moment in history when such a catalyst was needed. It was considered to be a "turning point of Finnish national life," having "focused the attention of the entire civilized world on the forgotten Finnish nation" (Wilson 1976: 48). The epic's contribution in creating a

Finnish national identity as well as in affecting other Europeans' perception of Finns as a people was thus highly significant (see Anttonen 2005; Fewster 2006; Anttonen 2012).

The exhibition *Ingrians – The Forgotten Finns* contained two citations of poetry from Ingria in Kalevala meter. One passage, describing the act of putting cattle out to pasture, came from the *Kalevala*'s tragic Kullervo cycle. Although Lönnrot constructed this cycle partly on the basis of the Ingrian and South Karelian poem type "Kalervo and Untarmo," Kullervo's character was largely created by Lönnrot himself (Kaukonen 1979: 168–169). In the exhibition, the passage was placed on top of photographs by Meeri Koutaniemi presenting contemporary Ingria. These photos showed old wooden houses in villages and elderly inhabitants who had Ingrian Finnish backgrounds. Another passage in the exhibition was attributed to Larin Paraske, a well-known and highly praised Izhorian singer. This passage narrates the superiority of one's home, even if living there would be "[t]o trudge through a sinking swamp," compared to being away from home, where one would "step on a stone street, [s]troll on a stone mountain." The exhibition placed the passage above Koutaniemi's photographs of present-day Yakutia in Siberia, where many Ingrian Finns were deported during the Soviet times. The majority of these photos presented rugged landscapes of Yakutia by the Arctic Ocean.

Figure 3: The wall with Larin Paraske's poem and photographs from Yakutia by Meeri Koutaniemi. (Photo: Nika Potinkara).

Although one could read a lot into these particular poems' inclusion in the exhibition – especially the poem extracted from the Kullervo cycle that discusses themes such as orphanhood, incest, and revenge – we have interpreted these poems' significance in the context of the exhibition in two ways. First, the passages discuss landscape and spatial belonging, and their display along with photographs created double images. The poems include imagery of the landscapes and spaces that people in Ingria sang about in the nineteenth century, while the photographs presented Ingria and Siberia as they are now. As such, the display created poetic connections between separate spatial and temporal dimensions. It constructed relationships between the nineteenth-century singers' past, the tragic pasts of the twentieth-century Ingrian Finns who were deported from their home villages to Siberia, and Ingrian and Siberian villages' present day, with their diminishing numbers of Ingrian Finnish inhabitants. Second, the exhibition's selection of these particular poems, and its paralleling them with photographs, connected the *Kalevala* and Ingrian folklore to the exhibition's own remembrance of Ingrian Finns' difficult and violent twentieth century experiences.

The Kalevala-meter poems used in the exhibition connected Ingrian Finns to the domain of an imagined mythic Finnish past, characterized by what has been called "Kalevala-ness" or "Kalevalaicity." The term Kalevalaicity (Fin.: *kalevalaisuus*) carries with it strong connotations of cultural features perceived as old and genuinely Finnish (Haapoja-Mäkelä 2019: 101). Kalevalaicity as an ideological construct has four biases that guide interpretations of the epic: the *Kalevala* is popularly believed to be authentic, archaic, and unequivocally Finnish, and this Finnishness is supposed to refer to a homogenous group of people who share a cultural consensus (Tarkka, Stepanova & Haapoja-Mäkelä 2018: 19). Although the origins of the *Kalevala* as a literary epic are well known within folklore studies, as are the origins of orally performed poems in the traditions of several peoples that speak Finnic languages, the Kalevalaic ideology still has a significant impact on the public view of oral poetry and purportedly homogeneous Finnish culture. Relying on this existing popular ideology of Kalevalaicity, the exhibition used it to raise awareness of the Ingrians' role and place within Finnish tradition – even though the *Kalevala* as a literary work has relatively little connection to Ingria, since only a small portion of the *Kalevala*'s materials originates from that region (see, e.g., Kaukonen 1979: 150–152). As such, the exhibition's inclusion of these poems exemplifies a strategic process of traditionalization (Bauman 1992: 128; Briggs 2020) that echoes similar earlier processes – including the nationalist processes of creating and legitimizing the *Kalevala* in the nineteenth century.

