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KARELIA, KARELIANS AND THE KAREL LANGUAGES[2]

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Abstract

The article presents the most important identity issues concerning a small, sociolinguistically diverse, geopolitically and culturally divided Balto-Finnic nation – Karelians. The author describes the Karelian ethnic group, emphasizing its inhomogeneity.

[2] This paper is a new and revised version of: Wojan. K. (2016). *O Karelach i językach karelskich* [On Karelians and the Karelian languages]. In: Wojan, K. (Ed.). *Nowe wyzwania, nowe horyzonty. Czterdzieści lat Skandynawistyki gdańskiej.* Vol. 3: *Język, kultura i społeczeństwo Finlandii* [New Challenges, New Horizons. Forty Years of Scandinavian Studies at the University of Gdańsk. Vol. 3: The Language, Culture and Society of Finland]. Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego: 197–233.

The paper lists and describes the ethnolects of Karelian spoken both in Russian Karelia and Finland. It points out, on the one hand, the ethnolectal differences among them and, on the other hand, their clear relationship with various Finnish dialects and vernaculars. The Karelian languages are treated as an ethnolect continuum. The article also contains a brief description of Karelian grammar, showing its Finno-Ugric characteristics. Eventually, the paper raises the issue of the rebirth of the Karelian national identity. It stresses the Karelian heritage in the culture of Finns, the development of the Karelian languages, as well as the initiated work on creating their literary variants. Moreover, the text presents Russia's planned linguistic and cultural policy in the Karelian Republic, still unfavorable to the ethnos, against a historical background.

Keywords: Karelia, Karelians, Karelian languages, ethnogenesis, Finland, Russia, language policy.

Abstrakt

W artykule przedstawiono ważniejsze kwestie tożsamościowe dotyczące niewielkiego, socjolingwistycznie zróżnicowanego, rozdzielonego politycznie i kulturowo narodu bałtyckofińskiego – Karelów, a także ogólną problematykę etnolektów karelskich. Na tle historyczno-geograficznym, a także archeologicznym i kraniologicznym, wprowadzono, powołując się na dane literaturowe, w zawiłe zagadnienia problematyki bytowania pierwotnych ludów zamieszkujących obszary dzisiejszej Karelii. Przytoczono popularne w fennistyce teorie na temat etnogenezy Karelów. Zawarto krótką charakterystykę etniczną narodu karelskiego, podkreślając jego niehomogeniczność.

Wymieniono etnolekty karelskie, będące w użyciu zarówno w Karelii rosyjskiej, jak i fińskiej, akcentując z jednej strony różnice etnolektalne między nimi, z drugiej zaś – wyraźne związki z dialektami i gwarami fińskimi. Opis lingwistyczny języków karelskich przeprowadzono w aspekcie etnolektalnego kontinuum. Zawarto również krótką charakterystykę gramatyczną języków karelskich z uwypukleniem ich cech uralskich (ugrofińskich). Na koniec poruszono sprawy odradzającej się tożsamości narodowej – karelskości. Zaakcentowano dziedzictwo karelskie w kulturze Finów. Podkreślono rozwój języków karelskich oraz zainicjowane prace nad tworzeniem ich wariantów literackich. Przedstawiono na tle historycznym planową, wciąż niekorzystną dla etnosu, politykę językową i kulturową Rosji prowadzoną w Republice Karelskiej.

Słowa kluczowe: Karelia, Karelowie, języki karelskie, etnogeneza, Finlandia, Rosja, polityka językowa.

Primitive peoples in the areas of Karelia

With regard to geology, the area of Karelia belongs to the oldest part of Europe – the Fennoscandian shield. The physiographic character of the vast areas of Eastern Europe influenced numerous tribes living there already in the Mesolithic period. Their existence was determined by the degree of adaptation to the locally harsh climatic and

geographical conditions. Contemporary researchers assume that the original settlement in Karelia came from the south, from the Volga River basin, i.e. from the areas where the glacier had previously retreated (Kočkurkina 2004).

In the northern zone, among the forest thickets, the man of the Neolithic era lived on the gifts of nature – the changes that took place in the south with the introduction of copper and bronze came in this part of the world much later, namely: the end of the Neolithic for northern areas fell only around 1000 BC. The north-eastern vast forest areas of Europe were populated by hunter-gatherer tribes – they left behind specific pottery with pointed bottoms with comb and puncture impressions, typical only of this settlement zone, whose most interesting finds come from southern Finland and Karelia (the so-called comb-puncture pottery culture) (Bukowski and Dąbrowski 1971: 88; Vitenkova 2002a,b; Kočkurkina 2004). Topical literature distinguishes the Karelian culture – well-known to archaeologists from the areas of Karelia and northern Russia – dating back to the late Neolithic and early Bronze Age, combining elements of various cultures, very clearly visible in ceramics, as well as the so-called Sperrings culture[3] – an archaeological culture of the early Neolithic period from the first half of the 4th and mid-3rd millennia BC, which is characterized by decorated clay vessels with organic and asbestos admixtures and numerous, usually polished, stone tools (see Žul'nikov 1999).

Based on archaeological data, scientists have determined that settlement in the lands of today's Karelia, a country with tens of thousands of lakes and swamps as well as dense forests, appeared approximately 9,000–10,000 thousand years ago, in the 7th–6th millennium BC (according to other data – in the 9th–8th millennium BC) (cf. Bukowski and Dąbrowski 1971: 88; Kočkurkina 2004; Dubrovskij, Gračev 2011). This land was inhabited by small groups of Mesolithic hunters, much more actively in the south, who would most likely make seasonal trips here in an earlier period, just after the retreat of the glacier. The faint traces of the first human camps seem to indicate that these groups of hunter-gatherers kept changing their places of residence (hut-type constructions). It was only in the late Mesolithic that the population increased significantly – numerous residential settlements appeared on the shores of lakes and rivers (fishing emerged) (Savvateev 1983). The cultures of the original peoples, whose ethnic origin has not been clearly identified yet, and who lived in complete isolation from the southern regions, left traces in the form of Mesolithic cemeteries (which confirm the strengthening of social bonds), tools made of local slates (Savvateev 1983) and – somewhat later – numerous Neolithic finds: a thousand petroglyphs (prehistoric rock carvings, called "a stone chronicle" and "the Bible of the Stone Age" – see Wojan 2015), fragmentarily preserved fine art (made of slate, quartz, flint, amber, horn, bone, clay, wood), tools (see e.g. Bukowski and Dąbrowski 1971: 88–96; Savvateev 1983; Kočkurkina 2004). Archaeologists have also identified the remains of over thirty prehistoric settlements in these areas. Karelians created their own state organism at the turn of the 1st and 2nd millennia AD – their residences were placed northward to the White Sea and the mouth of the Dvina (Hajdú 1971: 280). Scholars have proven that in the 5th–10th centuries CE the areas of today's Karelia were inhabited by Finno-Ugric

[3] The name comes from the Sperrings site ca. 20 kms south of Helsinki.

tribes – the ancestors of today's Karelians (territorial dominance), Veps (near Lakes Ladoga and Onega) and the Saami (in the north).

The first mentions of Karelians

Information about ancient Karelians is contained in various Old Scandinavian written texts, which are important historical sources: in the Latin-language Norwegian chronicle, Icelandic annals, geographical treatises, sagas of various types (royal, family, etc.) (Mel'nikova 1986; Džakson 1993; Glazyrina 1996). The first mention of Karelians, dating back to the end of the 7th century, is related to a konung of the Danish tribe – Ivar Vidfamne (Ívarr inn víðfaðmi, died around 700), who, due to a shipwreck, was defeated and ultimately killed in the *Kyrjalábotnar* reservoir (lit. "Karelian Lagoon")[4] (Napol'skih 1997: 14). This event was commemorated in the *Gesta Danorum* chronicle by Saxo Grammaticus and the *Yngling Saga*. At the beginning of the 11th century, the Karelian Duchy – *Kirjalaland* was recorded in the *Saga of Olaf Haraldsson*, the king of Norway who found refuge in Novgorod with Prince Yaroslav and his Swedish wife Ragnhild. The texts of the sagas present Karelians as a wealthy people, well-developed economically, trading with the Saami, undertaking long expeditions to the north, and, above all, showing extraordinary fortitude in the fight against the Vikings.

The first message coding the name *kiriali* in relation to the Karelians can be found in an Old Norwegian anonymous text dated to the 11th–12th centuries (Napol'skih 1997: 14; Marcantonio 2002: 21). In most of the available historical and literary documents, the early Karelians tend to be named *kirialar*/*kirjalar* (Russian: *кирьялы*). The form of this ethnonym requires explanation. Ester M. Metzenthin (1941: 57–58) noticed an unclear origin of the vowel *i* in the first syllable, and pointed to the forms with the vowels *a* and *ae*, which derive from the Old Russian ethnonym *корела*, as the original forms in the Scandinavian language. According to Dmitry Bubrich, the form *kirjalar* reflects the archaic name of the Old Karelian nation, close to the initial form *kirjala(iset)*, derived from the Baltic word *girja*, *garja* 'a mountain' (in the Finnish languages, in accordance with the phonetic laws prevailing in them, the sound *g* was devoiced) (Bubrih 1947: 17, 31; 1971: 17; see also Kočkurkina et al. 1996).

