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A borrowed jubilee: university anniversary rituals as cultural transfer at the University of Tartu

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses the emergence of the anniversary celebration tradition of the University of Tartu in the nineteenth century. It argues that these jubilees were not the result of local innovation but of institutional and cultural borrowing from the German academic world. Focusing on the university's first jubilees in 1827 and 1852, the study demonstrates that their rituals, such as religious services, academic ceremonies, festive banquets and student torchlight processions, closely followed a well-established jubilee model that had been developed in German universities since the early modern period. However, a comparison with anniversary practices at universities in the Russian Empire, particularly Moscow University, demonstrates that this model was not universal. Rather, jubilees functioned as a marker of cultural affiliation, enabling the University of Tartu to affirm its identity as a 'German university' within the Russian Empire.

1. Introduction

Reflecting in 1609 on the uniqueness of the occasion at the bicentenary of Leipzig University, the theologian and clergyman Johann Mülmann (1573–1613) observed:

'None among us has previously been present at this place, nor will anyone ever experience it again, however young he may be, in such a way that it might be held a second time: for it is an event that occurs only once in a hundred years. Therefore, we are all present here now for the first and the last time.'[1] (Mülmann 1609, p. 5).

This observation points to the paradox of university jubilees: they are events perceived simultaneously as singular and unique, yet at the same time belong to the realm of institutionally recurring rituals. University anniversaries, on the one hand, offer hope that the institution will endure for at least an equally long period in the future; on the other hand, the temporally bound human being is able to witness such a grand occasion only once in a lifetime, if at all.

University jubilees constitute a long-standing and taken-for-granted tradition within European academic culture and may, in the first instance, be understood as an impetus to recall an institution's foundation and its historical longevity. Owing to their cyclical recurrence, they also shape a specific conception of time through which jubilee celebrations reproduce themselves (Drüding 2014, p. 25). Reinhart Koselleck (2014, pp. 100, 105) has described this mechanism as a 'structure of repetition', by means of which a cultural practice gradually acquires an increasingly normative and self-evident status over time. In this sense, a jubilee does not merely mark the passage of time but creates an ordered temporal framework within which past, present, and future are placed into a meaningful relationship (Erdle 2018, p. 70). Albrecht Ritschl (1978, p. 288) linked the increasing frequency of jubilee celebrations primarily to a need for self-reflection. University jubilees provide opportunities for self-affirmation, retrospection, and historical orientation.

The University of Tartu will celebrate its next jubilee in 2032, marking the 400th anniversary of its foundation. Preparations for this distinguished event are already underway (Tartu Ülikooli Muuseum 2024, pp. 5–6; Tartu Ülikool 2026), and expectations are naturally high.

[1] '… keiner vnter vns zuvor an dem Ort gehalten/ wirds auch keiner wider erleben/ er sey gleich so jung als er wolle/ das es zum andern mal gehalten werden: Denn es ist ein Begeng-niß/ daß in hundert Jahren einmal geschieht: Darum sind wir jetzt alle dabey das erste und letzte mal.'

'Our task is to reflect on the past in an open manner and to plan the future boldly. We must ensure that the university remains as relevant as ever when it celebrates its 500th anniversary', observed the organisers of the event (Tartu Ülikooli Muuseum 2025).

The aim of this article is to take an open approach to history. We ask: what elements does the University of Tartu's anniversary tradition consist of, and how has it been formed? We argue that this tradition is not an example of local innovation but rather of institutional copying, influenced by operating within the German cultural sphere.

For this reason, our focus is primarily on the first jubilees celebrated during the period of the Imperial University of Tartu (1802–1918).[2] The Swedish era academies[3] are not addressed, as they were too short-lived to reach the stage of jubilee celebrations. In contrast, the university's development following its re-establishment in 1802 proceeded with comparatively few major interruptions, despite several social upheavals in the intervening period. Consequently, it is possible to speak of long-term continuity and the transmission of university traditions from the early nineteenth century to the present day, as a recent study on the custom of torchlight processions at the University of Tartu has noted (M. Vanamölder 2025). In the case of the Imperial University of Tartu, its close ties with Germany,[4] particularly during the first half of the nineteenth century, have been emphasised (Hiio 2020). For this reason, we primarily compared the university jubilees held in Tartu with descriptions of anniversary celebrations at universities within the German cultural sphere of the period.

The jubilee reports, which were printed by the universities themselves shortly after the conclusion of the festivities, proved to be a particularly important source.[5] Containing not only detailed listings of events but also summaries of speeches delivered, lists of invited guests and promoted doctoral candidates, notices of musical works performed and the full texts of verses recited during the celebrations, these reports constitute highly information-rich material. They also describe decorations, costumes and similar elements. However, it should be noted that these reports are a form of contemporary self-presentation by the organiser (i.e. the university), intended to emphasise the success of the event. The archival material relating to the Imperial University of Tartu is extensive yet fragmentary. For example, the file containing materials from the 1827 jubilee no longer exists,[6] and apparently no material was collected separately for later jubilees. While the correspondence, minutes, and similar documents would doubtless reveal interesting details (Dhondt and Tamul 2011, p. 63), they are not of primary importance for the present research question.

Although the historiography of the University of Tartu is extremely extensive, its traditions and festive practices have received relatively little attention and are rarely treated comprehensively. It must also be acknowledged that the university and its anniversary practices have largely been considered unique, with detailed attention devoted to individual events while models and influences have not been systematically sought.[7] The most thorough study of the nineteenth-century jubilees is probably still Roderich von Engelhardt's work (1933), which is now almost a century old. Pieter Dhondt and Sirje Tamul (2011) also addressed anniversaries in their overview of the university's fiftieth jubilee. Lea Leppik (2016) analysed the University of Tartu and its anniversaries as '*lieux de mémoire*'. In contrast, university jubilees in Germany (and elsewhere) have been extensively studied, both as part of the internal histories of institutions of higher education and as broader cultural phenomena. Notable works include those by Winfried Müller (2004, 2020), as well as studies by Marian Füssel (2010) and Pieter Dhondt (Dhondt 2011; Dhondt 2015), to name a few.

The most recent jubilee (375 years) was celebrated in Tartu on a grand scale from 4 to 6 October 2007, and the festivities comprised multiple elements. Introspective events included a ceremonial assembly and a religious service; activities directed at the wider public consisted of a torchlight procession and a mystery play; guests were entertained at a gala, and a celebration was organised for students. Conferences were held, commemorative plaques and monuments were unveiled, trees were planted, deceased colleagues were commemorated, and a wide range of other activities took place (Tartu Ülikool 2009). The aim of this text is to identify the origins of these elements.

