

Inspired & following the article *COMMENTARY ON WIIK'S THEORY AND INSERTION OF THE BOAT-PEOPLE EXPANSION EVENT OF AROUND 10,000-6,000 BC*
Published in *Fenno-Ugristica* #25, University of Tartu, Tartu, 2003, page 242

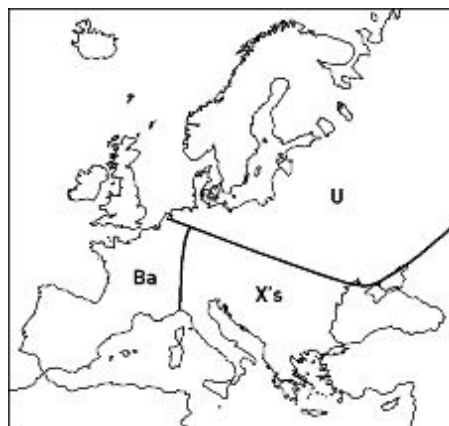
This article below expands from the author's original article that only responded to Wiik's 1999 article EUROPE'S OLDEST LANGUAGE in which Wiik argued that Finno-Ugrian languages may originally have been spoken by the whole of northern Europe. In that article, he also made some proposals of other major language families, notably Indo-European, occupying the remaining southwest and southeast sections of Europe. In the 2000's Wiik wrote more articles. The following responds more generally to all of Wiik's work, and the controversies he caused. There is no intention in this article to comment in detail

T COMMENTARY ON WIIK'S THEORY AND INSERTION OF THE BOAT-PEOPLE EXPANSION EVENT OF AROUND 10,000-6,000 BC
by Andres Pääbo

INTRODUCTION

Recently, a theory of the origins of the "Uralic" languages has been advanced by Finnish linguistic scholar Kalevi Wiik. His theory has been the subject of much controversy in Finland and Estonia in 2002 as a result of his publicizing it in book form. The theory has been presented in English previously in smaller articles, including the following map. (from web article at lib.helsinki.fi/bff/399/wiik.html)

KALEVI WIIK'S THEORY



Wiik's Map 1

European language distribution at the climax of the Ice Age and the following period, 23,000 to 8,000 BC
(Ba = Basque, U = Uralic, X's = unknown languages)

The map above deals with the earliest period after the Ice Age. It greatly oversimplifies the actual situation and the boundaries are open to question. The first "Uralic" peoples would have been reindeer hunters, and that means if the "Uralic" peoples began with reindeer hunters in the tundra, their location would have covered the entire range of tundra south of the glaciers. I have added some text and arrows

to a base map showing Europe in the Ice Age, more realistically. Wiik proposed that major language families were already subdivided in three portions as a result of there having been three Ice Age “refuges” according to archeology – Iberia, Ukraine, and Balkans. His next map suggests the major divisions took the following form.



