

## Story of the Wirkkalas

Narrated by Ilmari Wirkkala on his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1965.

Kainu is a name closely related to our family. That is why it is necessary to tell that the name occurs first time in "Idris -geography" somewhere around 1130 and refers to a place called Kainu found in Alaveteli – mentioned as "the flourishing city in the land of the Amazons". Kainu was a harbor by the sea. Current Perhonjoki river (Butterfly River) flowed down to the sea from two branches located on each side of the city. The northern branch was probably called Wetelinjoki and the southern Kainuunjoki, currently Kainobäck.

"Kaino" is Lapp variety of the name. It means "living in a house" contrary to the Laplanders "living in a gohti". Distinctive of Wetelinjoki is the word *veteli* which refers to a sort of roller wagon used in dragging the boats from a stream pool to another in the difficult rapids in Alaveteli and Yliveteli.

This river was connected from its headwaters to the rivers flowing down to Päijänne and therefore it was an important connection towards east. That is why it was neutral to be the boundary river between Finland and Novgorod yet until year 1250.

Around 30 kilometers upwards the river from the ancient city of Kainu, in the rural municipality of Kaustinen there is the **Wirkkala farm**, a taxable farm-estate which has been marked in the cadastres since 1549.

The first master of the Wirkkala farm was **Matti (Knut's son) Kaustar** from the Kaustar village of Kokkola. The same year Juho (Antti's son) Kaustar, from the same village, gained ownership of the Kaustinen farm. He might have been Matti's cousin.

The closest neighbor of Wirkkala on the north side of the river was Järvilä. The owner Matti Järvi is mentioned already in 1480. On the southern side of Järvilä there were Warila and Juoperi, while on the opposite of Wirkkala there were Huntus, Kentala and later Penttilä – all marked on the cadastre at the same times except Penttilä, which was separated from Kentala.

### **Catholic chapel in *Kappelinkangas*<sup>1</sup>**

***Kappelinkangas*** was attached to the lands of Penttilä and Kentala. According to folk knowledge there used to be a catholic chapel in the northeast side. Academic Kustaa Vilkkuna finds it plausible notifying that it could have been sacralized to Saint Jacob of Compostela, protector of pilgrims since there is a fountain near by called "**Jacobs fountain**", ***Jaakopin lähde***. The fountain wells straight from the rock of Puhkionkallio and it used to be vast though it still gives a lot of water.

Catherine of Vadstena, daughter of Saint Bridget of Sweden, was collecting miracles that had happened in the name of her mother in the Vadstena monastery. A big entourage from village of Karleby came to testify a miracle that had happened to a daughter of Lauritsa Thorinpoika (Thor's son) who had been lost in the woods for ten days and then returned home guided by a cow. All the witnesses appeared in

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1 *kangas* = type of boreal forest → *kappelinkangas* = "chapel forest"

names translated to ancient German. One of the names was Bero Slukir that is *Karhu Huntu*<sup>2</sup> from which the name *Huntus* was derived to documents. This happened in 1375.

Name *Kentala* also comes from ancient German – word ”*kenta*” refers to wife or woman in general. Above Kappelinkangas the river makes a two-fold curve. That is called *Veka* or *Veas*. That is ancient German as well and refers to exactly that kind of a ”z-curve”. On the other side there is a high riverbank called *Tempelinharju*<sup>3</sup>. Lower to the river there is *Yrttikoski*<sup>4</sup> which fits to a picture where gardening monks were the shepherds of the little chapel.

Year 1956 I wrote down a catholic evening prayer that had been stored in the family:

*”Jesus be on my right side  
Mary on my left  
The cross of Jesus on my chest  
Holy ghost above my head  
Let my eyes fall asleep  
my heart stay awake in Jesus  
so I wouldn't drown in bad dreams  
or give in to the enemies  
Jesus Christ! Like the sun shall you shine!  
The victory of the last battle will be thine!  
Take me to the last shelter  
to the life eternal.”*

This is the only prayer survived from the mass-book used in the evening mass of Ascension Day in the Franciscan convention of Rauma. The book is presumably the oldest one written in Finnish and is known as ”Ionnis Mathie Westhin messukirja” (Ionnis Mathie West's mass-book). It has been prohibited in Finnish churches since the year 1593, but in Kaustinen the people have been storing that fragment in their memories at least for 400 years.

### **What is the Wirkkala family heritage like?**

The old ”kainu-center” indicates that the description of the tribe is ”kainu”-type: skin color darker than usual, curly and often black hair, curved or straight nose and eyes usually blue but also brown, yet always a dark pigment; men's length usually above average and they are often stated powerful, women have been dark, not the Savonian type<sup>5</sup>.

Wirkkala farm-estate was originally a land of one mark which corresponded ½ pound in silver. Therefore its plantations were the size of one mantal. To reach an area of cultivation of this size takes about hundred years or four generations of work, so the colonization must have started in 1450's or even earlier.

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2 *Karhu* = bear, *Huntu* = veil

3 *Tempelinharju* = ”temple-esker”

4 *Yrttikoski* = ”herb-rapid”

5 In the Finnish version there also appears word ”*herrankorjia*” which is very difficult to translate – the closest equivalent is ”showy” - but since no clear corresponding word, it is left out from the translation.

Wirkkala farm-estate has originally been a summer pasturage of the people of the coast, which has been taken care of during summertime by the young girls – *kentas* in local dialect. Cultivation of the lands started when the Savonians started to move over the water divide due to a command of Kustaa Fincke, commander of state and city of Savonlinna. Then the people of the coast had to become permanent habitants of their outer farms.

