

# *The Language of Magic*

Edited by Eleonora Cianci and Nicholas Wolf



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# ARGUMENTS FOR THE AUTHORITY OF THE “TIETÄJÄ”

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## ABSTRACT

In the traditional Finnish-Karelian society a charmer with exceptional mental force *väki* was called *tietäjä* – literally, “knower”. He (she) was a ritual specialist and capable of helping or damaging people. The *tietäjä*’s skills were demonstrated at an incantation event shaped according to the situation: curing, cursing, magical blocking, etc. When the *tietäjä* prepared for enchanting, he recited specific opening lines, which included an allocation of his ritual self as well as a comprehensive description of required magical properties. These rune-lines comprise some critical elements that are proofs of mythical force. Expressed as performative utterances, the claims become true on the grounds of the power of the word and do act as arguments for the *tietäjä*’s authority. The charms studied in this paper are samples from a handwritten corpus recorded during field work at the turn of the twentieth century – in no authentic situation of curing, etc. These argumentative motifs were widely known and even used, but for some people they could be hearsay. Interpreting them as arguments of authority is based on several studies on Finnish folk belief commented in the text.

*Keywords:* authority; auto-communication; competence; mythical knowledge; ritual specialist.

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In the collection Suomen Kansan Vanhat Runot (SKVR; “Ancient Poems of the Finnish People”), now also digitized (<https://skvr.fi>), there is a corpus of charms of more than 33,000 items. The material contains verses for solving problems of everyday life, from fishing luck to healing and evoking love. The texts contain curses, spells, invocations of otherworldly assistants, and charms associated with the role of the *tietäjä* (lit. “knower”, sage, or healer). I will look at some of the opening lines of a charm performer preparing for his task as arguments for authority. The goal is not to

describe any personalities whose charms have been recorded and published in this collection, but to consider the performative character of some expressions. In the broad charm corpus available in SKVR, the recurrence of these verbal motifs supports the assumption of their essentiality to the charm.

These charms have been recorded from oral presentations, mostly in the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries. However, the collectors did not hear any charm in an authentic situation aimed at solving a problem: it was presented on request, in a non-genuine setting. Sometimes, the meta-data recorded with the charm mentions the performer and the setting, but other contextual information is given randomly. If no accompanying conditions are mentioned, the conclusions of the researcher fumble around on the basis of the words alone<sup>1</sup>. The texts are textualizations of charms presented to the recorder, but the objective remains open as well as their connection to a verified role of *tietäjä*. Lines associated with the *tietäjä* may have been adopted from somebody else and performed mechanically with no connection to an act of charming. In this paper, the opening lines are not interpreted as elements of certain performers' repertoire, but as a phenomenon of authority depicted through arguments.

The charm event is a dramatic rite, consisting of text spoken out loud alongside various actions. The charm always has an objective, whether eliminating a problem or causing one. A *tietäjä* is a ritual specialist capable of helping as well as damaging people. Achieving the set goal requires mastery of mythical knowledge and rite technique, self-esteem, and confidence in one's own authority<sup>2</sup>. A *tietäjä*'s archaic skill includes recognizing his relationship to magically powerful *väki*, his exceptional mental force. This concept has international counterparts referring to the special personal might of magical character. In Finnish folk belief even supernatural beings, objects, or things in contact with the otherworld were rich in *väki*<sup>3</sup>. The charmer had to equip himself for menacing contests on the otherworldly field of battle. His charm text commented on a critical situation, the requirements for managing it, and the psychic potency of his own "ritual ego"<sup>4</sup>. In an acute situation, the *tietäjä* activated the ability to attain a mental state bound to mythical reality. The ritual ego of charm speech takes shape by varying the linguistic register of expression and

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<sup>1</sup> Tarkka 2013, 62-64; Frog 2019, 232; Roper 2003, 33-49.

<sup>2</sup> Siikala 2002, 71-76.

<sup>3</sup> Siikala 2002, 79-80.

<sup>4</sup> Ilomäki 2004, 49-51.



the different motifs in terms of their reference. In the chains of motifs, the recurring ones are those in which the *tietäjä* positions himself and describes the elements of his ability. In order to gain a categoric control in the ritual situation, the charmer’s opening lines must be performative utterances. Being spoken in a conventional situation, these words indeed are of illocutive character<sup>5</sup>. The line “Let my words go through the bone” is not just performed; in the spiritual mind of the *tietäjä* it materializes, too. Performative words of charms embody *the power of the word*, which must be differentiated from *väki*, which is a magical force<sup>6</sup>. In this situation they demonstrate the *tietäjä*’s authority, his discretion to decide. He does not expect a response from the otherworld; the recovery of a patient or resolving a problem is a kind of answer.