2. The jubilee model: Tartu 1827 and 1852

The Imperial University of Tartu celebrated three jubilees: its 25th (1827), 50th (1852), and 100th (1902) anniversaries (von Engelhardt 1933, pp. 447–477). In 1877, due to the ongoing Russo-Turkish War (1877–1878), public celebrations planned for the 75th anniversary were cancelled (von Engelhardt 1933, p. 476; Leppik 2016, p. 250). In the following discussion, a more detailed examination of the first two jubilees and the

[2] Understandably, the University of Tartu has borne different names during its various historical periods, as has the city of Tartu (e.g. *Tartu–Dorpat–Юрьев*). While we are aware of this historical variation, for the sake of clarity the present article consistently uses the toponym Tartu only, including in reference to the university across its different periods of existence. In this respect, we adhere to the University of Tartu's current historiographical interpretation. See, for example: https://ut.ee/en/content/history-university-tartu.

[3] *Academia Gustaviana* (1632–1665) and *Academia Gustavo-Carolina* (1690–1710).

[4] In the current paper, 'Germany' primarily refers to a cultural sphere that broadly aligns with the former territory of the Holy Roman Empire (*Altes Reich*). Unless stated otherwise, it is neither a political nor a geographical designation.

[5] See, for example: *Das erste Jubelfest der Kaiserlichen Universität Dorpat, fünfundzwanzig Jahre nach ihrer Gründung gefeiert am 12. December 1827; Das zweite Jubelfest der Kaiserlichen Universität Dorpat: fünfzig Jahre nach ihrer Gründung gefeiert am 12. und 13. December 1852.*

[6] (RA)EAA.402.7.55: Programme, Berichte und Vorträge zum ersten Jubelfest der Universität. Drucksachen, 1827.

[7] See, for example, the 2025 annual conference of the University of Tartu Museum: https://muuseum.ut.ee/et/aastakonverents2025.

elements of their celebrations as events that created and consolidated tradition is presented.

2.1. The 25th anniversary – the establishment of a norm

The celebrations commenced on Monday, 12 December, at eight o'clock in the morning, when the university's academic staff and teaching body congregated at the provincial gymnasium.[8] Representatives of the Chancellery official (*Kanzellei-Beamten*), arriving from St Petersburg, greeted them on behalf of the curator and emperor Nicholas I. The emperor bestowed honours upon distinguished members of the faculty. The rector, Professor Gustav von Ewers (1779–1830), was promoted in rank to Active State Councillor (*действительный статский советник*), and other decorations were also conferred. Thereafter, a solemn procession, accompanied by the ringing of church bells, proceeded to the nearby St John's Church for a religious service. The ceremony centred on a sermon delivered by Gottlieb Eduard Lenz (1788–1829), a professor of theology, which concluded with intercessory prayers for the imperial household and the university (*Das erste Jubelfest*… 1828, pp. V–VI; von Engelhardt 1933, p. 461).

Following the church service, the participants proceeded to the university's main building, whose assembly hall quickly filled with approximately 1400 attendees. The ceremonial assembly commenced with the solemn entrance of the rector, professors, and other members of the academic community, who entered the hall in pairs according to faculty. The university's charter of foundation, which was personally signed by emperor Alexander I in 1802, was carried in on a red velvet cushion. In addition, a report printed by the University Council and publicly presented, providing an account of the institution's current state, was displayed in a richly bound volume[9] (*Das erste Jubelfest*… 1828, pp. V–VII).

The ceremony commenced with Mozart's *Te Deum*. The rector then delivered an overview of the university's history, after which a four-part choral performance was given. Professor Georges-Frédéric Parrot (1767–1852) then delivered an academic address on the intellectual development of humankind and responsibility. This was followed by the conferment of honorary doctorates, after which the winners of the students' scientific competition were announced. The ceremonial assembly was brought to a close with the reading of a letter from the university's curator, Prince Carl Lieven (1767–1844), in which he expressed imperial recognition of the university as a whole. Representing the University Council, Professor of Medicine Johann Friedrich Erdmann (1778–1846) delivered a speech of gratitude, and the proceedings concluded with Handel's *Hallelujah* (*Das erste Jubelfest*… 1828, pp. VI–VII; von Engelhardt 1933, pp. 461–462).

At four o'clock in the afternoon, the rector hosted a banquet in a building adjacent to the main edifice[10] for 180 invited guests. These included 'the most respected inhabitants of Tartu from all social classes'[11], visiting dignitaries and twenty students. The rector proposed toasts to the emperor, the Imperial House and the advancement of education, particularly within the local educational district (*Das erste Jubelfest*... 1828, p. XI). The official, university-organised part of the celebrations then came to an end, after which the initiative passed to the townspeople, and above all to the students.

In the evening, the houses of Tartu were festively illuminated at the expense of the townspeople. In addition, the main building was adorned with illuminated tableaux made of lamps and Latin dedications to Alexander I and Nicholas I. A particularly striking visual element was the torchlight procession: 'The students arrived [in front of the main building – M.V., K.V.] in a splendid torchlight procession accompanied by a choir. They sang *Vivat academia* and then greeted the rector with shouts of "long live" at his residence and burned the torches, piled together in the market square, into a single glowing bonfire.'[12] On 13 December, the students organised a ball that was well attended and representative. On the subsequent day, 135 former students hosted a ceremonial luncheon for professors, honorary guests and other students, where the mood was enlivened by song, and the rector proposed a toast in honour of the university and the curator (*Das erste Jubelfest*… 1828, pp. XI–XII).

To commemorate the 25th anniversary, numerous scholarly and representative publications were released, documenting the university's achievements during its first twenty-five years and underscoring its significance for the Russian Empire (*Das erste Jubelfest*… 1828, pp. XII–XIV; Leppik 2016, p. 248).

2.2.The 50th anniversary – the consolidation of the norm

The programme of the 1852 celebrations incorporated almost all the elements that had already been included in the 1827 programme. It is evident that this jubilee held greater significance than its predecessor: 'The university was experiencing a period of significant prosperity, having weathered challenging years and being in a position to adopt a forward-looking perspective. A significant number of scholars from various disciplines had congregated to extend their congratulations and gratitude to their alma mater' (von Engelhardt 1933, p. 466).