The name "Wirkkala" does not come up in the chronicles until the 1630's. "Official"<sup>6</sup> was a word known to be connected to certain hunting circle and it was possible to call a bailiff, who was responsible of the protection of certain area, an "official". In any case according to the old heritage Wirkkala householders were "bailiffs", which was of course an overstatement, since there was only one bailiff in Ostrobothnia who lived in Korsholma, except if they were to be those "hunting-bailiffs" or "village-bailiffs".

Matti (Knut's son) Kaustar died in 1557. His son **Prusi** (or Brusius) then became master of the farm and was in charge of the farm until 1595 when the acreage was marked to be 1 ¾ mantals. That area was back then regarded divisible and year 1595 Prusi divided the farm for his sons Matti and Erkki. It was during the restless times of the Cudgel War (Club War). Both of the boys vanished from the tax books without any heirs left behind; same with son Maunu who did not get any heritage but who left an underage son Juho.

By the time of Prusi the farm was forced to pay so called silver-tax for the ransom of the fortress of Älvsborg, which was taken out of every mantal-owner assessed by their movables. The levy happened in 1571 and Prusi payed only 9 marks and 4 ½ øres. He was the only one who owned a draught oxen, "golden ox" of the village. The lands of Wirkkala and Järvilä meet one another below *Juoperinkoski*, where the river makes the z-curve and that curve is called *Prusinkoukku*<sup>7</sup>. Prusi is mentioned in the ownership of the united farm in 1601, the hunger-year "when nothing grain shaped grew in Ostrobothnia".

All that is known of **Juho (Maunu's son)** is that he was master between years 1612-1626. But his son **Matti** was a man of action. He was the Kaustinen area's transportation director. A man of this kind of a position was called an official according to the royal country law, nowadays those officials are seen as "professionals".

Matti (Juho's son) started to use the name Wirkkala regularly and so did his daughters after they got married like the noblewomen did. Daughters were the oldest ones of Juho's children. **Helga**, born in 1610, was married to Heikki Luomala from the richest house of the village, and **Karin**, born in 1612 was married to Gabriel Torppa-Kainu from Kainu of Yli-Veteli. Matti carried on endless lawsuits concerning family lands and accretions downriver. He died after a short period of ownership in 1637.

### **Juror of court and churchwarden Juho Wirkkala**

Matti (Juho's son) Wirkkala had two sons, Juho and Antti. Antti's date of birth is unknown, but Juho was born in 1616 and when becoming master of the farm expanded to a size of two mantals he had turned 21.

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<sup>6</sup> The term "official" is related to the name Wirkkala, since it is *virkamies* in Finnish (from which: *virka* → *virkkala*)

<sup>7</sup> *Koukku* = hook → *Prusinkoukku* = "Prusi's hook"

*Last year there had been a disagreement between Kaustinen and Yli-Veteli about the location of a new church. People of Kaustinen were ready to restore the church at the place of the old chapel and they had already built new foundations and transported the rocks. People of Veteli had started the same business in the side of Klaavun kangas<sup>8</sup>.*

*Ericus Galle, the vicar of Kokkola made a proposition that the village from which a person first dies and needs a blessed ground will get the church. The person to be buried under the church floor could not be just anyone, the deceased had to be an innocent child.*

*So it happened that a child died in Kaustinen, but the people of Veteli stole the corpse at night and buried it inside their church's foundations and also quickly got a priest to lay the child to rest. When it was done "the case was closed" and Veteli got the new church. After the incident people of Kaustinen used to call the people of Veteli "corpse-thieves", and young men gathered to the village border in Veiskonluoma to fight with each other on several Sunday evening just because of that. This hatred maintained until 1910's.*

*When the new church was finished in Veteli, a picture was carved to the support pillar of the pulpit - that picture was supposed to represent the body snatcher, Wirkkala son-in-law, **Gabriel Torppa-Kainu**. Since his brother-in-law, Juho Wirkkala, was elected the first churchwarden as atonement to the people of Kaustinen, one could doubt his neutrality.*

It was the times of the Thirty Years' war. Farmers were strained by many taxes and call-ups. Alongside of his position as the transportation director Juho Wirkkala was the provisioner of Lohtaja's company. Olavi, member of the Vähä-Salo regular family, claimed Juho a thief but was himself sentenced to pay a fine for it in 23.3.1645, because he could not prove his accusations. When Olavi's brother "förrare" Juhani Salo returned home after the peace of Westfalen and physically abused Juho, he also ended up in courtroom 12.3.1650. Year 1649 Juho had to demand payment of the unpaid provision taxes from the heirs of Knut (Heikki's son) Kaustinen through court.

Juho Wirkkala was also strained by heavy taxes so he divided the farm with his brother Antti in 1645. That also ended up in court since he had been levied a full tax on the year of division. Juho was chosen to be a juror of court which was not a minor position back then. Juho knew how to stand up for himself in court. When his sister Helga started to claim her own share of the estate Juho set her on to Antti instead. Antti then had to pay Helga 16 thalers in silver. Karin did not inherit her share but it was left to later times.

Juho's wife was Leena Paavola from the Paavola-Lempling family, which is mentioned already in 1480 in Kaustinen. They had four sons and two daughters.

Henrik, master of Snåre farm in Kruunupyy, had accidentally died in his sawmill. His farm was put to compulsory auction at price of 1400 copper-thalers of debt. Juho sent both of his youngest sons Eerik

<sup>8</sup> *Kangas* = type of boreal forest – *Klaavun kangas* is the place where there still is a church and a cemetery in Veteli.

and Jaakoppi to buy the farm together with their 400 thalers portion of legacy. They managed to bid the house and decided to keep it as company farm with its inheritors, the widow, a daughter and a 4-year-old son.

