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K. Nordqvist[1], V.-P. Herva[2], and S. Sandell[3]
[1]University of Helsinki,
Helsingin yliopisto
Fabianinkatu, 24, Helsinki, 00014, Finland
E-mail: kerkko.nordqvist@helsinki.fi
[2]University of Oulu,
Oulun yliopisto
Pentti Kaiteran Katu, 1, Oulu, 90014, Finland
E-mail: vesa-pekka.herva@oulu.fi
[3]Helsinginkatu, 14, Helsinki, 00500, Finland
E-mail: sarita.sandell@gmail.com

Water and Cosmology in the Stone Age of Northeastern Europe

This paper explores water and watery places as sacred elements among the cultures of the northern boreal zone during the Stone Age, and especially the Neolithic period, through materials deriving from Northwestern Russia and Fennoscandia. The peculiarity and importance of water and certain watery environments, like rivers, lakes, bogs, waterfalls, and rapids, are discussed through depositional practices of material culture, mainly lithic artifacts. Rock-art provides further tools for approaching the topic, not only through its locations in the landscape but also through its motifs, which allow parallels to be drawn to later ethnographical sources and folklore, too. Finally, the paper briefly touches upon the rationality behind making a strict separation between "sacred" and "mundane" when interpreting prehistoric cultural phenomena. Water was integral to human life in many different ways, but bodies of water and watery places could also be threatening and unpredictable. Therefore water would have been an ambivalent element, probably invested with significant cultural meanings in the Stone Age world.

Keywords: *Animism, cosmology, material culture, relational ontology, rock-art, Stone Age.*

Introduction

Water is a sacred element in many cultures and religions and was presumably assigned "special" properties also during the Stone Age. Water is vital to human physiology and metabolism, and as such an everyday necessity, but also associated with danger and death. The element of water was present in various ways in the daily life of Stone Age hunter-gatherers, not least because the hunter-gatherer settlement in our area of interest is generally considered to have been shore-bound. This idea is based on the reasoning that proximity to water was important in terms of subsistence, as well as of transportation and mobility. Subsistence-related activities are usually also considered as an explanation to why certain types of artifacts (such as perforated stones) are found on "too low" elevations, i.e. elevations that were still under water during the estimated time of deposition (Edgren H., 1978: 1, 110). Accidents, such as capsized boats or falling through weak ice, are another common explanation; perhaps the most famous case is the Antrea net find on the Karelian Isthmus (Pälsi, 1920). Also a few whole pots found in lakes and bogs have been explained this way (Edgren T., 1982: 44).

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On the other hand, many artifacts found in water, or originally assumed to have been deposited in water, are given ritual explanations. These are seen as sacrifices, offerings, or votive gifts or deposits, placed in specific (wetland) locations in order to gain certain benefits or to secure certain goals, such as luck in hunting (Huurre, 1991: 293). Water, and especially the shoreline, islands, rapids, cascades, and springs, may have been seen as supernatural and liminal spaces (Goldhahn, 2002; Westerdahl, 2005; Rainbird, 2007: 12–13; Herva, Ylimaunu, 2014). For instance, seasonality and change are very evident on the banks of rivers and shores of reservoirs. Flooding is an obvious example, but long-term changes related to the shore displacement and transgressions/regressions are also first visible here. Thus, part of the depositional and other practices connected with water may have been one way to cope with these changes.

This paper explores water and watery places as sacred elements during the Stone Age, and especially during the Neolithic* (the 5th to 3rd millennia BC; for periodization, see (Nordqvist, 2018: Ch. 3)), through archaeological materials deriving mainly from Northwestern Russia, but also more widely from Northeastern Europe (Fennoscandia). The peculiarity and importance of water and watery environments are discussed through depositional practices, mainly of lithic artifacts. Rock-art will provide further tools for approaching the topic, not only through its locations and placing in the landscape but also through its motifs. In addition to archaeological material, later ethnographical sources and folklore will be used to give meaning to water and wetlands. Finally, we will briefly discuss the problems of labeling things as "sacred" or "mundane" when interpreting prehistoric cultural phenomena.

