

# Archaeological cooperation in the Soviet Union and Russia from the 1950s to the early 2020s at the University of Helsinki

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## Abstract

‘East archaeology’, research cooperation in the areas of present-day Russia, has been one part of the research activities of the Department of Archaeology at the University of Helsinki in the post-war era. The first steps were taken as part of the state-controlled Finnish-Soviet scientific cooperation between the 1950s and 1970s, but Glasnost and Perestroika opened up a whole new range of opportunities in the 1980s and 1990s. Initially, the collaboration focused primarily on the Karelian Iron Age, but soon expanded to the other periods of prehistory, the Stone Age and the Early Metal Period. A significant part of the research has been conducted in areas near Finland – the Karelian Isthmus and Ingria, the Karelian Republic, and the Kola Peninsula – but several other parts of Russia have also attracted attention over the years. The purpose of this article is to present the history of these ‘eastern’ studies from the beginning to the early 2020s; cooperation has currently been stopped as a consequence of Russian politics, which culminated in the war in Ukraine in 2022.

**Keywords:** History of archaeology, research cooperation, Finland, Russia, the Soviet Union

*‘I have earlier said, and it is worth to repeat, that it would be strange if this kind of cooperation and relations would not exist between two neighbouring countries sharing as many common features as our two countries do. Archaeology is, in a certain sense, a geographic discipline whose discoveries and arguments almost always have to do with a place or region. This is why we cannot accept any line drawn on a map which would limit our interest and curiosity within borders. Cooperation across borders in all directions is our lifeblood.’*

Speech by Professor C.F. Meinander at the opening of the 2nd Finnish-Soviet archaeological symposium on 17 May 1978 in Hanasaari, Espoo.

## Introduction

The term ‘east archaeology’ is usually used to denote archaeological activity directed eastward,

particularly into the Russian Federation (the Soviet Union). Consistent with Professor Meinander’s quote above, there are few prehistoric phenomena that are confined to modern Finland: the eastern direction, the boreal biogeographical region is often the setting in which the Finnish materials can be contextualised. Thus, while ‘east archaeology’ has never been the main research focus of the Department of Archaeology<sup>1</sup> at the University of Helsinki (UH), it has been involved in many aspects and activities over the decades.

This article provides a historiographical overview of the actions and cooperations of the representatives of Archaeology/UH, but the perspective is one of the participants. The part describing the events up to the 1990s is written by Pirjo Uino, who has been involved in the cooperation since the 1970s, and the post-Soviet period by Kerkko Nordqvist, who has been par-

1 Despite administrative changes that have altered the name and status of Archaeology, we use the terms *Department of Archaeology* or *Archaeology/UH* throughout the text.

ticipating since the beginning of the 21st century. Additional views on cooperation are presented in separate texts by Russian colleagues, Dmitriy V. Gerasimov (St. Petersburg) and Alexey Yu. Tarasov (Petrozavodsk). The chosen approach is similar to a chronicle and aims at a detailed account of past activities (Figure 1); given the recent events and turmoil on the international scene, an in-depth synthesis will have to await the future. The paper also paints a partial picture as it distinctly highlights UH-related actions, even though many of its representatives and activities intersect with other actors and organisations (for recent overviews of the broader ties between Finnish and Russian archaeological research, see Salminen 2014; Kirpichnikov *et al.* 2016; Nordqvist 2018).

### The initial phase – An agreement brought a thaw in the 1950s

In the field of archaeology, the Finnish-Russian cooperation has long roots that go back to the 19th century. A solid tradition of archaeological knowl-

edge of Russian archaeology has been established in the Finnish scholarly history: for example, both Professor Aarne Michaël Tallgren and (the next) Professor Aarne Äyräpää (Europaeus) of the UH were familiar with archaeological materials from eastern Europe (see Tallgren 1911; 1927–1938; Äyräpää 1933; also Salminen 2003). In addition to extensive correspondence, Tallgren was one of the few European archaeologists to visit Soviet Russia in the 1920s and 1930s (Tallgren 1936; also Nordqvist 2018, 33–34), until the purges of the Stalinera and World War 2 ended connections with the USSR. Contacts with Estonia and the other Baltic countries also broke off with the war.

When Finland occupied East Karelia during the so-called Continuation War (1941–1944), Äyräpää and Docent<sup>2</sup> Ella Kivikoski carried out archaeological expeditions in the Olonets region in 1943. Archaeological expeditions were part of the program carried out by the State Scientific East Karelia Commission and their main funder was the Finnish Cultural Foundation (Nordqvist & Seitsonen 2008a; Uino 2020). Officially, it was even a political assignment, and it



Figure 1. Places where representatives from the University of Helsinki have participated in archaeological fieldwork (dots) or conferences and museum work (squares). Map: Kerkko Nordqvist.

<sup>2</sup> Frequently used translations of the Finnish academic title *dosentti* include the *Title of Docent*, and, more recently, *Associate Professor*; for the sake of simplicity, we consistently use the short form *Docent*.

was expected that the results of various branches of research would verify the belonging of East Karelia to Finland – it was believed that the occupied area, partially inhabited by a kindred people, was to remain Finnish as a result of the war. However, the archaeological investigations can be explained primarily by the pent-up need to obtain comparative material to solve scientific questions concerning an area that had been closed to Finns since the Russian Revolution.

The agreement (1948) between Finland and the Soviet Union on Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance (called the *YYA Treaty*) also offered a new starting point for scientific contacts. Post-war cultural relations between Finland and the Soviet Union were strengthened in 1955, when an agreement on cooperation in the field of science and technology was concluded (the so-called *TT Agreement*). In Finland, the TT Agreement was implemented by the Committee for Cooperation in the Fields of Science and Technology (Fi. *Suomen ja Neuvostoliiton välinen tieteellis-teknillinen yhteistoimintakomitea*), called the TT Committee, within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Kaukonen 1975; Numminen 1983; TT Committee 1985; Pernaa 2002; see also Svedin 2007).

The TT Agreement meant the beginning of a new era in relations between Finnish and Russian archaeologists. The initial steps were taken shortly after the conclusion of the agreement. Intendant of the Archaeological Commission, Docent of the UH, C.F. Meinander and archaeologist Oiva Keskitalo travelled from 22 July to 22 August 1956 on an archaeological excursion to the Soviet Union. It was first directed to Novgorod, where the Finns familiarised themselves with the excavations at the Medieval town, carried out under the leadership of A.V. Artsikhovskiy (Meinander 1956a-b). From Novgorod, Meinander was taken to Lake Charozero in the Vologda region on a 'private' seaplane. A.Ya. Bryusov conducted excavations at a Stone Age settlement site along the River Modlona, where a truck and motorboat were still needed (Figure 2). This region with Stone Age settlements was actually Meinander's primary interest, but at first it had seemed out of reach for a foreigner (Meinander 1956a-b; Edgren 2013, 253–260). That same autumn, Meinander went on a study trip to the Soviet Union, which he repeated in 1958 (Sil-

ver this volume). Although these visits to the formerly closed neighbouring country remained at first an isolated case, they were an opening that was later followed by more regular visits by Finnish archaeologists.

The TT Committee also facilitated the organisation of study trips for students to the Soviet Union. As early as 1961, students of archaeology and art history from the UH, under the direction of Professors Kivikoski and Lars Pettersson, visited Leningrad and Novgorod for the first time. In Leningrad the exhibitions of the State Hermitage and *Kunstkamera* Museums were visited. According to Christian Carpelan, the most memorable in the *Kunstkamera* were the archaeological finds from the Oleniy Ostrov site of Lake Onega.