The *tietäjä* was the authority on mythical knowledge. His role and its associated status might be passed down within the family, but it was not just a property of lineage. Continuous learning and increasing experience guaranteed the status over time<sup>7</sup>. Numerous charm motifs present the competence of the *tietäjä*. Verified authority justified his role in the ritual context. This is expressed with performative utterances known as fixed motifs. The *tietäjä* acting on the boundary between the mundane world and the otherworld addressed himself, but the hearer of a charm might sometimes be the patient or someone present at random. Trust in the ability of the *tietäjä* is an essential part of achieving the charm’s objective. Being cured strengthened his authority in the patient’s mind. Still, a possible listener from the mundane world is not the supposed addressee of a charm, for the *tietäjä*’s charm message is directed to the otherworld. The opening lines of a charm are supposed to reassure a supernatural opponent, too.

## 1. CHARM MOTIFS AS ARGUMENT

The *argument* is the smallest comprehensive basic unit of reasoning by which an attempt is made to demonstrate facts, for example in a debate or scientific article<sup>8</sup>. The argument has also been categorized as “a unit

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<sup>5</sup> Austin 1967, 6-7, 60.

<sup>6</sup> Tarkka 2013, 110-111.

<sup>7</sup> Siikala 2002, 83.

<sup>8</sup> “Argumentti”, *Tieteen Termipankki* (2019)

<http://tieteentermipankki.fi/wiki/Filosofia:argumentti>.

of reasoning in which one or more prepositions purport to provide evidence for the truth of another proposition”<sup>9</sup>. This seems to be the case for recorded charms. The concept of argument was already explored by ancient philosophers, later Christopher Tindale, the contemporary researcher of the study of speech communication mentions two features: “An argument has a conclusion and premises in support of it. It is a reason-giving use of language, and its success is determined by evaluating the strength of such reasons”. Argumentation is a convincing use of language, and the credibility of the reasoning and connectivity determines the acceptance of an argument. Both reasoning and connectivity must be valid and unreservedly true<sup>10</sup>.

The true value and meaning of an expression are linked to the communicative connection. The argument is accompanied by a background assumption that is approachable by the recipient<sup>11</sup>. In traditional culture, the relevance of the argument is based on the ability of the performer to embrace and demonstrate the connection of an assertion to socially accepted knowledge<sup>12</sup>. In the study of speech communication, the argument is the whole linguistic entity of a proposition and the implicit reasoning that supports it. If an argument is a unit of reasoning in which one or more propositions purport to provide evidence for the truth of another proposition<sup>13</sup>, both must be recognized by the interlocutors. The competence of the performer of folklore in any genre is based on social interaction<sup>14</sup>. In ritual performances, the rhetorical force of some motif as a vernacular argument is based on a shared textual background. It means that the motif is intersubjectively recognized. It is known that the assertion “I put fire on my coat, embers on my shoes” does not refer to the ignition of clothes, but to the loading of the charm performer’s psyche with the power of the *väki* of a burning garment as a magic inheritance from the dead, possibly from one’s parents<sup>15</sup>. The assertion “I have a black dog, an iron-coloured cur, brass guts in its stomach” (*Onpa mulla musta koira, rakki rauan karvallinen, suolet on vaskiset vatsassa, kupariset kuihaeltu*. VII<sub>4</sub> 1628) describes the *tietäjä*’s helper animal. It is not necessary to mention its supernatural nature, since blackness points to otherworld forces,

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<sup>9</sup> Tindale 1999, 4.

<sup>10</sup> Tindale 2004, 2, 32.

<sup>11</sup> Tindale 2004, 116.

<sup>12</sup> Bauman 1992, 183.

<sup>13</sup> Tindale 1999, 4.

<sup>14</sup> Briggs 1987, 357-359.

<sup>15</sup> Siikala 2002, 288.

and with motifs of metal the dog becomes a magically charged figure. Like its everyday counterpart, it bites and even eats an opponent. The argumentation structure is clear when the statement contains a background assumption: the dog is a being that bites bones. The *tietäjä* controls it, and in relation to the otherworld being, his authority is indubitable. Such assertions act as arguments that witness the *tietäjä*'s capability while the motifs are recognised and used traditionally. The assumption affects the interpretation of what is heard, and the absurd reasoning guarantees the truth of the argument within the magical framework.

The context of the text affects the meaning of the message. In a given society, a sacred text may be untrue for an outsider if the reasoning of its arguments is implicit or not at all comprehensible. Intention influences interpretation<sup>16</sup>. This applies to charms, too. However, the reasoning behind charm motifs does not follow everyday logic. Argumentation is knowable use of language, but a charm's link to the category of the supernatural brings irrationality to the expression. As a performative speech act, a charm follows a genre-specific logic, which is described by the term *extrarational*. When the concepts related to the supernatural are characterized as corresponding to the mundane world, the incomprehensible is made observable in mundanely conceptualized terms. The mutual correspondence of the supernatural and the natural is the researcher's starting point, but a charm's linguistic usage is based on the emic interpretation of supernatural concepts<sup>17</sup>. According to Mihaly Bakhtin, the corresponding structure that challenges the regularity of mundane life appears in fairy tales when time or the hero's power is measured in everyday terms by magnifying them<sup>18</sup>. In a charm, expressions related to the otherworld impart the power of the word, and the interpretation of the argument is based on communally shared and agreed-on knowledge.

