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GENIUS LOCI

The spirit of place
in historical
Central Ostrobothnia

Genius Loci

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Central Ostrobothnia

Welcome!

The local cultural heritage presented on the Genius Loci website introduces visitors as well as local residents to interesting and exciting destinations for independent travelling and adventures in the 'historical Central Ostrobothnia' (i.e. the Region of Central Ostrobothnia, the northern parts of the Region of Ostrobothnia, and the southern parts of the Region of Northern Ostrobothnia). The spirit of the place is enriched by historical facts, legends and stories. The landscape of Central Ostrobothnia is tinged both with harmless, commonly accepted place stories and other unspoken, at times scintillating tales. No matter whether your tour is virtual or physical:

*Welcome to the mystical
Central Ostrobothnia!*

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Genius
Loci

What is *Genius Loci* all about?

‘**G**enius Loci’ is Latin for ‘the spirit of place’. The spirit of a place consists of local history and cultural heritage: factual data, legends, stories and fiction are born, live and change over the years and are passed on from generation to generation. Nearly every corner of the earth on which humans have set foot has been enriched for centuries, even for millenniums, with place stories that make each location unique. Now we look for and explore the spirit of place in historical Central Ostrobothnia.

In the project *Genius loci – geospatial data service: alternative tourism, pilgrimage and local culture*, we have created an online and mobile geospatial data service on Central Ostrobothnia, which serves as a cultural destination atlas. The place stories can be divided into six main themes: land, water, forest, sorrow, religiousness and spirit. These main themes are introduced on the Genius Loci website and in this text collection. We have selected local

information and stories for the website from the material collected by Ilkka Luoto and Annika Nyström in 2010–2012. In addition, the website includes a lot of new cultural heritage data that we have found and developed for this purpose. The geospatial data service also provides links to services located near the cultural destinations.

We could spend weeks debating the borders of ‘historical Central Ostrobothnia’ without a final consensus. One historically justifiable solution could be the definition by Pentti Virrankoski, according to which the southernmost municipalities of Central Ostrobothnia are Pietarsaari and Pedersöre, and the northernmost belt of municipalities ranges from Kalajoki to Pyhäjärvi. In our project we have even stepped outside of this definition so that the southernmost area is Uusikaarlepyy and the northernmost municipalities are Käsämäki, Siikalatva and Pyhäntä. The financiers of the project have also agreed with this area definition.

It is obvious that a virtual forum like this is never complete, because new destinations, data and stories are endlessly produced and discovered. Therefore, even after the project, the website should be continuously complemented, updated and developed, which requires content knowledge as well as technical skills and commitment from the website administrators. The protection, maintenance and touristic usability of the cultural destinations located in different environments within the region, for their part, depend on the activity of local actors.

The project’s research and development tasks are intertwined particularly in the context of highlighting local cultural heritage, strengthening regional awareness and utilising cultural heritage in tourism. We hope that the Genius Loci geospatial data service

will be used in various ways for pleasure and utility by the local people, tourists, heritage workers, associations and companies. Visitors can also suggest corrections and specifications regarding the destinations presented on the website, as well as new place data and stories.

The Central Ostrobothnian countryside with its small towns – like the countryside everywhere in Finland – is in many ways valuable and full of spiritual, social and economic opportunities. I have aimed at clarifying this view in the articles published during the project in the newspapers *Keskipohjanmaa* and *Österbottens Tidning*. I hope that these articles also encourage and inspire their readers to creativity in cherishing the rural cultural heritage and to utilising this heritage in tourism in a culturally sustainable way.

The *Genius Loci* project participants include Project Researcher Anne Ruuttula-Vasari, Professor Kari Ilmonen, Project Coordinator Tuomo Härmänmaa, Project Manager Veli-Matti Tornikoski and Financial Secretary Tarja Louhivuori. The layout of the project website was designed by St. Hurmos. The texts were translated into Swedish by Stina Hallman and into English by the University of Jyväskylä Language Services. The project was funded by the ELY Centres of Ostrobothnia and Northern Ostrobothnia (Rural Development Programme for Mainland Finland 2007–2013). I wish to express my warmest thanks to all the participants and financiers as well as to the creative steering group of the project.

*At the Kokkola University Consortium Chydenius
Kari Ilmonen*

LAND – hard work and skills

The land theme in the Genius Loci geospatial data service includes information and stories related to agriculture in Central Ostrobothnia, for example, to natural meadows, slash-burning, animal husbandry and field cultivation. The subtle manual skills that are based in one way or another on the soil also deserve attention here.

In his historical work *Pohjanlahden ja Suomenselän kansaa*, Pentti Virrankoski states that it took decades before the region's population rose back to the level at which it had been before the Greater Wrath in 1714. However, the population was very sparse in a region that could be principally called wilderness. In the mid-1700s, there were clearly less than 20,000 inhabitants in the Central Ostrobothnia region as defined by Virrankoski. Towards the end of the century, the population began to grow quickly, so that at the beginning of the 1800s it was clearly over 40,000. Population density was the highest in the coastal area.