Eerik married the widow the same year and Jaakoppi married the daughter two years later. The vast and branchy Snåre-family is descended from him and his spouse Margareta.

Juho Wirkkala resigned his ownership in dramatic conditions in 1674. France was in war against Brandenburg and demanded its ally Sweden to join in with army of 10 000 men. Sweden was ruled by regency of king Kaarle XI and the military institution was in decay. So men had to be recruited to army.

Back in the days Ostrobothnia had agreed to give away every tenth man but now it was demanded to bring every fifth. Antti Wirkkala who lived in Vanhatalo<sup>9</sup> estate, (brother Juho lived in Alitalo<sup>10</sup> estate), had had only one son and he had already died. Juho, his two sons who lived in home and two son-in-laws formed the quintet from which one had to leave for the war. Then Juho, juror of court, decides to defy the county agreement and signs up himself as a private soldier, puts it to tax records and announces his sons Antti and Matti the farm owners.

The forwardness peculiar to this family could not give in to the case. Juho's grandson, Matti's 14-year-old son Juho stepped in the place of his 58-year-old grandfather to the army heading to Germany.

Year 1681 Juho retired and stayed in living with Leena in the farm ordering his estate to be divided. The oldest son **Matti** recieved the estate according to the law of succession. **Antti**, **Eerik** and **Jaakoppi** got each 200 thalers in copper, two cows, one bull, one heifer, five sheep and to be shared amongst them one horse, five bushels of grain, a seine net of a length of 15 fathoms and other small unnamed things. The two son-in-laws, Olof (Anders' son) from Leppälahti of Pietarsaari (**Karin's** husband) and Jaakko (Olli's son) Kentala-Kuorikoski (**Margareta's** husband) both got 100 copper-thalers and wares half of the value of their brothers-in-law got.

Juho Wirkkala is mentioned as a juror of court in 1684 but supposedly he dies soon after. 1690 has been marked as the year of death of Leena. They were both buried underneath the floor of the new church of Veteli, built in 1679. Along with them was buried the last ruling and building force of the family, and so the family begun to scatter like the waves after a rock fallen down to the water.

### **Competing for inheritance**

Matti (Juho's son) Wirkkala died soon after his father in 1686 before managing to pay off other inheritors of the estate. He had had his worries on his daughter Brita's dowries when she married Niilo (Erkki's son) Iso-Salo in 1682. This young couple aimed as high as bying Slotte farm in Alaveteli which cost 700 (Swedish) riksdaler in silver.

Juho (Matti's son) Wirkkala had come back safe and sound from the unfortunate war and married Niilo's sister Margareta and also purchased Herlevi farm in Soko-Oja in Kaarlela of Kokkola because

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9 *Vanhatalo* = "Old House"

10 *Alitalo* = "Lower side House"

of the obscure situation at home. In Wirkkala the brother Antti had annexed Alitalo soon after Matti's death and by paying receivables of the other inheritors he wanted to keep the farm.

When Antti (Antti's son), master of Vanhatalo died in 1690, his sister Karin's descendants made sure that they'll get a grip on the house since no male inheritors were left. Karin's son **Juho (Gabriel's son) Torppa** had become a juror and he arranged his own son **Antti** the master of **Vanhatalo in Wirkkala**. It also happened that Antti of Alitalo had a daughter who was waited to reach a marriageable age. Because of such a hurry this daughter Kaisa was married to the new owner of Vanhatalo one month before her legal age 9.12.1694.

Kaisa's brother Erkki was sent to Jolkka in the border of Alaveteli and Kälviä where there were family's meadowland to start up a new farm by the name Herronen. This son Erkki then used last name Wirkkala-Herronen which was a rare thing to do. The other brother Matti married Brita Kettu. They went to Jylhä and built it up to a taxable farm-estate.

This happened in the times of the great hunger years in 1695-1697. Last one to die is Antti, owner of Alitalo and so is Antti of Vanhatalo ready to reunite the Wirkkala farm as one. However, private soldier Juho Wirkkala from Herlevi of Soko-Oja comes to keep an eye of his portion and gets the ownership of the house in 1698.

Apart from above-mentioned Antti there seem to be no other deaths in the family during the great hunger years. Only his sister Karin and her husband in Veteli died but they were both over 80 years of age and might have passed away because of their age. So no-one died because of hunger.

### **The times of the great wrath and Russian slaughter**

Men and funds were taken out of the land suffering from hunger during the Great Northern War. It eventually escalated to the point when a man from each house had to go to war since there was only own land left to defend. So it was Antti's (from Vanhatalo) turn to go and he recruited **Juho Pietari's son** to be his private soldier and gave him a soldier name **"Svartlock"**.

Juho served in Armfelt's army and had just happened to get a vacation for getting married at the time of the unfortunate Napua battle in Southern-Ostrobothnia against the Russians. Juho was married to daughter of Juho of Alitalo's, Liisa, in 21.2.1714. After that he is mentioned only in garrison of Hamina in 1725 where he served as corporal.

From the spring of 1714 the waves of hatred started rolling into the area. Master of Huntus farm was killed by the Russians. Children were taken to be sold in Russian slave markets. The Russian hatred increased and fell upon those in leading position in the parish. One reason for that was the guerilla troops of Hannu Käsä and Juho Corander-Kuorikoski who started destroying the Russian commands and stealing their supplies and sharing them to those in hideaways.