The ethnonym *karjalainen*, also used by the Ingers as an endonym, has received many different etymological interpretations. Riho Grünthal (1997) derives this term from the Germanic word *karja*, which means 'a group, a team'. Other interpretations are based on the following word sources: Germanic *karu* < **skarja* 'rocks, stones', Russian *гора́* 'a mountain', Germanic *kaira* 'cattle' (cf. Finnish *karja* 'cattle'). According to the Russian Uralist Vladimir Napolskih, the endonym *karjalaizet* (plural form) literally means 'a cattle breeder' from *karja* 'cattle' (Napol'skih 1997: 14). The last etymological proposal refers to a cultural fact: Karelians, especially those living north of the Ladoga and Onega, became famous as cattle breeders. Also, according to Johanna Laakso (1998), the Old Russian name of the fortress *Korela* (Old Russian: *Корѣла*, Finnish: *Käkisalmen linna*) is a reference to this very source of the word. Tuomo Pekkanen re-

[4] The name has not been clearly determined to this day. It is likely that it refers to the specific type of the skerry coast of the Karelian Isthmus (Okulicz-Kozaryn 1993).

ferred the Karelian ethnonym to the words: *karja* or *kaira*, but they were derived from the Saami *gair*, which means 'a wedge'.

The first Russian written source to mention Korela is considered to be the Novgorod birch charter no. 590, with a dendrodate of 1066. It mentions Lithuanians' attack on Karelians (*Литва встала на Корелу*) (Ânin, Zaliznâk 1986: 50; Kočkurkina al. 1996; see also Wojan 2013). The official character of the charter is evidenced by the tamgas placed on it (Wojan 2015). Karelians were regularly mentioned in Russian chronicles from the 1140s.

The ethnic split, or rather the distinctiveness of individual Finnish tribes, was noticed already in the Middle Ages. This resulted in information about the Livvis and Ludics in numerous historiographic documents (Napol'skih 1997). The first written information about the Livvi Karelians and the area where they lived is contained in Jordanes' *Getica* of 551. While reporting on the nations defeated by the Gothic leader Hermanaric (died around 375), the historiographer mentions a number of names of the Balto-Finnic peoples (now called Western Finns (termed after Okulicz-Kozaryn 1993)), including: *Aestiae* (Ests), a tribe called *Thiudos in Aunxis*, interpreted by historians as *Olonec Chuds* (cf. the Karelian name *Anus*, Finnish *Aunus*; Old Russian *Chudź*) (Braun 1899; Okulicz-Kozaryn 1993; Labuda 1999), and also *Vasinabroncae* (Vepsians? Ves?), *Merens* (Meria?), *Mordens* (Mordvins?), *Imniscaris* (Maryans? Meshchers?). Unfortunately, a complete identification of many tribes mentioned in the annals is impossible. The above ethnonyms received various interpretations by historians in different periods of the development of science. Some researchers (including Müllenhoff 1887/1906) assumed that the list of peoples was borrowed from an itinerary that has not survived to this day (Bubrih 1949; Kočkurkina et al. 1996).

It is highly probable that the first information about the ethnic group of Karelians – the Ludics – was included in the *Bavarian Geographer* (*Carolingian Notes*)[5], containing the note *Descriptio civitatum et regionm ad septentrionalem plagam Danubii* (The description of towns and lands on the northern side of the Danube) written in 845 in Regensburg. This document contains a Latin-language ethnicon for the *Liudi* tribe (see Łowmiański 1986a; 1986b). Somewhat later, we find information about the Ludic-Karelians in a book by a Muslim traveler Ahmed Ibn Fadlán, written in 921–922, which contains a description of a people called *Luud-aana*. It should also be noted that later Russian chroniclers clearly emphasized the ethnic distinctiveness of Ludics and Karelians (Korels); in medieval sources they were called *Luud-aana* (Russian: *луудаана*) or *Ludins* (Russian: *людины*). When Novgorod was founded in 862, one of its outskirts was named *Ludin* (Russian: *Людин конец*) in reference to the Ludic tribe (a mention of Ludin End in a yearbook of 1194); similarly, the term *Nerevski Kraniec* (Russian: *Нере[е]вский конец*) was taken from the name of the Nereva tribe.

The proper name of Olonets Karelians *livvikö*i, by analogy to the proper name of Ludics, seems to be derived from the Russian word *люди* 'a people, a nation'. This term reflects the mutual intensive linguistic and cultural contacts of both the Olonts and the Ludics with the Ruthenians (Laakso 1998; cf. Napol'skih 1997: 14).

[5] See *Geographus Bavarus*. (Online) http://www.idrisi.narod.ru/geo-bavar.htm (access 19.06.2023).

The ethnogenesis of Karelians

The modern ethnonym *Karelia* (Karelian: *Karjala*, Finnish: *Karjala*, Russian: *Карелия*, cf. colloquial: *Карьяла*) most likely comes from the name of the *Karjala* tribe or from the name of the *Korela* fortress[6] (Old Russian: *Корѣла*, Finnish: *Käkisalmen linna*, Karelian: *Käksalm*, modern Russian: *Prioziorsk*), currently located outside the country, within the borders of the Leningrad Oblast, which was in the past the tribal and then administrative center of Korels. The name *Korela* (Old Russian: *Корѣла*) is confirmed by entries in Old Russian chronicles. Korela was one of the oldest Balto-Finnic tribal communities. Based on linguistic data, it was found that the beginning of the formation of the tribal languages of the oldest groups of Baltic Finns dates back to the mid-1st millennium BC (Aristè 1956: 15, 21, 22). Scholars have been making attempts to clarify whether modern Karelians should be identified with this ancient tribe. However, it is known that the Karelians were formed later, as a result of complex mutual influences of ethnic tribes – mainly Korels and Ves (Bubrih 1947; Bubrih 1949: 49–50). Medieval Korelians inhabited the lands north of the Ladoga. Their neighbors to the north were Tawasts (Häms, Finnish: *Hämäläiset*), with whom Korels had to mingle undoubtedly (which has been proven by archaeological discoveries). North of Korela, there were the lands of the Saami people (according to the chronicles – the *Lopi*). It should also be recalled that in the 17th century, a large part of the today's territory of Karelia consisted of the so-called 'Lop pogosts' (Russian: Лопские погосты).

The problem of the ethnogenesis of Karelians (Karelian: *karjalazet*, *karjalaiset*, *karjalaižet*, *kariealazet*, *karielaizet*) has been widely discussed for a long time, but scholars have not clarified this issue finally. Linguists, archaeologists, historians, and paleoanthropologists (craniologists) still have been trying to solve the intriguing mystery of the origin of this ethnos (Hartanovič, Širobokov 2010). There are many, often controversial, hypotheses about the ethnic formation of Karelians (cf. Bubrih 1947; 1949; 1971; Hajdú 1971; Kočkurkina 1981; 2003; 2004; Savvateev 1983 et al.). According to one of them, Karelians constituted the majority of the population of Biarmeland (*Biarmii*, Norwegian: *Bjarmeland*, Finnish: *Bjarmi*, Russian: *Биармия*, *Биярмия*, *Бьярмаланд*), a historical land located in the north of Europe, known from the Icelandic sagas (these are probably the today's areas of the Arkhangelsk region, in the northern Dvina basin, on the White Sea coast (Kočkurkina 2003)). It was assumed that, after the fall of Biarmeland, Karelians began to move west and south, towards lakes Onega and Ladoga and the Gulf of Finland. Interestingly, it is in these areas that toponyms of Karelian provenance can be found (Hajdú 1971: 280).

At the beginning of the 20th century, Finnish studies were dominated by theories about the West Finnish origin of Korels (Karels), identified as direct descendants of the Häme (Tawasts) tribe, described in Russian sources as емъ, probably living in the first millennium CE in the historical lands of Intermarium (Setälä 1926; cf. Setälä 1892; Aristè 1956; see also Tanner 2007). These tribes were said to have migrated east and assimilated or displaced the Aboriginal peoples (see Žerbin 1956; Šaskol'skij 1979; Kočkurkina 1982: 7). The theory was questioned by Finnish archaeologists (including

[6] The then Karelian form of this name is unknown.

Europaeus 1859; Nordman 1924; Tallgren et. al. 1938; Kirkinen et al. 1994); in fact, it was not properly documented. Carl Axel Nordman (1924) put forward a thesis that Karelians were formed as a result of mixing eastern and western elements, and their culture differed significantly from the West-Finnish culture already in the first millennium CE. Nordman rejected a belief, popular among Finnish researchers, that the Viking expeditions contributed to a significant revival of the Karelian culture of that period. He tried to force the view that in fact the effect was the opposite: the development of the Korelian land (Korela) in the 12th–16th centuries took place exactly when the expeditions ceased, while Novgorod was supposed to have a positive impact on the Karelian community (Nordman 1924: 182–196).

