

Preface

The Iron Age and the transition from the prehistory to the Middle Ages are complex issues in the research of the region of Uusimaa on the southern coast of Finland. In the course of multidisciplinary work over the past ten years, plenty of new data has been collected. This allows us to approach the area and the time period from various new points of view.

The present multidisciplinary publication offers new perspectives from the viewpoint of archaeology, geology, history and palaeoecology from the Stone Age up to the early modern era, with a special focus on the Iron Age and the Middle Ages.

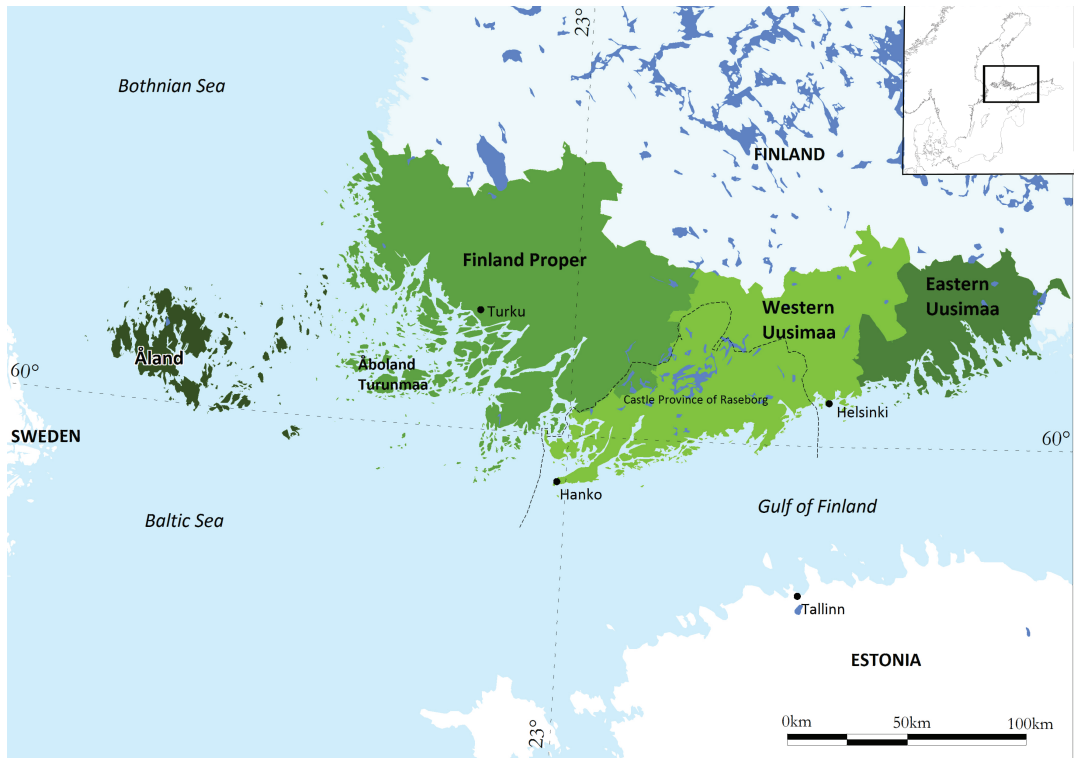
Uusimaa – a New Land in the Middle Ages?

According to the traditional view that has been accepted by archaeologists in Finland and abroad for a long time now, the southern coast of Finland, including the area of the medieval province of Uusimaa (Sw. Nyland), literally ‘New Land’, is regarded as a sparsely populated or almost uninhabited area throughout the Iron Age (ca. 500 BC up to the 11th century AD). For this reason, archaeologists neglected to search for any possible settlements of this period in the area of Uusimaa in the 20th century. Other Finnish provinces such as Finland Proper and Häme, where a large number of Iron Age burials could be discovered, were more tempting research areas for them than the seemingly empty southern coast.

In general, an essential problem is that the number of known Iron Age dwelling sites is very low in relation to cemeteries everywhere in Finland. For this reason, graves play a central role in the interpretation of different phases and changes in the Iron Age culture. Thus the

lack of richly furnished Viking Age cemeteries in Uusimaa (as well as, for example, in Ostrobothnia) seems to be enough to support the general preconception that these were areas with almost no permanent settlement at the turn of the Middle Ages.

