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MUSICAL INSTRUMENTATION IN CONSTRUCTING CULTURAL EXPRESSION
Master Thesis

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I have written the Master Thesis myself, independently. All of the other authors' texts, main viewpoints and all data from other resources have been referred to.

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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	3
1. MATERIALS.....	8
1.1. THE HISTORICAL FACT & OVERVIEW OF HISTORICAL MATERIALS.....	9
1.2. INTERVIEW MATERIALS & REFLECTION ON THE PROCESS	14
2. THEORY & METHODOLOGY.....	19
2.1. CULTURAL (AUTO)COMMUNICATION & CULTURAL MEMORY	19
2.2. MUSICAL MEDIATION & SEMIOTISATION OF INSTRUMENTS.....	23
2.3. FROM THE OBJECT TO THE TEXT	28
3. THE HARMONIUM AND ITS CONTEXT	32
3.1. INTRODUCTION TO THE FREE REED AND THE HARMONIUM	32
3.2. THE HARMONIUM'S INTRODUCTION TO FINLAND	35
3.3. PROPAGATION OF THE HARMONIUM IN FINLAND	40
4. THE HARMONIUM AS A CULTURAL TEXT	44
4.1. HARMONIUM IN PERSONAL MEMORY AND EXPERIENCE	44
4.2. PERCEIVED ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE HARMONIUM.....	48
CONCLUSION	53
List of References.....	55
List of Used Archive Materials	59
Kokkuvõte	60
Annex 1.....	62
Annex 2.....	63

INTRODUCTION

The study of musical instruments is known as organology, but due to historical difficulties in bringing together scientific and cultural perspectives in the study, the field has often been primarily concerned with the purpose of describing and classifying different musical instruments (Dawe 2003: 276). The field has its roots in the study of material culture and has tended to take the relationship between instruments and humans (or culture) for granted (Roda 2007: para. 1). Instead, the study of musical instruments' meanings in culture tends to fall between several different fields of research, and as such is often neglected in comparison to the study of other, more formally recognized aspects of music-making.

However, any musician will readily tell you of their personal relationship with their instrument and the various industries and markets for selling new and old instruments are vast and filled with complex information on the various features and characteristics of the instruments. Perhaps it is because of the wide variety and seemingly mundane aspect of all this that the study of musical instruments as cultural artifacts would entail that not a lot of study has been made in the field. It is often hard to say where the study of one instrument ends and another one's starts without first forming a robust classification system – something that most organologists have busied themselves with.

Music has been studied in one way or another as long as it has been played, that is, since prehistoric times. In Western scientific tradition the systematic study of music has been called musicology since the 19th century, often traced back to Guido Adler's work in *Musikwissenschaft* in the University of Vienna beginning in 1880s (Nettl 2010: 3). Unfortunately by that time the discourse on music had already been distinguished as the study of specific European-centered aestheticized expressions (Tomlinson 2003: 32),

and for a long time the focus would remain on a study of music as a purely aesthetical construction that has its own language and expression.

The concept of *absolute music* – coined by composer Richard Wagner in 1846 (Dahlhaus 1991: 18) but existing as an idea already since the 18th century – suggested to researchers that “pure” music expressed nothing but itself and the “total subject matter” of music is nothing but “the tonal forms of movement (in time)” (Tagg 2013: 89). While music has been used for therapeutic and self-expressional purposes since time unknown, researchers have struggled to connect its study with everyday human life. Apart from studying musical composers biographies (and writing them), not much focus was given to the broader musical culture in musicology before the 20th century.

Only in late 19th century, as Eurocentric and -classical attitudes started to break, musicologists started to look at what is different between Western and other musical traditions and cultures. This tradition of comparative musicology grew into what is now known as ethnomusicology (Merriam 1980: 5), the study of music and musicians in the context of culture and society. Still, while the ethnomusicologists understand music to be saturated in cultural meanings, the musical instruments that are used to produce that music seem to appear only as the material ‘things’ that musicians operate on, and nothing more.

As the general scholarly interest in semiotics grew in the 1970’s, so did the (ethno)musicologists’ interest grow in semiotics of music, but the focus in the field of music semiotics has mostly followed musicological lines: music semiotics is generally interested in what signification music can carry and how does it act (or how can it be modeled) as an independent sign system that partakes in anthropo- or zoösemiotic processes (Maimets-Volt 2016: 2). Still, as with musicology in general, from the point of view of music semiotics the role of the musical instrument is seldom anything more than a mediator between the sender and the receiver of the musical expression, in itself uninteresting. Philip Tagg argues that this has been due to the weight of academic tradition in musicological study:

While ethnomusicologists had to relate musical structure to social practice if they wanted to make any sense of ‘foreign’ sounds, and while the sociology of music dealt mostly with society and hardly ever with the (socially immanent) phenomenon of music as sound,

most music semioticians were attached to institutions of musical learning in which the absolutist view still ruled the roost. Their tendency to draw almost exclusively on euroclassical music for their supply of study objects provides circumstantial evidence for this explanation, not because music in that repertoire relates to nothing outside itself [...], but because the notion of ‘absolute’ music has been applied with particular vigour to music in that tradition. (Tagg 2013: 147)

In my view this situation is now begging to be remedied. The aim of this thesis is to show that the semiotics of culture has a lot to give for the study of musical instruments. Instruments are not only material objects that allow someone to express something in a musical sign system. Instead, they should be seen as active agents that partake in the way individuals and societies form semiotic models of music. Furthermore, the invention and introduction of new musical instruments to music-making societies requires that the instrument is made culturally meaningful in some way(s). An instrument acts as a symbol of specific musical situations, repertoires, performers and even whole cultures. I argue that we should be able to look at musical instruments as active participants in the (auto)communicative processes of specific music cultures. Culture shapes the instrument and the instrument shapes the culture.

The topic described above has not been widely studied before to the best of my knowledge and it is in itself too vast to be the topic of one single master’s thesis. The most popular musical instruments in use today have a long history of geographical propagation and gradual technical evolution so that it can be very hard to pinpoint any specific cultural aspects, or even when and how a specific instrument first appeared in a given culture. Additionally, ethnic instruments often have their origins in prehistory, making it similarly hard or impossible to separate them from their specific ethnic identity. Therefore the study at hand appears to be globally quite unique in approach.¹

To narrow the issue down for the purposes of this thesis I have decided to attempt a case study of a certain free-reed musical instrument, known as the harmonium,

¹ Kevin Dawe’s (2010) book *The New Guitarscape in Critical Theory, Cultural Practice and Musical Performance* deserves a mention here since it comes to very similar interdisciplinary ambitions as my own study (albeit in a much broader scale, as the influence of the guitar on global culture now is much larger than what the harmonium even historically had), but based on my literature research no other works focusing on the cultural study of an instrument discussing both the experiences and attitudes toward it appear to have been made.

and make explicit how it has historically affected Finnish culture in addition to those who play it.

First, some personal background: I am not a harmonium player myself. I – or my family – have never owned a harmonium and while I find myself capable of playing it (as it is, in essence, a keyboard instrument), I do not consider myself a harmonium player. It is not my expertise, although through the work on this thesis it is forming to be my hobby. For these reasons, it is not my intent to study the instrument through its material aspects (by which I mean looking at how the instrument is built, what materials are used in its construction, how do these aspects affect the sound the instrument produces) or how one would go about playing and maintaining the instrument. Instead, this is a study of what meanings the instrument has and has had and how are those meanings communicated in that specific cultural environment that I am best equipped to analyse: Finland.

As most Finns, at least those born before 1990s, I remember having seen and heard this instrument at an early age in school, and already then it captured my interest. It was, almost exclusively, not played. The few times that it was played, it sounded different than other commonly used instruments in my childhood. During my elementary education in the 1990s it was not actively used as a school instrument, instead, it had more or less become a very common museum piece, visible in many classrooms. Growing up in the 2000s I learned that many of the harmoniums I saw in my childhood had been disposed of or stored away, since they take up a lot of space and are seldom played. Stored in wrong conditions, the instruments are in danger of breaking up. While there are collectors who buy harmoniums to fix them, there appears to be no business in fixing and tuning harmoniums anymore. It is easier to just get rid of them. But even though its position as a school instrument has waned, there are still those who remember how the instrument was actively used.

To study the harmonium, a mechanical free reed instrument invented in France in the 19th century, and how it has entered the Finnish musical cultural sphere and made itself meaningful in certain cultural and societal spheres it is my hypothesis that we can look at it specifically as a school instrument, a liturgical instrument, a home instrument and a folk instrument, because in each of these fields the instrument seems to have

gained certain symbolical values that should be described and analysed. As source material on the topic that would handle the instrument specifically from these points of views are almost non-existent, it has been necessary to connect the analysis of historical archive materials with the conduction of interviews using methodology from oral history to bring out different self-descriptive notions of the musical culture surrounding the harmonium as it is semiotically mediated in both memory text and historical documents.

My thesis consists of four chapters devoted to the semiotic and cultural study of the harmonium and description on how to apply semiotic methods to the analysis of musical instruments. In the first two chapters I will describe the methodology of the research, explaining how musical instruments may be understood to participate in communication processes as more than just mediators of information. The archive and interview materials used for analysing the harmonium in this matter are described in the first chapter, alongside a presentation of the practical course of collecting this data. The second chapter goes over semiotic theory that is then, in the third chapter, applied to the analysis of the historical archive materials to explain how we can extract cultural (textual) meaning from these seemingly static objects. Consequently the fourth chapter then describes the information gained in the interviews and through the analysis of meanings presents the harmonium as a dynamic object in the semiotic structure or Finnish culture.

1. MATERIALS

In this chapter I will introduce the kinds of source materials I have chosen and managed to gather for the purposes of studying the harmonium as an object of culture with roughly 160 years of history in the specified (Finnish) culture. There are three different kinds of source material used in this study: 1) historical newspaper materials recorded by the National Library of Finland, 2) interview materials recorded by University of Tampere Folklife archives and 3) interview materials that I have produced myself. Attention is paid also towards how these materials were gathered, as it is an important factor in assessing whether my analysis and findings can be trusted upon to reflect the reality of the described culture and if the work has been conducted in an ethically sound way.

The general semiotic methods of assessing historical discourse (or facts, data and text) are discussed in general in the first subchapter, then the methods and principles used in conducting and presenting the interview materials produced by myself are described in the second subchapter. On the other hand, since the instrument's current use is limited and because researchable materials on its historical use are scarce, the use of more specific methodology is required to attempt a reconstruction of a semiotic model of the cultural spheres that were affected by the instrument; these matters are tended to in the second chapter.

1.1. THE HISTORICAL FACT & OVERVIEW OF HISTORICAL MATERIALS

A major part of this research has been an attempt² to map out what historical materials are available for research into the topic. By historical materials I mean all sorts of written data on the harmonium in Finland. In general “historical material” could also be extended to include the material instruments themselves, but this wouldn’t be feasible for the topic and point of view I have chosen: the objects themselves do not generate text and/or discourse, a human producer and interpreter of meaning is required for the semiotic description of culture.

As the topic of the thesis is about an instrument and the cultural phenomenon around it, both of which have already fallen into obscurity, a lot of data on the issue has already been lost and/or destroyed. The first data on the topic came from my own personal experience with the instrument: there had had to have been a wider reception of the instrument in the past, since I had been introduced to the instrument in my own school life. Great difficulty in the initial steps of my research resulted from the fact that I was often confused with the history of pump organs (of which the harmonium is actually not the only example, and the terminology used to describe different instruments is often contradictory and confusing), easily getting them mixed up with pipe organs. This was due to how in layman’s terms the instrument is often referred to simply as an organ, especially in the older materials, and it takes a certain amount of competence in the field to distinguish if the topic at hand in a given case is simply about pipe organs or organs including reed organs.

Already in 2011–2012 when I first started to get interested in this topic I attempted to find museums or archives related to the instrument and its manufacturers, but apart from a few short descriptions online³ there simply wasn’t any systematically organized and referenced sources available. In the fall of 2013 I also made an email-query for materials relating to harmoniums in museoposti@lists.greenspot.fi mail list, a list that collects the contacts of many museum employees in Finland. Through that

² The conduction of which actually predates the active part of composing this thesis by some years.

³ That are by now already unavailable in their original online sources.

query I received scattered notes of museums that held a harmonium or two and from there I obtained some hunches on where to look for archived materials on the instrument factories. However, such archives have not been widely preserved, most of them having been destroyed or sold/given to unknown individuals.