The argumentation is interactive by nature and calls for a recipient of the message<sup>19</sup>. The argument is linked to an assumed listener, who influences its content and reacts to it<sup>20</sup>. It may be a matter of a bilateral discussion or a discourse with a broad audience. The meta-communicative framework of the message consists of the responsible attitude of the speaker – also the charm performer – to communal tradition and verbal

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<sup>16</sup> Perelman 1996, 50-57, 107.

<sup>17</sup> Nikolic 2019, 88-89.

<sup>18</sup> Bakhtin 1981, 148-151.

<sup>19</sup> Perelman 1996, 16-17; Tindale 1999, 91.

<sup>20</sup> Bakhtin 1981, 280; Tindale 2004, 102-103.

competence<sup>21</sup>. The charm-reading event is communicative: the listening opponent is present in the otherworld in the verbal construction of a charm-performing *tietäjä*, even when acting on his own. This is emphasized by the ever-increasing threat to the otherworld adversary: “If you do not obey with that, I call to mind another reminder” (*Kuin et tuotana totelle [...] vielä muistit muistetahan*. VII<sub>4</sub> 1028).

In the field of argument, as envisaged by Plato, there also exists the concept of distanced dialogue, in which the listener is not present<sup>22</sup>. In the text mentioned earlier, Bakhtin pondered monologic rhetoric as the starting point for singular awareness and for the acceptance of the consciousness of another person. The message is directed to an assumed audience, and the addressee is defined implicitly. The words of a lamenter’s self-pity are *autocommunication*<sup>23</sup>, but directed to a decedent. The *tietäjä*’s monologue with traditional motifs of the opening lines is uttered primarily to himself. When addressing his ritual ego, the *tietäjä* draws on a separate aspect of his personality, his *luonto* or *baltija*: “Rise from the notch, my *luonto*, from underneath the branch, my *baltija*” (*Nouse luontoni lovesta, havon alta baltijani*. I<sub>4</sub> 15). Words depict the mental ability of the charm performer to move from a latent state of mind to active excitement. Both terms refer to the charmer’s mental element and are related to the human mind or soul<sup>24</sup>. The commanding utterances are influenced by the power of the word and activate the *tietäjä*’s authority connected to the ritual situation. The spontaneous ritual self-portrait is built in relation to both the mundane and the otherworld. The argument demonstrating the competency of the *tietäjä* is modally assertive and affects the listener by its assertiveness.

## 2. THE ELEMENTS OF AUTHORITY IN CHARMS

*Authority* is a descriptive element of power and command. In religions, it is a constant and pervasive element. The question of traditional authority is based on religious claims<sup>25</sup>. According to a sociological view, authority is a quality of communication by virtue of which it is accepted, and has a

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<sup>21</sup> Bauman 1992, 183.

<sup>22</sup> Tindale 2004, 92-98.

<sup>23</sup> Arukask 2012.

<sup>24</sup> Siikala 2002, 204, 250-260.

<sup>25</sup> *Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York, MacMillan, 1987), 1, 2.

charismatic dimension<sup>26</sup>. The *tietäjä* has an authoritative role of ritual specialist. Theodore Kemper examines status and power in the field of ritual behavior in the community, where authority is related to power-backed status. According to him, authority is a status granted to a person in the community, which enables the use of power in a well-defined context among those who grant the right. In social dealings, authority can be challenged, lost and reestablished. Authority must be confirmed from time to time, and if necessary, the continuance of power must be reviewed. The agent of power or his challenger can seek legitimacy by various means, even appealing to divine confirmation<sup>27</sup>. In the charm tradition appeals are also made to otherworld figures.

Authority can be established with moral conditions; normally it is confirmed by legitimacy, but exceptionally it justifies the use of force<sup>28</sup>. Violent verbal images in charms seem to refer to arbitrary authority. For example, a curse against supposed envy, “a bloody cloth on your ears, a fiery plug down your throat” (*veribursti korvillabe, tulitulppa kulkutorveh*. VII<sub>5</sub> 3216), speaks of the ability of an authoritative *tietäjä* to punish someone with the distressing image of a bloody cloth on his ears and a fiery plug in his throat. Such violent punishment motives do not describe the moral code of the community or the *tietäjä*'s authoritative preferences, but as threats they are influential motifs in the projection of the otherworld.