In the 1700s, agriculture was naturally the main source of livelihood in Central Ostrobothnia. Slash and swamps were

burned for agricultural purposes, but new fields were also cleared in forests and by ditching and ploughing meadows. In addition to grain, turnips and peas were traditionally cultivated. Towards the end of the century, potato cultivation became more common. "In the coastal area, good soil containing organic matter was often rocky, but it was persistently cleared by gathering high and thick stone walls between the crofts", Virrankoski writes. The stones were also used for building cowsheds, which contributed to forest preservation. Finland's oldest datable private cowshed, the Rasmus stone cowshed (Rasmuksen kivinavetta), was built in the mid-1700s and can still be found in the Sokoja village of Kokkola.

Virrankoski deduces that an average farm of the 1700s had a couple of hectares of arable land, a little fewer than ten cows and the same amount of sheep. Draught oxen had been replaced by horses. Hunting was not very significant in Central Ostrobothnia in those days, but it was revolutionary that the steel-arched crossbow was completely replaced by the muzzle-loaded hunting rifle.

According to Virrankoski, hard work and new knowledge were the reasons why agriculture developed strongly in Central Ostrobothnia, particularly at the end of the period in which Finland was an autonomous part of the Russian empire (1809–1917). As tar burning and shipbuilding died down, animal husbandry increased and arable areas became larger as, for instance, swamps were drained and agricultural tools and fertilisers were developed. Virrankoski mentions Perho as a traditional example of "hunger and poverty", where the positive

development was manifested in the early 1900s as extensive burned clearings, large cattle and well-functioning dairies.

Central Ostrobothnia has been known as a region of music, but versatile manual skills have also been characteristic of the region. Manual skills are usually based on the offerings of the soil. Shipbuilding included subcontracting such as rope and hawser braiding, sailcloth weaving, pulley part turnery, and ship's boat building. Further examples of important manual skills were weaving, leather manufacture, spinning wheel turnery, furniture manufacture and rush mat making. The blacksmiths of Central Ostrobothnia were able to make handsome and reliable grandfather clocks as early as in the late 1700s. Virrankoski states that a diverse peasant industry was a central characteristic of Central Ostrobothnian economic life and folklore particularly towards the end of the 1700s. An essential element of manual skills was church construction, which is covered extensively on the Genius Loci website.



Genius
Loci



Figure 1. The granary in Kälviä is from 1844. Granaries were generally used for storing grain. (Photo: Genius loci project)



Figure 2. The Rasmus stone cowshed is located in Sokoja, Kokkola. It was built in the mid-1700s. (Photo: Genius loci project)

WATER – sailing vessels and fishing

The water theme showcases the maritime spirit of Central Ostrobothnia through, for instance, the region's leading position in Finnish shipbuilding in the 1600s and 1700s, and with tales of unfortunate shipwrecks. The utilisation of rivers is demonstrated by well-preserved flour or saw mills and old photos of timber floating, and lake ore tells us about the utilisation of lakes. Fishing is a natural and eternal form of utilising all of these water elements, including seal hunting in the sea areas. The waterways have enabled Finns to reach both domestic and foreign locations and harbours – and not always for legal purposes, as the smuggling during the prohibition of alcohol in the 1920s shows.

In his history of the area, Virrankoski describes with geographical precision how the coast of Central Ostrobothnia is framed from the south to the Kokkola region by large, wooded islands, but also by countless small islets on which only juniper shrubs grow. The famous outer islands of Kalajoki, north of Kokkola, are called Kallan karit. The shallow, rocky shores are complemented by the extensive sand dunes of Fäboda, Lohtaja and Kalajoki. In her preface to *Merkkillinen meri*, Kristina Ahmas notes how land uplift and shifting of the shoreline are slowly but incessantly changing the landscape and offering new kinds of opportunities for life, population and sources of livelihood.

Historical Central Ostrobothnia is intersected by almost ten rivers and their tributaries: the Purmojoki in the south and the Pyhäjoki in the north. In addition, south of the Purmojoki, the Lapuanjoki runs into the sea area of Uusikaarlepyy. Here rivers have for centuries been arteries of human settlement, surrounded by fields, meadows, houses and villages.

You find no large lakes next to the coast, but heading inland you encounter lakes in Veteli, Halsua and Ullava, for example. “The largest lakes are huge Lake Pyhäjärvi and handsome Lake Lestijärvi”, Virrankoski states. Lakes have been dried for the needs of field cultivation and animal husbandry since the late 1700s, which has changed the structure of local villages and countryside landscape. Virrankoski mentions the drying of Lake Kalajärvi in Rejsjärvi in 1861–67. An enormous amount of labour produced 2,500 hectares of meadow, which yielded 12,000 horse loads of hay each year. A more recent example from the 1930s is the drying of Lake Isojärvi in Kälviä (present-day Kokkola), in the village of Ruotsalo, described in the village book of Ruotsalo.