Apart from the physical instruments themselves, there are traces of their historical existence in writing. Initially I set about to study the harmonium in historical newspapers digitized by the National Library of Finland (which go from 1771 to 1910). Even though making a database search of “harmoni”, “harmonio” (as it was referred to early on) or “urkuharmoni” in the historical newspapers results in thousands of results, most of these are simple commercials by various factories. By themselves these materials are hardly enough to analyse in a meaningful way as the characteristics of the instruments or their expected or actual users are not widely discussed in these advertorials.

One might wish to attempt making a chronology of Finnish harmonium factories using these materials, but it is often years since the beginning of production after a certain manufacturer might have advertised or gained interest of journalists. Even though the latter part of the 19th century saw a period of progress and growth in Finnish journalism, the transmission of information was still slow and the journalistic profession was still fairly widely based on amateurism (Tommila, Salokangas 1998: 30–37, 43–45). Still, there are scarce instances where the harmonium or its manufacturers have appeared in more meaningful contexts in these newspapers. The specific historical newspaper articles referred to have been listed in the section “List of Used Archive Materials” under “National Library of Finland’s Digital Archive”. They are spread between the timespan of 1854 – 1910 (from the earliest found mentioning of the harmonium in the archive until the end date of the materials covered in the archive) and in addition to regularly/periodically published newspapers (“dailies, weeklies and monthlies”) there are a few specially published journals.

In the spring of 2012 I participated in an ethnographical field trip (organized by the Department of History and Ethnology of the University of Jyväskylä) to the city of Lapua to "update" field work studies conducted by professor Erkki Ala-Könni in the 1960's and 70's. My involvement in the fieldwork put me into contact with the cantor of

Lapua Parish, Paula Pääkkönen, with whom I briefly discussed the relationship of harmoniums for organists. From there on I started to learn more of the history of Finnish harmonium.

Next year, in the spring of 2013 I was visiting Helsinki and decided to study what the Finnish Literature Society's Folklore Archive might hold on harmoniums. Again, searching through the Folklore Archives of Finnish Literature Society (SKS) with PhD Risto Blomster I failed to find anything but passing side notes on the harmonium. While that first attempt was unfruitful, PhD. Risto Blomster advised me to search the Folk Tradition Archives in Tampere and Kaustinen.

By fall of 2013 I had gotten access to the digitized interview diaries in these two archives and was able to plan my work more thoroughly. The archives in Kaustinen did not provide a lot of ample data, as they do not seem to date much further than the folk revival phenomenon beginning in the late 1960's (with the first Kaustinen Folk Music Festival having been held in 1968 and the founding of the Folk Music Institute in Kaustinen in 1974. Luckily, ethnomusicologist Erkki Ala-Könni (1911–1996), who was also one of the driving forces behind the founding of Folk Music Institute, had an interest on the harmonium and its builders. Ala-Könni & his field study groups conducted several thousands of folk tradition interviews during 1960s and 70s (Vallanen 2013).

A simple database search for “harmoni” in the Tampere Folk Tradition Archive returns 371 results, but, sadly, of those most are only brief mentions of the harmonium, and therefore are not suitable for deeper analysis. Among the studied towns were Jyväskylä, Kangasala, Kaustinen and Lapua, all homes to Finnish harmonium manufacturing. Sadly the interviews on Jyväskylä do not relate to harmoniums at all and most of the interviews from Kaustinen focus on pelimanni music and its performing, rather than discussing harmonium as an instrument. There are a few records from Kaustinen on the manufacturers of harmoniums and the Kangasala-interviews appear to also discuss manufacturers in Tampere and Sortavala. Still, only a handful of the interviews are centred on this particular theme, and oftentimes the interviewees cannot remember many details.

On the 20th of November 2013 I made my first trip to Tampere with the intent of studying interviews made in Lapua & Kangasniemi, two of the most prominent harmonium factory towns in Finland historically. In my limited time I only had time to briefly skim & listen approximately 12 hours of interviews from Lapua, but the information gathered then has been used for the first analysis chapter and has also proved to be important background knowledge for my work when dealing with modern interviews and other archive materials.

The recordings from Lapua were on the most part made during a field study trip in 1970. Ala-Könni later returned to Lapua for field study in 1978. Although there have been several harmonium factories in Lapua, most of the talk revolves around Lapuan Harmoonitehdas (Lapua's Harmonium Factory in English) that was founded by Jaakko Hissa (1868–1952), later bought by Vihtori Sillanpää (1871–1928) and apparently burned down in 1917 (Latvamäki, 1970). Hissa's factory wasn't however the first harmonium manufactory in Lapua, as Martti Piuhola has shown (Piuhola 1985). Of these I have used ten recordings that involve the most profound conversations on the pump organ manufacturing in Lapua. One of these interviews (Aho 1970) was made by a student; all the others were interviews by professor Ala-Könni himself. The specific interview tapes referred to have been listed in the section "List of Used Archive Materials" under "University of Tampere Folklife archives' Sound Archive".

The selection of these materials has, then, not been focused on any contextual factors, such as in which newspapers the materials have been published or who were the writers⁴ of the articles and what were their motives in deciding to publish anything about harmoniums, instead, they have been chosen for providing insight into the social function and cultural meanings of the harmonium. In this sense, I would liken my study aims to those expressed in microhistory (by which I mean the study of marginal and/or small scale historical events and everyday practices to challenge normative historical views), and likewise I should be wary of methodological limits and hazards related to that branch of study; as Brad S. Gregory points out:

⁴ As interesting as that would be to analyse, most of the materials here used have been published anonymously.

To be consistent with their own empiricism, systematic microhistorians must recognize the restricted character of their work. One could simply eschew a wider context altogether, but this would contradict the desire to investigate broader processes ‘on the ground’. If a particular village is to tell us about something more than itself – and systematic microhistorians certainly intend that it do so – then one must presuppose, know, or expect something about larger patterns. (Gregory 1999: 108.)

However, in this work we will attempt to approach historical materials spanning a relatively long period of time but relating to a single (albeit complex) cultural object thus enveloping those “larger patterns” into our study object. We furthermore detach ourselves from some traditional historiographical viewpoints in our consideration of all these historical materials as not so much as documentary facts (represented through text) of the past world but *text* that includes a wider array of factual content than is apparent in a single code, and as such requires reconstruction but the researcher:

So from the point of view of the addresser, a fact is always the result of selecting out of the mass of surrounding events an event which *according to his or her ideas is significant*. But a fact is not a concept, not an idea, it is a text, i.e. it always has an actual material embodiment, it is an event which is considered meaningful [...]. As a result, a fact selected by the addresser is wider than the meaning ascribed to it in the code; it is consequently unambiguous for the addresser, while for the addressee (which includes the historian) it *has to be interpreted*. (Lotman 1990: 219.)

Thus a major part of analysing the textual contents of the chosen materials becomes the (re)contextualization of those materials. We look at history and historical data and the role of historiography in this work as an “unfolding” of the plural and discontinuous communication processes that involve not only us as readers of historical text but the events and objects of history that can be approached as signs, following the notions brought about by Boris Uspensky (here explained by Taras Boyko):

“History is semiotic in its nature [...] it involves a certain semiotization of reality – transformation of non-sign into sign and non-history into history” (Uspensky 1988: 69; my translation, T.B.). For him the “unfolding” of events in time implies language (semiotika yazyka), while the perception of history implies sign (semiotika znaka). Together, such a combination, along with conditions of temporal sequence and cause-and-effect relations, ensures semiosis of history (Uspensky 1988: 69). (Boyko 2015: 276.)

Instead of microhistory, then, the method used has much more to do with mnemohistory, as postulated by Marek Tamm:

In the perspective of mnemohistory, then, the key question of historical research is not about the original significance of past events, but, rather, about how these events emerge in specific instances and are then translated over time, and about their everyday actualization and propagation, about their persistence in time and their social, if not spectral, energy. More precisely, mnemohistory asks questions such as: What is known of the past in the present? Why is it that some versions of the past triumph while others fail? Which events or other phenomena from the past are selected and how are they represented? How is the past used in order to legitimize or explain the happenings in the present or plans for the future? Why do people prefer one image of the past instead of another? (Tamm 2015a: 4.)

These topics and ideas are further discussed in the subsequent main chapter.

1.2. INTERVIEW MATERIALS & REFLECTION ON THE PROCESS

In the field of folklore studies the term “salvage folklore” might sometimes be used of the attitude that researchers have as they set out to collect some form art or type of knowledge that is “vanishing in the onslaught of modern civilization” (Jackson 1987: 37). The motives behind this thesis might be listed partly as this sort of “salvage folklore”. Bruce Jackson (Ibid, 38-39) warns that the researcher should remember the folklore this way collected always appears in different contexts than what the researcher probably originally wishes to record, and such field work is only ever useful if the researcher understands the place of the collected information in the lives of the informants, i.e. the people supplying the information. The informants’ attitudes towards the object of research may differ and it is the responsibility of the researcher to take this into account in conducting interviews. For these reasons it was reasonable to specifically search for informants who have themselves beforehand invested interest in the object of research.

The core interviewees were specifically selected for this research because of my previous knowledge of their expertise in the chosen field. Therefore, they can be

considered key-informants for the purposes of this research, even though typically in an anthropological study a group of key-informants is only found after a period of fieldwork (Briggs 1997: 8). From the point of view of cultural semiotics we have to consider whether the information acquired through interviewing individuals is universal enough to reflect the cultural sign systems of those individuals themselves. I have specifically chosen these interviewees because I have expected them to have a more refined picture of the issues relating to the harmonium in Finnish culture rather than some other persons living in the same culture would have. This places them in a special situation, as they themselves are also “expert” interpreters of the culture around them, dealing with me as the researcher of those interpretations.

For the thesis I have conducted interviews among specific harmonium collectors, repairers and players today in Finland who own (or have owned) and maintain personal harmonium collections, in some instances fashioning themselves as home museum keepers. I first contacted harmonium repairer Jaakko Järvelä, based in Kaustinen, whom I had read about in *Pelimanni* magazine (Träskelin 2009: 6-7). Next I contacted Sirkka-Liisa & Markku Myllymäki, a couple who collect, repair and play harmoniums in their home in Kalajoki, again as interviewed by the *Pelimanni* magazine (Heikkilä 2012: 32-33). Finally, based on a third article in *Uusi Kansanmusiikki* magazine (Nurminen 1999: 46-47) I contacted Ari Sintonen, who founded a harmonium museum in his family farmhouse in 1999⁵. During the course of these interviews I was, in addition to these core interviewees, introduced to and suggested to interview also the following people: Ira Järvelä, the spouse of Jaakko Järvelä, Ritva Kauppinen, a retired folk school teacher in Tyrnävä, and Eero Hautsalo, an awarded folk musician and harmonium player from Viitasaari and his wife Marja-Liisa Hautsalo.

The interviews were conducted during a field trip from 12th of February 2016 to 16th of February 2016 in each of the interviewees’ homes. See Annex 1 for the general minutes of the field trip and the interviews conducted. When referring to these interviews, I have provided the page number of the transliteration and the number of the interview as recorded in the minutes. The names of the interviewees have been shortened to their initials in these quotes. All of the interviewees agreed to appear in the

⁵ Sintonen’s museum closed in 2010.

research with their real names, and since there appear to be no binding ethical issues against it, I have decided not to anonymize them in the thesis. However, to secure the privacy and confidentiality of the personal matters discussed during the interviews, the interview materials will not be published (apart from citations made in this thesis) or archived for further use without a separate, explicit permission given by the interviewees themselves.

One interview should not be taken as just one single text, even though it can be written out in transliteration. The interview situation itself is a communication act, especially dealing with meta-communicative aspects:

[I]nterviews provide examples of *metacommunication*, statements that report, describe, interpret and evaluate communicative acts and processes. All speech communities possess repertoires of metacommunicative events that they use in generating shared understandings with respect to themselves and their experiences. [...] By participating in an interview, both parties are implicitly agreeing to abide by certain communicative norms. The interview moves the roles that each normally occupies in life into the background and structures the encounter with respect to the roles of interviewer and interviewee. Attention is concentrated on the topics introduced by the researcher's questions. [...] The problem here is that this movement away from the interview as a speech event mystifies researchers to such an extent that they generally retain this focus in the course of their analysis. What is said is seen as a reflection of what is "out there" rather than as an interpretation which is jointly produced by interviewer and respondent. (Briggs 1997: 2-3).