Early research visits include Kivikoski's trip to Estonia and Latvia with Pekka Sarvas in 1962 and Torsten Edgren's study trip to Riga and Tallinn in 1965 with a grant from the Ministry of Education. The latter trip was related to Edgren's doctoral dissertation. In May 1968, a group of archaeology students led by Professor Kivikoski undertook a study trip to Estonia.

Working groups representing various fields of scholarship were set up under the umbrella of the TT Committee. The working group for archaeology was founded in 1969 and officially strengthened in the XVI joint meeting of the Committee of Cooperation in 1970. The working group provided an operational environment for scholarly cooperation: symposiums, research projects, exchange of researchers, etc. (Kaukonen 1975; TT Committee 1985; Kirpichnikov *et al.* 2016, 10).

In Finland, cooperative activities were carried out by a working group for archaeology appointed by the TT Committee and representing the National Board of Antiquities (NBA, until 1972 the Archaeological Commission) and the Archaeological Departments of the Universities of Helsinki and Turku. In the USSR, the corresponding working group operated within the framework of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. In practise, the main responsibility for these activities lay with the Leningrad Branch of the Institute of Archaeology (LBIA AS USSR, now IHMC RAS) and its Sector (now Department) for Slavic and Finnic Archaeology.

The first official joint meeting of the working group for archaeology was organised in



Figure 2. C.F. Meinander participated in the archaeological fieldwork led by A.Ya. Bryusov in August 1956 in the Vologda region. The research group carried out excavations at a Stone Age settlement site along the River Modlona. Left to right: M. Shishkina, M. Pavlov, A.Ya. Bryusov, Zaytsev, C.F. Meinander, unknown, B.G. Tikhonov. Photo: Svenska Litteratursällskapet, SLSA 1165 Meinander Family Archives, Helsinki.

1972.<sup>3</sup> The first Finnish chair of the working group until 1981 was Meinander, the Professor of Finnish and Scandinavian Archaeology at the UH, and therefore the role of the UH in the cooperation was more prominent in the 1970s than later. In the beginning there were only two members in the working group: Meinander and Docent Ville Luho. Later the members of the working group, besides Meinander, were Docents Edgren, Aarni Erä-Esko and Luho, whose affiliation specifically mentions the UH. However, their roles in the working group and between the NBA and UH are somewhat difficult to separate. Until the 1980s, the Archaeology/UH facilities were in the same building as the NBA, so physical closeness also meant intellectual proximity. Thereafter, the role of the NBA and the background position of its members became more decisive than that of the UH. Professor Unto Salo represented the University of Turku in the working group.

After Professor Meinander, the Department of Archaeology/UH was represented in the working group by Professor Ari Siiriäinen, and Docent Edgren from the NBA became the Finnish chair of the working group (1982–1992). The TT Committee secretariat and the Committee-appointed scientific secretary, MA Paula Purhonen, then Curator (later Head of Unit) at the NBA, was responsible for the practical arrangements and delivery of the symposium publications printed in

Finland. Academician B.A. Rybakov of Moscow and Dr. A.N. Kirpichnikov of Leningrad were long-time Soviet chairmen. A Finn from Ingria, Cand. History A.I. Saksa was a central figure in the context of archaeological cooperation, also because of his proficiency in the Finnish language.

### Start of intensive cooperation in the 1970s–1980s

The prelude to collaboration was the Soviet-Finnish Symposium on anthropology held in Moscow in 1972 on the origins of the Finno-Ugrian peoples, in which Professor Meinander took part as the sole archaeologist (Meinander 1973). The presentations were published in Stencil no 7 of the Department of Archaeology of the University of Helsinki.

The working group for archaeology became visible in the mid-1970s with the organisation of the first Finnish-Soviet learned archaeological symposium. Since then, the most important form of activity was the assembly of such scholarly symposia every two or three years, alternately in the Soviet Union and Finland. The first Finnish-Russian archaeological symposium was held 1976 in Leningrad, and subsequent symposia were arranged in Helsinki 1979, Leningrad 1981, Helsinki 1983, Leningrad 1986, Helsinki 1988, Tallinn 1990

<sup>3</sup> Information on the meetings and correspondence of the archaeological working group mentioned in this article is contained in the folders listed as the archival sources at the Finnish Heritage Agency (FHA 2022).



and Helsinki 1992. A professional excursion was always an important part of the program (Figure 3). The presentations from each symposium were published as books in the country where the symposium was held. The publication of the first symposium arranged in Helsinki was printed in Stencil no 22 (*Fenno-Ugri et Slavi* 1980) of the Department of Archaeology/UH and the others in the publication series of the Finnish Antiquarian Society and the NBA (Kirpichnikov *et al.* 2016, 23).

While the ultimate starting point was a political one, and archaeologists were provided the possibility to act from a foreign policy rather than a science policy context, the system nonetheless prepared the ground for a favourable development of cooperation in many ways. The structure of the system, given from above, ensured the possibility of continuous relations. Without the TT Committee, international connections between Finnish and Soviet individual researchers would probably have remained rare, and essentially the system also made it possible to establish contacts with archaeologists in the Baltic countries. In addition to symposia and researcher exchanges, the TT Committee enabled

Finnish archaeologists to participate in the Congress of Finno-Ugric studies in Syktyvkar and the Congress of Slavic Archaeology in Kiev, both in 1985.

The regular symposia transmitted topical information on current trends in the field of archaeology and on the results of fieldwork projects. Although the topics of the symposia varied to some extent, the main theme revolved more or less around the encounter and connections between the Finnic and Slavonic tribes in the late Iron Age and the early medieval period. In addition to the broad framework of the general theme, there was also room for presentations on different topics. The range of presentations thus generally reflects the trends in archaeological research of the time in Finland and the Soviet Union – the symposia played an important international role in the field of archaeology. At the meetings, each party presented their own archaeological studies, and it was possible to acquire relevant information that otherwise would not have been possible, in part because of the language barrier. The talks and discussions were conducted through an interpreter in Finnish and Russian during the Soviet period.



Figure 3. The 5th Soviet-Finnish archaeological symposium was held in Leningrad in May 1986. A three-day excursion to Pskov and Izbornsk region was made. The participants are in the yard of the Pskovo-Pechersky Monastery in the Pskov region. In the front row from left to right: Christian Carpelan, Markku Torvinen, Paula Purhonen, Pirjo Uino, unknown, E.A. Savelyeva (Syktyvkar), Yu.A. Savvateyev (Petrozavodsk), Tatyana Romashenko (the daughter of Mrs. Savelyeva), Natalya Tolokontseva (Dept. of External Relations of AS USSR), A.I. Saksa (Leningrad). In the back row from left to right: Timo Miettinen, M.G. Ivanova (Izhevsk), Pirkko-Liisa Lehtosalo-Hilander, S.I. Kochkurkina (Petrozavodsk), V.V. Sedov (Moscow). Photo: Finnish Heritage Agency, Department of Cultural Environment Services.

Cooperation between Soviet and Finnish archaeologists was dictated by the inherent needs of the development of historical science and fully corresponded to the then-established neighbourly relationship between the USSR and Finland. Meinander (1979, 5) justly noted during the first symposium in Leningrad that no problem in Finnish archaeology could be solved without studying the materials and conclusions of Soviet archaeologists. So it was natural that Professor Meinander encouraged his students to study Russian – at least the Cyrillic alphabet was worth learning.