Artifacts from rivers and lakes

Stone Age stray finds collected from the Karelian Isthmus (Leningrad Region, Russian Federation) in the late 19th and early 20th century (stored in the National Museum of Finland, Helsinki) provide one way of approaching the cultural meanings assigned to watery contexts. The finds made in the surroundings of the rapids in Losevo (Kiviniemi) and the environs of Lake Sukhodolskoye (Suvanto) between the Vuoksa River (Vuoksi) and Lake Ladoga are presented here as an example. During the Stone Age, the white waters in Losevo connected the ancient lake in the valley of Vuoksa and the large lake (originally a bay of Lake Ladoga) located in the basin of the present Lake Sukhodolskoye. However, 19th-century human activities caused significant changes (reduction) in the extent of these bodies of water, and also altered their directions of flow (Saarnisto, 2008: 137). These works, and the consequent clearing of fields in the newly exposed areas, brought to light also a great number of stray Stone Age finds.

All in all, ca 190 Stone Age finds are known from the villages located on the shores of Lake Sukhodolskoye; of these, ca 50 are said to derive either from the water or from the exposed lake bottom (Table 1). The finds include mostly polished stone tools (axes and adzes) and fragments thereof. Other finds are just solitary curiosities; pottery is basically not present. However, this material does not stand in any stark contrast with the other 19th- and early-20th-century accidental finds, which usually comprise only large stone tools.

The stray finds certainly include artifacts that were simply lost in the water during everyday activities, but also ones deposited as a result of "irrational" forms of human behavior. Even if large stone tools are found at settlement sites, they are usually not encountered in large numbers. Thus, the substantial number of finds of large lithic artifacts, together with the elevations of find locations, suggest that also other kinds of depositional practices were significant—the intentional deposition of artifacts into water was likely a fairly common occurrence. This, of course, is not a phenomenon peculiar to our research area only. For example, deposition into water and watery places was practiced from the Stone Age to the Early Middle Ages and beyond in northern Europe and Russia (Larsson, 2011; Fredengren, 2015; Serikov, 2015).

Deposition of stone tools in rapids and rivers seems to have taken place in the research area, too. From the Losevo region, altogether 31 stray finds have been collected; of these, five finds are mentioned as deriving directly by or in the Losevo rapids. Again, most finds are stone axes and adzes; but also, some pieces of pottery and other material are present. In general, this area has clearly attracted human presence: after a recent survey a total of eight Stone Age sites are known within a few kilometers' radius around the rapids (Nordqvist, 2013: 17–20). Another example that can be mentioned, is the other major white waters in the Vuoksa River, the Tiversk (Tiuri) Rapids, ca 20 km north-west of Losevo. Here two artifacts (an adze and a weight stone) are reported to have been found in the rapids, and a few more axes and adzes from water in the surroundings; finds from the whole Tiversk village around the rapids total almost 60 specimens. Further, over 20 lithic artifacts were encountered while clearing other rapids and rivers on the Karelian Isthmus ca 100 years ago, including, among others, the Volchya (Saijanjoki), Veselaya (Konnitsanjoki), Petrovka (Kilpeenjoki), Gusiniy (Hanhioja), and Kozlovka (Kuhajoki) rivers.

*The report on this topic was presented at the scientific conference "Archaeology of Russian Ritual Sites" (Solovki, September 7–12, 2016) (Nordqvist, Herva, Sandell, 2016).

Table 1. **Finds of Stone Age artifacts made in the environs of Lake Sukhodolskoye**

Collection	Find type	Find location	Year
1	2	3	4
KM 263	Stone ring	Losevo (Kiviniemi), by the rapids	1857
KM 782	Adze	″	1857
KM 1062	″	″	1869
KM 1922:29	Gouge	Non-locatable village in the Lake Sukhodolskoye area, by an estuary	1878
KM 1922:31	″	Non-locatable village, the shore of Lake Sukhodolskoye	1878
KM 1922:33	″	Zaporozhskoye (Koukkuniemi), the shore of Lake Sukhodolskoye	1878
KM 1922:34	″	″	1878
KM 1922:35	Adze	″	1878
KM 1922:36	″	″	1878
KM 1922:37	″	″	1878
KM 2298:141	Axe	Zaporozhskoye (Kosela), the former bottom of Lake Sukhodolskoye	1884
KM 2298:142	Adze	″	1884
KM 2298:143	″	″	1884
KM 2668:13	″	Zaporozhskoye (Kosela Eevala), the former bottom of Lake Sukhodolskoye	1889
KM 2668:14	″	″	1889
KM 2668:15	″	″	1889
KM 2668:16	″	″	1889
KM 2668:17	Gouge	″	1889
KM 2668:18	″	″	1889
KM 2668:19	″	″	1889
KM 2668:22	Adze	Gromovo (Sakkola), the former bottom of Lake Sukhodolskoye	1889
KM 2668:23	″	″	1889
KM 2668:27	″	Zaporozhskoye (Uusanlampi), the former bottom of Lake Sukhodolskoye	1889
KM 2668:29	″	″	1889
KM 2668:33	″	″	1889
KM 2668:34	″	″	1889
KM 2668:35	″	″	1889
KM 2668:36	″	″	1889
KM 2668:61	Stone tool	Pyatirechye (Saaroinen), by the River Vyun (Viisjoki)	1889
KM 2836:4	Double-bladed adze	Losevo (Kiviniemi), from the rapids	1892
KM 4912:1	Gouge	Lugovoye (Vaskela), the former bottom of Lake Sukhodolskoye	1907
KM 4912:2	Adze	″	1907
KM 5608:1	Boat axe	Lugovoye or Zaporozhskoye (Vaskela or Kosela), the former bottom of Lake Sukhodolskoye	1910
KM 5608:2	Cradle-runner-shaped pickaxe	Non-locatable village, the former bottom of Lake Sukhodolskoye	1910

