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*Did You know that*  
*that the Kingdom of Setomaa*  
*lies Estonia's southeast corner?*

Living where East meets West, Seto people also call themselves the King's people or a *vool* (free) people. The country is ruled by Peko, the Seto fertility god. On the first Saturday of August, King Peko calls together his people in Setomaa from everywhere and the Seto Kingdom is visited by the President of the Republic of Estonia, who is received by the *ülembsootska*.

Tiesitkö, että Viron kaakkoiskulmassa sijaitsee Seton kuningaskunta?

Idän ja lännen risteyksessä sijaitsevat setukaiset kutsuvat itseään myös kuninkaan kansaksi tai *vool'a* (vapaaksi) kansaksi. Maata hallitsee kuningas Peko, setukaisten hedelmällisyyden jumala. Elokuun ensimmäisenä lauantaina kuningas Peko kutsuu kansansa kaikkialta Setomaalle ja silloin setukaisten kuningaskunnassa vieraillee myös Viron tasavallan presidentti, jonka vastaanottaa *setukaisten johtaja*.

Знаете ли вы, что в Эстонии есть королевство, называется оно Сетуское и находится на юго-востоке страны?

Народ сету, живущий на стыке востока и запада Эстонии, называет себя свободным, но подданным короля. Территорией сету управляет король Пеко, бог плодородия сетусцев. В первую субботу августа король Пеко созывает со всех уголков мира свой народ на Землю сету (Setomaa), и тогда в королевство прибывает в гости президент Эстонской Республики, которого принимает сельский старейшина.

Kas teadsid, et Eesti kagunurgas asub Seto Kuningriik?

Ida ja lääne kokkupuutepunktis elav Seto rahvas kutsub ennast ka kuningarahvaks või *vool'a* (vabaks) rahvaks. Maad valitseb kuningas Peko, setode viljakusjumal. Augustikuu esimesel laupäeval kutsub kuningas Peko kõikjalt oma rahva Setomaale kokku ja siis on Seto Kuningriigis külas ka Eesti Vabariigi president, keda võtab vastu *ülemsootska*.



White and red are the native colours of the Seto people and also grace their flag.



On that day, the people elect the next year's *Setomaa ülembsootska*, the King's surrogate on earth. Peko himself is resting in the caves of the Monastery at Pechory and may only be wakened if a major disaster is about to strike Setomaa. So far, he has been appearing in the dreams of the *ülembsootska*.

The title is for life, and all the *sootskad* together form the *Seto Kuningriigi Kroonikogo* (Crown Council of the Seto Kingdom). Celebrations in the Kingdom always begin with the arrival of the *ülembsootska* and the Kroonikogo.



The elections of the *ülembsootška* are the most democratic in the world, with people lining up in front of their chosen candidate. The person in front of whom the longest line assembles will be Peko's next surrogate on Earth.



Celebrations in the Kingdom are concluded by a parade of the Seto military forces. It is a way to swear loyalty to King Peko and to the newly elected *ülembsootška*.



Peko's wish is that his people should not forget their ancient skills. That way, on the day of the election of the *iilembsootska*, those best at singing, dancing and playing an instrument, crafts, making native dishes (bread and cottage cheese) and brewing native beverages (beer and *handsa*) are identified. The title *Seto kuninga meister* (Seto King's Master) is conferred on the winners.



More than a thousand years old, the Seto tradition of multiple voices singing – *leelo* – has been included on the UNESCO’s List of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Seto woman – bearer of the *leelo*. A good songstress can generate song lyrics as she sings, and such chanterers are called “song mothers”.



Folk religion has become so interwoven with Orthodox Christianity that a new term – Seto Orthodox Christianity – has been coined. In autumn, heads of households draw ‘blood lots’ to pick one who will be entrusted with the safe-keeping of Peko’s statue. There is running and jostling until someone’s blood is drawn first – that person will be the master of Peko for a year.





The capital of Setomaa is Pechory. Built in the 15th century, the Orthodox Monastery played a major role in the conversion of the Setos to Christianity. On Lady Day, the name day of the Monastery, many Setos go there, always attending their own church, the Church of St Barbara.



Small village chapels, *tsäissonad*, are an integral part of the Orthodox cultural space.



The name day holidays of Setomaa's churches and *tsässonad* end with a merry village shindig called *kirmane*. There are enough of them to last from Easter until late autumn.



The slopes of 'Lauluema' boast scenic views of Obinitsa Reservoir.