In the early 1980s there was a desire to expand the forms of Finnish-Soviet cooperation from organising symposia and ‘scientific tourism’ to joint research projects. One of the first Finnish-Soviet projects launched in the 1980s was called *Volosovo Fenomen*. The establishment of the project was proposed by Professor Meinander in 1980 at a meeting of the chairs of the archaeology working group. In central Russia, especially in the area between the Volga and Oka Rivers, alternative views had been expressed about the ancestry and significance of the Volosovo culture. According to one assumption, it was considered a kind of Finno-Ugric mother culture, from which both the Volga tribes and the peoples of the Baltic Sea region descended. In particular, the connections between the Volosovo culture and the late Neolithic cultures of Finland (e.g., Kierikki, Pyheensilta, Pöljä) and the Baltic countries were to be studied.

In Finland, funding for the Volosovo project came from the Academy of Finland, which granted it funds for 1983–1986. The project run through the Archaeology/UH and investigated the influences and co-phenomena of the Volosovo culture in the Baltic Sea region, Finland, Karelia and the Leningrad region, and their role in the formation of the Finno-Ugric population. The goal was to produce a collection of articles with 12 authors from the Soviet Union (the main person there was N.N. Gurina; Edgren 2013, 260) and three from Finland (Siiriäinen, Anne Vikkula and Matti Huurre). This project was carried out at a desk. It did not include common fieldwork, but papers were to be written on the basis of existing material.

The Volosovo project initially progressed promisingly. At the 1983 symposium in Helsinki,

Meinander gave a presentation on *Volosovo and the Baltic*. In addition, the presentations of Vikkula and Huurre were published in the proceedings of the *Fenno-ugri et Slavi* 1983 (Edgren 1984). In 1984, a separate seminar on the Volosovo phenomenon was held in Leningrad. In 1983–1984, Vikkula focused her research on the archaeological material found in Finland, which in one way or another is related to the Volosovo culture and its problems. Her task in the project was to find and analyse the finds of the Pyheensilta group in south-western Finland. Under these circumstances, she undertook a fact-finding mission to Moscow and Kazan in 1985. Ultimately, however, the Volosovo project did not progress to a joint publication, also because of the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. As late as that autumn, the Volosovo project was mentioned in the negotiation minutes of the archaeology working group, which indicated that the material would be ready in four–five years, and responsibility was assigned to Cand.History V.I. Timofeyev. The matter was to be addressed again the following year. Then the whole project was buried.

In the early 1980s, a proposal for another cooperation project was submitted to the TT Committee. The aim was a palaeoecological collaboration to study the emergence of agriculture and the connections between Estonia and the Uusimaa Province. The palaeoecological research project was presented to the working group by Professor Siiriäinen and Docent Erä-Esko. The first step would have been a trip to Estonia and getting to know suitable sampling sites with Estonian colleagues. However, it was reportedly judged impossible to set up the project during the contract period.

Again in 1986, the Finnish side proposed a joint research project on early farming in the Baltic Sea region. However, the decision on the project was not made then or later, although the topic was raised a few times in the working group discussions. In Finland, cooperation between archaeologists and palaeoecologists had intensified and the question would have been more topical than any theme based on traditional archaeology.

## Researcher exchange and joint field-work projects before 1992

The first decade of the TT Committee coincides with the so-called time of Stagnation (1975–1986), when the political liturgy of the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance, including the peaceful coexistence of the Finns and the people of the Soviet Union, was repeated time and again. Although individual scholars had an interest in ‘east archaeology’ during the Soviet era, this was by no means programmatic within the Department of Archaeology. Researcher exchanges between the Soviet Union and Finland were established by the end of the 1970s and in the 1980s these activities improved. In addition to delegations, the system also permitted individual researchers to travel to several cities in the Soviet Union that had Branches of the Academy of Sciences. Leena Söyrinki-Harmo was the first Finnish archaeologist to take part in the excavations in Novgorod already in 1977 and 1984. Among the UH’s assistants, Carpelan visited Leningrad and Petrozavodsk in 1978 (with Huurre) and Tallinn in 1982, Uino Tallinn in 1982 and Pirk-

ko-Liisa Lehtosalo-Hilander Tallinn and Riga in 1985. Vikkula’s study trip to Moscow and Kazan was mentioned above. In the Branches, studies could be carried out in the collections, archives and libraries. Excavations could also be followed in city areas (i.a. Novgorod), but smaller localities and the countryside remained closed to foreigners. The ceded Karelia was still a closed area.

Group excursions to the Soviet Union were also organised. Two trips to the USSR were made during Professor Meinander. The first excursion took place in September 1973 to Tallinn, Riga and Leningrad. When tourism to the Soviet countryside was limited, museums and archaeological institutes were natural places to visit; at least Jüri Selirand, Evald Tõnisson, Lembit Jaanits and Vello Lõugas were among the Estonian archaeologists and Ēvalds Mugurēvičs among the Latvian hosts. Ancient remains were seen along the way in the Baltic States: the hillforts of Iru and Lõhavere, the castles of Karksi and Viljandi and the Assaku cup-marked stone in Estonia, and in Latvia the Riga Old Town excavations, Salaspils and the excavations of the Mārtaņsala Iron Age cemetery (Figure 4). In addition to the Hermitage



Figure 4. Finnish archaeologists and students at Mārtaņsala archaeological site (then Latvian SSR) with Professor C.F. Meinander (right) in September 1973. Latvian archaeologist Ēvalds Mugurēvičs (left) and Estonian archaeologist Vello Lõugas present artefacts from the excavations of an Iron Age cemetery. At the other end of the table is Pekka Sarvas. Photo: Pirjo Rauhala (Uino).



Museum, a visit to its Gold Chamber took place in Leningrad.

The trip to Petrozavodsk, the capital of Soviet Karelia, organised by the student association Fibula in May 1976 was not part of the program of the TT Committee, but Soviet archaeologists helped implement the program. In addition to museums and the Archaeological Institute of the Karelian Branch of the USSR AS (now KRC/RAS), the Stone Age settlement of Uya on the shore of Lake Onega south of the city and the Martzialnye Vody health water springs in Kontupohja (Kondopoga) district were visited (Figure 5). Pirjo Uino recalls that there was a somewhat confused exchange of words on the tours with the Finnish-speaking guide: it was difficult for her to understand that the travellers wanted to see old Petrozavodsk and its grey log houses, not new residential areas and suburbs with colossal element buildings. In Petrozavodsk, G.A. Pankrushev and Yu.A. Savvateyev hosted the visit.

At the same time, archaeology students showed a growing interest in Soviet archaeology and Russian-language literature. Since few students knew Russian, the language barrier was an obstacle and the aim was to improve the situation by translating key works into Finnish. The projects were implemented through the student association Fibula, which launched two lengthy and demanding translation projects. The spirit of the time is reflected in the fact that Fibula received



Figure 5. Archaeologists G.A. Pankrushev, C.F. Meinander, Yu.A. Savvateyev and J.-P. Taavitsainen (in the background) during the excursion to the Stone Age settlement site of Uya in May 1976. Photo: Pirjo Rauhala (Uino).

a bibliography of translatable literature from the Soviet Embassy (Hiekkanen 2019, 27). Marta H. Schmiedehelm's dissertation (Schmiedehelm 1955) on the early Iron Age of north-east Estonia appeared in 1983 in the Stencil series of the Department of Archaeology (Schmiedehelm 1983). The project to translate G.A. Pankrushev's (then) new two-volume work on the Karelian Stone Age (Pankrushev 1978a–b) started in 1979. This endeavour turned out to be more cumbersome than expected, and only the first part was published in Finnish in 1994 (Pankrushev 1994; see also Nordqvist 2004). In addition to literary activities, the student association was allowed to make a study trip to Tallinn, Pskov and Riga in 1985.