In a traditional community, the authority of the performer is demonstrated and evaluated in connection with each oral presentation. Authority is then based on a situation-specific, communally defined ability to communicate intelligibly and skillfully<sup>29</sup>. For instance, during a situation of storytelling the speaker's authority may be derived from the collective authority of the elders of the society<sup>30</sup>. Even the *tietäjä* is responsible to his community when he acts on the basis of the assumptions and beliefs he has adopted, of which he has special knowledge. It is on this that his authority is based, and it is activated and, on the other hand, tested in every charm performance. He must prove his verbal ability to heal, to curse, or to solve some other problem. In the verbalization of the rite, the facts of mundane reality like disease or injury are dejected, but the arguments used and their background assumptions must be accepted by the community. Incompe-

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<sup>26</sup> *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (New York, MacMillan, 1991), 1-2, 473.

<sup>27</sup> Kemper 2011, 22-24.

<sup>28</sup> Kemper 2011, 19-25, 182-189.

<sup>29</sup> Bauman 1992, 182-183.

<sup>30</sup> Briggs 1987, 118-119.

tent expressions would put the *tietäjä*'s authority into question<sup>31</sup>. The long chains of charm motifs speak of the effort to secure his authority.

The postulated supernatural *listener* of the charm is a personalized negative concept when the objective is the elimination or creation of trouble – be it illness, a curse, envy, or absence of love. In the charm situation, the *tietäjä* contends with supernatural opponents. He uses the power of the word to subdue the listener by addressing him. If the sender of the evil to be expelled is conceived to be a person skilled in magic, the addressee is in the mundane world. However, in the *tietäjä* mindset, the trial of mental strength is situated in the otherworld. A *tietäjä* who contests the *väki* of an opponent and raises up his *luonto* is manipulating power. Then what kind of arguments are credible enough? In addition to the lines describing the charm performer, an answer must be sought in the underlying assumptions concerning the premises for his activities.

### 3. THE ROLE OF THE “TIETÄJÄ” AS AN AGENT OF POWER

The beginning of the charm is marked by verses depicting the ritual ego of the *tietäjä*:

Rise, my nature, from the notch,  
from underneath the branch my *baltija*,  
to make charms beside me,  
to rouse envy with me!  
Rise, just as you rose before  
when I invoked you.  
Then the mountains melted like butter,  
the hills flowed like honey,  
the blue backwoods like mead,  
my own fields like beer.

*Nouse luontoni lovesta,  
havon alta baltijani  
luonani lovehtimahan,  
kanssani kavehtimahan.  
Nouse niin kuin nousit ennen  
minun nostatellessani.  
Silloin vuoret voina vuoti  
kalliot meni metenä,  
simana salot siniset,  
oluena omat pellot.* (I<sub>4</sub> 15)<sup>32</sup>

The prerequisite for the efficacy of the *tietäjä*'s ritual ego is the attaining of a state of altered consciousness: he recognizes the resources of mental power that belong to his being and addresses his *luonto* or *baltija*, the spiritual being representing the charm performer's persona<sup>33</sup>. This is a mental collaborator

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<sup>31</sup> Kuipers 1993, 91.

<sup>32</sup> Alliteration and repetition with slightly varying motifs are essential features of Kalevala-meter used across a wide range of genres. It is the prevailing meter in Eastern Finnish and Karelian charms.

<sup>33</sup> Siikala 2002, 204.

who can cross the border between the mundane world and the otherworld. In his word to evoke his *luonto*, the *tietäjä* recognizes a figure of himself with active powers in the otherworld. After securing the ritual dimension of his personality, the *haltija*-endowed *tietäjä* attains his capability: “Here a sharp man is needed, a quick man is fetched” (*Tässä tarkka tarvitaan, mies noppii nouvvetaan*. VII<sub>3</sub> 38). These characteristics justify his authority: a transformer of elements is needed and fetched to perform a charm rite.

The *tietäjä*'s words form an autocommunication, addressed to the magical potential of his “nature”. The double personality depicts that a dynamic ritual ego “rises” from a notch (*lovi*) that leads into the otherworld in the manner of a man “from under a branch, hat on his head, from under a stone, with mittens on” (*bavon alta battupiäissä, kiven alta kinnaskiäissä*. I<sub>4</sub> 11). *Lovi* and parallel terms are linked to the world of “other side” and the *tietäjä*'s archaic magical site<sup>34</sup>. The garments are indexes of the *tietäjä*'s mental firmness and mythical resources<sup>35</sup>. The assertion that “one may not touch without iron mittens” (*ei kärsi käsin ruveta, ilman rautarukkasitta*. XII<sub>2</sub> 5244) emphasizes the danger of evil touch, but the *tietäjä* can seize the evil that needs to be driven out with iron mittens. The lines “I’ll take the claws from an eagle, the talons from a hawk, the meat tongs from a bird. I’ll squeeze the crook, I’ll press the evildoer” (*Otan kokolta koprat, havukalta buarottimet, linnulta libanpitimet. Minä konnan kouristelen, painelen pabantekijän*. VI<sub>1</sub> 2980) present the *tietäjä*'s magic activity in a chain of argument that moves the subjugation of opposition onto a symbolic level. The image is rendered credible by a knowledge of the ways of birds of prey. The performative words turn into concrete tools of his spiritual reality, and they subdue the opponent categorically:

Let my words go through the bone,  
through the limb,  
through hot flesh.