Some Finnish historians, including Heikki Kirkinen, express the view that all archaeological, linguistic and historical data clearly contradict the thesis about the western participation of the Hämesian (Tawastiac) element in the development of the then Korela (Kirkinen et al. 1994). Kirkinen also assumes that Korela was formed only in the 11th–12th centuries. Russian researchers, in turn, think that the consolidation of the Koreli tribe took place already in the first half of the first millennium CE (Žerbin, Šaskol'skij 1976: 37; Šaskol'skij 1979: 44).

Alternative views were developed in Soviet scholarly literature, which suggested the ethnic unity of the Karelian people and its autochthonity in the area of the Karelian and Olonets Intermarium (Gadzâckij 1940a).

The cluster of the most important historical monuments of the former Korela is located in the north-western Przyladozhe and in the south-east of Finland. Scientists assume that these tribes must have inhabited a much larger area (Kočkurkina 1982). The main archaeological center of the Karelian Isthmus covers the period of the flourishing of the ancient Korelian culture, i.e. the 12th–15th centuries CE. Unfortunately, due to too sparse source data, it is not fully possible to trace the earlier stages of the Karelian ethnogenesis in detail; and many problems have not been investigated at all. The issue of the time frame for the formation of the Korelian community still has been a subject of discussion among scholars. Many researchers assume that the Korelian community was a rather late ethnic formation formed in the 11th–12th centuries in the Intermarium area. Svetlana Kochkurkina (Kočkurkina 1982: 13) undermines this thesis, because – as she claims – the data regarding earlier eras do not allow for a clear resolution of this issue and marking the exact time period in which the consolidation of the Karelian ethnos took place. Aleksandr Saksa (Saksa 2001a, b) assumes that the appearance of settlements in Przyladozhka Karelia, which determined the flourishing of the medieval Korelian culture, is only partially a result of the mutual contacts with settlers coming from western Finland, and the beginning of the formation of the nation in Karelia and eastern Finland falls in the mid-first millennium CE. The questions of the direction from which the Finno-Karelian Intermarium was settled down and the identity of its inhabitants remain unanswered.

The thesis about the settlement of the Karelian Isthmus from the east was formulated in the 1930s by the Soviet archaeologist Vladislav Ravdonikas, on the basis of archaeological materials from the burial mounds of the Olonets Intermarium. Ravdonikas assumed that the Korela tribe lived in eastern Przyladozhe until the end of the 11th century, and also in north-western Przyladozhe (Karelian Isthmus) at the end

of the 11th–12th centuries (Ravdonikas 1930: 6–7, 25; 1940: 11). This was supposed to indicate the relatively late crystallization of the Karelian ethnos. Unfortunately, archaeological materials did not confirm these hypotheses.

In the mid-20th century, Dmitry Bubrich, based on the collected factual material, put forward a linguistic concept of the ethnogenesis of Karelians. He assumed that small nomadic, ancestral and tribal groups of the Saami contributed to the creation of the Old Russian state on the Karelian Isthmus. The beginning of the formation of Korela itself was, in his opinion, at the time of the formation of the Russian statehood. Bubrich maintained that the Korelians were formed as a result of intra-regional mutual influences of peoples belonging to different tribes. He formulated a view that, at the end of the first millennium CE, in southern Przyladozhe, there was Volkhovskaya Chudz – a primeval Balto-Finnic ethnos[7], located near Lake Chudzkie and Novgorod. Part of this tribe was to move to the Karelian Isthmus, where, under the influence of mutual contacts with emigrants from the Häme (Tawasts), it became the nucleus of the Korelian tribe (Bubrih 1947: 23–27; Bubrih 1971: 17–18). The above hypotheses were rejected by contemporary archaeologists. Reasons have been found to believe that the Korel tribe was formed on the west coast of the Ladoga, and its nucleus was the local population.

The Karelian language was undoubtedly among the oldest Balto-Finnic languages. Many linguists associate the beginnings of the Korel tribe with the first millennium CE, as evidenced by a famous Karelian epic (Kuusinen 1950: 11–16). According to Grigory Pankrushev (Pankrušev 1980: 148–149), Karelians were formed from tribes that had long lived in the southern regions of today's Karelia and the southeastern Baltic region, and the ethnonym *Korela* (Finnish: *karjala*, *karjalaiset*, Karelian: *karjalaižet*) is – in his opinion – an ancient ethnonym dating back to the era of reindeer breeding economy (Popov 1973: 83–85). In contemporary science, there is an opinion that the modern population of Karelians is a result of ethnic mixing of the medieval Korelians with other, much smaller in number, peoples of Finno-Ugric origin, such as Ves (part of the Veps), Lopars (Saami), etc., which resulted in (after their prior assimilation) taking over certain specific features of their language and culture (Kettunen 1943).

Kochkurkina dealt in depth with the issue of the origin of Karelians. She proved that this ethnos was formed from local peoples (Kočkurkina 1981: 118–123; Kočkurkina 2004). In her opinion, the people who left cemeteries in the Olonets Isthmus could not participate in the formation of the Korela tribe (Kočkurkina 1973). The issues regarding the formation of the Korela tribe and the Karelian culture in the 12th–14th centuries should be differentiated. The formation of the tribe may have occurred in the first millennium CE. The development of the Karelian culture took place later. According to the cited researcher, there were no significant population migrations. The medieval Karelian culture absorbed clear elements of the Novgorod, Finnish and Gotland cultures.

It is impossible to determine the exact date of the incorporation of the Korel lands into Novgorod. Certainly, in the 12th century, the area they inhabited was already its part. This is evidenced by the information recorded by Russian chroniclers (Napol'skih

[7] These were most likely the ancestors of the settled Veps nation of Karelia.

1997: 15). Mentions of Korels begin to appear regularly in Novgorod chronicles from the 1140s. In 1143, Korelians were privileged allies of Novgorod in plundering expeditions against Häms (Tavasts).

Korela, despite its political dependence on Novgorod and the obligation to take a fief oath, retained a certain separateness. In the 12th–13th centuries, the relations between Novgorod and Korela were, as can be judged from historical records, quite friendly. The Novgorodians were supported by the Korelian tribal aristocracy, which retained the old tribal system. To strengthen Korela, which was under Novogrod's rule, and neutralize the Swedish influence, the Russian knyaz Yaroslav II Vsevolodovich (1191–1246) baptized Korela into the Orthodox order in 1227. It was a culminating moment in the history of this nation – with the adoption of Orthodox Christianity, the process of forming the Karelian nationality, which also included Christianized Veps settled in the Olonets Intermarium, ceased.

Currently, there are virtually no extreme differences of opinion among researchers regarding the main areas inhabited by Karelians in the 12th–14th centuries. Both archaeologists and historians, as well as linguists and folklorists conclude that these were the Karelian Isthmus and the north-western coast of Lake Onega, and the Korela town itself was a tribal center[8]. The cultures of the peoples inhabiting the lands of the southern region of Savonia and Przyladozhka Karelia have certain commonalities. The local people gradually became culturally different from the Karelian Isthmus people. In addition, the distance from the Korelian center, the influence of their western neighbors, and political events (including the peace of Pähkinasaari of 1323) disturbed their eastern relations.

Research results obtained by paleoanthropologists may prove important in resolving numerous controversial issues. These include analyses of the anthropological peculiarities of medieval Korela and the ancestors – the people inhabiting the north of Eastern Europe and the Baltic region, on the one hand – contemporary Karelians, on the other hand – other peoples close to the modern Finnish-speaking nations. Recently, scientists have had access to medieval craniological material collected in the area of Przyladozhe and throughout Karelia. Over the last decades, representative craniological material has been collected and studied regarding relatives of the contemporary (i.e. 18th – early 19th century) Finnish-speaking nations, including: the first series of Karelian skulls from the basic area of their present settlement. In 2006–2007, a number of exhumations were carried out in the Kylälahti Kalmistomäki archaeological complex, which resulted in a discovery of a burial inventory typical of both Karelia and eastern Finland, as well as of the north-west. The first paleoanthropological material regarding ancient Korela was obtained. Thus, it was possible to prepare an anthropological characterization of the local population from the 12th to 14th centuries CE. In both groups – of medieval and contemporary Karelians – their anthropological identity and the presence of a specific set of craniological features were revealed, distinguishing

[8] It should be clarified that, based on a toponymy analysis, it is possible to determine the area of Karelians' settlement and the prehistoric directions of their migration. The Saami toponyms revealed in northwestern Przyladozhe are very old, and the main layer is Karelian. Toponyms of Slavic origin are much later.

them from other peoples close to them from the modern material base (craniological series) from the areas of Eurasia. The closest analogues of this complex are found only in the Mesoneolithic population of the eastern Baltic region. The craniological series from Kylälahti Kalmistomäki confirms the hypothesis of the conservation of specific anthropological properties of the oldest European people in southwestern Eurasia until the present day (Hartanovič, Širobokov 2010).

Contemporary Karelians

The name *Karelia* causes a lot of confusion due to the existence of two territorially (state-wise), historically and politically separated areas – the so-called Finnish Karelia (Finnish: *Suomen Karjala*) and Russian Karelia (Finnish: *Venäjän Karjala*, i.e. *Itä-Karjala* 'Eastern Karelia'). Eastern Karelia is part of the Russian Federation, since 2000, as part of the Russian Northwest Federal District, it has constituted the Karelian Republic with its capital Petroskoi (Russian: *Petrozavodsk*). In practice, however, its autonomy is quite limited.

