

Preface

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The First International Conference on Sámi Archaeology was held in Rovaniemi, Finland, from the 19th to the 22nd of October 2006. The main organizers were the Institute for Cultural Research, Department of Archaeology at the University of Helsinki and the Provincial Museum of Lapland, Rovaniemi.

The Rovaniemi conference was planned as the first of a series of events in the network *Sami Prehistory and Early History in the Western Barents Region*, also known as the Sami Archaeological Network or *Samiarc* (www8.umu.se/archaeology/SAMIARC/). By the time of publication of the papers of the first conference, one major event has taken place in each of three of the participating countries, and Norway will follow in 2010.

Samiarc is coordinated by the University of Umeå, Department of Archaeology and Sami Studies. The network was launched earlier in 2006. Since then, its work is financed by NordForsk until the end of 2010. The main partners are the University of Helsinki, Institute for Cultural Research, Department of Archaeology; the University of Tromsø, Institutt for Arkeologi; Saint-Petersburg State University, Faculty of History, and the Russian Academy of Science, Institute of Language, Culture and History in Petrozavodsk. Museums and research institutes from Sweden, Finland,

Norway, and Russia are included in the network as co-partners.

The purpose of *Samiarc* is to gather together all archaeologists interested in Sámi culture and the archaeology of *Sápmi*, the home region of the Sámi people. No chronological criteria have been specified for the research topics, which thus range from the Mesolithic up to recent times, as well as up-to-date problems concerning the preservation of cultural heritage. Strict limitations would not be useful, because there is no one definition of Sámi archaeology. Furthermore, the work is multidisciplinary in character. In addition to archaeology, fields such as environmental studies, osteology, linguistics, and history play an important role.

Samiarc connects researchers and post-graduates. After the Rovaniemi conference, the main events organised by the network have been the international PhD course “*Environmental and Cultural Perspectives on the Western Barents Region 5000 BC to AD 1400*” held in Lovozero in the Kola peninsula in June 2007, the workshop “*Prehistoric Identities, Cultures and Interaction in the North*” held in Helsinki in January 2008, the international PhD course “*Sami Archaeology and Cultural Heritage*” held in Jokkmokk, Sweden, in June 2008, and the conference “*Sami History and Prehistory: Archaeological Perspectives from Late Neolithic to Present Time*” held in St. Petersburg in November 2008.

The Rovaniemi conference in 2006 was very successful. It was a face-to-face meeting of more than 60 archaeologists from almost 30 different institutions. We were already familiar with each other's publications, but in Rovaniemi many of us at last had the opportunity to contact each other in person.

The organisers wish to thank all the participants of the Rovaniemi conference. Special thanks go to the authors of the 27 papers presented in the conference. The publication at hand offers the reader 16 of the oral presentations in an edited version.

The persons in charge of the conference and the publication would like to express their thanks to the anonymous peer-referees of the articles. We thank the Finnish Antiquarian Society for accepting the articles for publication in the scientific series *Iskos*. The conference and the publication have been financed by NordForsk, the University of the Arctic, the Kone foundation, and the Jenny and Antti Wihuri Foundation.

The authors submitted the first versions of their articles to the editors in spring 2007. Due to delays in the technical editorial work, the publication comes out three years later. Meanwhile, several new discoveries have been made and the research of Sámi archaeology has proceeded.

May a productive trend prevail in the future, too.

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The editors