To combat this mystification and rigid role-assigning in both conducting and analysing the interviews, I have placed great care in reflecting upon the planning and proceeding of each interview through the use of a study diary and digital audio recording (see also Briggs 1997: 101). Further, the problems arising from the clashing of these meta-communicative aspects tend to be less accentuated in situations where both interviewer and interviewee share a lot of cultural (communicative) codes, such as is the case with this research. The methodological proceedings of these reflections are also handled in the following subchapter.

The method I have chosen for gathering the material concerning the use and meanings of the harmonium in the current day field of research is semi-structured interviewing of these experts I have described above. The aim of the semi-structured interview is to allow the expert interviewee bring up the kind of knowledge that the

researcher might've not realized that the experts have. A set of discussion topics and some preformed questions that were used in preparation for the interviews is provided in Annex 2, but my aim as an interviewer has been to encourage the interviewees to bring in their own opinions and additions. Instead of rigorously adhering to the pre-set list of questions, different emphasis on these topics has been added according to the special expertise of each interviewee. As many of the topics discussed involve also the retelling and reinterpreting of the interviewees' memories, the aim of the researcher in the interviewing situation often becomes just to guide or focus the interviewee's in their personal narrative output, limiting it on the topic of harmoniums.

Before going to the interviews I wasn't quite sure what I could expect to hear while conducting them, as there were several different topics available to discuss and I had no previous knowledge (except for the journal articles) of their special knowledge. I was hoping to discuss both what the interviewee's knew of the harmonium's history in Finland, its current state and how they themselves experience the instrument as both a musical instrument and a cultural artefact. There was also the fact that my interviewees were all older than me, having different life experience and possibly different expectations of communicating about the harmonium or other topics than me.

All of my interviewees had however been very enthusiastic about me interviewing them when I first contacted them, so I was expecting to easily enter into the interview situation, especially since we come from the same cultural background and already shared a social expectation of what meta-communicative processes would be used. Even though an interview situation is always more or less a formal, separate speech act from every day communication, my interviewees had seemed very friendly, some of them even offering to have me over for lunch, and this I intentionally wanted to encourage to make the interview situation feel as informal and unobtrusive as possible, to get the best reactions and narratives from my interviews. Furthermore, I had taken my own copies of the historical materials I had acquired with me with the intent of showing them to my interviewees at some point in the interview situation, if they would be interested to see them.

The topics I had planned to discuss with my interviewees have been added in Annex 2, but to sum up there were three general themes that divided into several

subtopics. These general themes would be: 1) what kind of memories and experiences does the interviewee have of harmoniums in their own daily life and in public discourse, 2) how are the interviewees themselves connected to the harmonium, what is its meaning to them today, and 3) how do they see harmonium has influenced musical culture and what could be the reasons why its influence has declined. The focus on each of these themes naturally varied from interview to interview based on the position and knowledge of the interviewee. Additionally I could add the discussion of the harmonium factories history in Finland as a fourth theme, but that was not my key aim when going to the interviews, as that work should be based on historical materials, not memory study.

What I expected to hear from my interviewees was that the harmonium is practically a “dead” instrument in the sense that there is no interest to play and maintain the instrument apart from a few isolated cases, such as my interviewees, whom I widely considered the last up-keepers of the instrument in museum-like conditions. To some extent (however, not fully!), this view I maintained still after the interviews. Another expectation that I had – that it would be easy for the interviewees to distinguish the different roles and functions of the harmonium, especially in the sense of what music it fits and what it doesn’t – proved to be more misguided. It is clear that whatever semiotic meanings may be derived from the sound and utilization of the instrument, its players and listeners wouldn’t rather “limit” the instrument to these meanings when discussing its merits. However, in every interview it was clear that the interviewees found the topic(s) of these interviews and this thesis important and beneficial towards the study of the instrument. One topic I had not anticipated was how important it would be for the interviewees to compare their personal playing (and repairing) techniques towards those of other people and instruments (especially the piano).

2. THEORY & METHODOLOGY

Although the first chapter already described practical methods used in the formulation of the study materials, the aim of this methodology chapter is to go deeper into what kinds of methods were then applied upon said material to produce the analysis in the following chapters. The semiotic methods used for understanding or modelling cultural processes around the object of study as both a synchronic and diachronic whole in which we can place that object are first described, followed by, in the final subchapter, with my understanding of semiotic meaning-making processes in relation to musical/cultural context, and how we might understand musical instruments to participate in those processes. Thus it should thereafter be ample to move forward towards the analysis of the harmonium in its cultural context through the use of chosen source materials in the following two analysis chapters.

2.1. CULTURAL (AUTO)COMMUNICATION & CULTURAL MEMORY

Through the study of meanings, my work connects primarily with semiotics. Semiotics may be generally defined as the study of signs, as it was coined and etymologically derived from “*semeion*” – greek for a sign – by the 17th century philosopher John Locke. Contemporary semiotics has its foundation in the turn of 20th and 21st centuries with the theories of Charles Sanders Peirce and Ferdinand de Saussure. For the purposes of this thesis, we will focus on semiotics as it appears as a discipline studying *systems of signification* underlying different cultural processes (processes which make themselves perceivable through them processing a variety of signs). This definition comes from

Umberto Eco (1976: 7-8), who also maintains that “every act of communication to or between human beings – or any other intelligent biological or mechanical apparatus – presupposes a signification system as its necessary condition (Ibid, 9). This theoretical starting point allows us to compare our understanding of culture and the study of culture to prominent theorems in cultural anthropology as well, such as Clifford Geertz’s definition of culture as "an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and their attitudes toward life" (Geertz 1973: 89).

Specifically my interest here lies in the semiotics of culture. Since the foundation of human culture studying disciplines, such as anthropology and ethnology in the 19th century, the definition of culture itself has been problematic. Whereas anthropology (especially symbolic anthropology) has taken as its foundation the concept of how culture is constructed of meanings and semiotics takes as its basis the concept of how meanings are constructed of signs, according to Yuri Lotman the topic of semiotics of culture is the study of sign-systems in culture (Lotman 1988: 52). From a semiotic point of view, we may understand culture as consisting of all the information that we humans have, through the acts of communicating and preserving, made structured and meaningful: a culture is a *system of signs* or the *non-hereditary collective memory* of a society, transmitted through (oral and written) text (Lotman, Uspensky 1978: 211-213). However, to understand the complexity and dynamicity of culture as a semiotic system that allows us to code and model our experiences in a plethora of different ways, we must understand text as something more than just a passive carrier of information. Whereas normally we understand a text to be something that is written in one language and should be understood using that one language (or coded and decoded within one sign system), Lotman emphasizes that culture is *quintessentially* multilingual and any given culture text is always realized in at least two different semiotic systems (Lotman 2012: 9).

Moving on to musical text, it should be noted that according to Raymond Monelle, “musicians have wasted effort on pseudo-questions [such as] is the [musical] score the text [or] is the score the [musical] work” (Monelle 1996: 245). As we will

come to see in the following subchapter, these ideas and questions are indeed quite futile. We might consider the musical score to be *a* text, but just as well we should consider the performance of a musical work as *another* text, neither of them being *the* text. Monelle draws on the ideas of Rodolphe Gasché and Jacques Derrida in stating that, *the text*, whether literary or musical, is profoundly abstract and defined by intertextuality (Ibid, 249). For Monelle the (musical) text is the boundary between inner and outer interconnected parts of the (infinite) intertextual network of all signification related to the work. If we accept this standpoint we can conclude that the use of musical instruments to perform music does not alter a specific musical text, but generates subtext that is irreplaceable in both the (poetic) expression and the (aesthetic) interpretation of the music. In different times and with different mentalities or expressions of cultural self-description the construction of these texts then has also been different. Therefore one way to approach the harmonium as a cultural text in itself and as a predicator of musical meaning in culture we might ask what kind of music and for what kind of reasons might be more probable to be expressed on the harmonium. We will return to and problematize the notion of musical text and the musical instrument's relationship with it in the following subchapter, but for now let us focus on the implications of culture text (of which I consider musical text to be a part of) upon the study at hand.

Cultural historian and prominent cultural memory studies researcher Marek Tamm (2015b: 129) sees that the notion of autocommunication is a key term in Juri Lotman's concept of cultural semiotics, especially when we want to understand mnemonic character of culture (and cultural text). In *Universe of the Mind* Lotman (1990: 21-22) begins explaining the notion through communication theory, contrasting it to the classic addresser-addressee (or sender-receiver) model where a set message is transferred more-or-less unchanged from one individual to another. In an autocommunication situation the sender and the receiver are the same, unchanged individual, but the original message (sent from "I" to "I") is altered as the code, or context, is changed during the communication process. To clarify, Lotman accentuates that it is not primarily about communicating mnemonic texts (e.g. a memo on what to buy from the shop) but texts that, through their syntagmatic reorganization, may acquire

new semantic values and extra-textual associations, such as (but not limited to) poetic texts. While the process of autocommunication in an individual is something that may be also described with other terms in the field of communication studies and psychology – such as intrapersonal communication or internal dialogue – from Lotman’s point of view this can also be understood as a cultural mechanism, applicable to human culture in itself:

The laws of construction of the artistic text are very largely the laws of the construction of culture as a whole. Hence culture itself can be treated both as the sum of the messages circulated by various addressers (for each of them the addressee is ‘another’, ‘s/he’), and as one message transmitted by the collective ‘I’ of humanity to itself. From this point of view human culture is a vast example of autocommunication. (Lotman 1990: 33.)

The notion of text, then, with its myriad potential for intra- and extratextual relations when considered in different cultural contexts becomes an active participant in cultural communication and, according to Lotman, “in its complex relations both with the surrounding cultural context and with its readers [the text] ceases to be an elementary message from sender to receiver. Revealing a capacity to condense information, *it acquires memory*” (Lotman 1988: 56). In the case of such a complicated text, several (Lotman describes five) sociocommunicative processes may be recognised between the text, its individual reader, its wider audience and the whole of cultural context. Beyond simply bearing information, the text may even become to be recognized as a procreator and interlocutor of information, or it may be substituted as an equivalent to certain parts of cultural context. From this viewpoint we may also understand, I believe, how Lotman argued that culture and “all its elements are mutually isomorphic” (Tamm 2015b: 130) and even that a “single” text can be representative of the cultural whole. The importance of the afore-described dynamicity of text becomes very important to our mnemohistorically oriented study as, next, we consider the roles of the researcher-interviewer and cultural text produced by the interviewees and historical archives.

Classically the terms “emic” and “etic”, first coined by linguist Kenneth Pike (1954: 37), have been applied to the cultural study of people, providing a methodological basis for separating the “insiders” (emic) and “outsiders” (etic) conceptions of a certain culture. Would it be that this was a study I (as a researcher with

an etic viewpoint) am conducting with informants of a markedly different (emic) culture, we might leave it at that and focus on critically analysing the possibly differing biases we'd have towards the information being relayed. But as I have already described above, the informants come from the same cultural background as myself (save for representing older generations than me) and are often times as (or even more than) interested in, invested in and informed of the object of research as I am. Thus it clearly follows that we should approach the text produced through the interviews as a collaborative negotiation on the meanings of the harmonium between the interviewees and myself.

It has to be understood, that the interviews have their own understandings (emic) and probably their own more-or-less formed out narratives of how to explain any matters concerning the harmonium and its history. Furthermore, even when we acknowledge that the interview material requires methodological analysis, it should still be understood as interpretations made by the researcher. The text produced in the interviewing situation is therefore built around the mutual attempt of the interviewees trying to relate their cultural experience and understanding (or self-description) in their personal (emic) codes to me as a researcher, and my attempt, as the researcher, to allow myself to understand their experience and relate it to my "etic" description of their systems of signification in the culture we share. In a way, even though they have not prepared texts of the harmonium and its meaning themselves, they have spent more time processing these relationships on their own, resulting in a "mental text". In interviewing the informants I have expected to form new text from their and my own special understanding on the issues relating to the topic at hand.

2.2. MUSICAL MEDIATION & SEMIOTISATION OF INSTRUMENTS

To explain why musical instruments have not been widely studied in their cultural contexts we might consider how they are understood in different studies. In organology, focus has been placed on describing the material object. In musicology, the sound-

producing instruments have been limited to their functionality in expressing the sounds of the music. Ethnomusicology, as Henry M. Johnson argues (1995: 258), has the potential for examining the musical instrument in its socio-cultural context, but most likely due to factors already discussed in the introduction and because ethnomusicologists have been pre-oriented either towards musicological criticism or the study of anthropology of music and musical communities (Merriam 1980: vii-viii, 7-6) this has not been widely considered. Thus it is necessary to consider how can we theorize the purpose of musical instruments in the process of musical signification – in other words, how does a musical instrument affect musical semiosis and the formation of musical culture.