Nowadays, we have an opportunity to observe the mutual linguistic and cultural competition between Finns and Russians for the integration with Karelians – a national minority of Finno-Ugric origin living in the bordering areas of Finland and Russia. Politically, Karelia is still a disputed territory – until the times of Peter I, due to the centuries-long occupation by Swedes, it belonged to Finland, and, then, it was annexed by Russia (on the way it was under the influence of Kievan Rus, and after its collapse in the 12th century – it was dependent on Novgorod). In fact, Karelia is located on the border of completely different cultures. The ethnically distinct Karelians were strongly influenced linguistically and culturally by Russians (e.g. adoption of Orthodox Christianity, occasional use of the Russian language, annual customs, zoomorphic decorations) and Finns (e.g. Finnish mythology, private use of the Finnish language, also in writing). Finns and Karelians are united by folklore and the national epic that has arisen from its tradition: legends, poems and songs, but above all, the *Kalevali* and *Kanteletar* runes[9]. We cannot forget that Finns took over their cultural heritage, including the Finnish national epic *Kalevala*, from Karelians, drawing abundantly from the oral folk tradition of the inhabitants of the Land of Songs. Apart from the runes, other elements of folklore were widespread in Karelia: lyrical songs, ritual songs (e.g. wedding songs), lamentations, spells, fairy tales (usually about animals), proverbs, riddles, etc. In central Karelia, Finnish choral songs with jocular or love content were performed (see Evseev 1950; Haavio 1979; Litwiniuk 1998). We must also admit that Karelians, having old and rich traditions of folk music, had a strong influence on the development of the music of the neighboring Finns – Jean Sibelius, fascinated by the country, composed the *Karelia* suite. And above all, we cannot forget that Karelians played an important role in the formation of the Finnish language (Hajdú 1971: 279; Wojan 2016a). In general, we can say that there are not many differences between the way of life of Karelians and ancient eastern Finns, but certainly, traces of

[9] At a certain period, Finns perceived Karelian artistic work as a fragment of their own, i.e. Finnish literature.

the material culture and folk traditions in distant Karelia have survived much longer than in western Finland (note that Lönnrot gathered most of the *Kalevali* runes on the Russian Karelia side). Karelians and Russians share similar customs and traditions, and, above all, songs praising heroes (cf. Russian byliny), rhyming songs and songs referring to Russian chastushki. In the first half of the 19th century, the stereotype of Karelians as an extremely lively, cheerful and musical nation was widespread – Zacharius Topelius and Johan Vilhelm Snellman built the Finnish national identity on it. The contact between Finns and Karelians was inextricably linked to the interpenetration of the languages and the creation of a specific cultural community. As Jerzy Litwiniuk aptly notes, *kalevalanmitta* [i.e. the *Kalevala* meter] "tworzyła rodzaj wspólnego języka, pomostu między kulturami, a nawet nośnika synkretyzmu wierzeń religijnych 'created a kind of a common language, a bridge between cultures, and even a carrier of the syncretism of religious beliefs'" (Litwiniuk 1998: 6).

Karelians are one of the most numerous Balto-Finnic peoples, after Finns and Estonians. They mainly live in areas belonging to Russia, the so-called autonomous Republic of Karelia, constituting its indigenous population, as well as in the areas north of the Volga, where they arrived after the peace Treaty of Stolbovo in the 17th century, i.e. in the following oblasts: Tver, Leningrad, Murmansk, Arkhangelsk, Novgorod, as well as St. Petersburg and Moscow. A total of 32,422 people of the Karelian nationality live in the Russian Federation – according to the 2020 census data (completed in 2021), which constitutes only 0.02% of all nationalities (Rosstat 2023). Previous official data from 2010 put the number at 60,815 (Rosstat 2010a). Already then, Karelians constituted less than 10% of the population living in Russian Karelia (see Lehikoinen 1995: 21), while ethnic Finns and Karelians – in total, only one eighth of the population. Therefore, Karelians constitute a relatively small ethnic minority of Karelia (for comparison: the Russians who settled here in 1991 constituted as much as 73.6% of the population). In 2011, it was estimated that approximately 30,000 people constituting the Karelian minority live in Finland (Burtsoff 2015; cf. Sarhimaa 2017: 113). The Karelian population also settled in Ukraine (approx. 2,000 people), Belarus (approx. 1,000 people), Estonia (approx. 1,000 people), and also in Sweden.

An unprecedentedly rapid decline in the number of the Karelian population has been constantly observed since World War II (the main reasons are: Russian settlement in Karelia, strong assimilation processes, mixed marriages, as well as low natural growth, a high wave of economic emigration, and earlier – mass displacement of Karelians). However, it is difficult to determine the exact number of people of the Karelian identity due to the very progressive assimilation; until recently, mainly due to political subordination and strong cultural expansion with the Russians, and at present, more and more intensely with the closely related ethnically and mentally, having a higher social status, Finnish ethnos. Reliable data determination is further complicated by the fact that Finns formally consider Karelians to be people originating from historical Karelia, including the Finns who settled in the territories of the Karelian Isthmus after the Karelian population left it (Wojan 2016c).

Table 1 presents information on the share of ethnic Karelians compared to the total population of the Republic of Karelia in the years: 1926, 1959, 1979, 1989, 2002 and

2010 (data collected on the basis of: Rosstat – a table quoted from: Karjalainen, Puura, Grünthal, Kovaleva 2013 : 31).

Table 1. The share of in relation to the total population of the Soviet Union and Russia.

	1926	1959	1970	1979	1989	2002	2010
Population in total	260,734	651,346	713,389	732,060	790,150	716,281	643,548
Karelians in Karelia	100,781	85,473	84,180	81,248	78,928	65,651	45,570
Share of Karelians, %	38.7	13.1	11.8	11.1	10.0	9.2	7
Urban areas, in total, people	61,017	409,616	490,514	568,388	643,496	537,395	502,217
Karelians, in total	4,753	26,508	37,596	44,708	48,764	35,689	25,828
Share of Karelians, %	7.8	6.5	7.7	7.9	7.6	6.6	5.1
Countryside, in total, people	208,717	241,730	222,935	163,672	146,654	178,886	141,331
Karelians, in total	96,028	58,965	46,584	36,540	30,164	29,962	19,742
Share of Karelians, %	46.0	24.4	20.9	22.3	20.6	16.7	14

Source: Karjalainen, Puura, Grünthal, Kovaleva 2013: 31.

Table 2 contains the latest data on the number of Karelians in the Russian Federation, from the census conducted in 2020 and completed in 2021 (Rosstat 2023).

Table 2. The number of Karelians in the Russian Federation according to the 2020 and 2021 census.

2020 i 2021	Population in total	Karelians, in total, people
In total, people	147,182,123	32,422
Urban areas, in total, people	110,075,322	19,218
Countryside, in total, people	37,106,801	13,204

Own study.
Source of data: Rosstat 2023. (Online) https://rosstat.gov.ru/vpn/2020/Tom5_Nacionalnyj_sostav_i_vladenie_yazykami (access 19.06.2024).

Karelians and Finns

Even a thousand years ago, the ancestors of today's Karelians and the ancestors of today's Finns most likely constituted one Balto-Finnic tribal group, and thus created a specific cultural, linguistic and religious community. External factors, i.e. religious and closely related cultural and political issues, influenced the division of the tribe – a smaller part of the Balto-Finnic tribal group gave rise to the Karelian nation, while the larger part gave rise to the Finnish nation.

The basis for the development of a nationality separate from Finns was the adoption of Orthodox Christianity (Christianization carried out in the Eastern rite) and – as mentioned earlier – the strong and multilateral influence of the Slavic culture, and,

in particular, the Russian culture[10]. After the disintegration of the family community[11] (12th–14th centuries), the process of the consolidation of the Karelian tribes began, which ultimately led to the creation of the Karelian cultural community and the development of the Karelian nationality. The eastern branch of the Karelian-Finnish tribes found themselves under the political and cultural influence of Orthodox Russia, and the western branch of the Catholic and later Lutheran Swedish authorities. Naturally, cultural differences arose between two peoples with common roots, as well as mutual animosity, which turned into reluctance, and sometimes into hostility, lasting until the beginning of the 20th century. When the Swedish state, to which Finland was subordinated, occupied the Karelian Isthmus, most Karelians, fearing the Swedish rule, decided to leave the land of their ancestors and settle down deeply in Russia. The Swedish rule, in turn, was not opposed by the Lutheran Finns[12] (the so-called *Ingras*, Finnish: *inkeriläiset*, *inkerinsuomalaiset*).

Over time, being under the influence of two different cultures, Karelians developed a completely separate nationality and culture. Also, mutual animosity appeared.