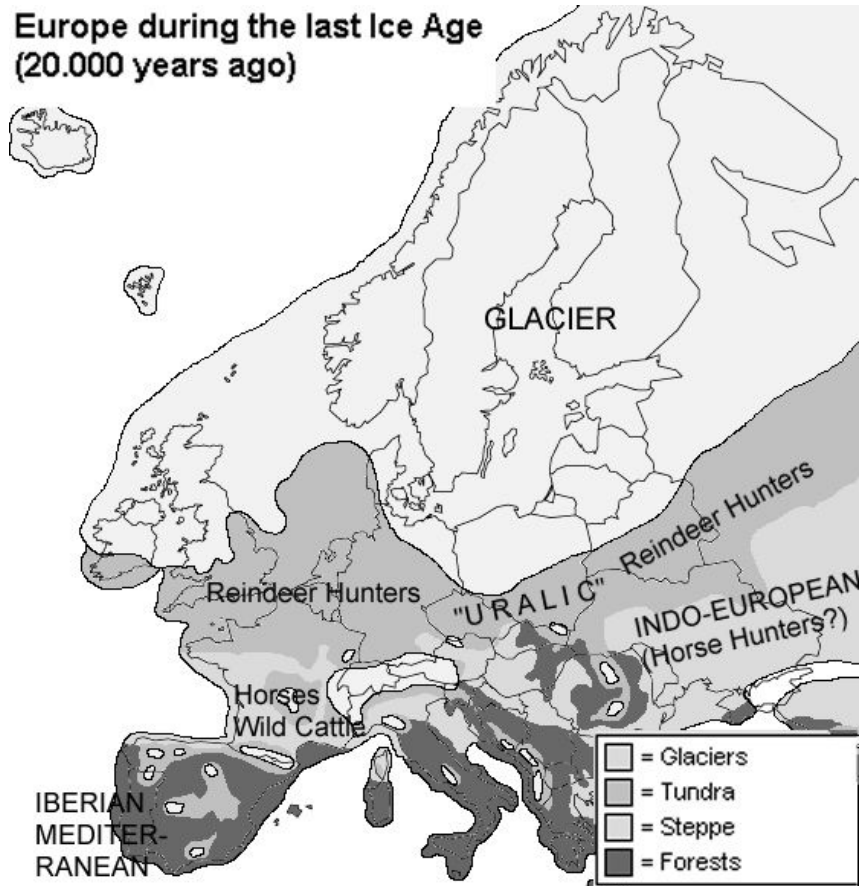
Wiik's Map 2

By 5,500 BC speakers of the small languages of central and southern Europe have adopted animal husbandry and the Indo-European language (Ba = Basque, IE = Indo-European, U = Uralic)

I disagree with Wiik’s approach, because I don’t think the first linguistic differentiation occurred simply as a result of the separation between three “refuges” but rather between different ways of life. You see humans in the different locations dealt with different environments and animals, and when different ways of life are followed, they do not encounter each other. Furthermore, if we are speaking of divergence in way of life preceding divergence of language, then that situation continues insofar as people who have adopted a different way of life, will continue to do so, even when the climate changes. As the Ice Age retreated, reindeer hunters would have moved northwards as the tundra and reindeer shifted northward. Similarly tribes that specialized in steppes and plains, and hunted horses, and other animals of those environments, would follow those animals when those animals shifted as the grassy plains and steppes shifted eastward. Thirdly there were the tribes who originally lived in forested locations, and who generally remained towards the south, living in forests.

This, in my view is the true origins of the early divergence. Whatever way of life was followed, would continue, and that would continue the separation for millenia. The northern peoples, who may have begun hunting other tundra animals like mammoths, became dedicated to hunting reindeer for millenia, and this way of life separated them from the horse-hunters and auroch-hunters in other environments. The horse hunters had to follow the steppes and horse herds towards the east, and they became the origins of the Indo-European language family. Elsewhere towards the south, at the borders of steppes and forests, auroch hunters eventually domesticated cattle, and they produced the Mediterranean cultures that worshipped the bull and mother goddess. I consider that linguistic branch to be “Iberian” because that is where the worship of bulls has endured (in Spain). The Iberian language, from some examples of it, has been determined to not be related to Basque, so Wiik made a mistake in calling that branch “Basque”. The Basques of today probably originated from seagoing people, and may have a distant origins in northern skin-boat peoples.

The following map illustrates the three major divisions – Uralic reindeer people, Indo-European horse people, and Iberian-Mediterranean cattle people.



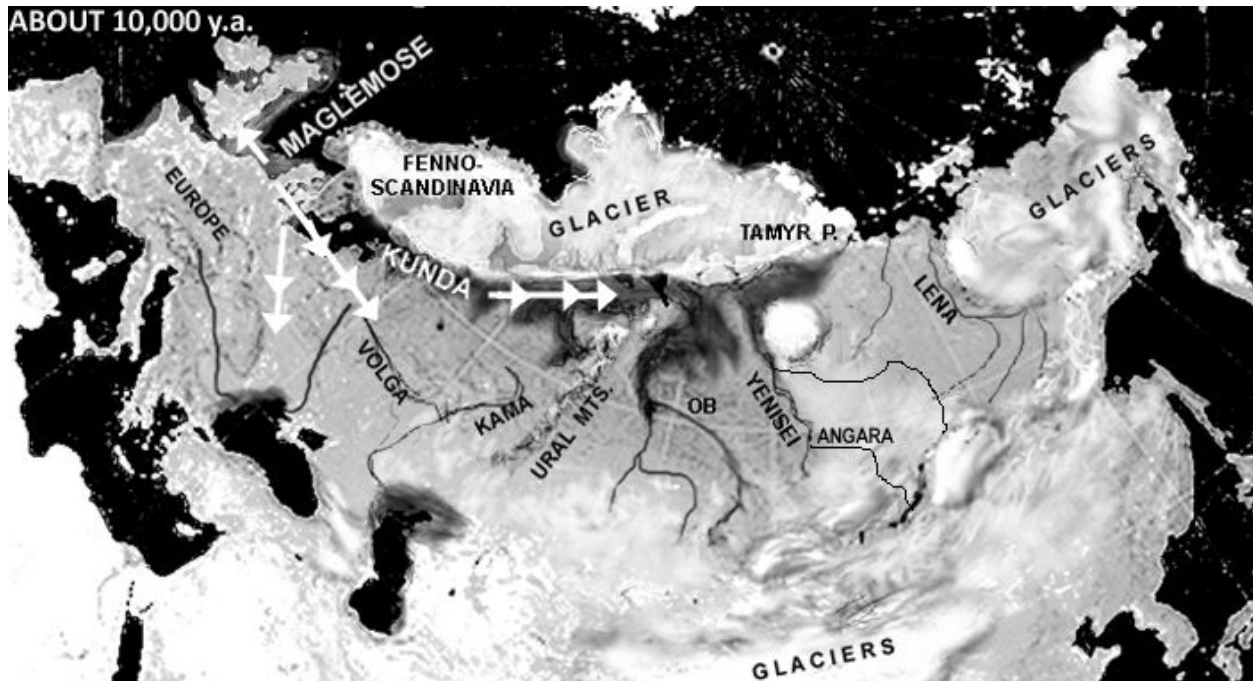
From 20,000 years ago to about 12,000 years ago, the climate warmed, and the glaciers shrunk. Where there had not been any glaciers, there had been polar cold towards the north, and these areas had been uninhabitable. Climate warming thus not only melted the glaciers but also warmed the polar regions enough to make them habitable for animals like reindeer.