By the mid-1980s, weak signs of future changes were visible. In 1984–1986 Uino participated in the excavations of Staraya Ladoga (Aldeigjuborg) on the River Volkhov. She was perhaps the first western archaeologist to visit the area since the Revolution – thanks to Dr. A.N. Kirpichnikov, as the visa was issued after a complicated process with many twists and turns (Figure 6; Uino 1989). In 1988, ceded Karelia (until then closed with exception for the town of Vyborg) was opened to Finnish archaeologists (Uino, Jussi-Pekka Taavitsainen). The opening of the Karelian Isthmus to tourism allowed more Finnish archaeologists to participate in fieldwork and familiarise themselves with ancient monuments in the region.

With the onset of Glasnost and Perestroika (1986–1992), the intellectual climate changed, and then political transparency and freedom of opinion increased. Evidently, the participants in the archaeological cooperation sensed the change, and the expressions used in the archaeological publications seem to reflect this.

The excavations carried out in the former municipalities of Räisälä (now Mel'nikovo) and Käkisalmi (now Priozersk) under the direction of Saksa in cooperation with Uino of the Academy of Finland started a new phase in the history of collaboration – the practical cooperation in the field (Uino 2007). The project, which took place within the UH, covered the years 1988–1993. Uino was the first Finnish archaeologist to take part in excavations in the rural areas of the Karelian Isthmus. This was the beginning of a series of joint scientific projects carried out in the



Figure 6. E.A. Ryabinin introduces Pirjo Uino to the well-preserved remains of wooden buildings from the Viking Age at his own excavation area in Staraya Ladoga in 1984. Photo: A.N. Kirpichnikov.

Karelian Isthmus and Ladoga Karelia, in which the disciplines of Archaeology of the Universities of Helsinki and later also Turku and Joensuu (now University of Eastern Finland) and the Lahti City Museum played a key role.

In the summer of 1988, Uino participated in excavations at Tontinmäki Hovinsaari in Räisälä, in an area called Hynninen cemetery. It was an extensive area of ancient monuments with burials, settlements and cup-marked stones. In 1989 Käkisalmi fortress was chosen as the main research object and excavations in the courtyard were then carried out as a Russian-Finnish project in cooperation between Saksa and Uino for many years. Investigations revealed earlier log structures and Viking Age artefacts, showing that there was human activity on the fortress island before 1294/1295, when Käkisalmi (Kexholm/Korela) fortress was mentioned by chroniclers. In the summer of 1991, excavations were conducted in the Käkisalmi countryside in Suotniemi (now Yarkoye) at a Crusade Period cemetery area. During the excavations, traces of a late Merovingian and Viking Age settlement were found that are older than the well-known burial ground (Uino 2021). Dates and other analyses were obtained in broad collaboration with Finnish natural scientists (Tuovi Kankainen, Terttu Lempiäinen, Matti Saarnisto, Irmeli Vuorela, Pentti Zetterberg) studying topics closely connected to archaeological questions (botany, geography, geology, geophysics, palaeoecology, etc.). The results have been

published in several articles and are included in the dissertations of Uino and Saksa (Uino 1997; Saksa 1998; 2010; see also Saarnisto 2003).

Soviet archaeologists who arrived as exchange researchers were often provided facilities for presentations at the Department of Archaeology/UH as part of their visitor program. In this way, the students were given the opportunity to become acquainted with the archaeology and current research of the neighbouring country. The presentations in Russian were translated into Finnish, opening up gaps in the language wall and facilitating the exchange of ideas when the language skills of the parties did not otherwise match. The excursion of the Fibula association to Leningrad, Käkisalmi and Staraya Ladoga in April 1990 also shows the increased interest of the students (Figure 7).

The collapse of the Soviet Union changed the settings but did not erase the need for cooperation. The conditions made possible by the TT Committee were still in effect in 1991–1992 when Professor Siiriäinen sent a letter to the TT Committee asking for a two-week annual travel quota to Russia for the new *Ancient Lake Saimaa* project of the Archaeology/UH. The Committee was soon dissolved, however, and it took a few more years for fieldwork cooperation to accelerate.





Figure 7. Students of the Fibula association during an excursion in Staraya Ladoga in April 1990, on the *sopka* burial mound named after Prince Oleg. Photo: Pirjo Uino.

## Joint research in the field since the 1990s

### *Two large projects on the Karelian Stone Age*

In the 1990s, the *Ancient Lake Saimaa* project and after it the *Martinniemi* project of the UH focused on the archaeological and environmental history of the Great Lake Saimaa area in eastern Finland (Siiriäinen 1996). They planted the seeds for the *Saimaan Vuoksi – Karjalankannaksen kivi- ja varhaismetallikausi* project, later the *Saimaa-Ladoga* project, which aimed to study the links between the two European lake basins (Lavento 2008a, 30). The extension of research to the Russian side of the border was a natural step following the Vuoksi River valley and was fully consistent with the scientific focus of the Archaeology/UH of that time, but it also reflects the *Zeitgeist* of those days. The collapse of the Soviet Union opened up opportunities to explore territories that had been inaccessible since World War 2, and other archaeologists and natural scientists also began working in the area (active explorers include the University of Turku, the Lahti and Riihimäki City Museums and the North Karelian Museum).

The *Saimaa-Ladoga* project transferred the research objectives of the *Ancient Lake Saimaa* project to the Karelian Isthmus: the aim was

to examine the archaeological and geological past of the area with modern and multidisciplinary methods (Lavento 2008b, 64). Like all later field projects, it was implemented in cooperation between Finnish and Russian scholars and carried out under the fieldwork licenses of the latter. The Finnish side was represented by the UH (Mika Lavento, Petri Halinen, Carpelan, Siiriäinen) and the NBA (nowadays the Finnish Heritage Agency, FHA; Uino), the Russian side by two organisations of the Russian Academy Sciences in St. Petersburg, the Institute for the History of Material Culture (IHMC/RAS; Timofeyev, S.N. Lisitsyn, Saksa) and the Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography, Kunstkamera (MAE/RAS; Gerasimov).

The TT Committee stopped working in 1992 and was replaced by the Commission for Scientific and Technical Cooperation between Finland and Russia (*Suomen ja Venäjän välinen tiede- ja teknologiayhteistyökomissio*). Even the exchange of experts was agreed between the Academy of Finland and the Russian Academy of Sciences, this setting no longer provided the same established framework as its predecessor (Kirpichnikov *et al.* 2016, 21). Due to the chronic lack of funding, the *Saimaa-Ladoga* project came to consist of numerous short periods of fieldwork (Lavento *et al.* 2008, 284). The first field excursion to the Isthmus was organised in the autumn of

1998 with the aim of assessing the research potential of sites known before World War 2, but during the trip it was decided that the best results could be obtained by studying new areas using modern methods (Siiriäinen *et al.* 2008, 10).