Mänköön minun sanani  
läpi luun, läpi jäsenen,  
läpi lämpöisten libain (VI<sub>1</sub> 2976)

The image of the material ability of the intangible word to permeate the physical being is based on the power of the word under the *tietäjä*'s control, and supports his authority. The *tietäjä*'s power and his opponent's incapacity are to be inferred from expressed parallels: “The witch will deprive the power from me as much as an axe from a stone, an auger from a rock” (*Sen verran minusta noita, kun kirves kivistä tuosta, napakaari kalliosta*. VII<sub>3</sub> 16). The basis of the statement is the everyday information that a bladed

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<sup>34</sup> Siikala 2002, 260-263.

<sup>35</sup> Siikala 2002, 292.

weapon is no use against stone, and hence neither can a supposed opponent harm the charm practitioner. A charm can establish authoritative prestige also through spiritual family tradition and divine background, when “I get my own words [...] through the family, through God, through the throat of the Almighty” (*Otan mie omat sanani, omat on neuot neuomani läpi suvun, läpi Jumalan, läpi kaulan Kaikkivallan*. VII<sub>3</sub> 28). In connection with charms, the argumentation works on an extrarational level: the opponent is subjected to a demonstration of a reality that contradicts the laws of the everyday world. Fact-based and mythical assertions side by side suit the charm’s expressive logic. As part of auto-communication, the assertions expressed to the image of the ego in a metonymic relation are the *tietäjä*’s arguments, put to himself, justifying his authority.

#### 4. THE “TIETÄJÄ’S” METAPHORS OF READINESS

The charms of the *tietäjä*, conscious of his skill, make his spiritual state, his magical ability and his actions. These expressive chains of argument testify to his undisputed ability of him to control mythical power (*väki*), but other specific elements of *tietäjä*-ship may constitute an underlying assumption behind the statements. The pointed statement “I have not come here without my power, without my control, without my father’s fervour, without my parents’ equipment” (*En ole tänne tullutkaana mahittani, maltittani, ilman innotta isäni, varuksitta vanhempani*) will serve as an introduction to verses that speak of single-minded preparation:

My mother washed me,  
my parents poured water  
thrice on a summer night,  
nine times on an autumn night,  
on every road to becoming a *tietäjä*,  
on every path to becoming a sage.  
Then he girded with a manly belt,  
put on a manly buckle,  
clad in a manly shirt.

*Pesihän mua emoni,  
valatteli vanhempani  
kolmasti kesäissä yönä,  
yhdeksästi syksyyönä  
joka tielle tietäjäksi,  
taitajaks joka tabolle  
Vjötti siitte miehen vyöllä  
pani miehen palkimella,  
pani päälle miehen pajjan.* (VII<sub>3</sub> 15)

The credibility of the lines is supported by the general assumption that charm skills are inherited in the family<sup>36</sup>. Being washed by night refers to

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<sup>36</sup> Siikala 2002, 83.



the traditional custom of pouring water on a newborn child (VII<sub>5</sub> 4944, 4949, 4953). Implicit reinforcement is lent by knowledge about the use of water in the healing rite (I<sub>4</sub> 14, 555, 612, 941). Night as the temporal setting of the washing rite and the threefold and ninefold repetition emphasize the magic character. The shirt motif refers to the tradition of wrapping a newborn in its father's shirt (VII<sub>5</sub> 4943). On the basis of mythically interpreted tradition uttered motifs become indexes of magical power. Addressed by the *tietäjä* they are arguments of his authority.

Various arguments demonstrate the *tietäjä*'s authority. The mythical inheritance is depicted as the weapons named in the charm: a stone axe, a rocky bow, and the arrows polished in a *hiisi*. The term has several meanings from Christian hell to a mythical being or woods<sup>37</sup>. Unreal features of everyday tools establish their magic quality, the expressions are arguments:

Gave a man's weapons,  
gave a stone axe,  
gave a rocky bow,  
carried shafts for the bow,  
prepared bolts,  
took a dozen arrows,  
shafts in his quiver,  
sharpened the arrows in *hiisi*.