As for marine fishing, Virrankoski refers to the most impressive – and even true – fish story of Central Ostrobothnia: on the coast of Kalajoki, a dead beluga nearly five metres in length was found in 1904. The genealogist Mikko Himanka wrote poems on the astonishing incident, as in the following:

*Meni Puskalan Eero rysälle,
luuli vaahtoa kertyneen aitaan,
mutta lähemmäksi ko souteli,
niin selekä tarttu paitaan.
Ei se vaahtua ollu, vaan kala.*

*(Eero Puskala went to check his bow nets,
thinking the fence had gathered some foam,
but while rowing closer,
his back got stuck on his shirt.
It was not foam but a fish.)*

In the water theme of Central Ostrobothnia, the most significant element is probably shipbuilding. This tradition is reflected in the present day as active and successful boatbuilding. Based on studies by Jari Ojala and Pekka Toivanen, Virrankoski estimates that in the forty years after the 1760s, even over 600 sailing boats were built on the coast between Pedersöre and Kalajoki, and that shipbuilding was most active in the 1770s. Towards the end of the same century, sailing rights were freed first in Kokkola and then in Pietarsaari, after a hard-fought political struggle. This meant that the economic profit of foreign trade remained increasingly in the region instead of flowing to the then capital Stockholm. In the first decades of the 1800s, seafaring and shipbuilding

continued to be significant in Central Ostrobothnia, particularly in the regions of Pietarsaari and Kokkola.

Mythical stories are told about the waterways in Central Ostrobothnia, such as the ghost stories of Harriniemi (Harrbådan) in Kokkola and the goblin story of Emoniemi in Pyhäjärvi.



Figure 3. Rytikari in Kokkola is an old shipbuilding venue and a fishing harbour. (Photo: Genius loci project)



Figure 4. The old mill of Helaala is located along the Kalajoki River, in the centre of Ylivieska. (Photo: Genius loci project)

FOREST – timber and tar

A countless amount of cultural history and heritage could be included in the Central Ostrobothnian forest theme. On the Genius Loci website, particular attention is paid to tar burning and export, household use of forest resources, and timber floating. The ‘small railroad of Eskola’ (Eskolan Pikurata), a forest railroad built for timber transport, is well covered on the website. This forest railroad was in use for over 40 years, providing employment for hundreds of people every year.

Virrankoski says that Ostrobothnia was a significant tar producer and exporter within the Kingdom of Sweden by the 1600s. Tar burning spread everywhere in the region along the rivers. Even in the 1700s, the financial value of tar was higher than, for example, that of sawn timber, even though the supply of ship timber to coastal boatyards was an important secondary industry for inland farmers. All in all, the utilisation of forests and merchant shipping were in many ways closely connected to each other.

Felling consumed the forests in Central Ostrobothnia, but there was enough timber for tar burning even in the 1800s. Tar was exported particularly through the harbours of Kokkola, Pietarsaari, Kalajoki and Raahe, until tar burning declined in the early years of the 1900s. Tar has been produced also after World War II locally for household needs, a practice that continues even today at traditional work demonstrations open to the public. You can find several old tar-burning pits in Central Ostrobothnia, for example, in Haapajärvi and Sievi.

According to Virrankoski, Finland's sawmill industry began to grow in the 1860s. At the end of the country's autonomous period, large sawmills using steam power were founded, among others, at Tukksaari and Leppäluoto in Pietarsaari and at Ykspihlaja in Kokkola. Jokisuu steam sawmill in Kalajoki provided employment for numerous local people as well as for newcomers to the area. The export of sawn timber, saw logs and mine props was also the source of livelihood of the lumberjacks who struggled with masses of driven logs at rocky rapids. For the landless population, in particular, timber felling and floating was an important employment opportunity after the tar utilisation era had begun to reach an end.

The timber cut down during the winter was transported by horses to the head waters of rivers in the spring, and due to spring flooding, also to smaller streams. In Central Ostrobothnia, logs and smaller wood were floated to sawmills along such rivers as the Perhonjoki, Lestijoki, Kalajoki and Pyhäjoki and their tributaries. In its 19 May 1897 issue, the magazine *Kaiku* reported on the dangers of floating: "Timber floating, which is currently proceeding down the Juurikoski rapids in Ylivieska,



has been viewed by many curious spectators. Public interest is not at all reduced by the fact that two rafters have been close to death in the rapids in a couple of summers.”

Mummo alkaa päivitellä tekeillä olevaa metsärataa. Mummo ei usko, että kapea rautatie tuo mitään hyvää tälle kylälle. Ruokaa ja selänsijaa tarvitsevat radan rakentajat tuovat tietysti rahaa kylälle, mutta samalla myös levottomampaa elämää. Mummon mielestä ei ole ollenkaan hyvää, jos taloihinsa vakiintuneiden kyläläisten seassa kulkee ja asustaa miehiä, joilla koko omaisuus kulkee repuissa ja konteissa.