As previously, the events were spread over the course of several days. 10 and 12 December were designated as semi-official preliminary days. On these occasions, the university's jubilee committee was responsible for the welcome and

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[8] The present-day Hugo Treffner Gymnasium at Munga 12 / Rüütli 20.

[9] *Die Kaiserliche Universität zu Dorpat. Fünfundzwanzig Jahre nach ihrer Gründung*. Dorpat MDCCCXXVII. Dorpat, Johann Christian Schünmann, 1827.

[10] In the report 'Löwenstern House', today better known as the 'von Bock House', Ülikooli 16.

[11] 'Die angesehnsten Einwohner Dorpats aller Stände...'

[12] 'Die Studierenden kamen in glänzendem Fackelzuge, und sangen, von einem Musik-Chore begleitet, das Vivat academia, brachten dem Rector vor dessen Wohnung ein Lebehoch und verbrannten ihre Fackelreste, zu Einer Glut geschürt, auf dem Marktplatze.'

entertainment of the arriving guest delegations. In turn, the delegations conveyed greetings and presented gifts. On the day itself (12 December), proceedings commenced with the reception of guests, followed by a solemn procession (ringing of church bells, etc.) to the St John's Church for a service (*Das zweite Jubelfest*… 1853, pp. IV–XIX; von Engelhardt 1933, pp. 467–469). From that point, a ceremonial procession, with musical accompaniment, proceeded to the university's assembly hall for the formal ceremony. It is evident that the university's charter of foundation was once again carried in and placed in a position of honour as regalia. The ensuing ceremony was oriented primarily towards the state: the rector delivered a speech lasting an hour and a half, in which he provided an overview of the university's development over the course of half a century and expressed gratitude to the emperor and the Ministry of Education for their support of the university. Greetings from the curator, the Minister of Public Education, and the emperor were read aloud. Finally, the winners of the 1852 students' scientific competition were announced (*Beschreibung der Festlichkeiten*... 1852, p. 4; *Das zweite Jubelfest*… 1853, pp. XX–XXVII; von Engelhardt 1933, pp. 469–471).

A ceremonial luncheon was held on 12 December following the formal assembly for approximately 200 invited guests at a restaurant situated on the banks of the river. The rector proposed a toast to the emperor and the Imperial House, and observed a moment of silence in memory of Alexander I. In addition, glasses were raised in praise of the university and the educational institutions of the educational district (*Beschreibung der Festlichkeiten*… 1852, p. 5; *Das zweite Jubelfest*… 1853, pp. XXVII–XXX).

On the following day, the academic proceedings continued in the assembly hall with a ceremony of a more explicitly academic character. At this event, the professor of astronomy Johann Heinrich von Mädler (1794–1847) delivered an academic address, after which the rector announced the university's new honorary members[13] (*Das zweite Jubelfest*… 1853, pp. XXXI–XXXIII). The selection of guests reflected the university's established practice of incorporating into jubilee rituals both official representatives of the empire and individuals connected through academic networks (Dhondt and Tamul 2011, p. 66).

As had been the case twenty-five years earlier, the evening concluded with an illumination of the entire city, centred on the university's main building, the teaching buildings on Toome Hill (*Domberg*) and the town hall. In front of the six columns of the university's main building, a classical triumphal arch was specially erected for the occasion, with a pediment adorned with Doric columns, state symbols and other allegorical figures. As had become customary, the highlight of the evening was the torchlight procession of students arriving to pay their respects to the main building, accompanied by the customary shouts of *Vivat academia*. Thereafter, the procession recommenced its journey to the town hall square, where the torches were consumed in a collective bonfire, thus marking the culmination of the festivities. These celebrations continued both in the square itself and in the city's taverns and social clubs (*Das zweite Jubelfest*... 1853, pp. XXX–XXXI). According to other reports, a ball or a similar grand gathering also took place that same evening (Becker 1933, p. 222; von Engelhardt 1933, p. 473).

In a largely similar manner, though without a torchlight procession, the jubilee was also celebrated in several parts of the city on the following evening (13 December), preceded by a ceremonial concert in the university's assembly hall. After this, on 14 December, the university's curator Gustav von Craffström (1784–1854) hosted an event for the guests. In addition, smaller receptions and social gatherings were held at various locations throughout the town (*Beschreibung der Festlichkeiten*… 1852, pp. 22–24; *Das zweite Jubelfest*… 1853, pp. XXXIII–XXXIV).

As was the case previously, a number of representative publications were issued for the jubilee, including a survey of the university's history[14] and the inaugural *Album Academicum*.[15] In these volumes, the University of Tartu was constructed above all as a *Landesuniversität* – the cultural and educational centre of the Baltic provinces (Leppik 2016, p. 248). The historical narrative emphasised the institution's continuity and loyalty to imperial authority, as well as its role in educating the German and local social strata. The jubilee publications swiftly gained authoritative status and, during the second half of the nineteenth century, came to define the perception of the University of Tartu's history.

2.3. Rituals and public space

Based on the two jubilees described above, it is evident that the fundamental components of the University of Tartu's anniversary tradition were established during the first celebration and have largely remained unchanged to this day. The religious service, the ceremonial assembly and the banquet for invited guests can be considered the exclusive elements of the celebration organised by the university itself. These events provided opportunities for reflection, honouring state authority and exchanging greetings. The public torchlight procession through the town, organised by students to honour the university and the rector, was an expression of student tradition that was also incorporated into the official programme of the festivities. Typically, students did not organise torchlight processions for December anniversaries. The only exceptions were made for the jubilees of 1827 and 1852 (M. Vanamölder 2025, p. 41). During the jubilee celebrations, students also raised funds to purchase a more

[13] Honorary members of the university are evidently not entirely equivalent to honorary doctors. For example, von Engelhardt (1933, pp. 461, 472) clearly distinguishes between the honorary doctorate (*Doktor-Ehrendiplom*) awarded at the 1827 jubilee ceremony and the honorary members (*Ehrenmitglieder*) announced in 1852; see also Tamul (2011, p. 66).

[14] Theodor Beise, *Die Kaiserliche Universität Dorpat während der ersten fünfzig Jahre ihres Bestehens und Wirkens: Denkschrift zum Jubelfeste am 12ten und 13ten December 1852*. Dorpat, 1852.

[15] *Album Academicum der Kaiserlichen Universität Dorpat: zur Jubel-Feier ihres funfzigjährigen Bestehens am 12. December 1852*. Dorpat, E. J. Karow, 1853.

elaborate frame for the emperor's portrait (Dhondt and Tamul 2011, p. 65).