**Antti Wirkkala** (Vanhatalo) was one the Russians had their eye on. So was his family also attacked. Oldest son **Janne** defended his mother and his three younger brothers and got them to safety but the father and three of the youngest children got into the hands of Russians. They were all killed and buried in a collective grave in Yli-Veteli's cemetery in June the 10<sup>th</sup> of 1716.

To tie up men to their service Russians commanded every mantal owning man to the military in 1717. Now it would have been **Janne's** turn to leave. He married Marjatta (Juho's daughter) Kettu, 8 years older than him, 30.5.1717 and ran off to Sweden right after the wedding. At the same time also his 83-years-old grandfather, juror of court Juho Torppa, got married to Liisa Forselius, daughter of a priest.

When general Kustaa Mauri Armfelt collected his army for the trip to Norway, Janne fell in using the name of house's private soldier Juho Svartlock. In the records he was called "**Svartlock-Wirkkala**". Since he was bigger than average, he was commanded to the first file of the Widow Queen's bodyguard regiment's first battalion's 1 company's 1 platoon. When heading for the unfortunate return he was one of the 600 survivors. The type of feat of strength that Topelius writes about in Välskäri's tale – breaking a gun sleigh into fire logs against one's knee – is suitable for a man like Janne.

When the men returned from the miserable campaign they were left to squalid conditions in Sweden, and when the front had moved peacefully on the southern side of Oulu in Finland, Janne came back home to Kaustinen where he now was using name **Jöns** influenced by his trip in Sweden.

Family life soon started bearing fruit. Right after making peace house was ready to be inhabited. Jöns had used to pioneering during campaign. As a reminder he built a straight road and stairs from Wirkkala to **Kalavesi** across **Pöösneva**; still after 60 years they were in sight in places although sunk into the bog and the road did not follow the line anymore. Jöns died of cancer in 1762 and his wife died of pneumonia in 1753. This marriage had a few barrel areas<sup>11</sup> in the lands of Kettu, grove fields across the river that were connected to the Wirkkala farm lands. Kettu had been split from Kaustinen farm. Kaustinen had once extended its possessions there across Kentala.

Matti, brother of Jöns, born in 1700 managed to redeem half of the farm to his name. He had been part of Hannu Käsä's guerilla troops and married his daughter Malin aka Leena in 1724. Matti became church's *seksmanni*<sup>12</sup> and his farm has been since called by the name *Seksmanni*. Matti died before reaching the age of forty.

Third of the brothers, Antti, went to be a farmhand in Tuomisalo farm of Soko-Oja. He married daughter of the house, Carin (Gustav's daughter) Tuomisalo, lived first as a son-in-law and then became master and progenitor of a vast family in Kaarlela.

Fourth of the sons, Erkki married a widow from Polso of Yli-Veteli. This widow had had eight children with his former husband but they had all died in early age. The new marriage was equally unfortunate. Erkki had reached age of 53 when the widow died. Erkki rushed into a new marriage with a 20-year-old Brita (Heikki's daughter) Pakkala and luck with the children started turning. Apparently pneumonia had been the reason of earlier deaths and it had stagnated to the house now attacking the older children. So a son already married died of "cough".

This is the first proved case of pneumonia in the family. Its carrier happened to be the widow of Juho (Antti's son) Polso-Sandbacka, Sofia (Erkki's daughter) Humalalampi, married to Erkki Wirkkala. She gave birth to 16 children who all apparently fell victim to pneumonia. The disease got stuck in the

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11 *Barrel area* is an old Finnish term of measurement for an area that is covered when sowing a barrel of grain.

12 "*Seksmanni*" is a word in old Finnish that refers to a person supervising the spiritual atmosphere and following religious customs of certain village. *seks* = "sixth" → *seksmanni* = "sixth man". Because of the frequent use of the name and the house it is left without translation.

house so that the newlywed died at the age of 37 and it continued in her descendants for three generations until the family seems to have become immune to it. But when the dairy industry became popular at the beginning of 1900's and the nutrition therefore deteriorated, the disease came back as an open tuberculosis and its side symptoms which drove families on the verge of extinction. This happened to the Polso family first in Veteli and then to that part that had moved back to Kaustinen.

From the other side of this branch of family originates a famous folk poet *Iso-Retula*, Erkki's grandson *Antti Polso* and his even more famous son *Antti Juoperinkangas* aka "Juonikas"<sup>13</sup>, called *Pikku-Retula* as well. A poem written by Pikku-Retula starts so:

*Halsua is a small chapel,  
where priest and sexton quarrel.  
First sexton got his tables turned,  
then gave priest's nose a churn.  
And congregation went on singing,  
as sexton gave the priest discipline.*

Thus spread out the Wirkkala's Vanhatalo family branch scattered by the Great Wrath. After difficulties a former soldier **Juho (Matti's son)** had become the farm owner of Alitalo. He is mentioned to have spoken Finnish and died in 1717. His son **Matti** got a mandate to become master not until the peace was made in 1721 and then ruled the house until year 1735. Other son **Erkki** went to Kängsälä. The third, **Juho**, was transferred to be the farm owner of the Herlevi farm in Soko-Oja which his father owned. He married Kaisa (Matti's daughter) Herlevi and after becoming a widower he got married to the widow of *seksmanni* Matti Wirkkala, Malin.

A person from Kettu had moved to Kainu house in Alaveteli and there went the fourth of the brothers, Antti, to be the son-in-law. His son Erkki married a daughter of church builder Karl Rijn and their daughter Anna Kaino (b. 11.10.1753) was mother of Finland's first sculptor Erik Cainberg. Father was a farmhand, "*kommer från Savoland*"<sup>14</sup>. Alitalo was then split in two and the other half was named *Mikontalo* after Matti's son Mikko.

