BOOK REVIEWS


The first comprehensive works on the prehistory of Eastern Karelia, or the Karelian Republic, Aleksandr J. Bryusov's Istoriya drevnei Karelii (1940) and Nina N. Gurina's Drevnaya istoriya Severo-Zapada Yevropeiskoi chasti SSSR (1961) were the only ones in their field for many decades. This void was filled in 1996 by a new work edited by Mark G. Kosmenko and Svetlana I. Kochkurkina, with contributions by researchers of the Archaeological Section of the Karelian Centre for the Sciences.

The scope of a review such as this does not permit a discussion of all the themes discussed in the compendium, and here I will only summarize the main result in view of the history of settlement in Karelia and the specific problems of ethnohistory.

The opening chapter, by Kosmenko, is on the main problems and objectives of prehistoric research in Eastern Karelia. Kosmenko outlines nine cultural-chronological strata in the prehistory of the region. These are the Late Mesolithic (represented by Epi-Swiderian archaeological cultures), the Early Neolithic (Sperrings and Särtsiänemi I wares), the Late Neolithic (Pit and Comb Ware), the Early Aeneolithic (Comb and Pit and Rhomboid-Pit wares), the Late Aeneolithic (Volosovo Ware), the Bronze Age (textile-impressed pottery), the Early Iron Age (the Ananyino Culture), the Early Middle Ages (SE Ladoga ceramics and a non-ceramic population) and the Late Medieval stratum (farming villages and monasteries).

According to Valentina F. Filatova, the author of the chapter on the Mesolithic, the continental ice sheet retreated from the territory of Eastern Karelia around 10 000-9 700 years ago, after which it became possibly to settle this region. Filatova dates the oldest sites in the vicinity of Lake Onega to the first half of the seventh millennium BC, which is also supported by radiocarbon dates. The closest parallels to this culture are to be found in the contemporary cultural sphere of the Upper Volga, from where the oldest inhabitants of Eastern Karelia descended. Sites on the River Kem, in the northern parts of the region, are dated to the seventh or sixth millennium BC. The assemblages of these sites differ from the Mesolithic finds of the Kola Peninsula or Northern Norway, but closely resemble the artefacts of the Mesolithic Suomusjärvi Culture of Finland. Filatova assumes that the Kemi and Suomusjärvi populations derived from the Ahrensburgian cultural sphere of Central Europe. Basing on her detailed knowledge of the Mesolithic finds of the Lake Onega region, Filatova regards them as a group distinct from the Suomusjärvi Culture. It is nevertheless hard to accept her suggestion that the Suomusjärvi and Kemi populations descended from the Ahrensburgian population. Migration from Central Europe to Fennoscandia across the much larger body of water that preceded the Baltic Sea would have been impossible for a whole Mesolithic population. If the group had moved northeast along the shores of the sea, it would could not have avoided coming into contact in the Baltics with the population of the Kunda Culture, descendants of an East European Palaeolithic population.

Filatova's concepts differ from currently held views on the age and origin of the earliest settlement of Fennoscandia. According to the model of settlement proposed by Milton G. Nuñez (1987) the oldest settlement of the region primarily descended from the people of the Early Mesolithic Kunda Culture, extending from the Baltic region to Northeast Russia. The oldest finds from Southern Finland date from around 8200 BC according to calibrated radiocarbon ages. The occupants of the younger Kemi site came from the east and represented a hypothetical North Russian complex (Nuñez 1996; Dolukhanov 1989; Sammalahiti 1995; Salo 1996). Although Filatova's and Nuñez's models differ from each other, both maintain that the earliest population of Fennoscandia was of at least partly southern origin.

According to the sections on the Neolithic and the Early Metal Period, written by Irina F. Vitenko,
Mesolithic to the Neolithic. The spread of Typical Comb Ware to Eastern Karelia around 3000 BC marked the arrival of a new population originating in the areas between the Baltic lands and the Upper Volga. The new settlers came into contact with the local early ceramic culture and assimilated them. Vitenkova’s concepts are in agreement with the view of Finnish and Estonian archaeologists with regard to the spread of the Comb Ware Culture. The roots of this culture, which spread into Fennoscandia and the regions around the Gulf of Finland around 3000 BC according to conventional dates (ca. 4200 BC in the calibrated chronology) are in the areas south of Lake Ladoga and in the Upper Volga. The immigrants appear to have closely related to the earlier population, which facilitated their merging (Salo 1996, 336).