The first survey was made in 1999 in the former municipalities of Kaukola (now Sevast'yanovo) and Räisälä (Lavento *et al.* 2001; Nordqvist & Lavento 2008) and continued in 2001 in Kurkijoki (Seitsonen & Gerasimov 2008) and in 2002 in Johannes (now Sovetskiy) (Carpelan *et al.* 2008). In the summer of 2002, a full-scale excavation of a Stone Age house pit was carried out at the Räisälä Juoksemajärvi Westend site (Bol'shoje Zavetnoye 4) (Figure 8; Halinen *et al.* 2008). Final surveys were made in Koivisto and Kuolemajärvi (now Primorsk–Pionerskoye) in 2003 (Nordqvist & Seitsonen 2008b), after which the project was terminated as funding from the Chancellor's Research Grant (UH) was secured for follow-up investigations.

The *Kaukola-Räisälä* project (or *Subsistence strategies and changes of communities between 9000–1 BC: an archaeological intensive-survey in the western part of Lake Ladoga, Karelian Isthmus, 2004–2006*) aimed to deepen the understanding

of Stone Age subsistence and settlement strategies (Figure 9). Unlike its predecessor, the schedule was planned from the outset and included two seasons of fieldwork (2004–2005) and one year of data processing (2006) (Lavento *et al.* 2006). The collaborating parties were again the UH (Lavento, Halinen, Teemu Mökkönen, Nordqvist, Oula Seitsonen, Sanna Seitsonen), the NBA (Uino), the IHMC/RAS (Timofeyev, Lisitsyn) and the MAE/RAS (Gerasimov, S.V. Bel'skiy) as well as the University of Tartu (UT; Aivar Kriiska).

The results of two projects were published in a collection of articles (Lavento & Nordqvist 2008) and a series of papers (Halinen & Mökkönen 2009; Mökkönen 2009). Besides a great impact on the understanding of the Stone Age of the Karelian Isthmus, an important result was the introduction of a new field methodology into the research area and the establishment and strengthening of scholarly contacts. Student involvement was also of significance: all surveys and excavations since 1999 were conducted as UH fieldwork seminars and practice. The insights and personal connections developed during these field seasons paved the way for further cooperation.



Figure 8. The excavations of a housepit at the Räisälä Juoksemajärvi Westend site (Bol'shoje Zavetnoye 4) was also a field school of the UH and involved more students than any other expedition described in this article. Paula Kouki, Sanna Seitsonen and Andreas Koivisto recovering finds during fieldwork in June 2002; Professor Mika Lavento and some of the participating students in the background. Photo: Kerkko Nordqvist.



Figure 9. The second survey of the *Kaukola-Räisälä* project took place in May 2005. Teemu Mökkönen reading the map in the Kaarlahti village (Kuznechnoye). Photo: Kerkko Nordqvist.

### *Versatile collaboration in the field*

*Saimaa-Ladoga* and *Kaukola-Räisälä* projects represent a separate chapter in the ‘eastern’ studies of UH/archaeology, in terms of resource contribution and personnel and student involvement, and in that sense received no successors. Instead, several projects and research conducted by individual or small groups of researchers on grant basis followed; UH’s role now changed to a more passive one. As the number of projects and the people who carried them out similarly increased, the level of detail of each study remains lower in the following part of this review.

The *Lake Pyhäjärvi – Ozero Otradnoye* project was built directly on the foundations of the previous projects (Figure 10). It was conducted in collaboration of the UH (O. Seitsonen, Nordqvist) and the MAE/RAS (Gerasimov) and continued the study of similar topics mainly on the western Isthmus through surveys and excavations in 2005–2008 (Nordqvist & Seitsonen 2007; Seitsonen *et al.* 2016). In addition to the Stone Age of the Karelian Isthmus, the conflict sites of 1918 and World War 2 were investigated, first in the *Landscapes of Finnish Conflicts* project (2003–2010; O. Seitsonen) (Seitsonen & Kunnas 2009), and more recently battlefield studies were undertaken as part of the *Archaeology of the Mannerheim Line* project (2018–2019; in collaboration

with the Military Museum of the Karelian Isthmus in Vyborg, B.K. Irincheyev). Similar themes were also explored further north in the *Lapland’s Dark Heritage* project (UH and University of Oulu, 2014–2018).

Despite its prominence, the Karelian Isthmus was not the only stage of cooperation. UH representatives already participated in the early post-Soviet international research project *Household and Settlement during the Mesolithic and Early Metal Period in Southern Karelia, Russia* in the Lake Onega region in 1994–1997 (Lavento, collaboration with the Universities of Tromsø (UTr), Umeå and Turku and the Karelian Research Centre [KRC/RAS], Petrozavodsk; Lars Forsberg, Knut Helskog, Erika Engelstad, Taavitsainen, N.V. Lobanova, M.G. Kosmenko, A.M. Zhul’nikov). Even before that, during the first years of the 1990s, UH scholars and students took part in excavations, for example in Staraya Ladoga, Vologda region and on the Tsilma River in the Republic of Komi.

Long-term collaboration was also established in central European Russia. Since the early 1990s, surveys and excavations were conducted in the Republic of Mari El and the Kostroma region (1992–1997, 2015), most recently within the project *Fenno-Ugric Ceramics in the Middle-Volga Region during the Early Metal Age*. These expeditions, led by Professor Lavento on the Finnish side, were first jointly organized with the Mari





Figure 10. The *Lake Pyhäjärvi – Ozero Otradnoye* project conducted fieldwork in different parts of the Karelian Isthmus. Dmitry Gerasimov, Tiina Mikkanen and Oula Seitsonen document a new site in Säkkijärvi (Kondrat'evo) near the Finnish border in August 2006. Photo: Kerkko Nordqvist.

State University of Yoshkar-Ola and then with the A.I. Khalikov Institute of Archaeology in Kazan (V.S. Patrushev). Cooperation with the Institute of Archaeology of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow (IA/RAS; N.A. Makarov, N.A. Krenke, S.V. Kuz'minykh), in turn, introduced Finnish scholars to the Moscow region in the 2000s. Further north, the project *Home, Hearth and Household in the Circumpolar North* focused on dynamics of northern indigenous households and conducted some of its fieldworks on the Kola Peninsula in 2007–2008 (Halinen, Lavento; in collaboration with the UTr and the IHMC/RAS; David G. Anderson, Bjørnar Olsen, Sven-Donald Hedman, V.Ya. Shumkin) (e.g., Halinen & Olsen 2019). It was linked to a larger international *BOREAS* project, which also pursued fieldwork in Siberia (Figure 11).

Palaeoecological studies were part of the new collaboration and already during the 1998 expedition a sediment core was taken at the site of the Antrea Net Find (Carpelan 2008; Miettinen *et al.* 2008). Sampling was carried out on the Karelian

Isthmus on several occasions in 2004–2005 in connection with the INTAS<sup>4</sup> project *Waterways and Early Human Movements in North-Western Russia* (P.M. Dolukhanov, University of Newcastle) (Timofeev *et al.* 2004; Zaytseva 2013), as well as the *Lake Pyhäjärvi* project. More recently, research on human-environment interactions continued in the project *Land use, cultivation, and animal husbandry during the Neolithic in North-Eastern Europe between c. 6000–1000 BC* (Teija Alenius, 2014–2019), in collaboration with the MAE/RAS (Gerasimov) and the Institute of Limnology, Russian Academy of Sciences (IL/RAS; T.V. Sapelko, A.V. Ludikova, D.D. Kuznetsov) (see Alenius *et al.* 2020). Archaeological and palaeoecological ventures further in northern Russia include the research done in the Pechora Lowlands in 1995–1996 (Carpelan, collaboration with the IHMC/RAS and the Department of Geology/UH; O.V. Ovsyannikov, Anu Kaakinen, Matti Eronen, Kristiina Löyttyjärvi, Sari Saastamoinen) (see Kaakinen *et al.* 1999). Cooperation was also made in the Republic of Tuva in southern Siberia in 2005 (Carpelan, Uino, Högne Jugner,

4 INTAS was an initiative funded by the European Community to promote research in the former Soviet Union.

collaboration with the IHMC/RAS) (see Zaytseva 2013, Ris. 79).