Table 1 (end)

1	2	3	4
KM 5650:4	Gouge	Gromovo (Sakkola) (?), inundated shore field	1910
KM 5685:1	Perforated (weight) stone	Udaltsovo (Riiska), the shore of Lake Sukhodolskoye	1910
KM 5707:1	Double-bladed adze	Zaporozhskoye (Koukkuniemi), the former bottom of Lake Sukhodolskoye	1910
KM 6008	Shaft-hole axe	Lugovoye or Zaporozhskoye (Vaskela or Kosela), the former bottom of Lake Sukhodolskoye	1912
KM 6068	Knife	Zaporozhskoye (Koukkuniemi), the shore of Lake Sukhodolskoye	1912
KM 6086	Adze	Lugovoye or Zaporozhskoye (Vaskela or Kosela), the former bottom of Lake Sukhodolskoye	1912
KM 6376	″	Lugovoye (Vaskela), the former bottom of Lake Sukhodolskoye	1913
KM 6381	Axe	Zaporozhskoye (Koukkuniemi), the shore of Lake Sukhodolskoye	1913
KM 6621:1	Gouge	Lugovoye (Vaskela), the former bottom of Lake Sukhodolskoye	1914
KM 6874	Claw-shaped adze	″	1915
KM 6919:1	Adze	Non-locatable village, the shore of Lake Sukhodolskoye	1915
KM 6969:1	Axe	Zaporozhskoye (Kosela), the former bottom of Lake Sukhodolskoye	1915
KM 7091:1	Gouge	Zaporozhskoye (Koukkuniemi), the former bottom of Lake Sukhodolskoye	1916
KM 7754:2	Double-bladed axe	Solovievo (Terenttilä), the former bottom of Lake Sukhodolskoye	1920
KM 7754:3	Narrow adze	″	1920
KM 7901:66	Perforated (weight) stone	Olkhovka (Lapinlahti), among rocks on the shore	1920
KM 8114	″	Udaltsovo (Riiska), field by the shore	1922
KM 10826	Pottery sherds	Losevo (Kiviniemi), by the rapids	1938
KM 11410	Shaft-hole axe	Gromovo (Sakkola), the shore of Lake Sukhodolskoye	1944

Note. Only the finds said to derive either directly from the water or from the exposed lake bottom are listed. KM – National Museum of Finland (Helsinki).

The number may seem small but it should be taken into consideration that the finds were made only accidentally, in connection with non-archaeological works, and may not include all artifacts originally present at these locations. On the other hand, the clearing works of the Pchelinka (Kannilanjoki) River, in Klimovo (Kuusaa), in the 1930s revealed over 40 finds, including again stone axes and adzes but also some pottery, whetstones, and bone items, even some Iron Age finds (Takala, 2005: 88–104). Further references to numerous lithic artifacts found from rapids may be found in the research literature. For example, in Satakunta province, western Finland, over 100 stone tools have been reported to have been found in ca 50 rapids (Huurre, 1991: 293).