(Granny starts to complain about the forest railroad that is being built. She does not believe that a narrow railroad would be of any good to this village. Of course, the builders who need food and a place to sleep bring money to the village, but at the same time also disturb the peace of the village. Granny does not think it is good at all if amongst the stable villagers there would wander and dwell men who carry all their possessions in backpacks.)

The above is an extract from the novel *Pölkynvälit* by Arto Ojakangas, in which the author describes the changing way of life and sources of livelihood in Central Ostrobothnia in connection with the building of the forest railroad of Eskola and timber transport in 1920–1961. At the beginning, in addition to local residents, a hundred Russian soldiers who had fled from the Kronstadt fortress also participated in building the railroad, even though not with great success. The railroad was nearly 70 kilometres long and only 75 centimetres wide. After its completion, it ran through the forests and swamps of Kannus, Sievi, Lestijärvi, Toholampi and Reisjärvi. Today, a forest

truck road, ruins of workers' cabins, the Eskola engine shed, a small engine acquired from the Soviet Union, and signboards are left of this railroad. The Pikkurata is commemorated in various ways at Eskola in Kannus.

For centuries the forests in Central Ostrobothnia have offered protection against enemies and provided opportunities for hunting, fishing, and picking berries and mushrooms. Central Ostrobothnia has various natural and cultural trails, along which you can use all your senses to experience the magic of forests, swamps, lakes, rivers, and their fauna.

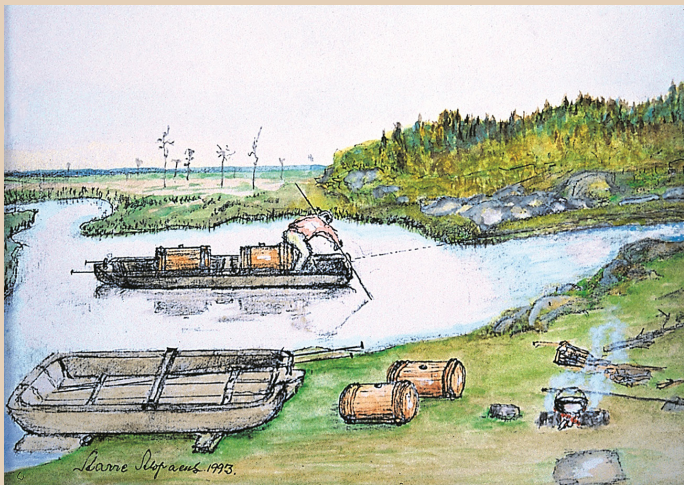


Figure 5. Tar was transported in low-sided boats along the small rivers of Ostrobothnia. (Watercolour by Aarre Alopæus, Sievi village book)

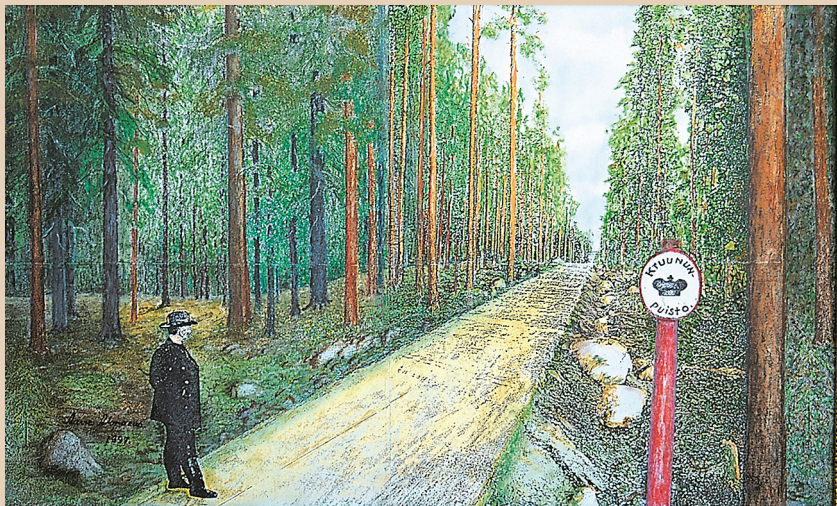


Figure 6. Forest Officer Väinö Alopaeus from Kalajoki standing on Finland's first forestry road in the 1910s. The water colour was painted by the officer's son Aarre Alopaeus. (Sievi village book)

SORROW – wars and graves

The theme of sorrow encompasses wars from the Greater Wrath in the early 1700s to the end of World War II. In addition to wars, suffering has been caused by crime, punishment, hunger and accidents. Unfortunately these phenomena have often accumulated on the same social, communal and individual destinies.