THE SUDDEN WARMING TO A MODERN CLIMATE AROUND 10,000 YEARS AGO

Wiik's later articles treated the entire "Uralic" area as if it contained the "Finno-Ugric" languages. But the the "Finno-Ugric" languages and culture are filled with mythology and imagery associated with boat use and wetlands. It suggests the Finno-Ugric cultures and languages emerged from the reindeer hunter cultures when the climate warmed rapidly and the reindeer tundra disappeared. This is indeed what archeology has found: In the region of Denmark, and Germany, the "Ahrensburg Culture" of reindeer hunters died and gave rise to the "Maglemose Culture" of people with boats and a boat-oriented way of life. Archeology has recorded a warming from Ice Age to modern conditions in less than a millenia. Population genetics has discovered a sudden drop in genetic diversity which suggests a catastrophic sudden drop in population. Towards the east, about the same time or a little later, there was the "Swiderian Culture" in the region now Poland. While the reindeer herds could reach further north, they were doomed too. Imagine conditions as warm or warmer than today. We do not find reindeer today south of the tundras along the arctic coast. Imagine that this happened suddenly. Large numbers of reindeer must have dies. Small herds and individual reindeer can survive in open northern woodlands. They are called 'woodland reindeer'. Thus the former reindeer hunters could convert to hunting large individual reindeer, as well as moose and elk. But since the landscape was filled with glacial meltwater, the most successful way of life was the one developed by the "Maglemose" Culture, The "Kunda Culture" of the east Baltic coast, apparently a descendant culture of the "Swiderian Culture", appears to have

adapted a way of life with boats, to hunting in the Baltic sea. This is suggested by finds of large harpoons that could only have been used to hunt seals and whales.

The following map portrays that time period.



This map above, shows how flooded northern Europe was around 10,000 years ago after the world climate became, within less than a millenium even warmer than today, so fast half the original glaciers were still unmelted. The information added to the map include the locations of the “Maglemose” and “Kunda” cultures, arrows suggesting the expansion of these boat peoples and their language (which we propose was the “Proto-Finno-Ugric”). In this region, the original reindeer hunters would only have continued their original way of life toward arctic Siberia such as the Tamor Peninsula. Genetic information says however that Asian reindeer peoples went north at the Urals too, and then migrated west when the glaciers were gone and the arctic coast became like it is today. After this time there would have been a millenium or two more of melting glaciers and glacial lakes and seas

My investigations of the boat peoples documented at www.paabo.ca/uirala/index.html was what prompted my original commentary which I originally placed on my website. My intention was to add to Wiik’s work the identity of the Finno-Urians as boat peoples. It was my emphasis on boat peoples arising from Maglemose and Kunda cultures, that drew the interest of Ago Künnap, editor of University of Tartu’s *Fenno-Ugristica* in 2003, who asked me if it could publish it in an issue of the theme reindeer people and boat people. My article is now some 13 years old, and has some details that I have since revised, so I no longer offer it. Current articles are more up-to-date.

