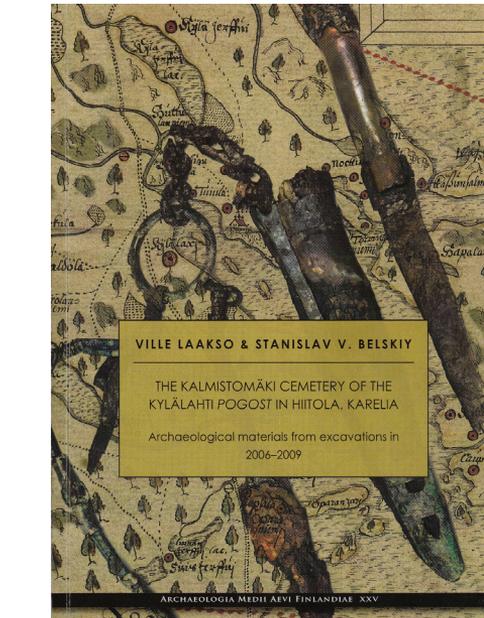


Ville Laakso & Stanislav V. Belskiy: *The Kalmistomäki Cemetery of the Kylälahti Pogost in Hiitola, Karelia: Archaeological materials from excavations in 2006–2009*. Archaeologia Medii Aevi Finlandiae XXV. Appendix 1: List of Artefacts; Appendix 2: The leather finds of Kylälahti (by Aleksandr Kurbatov). Suomen keskiajan arkeologian seura – Sällskapet för medeltidsarkeologi i Finland, Turku 2018. ISBN 978-952-69004-1-4. 328 pp.

When an archaeological find exceeds the threshold of news media, the press likes to call it a sensation. There are reasons to characterise the results of the excavations of the cemetery at Kylälahti in Hiitola of Ladoga Karelia as a scientific breakthrough. We talk about a unique, unusually well-preserved and carefully excavated cemetery which breaks earlier conceptions.

The municipality of Hiitola was located in the part of former Finnish Karelia, which in 1944 was ceded to the Soviet Union / Russia and there incorporated with the Karelian Republic. Now the authorities of the Karelian Republic take the responsibility for the protection of ancient monuments within the territory. The excavations of Kalmistomäki at Kylälahti in Hiitola were carried through by the Karelian and Northern European teams of the expedition of MAE RAS (Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography, Russian Academy of Sciences = the Kunstkamera, St. Petersburg) and the University of Turku, Finland. Financial support was given by several Russian and Finnish organisations.

Considering their significance, the Kylälahti investigations have attracted surprisingly little attention in the media as well as in Finnish archaeological publications. The latest work on Finnish prehistory, *Muinaisuutemme jäljet* ('The Traces of our Past'; Haggren et al. 2015), does not even mention the site. The prehistory of Ceded Karelia was treated in the book but the information on the Iron Age and medieval burial material beyond the eastern border is based on literature from around the turn of the millenni-



um (Uino 1997; Saksa 1998; Saksa et al. 2003). There were, however, current publications on the Kylälahti investigations in Russian (Bel'skiy & Laakso 2009; 2010), the latest of which included a covering summary in English (Bel'skiy 2012). Nevertheless, the language barrier has been too high to exceed. In this respect, the work examined here fills a big gap.

Before the Kylälahti excavations there were 15 likely Late Iron Age or medieval cemeteries in Hiitola. These were located by Theodor Schvindt in the 1880s and 1890s, who reported 39 graves (Uino 1997: 56). Schvindt did not define the locations of the cemeteries on maps, and therefore it has been a difficult task to relocate them a hundred years later. After the war, the Finnish population withdrew to Finland and was replaced by people from various parts of the Soviet Union who had no knowledge of the former names of people and places.

Under the direction of Aleksandr I. Saksa, the Institute for the History of Material Culture of the USSR carried out archaeological surveys in the Karelian Isthmus and the north-western coast of Lake Ladoga in the 1980s, and he also tried to locate some cemeteries noted by Schvindt (Saksa

1998; 2010). Because the maps of Ceded Karelia were secret then, the possibilities to locate archaeological sites were limited. When the use of topographic maps became permitted in 1989, the situation became easier. Based on place names found on maps and interviews with evacuated residents of Hiitola – at times including genealogy – the locations of the cemeteries were clarified in connection with my dissertation (Uino 1997: 214–25). Some spots I located in the field together with Saksa.