### Scattering continues

The great wrath had caused depopulation but after those times population growth started breaking new records. Except the case of Polso children were healthy and most reached majority. Since the order of inheritance favored the oldest son, the next boys struggled unless there were houses blessed with girls and in need of a son-in-law in the house around.

Back then love was not the determining factor of marriages but mantal and money instead. The reputation of the family did mean a lot. Wirkkala family was originally in especially good reputation. When thinking back those times, it seems almost as if the village was part of some fairy tale. As if they were something apart from the others, and yet it was worse if someone noticed that and tried setting himself above others.

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13 *Juonikas* = artful

14 "comes from Savonia" in Swedish

Even the most modest crofter in *Vissavesi* was pleased and when arriving to the village his daughters chirped: "Even at the trench of Vissavesi it feels like I can touch the sky"<sup>15</sup>. Boys of the Wirkkala family were light-fingered and welcome in any house; girls were usually offered the place of a daughter-in-law or even a farmer's wife at young age. How much love was involved we cannot say but maybe years entailed compatibility. And that was main issue.

Some people born being forced to move to a place elsewhere. Moving to cities, seas, the Baltic Countries and Sweden had already been common. Now the pressure started to grow. Every fourth or fifth son was christened Jaakop because he had to leave home and become a pilgrim, carrying "saint Jacob's staff". Valeriana, who's cattle was left untouched standing on the pasture, carried this same name. People went to Jacob's fountain (Jaakopin lähde) to do some magic to make the journeys of those who left fortunate.

When the French ideology of freedom finally reached the North it had its impact on families. The Romantic movement and power of love brought out in everyday chants were taking their share. This happened for example in 1841. Anna (Heikki's daughter) Vähä-Kainu was engaged to Kettu in Kaustinen and banns were published even twice but she denied the third publishment and married musician Juho Heikki (Heikki's son) Wirkkala (from Alitalo family). They did get "Pikkuklumpi" plot separated from the farm 10 years later, but this young couple had showed great fortitude considering the time.

After abolishing the regulations of farm divisions in 1780 small farms size of 1/8 mantals came about. The contracts of those days show that 1/32 was some sort of basic unit in sales. This meant that the land had been shattered into too many pieces in the distribution of estate.

Those days tar burning was main source of income. Because of its multiphase nature it required co-operation, and tar was not burned only in own forests but also forests in Perho were rented for this purpose. The forests were ground, hollows were made and finally one could burn tar. Making barrel for tar took a whole winter. It also required a lot of space. That's why houses were built large and they contained side rooms for the married and their children.

The confession documents show that families the size of 15-20 persons weren't unusual. If the large number of small children is counted, there could have been 30 people living in the same house. That requires a lot of space and makes the monumental sizes of buildings more comprehensible to us when compared to our practices. Even though the land was shattered and population massively increased the spirit of co-operation was keeping the families together. It was a necessity since a lonesome could not have survived the troubles of living on one's own. This can be taken as a solution to the problem of escaping the country in the 1800's, the problem that had become severe in the 1700's causing the authorities enact procedures to force youngsters to take positions as farmhands and maids at home.

### **Vanhatalo and Seksmanni**

In the map of partitioning of land in 1757 Vanhatalo and Seksmanni are in the same yard and next to *Seksmanninkangas* known today. To the river there were house of the provisioner of Lohtaja's company

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15 The Finnish expression is nearly impossible to translate – the idea of the expression is probably to describe the feeling of being involved with something special, which those girls from Vissavesi, rather remote small village, experienced when meeting the boys of the Wirkkala family.

(who was called *furiiri*). A fountain that wells from the bottom of Wirkkala rock and goes down to Alitalo, was partly led to pass "furiiri's" house to give him water as well. The water punctured the high river bank above and so was a stream called "*Furiirinluoma*" born.

Part of the water had flowed down to the river through Vanhatalo's stream but now this dried out and became a wetland between two high and wide brinks. When the water was high this had one day been a good dock.

Alitalo had been built to the brink of its stream and Mikontalo to the same yard. Thus can we see how the people of that time managed their water supplies. Later on the same fountain was the source of tap water for several decades.

Between years 1763-1786 **Juho (Jöns's son) Wirkkala** was master of Vanhatalo. After coming of age he married Margareta (Hannu's daughter) Juoperi 16.10.1745. Wife died the next year and Juho got married to another woman, an almost 19-year-old Leena (Taneli's daughter) Penttilä 7.6.1747. They had four sons and seven daughters. This number of daughters was considered almost as God's punishment because getting all those girls married felt like an impossible goal.