INTERACTION BETWEEN THE FINNO-UGRIC BOAT PEOPLES AND REINDEER PEOPLES

Even though the European reindeer hunters had turned into the Finno-Ugric boat peoples, there was another source of reindeer people – Asia. Population genetics has found that a y-chromosome N-haplogroup marker moved north as the world climate warmed, one group arriving at the Tamir Peninsula, and the other ending up in northeast Europe and northeast Siberia. These were obviously reindeer hunters because the N-haplogroups are most frequent in reindeer peoples – the Samoyeds of the Tamir Peninsula and the Saami in northern Finland. Those who ended up in northern Finland it is believed came first up the Ural Mountains, and when the large glaciers were gone and the arctic coast tundra had returned, followed the arctic coast to northern Finland. From these migrations, there was diffusion of the

N-haplogroup into the Finno-Ugrians, as a result of the early Finno-Ugrians being highly nomadic boat peoples.

The “Uralic” language family model had to wrestle with the relationship between the original Finno-Ugric languages and that of the Asian reindeer peoples in the east near the Urals, and in the northwest with the Saami. The original interpretation of the “Uralic Family Tree” model was made a century ago when there was very little information to help guide the explanation. Wiik seems to have rejected the traditional notion of a very narrow origin of the Uralic languages, but saw the languages covering a vast region. For a discussion of the interpretation of linguistic information compared to archeological information, please refer to the article: *THE “URALIC” DEBATE: LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS AND ITS INTERPRETATION ARE TWO DIFFERENT THINGS*. That article discusses the archeological and other information further.

The final conclusion is that because the Finno-Ugric boat peoples languages originated from reindeer hunters, it is likely the Asian reindeer hunters probably had a similar language, and linguists saw the similarity and assume they had arisen from the same parent – reindeer people languages across the tundra in the Ice Age. This means, the separation between reindeer people and boat people from a common reindeer people origins, did not occur at the Urals, but where archeology is finding it – in the Maglemose and Kunda cultures. Linguistic methodology can only compare languages. It is not able to determine the history of those languages in terms of geography and history.

Wiik was not interested in reconstructing the early historical events, but the later interactions with peoples arriving in Europe with farming practices. He was convinced the Finno-Ugric languages were the aboriginal hunter-gatherer peoples of northern Europe in the Holocene (after 10,000 years ago) and he, for the first time of any linguist, saw the Finno-Ugric languages extending west as far as Britain. (Which my own studies concluded even earlier. Refer to my accumulated articles at www.paabo.ca/uirala/index.html)

WIIK’S FINNO-UGRIC NORTHERN EUROPE AT THE TIME OF ARRIVAL OF FARMERS

Wiik became focussed on learning about the archeological cultures entering Europe and trying to picture how the Finno-Ugric hunter people responded. Since all the Finno-Ugric language west of the East Baltic has disappeared, obviously all of them have assimilated into the Indo-European languages brought by the farming cultures.

Controversy developed, however, when Wiik tried to determine which modern languages were the result of former Finno-Ugric speakers assimilating into the Indo-European language brought by the ancient Germans. (= “Corded-ware Culture”). Germanic scholars have for a long time puzzled at the seeming existence of a substratum language in German. Wiik suggested it was the remains of the original Finno-Ugric hunter-gatherers. This notion that German was the language arising from original Finno-Ugric speakers converting to this language, and was not pure.

Wiik assumed all northern aboriginal hunter-gatherers had been Finno-Ugric, but my criticism is that if the Finno-Ugric were boat peoples, they were located in lowlands where there were river highways. Highland areas would have contained pedestrian hunters in deciduous woodlands. They were probably remnants of the ancient horse-hunters – those who did not follow horse herds east. The substratum could be their language. Such descendants of horse hunters would have adapted to the deciduous forests and I think burnt forests to create open space for large forest mammals like deer, elk or even wild cattle. I believe that they created the open spaces that set the stage for additional crop farming. They may have been the original Indo-Europeans, and the immigrants from the east, were additional waves of Indo-Europeans, returning from millennia in the east. But this is my theory.

Another implication that the Finno-Ugrians were boat peoples, is that at one time there would have been expansions, not just to the east as far as the Urals, but southeast as well, through the lowlands of the Oder and Vistula. Scholars who have studied it, say that there is plenty of evidence of remnants of Finno-Ugric words in the southward directions between the Baltic and Black Sea.

CONCLUSIONS

It was never my intent to analyze Wiik's work in detail, but rather to celebrate the very attempt to project languages back to the Ice Age, and to speak of Finno-Ugric hunter gatherers, a subject that has rarely been of interest to the academic world. In a broad sense he offered a new correct way of thinking, but in terms of details, there is plenty to debate. Every year more discoveries are made in fields of archeology, population genetics, and culture, that will result in continued revisions and improvements to our reconstructions of the prehistoric past.