During the Greater Wrath, the population of Central Ostrobothnia was the target of plundering and violence by Russian soldiers. Virrankoski estimates in his work that during those years, the population of more than 16,000 was reduced by over one third – and most of the deceased and missing were civilians. In the Finnish War between Sweden and Russia (1808–09), which resulted in Finland being annexed to the Russian Empire, numerous Central Ostrobothnian tenement soldiers were killed either in battles or in epidemics. On the wall of the parsonage of Lohtaja, there is a plaque commemorating the truce produced there in autumn 1808. In Perho, you can still find the Kokkoneva

battlefield, on which around 150 soldiers of the Swedish army were killed or injured, as evidenced by the Genius Loci data. At Jepua in Uusikaarlepyy, next to the Lapuanjoki River, you can find the Battle of Jutas memorial from 1885.

The Crimean War in the mid-1800s was disastrous particularly for seafaring in Central Ostrobothnia, because vessels had to be sold quickly in fear of captures and sinking. The British caused anxiety and material damage by invading the harbours of the Gulf of Bothnia. Their attack on Kokkola was repelled by the local defence force led by Anders Donner and by Russian soldiers that had come to help. Soon after the Crimean War, Central Ostrobothnia also faced a series of crop failures, which led to famine. In the worst famine year, 1868, over one fifth of the population in Ullava and Reisjärvi died of hunger.

The wars in the 1900s did not cause any less grief in Finland than the earlier wars. The Finnish Civil War in early 1918 did not lead to large bloody confrontations in Central Ostrobothnia, but it did cause a lot of sorrow and suffering in the homes of both sides in the conflict, 'the Whites' and 'the Reds'. Even though the bitter memories have become milder over the generations, we have the opportunity to honour the memory of those deceased in the war by visiting graves, memorials and execution sites also in Central Ostrobothnia. The wounds caused by the destructive and severe Civil War were healed at least for the years of the Winter War, the Continuation War and the Lapland War in 1939–1945. Virrankoski states that over 3,000 Central Ostrobothnian men died in these war years, in Lohtaja almost eight per cent of the local male population. In many cemeteries, the war graves for the sons of the Civil War's opposing sides rest side by side.

The old sites of torture and execution identified in Central Ostrobothnia, according to the Genius Loci data, include at least Lohtajan mestauskivi ('Lohtaja beheading stone'), Piiskamänty ('whipping pine') and Kermaranta in Haapajärvi, and Hirsipuunpelto ('gallowsfield') at Ruotsalo in Kokkola. In a story from the 1700s related to Hirsipuunpelto, the executioner had actually ordered that the long hair of a woman convicted of infanticide be cut so that it would not disturb her execution.

Sad stories are told about the destiny, for example, of the little girls Aili and Lempi, who got lost in the wilderness of Toholampi at the beginning of the 1900s, and about the little Karelian evacuee boy, who got lost on Puusaari Island in Himanka during the Lapland War. These berry-picking outings ended sadly, with the passing of all three children. The remains of the evacuee boy were found only several years later, a berry mug still in his bony hand. Both of these accidents have been

marked with a monument. But there have also been miraculous rescues, such as in the tale about Susisaari in Reisjärvi, according to which wolves captured a little girl but dropped her from their teeth after being scared off by the men from Pihtipudas who accidentally happened upon the scene. The girl received only mild injuries.





Figure 7. The Battle of Jutas memorial in Uusikaarlepyy, at the Lapuanjoki River, commemorates the Finnish War, fought in 1808–1809 (Photo: Genius loci project)

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Figure 8. WW II soldiers' graves in the graveyard of Pyhäjärvi (Photo: Genius loci project)

RELIGION – faith and hope

The religion theme introduces all the church neighbourhoods of historical Central Ostrobothnia, as well as some old, mainly coastal parsonages that are still in use. The idea and history of religion is naturally not connected to these destinations only, but their environments fascinate us with their aesthetic character and long-lasting architectural continuum.

Relatively few relics of older building culture have been preserved in Finland, which is why the development of building culture is best visible exactly in churches – from the later Middle Ages to the present. In addition to clergymen and -women, church history has been created by self-taught masters. In Central Ostrobothnia these include, among others, the Kuorikoskis, Biskop, Rijf, Honka and Karjalahti. One should not forget the church items, church paintings and bell towers, either.

The carved, wooden ‘poor man statues’ (vaivaisukko in Finnish) placed outside of several Finnish churches represent an early form of poor relief. They are sympathetic manifestations

of folksy design skills, a kind of outsider art from bygone times. In addition to charity, the poor man statues were recipients of pleading and prayers. The majority of these statues were manufactured and can still be seen in Ostrobothnia. Most of them date back to the 1800s.

In addition to the value of churches for building culture and art history, we should remember their social and spiritual significance over the centuries. The church has often been – and remains so – the centre of a cultural landscape, but also the big heart of a local community, the spirit of a place. Irrespective of conviction, the church and the graveyard are often experienced as sacred areas, a space for reflection, reminiscing and soul-searching. If a long- or short-distance traveller wishes to learn the history of a location, the church and its surroundings are a good place to begin.