Theodor Schvindt's excavations of the cemeteries in Hiitola were superficial: he dug up some skulls, which he sent for anthropological measuring to the Department of Anatomy, University of Helsinki. In general, the graves lacked finds and therefore Schvindt did not continue the investigations. In fact, real archaeological excavations had not been carried out at any cemetery of Hiitola. At the turn of the 21st century, the region was more or less unknown territory. However, a palaeoecological research project financed by the Finns in the 1990s had produced important new knowledge about the history of cultivation and the Iron Age settlement of the Kilpolansaari Island and the surrounding region (Taavitsainen et al. 1994).

In the spring 2005, a Russian-Finnish expedition directed by Stanislav V. Bel'skiy was prospecting in the Ladoga Karelia. The target was to find relatively well-preserved cemeteries worthwhile to excavate. Researchers found their way to Kalmistomäki ('Cemetery Hill') at Kylälahti ('Village Bay') at the end of difficult small roads. Surprisingly, Schvindt had not visited the spot, in spite of his aim to visit places named *kalmisto*. In 1928, Nils Cleve brought with him a Crusade Period chain holder recovered at the site. An oval tortoise brooch and a spearhead were found on the hill three years later. The last Finnish archaeologist to visit the site was Sakari Pälsi who in 1933 noticed thirty or so shallow pits, apparently marking inhumation graves (Uino 1997: 222, HIIT 32; Nordqvist 2017).

Stanislav V. Bel'skiy's group noticed that the Kalmistomäki landscape had not changed during the post-war years. The old buildings had disappeared, and new buildings had not replaced them. In 2006, test excavations revealed two graves suggesting that there was a well-preserved medieval cemetery with a substantial potential for

research. This was a lucky turning point for the project.

A solitary place like this was most suitable for a large archaeological investigation. During four seasons, in all 426 m² were excavated. The investigations revealed 93 burials, all inhumations, except for two cremations. As for the number of graves, this cemetery is the largest in the Ladoga Karelia as well as the Karelian Isthmus. More than half of the burials included personal objects or parts of the dress.

The volume presenting the results is divided in six chapters: (I) Research history and topography of archaeological sites in the region of Hiitola, (II) Graves and other structures at the site, (III) Types of artefacts from the cemetery in the European typological and chronological systems of the medieval period, (IV) Chronology of the cemetery, (V) The burial rite at the cemetery of Kylälahti, and (VI) The Kylälahti village and *pogost* in written sources of the 14th–16th centuries. This is followed by Conclusions, a Finnish summary and two appendices. The book presents a very generous and praiseworthy illustration, including both structures and objects.

The Kalmistomäki cemetery is not only the largest in Ceded Karelia in terms of the number of excavated burials, but also one of the richest in terms of the number of burials with artefacts (cf. Schvindt 1893). Kalmistomäki is the first investigated cemetery of the 14th and 15th centuries in Hiitola and on the whole north-western and northern coast of Lake Ladoga. It is also the first – and so far, the only – apparently totally excavated cemetery. The graves are excavated more carefully than ever before in the part of Ceded Karelia now belonging to Russia. The cemetery itself is in many respects exceptional compared to those discovered earlier.

The burial rite was extremely standardized: all the directions are western with a strong deviation to the south-west, where the head of the corpse was. There were pieces of wood from the chests in the graves, and in several burials there was birch bark either on the bottom or covering the body. Most burials were placed within oblong frameworks built of stones that were not visible – at least now – above the surface of the ground, but were revealed during the excavation. Occasionally larger stones were erected at the ends of the graves. Stone structures have

been recorded in over more than half of the excavated burials. According to the authors, this funerary rite completely corresponds to the so-called *zhalmnik*-graves. Burial grounds of this kind are widely distributed in the western regions of the Novgorod Land, Izhora Plateau, Lake Chudskoye (Fi. Peipsijärvi) and the area of the Luga River (Fi. Laukaanjoki).

Similar stone fences in Karelia were previously reported only by Theodor Schwindt, who in the mid-1880s excavated four burials at the cemetery of Säässynäkummut in Tenhola of Hiitola parish. The graves lacked finds and date, and the cemetery has not been investigated since then (Schwindt 1893: 107–8; Kochkurkina 1981: 105, No 124; Uino 1997: 221, HIIT 25).