Waterfalls can be presented as a special case. One of the most famous cascades of Northwestern Russia is Kivach (Kivatsu, Kivačču), in the River Suna (Suunu) water system, in the Karelian Republic. This rocky gully, with a drop of almost 11 m, clearly stands out from its environment, and obviously also enticed Stone Age people (Fig. 1). In expeditions by Finnish scholars in the late 19th century, altogether 18 lithic artifacts were recovered from the Kivach area (Pääkkönen, 1898; Nordqvist, Seitsonen, 2008), in addition to which Russian sources mention seven specimens originating somewhere in this region (Bryusov, 1940: 221; Kochkurkina, 2007: 51). As a curiosity, the "ritual" use of many artifacts was also continued later on: five of the specimens were used as magic charms (thunderbolts) in the 19th century (Table 2). The number of finds from Kivach is quite large. In 19th-century Karelia, similar numbers of artifacts were usually collected only from the

Fig. 1. The upper part of Kivach waterfalls in the Suna River. Photograph by K. Nordqvist.

Table 2. **Stone tools recovered as stray finds from the area of Kivach**

Collection	Find type	Find location	Year of find
1	2	3	4
GE	Gouge	Kivach	19th century
GIM	Arrowhead	″	19th century
″	″	″	19th century
″	Axe	″	19th century
″	″	″	19th century
″	Stone tool	″	19th century
″	Unfinished axe	″	19th century
KM 3309:257	Adze	Kivach, shore	1896
KM 3309:258	Perforated (weight) stone	″	1896
KM 3309:259	Cradle-runner-shaped pickaxe*	Kivach, forest	1896
KM 3309:260	Adze*	Kivach, shore	1896
KM 3309:261	Cradle-runner-shaped pickaxe*	″	1896
KM 3309:262	Adze	Kivach, field	1896
KM 3309:263	″	Kivach, forest	1896
KM 3309:264	″	″	1896
KM 3309:265	Stone tool	Kivach, shore	1896

Table 2 (end)

1	2	3	4
KM 3309:266	Cradle-runner-shaped pickaxe	Kivach, shore	1896
KM 3309:267	Axe	″	1896
KM 3309:268	″	″	1896
KM 3309:269	Axe*	Kivach, field	1896
KM 3309:270	Cradle-runner-shaped pickaxe	Kivach, shore	1896
KM 3309:271	″	″	1896
KM 3309:272	Cradle-runner-shaped pickaxe*	″	1896
KM 3309:273	Cradle-runner-shaped pickaxe	″	1896
KM 4259	Axe	Kivach, near the waterfalls	1903

Note. KM – National Museum of Finland (Helsinki), GE – the State Hermitage Museum (St. Petersburg), GIM – the State Historical Museum (Moscow). Artifacts used later as magic charms (thunderbolts) are marked with an asterisk.

territories of large parishes or from villages located on the shores of lakes, which today are known to be rich in Stone Age settlement sites (e.g. Syamozero/Säämäjärvi). At least 12 items out of the 18 have been discovered on the shore or in water. Thus, it seems obvious that at least some of these artifacts were originally placed in water intentionally.

The area of the waterfall was for a long time archaeologically unexplored, but during recent years, fieldworks have revealed 20 new sites in the vicinity dating to the Mesolithic–Eneolithic (German, Melnikov, 2017). Apart from one site located a bit upstream, the settlements are situated some kilometers south of the cascades, on ancient shore terraces of Lake Onega. Even if some stray finds may derive from these sites (no information exists, however), most are still likely related to the waterfalls, especially the ones found in water.

The rocky area of the cascade is not really a potential or likely place for ordinary settlement. The reason that the artifacts were deposited into the cascade is not self-evident, but there seems to have been a specific meaning behind the activities. It may well have been that this exceptional location in the natural environment attracted people, somehow resonated with their wider worldview and ambitions, and provoked ritual activities. As waterfalls can be understood as liminal places between "this world" and the "otherworld" of supernatural beings and powers, and as they also provided visitors with various sensory stimuli, cascades may have been ascribed very different meanings than, for example, "ordinary" rivers or rapids. Such sensory stimuli (visual, aural, and other) have also been presented as an important reason as to why some North-European waterfalls contain rock-art (Goldhahn, 2002: 49).

Water, islands, and shores— rock-art and burials

Water has been a central element in the traditional cosmologies and mythologies in Fennoscandia and Northwestern Russia for centuries and millennia. The conceptual ordering of the world around the land-sea opposition has even been proposed as a key cosmological principle in the northern Baltic Sea region from the Stone Age to the recent past (Westerdahl, 2005). Water does feature prominently in Finno-Ugric (and in many other northern peoples') cosmogonic myths: one version attributes the birth of the world to a duck, which dives to the bottom of the world sea and brings up mud, from which the land is made; whereas another version holds that the world was born from a waterfowl's egg on a mythical island on the world sea (Kuusi, Bosley, Branch, 1977: 522–523; Berezkin, 2010). The cosmogonic myths have interesting links to rock-art: a similar idea of the world coming into being from a bird's egg seems to be represented in a rock carving on the Island of Bolshoy Guri, in the eastern Lake Onega area (Lahelma, 2012: 27–28). Importantly, the rock carving in question is located on a rocky island of smooth, rounded, and shiny bedrock that makes the island look as it was made of gigantic fragment of eggshell. Discussing these and other features of the Onega rock-art and its context, A. Lahelma has put forward the interpretation that "the egg-shell shaped cliffs and islands would have actualized the myth" wherein the world is born from an egg, and that "the cliffs may have been viewed as a place where the world was created" (Ibid.).