*Anto miehen astalotkin,  
anto kirveheen kivisen,  
anto kaaren kallioisen.  
Kanto kaarelle pulikat,  
vasamatkin valmisteli,  
toipa nuolia tusinan,  
pulikoita pussillisen.  
nuolet hijessä hijotti.* (VII<sub>3</sub> 15)

The verses that rouse the *tietäjä*'s consciousness form a mental structure based on the mythical reinterpretation of everyday information. Iron objects appear repeatedly in the charms as a guarantee of the *tietäjä*'s power. Iron is also a key element in the magic tradition, perhaps with an implicit background reminiscence of its cultural significance as metal. The idea is manifested, for example, in the myth of the origin of iron, read out as a charm to stem blood<sup>38</sup>. The charmer subdues the iron but utilizes its power. There are discussions of dressing up in metal: “We made ourselves strong,

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<sup>37</sup> Siikala 2002, 162-164.

<sup>38</sup> The supposed listener of the mythic poem “Origin of Iron”, used to stem blood, is exceptional. Usually, the objective of the healing charm is to clarify the origin of a disease or pain, but a steel weapon (knife, sickle, axe) is generally supposed to be the cause of the bleeding. Therefore, the ability of the iron to cause the wound is understated, becoming an ability to staunch the flow. The verses are arguments for the ultimate insignificance of iron: “You were not great then, / neither great nor little, / not very fine. / You hung out over the summers in a swamp, / the winters inside the dough / [...] / You were born on the coal hill / you grew on the coal moor / [...] / when it was dredged from the bog / and prepared from the mud of earth” (I<sub>4</sub> 188). Only then does the healer address the flowing blood, ordering it to stop.

we girded ourselves, we put on iron shirts” (*Hyöteleimme vyöteleimme, rautapaitoihin pu’emme, vaan ilman vain varustelemme*. VII<sub>3</sub> 17) is a metaphor for magic preparation; an iron shirt and a steel belt protect against arrows and knives. Propositions about the properties of a fictional outfit create a chain of argument that presents the magical protection of the ritual ego.

In [metal] plates a man is stronger,  
better in iron shirts,  
more effective in a steel belt,  
so that a witch’s arrows do not stick,  
nor a *tietäjä*’s blades,  
nor a wizard’s iron knives.

*Lustusissa mies lujempi,  
rauta pajassa parempi,  
deräs vyöllä tehtoisampi.  
Siihen ei pisty noijan nuolet  
eikä tietäjän teräket,  
eikä velhon veibti rauvat.* (VII<sub>3</sub> 15)

The chain of affirmation of the *tietäjä*’s invulnerability annuls the opponent’s attack as a series of pricks expressed in concrete images:

The points will not pierce me,  
the steel will not work effectively  
I have a sandy skin,  
an iron-crusted hide,  
I shall make the blade limp,  
I shall twist the tip.

*Ei minua piilit pistä,  
terä rauat tie tebuansa.  
Mull’ on hiekkänen hipiä,  
rauan karstanen kamana;  
Terän mie vennoksi vetäsen,  
kären käänän käppyrähän.* (VII<sub>3</sub> 29)

The verbal affirmation, interpreted mythically and expressed in everyday language, shows that the *tietäjä*’s (mental) skin is invulnerable: the opponent’s knife blades are turned aside. The assertions proclaim that the *tietäjä*, in command of the power of iron, has superiority over his opponent. The iron motifs are arguments for the charm performer’s capability and reliability.

## 5. OTHERWORLDLY CONTACT

A *tietäjä* preparing for his task must strengthen his personal capability by securing his connection to the otherworld. Knowledge of mythical reality brings resources that must be taken under control over and over again. The *tietäjä*’s supposition concerning his relationship to the power of the word is stable, but by addressing otherworld beings, he actualizes his contact and exploits mythical power. The allocution to the water spirit binds it as a participant in the healing process: “Rise now, girl, from the spring, fine-hemmed from the pool to be a companion to the famous man” (*Niin nouse nyt, neiti, lähteestä, Hienohelma, hetteestä Miehen ainuon avuksi Miehen kuulun kumppaliksi*. VII<sub>3</sub> 57). The argument “I am not speaking

with my own mouth, I am speaking with a pure mouth with the good spirit of the Lord” (*En pubu omalla suulla, pubun suulla pubtaballa, Herran bengellä hyvällä*. I<sub>4</sub> 285) contains implicit Christian reasoning. The metaphor of healing by hand – “I don’t anoint with my own fingers, I anoint with the finger of God” (*En voija omin sormin, voijan sormella Jumalan*. VI<sub>1</sub> 2977) – relies on the supposition of recovery with the help of a Christian figure. This argument demonstrates the patient’s recovery through a touch of God’s finger intermediated by the *tietäjä*. Among the host of the charm performer’s helping beings, figures of Christian and folk beliefs are found alongside each other, nor is there any conflict between them: “I move with the power of Ukko, with the power of God, with the power of old Väinämöinen” (*Mie liikun Ukon väellä, Jumalan väellä, väellä vanhan Väinämöisen*. VII<sub>3</sub> 1). Appealing to various beings does not need to rest on conscious selection<sup>39</sup>. Regardless of the belief category, the assertion of the efficacy of otherworldly help is connected with the supposition of the ability of the supplicant to access mythical power for himself. Control over a negatively defined figure is represented by the spell:

I banish you there:  
to Rutja’s harsh rapids,  
into the embrace of the swimming fish,  
into the mouth of an iron burbot.  
That will take you into the deep.  
You will not get away from there all your days,  
or ever escape.