If we place the musical instrument within the classic sender-receiver model of communication (or more precisely: sender-transmitter-(code)-channel-(noise)-receptor-receiver⁶), it would seem that we are dealing with the instrument as the transmitter of the musical messages or meanings from the musician (sender) to the listener (receiver) through sound waves (the channel) and the listener's ears (receptor). The notes (or other musical signals) the musician chooses to express by mechanically operating the instrument would appear to form a code that the listener then decodes in his mind (and herein a musical semiosis has occurred).

As straightforward as this seems, we are immediately confronted by a problem that forces us to consider if this model is at all applicable to music: to quote Jack Shepherd & Peter Wicke (1997: 100), “sounds in music do *not* signify in the same way as they do in language”. They refer to Julia Kristeva to make this evident: “while the two signifying systems are organized according to the principle of *difference* of their components, this difference is not of the same order in verbal language as it is in music” (Kristeva 1989: 309). That is to say, whereas language utilizes signifiers (such as sound-objects of uttered words) to refer to signifieds that may form propositions, musical sounds very rarely have truly symbolic⁷ meanings, instead acting typically on

⁶ C. E. Shannon and W. Weaver first proposed the model in 1949, but numerous theoreticians have commented upon and modified it. The form presented here comes from Umberto Eco (1976: 33).

⁷ Exceptions include, for example, Papua-Guinean drum patterns (Martinez 1996: 64) or hunting horns (Tagg 2013: 163-164).

either an iconic (Monelle 1991: 101) level of feeling or, by extension to social context, on an indexical (Martinez 1996: 72-83) level of metaphors.

Still, Philip Tagg (2013: 173-174) for example still retains the use of this sender-receiver model in describing musical communication for practical reasons, albeit he emphasizes that it should be understood as enveloped in “a constellation of culturally specific values and activities, i.e. as part of [a] socio-cultural field” (Ibid, 174). Of this field (or sphere) of socio-cultural norms can be separated different “stores of signs” that may or may not be shared by the sender and the receiver. It follows that in the process of musical communication for Tagg there have to be distinguished two types of “non-communication”: codal incompetence (arising from the sender and receiver not sharing a particular store of signs) and codal interference (the sender and receiver having differing socio-cultural norms). These should not be understood as purely negative aspects, instead, like Umberto Eco’s concepts of overcoding and undercoding (1976: 133-136, 155) they are necessary for creative renegotiation of musical meaning:

Neither the ‘incompetence’ nor the ‘interference’ imply any stupidity or malice on the part of transmitter or receiver. Each concept simply highlights a particular set of mechanisms causing the varying degrees of difference that inevitably arise, in semiotic terms, between object and interpretant or, in terms of intentional communication, between intended and interpreted message. Codal incompetence and codal interference are in fact essential to the renegotiation of music’s possible meanings and to its survival as a sign system capable of adapting to different functions for different individuals in different populations at different times and in different places. (Tagg 2013: 178.)

Another way to approach the problem of arbitrariness of musical meaning in communication may be observed in the Molino-Nattiez’ model of communication:

Poietic Process		Esthetic Process
"Producer"	→ Trace ←	Receiver

Here, the “Trace” represents a neutral level of the sign: it is the result or “something that is left behind” of the poietic process and it will function as a representamen (Peirce 1998: 272-273) of the artist’s (in our case, the musician’s) work. It is only in the course of the esthetic process, however, that the receiver (listener) constructs a dynamic meaning (or meanings) based on the trace. (Nattiez 1990: 11-17.) Thus it follows that musical communication is not a simple process of mediating a meaning from sender to

receiver, but the result of two different highly complicated (driven by poetic and aesthetic mechanisms) encoding and decoding processes. This realization is of great importance to us because it allows us to look at the musical instrument as a meaning-generating socio-cultural factor in both of these instances.

Having thus established that musical meaning is not simply transferred from sender to receiver through the instrument (and sounds it produces), instead stemming from the addition of interpretation to the musical representaments, we may move to considering *sound as a medium* for negotiating music's meanings. But how do we apply meaning to the neutral level of musical signification? Philip Tagg has utilized the definition of *museme* (borrowed from Charles Seeger (1960: 76) and suggesting equivalency with morpheme in linguistics) as either the basic unit or simplest element of element of musical signification, but Tagg agrees that there are problems related to this definition of the museme and he himself cannot give any conclusive definition for it (2013: 232, 237). Rather, he connects musical meaning to "paramusical fields of connotation" (Ibid, 229). Shepherd and Wicke, however, citing Richard Middleton's work *Studying Popular Music* (1990), argue that beyond "a first semiology" of denotative and connotative signification (leading to syntactic and semantic analysis) music has to be grounded in "a second semiology" of indirect reference (Shepherd, Wicke 1997: 99, 103, 109). For this purpose they invoke the concept of "sounds acting as a medium":

The term 'medium' is used here in a very specific sense drawn from the world of science: to mean an agent or a material substance in which a physical or chemical process takes place, but which remains unaffected by the process. (Ibid, 116.)

This should not be confused with the neutral level discussed earlier:

We would argue that music can only be understood to display a *niveau neuter* in the sense of shaping the material grounds and potentials for meaning construction, not the processes of meaning construction themselves. It is because of this second characteristic that the concept of the medium allows space within which the construction of meanings through music's sounds can be understood as being socially negotiated but *not* arbitrary. (Ibid, 116.)

As it has then been established that sounds do not create meaning but are “*materially* involved in calling forth from people elements of signification” (Shepherd, Wicke 1997: 116), we may look at musical instruments as the producers and *shapers* of those sounds, participating in relating those paramusical connotations from the articulation of the music to the meaningful understanding of the music. Here, finally, we might consider the sound of the harmonium – or more specifically its timbre⁸ – that Tagg declares to have two semiotic aspects:

[1] ANAPHONICALLY⁹ —the timbre in question has an iconic semiotic connection with the sensations denoted by the sort of adjectives listed in italics [...] [such as *rough, smooth, rounded, cold, warm*, etc., for a full list, see (Tagg 2013: 305) — A.K.]; [2] SYNECDOCHALLY — the timbre relates indexically to a musical style and genre, producing connotations of a particular culture or environment. (Tagg 2013: 306.)

If we think about the harmonium as tool that allows the mediation of musical meanings in the process of communicating musical ideas, we should also realize what sort of signs is the harmonium distributing in itself. On one hand, the sound is iconic (Peirce 1998: 277): it is distinguishable as its own instrumental sound for the harmonical peculiarities of its sound. But at the same time, its sound is highly indexical (Ibid, 274): it reminds the ear of the organ sound (and there it also gets its vernacular name ”pump organ” or ”urkuharmooni” in Finnish), so it reminds the listener of a church and holiness. Furthermore, the genre expectations we share socially (due to codal interference) make it an index of liturgical and folk music as well. The sound reminds the population of another time and age (school for most). These are aspects of the harmonium in Finnish culture that we will be going over and analysing in the following two chapters (especially the third chapter).

In the course of the musical communication process the musician either breaks or conforms to these genre expectations through the act of selecting musical instruments, playing techniques and even different spaces for the performance of musical pieces,

⁸ ”The character or quality of a musical or vocal sound (distinct from its pitch and intensity) depending upon the particular voice or instrument producing it, and distinguishing it from sounds proceeding from other sources; caused by the proportion in which the fundamental tone is combined with the harmonics or overtones.” (OED 2016 sub **timbre**.)

⁹ Anaphony is a neologism coined by Philip Tagg (see Tagg, Clarida 2003: 99–101).

resulting in the formation of new metatext (Torop 2000: 72). Thus if, having established sounds as a medium for music, we look at musical instruments as sort of “media tools” (by extension of the comparison to media technology), we can also consider how choice and application of musical instruments partakes in creating intermediality of musical texts. In this sense, we could say that a musical instrument can affect and bring about intertextual translation between different intersemiotic layers of a culture (Torop 2000: 80, 96).

These ideas have been underlying especially in the planning of the interview question made for this thesis, and their practical application in culture should appear in the viewpoints and opinions discussed in the analysis parts of chapter 3. Furthermore, I have hypothesized that the indexical features of the instrument (not only its sound) lead to it being interpretable as several competing symbols: a symbol of home, of church, of the folk, and of old time, for example. Based on these presumptions the interviewees were presented with a theorem that the harmonium should have some specific meaning as 1) a school instrument, 2) a liturgical instrument, 3) a home instrument and 4) a folk instrument. The responses given by the interviewees toward this statement (as analysed in the fourth main chapter) show that while such symbols may be recognized, the actual usage of the instrument is not as rigid.

2.3. FROM THE OBJECT TO THE TEXT

As this is a study on “things”, i.e. man-made objects constructed out of tangible materials that exist in the physical reality around us, it may be also said that this study concerns material culture. Material-culture studies, although fairly marginal, have “more than a century-long history” (Schiffer 1999: 5) alongside anthropology and ethnoarcheology. Material-culture studies typically employ similar methods as I have demonstrated already in the first chapter of this work, specifically, interviews and close reading of texts related to the studied objects. However, as stated already in the introduction, the aim of this study is to not simply describe the musical instrument but

to recognise its semiotic functionality in the formation and intermediation of meaning in (musical) culture. Therefore we should approach the materiality of the harmonium through some theory or understanding of a *semiotics of objects*.

In his treatise of a semiotics of consumer goods, Winfried Nöth (1988: 354-361) provides us with a summary of several different approaches to semiotics of objects. From there we can notice, that often times a division has been made between A) the functional or utilitarian aspects of objects, which, quite unintelligibly in my opinion, “have a substance of expression whose essence is not to signify” in their everyday use (Barthes 1964, 41) and B) the semantized or semiotized sign-function (Ibid) of the object. This mode of thinking can be seen at least in the works of Jan Mukařovský, Petr Bogatyrev & Roman Jakobson, Roland Barthes and, at least to the extent of problematizing this view, in the works of Umberto Eco and Abraham Moles. Coming from the field of ethnology studies and understanding the everyday understanding of the world as highly signficatorial, this division, albeit understandably providing a clear distinction of sign and non-sign analysability towards objects, seems to me redundant. Instead, especially what comes to musical instruments, I’d rather understand the everyday utilitarian aspects of the object as another field of signification: in the previous subchapter I have argued the semiotic functions of musical instruments in shaping musical meaning. As an alternative to the aforementioned division I’d like to introduce Christian Bromberger’s methodological treatise on analysing technological objects in a framework of a semiotics of objects. For him, the object has a threefold status in culture through its relationship as 1) material with its functional context, 2) as a sign in a status system (or a hierarchy) and 3) as a symbol for mental schemes or ideological themes (1979: 131-132). I find that this model of the object goes also well with Lotman’s understanding of text as a socioculturally active interlocutor of meaning (Lotman 1988: 55). But to further saturate the objects of the research with cultural text, we will consider especially the “system of objects” provided by Jean Baudrillard.

In his book *The System of Objects*, Baudrillard (1996) describes a system of objects as it enveloped him in the 1960s French society. He describes a system of signification of everyday objects and commodities in modern décor and breaks them into three different systems: 1) the functional system, consisting of those items deemed

useful and necessary in a modern home, 2) the non-functional system, detailing especially antiquities, and 3) the metafunctional and/or dysfunctional system, where Baudrillard places various gadgets, gizmos and robots that, especially in the context of modernity, appeared to him as an emerging class of objects. This threefold division of objects will prove valuable to our analysis of the harmonium in the following chapters, as we will be able to track the movement of the harmonium through each of these systems.

Finally, let us consider how these semiotics of objects have affected our understanding towards cultura text. Mark Gottdiener describes Baudrillard's system of objects by first comparing it to Barthes' conception of the system of fashion. As already hinted at in above in this subchapter, Barthes sees that material culture works as a mode of signification, where a system of signification such as dress code can distinguish different signs. But a dress code is not text or a mode of communication; instead the system of fashion uses different semiotic "logotechniques" to articulate text out of material through shows, magazines and discourse. (Ibid, 28.) At this point we might remind ourselves of the aim of semiotics, here well summarized by Gottdiener:

Semioticians today follow Eco and distinguish between cultural complexes that communicate intentional meanings, or systems of communication, and complexes that do not necessarily communicate intentionally but are structured as a language, or, systems of signification. All systems of communication are also systems of signification, but not the other way around. (Ibid, 27.)