According to the traditional historical view, the province of Uusimaa was populated in the 12th and 13th centuries AD, when Swedes deliberately colonised new areas on the north-eastern side of the Baltic Sea. The usual assumption is that the area on and near the northern shore of the Gulf of Finland was inhabited within a short period. Already in the late 13th century, the settlement was so dense and the number of inhabitants so high that these coastal areas were organised as a Swedish province that was given the Swedish name *Nyland*. Since then the same settlements expanded continuously up to the middle of the 16th century. The population and settlement in western Uusimaa peaked around 1560, after which wars, the mandatory quartering of troops, severe taxation and poor crop yields led to the abandonment of hundreds of farms.



The research area on the coast of the Baltic Sea.

Some remarks on the research history

The area of Uusimaa is interesting from the viewpoint of the research history of the prehistory of Finland in general.

Archaeologist Alfred Hackman suggested in the early 20th century that the early phase of “the Finns” as a group in Uusimaa could be reasonably explained by the so-called *immigration theory*. His main argument for assuming the immigration of linguistically and ethnically homogenous groups of people from the south across the Gulf of Finland during a fairly short time was the burial custom. The so-called *tarand* graves emerged in a few areas in Uusimaa at the beginning of the Common Era. The origin of this cemetery type is in northern

Estonia, in the northern part of the province of Virumaa where a Baltic-Finnic language was spoken at that time. Hackman’s theory, which was closely connected with certain linguistic data, prevailed until the 1970s as the leading hypothesis to explain the origin of “the Finns” for both archaeologists and linguists.

Archaeologist C.F. Meinander assumed in 1968 that Hackman’s conclusions could be overcome. In his opinion, certain important sites on the coast of Uusimaa indicated continuation of the habitation throughout the Pre-Roman Iron Age. This supported his general view on the prehistoric settlement in Finland, because the continuity of settlement from ca. 500 BC to the beginning of the Common Era was already known to archaeologists in the inland, for example, in the Lake Saimaa area. According to Meinander, the burials at the Morby site in Espoo, as well as a few other cemeteries and

dwelling sites – located for example in Lohja in the west and Porvoo in the east – indicated that there was no longer any need for archaeologists to assume any massive wave of immigration in order to explain the obvious existence of local communities in Uusimaa already in the very beginning of the Iron Age. The habitation had continued from the Stone Age to the Early Iron Age in the coastal zone as well as in the inland.

Meinander did receive support for his interpretation from a few other scholars, although Hackman's theory was not totally abandoned in the 1970s, either. The debate continued in the early 1980s, and in a few respects it is still going on.

Few archaeological sites were found and excavated in western Uusimaa in the 1970s and 1980s. Thus, the Iron Age settlement history of Uusimaa was still full of questions for archaeologists. In addition to the earliest phase, there were chronological hiatuses in empirical evidence of any kind in the settlement history after the Late Roman Iron Age. Almost none of the known sites dated to the Middle Iron Age (the Migration and the Merovingian Periods), and the Late Iron Age seemed to have been a time of fairly sparse habitation. To sum up, the archaeological material did not yet reflect any considerable change in the settlement pattern prior to the Swedish colonisation period in the early Middle Ages.

In the 1990s, new results, especially pollen analyses, began to challenge this view. For archaeologists, it was time for new hypothesis concerning the area of Uusimaa. In the beginning of the 21st century, it became obvious, though, that the basic archaeological data was all too heterogeneous here, and most of it had not been updated or revised by archaeologists for decades. Many areas were completely ignored by archaeological surveys. Furthermore, medieval archaeological sites and monuments had never been surveyed in any systematic way.

The beginning of intense studies in western Uusimaa

The EU LEADER+ funded project “*Vårt Maritima Arv – Merellinen Perintöemme – Our Maritime Inheritance*” was launched in 2002 under the leadership of Ari Siiriäinen, Professor of Archaeology at the University of Helsinki. Since Professor Siiriäinen passed away in December 2004, BA Henrik Jansson took over the responsibility for completing the project. The aim was to study the use of the maritime landscape during the Late Iron Age and Early Middle Ages. After three years of intensive fieldwork and the study of archival sources that have survived from medieval and post-medieval times, the project had obtained a huge amount of new information. During this project, ca. 450 new sites were found and documented in the area. The result of the project was the systematically collected data bank of all the hitherto known archaeological sites and monuments of the coast and archipelago of western Uusimaa.

In 2003, a new multidisciplinary project called “*Western Uusimaa during the late Iron Age and Medieval Period. Settlement history from the viewpoint of archaeology, history, biology and geology*” started. This project was funded by the Kone Foundation and led by PhD Georg Haggrén. The project combined several disciplines including archaeology and history, as well as environmental sciences such as geology and palaeoecology. One of the aims was to investigate the development of the environment and the human activities, resource utilisation and settlement history of the area with an emphasis on maritime adaptations and the utilisation of the archipelagic resources.