As the authors say, in the archaeology of Crusade Period and medieval Karelia there are problems of dating and periodization of funerary complexes. The chronology of the cemeteries rests to a large extent on different studies of typologies of grave goods and on classifications of burial rites. Coins are rare in graves, and clear focal points for absolute dating are missing. Dating based on artefact typology is problematic because of the danger of circular conclusion. The dates of the Karelian inhumation cemeteries are primarily approximate. Materials from earlier excavations have not been used for radiocarbon dating, except for the dates of graves at Suotniemi in Käkisalmi, not yet published (Uino in prep.). The lack of radiocarbon dates is great, and the dates obtained from the Kylälahti Kalmistomäki graves, unfortunately, do not repair the situation. Only in one grave of the Kylälahti cemetery was found a Novgorodian silver coin (a *denga*), minted in the period from 1447 to the 1470s.

The chronology of Kylälahti Kalmistomäki takes a central position in the publication of materials at hand. The objects recovered in the cemetery find counterparts in materials from Karelia, Novgorod, north-west Russia, the Baltic States, Scandinavia and are widespread also elsewhere in Europe. When building the chronology of the cemetery of Kylälahti, the authors have applied the basic concept of *chronologically diagnostic types*, as introduced by Yury M. Lesman. The types of jewellery and their dates are presented mainly according to his publications and an unpublished manuscript, in which he deals with Novgorod objects from the 10th to the 15th cen-

turies with reference to the dendrochronology of Novgorod. In contrast to Novgorod, there is no common Northern and Central European chronological scale of antiquities for the period under study. In this case, the authors must use the dates of different categories of artefacts. They have presented the chronology of 38 burials according to chronologically diagnostic artefacts, and one grave has been dated according to the typology of leather finds (Appendix 2).

Radiocarbon dates were made of the Kalmistomäki material. They are not listed, but instead the dates are spread in the text and notes, which makes it difficult for the reader to perceive how many there are – probably ten (Bel'skiy 2012: Fig. 130 lists four more dates). The bone dates from graves are conventional ¹⁴C dates. A bone from grave No 8 also has an AMS date (Ua-44162, calAD 1220–1300; see pages 267–8), which corresponds very well with the typological date. However, another radiocarbon date of bone from grave No 8 (SPb-154) is almost 600 years older than the AMS date. Due to contradiction, none of the conventional dates have been used as evidence in the present publication, although many of the dates do not significantly differ from the typological dates. The results are passed lightly on page 275 in one single footnote (21). To my mind, the use of radiocarbon and AMS datings asks for more profound thinking.

More AMS dates – of bones and other organic items, e.g. leather shoes and textiles – would have produced dates independent of typological dates. If the bones and other organic items from the cemetery are still available, it would be justified to produce more AMS dates in order to increase the precision of the chronology.

Within the medieval inhumation cemetery, also traces of a preceding cremation cemetery were found. Numerous artefacts dated to the Viking Age and the Crusade Period suggest that a burial ground with cremation burials had existed on the hillside during the 10th–13th centuries and was disturbed during the 14th and 15th centuries, when the inhumation cemetery was established. The finds included, for example, a circular perforated pendant, an iron penannular (not a horse-shoe!) brooch, glass beads and fragments of handmade pottery. The AMS date (Ua-44163, calAD 890–1030) of charred crust on ceramics falls well within this range (see page 225).

In summary, the dating results suggest that the inhumation cemetery of Kylälahti Kalmistomäki was taken into use not earlier than the late 13th century (according to the AMS dating of grave No 8). The cemetery was used for approximately 250 years, until the first quarter of the 16th century (according to typology of leather finds from grave No 20).

At the top of Kalmistomäki, fragments of a big circular limestone cross and a pedestal of the cross were recovered (see also Bel'skiy, this volume). The object belongs to the type of 'Novgorodian' *zhalsnik*-grave crosses. Was it a common marker of the whole cemetery? A circular stone cross was earlier found in Hiitola Kilpolansaari (Schwindt 1893: Fig. 521; Uino 1997: 394, HIIT 10). Jewellery and other items related to the costume were recovered, but no breast crosses or wearable icons were found in any of the Kalmistomäki graves. This appears strange with reference to the stone cross and the Christian direction of the graves. Although many of the dead were buried in their better clothes and with utensils, the Orthodox Church already clearly supervised the mode of burial in the area. It appears that the population had adopted significant burial traditions as historical sources indicate.