Although the elements were very similar, the tone of the first two jubilees differed. While the first could be seen as an assertion of a relatively new institution, by the time of the second, the 50-year-old university had already become a mature institution. Both jubilees took place during the reign of emperor Nicholas I (1825–1855), but the first occurred at the start of his reign, when memories of the university's foundation and its founder, Alexander I, were still fresh. The second took place at the end of his reign, when Russia had already become considerably more centralised. According to Villu Tamul (2007a, p. 120), at the University of Tartu, the period from 1835 to 1854 is also seen as a time of reaction, the first serious attempt at Russification. This undoubtedly affected the atmosphere surrounding the 50th anniversary celebrations. Among other things, both student organisations and other forms of public student festivities, including torchlight processions, had been prohibited by that time. However, for the jubilee, the curator made an exception that permitted public student participation, establishing students as partners in organising the celebration (M. Vanamölder 2024, pp. 57–59).

The programme for the University of Tartu's 100th anniversary celebrations in 1902, by which time it had been renamed Yur'ev University (1893), emphasised the university's re-establishment in 1802 and its development over the course of a century. The jubilee festivities aimed to highlight the university's historical continuity and its position within the educational and scholarly system of the Russian Empire. The jubilee day began with ceremonial gatherings in and around the university buildings, attended by university leaders, professors, invited guests and townspeople. To mark the occasion, both the university buildings and the town were decorated. However, the main emphasis of the celebrations remained on internal, institutionally organised university events. For example, no public student torchlight procession was organised. In connection with the jubilee, a symbolic architectural element was added to the university's main building, the onion dome of an Orthodox chapel, which was erected on the site of the former meteorological cabinet (Leppik 2016, p. 251).

3. The German university jubilee model

3.1. The Protestant university jubilee and its Catholic origin

The term *jubilee* derives from the Hebrew word *yōvēl* (ram's horn) and, in the biblical tradition, originally denoted the release of slaves and the remission of debts, together with a reaffirmation that the ultimate ownership belonged to God.[16] The jubilee year acquired a defined historical form in 1300, when Pope Boniface VII instituted the Holy Year (*Iubilaeum*), replacing a previously temporally indeterminate practice of indulgences with a regular system based on a fixed temporal cycle. From 1475 onwards, the Holy Year became associated with a quarter-century period (Müller 2020).

The Reformation led to a more systematic division of human life into periods, fundamentally altering people's perception of their relationship with time. It was in these circles that the practice of celebrating personal jubilees subsequently emerged, marking the beginning of a secular jubilee culture. Personal jubilees, in turn, provided an impetus for the development of an institutional culture of anniversaries (Müller 2020). While it was not yet possible to speak of large-scale jubilee celebrations at universities at the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, jubilee and century consciousness is evident in academic prints and lecture programmes from the universities of Erfurt (founded 1379), Basel (1460) and Ingolstadt (1472). These documents explicitly designate the anniversary year of each university as a jubilee year (Müller 2004, pp. 21–22).

When searching for the earliest university jubilees, attention should be directed towards the Protestant regions of Germany. The 100th or 200th anniversaries of the foundations of the universities in Heidelberg[17] (1386), Leipzig (1409), Tübingen (1477) and Wittenberg (1502) were marked by official celebrations organised expressly for that purpose. In Heidelberg, for instance, the Count Palatine's[18] court, the city and the university jointly celebrated the university's 200th anniversary as a jubilee for the first time with a ceremonial assembly on 30 November 1587[19] (Müller 2004, pp. 22–23; Düchting 2010, p. 18). The fact that Protestant universities adopted a temporal rhythm associated with the Catholic Holy Year for the purposes of self-representation was by no means obvious in the sixteenth century and needed to be justified. According to the argument developed by the universities in question, university anniversaries were to be celebrated as a truly evangelical jubilee festival derived solely from the Bible (and not Rome). Thus, with the first Protestant university jubilee celebrations, the connection with the Holy Year was severed, paving the way for the use of the jubilee year (Müller 2004, pp. 23–24).

The jubilee celebrations enabled universities that were originally founded as Catholic institutions, but were later reformed, to reappropriate their earlier history. This established them as venerable and authoritative institutions, whose legitimacy was guaranteed by their age. An activity that had been

[16] 'Count off seven sabbath years – seven times seven years – so that the seven sabbath years amount to a period of forty-nine years. Then have the trumpet sounded everywhere on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement sound the trumpet throughout your land. Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each of you is to return to your family property and to your own clan' (Lev. 25:8–10, NIV).

[17] Even though Heidelberg has never been exclusively Protestant.

[18] Frederick IV, Elector Palatine of the Rhine (1574–1610).

[19] The first Heidelberg jubilee was celebrated 'a year later', in 1587, to mark the election of the first rector, Marsilius of Inghen (c. 1340–1396), in 1387. However, at subsequent jubilees, the year 1386 was celebrated when the university was actually founded (Düchting 2010, p. 11).

measured in centuries became a success story within the memory culture of universities. In the numerous centres of the Holy Roman Empire, universities of different denominations viewed each other as rivals, and jubilee celebrations became an important and dignified means of self-presentation (Lind 2009, p. 309). As most German universities were directly associated with a territorial ruler[20], subsequent jubilee celebrations predominantly focused on honouring the local sovereign as the successor of the original founder and patron (Füssel 2010; Schreiber et al. 2025).

3.2. The jubilee in public space

Early modern jubilees were largely grounded in Christian liturgy, and ecclesiastical elements (religious services and the like) continued to occupy a significant place within the ceremonies. Concurrently, novel and secular forms were incorporated into jubilee celebrations, including grand processions honouring the ruler and the university, fireworks, illuminations, salutes and the erection of commemorative monuments (Angehrn 2010, p. 8). As time passed, events came to be viewed as increasingly linked to the public sphere and to urban space, a development that is characteristic of early modern processions in general (Kodres and Mänd 2013). The nineteenth century witnessed a further progression in the secularisation and expansion of processions, parades and jubilee celebrations, which increasingly took place in urban spaces, such as streets and squares (Müller 2004, pp. 32–33).