So when we take as our object of study a material object, such as the harmonium in all its instances in the socio-cultural area known as Finland, we must first understand that the instrument is made meaningful through text, or more broadly speaking discourse, that is produced in relation to the object. The system of objects thus structured acts as modes of signification:

"[A]s socially constructed and meaningful, the morphology of musical instruments reveals through their shape, decoration, and iconography features of the body politic, as embodiments of the values, politics, and aesthetics of the community of musicians that they serve. They are at once physical and metaphorical, social constructions and material objects. In fact, as sound producers they are "socially constructed to convey meaning"

(Feld 1983, 78) and remain "saturated with meaning" (after Derrida 1978)." (Dawe 2003: 275-276.)

If we look at the musical instrument as a meaningful object in itself, we can make several questions that we could make of any material object in relations to its perceiver's social reality (Berger, Luckmann 1991: 46): How is the object used? What is it good for? Is it pleasant to look at or handle? What kind of memories and experiences the subject has with the object? Does the subject own the object? Does the object symbolize something for the subject? As the subject expresses answers to any of these questions, we will acquire text describing the object. These and other questions raised by the multitude of theoretical and methodological notions described in this chapter have been presented to, in one way or another, to the interviewees whose voice and narration on the object we will hear in the final chapter of this work.

3. THE HARMONIUM AND ITS CONTEXT

Having thus considered the available source materials and their semiotic treatment we move on to the analysis of the harmonium in that semiotic framework. The aim of this chapter is to provide a historical backdrop for the analysis of the harmoniums meanings in history as well as consider how do we extract textual knowledge of the object, an in-itself mute musical instrument, to get to what Clifford Geertz (1973: 7, 52) would call a “thick description” in the end of the chapter. This chapter entails in it the study of the historical newspaper materials and University of Tampere’s Folklife archive’s materials.

3.1. INTRODUCTION TO THE FREE REED AND THE HARMONIUM

The free-reed, which is the basic sound-producing element of the harmonium, is essentially a thin piece of flexible material affixed from one end and freely vibrating on the other end, usually tightly placed over an opening where air flow makes the reed vibrate back and forth towards the opening, creating a sound wave. The free reed is called such typically in distinction to a beating reed that additionally beats against another surface as it vibrates, usually the frame of the opening or, in case of a so called double-reed, another vibrating reed. One of the most simple and archaic examples of a free-reed would be the Jaw harp (or Jew’s harp), a metal reed fixed to a metal bar that is placed on the performers mouth and teeth, thus using the mouth as both the source of air pressure and amplification. (Ord-Hume 1986: 15-17.)

It is quite probable that the technological innovation of installing several free-reeds on a bigger instrument frame came from China, where a free-reed instrument

consisting of several pipes that the player sucks air through one unified mouthpiece, called the *sheng*, is first mentioned already in 1100BC. In Europe the first written record of a free-reed is often considered to have been given in Michael Praetorius's *Syntagma Musicum, Volume II* written in 1619, but it is possibly simply a description of a beating reed, which has been used in various wind instruments for a much longer period and which was, at the time, popular in another early reed organ design called the *regal*. Thus it is still unclear when and how exactly did the free-reed technology reach the West as the descriptions given in 17th century sources are often vague and do not make it clear if the described instruments are considered novel for the Western audience or not. It is even possible that the free-reed innovation was discovered in parts of the Western world separately from the Asian tradition, as there is a difference between the build and positioning of the reed in contemporary Western instruments and traditional Asian instruments. There is clear evidence, however, that by the mid-18th century the technology was experimented upon, most famously by Danish physicist Christian Gottlieb Kratzenstein who, in the year 1780, applied the free reed to his "speaking machine" that demonstrated how basic vowel sounds can be reproduced artificially. However, apart from a few separate experiments, mostly as extensions to the pipe organ, the free reed remained fairly unexploited until the 19th century when forerunners of current harmonicas, accordions and harmoniums started to appear. (Ord-Hume 1986: 19-20; Missin 2010: para. 4-9.)

The birthplace of the harmonium and its predecessor *orgue expressif* is France, so it is reasonable to consider the artistic atmosphere of the French organ music of the time. In France the revolution of 1789 set forth a period of romantic-symphonic style in organ building that required clarity of sound and wide expressivity. Especially the rising popularity of the piano, or pianoforte, as it was then known as, demarcated the expressive limits of the organ¹⁰. (Nordström 2000: 23-24) While the German organ (building and playing) tradition at the time (early 19th century) preferred congruence and fugal technique, the French artists had a tendency towards improvisation and technical prowess, according to Tor Nordström (*Ibid*, 22). It seems that the *orgue*

¹⁰ The name "piano-forte" translates as "quiet-loud", a marketing trick of its time to emphasize the instrument's unique ability to express a wide variety of loudness.

expressif, developed by Gabriel-Joseph Grenié in 1810, was the first reed harmonium based on the free reed to answer the needs of those artists. Other designs by various builders under various names followed and improved upon Grenié's successful design, but it was only in the year 1842 that Alexandre François Debain patented his design for an instrument that applied in itself the "then novel method of dividing its reed ranks into two portions [bass and treble]" (Ord-Hume 1986: 26). The name "harmonium", that Debain patented alongside his design, took a while to generalise in France, it seems that the name quickly gained popularity in Germany (and other countries, such as Finland, that had close commercial ties with Germany).

It is important to note that these designs, while they might be technically very distinguishable from each other, all relied on pressure bellows, operated by either hands or legs, that push atmospheric air into a system of reserve bellows or a "wind reservoir" from where the compressed air is directed to and released through the free-reed as the player presses a key (Ibid, 69-70). The complete opposite of the process, using instead a system of suction bellows or a "vacuum reservoir", was experimented upon in the 1860s in France, but apparently due to the loss of the ability to close off the reservoir, allowing a greater expression through the technique of operating the foot treadles, it was not considered commercially viable in France (Ibid, 27).

Instead, the suction-powered design became so popular in the United States that the name American organ is now synonymous with it and the name harmonium is instead used to refer only to the pressure-powered instrument in some instances¹¹. Although the differences between the perceived (psychoacoustic and semiotized) sounds of the two different instruments might seem vanishingly small to the untrained ear, it (combined with the technological prowess of manufacturers in building either type) seems to have been meaningful in considering which is considered typical (and even preferable) to the cultural sphere of different countries, as it would seem that the suction-system was also much more popular in Germany.

¹¹ As we move to the Finnish cultural context, the harmonium should be instead considered to refer to the suction-system by default, with the original French design usually differentiated as a "pressured air harmonium" ("paineilmaharmoni" in Finnish). Sometimes, when the term "harmonium" is preserved for the pressure-system outside of American English, the term "organ harmonium" is designated for the suction-system.

3.2. THE HARMONIUM'S INTRODUCTION TO FINLAND

As I began work on this thesis, I was amazed to slowly learn that there is not to be found a fundamental book or study on the harmonium and its history in Finland. There are only a handful of articles and a few books relating to some specific harmonium builders in history. What published knowledge there is, is fragmented and insufficient for an understanding of what the harmonium is or was in Finnish culture, what its place in society has been and how broadly it had spread in the whole country in its time. Therefore, as interesting as it is to understand how the harmonium entered Finland in the 19th century, likewise the reasons why the harmonium moved from centre of cultural space to its periphery should also be considered. To explain both of these processes we will consider, first in this chapter and then in the next, what did the instrument offer for its culture and how and why did these values cease to be needed by its culture.

This, however, does not mean that the harmonium hasn't been studied at all or that it has been totally forgotten in Finland. As will be shown in my study, the instrument has maintained a somewhat active position in folk music. Southern-Ostrobothnia, a geographical area in Finland, is known for its rich tradition of "pelimanni" folk music (Talve 1997: 258). Possibly related to the fact that a lot of the harmonium factories in Finland were based in this area, during the so-called folk music revival roughly in the middle of the 20th century the harmonium was seen as an important part of any pelimanni orchestra. During this time the Folk Music Institute was founded in Kaustinen and prominent Finnish ethnomusicologists such as Erkki Alakönni and his pupil Simo Westerholm did not disregard the harmonium in their research interests. Unfortunately Simo Westerholm passed away in 2011 and couldn't participate in the study effort of this thesis. The most refined summary (that I have managed to find) of Westerholm's life-long knowledge on the history of the harmonium in Finland seems to have been preserved in Finland's first (and only) harmonium study book (edited by two prominent pelimanni-musicians, Timo Alakotila & Timo Valo):

The harmonium quickly became common in Finland roughly in the following order: churches, elementary schools, seminars, folk high schools, youth clubs. From the 1880s onwards one can read for example from *Satakunta* magazines years and years worth of soiree fund raising announcements for purchasing an »organ harmonium» for a school or a youth club. Of course, the moderately cheap (depending on model) substitute for a piano also became quite a popular home instrument, but most often it was, in fact, the first instrument heard or even touched by many school children up to the 1960s.

There have been about fifteen domestic harmonium factories or workshops, but with the exception of some few their histories are so far poorly documented, even though many of them produced thousands of instruments in their time. Today, it is nearly impossible to get a new harmonium. [my translation of the original Finnish – A.K.] (Westerholm 2010: 9.)

But firstly, as we delve further into the study of the Finnish context, it is important to note that organ music was predominantly connected with church music and the Christian education of the people through hymnal music. While organs were rare in Finland until the 18th century, the Finnish church law of 1686 distinguishes between the professions of the organist, whose primary task was to lead hymnal singing during service, and the precentor (*lukkari* in Finnish, from Swedish *klockare*, bell-ringer), who had various care-taking roles in addition to overseeing children's liturgical education (Jalkanen 1976: 11-13). Kaarlo Jalkanen's studies on The professions of precentor and organist in Finland 1809 – 1870 (Jalkanen 1976) and 1870–1918 (Jalkanen 1978) show that in most cases the professions were combined into the post of precentor-organist that oversaw all musical education in the church, typically through the use of both pipe organs and harmoniums (Jalkanen 1978: 18). In layman's terms the precentor-organist may have also been referred to as the cantor (*kanttori* in Finnish), although the legal description of the post of cantor would vary through time. The charts ("Organs and harmoniums at the beginning of the year 1845 and at the beginning of the year 1870") provided by Jalkanen (1976: 286-316) show that after the invention of the harmonium the amount of instruments in all Finnish bishoprics roughly doubled in quantity, indicating widespread adoption of the instrument.

Secondly, the time when first (imported) harmoniums began appearing in Finland – the latter part of the 19th century and the 1860s specifically – coincides with a time of turmoil or progressive change in the principles of social organization: in 1865 czar Alexander II issued a new decree granting local (administratorial) autonomy to the

Grand Duchy of Finland, followed by a decree on founding elementary schools (commonly referred to as “kansakoulu”, a folk school, in Finnish) in the following year (Lipponen 2006: 2). While the folk school was originally only available for (and maybe even only intended for) a limited amount of higher class pupils in the cities, it quickly caught on as the catalyzer for a new ideal of an educated folk in liberal, nationalistic, philanthropic as well as conservative circles (Lipponen 2006: 2, 15, 49, 51). These changes in local administration also marked a declining shift in the role of the church as the educator of the masses (Lipponen 2006: 24, 57-58). As will be shown later in this chapter, the harmonium was closely connected to the structure of this new elementary school.

The study of harmoniums historical rise and what meanings it may have had at that latter part of the 19th century when the instrument was introduced in Finland is problematic as these kinds of things were not widely discussed and written down. There are no works available where contemporary musicians or writers write about their experience of playing the instrument, as that was not the norm, especially when most of the uneducated people barely had any skill in writing. What material there is comes from newspapers and journals, but it is mostly a plethora of side notes of when and where and how an instrument was purchased (usually from benefits of lotteries organized in community/youth houses). Another source of materials available are advertisements and leaflets commissioned for by the factories and music shops, and what descriptive material may be found of these is purposefully praising (advertorial) words about the aesthetic abilities of the instrument.

It is impossible to say who was the first one to start building harmoniums in Finland, as that honour most probably falls to some village carpenter and/or blacksmith who studied the mechanisms of some imported instrument. A good example comes from Matti Piuhola, who provides us with the story of how professional harmonium building began in Lapua:

In the beginning of 1870s Jaakko Kolanen, the first folk school teacher of Kauhajärvenkylä, Lapua had a modest harmonium built by a man called Jaakko Spangar from Vimpele. Juha Saarimaa, who had been educated as a precentor, heard about Kolanen’s harmonium and was so interested as a musician that he went to see it himself.

After studying its mechanisms closely and returning home he began constructing one of his own. (Piuhola 1985: 8) [My translation. – A.K.]