Ethnic division of Karelians

Ethnically, Karelians are not a homogeneous group. They are quite diverse both dialectally (some differences in the alphabet are also observed) and culturally, as well as, to a lesser extent, also racially. Therefore, the following subethnoses can be distinguished:

1) Karelians Proper, i.e. White-Sea Karelians (Karelian *karjalaižet*, Finnish: *Vienankarjalaiset*) – the largest group as for the population, inhabiting most of Karelia;
2) Karelians from the Karelian Isthmus and Finnish North Karelia (Finnish: *tytärkarjalaiset*, *saarekekarjalaiset*) – emerged from Karelians Proper after 1617 (a result of mass migrations to north-western Russia; forced to leave the Karelian Isthmus (given to Sweden) and to settle down in the Tver area):
   a) Tver Karelians (Karelian: *Tiverin karielaizet*, fiń. *Tverin karjalaiset*) – speak a variant of the Karelian Proper dialect, considered by most ethnologists to be a separate subethnos due to differences in ethnic traditions,
   b) Valdain Karelians, i.e. Novgorod Karelians (Finnish: *Valdainkarjalaiset*, *Novgorodin karjalaiset*),
   c) Tichvin Karelians (Karelian: *karjalaset*, Finnish: *Tihvinänkarjalaiset*),
   d) Lappees, i.e. Segozer Karelians (Karelian: *lappalaizet*) – descendants of the Finno-Ugric Saami (Lopars) completely assimilated with Karelians (however, they retained their own name), living in the Segozer region; the second group

[10] Throughout the 8th–11th centuries, Karelians maintained active trade contacts with the nearby Slavic nations, as well as with the Volga Bulgarians (furs were exported).

[11] The family system in which these peoples lived is reflected in the Karelo-Finnish epic titled *Kalevala*.

[12] These were people administratively resettled in the 17th century to the Swedish province of Ingria.

of *lappalaizets* inhabits the coast of Lake Saimaa in Finland, the Lappeenranty province;

3) Ingerians (Ingrians, Inkerians) in Ingria (Ingermanland) (Finnish: *inkerikot*) – among them, the Ingrians from the Soikinsky Peninsula area identify with Karelians, even though the Ingerians are perceived as a separate nation (subethnos);
4) Livvis, i.e. Olonets Karelians (Karelian: *lügilaizet*; *karjalazet*, Finnish: *Aunuksenkarjalaiset*, *livviläiset*) – settled down in the south of Karelia, most numerous in the Olonets region (the so-called Olonets Karelia);
5) Ludics (Karelian: *lüüdilaizet*, Finnish: *lyydiläset*) – live in the area of Lake Onega in eastern Olonets (the so-called Onega Karelia);
6) Karelian-speaking inhabitants of Finland, i.e. the so-called Western Karelians (Finnish: *Suomen karjalankieliset*) – inhabiting regions such as South Karelia and North Karelia; closest to Finns in terms of language and culture, and completely assimilated by them; according to ethnographers, they actually became part of the Finnish ethnos, but they call themselves Karelians.

The vast majority of Karelians, in anthropological terms, represent a type of European race – the White-Sea-Baltic subtype with a Mongolian admixture. The so-called Lappees included in the laponoid group of the Uralic type (Piasecki 2021: II: 29).

Karelian ethnolects

Unfortunately, there is no reliable information on the total number of the speakers of Karelian ethnolects. According to the 2010 census of the Russian Federation, 15,000 people used the Karelian ethnolects in the Republic of Karelia (Rosstat 2010b). In turn, in Finland, approximately 5,000 people speak Karelian on a daily basis, approximately 11,000 people have a very good command of Karelian, and 30,000 people belong to the speech community (Sarhimaa 2017: 113; cf. Burtsoff 2015).

Historically, the Karelian language (Finnish: *karjalankieli*) is a continuant of the spoken Proto-Karelian (Finnish: *muinaiskarjala*) from the western part of the Ladoga region. It ranks high in third place in terms of the number of users, after Finnish and Estonian. However, the majority of the ethnic group living in Finnish Karelia speaks the so-called Karelian dialects of Finnish. Displaced people from the so-called Lost Karelia (Finnish: *luovutettu Karjala*), South Karelians and a large group of the inhabitants of the Kymenlaakso region speak southeastern Finnish dialects. North Karelians use eastern Savonian dialects. All these linguistic forms originate from Proto-Karelian and constitute a component of the Karelian culture[13].

In Finland, Karelian has the status of a minority language, which has been guaranteed by the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages since 2009. Paradoxically, however, it does not have the official status of a national minority language, because such a concept (Finnish: *kansallinen vähemmistökieli*) is not recognized by the Finnish law. Currently, Karelian is the only indigenous language in Finland that is not

[13] The issues of the Finnish-Karelian and Prato-Karelian communities were described by Terho Itkonen (1983).

mentioned in the Constitution of Finland or in any legal acts. Today, Karelian is also considered an endangered language (Ethnologue 2024[14]).

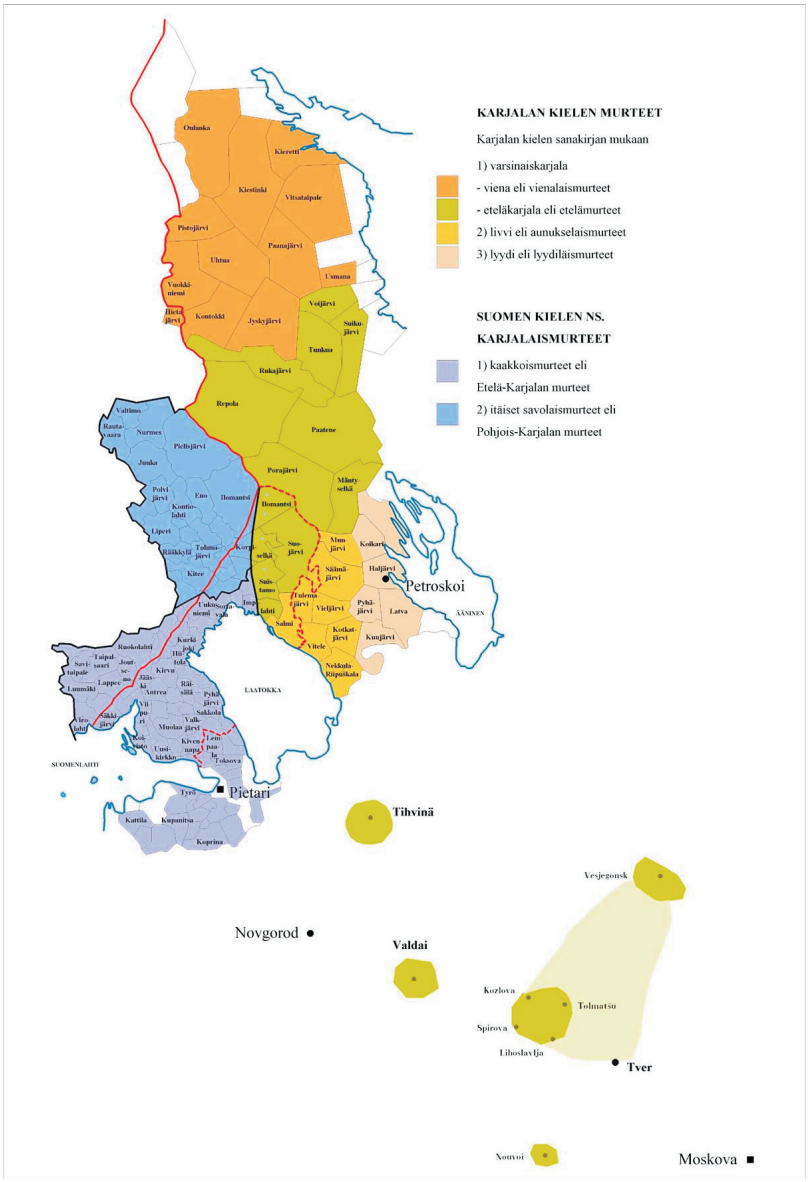
The linguistic situation of the arbitrarily divided Karelia is, as we can see, complex, primarily due to historical entanglements – variable and constantly different nationality, different socio-political influences, various cultural influences, and "non-homogeneous" language policy. The common national heritage of Karelians and Finns is the epic titled *Kalevala or Old Karelian Songs about the old times of the Finnish people* (Lönnrot 1835–1836/1849). This work was created on the basis of various language variants originating from the Land of Songs. The songs were collected and published by a Finnish physician and linguist of Swedish origin, Elias Lönnrot (1802–1884), fascinated by Karelianism. We must not forget that the language of *Kalevala* was Karelian. Another fact of cultural importance is that the first Finnish written monuments (13-th-century Novgorod charters on birch bark) were written in the (Old) Karelian ethnolect (see Wojan 2013; 2015). In fact, Karelian has had a significant influence on the Finnish literary language; it has also influenced the south-eastern dialects of Finnish to a large extent. The bilingualism and trilingualism of the Karelians of Russian nationality is worth emphasizing – almost all of them speak the prestigious Finnish, and therefore the language of their former tribesmen, the songful heirs of the beautiful Karelian runes from the country of Kaleva.