*Tuonnepa sinun manoan:  
Rutjan koskeben kovahan,  
kalan uivan kainalohon,  
suuhun rautasen matikan;  
tuo sinun syvälle viepi.  
Tuolt’ et pääse päivinäsi  
selviä sinä ikänä.* (VII<sub>4</sub> 2892)

The concluding argument describes the authority of a *tietäjä* in relation to an opponent: he has the power to prevent the return of evil.

The series of threatening images of the *tietäjä*’s acknowledgement of his power is constructed on the basis of motifs that become more and more frightening line by line: if this punishment does not work, there is worse in reserve.

If you don’t heed that,  
I will banish you  
to a brass mountain,  
into the maw of a screaming bear,  
to a coloured church,  
onto a hundred-plank roof,  
into a dead man’s guts.

*Jos et tuosta vielä huoli,  
tuonne mie sinun manoan  
vuoren vaskisen välihin,  
karhun kaljuan kitaban  
kirkon kirjavan tyköhön,  
sata lauan lappiohon,  
miehen kuoleben kobuhun.* (VII<sub>4</sub> 1634)

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<sup>39</sup> Tarkka 2013, 113–115.

These messages are directed at abstract listeners, such as illness, envy, curses. The aim of the charm is to subjugate the opponent. Threatening arguments are based on the motives of the otherworld contacts controlled by the *tietäjä*. “I will banish you” is an unchallenged argument.

## 6. THE “TIETÄJÄ’S” GUARANTEES OF MAGICAL SECURITY

After strengthening his self-confidence, the *tietäjä* turns to the tools needed for him to operate in the otherworld reality. The iron fence, stretching up to heaven and equipped with snakes and lizards, is a recurrent motif of protection against otherworld dangers<sup>40</sup>. It is a motif that is also recognized also in mythic epic. Intergeneric dialogue is common in Kalevala-meter poetry<sup>41</sup>:

I will build an iron fence,  
I will set up a steel posts  
from earth right up to heaven,  
from heaven right down to earth;  
I will bind it with lizards,  
I will twist it with black serpents,  
I will turn it with speckled snakes,  
I will leave the tails to wag,  
their middle parts to rock,  
their firm heads to shake.

*Aian rautasen rakennan  
terässeivon seisottelen,  
maasta saatse taivabasen,  
taivabasta maahan saatse.  
Sisiltiuskuilla sitelen,  
väännän mustilla maoilla,  
käännän kirjokäärmeillä,  
jätän hännät häilymähän,  
keskipaikat keikkumahan,  
päät vankat vapisemahan.* (VII<sub>3</sub> 44)

The underlying assumption in the chain of verbs in this example is the *tietäjä*'s ability to control the anomalous snake, an animal without wings, feet, pelt, or feathers, a finned “non-fish”, and the lizard that resembles it. In many cultures, the well-known image of a mythical snake is supported by ambivalence<sup>42</sup>. In charms, the snake motif is often an asset associated with the *tietäjä*. It appears in the argumentative couplet, “my fingernails burn like adders, my own hands like snakes” (*Kyinä kynteni palavi, käärmeihinä omat käteni*. I<sub>4</sub> 14), the power of the snake is in the hands of the *tietäjä*, but he can also dress his hands in it like gloves: “Where are my adder mittens, my gloves of earth worms?” (*Missä kyiset kintamani, maan matoset vantubeni*. VII<sub>4</sub> 1745). Here the *tietäjä*'s authority is expressed metaphorically. The idea can be formulated onwards.

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<sup>40</sup> Siikala 2002, 105, 338.

<sup>41</sup> Tarkka 2013, 96-100.

<sup>42</sup> Haavio 1967, 414-417; Siikala 2002, 233-234, 293.

The authority of a *tietäjä* in relation to the otherworldly equivalent of the snake, a source of both veneration and disgust in the mundane world, is seen in the threatening lines “I yoked a dozen adders, I saddled a hundred worms” (*Kytkin kytitä kymmenkunnan, satuloin sata matoista*. VII<sub>4</sub> 1955). The effectiveness of the assertion is based on a shift to the absurd imagery of animal husbandry: the otherworld reptiles are yoked like cattle to a stall in a barn and are saddled like horses. The mythical interpretation of everyday concepts serves as a metaphor for the *tietäjä*’s ability and as an argument for his authority, even over the snake.