The list of expeditions and projects organised by other (Russian) institutions, but in which staff and students of the UH took part, is still much longer and consists of both individual visits or workshops and recurring annual collaborative activities. These include, among the others, the geo-archaeological research of the Narva-Luga micro-region in Ingria (Nordqvist, main collaboration with the UT, Kriiska and the MAE/RAS, Gerasimov and numerous colleagues from the IL/RAS, the Arctic and Antarctic Research Institute, the Russian Geological Research Institute, the IHMC/RAS, and the St. Petersburg State University [SPbGU]) (Kriiska *et al.* 2016; Gerasimov 2019), documentation and research of rock art of Lake Onega and the Kola Peninsula (Antti Lahelma in collaboration with the KRC/RAS, the SPbGU and the UTr; Lobanova, Murashkin, J.-M. Gjerde), and investigation of wetland sites in Serteya and Zamostye regions (Satu Koivisto; in collaboration with the IHMC/RAS and the State Hermitage; A.N. Mazurkevich, E.V. Dolbunova, V.M. Lozovsky, O.V. Lozovskaya).

Many of the studies mentioned above involved UH students since the 1990s. Cooperation

with Russian colleagues and acquaintance with the materials prompted some students to further explore field archaeology in Russia, including (but not limited to) the Paleolithic of the Kostenki-Borschevo area on the River Don, the Bronze Age of the Republic of Tuva, the prehistoric arctic lifeways on the New Siberian Islands, the Kola Peninsula and the White Sea region, as well as the Viking Age of Staraya Ladoga and Ryurikovo Gorodishche (Figure 12). The student association Fibula also organised an excursion to St. Petersburg in 2005. Still, despite constant connections, the movement was rather one-sided in terms of fieldwork: the Finns travelled to Russia, but not *vice versa*. This may reflect general question framings, geography, as well as financial issues. There are some exceptions and Russian scholars or students participated in UH field practice, for example, in 1995 in Ristiina and in 2013–2015 in Virolahti.

### Changing cooperation in the 2000s – New themes and new methods

The intensive phase of fieldwork that characterised the beginning of the new collaboration slowed



Figure 11. The fieldwork of the *Home, Hearth and Household* project included the investigation of a dwelling at the Chavrin site in Lovozero (Kola Peninsula) in August 2008. Vladimir Shumkin, Petri Halinen and Anton Murashkin discuss the progress of excavation. Photo: Kerkko Nordqvist.



down after the early 2000s. This is partially due to fieldwork meeting primary objectives, partially to problems securing funding, but also partially due to the changing political climate, beginning with the 2008 war in Georgia and the annexation of Crimea in 2014. Over the last 10–15 years, the focus has been more on processing the results obtained and studying new questions through new detailed analyses of find materials and natural scientific methods. Two main types of research can be distinguished here. The closest collaboration developed in research projects where much of the research materials and many collaborators came from Russia, but there was also cooperation on projects that were not specifically focused on Russian archaeology but touched on it in one way or another. As a result, the scale of involvement varied from large, comprehensive projects to individual case studies. Considering the material culture and archives, most of the work was done in research institutes and museums in areas closest to Finland, in St. Petersburg and Petrozavodsk, but also elsewhere in northern and central Russia, including Moscow, Vologda, Cherepovets, Staraya Ladoga, Kostroma, Yoshkar-Ola, Kazan, and so on. Complementarily, the UH (along with other institutes, notably the NBA/FHA) also provided facilities for researchers visiting Finland to study materials. In addition, consultation on specific questions or details became much more

frequent, which also reflects the expansion of researcher networks and the rapid development of virtual communication tools.

Research projects that focus specifically on Russian materials include the *Copper, Material Culture and the Making of the World in Late Stone Age Finland and Russian Karelia* (2010–2012; V.-P. Herva, Lahelma, Nordqvist and Janne Ikäheimo from the University of Oulu; collaboration with the KRC/RAS; Tarasov) (Nordqvist & Herva 2013; Herva *et al.* 2014). Intensive collaboration also developed around a group of projects focused on mortuary archaeology, including the ERC-funded *Animals Make Identities* project (2020–2025) and the preceding *Bioarchaeological methods in the research of worldviews and human-animal relationships* (2016–2020) and *Animal remains in burial contexts in Mesolithic northern Europe* (2013–2016) (PI Kristiina Mannermaa; the main collaborators in Russia: the MAE/RAS; Gerasimov, V.G. Moiseyev, V.I. Khartanovich, A.V. Zubova, and the KRC/RAS; Tarasov) (Mannermaa *et al.* 2021; Mannermaa & Rainio 2020), as well as other research on burials (Ahola *et al.* 2020). Russian material was successfully addressed also in the *Lapland Pioneer* project (2009–2014; Tuija Rankama and Jarmo Kankaanpää; collaboration, among others, with N.V. Kosorukova of the Cherepovets Museum, I.N. Chernykh of the Tver Museum and M.G. Zhilin of the IA/RAS) (Rankama & Kankaanpää



Figure 12. Numerous students of the University of Helsinki participated in various fieldwork projects over the years. Valeriy Patrushev, Kerkko Nordqvist and Oula Seitsonen surveying in Kokshaisk (Mari El) in July 2002. Photo: Sanna Seitsonen.

this volume). The studies on the ideological and research history of Finnish and Russian archaeological research by Timo Salminen and colleagues are also worth mentioning (Salminen 2003; 2014; Kuz'minykh *et al.* 2014).

Archaeometric studies include, for example, a geochemical study of the use of Karelian lydite (Mikael A. Manninen, Pasi Heikkilä, Niko Anttiroiko, Petro Pesonen; collaboration with the KRC/RAS; Tarasov) (see Tarasov *et al.* 2017a). Research in the Upper and Middle Volga area was continued within the *Fenno-Ugric Ceramics* project (Patrushev & Lavento 2019), with a focus on sampling and analysis of artefacts. In addition, Archaeology/UH scholars were involved in the *Ancient genes of North-Eastern Europe* project (SUGRIGE; UH and University of Turku), which also looked at Russian materials (Onkamo *et al.* 2019).

Despite the change in institutionalised forms of cooperation, the tradition of symposia continued from the 1990s to the early 2000s and, with a small interruption, to the 2010s (Kirpichnikov *et al.* 2016, 22; Figure 13). The Archaeology/UH acted as a partner organisation in the symposia held in Finland and also placed a representative in the new Finnish-Russian collaborative group in the field of archaeology (founded in 2014). The last symposium was arranged in 2019 – the next one was initially postponed due to the Corona pandemic and then cancelled after the Rus-

sian aggression in Ukraine. The new conditions brought about by these factors have also severely impacted many of the recent projects mentioned above, resulting in only partially achieved goals, a realignment of focus and materials, or complete termination.