The story goes on to describe how Saarimaa continued manufacturing harmoniums with his friend Elias Sillanpää, who officially founded the first harmonium factory in Lapua by the year 1875. The story does not mention, however, anything about the preceding work of Jaakko Spangar, so the beginnings of this tradition still remain veiled in mystery.

The earliest reference to the harmonium in Finnish newspapers (that I have found) comes from 1854 in a Swedish language magazine called *Morgonbladet*, published in Helsinki. The article (*Litteratur*, 1854: 4) goes over what this new German invention by the company Schiedmayer & Sons called the Harmonium is and compares it to two previous similar instruments, the *physharmonik* and *Orgue expressif*. The unnamed author of the article goes over the variety of the instruments expressive abilities and technical innovations and expects that the instrument will surpass the use of ordinary pipe organs in churches, chapels and singing halls due to its relatively small size (compared to the pipe organ) and low price.

From there onwards not a lot seems to have been written towards the instrument before the middle of 1860s when it is first mentioned in relation to the then newly opened Jyväskylä Teacher's Seminarium, where it was clearly a desired instrument beside the piano (*Kansakoulun* 1864: 2; *Kotimaalta* 1865: 1; *Toimitusten* 1867: 5). In the following years the instrument is time and again mentioned as part of school attire, and in several instances where communal work parties (“talkoot” in Finnish) were formed for raising money to acquire a harmonium to the local school.

Päivi Lipponen (2006: 15, 40, 51) explains that while the decree of 1866 on founding elementary schools compelled cities to start new folk schools, in the countryside the founding of new folk schools remained voluntary, and relied on the voluntary action of the people of the municipalities. Somewhat surprisingly the rise of folk schools all around the country meant that the folk school teachers entered into many administrative positions alongside the clergy and the land-owning peasants (Lipponen 2006: 42-43). The “essence” and formation of the elementary school degree centered around two influential statesmen, Johan Vilhelm Snellman and Uno Cygnaeus,

who had widely different ideas on what the folk schools should entail. While Snellman saw that the elementary school's primary task was to raise citizen, Cygnaeus saw that the school could be a tool for even the poorest of the folk to reach for a better social position, and the folk school should integrate well into the local municipalities. (Lipponen 2006: 42-43.)

As already mentioned, it is a futile attempt to say who was the first Finnish harmonium manufacturer. Almost as hard is to say with certainty who was the first one in Finland to found a harmonium factory. Lacking reliable sources I will not venture into making such a claim¹². Still, if we want to trace the origins of professional harmonium manufacturing in Finland, one prominent figure must be discussed: Eero Mäkinen. Born in 1845 in Alavus and died in Sortavala in 1902, he studied in the Jyväskylä Teacher's Seminar soon after its founding in 1864 (Blomstedt 1902: 52) and got interested in the harmonium there (Kuoppamäki 2008: 107).

With the help of Uno Cygnaeus, the Seminar's director, Mäkinen first acquired a harmonium in Alavus around the year 1870 and later in 1878 was already building his own harmoniums (Porista 1878: 2) when he went to study in Stuttgart, again aided by his friend Cygnaeus (Kuoppamäki 2008: 124-126) and in 1881 Mäkinen founded his own harmonium factory in Sortavala (Kettunen 2001: 34). While Mäkinen's factory in Myllykylä, Sortavala was perhaps not the first harmonium factory in Finland it was working in tandem with the Sortavala Teacher's Seminarium, founded in 1880, where Mäkinen also taught. The guiding principle in Sortavala's Seminarium was the handicraft-based education, also known as educational sloyd, that Cygnaeus promoted (Luukkanen 2004). From there-on the availability of professionally produced harmoniums for the Finnish folk schools (and other customers) was ensured, and it would seem that even most of the manufacturers preceding Mäkinen went to study harmonium building with him at some point¹³.

¹² Although unconfirmed sources would seem to suggest that Anshelm A. Hedén may have founded a harmonium factory in Tampere as early as 1860s. Later, Juho Emil Hedén, born 1875, appears to have managed several harmonium factories of the 20th century. (Valanki 1975; Gellerman 1998: 97; Westerholm 2010: 9.)

¹³ Even A. A. Hedén reportedly (Kotimaista 1889: 3) studied reed metal casting with Mäkinen in Sortavala.

3.3. PROPAGATION OF THE HARMONIUM IN FINLAND

Due to harsh natural conditions and Finland's position as (cultural, economical as well as geographical) periphery, as suggested by Erkki Alakönni (1986: 11), the variety and availability of musical (folk) instruments in Finland has been historically very limited. Apart from archaic pastoral wind instruments and the zither-like ethnic instrument kantele¹⁴, only violin and (to some extent) clarinet seem to have been "widely" (more widely in Southern and Western parts than Northern and Eastern parts) spread in the country before the 19th century (Ibid, 11-13). According to Simo Westerholm (2010: 10) the harmonium entered Finland at a time when polyphony (or even diatonic chord accompaniment) was still a new innovation among the "folk", or lowly educated rural people. Harmonic accompaniment and musical theory might've been taught in urban "elite" schools, but traditional Finnish folk tunes were mostly monophonic (Alakönni 1986: 13). Therefore, the harmonium acted as a catalyser for the enrichment of musical variety among the folk, as players learned to experiment with new techniques. In Ostrobothnia, where most of the early harmonium builders are met, the harmonium became an important accompaniment instrument for the violin-playing "pelimanni" folk musicians and thus also became an important instrument for playing the ceremony music in so-called "crown weddings" (kruunuhääät), an Ostrobothnian grandiose wedding tradition, at least in the beginning of the 20th century (Ibid, 11). The loudness and reliability of the instruments tuning must have had an impact on both the players and the audience. In fact, the colloquial pelimanni-music term for accompanying with the harmonium "tämmääminen", comes from the expression used for referring to a properly tuned (and played) violin "olla tämmissä" according to Simo Westerholm (Ibid, 16).

The fact that the earliest Finnish harmoniums were built by anonymous carpenters and blacksmiths based on their experiences with just a few imported

¹⁴ Some other ethnic/folk instruments do appear (see, for example, REFERENCE KANSANMUSIIKKI), and it would be prudent to mention the "jouhikko", a sort of bowed lyre, but these appear to be quite marginal in comparison.

harmoniums in folk schools or youth halls (in the countryside) and in the homes of wealthy merchants (in the city) is quite remarkable. It indicates the high competence and motivation of the “country folk” in acquiring “high society” technology and habits. Indeed, the 19th century marked a period of notable societal change in Finland:

One characteristic of the latter half of the 19th century in Finland was the actual beginning of modernization. 1860s has been seen as the decade of progress that foreshadowed a new future based on industry. During the decade there were also several counterblows. During the famine in 1867–1868 an approximated 138 000 persons, about 8 per cent of the population, died of hunger and disease. The catastrophe of the famine proved that the national future could not be based on traditional agriculture any more. [my translation – A.K.] (Stark 2006: 12.)

By the mid-19th century still only 6% of the population lived in urban settings, meaning that the fast deployment of harmoniums among the “village” blacksmiths and woodworkers made the harmonium the first and quite probably the only musical accompaniment instrument the folk would get acquainted with (apart from the kantele, that, due to its fairly quiet voice, would usually only be practical as a solo instrument).

Through the implementation of the harmonium as a folk school instrument by Eero Mäkinen’s and Uno Cygnaeus’ efforts it may be argued that the instrument became to symbolise and represent both the traditional or conservative values of church education as well as the modern and ground-breaking methods of the folk school education, since the sound and musical application of the instrument resembled the church organ but the technical versatility and mobility (compared to the organ) of the instrument and the industrious effort needed for the acquisition of the instrument connected it to the ideals of progress.

At this point it might be useful to consider the use of the harmonium in relation to what Erkki Ala-Könni (1986: 8) calls the division between *essential* and *superfluous* music (“tarve- ja joutomusiikki” in Finnish) in the study of traditional music. Essential music is most often synonymous with ceremonial music: the music’s primary meaning for the society (and the individual interpreting it within various everyday contexts provided by the society) is to fulfil a function as either a part of a certain ceremony or ritual, or to indicate that a ceremony or ritual is on-going in the present moment. Other forms of essential music might be tonal signals, working songs, magical spells that

involve singing or playing and meditative/therapeutic music to name a few, but it is unnecessary to delve in deeper with them here. Superfluous music, in contrast, is music that is performed “for the sake of performing”, as a form of art or entertainment or as background ambience.

In practice it is of course often impossible to say that any specific performance or piece would be purely one or the other, and, if we claim that in contemporary times music is regarded more superfluous than in past traditions, it is arguable whether the members of past traditional societies might've shared any such attitudes. However, for the sake of analysis it is interesting to note that in all three above-discussed spheres (harmonium in the church, harmonium in the folk school and harmonium among folk players) the harmonium appears as a necessary instrument for the performance of essential (ceremonial) music: 1) in the church it was capable of performing liturgical music that had previously been performed only on the pipe organ, and in addition it allowed the precentor to teach and accompany hymnal singing outside the church hall (violin was seldom used in spiritual music (Ala-Könni 1986: 13)), 2). In the folk school the instrument was used likewise to lead school children into hymnal/choral singing and probably to aid the teacher in musical education, and 3) the pelimanni-musicians began accompanying their violin-playing with the harmonium in playing ceremonial music in weddings. Again, it is necessary to note that the limitations of the available source materials prevent us from making any strong claim that this connection to essential music would've been an inherent property of the harmonium for its users in history, as it is also probable that the instrument was used for performing superfluous music in homes even though we do not have sources relating to that.

Further, we might reconsider here why the suction and pressure systems have different preferences: in France, as discussed above, the instrument answered the needs of artists working with classical (or otherwise “art”) music, thus what we would consider superfluous music. Interviews by Erkki Ala-Könni hint at the pressure-system having been originally implemented in Finland as well (Lahdensuo 1970), probably due to the imported instruments having been of this type, but the suction-system quickly standardised in Finland. Thus, it did not matter that much for the players of that time that the suction-system would be less distinguishable from the pipe organ than the

pressure-system; on the contrary. In Finland, (and possibly Germany and other Nordic countries) the harmonium's primary "market advantage" was in providing a cheaper and fairly mobile alternative to the pipe organ, an instrument more important in fulfilling the needs of Christian ceremonial (essential music) needs than anything else.

The tendency to "sell" harmoniums as pipe organ alternatives is obvious in the way how internationally almost every harmonium manufacturer would add dummy pipes (i.e. organ pipes that are not connected to any mechanism and exist on the façade of the instrument for purely decorative reasons) on at least the more expensive models they'd sell. However, to the aficionados of organ music the harmonium seems to have been only a poor substitute. Erik Vilhelm Valanki, a retired technical supervisor of Kangasalan Urkutehdas (an organ factory that, especially in the 20th century, was possibly the largest manufacturer of harmoniums as well) confided in Ala-Könni in saying:

It is actually so, that for one who's grown up from childhood in touch with pipe organs, the harmonium appears as nothing but a surrogate. It has a sound, yes, but it doesn't have the volume and you can hear right away that it's a string¹⁵ that rings. But it's great in the small scale, for small spaces, at least as a home instrument. (Valanki 1975.)

As time progressed it would seem that these organ-imitating models with dummy pipes became more rare as the industry specialized in marketing for schools. An early pioneer of this tendency can be seen in Jaakko Hissa's "pulpit harmonium" model that he'd patented by the beginning of the 20th century (Patentin 1901).¹⁶

Thus we have seen in this chapter the various contexts and functions that were available and were made available to the harmonium in the 19th century. In the following chapter we will see how some of these niches would turn to work against the harmonium in the 20th century.

¹⁵ The free reed is colloquially called a string in Finnish.

¹⁶ A profound analysis of harmonium's physical appearance has been left outside of the scope of this thesis, but interested parties may refer to Robert F. Gellerman's *Gellerman's International Reed Organ Atlas* (1998) to learn more.

4. THE HARMONIUM AS A CULTURAL TEXT

Finally, having in the previous chapter provided a historical and topical context for the harmonium as an object of study, we are ready to apply the lessons learned in the second chapter (about semiotic modelling of culture and its objects as text) to the harmonium in its modern day position and understanding in the sociocultural space as reconstructed through the interviewees expressions and their interpretative reading.

I have attempted to present the analysis in an easy-to-follow conversational narrative that still preserves a reading of both 1) the harmonium as a cultural text and 2) the semiotic processes (involving cultural memory, personal experiences, the role of artefacts, music & their critics in culture) that shape the formation of that text.