Let us return to linguistic systematization (Torikka 2003). It is extremely difficult to clearly determine whether we are dealing with one (macro)language, a set of languages, different languages, or dialects – Finnish or Karelian. It is also a very delicate issue with political and social overtones. In practice, the eastern Finnish dialects and the Karelian language form a specific dialectal continuum. They all come from the Proto-Karelian language, which existed in the 12th century on the coast of the Ladoga, from where its bearers set off to Savonia (Finnish: *Savo*). Taking into account the relatively large range of significant differences between individual Karelian ethnolects, manifested at the level of structure, phonology, lexis, morphology, and alphabet, many linguists, especially representatives of the Western European school, have proposed treating these dialects as separate Balto-Finnic languages, i.e. Karelian Proper, Livvi Karelian (Olonets, Aunu), Ludic Karelian (Lüdian), Tver Karelian and others. The validity of such systematization is also supported by the fact that the differences among them are greater than, for example, between the systems of the separated Mordvinian languages – Mokshan and Erza. However, Karelian should under no circumstances be identified with the southeastern dialects of Finnish.

The range of the Karelian language and Karelian dialects is shown in Figure 1.

Karelian Proper (Finnish: *varsinaiskarjala*) forms the Karelian linguistic/dialectal continuum together with Olonets (Aunian, Livvi) and Ludic (Lüdian) Karelians. The Karelian language is often identified with the Karelian Proper dialect (see Lytkin 1966; Redei et al. 1975). The dialects of the Karelian Proper ethnolect, especially the White-Sea speech (Lehikoinen 1995: 78), are closest to the Finnish language, more precisely: its southern dialects (Lytkin 1966: 78). The Karelian Proper ethnolect is most similar to the south-eastern Karelian dialects spoken in the area stretching from southern

[14] *Ethnologue*. (Online) https://www.ethnologue.com/language/krl/ (access 20.06.2024).



Legend
Dialects of the Karelian language
1) *varsinaiskarjala* – the Karelian Proper dialect
– *viena (vienalaismurteet)* – the White-Sea/North Karelian dialect (White-Sea dialects)
– *eteläkarjala (etelämurteet)* – the South Karelian dialect (South Karelian dialect)
2) *livvi (aunukselaismurteet)* – the Livvi Karelian dialect (Olonets and Aunu dialects)
3) *lyydi (lyydilaimurteet)* – the Ludic dialect (Ludic dialects)
The so-called Karelian dialects of Finnish
1) *kaakkoismurteet (Etelä-Karjalan murteet)* – south-eastern dialects (dialects of South Karelia)
2) *itäiset savolaimurteet* (*Pohjois-Karjalan murteet*) – southern Savonia dialects (dialects of North Karelia)

Fig. 1. The range of the Karelian language and Finnish Karelian dialects.
Source: Hänninen 2003.

Saimaa to southern Ingria (Ingermanland). They are spoken by the largest group of Karelians. There are two main varieties: the White-Sea ethnolect (dialect), i.e. North Karelian (Finnish: *vienankarjala*, *vienalaismurre*, rarely: *pohjoiskarjala*), whose ethnic representatives live in the areas west of the White Sea coast (in Finland: villages of the Suomussalmi and Kuhmo communes in the Kainuu region), and the South Karelian ethnolect (dialect) (Finnish: *etäläkarjala*, *etäläkarjalainen murre*), spoken by the Karelians settled in the central Republic of Karelia, as well as ethnolects (Finnish: *saarekekarjala*) from the vicinity of larger cities, such as Tver (Tver Karelian, Finnish: *Tverin karjala*), Tikhvin (Tikhvin Karelian, Finnish *Tihvinän karjala*), Valday (Valdain Karelian, Finnish: *valdain karjala*), Novgorod (Novgorod Karelian, Finnish: *Novgorodin karjala*). The first three dialects: Tver, Tikhvin and Valdain, in order to distinguish them from the South Karelian dialects (vernaculars) used in Russian Karelia and Finnish Karelia, are hyperonymically referred to as "Karelian daughters" (Finnish: *tytärkarjala*) and "Island Karelian" (Finnish: *saarekekarjala*) or "island dialects/vernaculars" (Finnish: *saarekiemurteet*). In turn, the Valdai and Novgorod dialects are in fact western dialects of the Tver language. The South Karelian dialect should not be confused with the southeastern dialects of Finnish spoken in Finnish South Karelia. In Finland, the language of White-Sea Karelians has been transformed into a set of local Finnish dialects, as in the Russian territory it has became isolated from the Russian language in some places. The White-Sea ethnolect is used by the inhabitants of the borderland, i.e. the Kalevalan region (Finnish: *Kalevalan piiri*). The White-Sea speech does not differ much from the southern vernaculars (dialects) of the Finnish language, which favors mutual communication between White-Sea Karelians and Finns (Kunnas 2006: 234).

The most significant ethnolect among the South Karelian ethnolects is Tver (see Golovkin 2006), with at least 23,000 speakers. It is a generational language. In Finnish studies, it is considered an autonomous language due to its considerable differences from the northern Karelian dialects. It has three territorial dialects. Unlike most Karelian languages/dialects, Tver, thanks to its long-term isolation, has retained its most archaic form, closest to Proto-Karelian (Finnish: *kantakarjala*). It is characterized by slight influences by Vep, mainly at the lexical level.

The Tikhvin Karelian (Finnish: *tihvinänkarjala*, *Tihvinän murre*) has about 2,000 speakers (see Kuzmin 2006). Finns understand it "so so", but some linguists tend to consider its current form as a separate language/ethnolect (see, i.a., Kunnas 2006). Because Tikhvin Karelians (Finnish: *Tihvinän karjalaiset*) have lived in isolation for over four centuries, their language has developed independently of other Karelian dialects (Râgoev 1977; 1980; 1993; Râgoev 2003). We can conclude that this ethnolect has survived because its native speakers have had relatively little contact with other nations and languages. This fact is reflected in the language – in phonology, morphology, lexis. The specific Tikhvin pronunciation concerns, among others: words such as *jaaho* 'flour' (also *jauho*), *haagi* 'a pike' (also *haugi*), *mändii* 'we went' (also *mendii*). Another phonetic and phonological feature is lenition (weakening of articulation) of sounds or their disappearance in an utterance. The Tikhvin variety is characterized by old Karelian lexis, e.g. *kiugua* 'a stove' (cf. Finnish: *kiuas*); *min´n´a* 'a daughter-in-law' (cf. Finnish: *miniä*); *virzi* 'a song' (cf. Finnish: *virsi*); *azie* 'a thing, a matter' (cf. Finnish:

asia). The ethnolect has a specific vocabulary not found in other dialects, e.g. *joolu* 'there is no' (cf. Finnish: *ei ole*), *potokka* 'a well' (cf. Finnish: *kaivo*), *broni* 'a crow' (cf. Finnish: *varis*), *peittyä* 'to bury' (cf. Finnish: *haudata*) (examples from: Râgoev 1977; 1980; Riagoev 2003).

Livvi Karelian (Olonets Karelian, Aunu Karelian) (Finnish: *aunuskarjala*, *aunus*, *livvi*) is treated as both a separate language and a dialect of the Karelian language. It is widespread among the Olonets community, numbering 3,000–5,000 people. In the former Finnish border area, Livvi Karelian was spoken in the areas of Salmi and Suojärvi. This is also where the Aunu displaced people come from. Their descendants still remember their native language. On the basis of the Livvi dialects, both in Finland and in Russia[15], the Livvi literary language has been developing. From the perspective of diachronic linguistics, the Livvi language resembles a more Karelized Vep linguistic form. Therefore, it causes some problems for Finns regarding its understanding by them (Lytkin 1966: 78; Râgoev 1993: 64). However, the southern dialects of Karelian Proper (Finnish: *karjalaiskarjala*) are close to Livvi. Olonets Karelian has absorbed the features of the Karelian Proper dialect. It is characterized by a strong voicing of consonants, significant lexical influences by the Russian language, and also has a certain layer of West-Baltic vocabulary, not found in other Karelian languages.

The third important Karelian ethnolect is the Ludic language (Finnish: *lyydi*, *lyydiläismurteet*), once associated with Vep (see Pahomov 2007). However, the thesis put forward by Bubrich about the existence of a mixed Vep-Karelian language in the past (Bubrih 1947) has not been confirmed (Barancev 1975: 5; Tambovcev 2003). The Ludic area is located between the Livvi (Olonets) and Vep areas, which naturally resulted in mutual influences of the ethnolects. Many researchers describe the Ludic (Lüdian) ethnolect as a mixed dialect, due to its Proto-Vep roots with Karelian influences; others (mainly Finnish scholars) recognize it as an independent language of the Balto-Finnic subgroup (Lehikoinen 1995: 23). From the archaeological perspective, the Ludic area has been a separate territory for thousands of years. This language has 3,000 speakers currently (less than one third of the Ludic population). In the south of the Ludic enclave, the Vep language is spoken, and in the western part – Livvi Karelian. Ludic has preserved three basic dialects: North Ludic (Finnish: *pohjoislyydi*) with influences from Karelian Proper (near Kondopoga, Karelian: *Kondupohju*, Finnish: *Kontupohja*), Central Ludic (Finnish: *keskilyydi*) with influences from Livvi (Olonets) and the dialect from the Kuujärvi area (Russian: *Михайловское*), i.e. the Mikhailovsky dialect (Finnish: *Kuujärven lyydi*) with Vep influences. In terms of typology, Ludic is characterized by weaker vocal harmony than other Balto-Finnic ethnolects.