Outside of the symposia, participation in seminars and conferences organised in Russia became a form of cooperation in the 1990s and early 2000s. Over the years the number of attendees – as well as the number of events organised – increased steadily and it is not possible to present a complete list in a concise form here. Among many others, UH staff and students participated in the annual *Tver land and the neighbouring areas in the antiquity* conference, thematic conferences of the IHMC, *All-Russian Archaeological*, *Northern Archaeological*, and *Uralian Archaeological* congresses, *Archaeology of the Arctic* conference, *The Great Volga Route* conference, and so forth. The proceedings of these events, like other Russian journals and publication series, became a channel for the publication of many (joint) research projects. Joint sessions were also organised in international conferences. Guest lectures were arranged in connection with the study and other visits to both Finland and Russia. These events took place irregularly, but for example the lecture series *Winter Dialogues with Russian Archaeology* (2018–2019; Nordqvist, Volker Heyd) aimed to increase knowledge about current Russian



Figure 13. Some of the participants of the 15th Finnish-Russian archaeological symposium during the excursion in Novgorod in November 2017. From left to right: Päivi Kankkunen, Petri Halinen, guide, Pirjo Uino, Mervi Suhonen, Christian Carpelan, Mika Lavento and A.I. Saksa. Photo: Kerkko Nordqvist.

research through a series of invited talks. Not to be forgotten is the special course on Russian archaeology, which was repeatedly organised by Uino and Carpelan at the Archaeology/UH. Cooperation agreements were also signed with various Russian research institutes, but no student exchange or continuous exchange of lectures was established between Helsinki and its Russian partners.

### **Final remarks: The Covid-19 pandemics and the war in Ukraine**

The beginning of Finnish-Russian cooperation in archaeological research was controlled at the state level and operated by institutionalised actors and individuals. The collapse of the Soviet Union ushered a transitional period during which collaboration was already more determined by the interests and direct contacts of a wider circle of individual researchers. Over the years, travel and communication became easier and encouraged collaboration, and while some of the old stumbling blocks, including the language barrier, remained, the number of scholars actively engaged in collaboration increased. The Finnish-Russian symposia are a mirror of the broader development: they represent the background from which the later collaboration was originally born, while most of the latter contacts and cooperations took place independently of them. At the same time, the often personal and informal character of the collaboration deprived it of continuity or financial security.

The Department of Archaeology at the University of Helsinki was one of the actors that seized the moment in the 1990s and early 2000s. The initial emphasis on the Karelian Isthmus was a consequence of the geographical focus of the work then in progress, the special position of the Karelian Isthmus as a former province of Finland and an important region for the development of Finnish archaeology (Uino 2003; Nordqvist 2017), and its proximity to key Russian collaborators in St. Petersburg. At the same time, other areas of northern and central European Russia were also explored, the importance of which steadily increased with the scope and variety of the research topics. This is in line with general changes in archaeological science and also reflects the

growing understanding of the importance of the wider Eurasian context. These conditions made the Archaeology/UH one of the research centres and gateways to prehistoric north-east Europe. In the early 2020s, however, the situation changed.

The first version of this manuscript was submitted for peer review in early 2022 – the aim was to summarise the collaboration to date and to explore possible future directions and questions. It turned out to be something else entirely. At that time, the research cooperation was already severely slowed down by the restrictions imposed due to the Covid pandemic. In February 2022, an all-out Russian military attack on Ukraine brought collaboration to a standstill. This has influenced research in many ways, and for example the Academy of Finland funded project *Europeanisation of Finland and the Karelian Isthmus AD 1100–1600* (PI Lavento, 2022–2026) was forced to change its implementation from the start and to rely on the published accounts for Russian materials (Uino *et al.* 2022, 142). As long as the current ideological and political regime prevails in Russia, it seems unlikely that official research cooperation with state-related institutions can be reinstated. In other words, ‘east archaeology’ has entered yet another low-intensity period of unknown duration.

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## Discovery and exploration of multi-layer Stone Age sites on the Karelian Isthmus

*Dmitriy V. Gerasimov*

The discovery of stratified multi-layer archaeological settlements can be considered one of the most important advances in Stone Age archaeology of the Karelian Isthmus at the beginning of the 21st century. The first multi-layer sites were discovered and studied as part of international research projects that brought together the University of Helsinki, the National Board of Antiquities (nowadays the Finnish Heritage Agency) and the Lahti City Museum with several research institutions of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

The first Stone Age archaeological contexts covered by aquatic sediments were discovered on the southern shore of Ladoga Lake in the last quarter of the 19th century by A.A. Inostrantsev (1882). At the end of the 19th century, general models of isostatic land uplift in Fennoscandia and the ancient Baltic Sea oscillations were developed. Successful fieldwork based on the shoreline displacement model was conducted on the Karelian Isthmus at the beginning of the 20th century (Pälsi 1920). The famous paper by Saarnisto and

Siiriäinen (1970) presented models of the Ancient Lake Ladoga shorelines for the transgression maximum before the River Neva breakthrough, and for several earlier chronological slices. These models clearly identified shorelines that were submerged in the Late Holocene in all parts of the Ladoga Basin. Nevertheless, until very recently, no submerged Stone Age settlement contexts were known on the Karelian Isthmus.

At the beginning of the current millennium, the Stone Age archaeological field survey methodology developed in Finland based on shoreline displacement model(s) was successfully extrapolated to the Karelian Isthmus. In just a few years, several dozen archaeological sites were discovered within the framework of international research projects (Lavento & Nordqvist 2008). The integration of Russian and Finnish methodological approaches during trial excavations at some of the newly found sites enabled the discovery of multi-layer settlements – these sites are characterized by cultural layers sealed by sediments from the rela-



Figure 14. Map of the multi-layer Stone Age sites studied on the Karelian Isthmus.

tively well-dated oscillations of the Baltic Sea and Ladoga Lake (Figure 14).

The first Late Mesolithic and Early Neolithic settlement contexts, submerged under aquatic sediments, were discovered at Silino (Muolaa Telkkälä) in 2000 (Takala & Sirviö 2003). In 2002–2003, the stratigraphy formed by the Ladoga oscillations was studied at the Räsälä Juoksemajärvi Westend (Halinen *et al.* 2008), Kurkijoki 33 (Kylliäisenlahti W-2) and 35 (Lahdenryhmä) sites (Seitsonen & Gerasimov 2008). Later, submerged contexts were found at the Ozernoje 3 and Komsomol'skoye 3 (Pyhäjärvi Kunnianiemi) sites (Sapelko *et al.* 2008; Seitsonen *et al.* 2009). A major stimulus for the professional community (both geologists and archaeologists) was the discovery of submerged Stone Age settlement contexts at the Okhta 1 site in St. Petersburg in 2008 (Gusentsova & Sorokin 2017). The Podolye 1–3 sites on the southern Ladoga shore became the first submerged Stone Age contexts found in this region as a result of modern targeted systematic field investigations under T.M. Gusentsova's supervision (Gusentsova & Kulkova 2020).

The discovery of stratified archaeological sites with clear geochronological markers allowed

the definition and study of archaeologically homogeneous contexts that formed within certain chronological limits (Figure 15). The main water fluctuations discernible in the stratigraphy of multi-layer archaeological sites are the Litorina transgression of the ancient Baltic Sea, the Vuoksi River breakthrough and the Ladoga transgression. The data obtained, some of which have only been partially published and are still under analysis, are of crucial importance for the development of regional archaeological chronology and for understanding the dynamics of socio-cultural processes in the context of Holocene environmental changes.