*Let us tell an anecdote about Antti Chydenius, an economist from Kokkola. He was a local minister and came to examine the reading skills to Vanhatalo of Wirkkala where he had been visiting earlier too. He had heard complaints about the mischievous activities the young men of the village had at night. Something serious had to be said to them.*

*So he gave a powerful sermon to the young men and told that it hasn't been long ago when a boy called Jaakko from village of Rauma had been put in the stocks for trying to get to the room of Juho Wirkkala's daughter by force. Finally the minister asked if the master agreed on the issue. "I've nothing to complain about this whatsoever, the boys haven't been interrupting my sleep.", Juho replied. "All right then" said the provost, "I didn't remember that you had seven daughters". "Yes, it was daughter of Juho of Alitalo whose daughter was harassed and that Jaakko bought himself free for two thalers" said Juho. Both of the Juhos happened to have daughters named Brita who were even born the same day.*

*According to the local tradition, when Antti Chydenius arrived to Vanhatalo as minister of Kokkola for the first time, Juho passed him a house silver bowl filled with liquor and asked him to empty it. Chydenius did what was asked for and passed the bowl back saying: "I wish this isn't going to be customary!" "It is not for custom but for welcome and health", replied farm owner. The bowl ended up with Marketta, Elias's daughter, to Peltoniemi in 1825.*

## **Cartwheel manufacturing becomes livelihood**

Antti Chydenius had made an invention to reduce the friction in the axels of the carts drums. He managed to inspire **Elias**, the third son of Vanhatalo to start making cartwheels. Elias was clearly the handiest one of the boys. Until these days people had been using strong wooden axels in cartwheels. Now they were replaced with iron ones and so the drums became more delicate and their bearing and

oiling system more practical. Little by little the manufacturing of the cartwheel turned into a cottage industry which tied a lot of work force to the house.

The oldest of the sons was Antti Wirkkala, who at 26 years of age had married Brita (Heikki's daughter), a housemaid nine years older than him in 26.6.1774. When Juho died in 1786, Antti took charge of the farm. The next year *seksmanni* Hannu Matinpoika moved to Lohtaja and sold his house to Antti. Thus was half of the old Wirkkala again in the possession of one master.

### **When the Devil took the baby**

One must meddle with the case of the trusted man of the congregation, *seksmanni*, moving suddenly away from the village. His oldest son had gone earlier. To frame the next story one must mention that the king Gustaf III had stopped the witch-hunt, but the belief of the Devil interfering peoples' lives was living strong among the people.

The story goes as such:

*Daughter-in-law of seksmanni Hannu Matinpoika's was pregnant and she had gone to visit the neighbors. In the fashion of the women she had her unfinished tapestry in her arms when walking the road. The ball of wool was inside her apron which was lifted up and tied on her waist. Suddenly a fine man crosses her on the road and points to her waist asking: "Can I have that?". She thought he was referring to her tapestry. "Sure, once it's finished" answers the unsuspecting daughter-in-law.*

*Then comes the time of the childbirth and according to the manners the woman in labor is taken to a heated sauna, where she must survive on her own. The husband is ordered to take her and the newborn home after some time. When the woman has given birth to the child, the man she met on the road enters the sauna saying he has come to take what was promised to him.*

*Now the wife was being taken away by the man in a fine brougham, over the stumps and rocks, along Jöns's stairs and through the darkest wall of **Pööskallio** into a big cave which was stunningly lighted. There was the wife of the Devil (**Pöö**) who had given birth to a dead child and the child was replaced by the living one of the wife's. As a reward the wife was given golden coins and she was strictly forbidden to tell anyone where the money was from. Then she was taken back to the sauna.*

*When the husband came to take his wife and newborn home there were no child there. The incident was so extraordinary that it is written in the history books of Veteli's congregation – though without mentioning the Devil.*

*Anyway, the daughter-in-law faced a tough examination at home and she had to tell what she knew about the incident. She had hidden the golden coins between the pages of Postilla-magazine. When it was opened there were only yellow aspen leaves between the pages.*

*The deal with the Devil did not remain a secret. When the rumors spread Matti (Hannu's son) had to move away from his home and his father seksmanni's reputation suffered as well, so he thought it was best to share his destiny with his son. From Lohtaja they took off to Kalajoki, from there to Pyhäjoki, back to Silvasti in Viirre and from there to Vasankari, where the family lives using names Ruuskala and Manninen.*

Juho, one of the *seksmanni* Hannu's sons, had married the oldest daughter of Wirkkala, Marketta in 1775 and had become son-in-law as well as worker to house's the cartwheel factory. Master of the house, Antti, was struggling to buy out the numerous siblings because his brother Elias had the cartwheel factory to his names. Everyone was married and claiming their shares. Besides, two of Antti's daughters were already married. Antti had to redeem nine angry son-in-laws and three brothers out of the house. Because his wife had no legacies either, the farm had to be sold to cover the costs in 1814. Elias bought it because he was able to manage the debts.

The war of 1808-1809 had rushed over the neighborhood three times and always taken away the transports, either of requisition or by paying money. Either way the call for cartwheels rose to its top and work as well as income were guaranteed. That's how Elias Wirkkala had created capital which was now needed.

Elias could sign the Seksmanni farm over to his sister and her husband, Juho Seksmanni. Elias also gave funds to his brother Taneli – who was also his brother-in-law – to buy a farm in Tunkkari. Taneli soon decided to move to Kruunupyy. Brother Juho got himself an outer farm called Köyhäjoki along the Köyhäjoki river. Juho did not stay for long in his farm either, it was sold to his brother-in-law Juho (Jooseppi's son) Meriläinen, who was married to Brita, sister of Elias.

Juho (Jöns's son) got to see five of his daughters married. Kaisa brought home a son-in-law Matti (Matti's son) from Järvilä in 1775. Anna was taken to Antti (Jaakko's son) Vintturi in 1777. Kaustinen got it's chapel church the same year. Maria was married in 1783 to Heikki (Matti's son) Björknäs and Leena was married to Juho (Antti's son) Kentala 1785. Brita was married to above mentioned Juho Meriläinen in 1790. Susanna, youngest of the children, had to go to Varila to be wife to a widower Abraham (Markku's son) in 1793. Susanna became mother of the famous village musician “Markku's Joonas”.