In the work under review, the Early Metal Period is divided into the Aeneolithic (i.e. the Copper Age) and the Bronze Age. Corresponding to the Copper Age of Eastern Karelia are the Late Neolithic inland cultures of Finland (Huurre 1990, 89). Vitenkova claims that the Copper Age began in Eastern Karelia after 2500 BC and continued until ca. 1500 BC. Like the Late Neolithic population of Finland, the East Karelian settlers of the beginning of the Early Metal Period made and used asbestos-tempered pottery, which Vitenkova maintains had developed locally from Early Comb Ware.

The sections on the Bronze Age and the Early Iron Age are by Kosmenko. The sites of the bearers of the Textile Ceramic Culture, which was familiar with bronze metallurgy, are in the environs of Lake Onega and date from the close of the second and the beginning of the first millennium BC. Finds from the northern regions of Eastern Karelia date from around 500 BC. According to Kosmenko, the Bronze Age culture had an almost completely foreign basis, i.e. artefact forms introduced by settlers from the Upper Volga regions. The earlier populations of Eastern Karelia thus merged with the immigrants but did not leave any appreciable imprint on their culture. Finnish archaeologists maintain that the bearers of the Bronze Age culture (1500-500 BC) of the Finnish inland regions, which received eastern influences from as far as the Urals, descended from earlier local population (Huurre 1990, 110).

The Early Iron Age finds of Eastern Karelia represent four cultural groups falling into the period 500 BC - AD 500. The roots of the most developed of these, the Late Kargopol Culture are, as claimed by Igor S. Manyukhin the author of the section concerned, in the cultural sphere that flourished in the Mid-Volga region between the 8th and 6th centuries BC. A marked migration extended from the area to the north as far as Lake Onega.

According to Kosmenko, Iron Age sites west of Lake Onega and in places in the central and northern parts of Eastern Karelia, contain ceramics typical of the Pre-Roman Iron Age population of the central and eastern regions of Finland, which C.F. Meinander (1969) calls the Luukonsaari population. Unlike Meinander, who regards this population as autochthonous, Kosmenko claims that it emerged as the result of a westward movement of population from the region of the Late Kargopol Culture.

Sites of Meinander’s Arctic Group, occupying areas north of Lake Oulujärvi in Finland, are also found in Eastern Karelia. Kosmenko maintained that the introduction of textile-impressed pottery in the northern regions of Eastern Karelia point to migration from among the Luukonsaari population. The Arctic Group would thus be the most peripheral subdivision and the one that had undergone the most cultural change among the populations formed as the result of expansion from the Ananyino Culture. Although finds from around the Birth of Christ are few in Northern Fennoscandia, archaeologists who have studied this problem recently are agreed on the continuity of settlement from the Stone Age to the Iron Age (Gurina 1987; Carpelan 1996; Shumkin 1996).

Sites of the Late White Sea Culture are known from the southwest shores of the White Sea. The ceramics of this population differ from types of pottery used elsewhere in Eastern Karelia. This material also bears a strong imprint of the Ananyino Culture. The population in question most probably came from regions far to the east, arriving along the White Sea coast.