For example, the University of Giessen's 100th anniversary celebrations in 1707 took the form of a multi-day public event. These began on 17 October with the arrival of the heir to the throne,[21] who was greeted by a group of mounted students of noble origin and with an artillery salute, while the city garrison and citizens formed a guard of honour. The university also erected a special triumphal arch at its own expense (Lind 2009, p. 310). The festivities began with trumpets, bell-ringing and choral singing. The academic programme comprised a gathering of professors and Latin orations, followed by a public procession to the church for a religious service and a banquet. Jubilee medals were distributed to participants. Over the following days, various academic ceremonies were held, including the conferral of master's and doctoral degrees, as well as Latin and Greek speeches and disputations by students. The celebrations concluded on 21 October with a student serenade for the *rector magnificentissimus* (Lind 2009, pp. 311–313). Similarly, the University of Leipzig celebrated its 300th anniversary in 1709 with solemn religious services, ringing of church bells, music, public processions, academic assemblies, doctoral promotions and public disputations, although the patron did not attend (*Historische Beschreibung*… 1710, pp. 104–119).

To mark the 200th anniversary of the University of Würzburg in 1782, guests were greeted with artillery salutes upon their arrival. Representatives of Protestant universities were invited, and the festivities included ceremonial speeches, disputations and the presentation of achievements in the natural sciences in the form of demonstrations and public physics experiments. At the banquet, guests were served twenty-three different varieties of Franconian wine. The programme also included excursions and various artistic performances. The crowning finale of the celebrations was a ceremonial student procession followed by a grand ball. Guests, richly supplied with wine and presented with golden and silver jubilee coins, were once again sent on their way to the sound of honorary artillery fire (Universitätsarchiv… 2026). At Heidelberg's 400th anniversary in 1786, alongside traditional ecclesiastical and academic rites and processions, a ball for up to 2000 guests was organised. As an important visual element, the city was festively illuminated through the joint efforts (and at the expense) of citizens and members of the university (see, for example, *Sammlung aller*… 1787; Cser 2010, pp. 34–35).

In the eighteenth century, students began to play an increasingly active role in academic festivities and public ceremonies. Previously, they had tended to remain in the position of spectators (Zientara 2021, p. 325). Alongside serenades sung for the rector (Giessen in 1707), student processions grew in importance. Examples from the universities of Erfurt and Jena show that student torchlight processions were being used to mark important occasions by at least the 1730s (Müller 2007, pp. 124–125).

3.3. The German university jubilee model as a normative practice

Political and administrative reorganisation resulting from the Napoleonic Wars, together with the closure or reorganisation of some older universities (e.g. Helmstedt in 1810, Wittenberg in 1813 and Erfurt in 1816), left approximately twenty universities in the German territories by the first quarter of the nineteenth century – around one-third fewer than in the previous century (*Politisches Journal*… 1817, pp. 879–881; Krause 2004, pp. 95–96). In terms of student numbers, Halle (with around 730 students) and Göttingen (with around 600) were the largest, followed by Leipzig, Jena and Würzburg, each with around 400 students (Krause 2004, p. 95).

Wartime conditions were not conducive to jubilee celebrations. For instance, the planned 200th anniversary celebrations of the University of Giessen in 1807 were cancelled because French troops were quartered in the city, including in university buildings (Lind 2009, p. 313). Nevertheless, one of the most magnificent university jubilees took place in December 1809, when the University of Leipzig celebrated its 400th anniversary. This occurred at a time when parts of Saxony were occupied and the king[22] had fled the capital, Dresden (Krause 2004, p. 103). Representatives of the universities of Wittenberg, Jena and Halle were invited to participate in the festivities, which were announced to all German universities (Uhrbach 2024). The Leipzig jubilee brought together the university, the state, the city and the

[20] This is reflected in the names of universities, such as the Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, which was named after its founder, the Duke of Brunswick-Lüneburg, Georg August (1683–1760), also known as King George II of Great Britain.

[21] Louis VIII (1691–1768), Landgrave of Hesse-Darmstadt.

[22] Frederick Augustus I (1750–1827).

church, constituting a celebration that was both an internal university event and one directed towards the wider public.

On the eve of the principal day (4 December), a reception was held for the guests who had arrived, followed by a social gathering. At five o'clock the following morning, bells were rung in all the city's churches, a practice repeated for the next two hours. Thus, the entire city was awakened and drawn into the event. After the final ringing of the bells at seven o'clock, members of the university gathered at St Thomas Church, founded four hundred years earlier (Kreußler 1810, p. 9). This was followed by 'the most magnificent and resplendent procession that Leipzig had ever seen within its walls'[23] (Kreußler 1810, pp. 9–10). Accompanied by military music, around a thousand participants (including the university, military personnel, representatives of the territorial ruler, clergy, the Leipzig magistracy, urban estates, guests and others) moved in strict (social) order. The university itself occupied the central position. It was led by bedels (*Pedell*) carrying silver staffs and followed by the university's statutes and seal. Next came the *rector magnificus*, the faculties and the teaching staff. The rear section of the procession was formed by the students. On that day, all Leipzig students wore the university cockade (Kreußler 1810, pp. 10–15).

The procession continued to the university church, where a festive religious service and speeches were held. This was followed by a luncheon for 300 guests, accompanied by formal addresses and toasts to the king, the royal household, the university and the guests. In the evening, the halls, buildings and outdoor spaces were adorned with illuminations, allegorical representations and Latin epigrams linking the foundation of the university in 1409, its endurance over the centuries and the protection of the monarchy. Several poems and Latin texts written specially for the jubilee were performed (Kreußler 1810, pp. 21–25).

An integral part of the jubilee celebrations were the events organised by the students, such as banquets and other gatherings. The following day, the students held their first torchlight procession through the streets of Leipzig. Approximately two hundred torches were used for this purpose. Along the route, they stopped to sing and recite poems, chanting a jubilant threefold *vivat* for the king and his household. The procession then moved to the residence of the *rector magnificus*, where a salute (*Vivat academia*) was once again voiced in honour of the university and its head. The procession concluded with the ritual burning of the torches in the courtyard of the *Paulinum*,[24] 'according to ancient custom' (*nach alter Sitte*), accompanied by a solemn rendition of *Gaudeamus igitur*. This was followed by a ball attended by around 800 people (Kreußler 1810, pp. 30–36). There are clear connections between the later Tartu celebrations and the Leipzig jubilee.

The celebrations continued the next day, 6 December, with the solemn inauguration of the new philosophical seminar. The opening ceremony included Latin speeches, academic presentations and practical demonstrations. In the evening, students gathered for a ceremonial dinner attended by representatives of the Leipzig city magistracy, citizens, merchants and the military. Later, there was another torchlight procession. In the following days, several professors were greeted with ceremonial toasts accompanied by music. Unlike the preceding days, these events did not feature an extensive programme (Kreußler 1810, pp. 36–38).