The Karelian language was also used in the past in the vast areas of Finnish Karelia. At the beginning of the 20th century, Karelian-speaking people lived in Finland, on the eastern border in Ilomantsi and Suomussalmi. Currently, as Finnish researchers state with regret, the Karelian language in these areas has been almost completely replaced by the Savonian dialects (Finnish: *savo*), which was probably facilitated by their enormous linguistic proximity (the Finnish Karelian dialects are classified as the Savonian

[15] See Kotimaisten kielten keskus. (Online) http://www.kotus.fi/index.phtml?s=186 (access 29.01.2024). Cf. also Kunnas 2006.

type and the south-eastern group of Finnish dialects). In the Savonia region and North Karelia, the Finnish Savonian dialects are partly derived from Old Karelian (Finnish: *muinaiskarjala*). In North Karelia, a considerable stock of vocabulary derived from the Karelian language has been revealed in the spoken Eastern Savonian dialects. Karelian was also spoken in many north-eastern areas of Karelia, in the area of the so-called Ladoga Karelia (Finnish: *Laatokan Karjala*). Unfortunately, the descendants of the Karelians living in these territories, which, for obvious political reasons, became part of the Soviet Union in 1944, and who were evacuated to Finland, no longer speak the language of their fathers, as they have undergone natural (or rather unnatural, because imposed) assimilation. In the so-called Swedish Karelia, the spoken Karelian language was developed under the influence of the so-called Vyborg Karelian (Finnish: *Viipurinkarjala*), and ultimately, as a group of southeastern Finnish dialects, which are also called Karelian dialects of Finnish. The Vyborg subdialects are divided into two main vernaculars, sometimes called Äyrämöj (Ingrian Finnish) and Savak, although the name Savak is known only on the Karelian Isthmus and in Ingermanland. Speakers of the Äyrämöj dialects live in the areas adjacent to the Gulf of Finland, and the speakers of the Savak dialect live in the areas adjacent to Lake Ladoga and the southern shore of Lake Saimaa. The Äyrämöj dialectal group is very close to the Ingrian language, and close enough to the Finnish language, while the dialects of the Savak dialectal group reveal numerous connections with Karelian Proper. The dialects of the Savonian group are also close to the Vyborg dialects.

Linguistic features of Karelian ethnolects

Intralinguistic phenomena determined by extralinguistic contacts were realized at all levels of language. At the phonetic level, the Karelian language borrowed the sounds /f/, /c/, /į/ from the system of the Russian language. Moreover, the influence of Russian accounts for the strong palatalization of consonants, especially in the Karelian Proper dialect (Tikhvin and Kalinin Karelians). A number of word-formation suffixes, particles and conjunctions have been borrowed from Russian. Karelian is also rich in later lexical borrowings covering all spheres of life.

During the period of its independent development, the phonological system of the Karelian language moved significantly away from the general Balto-Finnic phonological system. The following features are typical for the modern phonetic system of the Karelian language:

1) voicing of former *k*, *p*, *t* > *g*, *b*, *d* in intervocalic positions and after sonorants;
2) positional palatalization of consonants (e.g. *t–t'*, *d–d'*);
3) quantitative and qualitative alternation of vowels *k*, *p*, *r*, *s*, *š*, *t*, *t'*, *č*, *g*, *d*, *b*, *ž* in the Karelian Proper dialect (e.g. *kk/k*, *lg/ll*, *nd/nn*), quantitative and partly qualitative alternation in the Livvi dialect, and only quantitative alternation in the Ludic dialect;
4) diphthongization of long and tense vowels; in dialects, most formerly long vowels in the first syllable of a word turned into diphthongs: *ā* > *oa*, *ua*, *įa*, np. *mā* 'the

Earth' > *moa*, *mua*, *mįa*; *ō* > *uo*, np. *nuori* 'young'; *ē* > *ia*, *iä*, *ie*, *eä*, np. *piä* 'a head', *pie*, *peä*;

5) triphthongs – are characteristic of Ludic and some vernaculars of the Karelian Proper and Livvi dialects, e.g. *ma-guau* 'he is sleeping', *mu-guoi-ne* 'such', *suai* 'to';
6) change of final sounds *-a*, *-ä* in two-syllable nouns; cf. Finnish: *haapa* 'aspen', Karelian Proper: *huaba*, Livvi *huabu*, Ludic *huab(e)*;
7) vocalic harmony;
8) main stress falling on the first syllable of root words, secondary stress – on subsequent odd syllables, except the last one;
9) freedom of consonant distribution, only /ǯ/, /ŋ/ cannot appear either as the initial or in the final sound of a word.

The characteristic morphological features include:

1) a specific plurality marker *-loi-/-löi-* in dependent cases;
2) syncretism in the subsystems of specific internal and external localizing cases (expressing a place): in the Karelian Proper dialect, the allativus (an internal case meaning the pointing of one object towards another) is coincident with the form of the adessiv (an external case meaning a spatial contact of two objects – the localized object and the locator), and in Livvi and Ludic – the ablative (a case meaning remoteness) with the adessive;
3) Karelian Proper has preserved a subsystem of internal cases of place: the inessivus – a case of being inside something, the elativus – a case meaning the direction of movement from inside an object, the illativus – a case meaning the direction towards the center; in Livvi and Ludic, the elativus coincides with the inessive (see Eliseev 2002: 213).

The root morpheme is characterized by complex inflectability. All words have a stem on a vowel, but there is a group of words that have a root morpheme also on a vowel; these are the so-called double-theme words, e.g. *šammal* 'moss' – *šammale-n* (genetivus sing.) – *šammal-da* (partitivus sing.).

The exchange of consonant clusters within the root morpheme (radical alternation) is characteristic of the Karelian language. A quantitative alternation includes: *kk: k*, *pp : p*, *tt : t*, *t't' : t'*, *čč : č*, *rr : r*, *ss : s*, *šš : š*, np. *pakkuan* 'I ask' : *pakota* 'to ask', *očča* 'a forhend' : *očan* 'of a forehead' (genetivus sing.), *vuašša* 'an acid' : *vuašan* 'of an acid' (genetivus sing.). Examples of a qualitative alternation include: g : Ø, e.g. *vägi* 'power' : *viän*, *väin* (genetivus sing.); *g* : *v*, np. *ruga* 'resin' : *ruvan* 'of resin' (genetivus sing.); *ld : ll*, np. *šilda* 'a bridge' : *šillalla* (adessivus sing.).

Vowel alternation in particular cases is done through a change of vowel, e.g. *vuoži* 'a year' : *vūešša* 'in a year' (inessivus sing.).

The Karelian language is an agglutinative language. However, as a result of important changes that have taken place in it, inflection plays an enormous role.

In Karelian, there are analytical ways of expressing grammatical meaning (compound verb tenses, post-positional constructions, gradation).

Among the grammatical meanings, the following categories are expressed: number, cases, person, comparative, superlative, tense, modality and possession.

Karelian does not have a grammatical gender. Among pronouns, it uses an opposition between the animate (human) and the inanimate (non-human).

The grammatical number of names is expressed by the opposition of singular and plural forms. The meanings of cases (partiality/totality of the subject, object and predicates, spatial-temporal relations, possession, state, measure and degree, purpose and cause, manner, instrumentality, commonality of action, etc.) are expressed using case formants. Prepositions and postpositions help to expand the meanings of cases. In most dialects, possessiveness is expressed using the genitive form of a name or a personal pronoun.

Karelian does not have the categories of voice and aspect. It does not have the categories of definiteness and indefiniteness either.

There are fifteen paradigmatic cases of names in total, and two infinitive forms of verbs.

The linguistic situation in Russian Karelia

It is regrettable to say that Karelian, despite being the language of the indigenous people inhabiting the autonomous Republic of Karelia, which is part of the North-Western Federal District of Russia, has not obtained the status of an official language yet (in Soviet times, Finnish was established as an official language alongside Russian). Although Karelian has a certain privileged position in education, it is very unstable, which is an obvious result of the long-term and planned Russification policy implemented by the Moscow-based government. The Vep language – the language of the autochthons living in the regions of south-eastern Karelia – is in an identical situation. These circumstances are incomprehensible and difficult to accept by contemporary Europeans, because many nations living in areas that were granted a certain – in fact, severely limited – autonomy, and located within the borders of the current Russian state, and speaking one of the languages of their Finno-Ugric ancestors have officially received the opportunity to formally use their own language at the level of offices as well as research and educational institutions.

It should be emphasized that the Karelian language did not have a literary form or its own writing until recently; there is no periodization of literary language. It took a long time to develop a single literary form of Karelian, until the 1980s, which immediately resulted in the development of Karelian writing in the Latin alphabet (spelling rules and additional letters were borrowed from the Finnish alphabet). Initially, two variants of the literary language were designed: one based on the Olonets dialect (Livvi, Aunu), and the other – on the actual Karelian dialect. However, the formation of the Karelian literary language on the basis of the Karelian Proper dialect is fraught with too many and significant dialectal differences (Lehikoinen 1995: 24). The development of one common literary form of the Karelian language was inextricably linked to the creation of new scientific, journalistic and literary vocabulary, etc. However, it is not infrequent that Finnish is treated as the official form of the Karelian language. It is also worth mentioning that the words of the official anthem of Karelia were written in Finnish – as one of two language versions, next to the Russian version (functioning as long as the Russian version was being imposed as the obligatory one). Definitely, Finnish is still treated by native Karelians as a language of higher culture and a language

of high social prestige (Finnish: the so-called *sivistyskieli*), which is probably helped by the fact that since 1917 – with breaks – education was conducted in Finnish, alongside Russian.