Late Iron Age finds from Eastern Karelia are mainly from the 10th-12th centuries AD. Following the periodization established in Soviet archaeology, this material is classed as medieval. Kochkurkina notes that the term ‘Middle Ages’ is poorly suited to the late prehistory of Eastern Karelia. She proposes that it be defined as a separate period, for which she suggests the name ‘the period of the formation of the Ancient Russian state and the ethnoi of Northwest Russia’. In view of Eastern Karelia, this name lacks content and is even misleading. The few Russian influences of the turn of the first and second millennia AD came via the Vepsians. Nor did new ethnic groups form in the region during this period. Historically documented times began in the southern parts of Eastern Karelia and along the west shore of the White Sea in the 15th century, and only as late as the turn of the 17th century in the central and northern regions.
Kosmenko classes the Late Iron Age finds into two groups according to the presence or absence of ceramics. Pottery-bearing sites and cemeteries are clustered on the shores of Lake Onega and the near vicinity. There are no remains of log buildings at dwelling sites, but there is evidence of iron smelting furnaces. These finds are attributed to groups that came from areas southeast of Lake Ladoga to practise hunting and to engage in the fur trade in the wilderness regions of the north. Evidence of permanent settlements engaged in animal husbandry has come to light only along the north shore of Lake Onega. Pollen samples from Säämäjärvi, west of Lake Onega, show that slash-and-burn cultivation was attempted in the area around AD 1020. This date, however, has been questioned (cf. Taavitsainen et al. 1994). Inland dwelling sites of the 10th-14th centuries in the areas west and north of Lake Onega were occupied by a hunter-gatherer population that had stopped making ceramics. This change occurred in the 4th century AD in the Finnish inland as the result of specialization in procuring furs. The dwellers of the East Karelian inland did not adopt this new trend until the turn of the first and second millennia.

The late prehistoric settled areas of Vepsän and Karelia were outside the territory of Eastern Karelia, but their population played a role in the formation of the present-day Karelians and Vepsians. Kochkurkina presents the Iron Age culture of Vepsän and Karelia from this basis.

During the Late Iron Age, the Vepsians developed the kurgan, or grave-mound, culture that flourished in the southeast coastal area of Lake Ladoga. The local population had grown affluent as a result of trade that gained pace in the 9th century and had adopted new cultural influences from Scandinavian colonists. The development of this population can be followed until the 13th century, when the kurgan culture gradually gave way to the Christian burial custom. Also other archaeologists who have studied this culture maintain that Scandinavian colonists had a distinct influence on its emergence (see Boguslavskii 1993).

Leonilla A. Golubeva's and Kochkurkina's (1991) division of the Vepsian region into three ethnographic zones is of importance for research into the early ethnohistory of the Vepsians. In addition to the southeastern coastal area of Lake Ladoga, the Vepsian regions on the River Suda and around lakes Beloozero and Lacha were greatly influenced by the Finno-Ugrians of the Upper Volga. The population of these regions was assimilated among Russian colonists early in the second millennium AD.

According to Kochkurkina, lack of material prevents us from following the development of the Vepsians prior to the emergence of the grave-mound culture. In 1986 and 1992 two unpublished dissertations were presented in St Petersburg, A.N. Bashenkin's study on the areas southwest of Lake Beloozero in the first millennium and the early second millennium AD and O.I. Boguslavskii's research on the areas south of Lake Ladoga in the late first and early second millennium. The latter study appears to have remained unknown to Kochkurkina. Although she mentions Bashenkin's conclusions regarding the presence of the Vepsians along the River Suda since the sixth century AD, she reviews the history of Vepsian settlement solely with reference to the conclusions of toponymics. The stratigraphic sequence of the oldest Vepsian place-names is in the area southeast of Lake Ladoga, from where toponyms are assumed to have moved east along with colonists.

The few Early Metal Period and Early Iron Age dwelling sites investigated by Gurina southeast of Lake Ladoga and the 8th-century finds studied by Boguslavskii point to continued settlement until the Late Iron Age (Boguslavskii 1993, 135; Pöllä 1996, 48). Accordingly, both archaeological and toponymical support is found for the assumption that the southeast coastal region of Lake Ladoga was the area where the Vepsians originated.

Kochkurkina begins the section on Ancient Karelia, which flourished in the areas west of Lake Ladoga at the beginning of the second millennium AD, with a review of finds of the 6th century AD. The Early Metal Period and Early Iron Age material, from which Aleksandr Saksa (1989, 94; Saksa et al. 1996, 372) concludes that settlement was continuous until the Late Iron Age, appears to have remained unknown to Kochkurkina.