The motifs of the control over fire also establish the *tietäjä*’s authority. A magically modified resource is depicted as the *tietäjä*’s fiery garments, and sweat acts as a graphic representation of his mental power:

Dreadful sweat would pour  
on my fiery coat,  
on my blazing shirt.  
So my ‘nature’ will be firmer,  
better in blazing in shirts.

*Hiki hirmuinen tulisi  
tulisehen turkkibini  
panuisehen paitabani.  
Että luontoni lujempi,  
panu paijoissa parempi. (I<sub>4</sub> 8)*

The notion that the influence of the fiery clothing charges up the power of the *tietäjä* is based on the assumption that he has the ability to control the fatal force of fire. In the charms, fire is a *tietäjä*’s verbal image: an element associated with fighting fire or frost as well as healing frostbite or burns. Before the words that banish an acute problem, the poem that describes the fire’s mythical origin was spoken<sup>43</sup>. This is why the *tietäjä* can apply to it the power of the word. He claims to “take fire” onto his clothes and to subdue both cold and burning:

I take coal from the embers,  
fire with my gloves,

*Otampa hiilet hiiloksesta  
valkieseñ vanttubiissä. (I<sub>4</sub> 83)*

In the healing charm for frostbite, the exploitation of the power of fire emphasizes the *tietäjä*’s ability and guarantees an experiential relief of pain. Taking coal into hands suffering from cold is a strong argument of the *tietäjä*’s capacity. The recipient of such a message may be a listener in everyday reality, perhaps a patient, part of whose recovery consists of faith in the *tietäjä*’s ability. However, the last two lines are directed to personified frost, an element of the otherworld. With these words, the *tietäjä* also supports his own mental state.

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<sup>43</sup> Haavio 1967, 367-381.

## 7. ARGUMENT, A VERBAL TOOL OF THE CHARMER

Arguments for the *tietäjä*'s authority are derived from verses that describe his person, his position in the rite, and prerequisites to magic activity. At the beginning of the ritual situation, the charm performer comments on his mental state, differing from his mundane ego, his position in the otherworld, and his verbal tools charged with magic. The *tietäjä*'s magical tendency, as well as verbal tools, may be inherited from his family, but the lines with mythical motifs may also be acquired from another skillful charmer. These stereotyped images are regular formulae with minor variations. Arguments that emphasize the *tietäjä*'s ability may be expressed with motifs that characterize magic tools. The representation of magic coordination is repeatedly associated with the hands (a cock's claws, fingernails like adders, iron gloves, the Creator's hands). Recurring closely related motifs produce chains of argument instrumental in supporting the *tietäjä*'s authority.

The truth value of the statements here called arguments is linked to the transrational explanatory model described above. In the mythical world view, conceptualization is based on a logic that is meaningful from a communicative perspective. An interpretation that relies on this creates a credible explanation when bringing together a factual characteristic and its mythical counterpart, and modifying the arguments that put into words the control over a situation. This makes the arguments credible. The aim of a charm is to alter something (make a sick person healthy, secure prey, etc.), so words act as tools regardless of the meaning of the everyday interpretation. Lines of charms present realistic meanings in a ritual context, where the argument presented is true. The mental subjugation of the opponent is part of the verbal solution to a problem. The authority of the *tietäjä* produces acute credibility, which expels a problem (illness, curse, etc.) and restores the ritual balance.

Besides the "ritual self" of the *tietäjä*, a charm's statements are addressed to an otherworld listener. An aggressive or bragging utterance demonstrates the authority of a *tietäjä* in relation to an otherworld figure, a humble appeal (usually to a Christian figure) authorizes the *tietäjä* to mediate the power (*väki*) of the otherworld opponent or helper – depending on the task. At random the argumentative lines that evidence the *tietäjä*'s mental ability act as an argument for his authority to a mundane listener, such as a patient.

Regardless of the form of the predicate of the argument (first-person singular), the expressions are not personal and unmatched. They are not

the private feelings of an individual *tietäjä*, but are part of a traditionally recognized charm paradigm. In an acute situation, he would choose diachronically verified arguments from his repertoire that present his authority. In an authentic situation, the charm presented in each rite would be a unique reproduction, a text personally selected from the verbal reserve of the *tietäjä*, and synchronized according to the objective. In the meeting of the mundane and the otherworldly, as a mediator the *tietäjä* performing a charm produces speech that is both tradition-bound and personally selected as required by the context. A credible performance of a charm requires the successful reproduction of the rite – also from the perspective of the *tietäjä*'s own authority. The *tietäjä*'s command of verbal expression was part of his authority in traditional society. Formulae of the opening lines when starting a magical task are auto-communicative commands and arguments that serve as proof of this authority.

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