In the past, however, there were, though few, written documents in the Karelian language written in the Cyrillic alphabet. The oldest Karelian writings come from the 11th–13th centuries – they are the so-called Novgorod charters on birch bark (see Wojan 2013; 2015; 2016a): charter no. 590 dated 1066, which mentions the attack of Lithuanians on Korel (Korelians), and (discovered in 1963) charter no. 292, which consists of four lines of conjuring a thunder (Eliseev 2002: 213). Also, specific Karelian runes carved in stone dating back to the 7th-10th centuries, as well as wooden buildings and objects such as calendars, pastorals, etc are known. The Karelian runic writing should not, of course, be identified with the Gothic runes. It should be noted that, due to its small volume, the text of the runes has not been deciphered yet, which means that they are attributed to the Karelian heritage only on the basis of high probability (Wojan 2015; 2016a).

The first printed Karelian-language book was published relatively late – in 1820. It was *The Gospel of Matthew* (*Gerran' miân*"… 1820: 96). In the 1930s, in several dialects, writing was practiced based on Russian grazhdanka, and earlier also on Latin (nearly two hundred titles of translated literature were published (see Râgoev 1993: 64)), a grammar of the Karelian language was published (Bubrih 1937); however, in the era of the cruel Stalinist rule, in the late 1930s, a ban was introduced on publishing in the Karelian language, books were burned, and in 1940[16] the use of Karelian as a literary and official language was completely forbidden, and severe repression was applied against the Karelian intelligentsia. It is therefore not surprising that the Karelian language was replaced by Finnish and Russian in literary works, which resulted in rapid denationalization.

Currently, a Finnish-language press is published in the Republic of Karelia ("Karjalan sanomat", "Carelia" and a children's magazine "Kipinä"), there is a Finnish-language theater in the capital Petroskoi, and many Karelian authors also write in Finnish. The future of the Karelian language – which is extremely sad from the point of view of contemporary Europeans and dynamic identity trends – does not seem bright in the face of its native speakers' linguistic competence decreasing year by year; besides, a large part of the Karelian population is bilingual (due to the supremacy of the Russian language and the huge popularity of Finnish), and the younger generations, unfortunately, no longer know native Karelian at all (which is a result of preschool education and the entire school system held in the Russian language) – it is regrettable to note that only one school offers optional teaching of a southern variant of the Karelian

[16] Riagoev (Râgoev 1993: 64) proposes that the lack of interest among Karelians in the development of literary Karelian, huge dialectal differences and bilingualism are the reasons for the decline of Karelian-language writing, which seems an absurd statement and is contradicted by historical facts. Also, direct and indirect (through the mass media) contacts with representatives of the Karelian ethnos reveal the truth about the practices used by the Soviet authorities towards the Karelian people and their language. Suffice it to recall that in the years 1923–1939 there was a "special purpose camp" on the Solovetsky Islands, where 7.5 thousand people (including scientists and clergy) lost their lives.

language (Lehikoinen 1995: 24)[17]. Fortunately, a kind of national awakening has been observed over the last few decades – Karelian-language primer books and textbooks have appeared, the "Oma Mua" magazine has begun to be published, and a Karelian radio station has started to broadcast Karelian-language programs. The establishment of the Institute of the Karelian and Vep Languages at the Faculty of Baltic Languages at the University of Petrozavodsk (Finnish: *Petroskoi*) in 1992 was a huge success. In the same year, the First National Congress of Karelians, Finns and Veps was held. It was aimed at the guarantee of adequate protection of the national cultural and historical heritage, the fight for granting the status of an official language to Karelian, and the prevention of the decrease in the Finno-Ugric population of the country.

Additionally, bilingual lexicography is being intensively developed. Extensive dictionaries are created; published so far, among others: *Русско-карельский словарь* by Grigory N. Makarov (Makarov 1975) and an extensive, 522-page work with approximately 20,000 entries – *Sanakirja suomi-karjala* by Lyudmila Markianova and Raija Pyöla (2008). Finns have a large share in researching and archiving ethnolects, having developed and digitized, among others, the six-volume *Karjalan kielen sanakirja* (Torikka 2009).

Two (Russian vs. Finnish) language policies – a summary

The Karelian language is used in two politically and culturally separated areas – in eastern Finland and in the northern part of the Russian Federation (the (autonomous) Republic of Karelia). Different geopolitical and administrative conditions result in incompatible language policies regarding its status in both countries, its presence in education at various levels, and the development of writing (belles-lettres, scientific literature, journalism) in the Karelian language. It is also visible in scientific research (undertaken research strategies, perceiving Karelian as: a) a language, b) a set of various dialects, c) Finnish dialects, d) a dialectal continuum; dual attitude towards the Karelian language). The problem of the status of Karelian comes to the fore – both in the official spheres (in neither of these countries is Karelian either an official language or a language of a national minority) and in the social space. Karelian is a language of a large ethnic community that also uses other languages on a daily basis (therefore, bilingualism and even trilingualism have developed). On the one hand, it is an endangered language, and, on the other hand, it is developing thanks to the cultivation of literature and the use of dialects at home (a contact-at-home language). The bilingualism/trilingualism of Russian Karelians has a negative impact on the process of developing the Karelian language and the development of its good competence.

An analysis of the actual status of the Karelian languages in Finnish Karelia and Russian Karelia leads to the conclusion of non-homogeneity of the language policies of Finns and Russians. With regard to the territory administratively belonging to Finland, we can even observe the imperfection of this policy, with a certain amount of apparent disregard on the part of Finnish researchers towards Karelian matters, and, above all,

[17] After 1917, teaching in the Karelian language existed in Tver Karelia.

the failure to assign the status of a national minority language in Finland to Karelian, because the Finnish law does not provide such a concept (Finnish: *kansallinen vähemmistökieli*) (see Sarhimaa 2017). In Finland, the issues of the Karelian language and its native speakers remain marginalized and even passed over in silence – in everyday social discourse, the Orthodox Church, large media, in school teaching and teaching materials, in legislation, as well as in scientific research (see Sarhimaa 2017). Suffice it to mention that the first monograph on the Karelian-speaking Finnish Karelians was published only at the end of August 2017; this work is titled *Vaietut ja vaiennetut: Karjalankieliset karjalaiset Suomessa* [Silent and silenced: Karelian-speaking Karelians in Finland] by Anneli Sarhimaa. For years, the Karelian theme was not only unnoticed in Finland, but also silenced (as reflected in the title of the mentioned monograph). It is also significant that currently the Karelian language is not taught in Finland, either at the stage of pre-school or school education (Kielipoliittinen ohjelma 2022: 55).

Two different language policies are being implemented – Finnish and Russian – in relation to individual Karelian speech communities living in historically separated territories. However, both leave much to be desired. The linguistic situation of linguistic and cultural communities, arbitrarily polarized by administrative coercion, is complicated. Today, however, in the Republic of Karelia, in the era of resurgent Russian imperialism, it is becoming more and more difficult. Repression is also expected.

In Finland, in turn, although recently we can observe a number of favorable political, cultural and scientific activities of Finns with regard to Karelian, and some signs of care for its development (writings, dictionaries, research, recording dialects), there is an officially conducted language policy. However, it does not include the Karelian language, as it does the Saami languages, Romani, Swedish, and the language of the Deaf (see Sarhimaa 2017). Nevertheless, in Finland – it is worth noting – Karelians are a much more numerous ethnos than the Saami. We can therefore talk about unequal treatment. The Karelian language is an indigenous language of Finland and – as some scholars point out – Karelian has been spoken there for as long as Finnish (Sarhimaa 2017).

The above is related to such basic issues as the creation of a literary language norm (the problem of the existence of two parallel Karelian literary languages, the choice of the dialect that will be the basis of literary Karelian), and the systematization of the Karelian ethnolects. There is no unanimity among researchers (Finnish, Russian, Karelian-Russian, Estonian, Western European) regarding the aspect of the genetic classification of the Karelian language. There are different opinions on fundamental issues: are we dealing with one (macro)language, a set of languages, different languages or dialects – Finnish or Karelian? These problems have a political basis. The situation of the Karelian dialects/languages is, in general, complex. A certain ratio of superiority of Finnish over Karelian ethnolects comes to the fore here. Taking into account the relatively large range of significant differences between individual Karelian ethnolects, manifested at the level of structure, phonology, lexis, morphology, as well as the alphabet (Latin vs. Cyrillic), many linguists, especially the representatives of the Western European school, propose treating these dialects as separate Balto-Finnic languages, i.e. Karelian Proper, Livvik (Olonets, Aunu), Ludic (Lüdian), Tver and others. Yet, Finnish researchers often do not share this opinion.

While the policy of Finns can be currently perceived as supporting Karelian, the direction of the policy represented by the Russian authorities is not actually aimed at a linguistic and cultural support of the Karelian ethnos.

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