Kochkurkina explains the difference between the Middle Iron Age and Viking Age material and burial customs in relation to the undeniably Karelian material of the 12th -15th centuries by establishing as a separate group finds of a 'transition period'. According to her, the transition period of the 11th-12th centuries tells of 'ethnic evolution' among the local population, during which the type of ethnic community developed from the tribal stage to a medieval people. It should be pointed out here typologies of ethnic communities linked to societal development was a theoretical construct of Soviet ethnology. Because the transition of an ethnos from one type to another could not lead to any decisive changes in material culture, the hypothetical ethnic evolution of the dwellers of the Karelian Isthmus may only be a construct derived from the archaeologically observable changes in the life of the community concerned.
Saksa has suggested a more plausible explanation for these changes. Slash-and-burn farming, which had been adopted by AD 800, led to population growth. During the 10th century, an organization specializing in the fur trade formed in the region. The growing affluence of the population laid the basis for adopting new artefact types and ideological concepts. The internal development of the community on the Karelian Isthmus from the 9th to the 13th century led to the formation of the Karelian ethnos (Saksa 1994, 102; Saksa et al. 1996).

In presented the antiquities of the 12th – 15th centuries Kochkurkina focuses her main attention on hillforts where she herself has excavated. On the other hand, Kochkurkina offers little discussion of the villages of the agricultural population of the Karelian Isthmus, of the kind in which the majority of the population of the Ancient Karelian heartlands most probably lived (cf. Saksa 1984). Readers unfamiliar with ancient Karelia are easily given the idea that the relatively small and peripherally situated hillforts were centres of community life at the time. They were in different locations than the parish centres, or pogosts, which can be identified from documentary sources (Spiridonov 1990, 83).

Kochkurkina’s Ancient Karelia includes the Iron Age settlement of Southern Savo, which did not become a separate entity until the 14th century. The Finnish archaeologists J.-P. Taavitsainen, Matti Huurre and Pirkko-Liisa Lehtosalo-Hilander maintain that the cultural identity of Savo already emerged in the 11th century, which would point to the existence of two areas that were originally different in ethnic composition and culture (see Taavitsainen 1987, 220; Lehtosalo-Hilander 1988, 181).

According to Kochkurkina the Karelians who by the year 1000 had come as far as Northern Finland were accompanied by Novgorodian colonists. The Karelian colonization of the coasts of the Gulf of Bothnia is indicated by the archaeological record, place-names and documentary sources. There are, however, no indications of Russian colonization in the area (Koivunen 1992, 159; Vahtola 1980, 383).

Archaeology, linguistics and historiography have demonstrated the marked presence of Karelians east of the Tavastian (Häme) region, in the Päijät-Häme and Vanajan-Häme areas in the 11th-13th centuries. This phenomenon is not mentioned in work under review (cf. Vahtola 1980, 317; Taavitsainen 1990, 64; Taavitsainen 1994).

According to Kochkurkina, colonization extending northeast from Ancient Karelia is attested by 15th-century documents. She does not, however, discuss finds from the 11th-15th centuries from along the inland water route leading to the White Sea (cf. Pölö 1995, 26).

The chapter by Kosmenko is intended as a summary of the book. This section reviews the early stages of ethnohistory in Eastern Karelia. Kosmenko has presented his views on the ethnic background of the early settlement of Eastern Karelia in 1993 in a paper delivered at the Historia Fenno-Ugrica congress (Kosmenko 1996). Proceeding from the linguistic community of the Uralic peoples and the anthropological differences of the eastern and western language groups within this entity, Kosmenko claims that the origin of the Fenno-Ugric population of Eastern Karelia is most reliably investigated by tracing the spread of an archaeological culture with Uralic features into Finno-Scandia. Kosmenko maintained that the spread of textile-impressed pottery between 1500 and 500 BC into the regions between the Upper Volga and the Baltic marked the arrival of a Proto-Fenno-Ugric people. At that stage the Stone Age inhabitants of the region merged with the new colonists, for it would otherwise be hard to explain the anthropological differences between the western and eastern groups of the Fenno-Ugrians.