The celebration of the 300th anniversary of the University of Marburg in July 1827 was even more strongly oriented towards the public. The four-day festivities followed a similar rhythm to the Leipzig jubilee in many respects. On the first and foremost day, the morning began with a religious service, after which a magnificent procession continued to the university's Great Auditorium for the ceremonial assembly. This was followed by an official luncheon, after which the celebrations spread throughout the city. The second day featured a church concert and a student torchlight procession in honour of the university leadership. Accompanied by music, the procession moved through the city centre and concluded with the torches being burned in the market square. The city's inhabitants had illuminated their houses in honour of the festivities. After the procession, the university hosted a ceremonial meal for the students. On the third day, religious services were held early in the morning. This was followed by a procession to the university church for a religious service. Participants then proceeded to the university auditorium, where speeches were delivered and academic promotions took place. The celebrations continued in the city and in public gardens in the afternoon and evening. In the evening, a grand ball organised by the city in honour of the students was held at the town hall. The ball was attended by university leaders, professors, students, townspeople and guests. On the fourth day, the final phase of the celebrations began outdoors with the participation of students and townspeople alike. Communal feasts were held, accompanied by music and dancing. Many participants continued the festivities until midnight, after which they returned to the city together, bringing the celebrations to a close with a final tribute to the university board (Frömbling 1828).

3.4. The pan-European jubilee

As is evident from the foregoing, the format of the formal, public jubilee celebration, with its fixed, traditional elements, had become firmly established at German universities by the mid-nineteenth century. Similarly, the University of Göttingen celebrated its 100th anniversary in September 1837 (Schreiner 2010, pp. 9–10), while the University of Königsberg marked the 300th anniversary of its foundation in August 1844 (Witt 1844). This set of practices spread throughout the German-speaking cultural sphere. In 1848, the German-language Charles University in Prague celebrated its 500th anniversary in a similar way (Ďurčanský and Dhondt 2015, p. 33), as did the University of Basel its 200th anniversary in

[23] '… der glänzendste und feierlichste Zug, den Leipzig je in seinen Mauern sah.'

[24] *Collegium Paulinum* (St Paul's College), one of the old colleges at the University of Leipzig, which included the original university church.

1860 (Angehrn 2010, pp. 14). This list could be extended to include the 200th anniversary of the University of Helsinki (1840), the 400th anniversary of Uppsala University (1877), the 300th anniversary of the University of Edinburgh (1884), the 450th anniversary of the University of Glasgow (1901) and the 500th anniversary of the University of St Andrews (1911) (Anderson 2011, p. 243). The jubilee celebrations of these universities adhered very closely to the same set of practices in their academic and ritual core. Central elements included solemn academic processions, most often directed towards a cathedral or collegiate church, religious services, degree ceremonies and official receptions hosted by university and municipal authorities. Student torchlight processions emphasised student visibility and participation in the festivities. In addition, balls, banquets, concerts and other social events formed part of the programme, with somewhat greater variation in these components.

The examples presented show that university jubilee celebrations developed into a recognisable, pan-European commemorative tradition from the early modern period onwards. This custom persisted until at least the end of the nineteenth century, although its intensity, emphases and individual elements could vary over time and across different locations. These celebrations were not peculiar to individual universities nor traditions that emerged by chance or in isolation; rather, they were an institutional formula adapted to political circumstances, the possibilities of urban spaces and the expectations of academic audiences. Interruptions, cancelled celebrations (e.g. Giessen in 1807) and unsuccessful commemorations (e.g. Innsbruck in 1877) do not call this practice into question; rather, they demonstrate its normative force. It is within this European context that the jubilee celebrations of the University of Tartu must also be understood. Nothing uniquely original was 'invented' in Tartu in 1827 and 1852; rather, an already established tradition was replicated in all elements and details.

The question remains of how jubilees were celebrated at the universities of the Russian Empire. Moscow University, the state's oldest institution of higher learning, was founded in 1755. During this period, jubilees were held to mark the 25th (1780), 50th (1805), 75th (1830) and 100th (1855) anniversaries (*Летопись*… 2004; Морозов 2016, p. 110). Although the centenary celebrations were particularly grand, they were more strictly structured than European examples: student-organised public processions, multi-day citywide festivities and spontaneous academic demonstrations were absent from the programme (*Летопись*… 2004, pp. 149–151). At the Moscow University jubilees (1805, 1855), several ritual elements widely attested in Europe were present, such as religious services, ceremonial assemblies and representative publications dedicated to the jubilee day. However, their functional and social positioning differed. The jubilee did not develop into an event that engaged and unified the urban space and academic community broadly but rather remained within the framework of institutionally controlled self-representation (Морозов 2016, p. 110). During the period of Russification, the 100th anniversary of the University of Tartu was also celebrated for the first time as a festival of a Russian Empire university, with student-organised public processions omitted (Leppik 2016, p. 251).

The celebration of jubilees every quarter-century at Moscow University was exceptional within the Russian Empire, where centenary celebrations were more commonly permitted. For a similar reason, emperor Nicholas I prohibited the celebration of Kazan University's 50th anniversary in 1854. By that time, the empire had already been engaged in the exhausting Crimean War (1853–1856) with little success. Under such difficult foreign policy circumstances, a provincial university jubilee may have seemed inappropriate to the emperor (Морозов 2016, p. 111). There are clear parallels with the cancellation of the 75th anniversary celebrations of the University of Tartu.

4. Cultural belonging through ceremony

4.1. Tartu as a German university in context

In the nineteenth century, the University of Tartu's ties with Germany and German universities were naturally close, multifaceted and well established. The university was founded as a German language institution modelled on the classical German university system and, in this respect, differed from other universities in the Russian Empire (Leppik 2001, pp. 129–135). Until the Russification measures of the final decade of the nineteenth century, the university retained its special status, including the Lutheran faith and the German language, and enjoyed a comparatively high degree of autonomy in relation to other Russian universities (Tamul 2007b, pp. 114–116).

Informal connections with Germany were maintained through professors and students. The professorial staff at the University of Tartu in the first half of the nineteenth century were primarily graduates of the universities of Halle, Jena, Göttingen, Leipzig and Berlin (Tamul 2007c, pp. 172–175). Conversely, a significant proportion of Tartu alumni went on to pursue careers in Germany (Tankler 2002). As von Engelhardt noted, 'there is hardly a university in the German Empire or in German Switzerland where one of the disciples of Athens on the *Embach* [Emajõgi] is not, or has not been, employed as a professor' (1933, pp. 452). Students from the Baltic provinces[25] had been studying at German universities since well before the nineteenth century. The 1780s saw the peak period of study abroad for predominantly noble Baltic students (Tering 2008, p. 52). For instance, in 1782, students at the University of Leipzig organised a large torchlight procession in honour of the rector. The event's main organiser was a local student, Eugenius von Rosen (1758–c. 1825), a nobleman originated from the province of Estonia/Estland (Tering 2008, pp. 460–461).

