

## Preface

MAUNU HÄYRYNEN AND PETRI J. RAIVO

The recent years have seen a growing international interest in the study of Karelia. This interest has not limited itself to the fields traditionally associated with the area, such as regional history or ethnology, but has extended into new areas such as cultural studies, human geography, art and architectural history.

This special issue of *Fennia* is a result of a long-lasting contact, co-operation and mutual influence of a group of Finnish, Russian and Scandinavian researchers. As its subject area, the publishing project has undergone a long process of metamorphosis, not without sudden change or delicate shifting of meanings. The initial motivation for the project and its cohesive force has been an understanding of Karelia as a multicultural landscape, an object of constant reinterpretation, recontextualisation and re-presentation by the different actors historically linked to it.

The issue seeks to map out different angles to the study of Karelia, placing them into a comparative framework. It has a further, conscious aim to promote a cultural dialogue on Karelia across the border and to place its nationalist representations under scholarly analysis, both not always self-evident starting points in the popular discourse. The co-operation that has produced the issue at hand is now continuing in the form of the *Transboundary Landscapes* joint research project (2004–2006), coordinated by Landscape Studies at the University of Turku and funded by the “Russia in Flux” research programme of the Academy of Finland. The project also deals with the study of the Russian-Estonian borderland.

In her article Netta Böök, a doctoral student in architectural history at the Helsinki University of Technology, looks at the different readings of Russian Karelian architecture – a source of inspiration for the Finnish *fin-de-siècle* National Romanticism – and their touristic utilization. Maunu Häyrynen, Professor of landscape studies at the University of Turku, focuses on the particular role of Karelia as a “liminal zone” in Finnish national landscape imagery, arguing that there have been other important contexts besides artistic Karelianism that dominates the art historical image of the area.

Häyrynen’s scope reaches to the reactions to the loss of Karelia in the aftermath of the Second World War, while Gregory Isachenko, Docent of cultural geography at the University of St. Petersburg, carries on with the study of the post-war Soviet imagery of the same area. His argument builds on the dramatic changes in the physical landscape on the one hand and on the ideologically dictated total break with the past on the other. Only during the recent years does he discern a reconciliation between the present-day and historical images of the Vyborg (Viipuri) Karelia.

John Lind, Professor of history at the University of Southern Denmark in Odense, dwells on the effect of landscape to the early stages of identity formation in Karelia. According to him, this could be pointed out in the establishment of borders and primary routes of movement as well as in settlement patterns and colonization of the area, culminating in the religious, political and military confrontation between the rival western and eastern powers.

Alexandr Pashkov, Docent of history at the University of Petrozavodsk, has studied the origin and development of the Russian image of the Vyborg province before the Finnish independence, noticing an early phase of academic interest, an ensuing period of military and statistical survey and a last stage of touristic promotion to the growing Russian middle class. The article tells a rather different story of the area from those of Böök and Häyrynen, concentrating on economic resources and administrative matters.

Docent Petri Raivo, Principal lecturer at the North Karelia Polytechnic, discusses Karelia as a Finnish *lieu de mémoire*, revealing the politics of memory manifested in the disputes over war memorials between Finland and Soviet Union/Russia. In accordance with Isachenko, he too observes a rapprochement between the Finnish and Russian interpretations of recent history – at least in the acknowledgement of the existence of different versions.