According to the authors, Kalmistomäki was not an ordinary rural burial ground (or *kylä-kalmisto* in Finnish), but an important central cemetery of the area. In the second half of the 14th century, there was a large settlement with a church in Kylälahti. According to the First Novgorodian chronicle record under the year 1396, this pogost-settlement was the central one in the district. Based on written sources, there were almost 20 houses in the Kylälahti village at the end of the 15th century. Test trenches revealed a thick cultural layer in the area, but the settlement site has not yet been comprehensively excavated.

A possible cup-marked stone with one cup depression, found during excavations on the southwestern slope of the Kalmistomäki Hill, is named as the first object of this type in the Ladoga Karelia region. However, a cup-marked stone was found in the Lapinlahti village of the Kurkijoki parish already in the beginning of the current millennium. There was information of this stone (Uino 1997: 257, KURK 41), but its exact location was forgotten. The stone was re-discovered

by Marina Petrova and Igor Petrov from Kurkijoki, researchers of local history (Uino 2007).

Did the dead from Kylälahti Kalmistomäki genetically represent the same population whose wealthy inhumation graves of the Crusade Period are known from the Karelian Isthmus, especially from the downstream of the River Vuoksi? However, the Kalmistomäki graves of the period AD 1100–1300 did not include women's pectoral chains or jewellery combinations of 'Karelian types' with oval tortoise brooches. At Kalmistomäki, the most conspicuous feature of the female funerary costume was the use of peculiar composite belt pendants. Why did this 'transference' of a set of ornaments take place in the 14th century? This question needs separate and serious future studies, the authors say.

The structural features of the graves and the objects indicate the direction from which the population arrived or maintained contacts: many-beaded temple rings or earrings were recovered in several women's graves. Only one ring of the kind had been found previously in Karelia, from a possibly devastated Kirkkoveräjä cemetery on the Sortavala Tulolansaari Island (Kivikoski 1973: Abb. 1078; Uino 1997: 325–6, 372, SORT 02). The many-beaded temple rings (or earrings) have been earlier connected with the Vodians, and even if this is not sure, it is clear, however, that most of this kind of rings have been found precisely in the kurgan-*zhalsnik* cemeteries in the central area of the Izhora Plateau. Researchers suggest that long-term marriage contacts between Karelia and Ingria and other southern regions could explain these similarities. Correspondingly, sets of Karelian female jewellery have been found in burials outside the limits of the old Karelian territory proper.

Kylälahti is mentioned both in the Novgorod chronicles and in the birch bark documents (Nos. 130 and 248). Kylälahti (Кюлолакша) and Tiurula (Тиврoла) are mentioned in the *Pistsovaya Kniga* (census book) of the *Vodskaya pyatina* of 1500. The Tiurula village, where the Orthodox church survived until July 1941, was situated on the opposite bay shore from Kylälahti Kalmistomäki. The Tiurula residents (*Tivrultsy*) were mentioned in the written sources, apparently, as one of 'five clans of the Karelian children'. Thus, the written sources indicate that Kylälahti has been a really important population centre since

the 14th century. Afterwards, one may wonder why Kylälahti and the place known as Kalmistomäki ('Cemetery Hill') became an object for archaeological study only after AD 2000, considering how much evidence historical sources have preserved of the place.

In the summer of 2007, I had the possibility to get acquainted with the investigations at Kylälahti Kalmistomäki together with my colleagues Christian Carpelan and Mervi Suhonen, join the expedition and spend a couple of days as a guest in their camp. It was a stroke of luck for archaeology that the cemetery had survived without major damage for many centuries, and moreover, it could be investigated employing the developed methods of the 21st century. Hopefully another cemetery corresponding to and of the same age as Kylälahti Kalmistomäki will be found, so the remaining open questions will find answers in the future. The SUGRIGE project (Ancient genes of North-Eastern Europe) handles samples of ancient DNA from Kalmistomäki burials. The first results have just been published (Översti et al. 2019).

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