4.1. HARMONIUM IN PERSONAL MEMORY AND EXPERIENCE

Prior to conducting the interviews I would've expected the earliest memory of the harmonium, for all of my interviewees, to be in the school environment. While all of them did mention the instrument's importance as a school instrument, surprisingly most had earlier experiences of the instrument in their or their close relatives' homes already before school age. For Ritva and Sirkka-Liisa the connections were religious: Ritva's grand father was a cantor (Interview 4: 1) and Sirkka-Liisa's family was, in her words, "musical" (Interview 3: 18): she remembers playing religious hymnal music on her grand mother's harmonium at a very early age, already before her first music lessons (Interview 3: 19). The most striking narrative comes from Eero, who was born in 1939 and remembers imitating on his family's harmonium the sound of the over-flying

Russian bomber planes as he heard them in the bomb shelter as a 5-year-old during the 2nd World War:

E.H.: It was '44. [...] We were afraid when the bombers flew over Viitasaari, over us. I even imitated the sound on the harmonium. We had one of those pressure models at home, and I used that harmonium's sound. [Eero plays a cluster of bass notes on his harmonium.] (Interview 5: 1.)¹⁷

For Ari, Jaakko and Markku the first experiences were, as expected, in their first school classes (Interview 1: 1; Interview 2: 1; Interview 3: 21). A prominent memory shared by the interviewees was that the school instrument was forbidden from pupils to touch and play with (Interview 1, Interview 2: 3; Interview 5: 1):

J.J.: The first times I saw a harmonium were in school, of course. Every morning we had a morning assembly, where the teacher took out his choral book and played some hymnal tune from there and we sang along. (Interview 2: 1)

J.J.: At our village school there were two or three harmoniums, one in every classroom of course. And we weren't allowed to touch them, only the teacher was allowed. [Laughter.] But of course sometimes during recess we'd play it in secret. But then we got a piano, and that was locked as well, you weren't allowed to touch that either. (Interview 2: 3)

The memories and experiences of the interviewees towards the harmonium as a school instrument are reflective of the whole of Finnish school pupils in the latter part of the 20th century. The interviews span three separate generations (Ritva Kauppinen, Eero and Marja-Liisa Hautala having been born around the year 1940, Ari Sintonen, Sirkka-Liisa and Markku Myllymäki in the late 1950s and Jaakko Järvelä and Ira Korkala during the 1970s (Interview 1: 1; Interview 2: 1; Interview 3: 1; Interview 4: 1; Interview 5: 1) giving us broad example. Only in the late 1980s did the attitudes towards music teaching in Finnish schools change so that more playing experience with an instrument (typically a kantele or a recorder) was added to the musical teaching (Interview 4: 5).

Of the interviewees only Eero has been playing the harmonium continuously through his life, having been a founding member of a local folk orchestra Niinjoen

¹⁷ All interview citations in this chapter were originally spoken in Finnish, and have been translated by me [A.K.], the author of this thesis. See chapter 1.2. for details.

Pelimannit in 1957, an orchestra that later toured around Finland and was well known in folk music circles. In addition to buying several old instruments he had also ordered one custom made from Eino Tiainen, one of the last professional and active harmonium builders, as late as in the 1980s. (Interview 5: 4.)

E.H.: It started so that we needed to organize some program for the village mother's day festival. It wasn't so that we could just ignore it, because in those times it was so... all the people of the village were there. So we kept on going, and eventually we had four violinists from our village, a bassist, even an accordionist.

A.K.: Were you there from the beginning as a harmonium player?

E.H.: Yes, I put in the word... for when we should practice. (Interview 5: 10.)

For Ritva, as an elementary school teacher, the instrument appeared as a teaching tool. By the peak time of the harmonium's practical use in schools (although maybe not the peak of overall popularity) it had a visibly institutionalized position in the education of teachers:

R.K.: [The Department of Teacher Education] had so called "harmonium booths". [...] We went there, and I had played before, so I knew enough, when my music teacher just listened to me play. They said "whatever school you go to, music teaching will do fine there." [...] But I think, that there could've been other instruments. Guitar, for example. Because... it would be more towards the children. That's pretty important. The problem with the harmonium is, that the teacher is there, sort of... his back towards the children. (Interview 4: 1.)

As for the others, even though they had gotten introduced to the instrument at an early age, their active interest towards the instrument had blossomed only in adulthood. Sirkka-Liisa's parents sold or gave away the family harmonium in exchange for a piano (Interview 3: 19), Ari's home couldn't fit a harmonium so he'd practice on piano and various electrical instruments (Interview 1: 1) and Jaakko began playing contrabass in a folk orchestra (while another friend of his played the harmonium) (Interview 2: 2). They describe either a disappointment towards other instruments or a growing feeling that the harmonium had been "waiting to be discovered" by them:

S.M.: And – oh dear – how I hated that piano. I don't know why I hated it so much. I so liked the harmonium. [...] And then in 2010 we bought again that first harmonium, and it so struck... my heart that "gosh, this was the thing all along. (Interview 3: 19-20.)

A.S.: Somehow that harmonium business was always there somewhere, and when I came to study [...] in Helsinki, I stumbled upon this great harmonium built by Heden in the Saint Heart's Chapel in Kallio, it was a bit broken... I had never seen so many organ stops before and it was... beautiful, decorative [...] so then I began asking if I could buy it, since it wasn't in use. [...] And somehow I got started and began collecting them. (Interview 1: 1.)

The interviewees also describe their interest in preserving the instruments to explain why the instrument matters to them. Jaakko first wanted to try out the harmonium to get more variety to his playing (Interview 2: 2) but soon found himself intrigued by the mechanical complexity of the instrument and the skills necessary to fix them:

J.J.: So, I don't know, what fascinates me about the harmonium is the sound, sound world. And then, as it is a mechanical instrument... you can affect the impact with your pedaling technique. Make all sorts of nuances and so on... it's just a packet that you won't get with an electrical instrument or what not. [...] So what fascinates me, is the sound world, but I'm also fascinated about... I want to preserve them. And... fix them so, that they will preserve for decades. Those are the two main fields, playing and preserving. [...] I like this sort of technical thing, so I have made all sorts of small tools that do not... are not available anywhere. And overall, that knowledge about preserving a harmonium, there isn't any[.] (Interview 2: 16-17.)

Markku (Interview 3: 4-5) and Ari (Interview 1: 14) presented similar views towards fixing and tuning as well. Another attitude towards preserving the instruments comes from Sirkka-Liisa, who had taken to writing down short histories of the instruments she and Markku had acquired:

S.M.: I have a habit of making histories of some harmoniums, if it is possible. [...] I think these are important matters. [...] Often times a harmonium's life is much longer than our humans', it's just not something you happen to think about. [...] And I'm also interested of this with the harmoniums: their lives. What have they seen. [...] What's interesting about these harmoniums is to see what kind of fates the people who owned them had... it touches my heart, and makes me see I'm not the only one here. And it makes me sad, that [...] these art-pieces [...] are discarded just like that. No one appreciates them. So then, when some families [...] want their instrument to continue as an instrument, it brings me good feelings. And then of course I want to record their memories. (Interview 3: 7-8.)

Here, of course, we see the interviewees special "expert" roles towards the harmonium: were it that I had interviewed "normal" people, uninterested towards the harmonium, their answers would have most likely involved the harmonium as a more or less useless

waste of space, or a curious object in itself but mostly inapproachable in everyday life. We may conclude that the harmonium does not occupy a central position in current culture, but the attitudes expressed towards it by our expert interviewees nevertheless express its position in periphery of Finnish sociocultural space, and what cultural memory the instrument still holds to this day.

4.2. PERCEIVED ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE HARMONIUM

What, then, makes the instrument so important to the interviewees? How would they describe what makes the instrument meaningful to them? Throughout the interviews, this proved to be a tough question to answer clearly and shortly, for obvious reasons: the complex whole of feelings, memories, experiences and mental associations is not easily expressible in natural language. It is, however, more feasible to approach these feelings through the way how the interviewees describe their experience of the sound of the instrument and how it is to play it, and how it differs from other sounds and instruments. Jaakko emphasizes the versatility of the instrument:

J.J.: In Finland... in my personal opinion, the harmonium has been labelled as an accompaniment instrument, and as a hymnal instrument. And then here we have the pelimanni-music as well. But you can play anything with the harmonium... in Finland, we do not have a tradition of playing classical music with the harmonium, unlike in Central Europe. (Interview 2: 4)

J.J.: I like playing the harmonium and I enjoy how... I play quite a lot by myself, at home. What ever comes to mind. And I like that... sound world, and its peacefulness and harmony that it brings to it. I think it's great to just play around with chords, [...] how you can bring so much colour to it. (Interview 2: 15.)

Similarly Sirkka-Liisa recognizes the harmonium's labelization towards liturgical music, but considers the variety of the historical instruments:

S.M.: The harmonium, to me, is like an extension of my heart. I open up myself and my feelings [...] and it is like that because every harmonium is like a person to me. They weren't made on an assembly line, they are individuals. [...] When I play, I want to be, how should I say it, an interpreter of the harmonium's makers. I wish I could give to it

that prestige and honor that they put into making that instrument, that it would come through in me. That they'd live through me.

A.K.: [...] What, to you... defines that prestige?

S.M.: All of it. The age, the looks, the history.

M.M.: What about the sound...

S.M.: Of course. [...] I'd like [...] that it all comes through, what they had wanted. (Interview 3: 12.)

But while the interviewees themselves were very appreciative of the instruments, it was obvious to them that since the mid-20th century public interest in the instrument had begun to wane and there were various reasons to explain why it was so:

A.K.: Is it possible to say, what kind of reasons were there, why the use of the harmonium stopped?

A.S.: Well let's say... I think it started in the sixties, even though they still made harmoniums. [...] But it's about market economy and human life, and it was quite normal, that... people wanted to get rid of old things. (Interview 1: 5.)

A.K.: Why did [harmonium playing], in a way... stop, then?

E.H.: Pianos took over it. Yes, when they started manufacturing locally. [...] Some of them are horrified, pianists, that they'd have to play on a harmonium even a little bit. (Interview 5: 7.)

I.K.: What happened was that pianos came to the schools and harmoniums disappeared, although here [in Kaustinen] they remained because of the pelimanni-tradition. Here it became an accompaniment instrument for pelimanni-orchestras in the thirties and forties.

J.J.: [...] Here we still have harmoniums in the schools. But of course there are pianos too and the teachers might rather like to play the pianos. But it didn't ever disappear in that sense... it's funny to think that elsewhere in Finland it is so rare. (Interview 2: 3.)

It is obvious from the citations given so far that the primary "competitor" for harmonium in the experiences of the interviewees is the piano. Finnish piano manufacturing industry is somewhat younger than that of the harmonium, with first notable factories having been founded only in the 20th century. Further research is needed to show the scope and prices of imported and local pianos and harmoniums in the 20th century, but it would seem that up until the 1960s the purchasing cost of a piano was at least double the price of a harmonium. The simplest way to explain the "down fall" of the instrument would surely be to explain it through market forces: it may be assumed that the piano was the more "prestigious" instrument all along, but only in the

latter part of the 20th century purchasing a piano for small schools and homes became economically viable.

But I argue that another explanation or cultural reading emerges from the interviews as well: since the mid-20th century (at least, possibly even earlier) the harmonium has increasingly been viewed as a remnant of pious school culture.

R.K.: I found [the harmonium] very adaptable. [...] And in organ music, for those who can play it, Bach, for example... well, it is great. And the pianos, then... they are for different songs. Well, I don't know if I can put it like that, but... [the harmonium] is pious. (Interview 4: 3.)

At this point we might also take a look into what kind of music was played on the harmonium in the folk schools. The interviews paint a picture of the harmonium being played in the following situations over the school year: daily, as part of morning assembly, and in calendric festivities, most prominently on Christmas and at the end of the school year in Spring. The music played in both of these situations was hymnal/choral: interviewees specifically name songs published in Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland's hymnal, such as "Jo Joutui Armas Aika" (especially popular in Spring festivities), "Enkeli taivaan" (popular on Christmas), "Oi rakkain Jeesuksi" & "Oi Jeesus, lasten ystävä" (Interview 1: 5; Interview 4: 1-2; Interview 5: 12). Thus the repertoire was very much connected to the annual festivals of the Evangelical Church. But in connection to these points the interviewees wanted to point out, when asked in general what kind of music can, may, cannot or may not be played on the harmonium, was that it should not be limited in such a way:

S.M.: The harmonium is lovely, because you can play anything with it. From rock to hymns. Let me play you a children's song, for example. A bit faster than usual. [...] Many people think that you cannot play fast on the harmonium, but that isn't true. [...] Often they think that harmonium is only used to play hymns or some folk songs. And greatly it is used so. And I think it fits there well. [...] But I use them to express myself, my feelings, so sometimes I play fast songs, schlager, waltz, tango, what ever. And sometimes, just hymns.