In the preface of her work *Suomalaiset pappilat* ('Finnish parsonages'), Marja Terttu Knapas notes that parsonages have had a significant role in Finland's cultural history. In the spirit of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment and utilitarianism, parsonages were local centres of both religious and worldly wellbeing. It was common that parsonages aimed at being exemplary in their way of life and environment, for instance. Parsonages simultaneously preserved ecclesiastical traditions and served as centres of reform. They were the growth environments of many influential figures in society, such as Anders Chydenius.

Finnish parsonage culture has changed and partly even disappeared over the centuries. Today only a fraction of the parish parsonages occupied earlier by parsons and chaplains are used by office-holders. Some have been pulled down and



some serve as parish offices, assembly and meeting places or museums. You can find several old, well-kept parsonages in historical Central Ostrobothnia.

One should note that there have been, and there still are, various revivalist movements in Central Ostrobothnia, whose relationship to Lutheranism and the mainstream church is more or less distant. In the light of history, even extreme separatism has existed in the region. Antti Tuuri's novels on the Eriksson brothers from Kälviä portray an anticlerical popular movement that was strong in the region in the 1700s, derived not only from Christianity but also from mysticism and spiritualism. The brothers and their supporters were convicted of heresy and sent into exile in 1733. They acquired a ship in Denmark and tried to find a suitable home in one of the countries around the North Sea. Another interesting phenomenon was the so-called Munsala radicalism, on which Dennis Rundt wrote his doctoral dissertation. This political-idealistic movement, effective in the Swedish-speaking part of Ostrobothnia in the late 1800s and early 1900s, integrated leftism with pacifism and evangelicalism. For a short period, the Kokkola area was also the scene of a spiritualist sect called the Åkerblom movement, which emerged at the end of the 1910s. This movement was led by the trance preacher Ida Maria Åkerblom, who had declared herself a prophet and was the source of wild stories.

The overall picture of revivalist movements in historical Central Ostrobothnia is a colourful and diverse one. During the present project, we unfortunately lacked the time to explore the theme sufficiently. These regional movements should be examined sufficiently later in order to include a significant part of them also on the Genius Loci website.



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Figure 9. The church of Luoto from 1789. The photo was taken from the side of the Marieholm parsonage. (Photo: Genius loci project)



Figure 10. Rosenlund parsonage in Pietarsaari dates back to the end of the 1700s. The courtyard also includes a large stone cowshed and the garden of Aspegren from the same period. (Photo: Genius loci project)

SPIRIT – ghosts and spiritual giants

On the Genius Loci website, we present examples of spiritual phenomena and creatures, including giants and goblins from folk tales with their stone labyrinths (jatulintarha), stone constructions called 'giant's churches' (jätinkirkko) and other rock formations. In addition, the website introduces cup stones, ghosts and treasures. Immovable relics are fascinating also because they have been open to more or less scientific interpretations and narratives. The numerous makers of culture in historical Central Ostrobothnia can also be regarded as spiritual giants, whose cultural historical - and simultaneously mythical - value has been preserved and even grown over the centuries.

Did you know that an ancient giant dropped his stone load next to the point of the Emoniemi cape in Pyhäjärvi, and now the place

is called Hiidenkari, that is, 'goblin rock'? The enormous 'nest rocks' (Pesäkivet) on the border between Kälviä and Lohtaja also give wings to a visitor's imagination. The story tells that in the olden days, standing on these rocks, one could see the steeples of the churches of Kälviä, Kannus and Lohtaja. In Kruunupyy there are several giant's churches that bear references to the directions of sunrise and sunset as well as to the life of coastal residents a couple of thousand years before the Common Era. In Central Ostrobothnia you can also find cup stones, that is, sacrificial stones, through which people were in contact to the deceased. The rainwater that gathered in these cup stones was believed to have a healing effect. Exciting treasure stories are commonly told about the events of the Greater Wrath, during which silver coins and church silver items were hidden and church bells were sunk for the fear of plundering Russians.

In her collection *Aaveiden Pohjanmaa*, Tiina Hietikko-Hautala presents ten ghost stories, two of which take place in historical Central Ostrobothnia. Numerous versions of a story are related to the Malmi house, in the centre of Pietarsaari, built in the late 1830s for the shipowner Peter Malm. The most touching story tells of the shipowner's son, shopkeeper Otto August Malm. His phantom has been seen to move around the house or in the yard, obviously waiting for his wife who perished in the shipwreck of the steamship *Österbotten* at the time she was bearing their first child. Another setting for ghost stories is the Harriniemi (Harrbådan) cape in Kokkola. A maiden in a summer dress, told to have drowned under unclear circumstances at the turn of the 1800s and the 1900s, has often been seen near the point of the

cape and the old lighthouse. Seeing the maiden of Harrbådan is believed to bring misfortune.