Although emperor Paul I had prohibited Russian subjects from studying abroad in 1798, his successor, Alexander I, revoked this ban in 1802. Baltic students continued to study at German universities throughout the nineteenth century, that

[25] By the Baltic provinces are meant the provinces of Estonia (*Estland*), Livonia (*Livland*) and Courland (*Kurland*).

is, during the same period when the University of Tartu already existed (Hiio 2003, pp. 697–698; Hiio 2020, p. 18). For example, student associations uniting men from the province of Courland (*Curonia*) operated in Tartu, Jena, Göttingen, Heidelberg and Berlin during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. These associations ceased their activities in 1830, but this did not mean that young men of Baltic origin stopped studying in Germany thereafter. During this period, over two hundred Baltic students were members of student organisations in Germany (Hiio 2003, pp. 697–698). The interpersonal, often familial, connections among compatriots studying and having studied in Germany and Tartu helped sustain a sense of belonging to a joint cultural sphere through family memory. Georg Martin Knüppfer (1850–1901), for example, who studied history in Tartu in the early 1870s, recalled his grandfather, who had studied in Göttingen: 'It is especially important to me that, as a nine-year-old boy, I learned a few verses of *Gaudeamus* from him. Whenever I sang it as a student, I always thought of my grandfather, who had studied in both Tartu and Göttingen' (Knüppfer 2025, p. 69).

The university's institutional sphere of interaction, that is, its formal channels of communication, integrated Tartu into the world of German universities in several ways. In 1818, for instance, the University of Tartu joined the publications exchange association of German universities. This network organised the mutual exchange of dissertations and curricula among member institutions and maintained direct contact with a range of publishers and booksellers in Germany (Leppik 2001, p. 154). Similarly, the university's botanical garden maintained extensive links with botanical gardens around the world (Leppik 2001, p. 155). However, in 1827, it was noted that the exchange of seeds and plants with other universities had become less active. Nevertheless, materials were still received from universities such as Jena, Berlin, Tübingen, Erfurt, Göttingen, Breslau (Wrocław), Dresden and Munich, and consignments were likewise dispatched to partner institutions in return (Estonian National Archives, 16v.–17v.).

As rector Ewers observed at the first jubilee's ceremonial assembly, the University of Tartu was 'a German university in Russia'[26] (*Das erste Jubelfest*... 1828, p. IX). This formulation can be taken literally: professors and administrators modelled the institution on their home universities in Germany, not only in the jubilee celebrations discussed above but in many other respects too. A noteworthy episode occurred in the spring of 1802, when the assembly of university professors deliberated on the statutes submitted by the curator. Paragraph 16 stipulated that, on ceremonial occasions, prorectors and deans were to wear 'the customary ornament (*Ornat*) of German universities'. However, the professors argued that such an obligation had 'already been abolished in many foreign universities' and maintained that it was an outdated and purposeless custom ill-suited to the spirit of the age (Luts 2002, p. 23).

For another example, emperor Alexander I 'ordained in perpetuity' the annual tradition of student's scientific competitions as part of the anniversary assembly (*Das erste Jubelfest*... 1828, p. VIII; von Engelhardt 1933, pp. 459–461). According to the professor of provincial law, Erdmann Gustav von Bröcker (1784–1854), this practice was modelled on that of the University of Göttingen (*Dörptsche Zeitung* 11.12.1827).

The detailed, brochure-like printed surveys documenting the 1827 and 1852 celebrations in Tartu, including the speeches delivered and the building decorations, also belong to this overall common tradition. Such *post festum* publications, which were often illustrated and sometimes ran to over a hundred pages, were issued by almost all German universities celebrating jubilees in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The earliest example identified during the present study was the report on the University of Leipzig's 1709 jubilee (*Historische Beschreibung*… 1710), although the origins of the tradition must, of course, be sought in an earlier period and broader context. Similar printed accounts containing detailed descriptions were produced in the sixteenth century Germany in connection with university inaugurations (Kirwan 2019). Examples of the same tradition from the period of the Swedish era academies in Tartu include Friedrich Menius's (1593–1659) *Relatio Von Inauguration der Universität zu Dörpat* (1632) and other orations (Menius 1997; Jaanson 2000, pp. 47, 176).

During the early modern period, highly detailed, report-like printed accounts of ceremonial events (such as oaths of allegiance, rulers' funerals and coronations) constituted a widespread genre of occasional print. For example, a printed description of the oath of allegiance sworn to a new governor-general of Estonia/Estland from Tallinn (Reval) in 1690 survives in several memory institutions (*Kurtzer Bericht*… 1690). Through such descriptions of political performances, social order and hierarchies were publicly manifested (Kodres 2013). Moreover, the act of printing itself functioned as a final confirmation that the event had taken place, simultaneously enhancing the organiser's prestige as a form of self-presentation. Printed accounts of university jubilees (including those produced in Tartu) should therefore be regarded as obligatory elements of the tradition, on a par with ceremonial assemblies and torchlight processions.

4.2. Communication networks and cultural transfer

The brochure format was ideal for distribution by post. Such publications evidently circulated widely through the contemporary postal network. Universities celebrating anniversaries, as well as individual professors and scholars, sent them to partners and colleagues, while booksellers offered them for sale. From at least the second half of the seventeenth century, the Baltic provinces were integrated into a pan-European postal network via a courier system running from Hamburg to Riga and back twice weekly. Following the Great Northern War (1700–1721), this route was extended to the new capital of the Russian Empire, St Petersburg, and became the empire's primary westward channel for transmitting information. The exchange of information was therefore con-

[26] '… auf der Deutschen Universität Russlands.'

tinuous and regular, making it possible to follow European events on an ongoing basis through newspapers and other printed matter ordered from Germany from the later seventeenth century onwards (K. Vanamölder 2024a). Thanks to this regular postal system, stacks of annual volumes of the oldest scholarly journal in the German-speaking world, the *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen*, could accumulate in the attic of the Väike-Maarja parsonage by the mid-nineteenth century, as recalled by Knüppfer (2025, p. 66).