Elias was master (of Vanhatalo) between years 1815-1839. He was the last patriarch and governed his household. Yet in 1824 there were 37 members in the family table. The hirelings weren't counted. He was married to Maria (Mikko's daughter) Tunkkari, brought to the house at the age of 17 when Elias was 20-years-old. They had four sons and two daughters.

### **Fighting with the priest**

It all could have gone well, but Elias's oldest sons Taneli and Mikko had banded together to drink alcohol with Iisakki Hedberg, current assistant vicar of Kaustinen. The priest was a friend of folk music. He used to organize dancing contests to the young and the best dancer was awarded. Taneli and Mikko were the referees.

*One time this type of contest was held at Markku Varila's house, which was home of the brothers' aunt Susanna. It was Saturday evening and Susanna was busy baking bread. The drunk priest ordered the dance to start.*

*There was a brewery in Varila and the referees had pints of beer with them when judging the dancing. The priest had a club foot. When he thought someone did not know the right dancing steps he went to show them himself and kicked accidentally a pint of beer right towards Taneli.*

*Taneli was strong like a bear and also short-tempered. He instantly attacked the priest. Susanna had to intervene with her peel screaming: "For God's sake do not kill the priest!"*

*He later received paternal judgment for this as well as other things.*

The farm was only a size of ¼ mantal and it could only be shared in two at the most. When Lerbacka farm, size of a mantal, was auctioned in Alaveteli year 1824, Elias went there dressed modestly in frieze and a sack in his back. He bought the house but the auctioneers could not recognize the simple looking lad from Kaustinen as they asked: "How do you pay for your bid?"

Elias poured down the contents of his sack saying: "Will you count them!" There were a whole diversity of money, silver riksdaler, *banco* riksdaler<sup>16</sup>, rubles and different kinds of state's debt notes. But the price of the house was collected of them and some were left over as well. The farm was given to the third son, Juho Jaakko, whose wife was Maria Kattilakoski. The fourth of the sons, Joonas, married Anna (Joonas's daughter) Nikula, went to be son-in-law and ended up being master of the house.

Joonas is mentioned as master builder. He had to compete with the church builder Jaakko Kuorikoski aka "Jaakko the Great". In a way this was also a competition between a descendant of a spinning wheel master and a descendant of a cartwheel master. Jaakko Kuorikoski had started to build a new parsonage to Kaustinen in 1831. Before proceeding to the roof the parishioners criticized him for making the walls too thin and poorly construed that the contractor quit his work.

An unbiased expert confirmed that the work was useless. The contractor would have to repair it and pay the lumbers to the congregation. The amount of money he was sentenced to pay was 239 riksdaler, which he could only pay in installments with the help of his father-in-law who acted as surety for him.

Year 1837 congregation gave the piecework to Joonas Nikula-Wirkkala. He finished the building the same year to please the congregation. Jaakko Kuorikoski had built the church of Halsua when he was at confirmation class, but the roof was also weak since Joonas had to rebuild it twenty years later in 1848.

Maria, the older daughter of Elias married Jaakko (Taneli's son) Huntus. The man was blacksmith and organ builder. Their son Aleksanteri also built and tune up organs around the area. He married Anna Liisa (Taneli's daughter) Wirkkala, who sang folksongs and played Finnish zither circling around country to publicize the zither music of Kaustinen. This happened before Kreetta Haapasalo, whose peer and friend Anna was.

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16 The money of the State Bank was called by name "*banco*" at the time due to Gustav III money reform.

It has already been mentioned about Margareta that she went to Peltoniemi to be wife to a verger Juho Hintrekinpoika (Hintrek's son).

The oldest sons Taneli and Mikko stayed home waiting for the distribution of estate. Uusitalo<sup>17</sup> was built for one brother, but for which one? That was a question indeed. Taneli's son Joonas had started drinking with the boys of the parsonage especially after the priest had died. Isakki was a musician and a tailor and Jaakoppi an idler, both of those boys had been kicked out of school in Vaasa.

*When uncle Joonas was building the new parsonage in winter of 1837, the boys were boozing in the old parsonage and Junno of the "Pikku-klumppi" was there as well.*

*Joonas and Junno were heading back home that moonlit night and decided to take a shortcut across the church land. Back then the dead were buried in the winter graves which were chambers above the ground. These chambers were on the left to the direction of the boys' shortcut. When they arrived at the church gate in the Ali-Kentala's side, Junno shouted towards the winter graves: "Come and see us you moldy noses, we're boys that aren't scared!"*

*They got pass the church and then suddenly all nine of the doors of the winter graves were opened and a steam-like mass was pushed out. Boys made a run for it. They ran for their lives approximately eight kilometers. They felt like there were noises and groaning behind them all the way.*

*They tried misguiding the dead to the winter road in Puhkionluoma where there is a road towards Wirkkala. That was not helping. The flight continued across the iced river towards the Vanhatalo shore. Joonas was better runner so he threw himself hiding into a fish-pit in the yard. From there he could see the ice was empty and Junno running for his life. As Junno made it there as well he saw the empty ice, and started shaking like a malaria patient and stayed that way until his death.*

*According to the story both Joonas and Jaakoppi were in love with Kreeta, Jaakko Järvilä's daughter, and that night they decided to swap the bride.*

The wedding of Joonas and Kreeta was held in Vanhatalo in midsummer of the same year and the bride was dressed to her finest ("i full skrud" in swedish). Her parents had secretly paid 1½ riksdaler to the church since the first child was born three months too early!

Elias heard about this scandal during the wedding and after the wedding Taneli and whole of his family had to move out of Vanhatalo. They did not move to Uusitalo because Elias exchanged it to the farm of Antti Huntus and Taneli had to go to Huntus along with the newlyweds and the also had to change their names to Huntus.