In the period after 800 BC a horizon of antiquities of the Ananyino Culture emerged in the areas north of the Upper Volga. This cultural sphere took shape as the earlier textile-ceramic population merged with colonists from the River Kama. According to Kosmenko only the Ananyino Culture artefacts display distinctly Uralic features, upon which grounds he assumes that the bearers of this culture spoke a Uralic language form. Therefore the spread of this culture into Eastern Karelia around 500 BC should be linked to the arrival of a Fenno-Ugric population. The divisions of this population in the inland, e.g. into Saami in Eastern Karelia and Baltic Finns emerging in areas to the south began after the beginning of the common era.

Kosmenko’s interpretations of the early stages of the Fenno-Ugric peoples differ considerably from the views of other archaeologists and linguists concerning the origin of this community and its development into its present peoples. Kosmenko takes as his starting point E.N. Setälä’s early-20th-century theory, most recently revised by Péter Hajdú (1985), of a limited original home area of the Uralic linguistic community and of a gradual migration to the present areas of the peoples concerned. Kosmenko appreciates this theory because it proceeds from linguistic processes and does not rely on the mistaken interpretations of archaeologists. Kosmenko fails to notice, however, that comparative linguistics largely relies on synchronic material ob-
tained from currently spoken languages. In order to establish an absolute chronology and the area occupied by community of speakers of a proto-language, linguistics must rely on the most probable archaeological results available.

Kosmenko does not seem to be familiar with the theory suggested by the Russian archaeologist P.M. Dolukhanov (1978) and later developed by Núñez on the formation of a community of speakers of a Uralic proto-language in the Periglacial zone extending from the Urals to Central Europe. After the melting of the continental ice sheet, Northeast Europe received its first inhabitants from the south - from the plains of Eastern Europe. The theory of an extensive European home area of the Fennougrians and their migration to the forest zone of Eastern Europe during the Mesolithic has received support among experts in various fields (see Sammallahti 1995; Siiriäinen 1995; Julku 1996; Nenonen et al. 1996).

Kosmenko seeks support for his views that the Saami community formed only in the Iron Age in Fennoscandia from Erkki Itkonen’s (1961) hypothesis which still holds explanatory power in regard to linguistic processes. According to Itkonen, the present-day Saami language is a continuation of Early Proto-Finnic. Kosmenko appears to be ignorant of the genetic and anthropological differences of the Baltic Finns and the Saami. Ethnohistorians generally accept the idea that race, culture and language are not necessarily synonymous. At present, the problem of the origin of the Saami appears to lack a comprehensive explanatory model. Present-day research, however, largely accepts the concept of the Saami as the autochthonous population of Fennoscandia (Sammallahti 1995; Carpelan 1996).

The compendium lacks a review of finds from historically documented times. In addition to the published results of excavations at Valamo monastery, the village of Chelmuzhi and the fort of Olonets (Spiridonov & Chernyakova, 1991; Spiridonov 1992; Kochkurkina 1993) and Juho Mullo’s surveys of coin hoards of the 16th–18th centuries (Mullo 1991), there are probably other, hitherto unpublished, finds of the historical period from Eastern Karelia. If the editors of the work under review regard historical archaeology as unsuited to the themes of general work on Eastern Karelian archaeology, the content would best be expressed by a heading such as "The Prehistory of Karelia".

Kosmenko and Kochkurkina have mostly succeeded in their aims. Apart from a few exceptions, the book provides a detailed picture of the current state of archaeology at the Karelian Centre of the Sciences and of its achievements and problems. The authors seek to link the prehistory of East Karelia to the broader context of contemporary developments in the rest of the forest zone of Northeastern Europe. The credibility of the work is, however, undermined by the fact that the authors take as their starting point the situation in Eastern Karelia, which they know best, instead of conceiving of the development of this area as part of the current picture of early settlement and ethnohistory in Northeastern Europe.

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**ABBREVIATIONS**

*FA* = *Fennoscandia Archaeologica*. Ekenäs.