Likewise, the re-established University of Tartu lay along this contemporary 'permanent fibre-optic connection' and was consistently and abundantly supplied with information arriving by post, including letters, newspapers, journals, brochures and books, from both St Petersburg and the Riga–Hamburg axis. As early as 1804, for example, the university subscribed to all major scholarly journals for 500 roubles (Ermel 2024, p. 81). Newspapers were added to these holdings. Throughout the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century, the Hamburg newspaper *Hamburgischer Correspondent* (1712–1934), with a print run of 30 000–50 000 copies, was widely read across northern Germany and the Baltic Sea region, including the Baltic provinces and St Petersburg (K. Vanamölder 2024b, pp. 99–100). The University of Tartu also subscribed to this newspaper via the postal service (Ermel 2024, p. 81).

As grand public events, university jubilees provided particularly attractive material for the press. For example, the Hamburg newspaper reported in detail on the jubilee celebrations of the University of Leipzig in 1809 (*Hamburgischer Correspondent* 13.12.1809) and the Göttingen jubilee of 1837 (*Hamburgischer Correspondent* 19.09.1837, 21.09.1837). The University of Tartu and its anniversaries likewise received at least indirect mention. For instance, in connection with the 25th anniversary, the *Hamburgischer Correspondent* reported on the promotion of rector Ewers (08.01.1828).[27] On the 50th anniversary, readers were informed of the curator Craffström's decoration with the Order of Saint Vladimir, first class[28] (*Hamburgischer Correspondent* 06.01.1853). Reports in the *Hamburgischer Correspondent* are just one example. The jubilee celebrations in Tartu were undoubtedly covered by other contemporary periodicals as well. Such events naturally possessed news value within the cultural sphere. One of the best-known accounts is the detailed report published in the Leipzig-based *Illustrirte Zeitung* (26.02.1853, pp. 132–131), including illustrations of the university's 50th anniversary celebrations, which have been later reprinted in various other contexts (for example, *Ajalooline Ajakiri* 2002).

Knowledge of the constituent elements of a 'proper' jubilee and of the correct manner of organising one spread and became consolidated throughout the German cultural space through the medium of newspapers and specialised brochures describing jubilees. Members of the academic community were undoubtedly particularly receptive to such information. As mentioned, the programmes for the 25th and 50th anniversary celebrations at the University of Tartu contained no original elements: everything from the morning religious service to the communal bonfire torch procession was taken directly from German university traditions. As in Heidelberg, Leipzig and Marburg, Tartu's jubilee celebrations were a solemn act of institutional self-reflection, a gesture of homage to state authority and a public festival encompassing the entire town. The personal networks of the university community and the institution's formal relations with German universities, reinforced by continuous and natural participation in the same information space, explain why the University of Tartu's jubilees were organised according to German university models in the nineteenth century. The university community at the time may not have perceived the need for, nor desirability of, creating 'their own' traditions. The example of jubilee celebrations shows that some of the University of Tartu's 'long-standing traditions' are in fact a form of cultural transfer. This invites a fresh, comparative approach to the university's history as a whole.

5. Conclusion

The nineteenth century jubilee celebrations at the University of Tartu did not originate from local innovation but were part of a wider institutional and ritual practice that had primarily been established within the German cultural sphere. The jubilee in Tartu was neither an experimental nor accidental form of commemoration; it drew upon a standardised repertoire comprising academic processions, a religious service, a ceremonial assembly, visible student participation and the appropriation of public urban space. The recurrence of these elements across different locations and periods indicates that the university jubilee was a recognisable pan-European cultural practice. Its adoption in Tartu was smooth and there was no perceived need to emphasise local distinctiveness.

However, the example of Moscow University suggests that this logic was not universal within the Russian Empire in the nineteenth century. There, a more closed jubilee tradition developed, oriented towards state-centred representation and characterised by restrictions on autonomous student participation. This tradition evidently required student autonomy. The centenary jubilee in Tartu in 1902 differed from earlier celebrations in that it was more compact and institutional. However, it did not establish a new norm, remaining an exceptional episode immediately preceding the reopening of the university as an Estonian language institution in 1919.

The formation of the jubilee tradition at the University of Tartu can therefore be understood primarily as an instance of cultural transfer, through which affiliation with the German academic cultural sphere was affirmed. Its significance lies less in originality than in the conscious and consistent adoption of a normative jubilee practice.

Data availability statement

Data are contained within the article.

[27] 'Der Rector der Universität Dorpat, Statsrath Ewers, ist zum wirklichen Etatsrath erhoben worden.'

[28] '… bei Gelegenheit des bevortsehenden fünfzigjährigen Jubiläums der Dörptschen Universität zu erkennen geben…'

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Laenatud juubel: ülikooli aastapäevarituaalid kui kultuuriline ülekanne Tartu Ülikoolis

Madli Vanamölder ja Kaarel Vanamölder

Artiklis käsitletakse Tartu Ülikooli juubelitraditsiooni kujunemist 19. sajandil ja väidetakse, et tegemist ei olnud kohaliku innovatsiooni, vaid Saksa akadeemilisest kultuuriruumist üle võetud institutsionaalse ja rituaalse praktikaga. Analüüs keskendub 1827. ja 1852. aasta juubelitele, näidates, et nende ülesehitus – jumalateenistus, pidulik aktus, akadeemilised rongkäigud, pidusöögid, üliõpilaste tõrvikurongkäigud ning linnaruumi sümboolne hõivamine – järgis varauusajast alates Saksa ülikoolides välja kujunenud standardset juubelimudelit. Nende elementide kordumine eri aegadel ja paikades osutab, et ülikooli juubel oli äratuntav üleeuroopaline kultuuripraktika.

Võrdlus Vene impeeriumi ülikoolidega, eriti Moskva Ülikooliga, näitab siiski, et selline mudel ei olnud impeeriumis universaalne. Mujal impeeriumis kujunes riigikesksem ja üliõpilaste autonoomiat piiravam juubelitraditsioon. Seevastu Tartu Ülikooli juubelid toimisid kultuurilise kuuluvuse markerina, kinnitades ülikooli identiteeti „saksa ülikoolina" Vene impeeriumi koosseisus. Artikkel käsitab Tartu Ülikooli juubelitraditsiooni kujunemist kultuurilise ülekande protsessina, mille keskmes oli teadlik ja järjekindel Saksa ülikoolide juubelipraktika omaksvõtt, mida kasutatakse tänapäevani.