It is interesting to note that the idea of the world emerging from a primordial sea would have resonated, in the Stone Age Northeastern Europe at least, with actual

post-glacial changes in coastal environments. Owing to land uplift, islands could be seen to emerge from the sea, grow larger, become joined with the mainland, and gradually rise on the higher ground to become more or less pronounced hills in the landscape. Furthermore, as water and watery places have associations with the underworld and the supernatural, it is not surprising that islands have frequently been used as burial sites, and associated with death in various cultures (Bradley, 2000: 5; Rainbird, 2007: 12–15). The first known examples of such practice in the research area derive from the Late Mesolithic, the most notable example being the Yuzhny Oleny Island on Lake Onega (Gurina, 1956). It has also been proposed that some of the Stone Age people had been buried in water, which would explain their general absence in the archaeological record. Water-related depositional practices of human remains from the Late Mesolithic have recently been revealed in Motala, central Sweden (Hallgren, 2011). Water and watery places have been connected with death and body disposal also in later times, as exemplified by the Iron Age bog bodies of Northern Europe (Aldhouse-Gren, 2002), or the Finnish burial site of Levänluhta, in Southern Ostrobothnia (Wessman, 2009). Numerous examples of island burials can also be found in Northeastern Europe up until the recent past (Sarmela, 1994: 57; Shumkin, Kolpakov, Murashkin, 2006; Ruohonen, 2010).

In addition to cosmological elements, rock-art contains other features that connect it with water. For example, boats are a common theme, as well as scenes of maritime hunting in some areas. These have been considered by some scholars as depictions of everyday activities, but just like other motifs in rock-art they can also be seen as symbols that depict something beyond the illustrated objects themselves (Zhulnikov, 2006: 113–115; Lahelma, 2008: 56–57; Gjerde, 2010: 145–150). The rock-art locations themselves also indicate that special ritual meanings were attributed to water. For instance, rock-art was often placed near the waterline. This was a liminal zone, where different worlds (associated with the sky, earth, and water) met, and images thus "traveled" between the worlds when water levels changed (Helskog, 1999). In other words, it is possible that some of the images were originally intentionally placed so that water washed or covered them at times; this would have given the images part of their meaning (Gjerde, 2010: 100–101).

Images may also have been considered as an "interface" between the worlds in another sense: that is, they can be understood as "membranes" between different dimensions of reality (Lewis-Williams, Dowson, 1990; Lahelma, 2008: 59–60). For example, some images in Finnish rock paintings appear to represent shamanistic experiences, wherein a shaman figure is associated with a fish, indicating that places visited during altered consciousness were associated with an underwater world (Lahelma, 2008: 52–56), which represented one level of the three-tiered world in northern shamanistic thinking. It is also worth noticing that in Finno-Ugric folklore and traditional cosmology, lakes and other bodies of water could be inhabited by spiritual beings. For example, for Sámi people certain lakes and ponds, called *sáiva*, were considered to be sacred, inhabited by spirits, and also at times envisaged as double-bottomed passages providing access to the netherworld (Sarmela, 1994: 58; Pentikäinen, 1995: 146–149; Serikov, 2015: 444–445).

The idea that water was inhabited by spirits on the one hand, and provided a connection between different dimensions of reality on the other, makes it possible to construct a bridge between rock-art and artifact deposits made in water. In fact, there are artifact depositions by some rock paintings—in water. Perhaps the most well-known examples of this are the three human-faced amber pendants found in water right in front of the Astuvansalmi rock-art panel in eastern Finland (Grönhagen, 1994). Another Finnish rock-art site, where evidence of offerings has been recovered (although on dry land and dating to the Early Metal Period), is Valkeisaari on Lake Saimaa. On the basis of finds that indicate communal consumption of food, parallels to historically recorded Sámi practices at sacred *sieidi* sites have been drawn (Lahelma, 2006: 17) (Fig. 2). But there are also many other signs of human activities taking place in the vicinity of northeast-European rock-art sites: in the Lake Onega and White Sea areas, many rock-art panels are accompanied by indications of human activities spanning several millennia (Savvateev, 1977: 309–311; Lobanova, Filatova, 2015: 195–196).