Virrankoski presents a range of prominent Central Ostrobothnian figures and masters from the 1700s onwards in literature, music, the visual arts and church building. The promoters of popular enlightenment who lived in the region, from Anders Chydenius (1729–1803) to Johan Vilhelm Snellman (1806–1881), have a prominent position in the book. The book includes a small – but not insignificant – reference to a poor sailor's widow, Anna Helena Westman (1744–1837), who ran a school for small children in Pietarsaari in the 1790s. One of the little boys who learned the ABC book and catechism in the attic room of 'Granny Westman's' school was Johan Ludvig Runeberg (1804–77), the national poet of Finland. The house and its old courtyard still exist as a museum. Among later influential figures in society, we must also mention Lucina Hagman (1853–1946), born in Kälviä, who worked to promote the status of women, pacifism and temperance, among other issues.

In the eyes and the stories of the common people, village idiots, healers and witches could also be spiritual giants. In the 1800s people came from as far as St. Petersburg to Saukonperä in Sievi to be healed by the so-called Näätä-Vaari or 'granddad weasel' (also called 'weasel god', 'weasel devil') with prophecy and witchcraft skills. In the 1600s in Central Ostrobothnia, like in many other places, witches were regarded as servants of the devil and often sentenced to death.

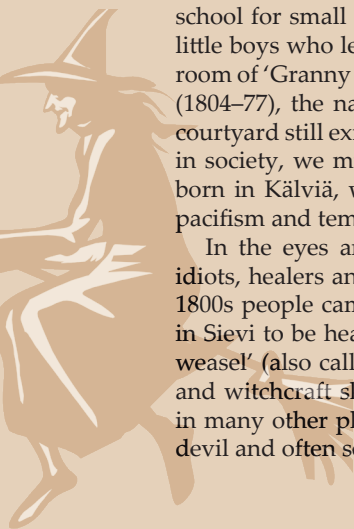




Figure 11. Around the raddled Kokkola Harriniemi (Harbådan) lighthouse, haunting has been experienced, as it is even today. (Photo: Genius loci project)



Figure 12. A cup stone at Vanhakirkko chapel in Sievi (Photo: Genius loci project)

Cultural heritage and the spirit of place

Above the main street, enormous light decorations dangle from cables, symbolising faith, hope and love. They enhance the city's winter idyll, and not only superficially. The streets and roofs are covered by a thin snow blanket, and the centre looks smaller and cleaner than ever. We can't help imagining a market in front of the old town hall, coloured by horses, traps, scarf-headed women and brim-hatted men – something we've seen in passing in the photographs of the early 1900s. The square, surrounded by old and new buildings, is the gently beating heart of the city, with no particular arrhythmia. Only the stinking, stop-and-go car traffic reminds us of the present day, crushing our sleepy, glazed hallucination.

A place can evoke these kinds of thoughts and feelings if it is meaningful to a person in the light of previous knowledge or experience. In addition to its physical form, a location can have a spiritual halo, which can even resemble religion. In such a case, we talk about the spirit of a place (Latin *genius loci*) and place experience. The present-day reality of a location is penetrated by various historical layers, mental images and emotions.

The more historical information and memories are associated with a location, the more charged is the mental image related to this location. More or less fictional stories on a location have the same effect, making our imagination and emotional world vibrate, sometimes even run riot. Such an experience, for its part, binds residents more profoundly to their home region and maybe also satisfies the hunger for experiences in a passer-by or traveller – irrespective of whether the profound places are located in cities or in the countryside. The mosaic of place experience can include cultural traditions, historical roots of places and communities, as well as landscapes, noises, scents, and own and narrated memories.

A destination or place can be experienced in different ways: as something casual, with an emotional charge, or as a strategic tourism product. All these dimensions can open up separately or be integrated, depending on the way and context of viewing. But when we begin to define or understand places and destinations as something that has cultural historical value, a socially uniting and commonly shared cultural heritage begins to take shape. Certainly, people who are totally immune to this kind of experience may still remain cold and unimpressed.

Cultural heritage flows from and is built on different subcultures and temporal layers. Alongside a serious approach, the eras, styles and types of the past can be approached through play, for example, by organising a medieval fair or a wedding ceremony in the eighteenth-century spirit of Anders Chydenius. An example of this is the Pikkurata forest railroad, built in Central Ostrobothnia in the 1920s, which is commemorated in the Eskola village of Kannus with events, plays and literature.

If the purpose of historical research is to understand what has happened and why, the purpose of heritage production and the heritage industry is to rebuild certain past phenomena and values, as well as to celebrate them as parts of the present. If the study of history also reveals things that the community experiences as embarrassing, the heritage industry prefers to cherish and present phenomena interpreted as “honourable”. It is true that the past is romanticised and exoticised, but does heritage production consciously exclude something? It may be possible to productise even difficult things, particularly if research reveals past wrongdoings and injustices or marginalised groups of people.