M.M.: Sometimes you've played classical. Bach and so on. (Interview 3: 12.)

J.J.: And then, what information I'd like to spread now is that the harmonium has been used in classical music in Europe, but we just don't have that kind of culture here at all. (Interview 2: 22.)

These point to another aspect – already alluded to in the previous chapter – that the harmonium has been and/or is perceived as a technically limiting instrument. This is most probably related to the level of musical education and experience of its most prominent players:

E.H.: So that school harmonium, then, you weren't allowed to touch it. And the teachers didn't really know how to, because it was just after the war, that folk school period. So... it was one male teacher who played it. (Interview 5: 2.)

A.S.: If you got a teacher who could only play with one hand, one finger, then... it was quite simple listening. [...] Of course there were good players too, among the teachers at the time... [...] but, most of [the instruments] were, of course, none of these concert models, just cheap ones, with a flat voice, and... some teachers [...] didn't have a lot of artistic understanding over the use of different organ stops, so they were either all out or not. So it was kind of simple... depending on the teacher you got. (Interview 1: 7.)

These culturally shared memories seem to have purported an image of the harmonium as an inferior instrument. Furthermore, it was highly likely that bad experiences relating to musical education and school life in general could be connected to the harmonium as a symbol of the class room:

A.S.: We were talking about the sixties... there were also events, like... for once, a harmonium was burned at the market square. They said that it had destroyed school children's musical ears. [chuckles] Was it at the Kuopio market square... they wrote about it [in a newspaper]¹⁸ (Interview 1: 7.)

A.S.: [...] And then... there has to be a scapegoat, if you have bad memories from school. Many times you'd have to stand behind the instrument [as a punishment], if you were too bustling. [...] and if you happened to be very sensitive musically, or couldn't sing well... if you sang poorly and were teased and bullied about it, somehow it all connected to the harmonium somehow. [Chuckles] then you wouldn't want to ever see or hear it, and then you'd probably burn it. [Chuckles jokingly.] (Interview 1: 7.)

Thus it follows in my opinion that we cannot view the piano or other (mostly electrical) instruments as simply more advanced and prestigious instruments than the harmonium, instead we should consider the harmonium to have acquired certain “baggage”, or, in

¹⁸ Sadly, by the time of presenting this thesis I have not had the time & possibility to track down this specific event in any newspaper archives. The event came up in another interview with Eero Hautsalo, so I have no reason to doubt that such event wasn't recorded. However, further research is needed in pinpointing this peculiar event.

other words, to have been attached with negative textual content, as an instrument used to uphold conservative values in the school environment (or the parish) over other values that in comparison would appear to represent modern thinking. The piano or other new electrical instruments should not be then equated with modernism, but representing modernism through the actions of the younger generation, as we can read from the following interpretation:

A.S.: It was almost so, that whenever a new cantor came to the parish or a new teacher to the class room, they'd consider themselves so good and modern, that they'd practically laugh these harmoniums out of there. (Interview 1: 10.)

From this viewpoint it is easy to envelope the harmonium in Jean Baudrillard's system of objects: when the harmonium entered Finnish culture in the 19th century, we could briefly see it as an unnecessary gizmo, a representative of Baudrillard's dysfunctional system, at least to those members of the folk who did not know how to play it or incorporate it to their minuscule traditions of superfluous music (Baudrillard 1996: 123), but through innovation of certain manufacturers and "enlighteners" it quickly acquired a place in the functional system of everyday utilitarian objects through its applicability in existing traditions of essential music (Ibid, 62-63). However, by the turn of the 20th century its functionality began to wane as society began reevaluating the place and needs of that tradition of essential music. Thus the instrument moved to the system of non-functional or marginal objects (Ibid, 74) wherein the current day users of the instrument need to accept that their passion towards the instrument is a special fringe case (Ibid, 85). Still, it is only within the system of objects specifically communicated in this particular culture that we can make such ruling; the construction of meaning for the text of the instrument varies in other contexts.

CONCLUSION

In the roughly 160 year long period (from 1850s to 2010s) that the harmonium has been a part of Finnish culture, it has provably acquired several different symbolic meanings which have both aided and hindered its popularity and use as a musical instrument, and through its own symbolic functions it has participated in shaping Finnish culture. The study at hand shows that there have been specific cultural reasons for the rise and fall in popularity of the instrument that can be used to explain its peculiar social history.

The framework for studying musical instruments as meaningful objects in a musical culture constructed in this thesis proves that through their semiotic functionality musical instruments can act as sort of “cultural catalysts” in a given culture’s self-descriptive expressions and therefore should not be considered just as passive tools of musical expression. Musical instruments should not be viewed as simple technological mediators between the musician and his audience; instead musical instruments should be seen as participating in the cultural process of signification.

Grappling with a fairly non-researched and interdisciplinary topic, a challenge for the study has been to locate and connect several different source materials to sufficiently describe the object of study in its cultural context, and the responsibility to determine if a holistic representation has been achieved falls to the reader of the work. The aim of the work has been to provide a robust methodology combining aspects from organology, ethnomusicology, semiotics of music, material culture studies, semiotics of objects, cultural semiotics and cultural memory studies matched with a thorough analysis that could be described as a “thick description” of culture.

In the first two chapters I have described the materials used and methodology applied to both the gathering and conducting of those materials as well as towards their cultural semiotic analysis. In Chapter 3, first of the analysis chapters, I have provided a

historical analysis of the harmonium and the society into which it entered in the 19th century. As a result, we get to show the harmonium's role in propagation of superfluous and essential music, as theorized by Erkki Ala-Könni (and other ethnomusicologists). In the second analysis chapter, Chapter 4, I have described the harmonium as a cultural text as it has appeared through the analysis of contemporary interview materials, thus completing my interdisciplinary case study of the harmonium in Finnish cultural context and, I believe, showing that the dynamicity of the object in the Finnish cultural space. The final chapter shows that the instrument and its meanings in a semiotics of objects may fluctuate due to its inherent semiotic properties of meaning-making.

It is my view that the research may serve as a starting point for future cultural and semiotic study of musical instruments, and the studying of the harmonium as a cultural artefact is a topic ripe for further study.

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Kokkuvõte

MUUSIKAINSTRUMENTIDE ROLL KULTUURILISE VÄLJENDUSE KONSTRUEERIMISEL

Antud magistritöö uurib Prantsusmaal 19. sajandil leiutatud muusikariista harmoonium kohta ja tähendust Soome kultuuriruumis alates tema ilmumisest kuni tänapäevani. Sellest aspektist ei ole mainitud muusikariista varem piisavalt uuritud, lisaks on vajalik leida uus interdistsiplinaarne uurimismeetod taoliste objektide vaatlemiseks kultuurikasutuse ja -väljenduse piires, sest traditsioonilised muusikadistsipliinid on jätnud muusikariistade problematiseerimise välja.

Seetõttu pakutakse käesolevas töös välja teoreetiline ja metodoloogiline raamistik muusikariistade uurimiseks, lisaks kasutatakse rohkelt ajaloolisi arhiivimaterjale ja tänapäevasi intervjuumaterjale harmooniumi pikaajalise kasutamise kirjeldamiseks. Töö vaatleb muusikariista kultuuriteksti, esemete semiootika ja muusikalise tähendusloome vaatepunktidest ja kaalutleb esemete kohta kultuuri (auto)kommunikatsiooni- ja mäluprotsessides.

Töö koosneb neljast suuremast peatükist. Esimene peatükk annab ülevaate arhiivi- ja intervjuumaterjalidest, harmooniumist kui praktilises kasutuses olevast muusikariistast. Teises peatükis kirjeldatakse uurimuse metodoloogiat, kaalutletakse erinevaid võimalusi vaadelda muusikainstrumenti kui aktiivset osalist (auto)kommunikatsiooniprotsessis nii indiviidi, kollektiivi kui terve kultuuri tasandil. Kolmas peatükk näitab, milliste vahenditega on võimalik muusikainstrumenti käsitleda mitte lihtsalt staatilise objektina, vaid kultuuritekstina. Viimane peatükk ongi

pühendatud harmooniumi analüüsile kultuuritekstina, esitledes harmooniumi kui dünaamilist objekti Soome kultuuri semiosfääris.

Töö näitab, et harmoonium on omandanud Soome kultuurikontekstis mitmeid märgilisi tähendusi, mis on muusikariista kasutamist ja populaarsust eri aegadel mõjutanud. Tulemused osutavad, et muusikariistu ei peaks alatähtsustama, otse vastupidi, neid peaks tunnustama muusikalise kultuuritähenduse levitajana.

Annex 1

Minutes of the interviews

Interview 1

Date: 12.02.2016, Place: Espoo

Interviewer: Antti Kiviranta

Interviewee: Ari Sintonen

Recorded to digital audio, 136 minutes. Transliteration page count: 15.

Interview 2

Date: 13.02.2016, Place: Kaustinen

Interviewer: Antti Kiviranta

Interviewees: Jaakko Järvelä & Ira Korkala

Recorded to digital audio 163 minutes. Transliteration page count: 23.

Interview 3

Date: 14.02.2016, Place: Kalajoki

Interviewer: Antti Kiviranta

Interviewees: Markku Myllymäki & Liisa Myllymäki

Recorded to digital audio, 125 minutes. Transliteration page count: 25.

Interview 4

Date: 15.02.2016, Place: Tyrvävä

Interviewer: Antti Kiviranta

Interviewee: Ritva Kauppinen

Recorded to digital audio, 48 minutes. Transliteration page count: 8.

Interview 5

Date: 16.02.2016, Place: Jyväskylä

Interviewer: Antti Kiviranta

Interviewees: Eero Hautsalo & Marja-Liisa Hautsalo

Recorded to digital audio, 78 minutes. Transliteration page count: 14.

Annex 2

Interview questions (translated from original Finnish)

INTERVIEWEE'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE HARMONIUM

- where did the interviewee see and hear the instrument for the first time?
- when did s/he begin to play and why?
- does s/he consider the harmonium to be specifically tied to a certain environment or purpose?
- when and why did s/he begin to appreciate the instrument, in what way?

EXPERIENCE OF THE HARMONIUM AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH SOCIETY

- what does the interviewee know about harmoniums history in Finland and elsewhere?
- where does s/he know harmonium to have been played (and for what purposes)?
- who played and what for?
- what was harmonium used to play, and what not? What does s/he play herself?
- are there situations or reasons for when harmonium would not have been played?
- when did the purchase, playing and repairing of harmoniums end?
- why? What could be the reason for this line of progress?

HARMONIUM AS AN INSTRUMENT

- what is it like to play?
- how does it compare to other instruments?
- good / bad sides?
- what is original about the harmonium?

HARMONIUM AS AN OBJECT

- repairing and maintaining?
- weight, mobility
- function in the house/room
- looks
- how does it affect the everyday?

HARMONIUM AS A COLLECTOR'S ITEM

- where and how the interviewee acquires harmoniums?
- price and value?
- what kind of harmoniums s/he looks for and why?
- are there acquaintances or other sources where s/he gets more info?
- what joys and sorrows are related to the hobby?
- how does s/he describe her relationship to the instrument:
 - > player? collector? repairer? nostalgic recollecting? upkeeper? museum coordinator?
 - > what in this relationship is important, meaningful?

MISCELLANEOUS THEMES

- how does s/he consider the division home, school, church, and folk instrument? anything to add? different opinions?
- is there a specific reason why the instrument appears in these spheres and not, for example, in art and pop music?
- how has the playing of harmonium affected these spheres?
- how does playing or listening to the instrument affect her/himself?
- how does it feel like to play? experiences, thoughts, feelings?
- is the harmonium part of an identity, for example, Finnishness? a memory from another time?
- how often / in what situations does s/he use / work with harmoniums?

GENERAL INTERESTS:

- 1) WHAT KINDS OF MEANINGS ARE RELATED TO THE HARMONIUM IN FINNISH CULTURE?
- 2) HOW DID THE HARMONIUM AFFECT FINNISH MUSICAL CULTURE/ENVIRONMENT?
- 3) CAN THESE MEANINGS EXPLAIN THE HARMONIUMS DISAPPEARANCE FROM THE CULTURE?

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