Conclusions: ambiguous water—ritual and mundane

The opposition between the "sacred" and the "profane" is first and foremost a product of post-Enlightenment western thinking, and its projection on prehistoric (or other non-Western) cultures is deeply problematic—most likely, prehistoric people would not have understood the sacred and the profane as we do today. Within the broadly animistic-shamanistic cosmology of that time, "ritual" and "rational" were intertwined, because the world and its works were understood differently from modern times. One way of reconceptualizing Neolithic worldview is to understand the Stone Age world as one inhabited not only by people but also by spiritual or other non-human beings with which people interacted in various "ritual" and other ways (Bird-David, 1999; Brown, Walker, 2008; Herva, 2009; Holbraad, 2009). Extraordinary properties were attributed not only to water and watery places but also to

Fig. 2. Sacred site of the Sámi: the *sieidi* of Taatsi by Lake Taatsinjärvi in Kittilä, northern Finland. Photograph by K. Nordqvist.

forest, soil, the elements, various materials and artifacts, and so on. Therefore, straightforward divisions between subjects and objects, culture and nature, or natural and supernatural cannot be drawn; this is also typical for later, traditional northern cosmologies. The world was ultimately reciprocal and came constantly into being through the interaction and relations between the humans and the non-humans.

The Stone Age beliefs and ritual practices associated with water and watery places should not be seen as isolated beliefs or misinformed superstition, but instead as arising from a certain way of perceiving and interacting with the world in general. Even if deposition of artifacts in water may seem deeply ritualized (and even nonsensical) to us, it may have been the normal way to prepare oneself for the present and the future. It is also important to underline that there was not necessarily a drastic difference between ordinary everyday activities and "rituals" in the first place; rather, these can be seen as two sides of the same coin. The discarding and deposition of material culture, including the practices directed towards water, may have been utilitarian, small-scale events, which were still governed and directed by social rules and cosmological concepts (Chadwick, 2012).

Part of the meaning assigned to water arises from its physiological necessity: the human body cannot function without water. Bodies of water also provided a significant portion of the subsistence for many northern Stone Age people, and waterways (open or frozen) formed central routes of transportation in many areas. Water is also almost trans-culturally seen as a purifying, cleansing element—this can be understood not only literally, but also metaphorically. On the other hand, storms, floods, and the like clearly epitomize the destructive, potentially lethal aspects of water; for example, myths of a Deluge are known around the Globe. Other negative properties also have been connected with the watery places. As mentioned above, in Finno-Ugric and other northern folklore and mythology, many watery locations, such as bogs, rivers, springs, lakes, and ponds were considered portages to the netherworld or afterworld (Siikala, 1992: 163–164, 182; Serikov, 2015: 444–445). In addition to being seen as portages to another dimension, watery places and wetlands have been perceived as places of punishment or banishment: unwanted persons or things may have been deposited or deported there, either concretely or figuratively speaking (Siikala, 1992: 157–158). According to historical folklore and sources, people who had suffered "bad death" (e.g. through suicide, execution, a drunken fight, infanticide, or drowning) were buried into the least-valued parts of the churchyard, or left outside the consecrated land, on bare ground or in wetlands. Further, in some regions it was believed that the spirits of the drowned remained eternally as wandering restless souls (Sarmela, 1994: 60, 172–175; Pentikäinen, 1995: 215–216). Thus, the negative aspects of water had

not only the potential to harm one's physical health but were equally dangerous to one's soul. Northern folklore includes a vast array of spirits, "water people", which further illustrates the ambivalent nature of this element. Some of the spirits are benevolent, many malevolent, and some ambivalent both in their intentions, habitus, and gender, such as the Water Fey (Siikala, 1992: 182; Sarmela, 1994: 165–168).

Of course, the examples provided by folklore and historical mythology cannot be taken as direct analogies to how the world was perceived and understood during the Stone Age, but insights gained from ethnographically informed approaches provide useful ideas for canvassing the possible meanings behind prehistoric practices. We have not tried to imply that the meanings and practices connected with water and watery places were identical in all areas and at all times. Our aim here is simply to outline an alternative frame of reference, within which these finds and phenomena could be interpreted.

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