The exhibition rarely referred to the Izhorians – one of the two oldest known ethnic groups in Ingria – even though one of the two poems displayed in the exhibition was performed by Izhorian singer Larin Paraske. Apart from two brief mentions of Izhorians

as Eastern Orthodox people who escaped from Ingria after the area had been annexed by Lutheran Sweden in 1617, and as part of the population that remained in the areas occupied by Germans during the Second World War, the exhibition did not discuss Izhorians' centuries-long coexistence with Ingrian Finns in Ingria. The poem collected from Larin Paraske was labeled "Ingrian folk poem, Larin Paraske, 19th century," without mentioning Larin Paraske's Izhorian ethnicity or status as a famous singer of oral poetry. Izhorian identities and experiences were not discussed in the exhibition, but were largely coopted by and incorporated into the culture and history of Ingrian Finns.

Since Kalevala-meter oral poetry is popularly associated with the image of Finns' shared ancient culture, we interpret the exhibition as promoting identification of Ingrian Finnishness with Finnishness. However, rather than echoing the (romantic) nationalistic idea of the Finnish nation, we interpret that this identification comments on the public discussion in Finland related to the national and cultural belonging of Ingrians that emerged during the remigration process of the 1990s (see Heikkinen 2003; Varjonen, Arnold & Jasinskaja-Lahti 2013). Whereas the predominantly Russian-speaking immigrants with Ingrian Finnish origins in the 1990s were often perceived as ethnic Russians in Finland, the exhibition aimed at expanding the category of Finnishness to also include Ingrian Finns. In our view, the exhibition's inclusion of the poetry passages can be seen as a strategic process that foregrounded a historical tradition (oral poetry) in order to make claims about visibility and recognition of Ingrian Finns' pasts as part of Finnish history, and thus about Ingrian Finns as part of the Finnish people in present-day Finland. This strategic process essentially rested on mobilizing the contemporary turn in modes of presenting pasts that relies on personal narratives as well as traumatic and often allegedly silenced or forgotten experiences. Interestingly, the exhibition did this by referencing earlier processes of tradition and heritage creation that were closely connected with nation-building projects.

Conclusions

By highlighting Ingrian Finns' Finnishness despite the geographical and temporal distances involved, the exhibition *Ingrians – The Forgotten Finns* contributed to a broader understanding of Finnishness and resisted spatially rigid notions about national or emotional belonging. This resistance was highly compatible with the current agendas of many heritage and memory institutions who wish to foreground the importance of memories and narratives of minority groups or individuals that have earlier been absent from museums. While contributing to diversifying Finnish heritage and memory culture through Ingrian Finnish perspectives and thus transforming national heritage into something more inclusive with regards to other minority heritages and histories, the exhibition also "nationalized" Ingrian Finns' history and experiences by re-articulating

them as Finnish heritage. This process, however, also caused Izhorian identity to fade and be absorbed into Ingrian Finnishness – and even Finnishness in general.

By foregrounding the interconnections between several levels of memory and by claiming that the difficult, violent, and transnational personal pasts represented in it had been silenced or forgotten, the exhibition aligned itself with contemporary memory discourses and ideals guiding museum practices. By situating individuals' narratives and memories related to devastating experiences in the premises of the National Museum of Finland, the exhibition heritagized Ingrian Finns' private experiences and memories, absorbing them into the widely-shared collective and institutional representations of the Finnish people. While claiming that Ingrian Finns and their histories had been absent or at least forgotten, the exhibition simultaneously utilized and built on the fact that Ingrian Finns have been included in the Finnish folklife sphere (see Klein 2006; Seljamaa 2021) from the nineteenth century onward. The exhibition thus reframed earlier folk heritage artifacts and folklore as the heritage of experiences of one minority's oppression.

Hosting the exhibition enabled the National Museum to underline its role as an institution committed to the principles of new museology, one with contemporary value. The exhibition arguably helped the museum to reformulate itself as a *memory* organization and in that way to make itself relevant from the perspective of today's needs. By discussing the themes of home, loss, family, and migration, and by articulating them with the *Kalevala* and material heritage collected under the nationalist paradigm, the exhibition promoted the relevance of the National Museum of Finland regarding current Finnish and European discussions on cultural change and socio-cultural belonging.

Based on our analysis, we thus argue that while promoting the remembrance of pasts and experiences of a "forgotten" group of people, the exhibition simultaneously relied on and partly reframed the results of earlier Finnish nationalistic projects related to Ingrian heritage and folklore. While the National Museum of Finland as an exhibition venue enabled the heritagization of the exhibition's narrative, the exhibition also reinforced the legitimacy of the message of transformation that the museum arguably wished to convey about itself.

Our analysis of the exhibition usefully highlights some of the challenges connected with contemporary museum practice. Even though museums might generally prefer to avoid totalizing interpretations of the past, as *national* institutions with powerful symbolic status they – even unintentionally – may simultaneously come to organize various minority perspectives and narratives within an overarching master narrative of the nation.

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