Taneli took this so hard that he sold his farm and moved to Toholampi where he started using the name Wirkkala again. That's how the Wirkkala village in Toholampi got its name.

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<sup>17</sup> Uusitalo = "New House"

Mikko inherited Vanhatalo. He was married to **Kaisa (Antti's daughter) Manderbacka** who spoke Swedish. Mikko was the master between years 1840-1855 and Kaisa 1855-1862.

### **Floods and drought taxes**

Elias Wirkkala died in 20.12.1839. In his last spring a great flood spreaded across Ostrobothnia. The water in Perhonjoki rose so high that the flood reached the houses in low-lying shores in Wirkkala. Above Mosala rapid the stream started to break a channel. The houses located near the break were in danger. The corrosion had to be filled with all the stones from the stone walls of the village.

The houses were saved, but they needed to be relocated for safety reasons. So were Alitalo houses relocated to Mikonkangas and Iso-Klumppi. The two Vanhatalo buildings steadfastly stood on their place even though the flood mangled the shores.

Taneli's son Joonas and Kreeta Järvilä ended up after different phases in Haapasalo of Veteli, from where Kreeta left after the "stone-summer" of 1853 to make a living by singing and playing Finnish zither. All the growth had withered and died during that summer.

Kreeta made people love folk song by performing across Finland and abroad in St. Petersburg and Stockholm. The constant setbacks in land trades and farm settling of her husband Joonas and a flock of 11 children were Kreeta's biggest concerns. These made her sing her way to peoples' hearts and she was understood. Even though her playing was not that extraordinary, she had a beautiful voice and an unforgettable way to perform. Joonas and Kreeta eventually moved to Varkaus. Kreeta died in Jyväskylä and her grave is in cemetery of Taulumäki.

### **Son carries his father home**

Mikko of Vanhatalo had four daughters and two sons. Oldest of the daughters, **Leena**, was married to Heikki (Gabriel's son) in Puumala village. His husband became a justice. Other daughter, **Maria**, married a gun-/ clock smith and organ builder **Abraham Björk** in 1832. Abraham built several home organs and also the first cuckoo clock of the parish. Their son **Abram** was one of the first students of the Jyväskylä seminar and first teacher of Perniö elementary school. In local home museum there is a special "teacher Björk's room", where there is organ of the Finnby church that is still functioning, made by the teacher himself.

Daughter **Liisa** was married to Jaakko Kaustinen and **Greta** to Liedes from Halsua. Older of the sons **Elias** inherited the house. His wife was **Maria Viitala**, who was also a descendent of Jaakko (Matti's son) Wirkkala who moved from Seksmanni house to Viitala to be son-in-law.

Elias Wirkkala was the last professional cartwheel maker in the family. His achievement was manufacturing a pair of cartwheels in 18 hours. By that time the wheel master was taken from house to house. Elias ended up in a house where there were German cockroaches which he hated the most. He did not rest or eat during those 18 hours that he worked his guts out to get out of the house.

Elias suffered from his father's craving for liquor. He had read his master builder uncle Renqvist's books including "The horror of alcohol". By the time people used to spend "liquor funerals". In one winter Elias found his father Mikko lying on a ditch drunk after a "liquor funeral". He carried the old

man home, threw him to bed and said: "I'll take care that my son won't have to get me home in such state!"

That was an abstinence promise that lasted for several generations.

Younger son **Juho** married Greta (Juho's daughter) Kentala and stayed home until the final distribution of estate, after which they moved to Halsua. There they bought one of the Meriläinen houses in 1863.

### **Continuators of work of Elias and Maria**

Elias (Mikko's son) was the master between years 1862-1894. In his time Vanhatalo was rebuilt in 1868. The former building that was located in the direction of the river was sold to Kristofferi from Alaveteli. The married couple had three sons and two daughters. While their parents were still living they decided to share their inheritance as such: oldest son **Kalle** gets the house, next son **Juho** gets 500 marks and is taught to tailoring and the youngest son **Matti** is educated to become a schoolteacher. Both of the daughters will get 200 marks.

So it happened. Daughter **Leena Kaisa** married tanner **Joonas Wirkkala** and they moved to Astoria in 1892. **Emma** married Kalle Kemppainen from Särönsniemi.

Kalle married Maria (Matti's daughter) from Juoperi, but he got to be the master only from december of 1894 until January of 1899 when an appendicitis ended his life. The housewife was left to take care of the house, which Kalle had bequeathed before his death. The children managed to revoke the will later.

Juho bought Syrjälä farm in Wirkkala but after fallen out with his spouse (**Marjaana Hautakoski**) he was forced to go to America where he stayed for nearly six years. After his wife gave birth to a child outside marriage Juho returned to Kaustinen and applied for a divorce, which was the first one in the family. In 1889 he remarried **Anna-Liisa (Matti's daughter) Kentala**.

Matti who went to the seminar started using name Manner and married **Hilma (Jaakko's daughter) Sillanpää** from Veteli. Their sons switched back to using name Wirkkala.

Many branches of the family have lost their original name and are using different names. They are all still Virkkalas in essence. Researching the family gives an impression that nearly half of the family are nowadays Swedish-speaking in Teerijärvi, Alaveteli, Kruunupyy, Kaarlela and further away.

America has swallowed a great deal of Virkkalas. A headstone put up in Vanhatalo mansion in 400-year celebration is brought up by the donations of the Virkkalas of Naselle, Deep River and Rosburg.