This project focused on nine case study areas where the environmental development and settlement history were analysed. Soil samples were examined in all the study areas except two (Hanko, Raseborg–Snappertuna) where no adequate environmental samples could be obtained. The analysis by quaternary geologist, PhD Arto Miettinen shed new light on the shore displacement and the topographical changes in

western Uusimaa. PhD Teija Alenius focused on the environmental change, vegetation history and the development of cultivation on the basis of pollen analyses. Based on the archaeological record, MA Henrik Jansson analysed the utilisation of the archipelago and the coastal areas during the Iron Age. PhD Georg Haggrén analysed the Medieval and early modern settlement history of western Uusimaa, the Castle Province of Raseborg, on the basis of historical sources combined with the archaeological record from deserted medieval hamlets.

Instead of being an uninhabited outland, western Uusimaa proved to be a province with an interesting prehistory and history both during the Iron Age and in the Middle Ages. The main results of the project are fundamental for the articles that are now published in this volume.

It had been an enormous task to build up a complete view of more than thousand years of environmental and cultural changes in a province where little research had been done before. This was a good basis for further studies. In 2007, Ella and Georg Ehrnrooth's foundation funded a project called "*Fisherman's farms and noble manors – Man in the maritime landscape in Finland Proper and Uusimaa*", during which our team finished the archaeological and historical research that had thus been going on for five years since 2002. This funding also now enables the publication of the results.

Archaeologist, PhD Tapani Tuovinen has made a thorough analysis of the research history of the Finnish archipelagic coast and the changing views concerning the development there. Together the five articles of this volume of the publication series *Iskos* provide an updated and, in a certain respect, a completely new view of the environmental change and settlement history in western Uusimaa and the neighbouring coastal areas.

The multidisciplinary work continues

This book was completed in the framework of the SEAS project. "*SEAS – Settlements and Economies around the Sea – Maritime settlement, subsistence and economic histories around the Baltic Sea 500–1700 AD*" is our fourth project in a row. It was launched in 2009 and funded by the Academy of Finland. This multidisciplinary project, led by Professor Mika Lavento, is based on the results of the three previous projects. Now the history of and changes in the research area are analysed in a wider context.

The main aims of the SEAS project are to investigate the development of the environment, human activities, resource utilisation and settlement history of the area with an emphasis on maritime adaptations and the utilisation of the archipelagic resources. This includes, for example, occupation, harbour, navigation, subsistence and ritual activities. It follows that the relations between the coastal populations in south-western and southern Finland, as well as the coastal areas in northern Estonia and eastern Sweden, must be taken into consideration. Sometimes communication may have taken place via long routes, across the Baltic Sea region.

We are now giving western Uusimaa and the Finnish Archipelago Sea an international background that covers the whole Baltic Sea area. The challenge is to fill an important gap in our knowledge of the late prehistory and early history of the maritime landscape of the northern Baltic Sea. The relations between coastal and inland populations must also be kept in mind. Contact networks have surely existed and changed throughout the Holocene.

The research questions of the SEAS project include agricultural economy with special regard to the environmental background for slash-and-burn and field cultivation. The results achieved through pollen analyses reflect the general development of the economy in many key areas in Uusimaa. Still, these results do not reveal who the people were or which languages

they spoke. These problems can be approached through toponyms. Questions concerning the history of Baltic-Finnic languages and/or Sami language forms belong to the area of interest of our project. We also aim to find an explanation for the origin of a number of Swedish toponyms in the coastal zone of the Baltic Sea, as well as to date some of them on the basis of archaeological and palaeobotanical evidence.

Taking the currently available methodological package into account, it may not sound too difficult to discover dwelling sites from the different periods of the Bronze Age and Iron Age at last. However, the most probable topographical relation of dwelling places to the known cemeteries is not easy to figure out. The search for potential past settlement sites must continue in Uusimaa and elsewhere.

One interesting theme is the prehistoric iron production and medieval iron refining. In southern and south-western Finland, prehistoric iron handicraft was an imported innovation, the origin of which might be traced either to eastern Finland, Estonia, or central Sweden. In the 17th century, western Uusimaa became an area of iron industry.

All in all, many open questions remain concerning the early development of population history in the Uusimaa region and the dating of the various phenomena. They are all worth discussing in the light of the data that is now available.

Some results of the SEAS project have already been published elsewhere, and more printed articles will follow. In this volume, the central topics are related to the environment and the human influence in the long run from the Late Stone Age up to the 18th century. All the articles provide starting points for discussions that will continue in the next volume in 2012.

Helsinki, at the beginning of the summer 2011

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Mika Lavento