Analysis of the distribution of submerged sites in the discussed area allows us to expect the discovery of many more Late Mesolithic and Early Neolithic archaeological contexts on the shores of Ladoga Lake and the Gulf of Finland, and particularly in the area of the former Heinjoki Strait, which connected Ladoga Lake and the Gulf of Finland before the Neva River breakthrough. The possibility of discovering Early Mesolithic archaeological contexts covered by sediments of the Ancylus Lake transgression cannot be excluded either.

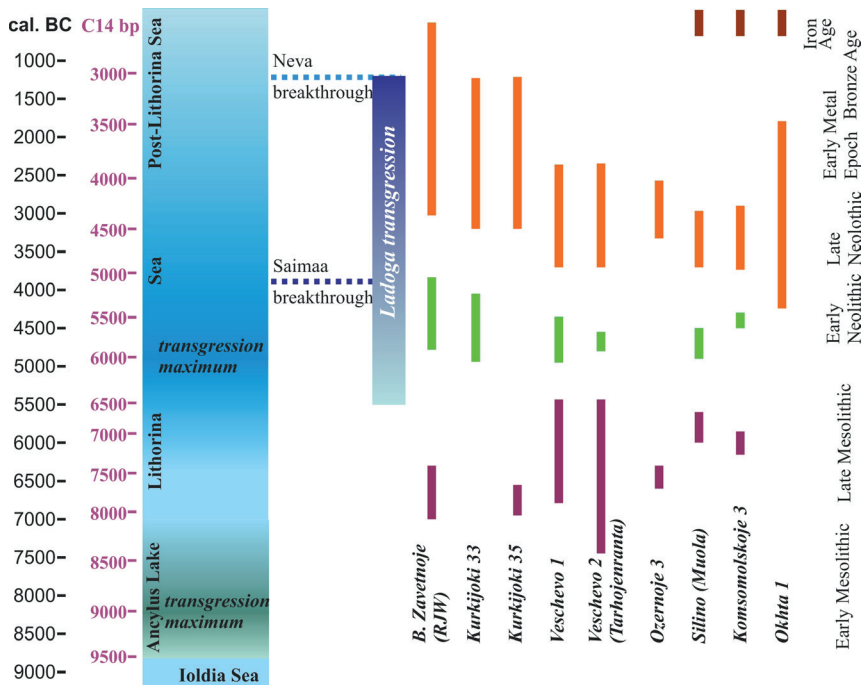


Figure 15. Archaeological contexts present at the multi-layer Stone Age sites studied on the Karelian Isthmus.



## Research cooperation with Karelian archaeologists in the post-Soviet period

*Alexey Yu. Tarasov*

In this short overview, I briefly review the collaborative archaeological activities of Finnish and Karelian (Republic of Karelia, Russian Federation) archaeologists involving the University of Helsinki in the post-Soviet era. The collapse of the Soviet Union, a very ambiguous event that had both negative and positive consequences, paved the way for a whole new era in the history of scientific collaboration between archaeologists from Russia (including Karelia) and Western countries. Of course, the exchange of information and ideas across national borders never entirely stopped, but neither during the Soviet era nor before did there exist similar joint ventures like international projects, fieldworks, and publications that we see in the post-Soviet period. Although the intensity of collaboration remained at a rather moderate level, cross-border research cooperation in the practice of Karelian archaeology became a reality.

My first personal encounter with archaeologists from Finland, including Mika Lavento, who later became a professor at the University of Helsinki, took place in the mid-1990s during the

so-called *Onega* project – a series of excavations of Stone Age sites in Karelia by an international team of Russian, Finnish, Swedish and Norwegian archaeologists (Figure 16). The scale of the excavations was rather modest compared to the previous period of very extensive fieldwork, while the excavation process was conducted and recorded with an accuracy quite unusual for Karelian archaeology of the time. Today, soil sieving and 3D-mapping of artefact locations are mandatory in Stone Age excavations in Russia, but during the project it was a new approach for most Karelian colleagues. The planned publication of the project results never came out in a single volume, but most eventually appeared in separate publications by A.M. Zhul'nikov (2005) and N.V. Lobanova (2004; Lobanova & Filatova 2015). Further joint Finnish-Russian surveys and small-scale excavations took place in the north-western part of Ladoga in the 2000s and 2010s, but these were organized by Finnish museums without the direct official involvement from the University of Helsinki.



Figure 16. The excavations of the *Onega* Project are underway at the Sumozero XV settlement. Photo: Alexey Tarasov.

The fieldwork projects emerged during a period of severe financial shortage in Russian archaeology, when regular government funding ceased, a modern grant system had not yet been developed, and contract works had not reached any significant scale. With their support, field research could continue and led to truly considerable outcomes – the materials obtained were used in a number of publications and manuscripts. However, there was another side of the coin, already discussed by K. Nordqvist (2018): the cooperation was one-sided, i.e., works initiated and funded by the western side were carried out in the east and no field projects with Karelian participation were organized in Finland.

The situation did not change even in the 2010s, when economic conditions in Russia improved greatly. The willingness of state authorities to finance investigations in Finland, as well as the readiness of Finnish partners to accept this hypothetical aid, is unthinkable. Moreover, no initiatives for such works were presented from the Karelian side, which is probably partly due to the ‘provincial’ position and mindset of Karelian archaeology and archaeologists. This is proven by numerous research projects in the 2010s. All were initiated by Finnish researchers (including K. Nordqvist, T. Alenius, M. Manninen and K. Mannermaa) in order to get to know the materials of Karelian sites better and to obtain samples for various scientific analyses and were funded by Finnish organizations. There were no joint projects where Karelian organizations were official partners. An agreement on mutual cooperation was signed between the University of Helsinki and the Institute for Linguistics, Literature and History of the Karelian Research Centre, Russian Academy of Sciences, but it was about the opportunity for Helsinki scholars to study artefacts and take samples in Petrozavodsk. Karelian archaeologists were only personally involved in supporting this work and participating in the preparation of publications.

Undoubtedly, these projects were of great importance for Karelian archaeology. Since then, cooperation has also shifted from the field to the indoor and laboratory. One of the most significant recent initiatives was the AMS program to date the Neolithic–Eneolithic pottery of Karelia, which resulted in the establishment of a reliable chronology of the Late Stone Age in just one year (see Tarasov *et al.* 2017b). Although this project was entirely based at the University of Oulu, it also made use of the knowledge and connections gained through previous collaborations with the University of Helsinki. Recently, a promising program has been launched to study the isotopic values and the mobility of individuals buried in the Mesolithic Oleniy Ostrov cemetery. The potential of these joint projects has not yet been fully realized.

Another important part of scientific cooperation is informal communication, especially in the context of conferences and seminars. During the post-Soviet period, Finnish and Karelian archaeologists had an excellent opportunity for regular face-to-face interaction at numerous events organized in Finland, Karelia and other regions in Russia, as well as at international meetings in other countries. Informal contacts also include email correspondence, excursions and sometimes even vacation trips. Recent negative developments in global politics and COVID-related restrictions have placed the continuation of this form of communication at risk. Communication via the internet, enhanced by mobility restrictions and affecting our practices, is only a partial solution and cannot substitute face-to-face meetings. I hope that these negative processes will be temporary, will end soon and will not undermine our collaboration, which has great potential and future.

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