Heritage production thus always implies selection: what kind of an image of the reality do we want to produce by portraying the heritage, and on whose terms – the local population, heritage workers, artists, decision-makers or tourism entrepreneurs? In any case, heritage production must rely as much as possible on historical research data and methods in order to achieve a credible end result and, consequently, awake more sustainable interest. This does not mean that the phenomena of cultural heritage and continuous evolution would appear to us as somehow virginal. An absolute origin and “authenticity” are always unattainable quantities, because we are bound to current texts and imagery and the interpretations they introduce. In heritage production, the past is always interpreted from the perspective of present uses.

Ideally, local people experience their neighbourhood as cosy, at times even exciting, and this is connected to mental and social wellbeing. A quarry stone that has been lying at the edge of the

forest for ages and a creaky old building along the village road begin to tell tales to daily passers-by who earlier only rushed past them, their eyes and ears shut. The places and destinations appear to the residents as shared mental landscapes. What has happened? Someone has coated the stone and the building with history and stories. The passers-by begin to remember and also talk about the place stories of their grandparents or neighbours. The spirit and matter of the destinations and places flow into each other.

Heritage work can be carried out in various ways and by various actors, but essential therein is the preservation and enriching of cultural heritage with the aim of strengthening residents' regional awareness. As a counterbalance for social dispersion and individualism, which have been characteristic of the Western way of life, local identities and social connectedness are experienced as increasingly important today. People want to identify themselves with a location and find some base for their identity and attachment to this location. This is part of the sociocultural meaning of heritage.

In addition to making the residents feel more at home in the region and deepening their regional awareness, the impact of local cultures also extends to the possibilities to utilise the destinations and place stories in tourism. Public interest in narrativised experiential products and services is continuously growing. People are increasingly attracted, in particular, by alternative tourism. Massive cultural tourism, such as in the older, historical parts of Tallinn and Prague, is not necessarily a reasonable or realistic aim. Instead of mass tourism, we can promote individual, spontaneous and silent tourism.

The productisation of the past can, to a growing extent, influence regional economies. Cultural tourism provides opportunities to complement regional wellness services, diversify the economic life, increase people's awareness of the various regions and destinations, as well as provide additional income to companies and associations. Cultural tourism also encourages new forms of cooperation between different actors in the private, public and third sector.

Indifference and downright vandalism are enemies of cultural heritage. The mania of productising cultural heritage also implies the danger that the destination or place itself is spoiled or loses its credibility. Random presentation of the past does not meet the principles of culturally sustainable development. Moreover, people are not always willing to expose all the features of their local community to visitors. The touristic development of localities and destinations must also be ecologically sustainable. The utilisation of cultural heritage should thus be subtle and careful. Cultural heritage and related skills are cherished, used and conveyed in the most sustainable way with sufficient competence in history research and with good taste.

Genius
Loci

Experience-intensive domestic tourism

According to researchers in the tourism industry, conventional summer and winter trips to foreign destinations are giving way to small-scale, spontaneous domestic tourism (e.g. 'staycations') – as a sort of counter trend for mass tourism. People do not necessarily want to go on beach holidays any more but expect leisure travelling to be a source of peace, quiet and balance in life. As a counterbalance to the performance orientation and efficiency requirements of a competitive society, we speak about the healing and harmonising effect of the countryside.

An interest in the material and immaterial cultural heritage of a region or locality is highlighted in domestic tourism. Material cultural heritage refers to buildings and objects, whereas immaterial cultural heritage consists of customs and skills. Both states of cultural heritage are proof of the local

community having a history. It is true that the cultural heritage of a community is interpreted and highlighted based on the starting points and needs of the time, which is why it is subject to continuous redefinition and reproduction. In addition to experts, tourists themselves are involved in interpreting and colouring cultural heritage based on their own realm of experiences and imagination.

The countryside, which we perceive as a silent place, offers tourists interesting and experiential destinations and stories. In addition to the lack of noise and sounds, silence may imply the opportunity to listen to one's inner world and to relax, for example, in the atmosphere of an old church, a local history museum yard or in a forest enriched by mythical stories. Many of us find a tranquil sea or lake scenery stimulating. These kinds of destinations may serve as "loops" through which a passer-by takes a broader interest in a region's unique cultural heritage and landscape.

Domestic tourism draws from independent initiative and individual interests. In the field, the term 'new tourism' has been introduced. It replaces predefined operating models and schedules, as well as refined brands, with travellers' own initiative, creativity, new discoveries, learning, and activities that comply with personal values. The researchers Katriina Petrisalo, Maarit Grahn and Maunu Häyrynen have noted that humanistic cultural contents and an ethical attitude to tourism are gaining strength.

Who could the 'new tourism' enthusiasts be? We already know that pensioner groups like to visit the places of their memories, in which their own history or the history of their friends and family is touchingly present. Long- or short-distance

motorcyclists can be attracted to drive along old, winding village roads, particularly if they know that these offer interesting cultural and nature destinations as well as services. Not even the locals are always familiar with their region's culture or history, and they enjoy making experiential discoveries in their neighbourhood on foot or by bike. At the events organised by village associations, geocaching can be an entertaining activity, which simultaneously strengthens regional awareness and togetherness.

In order to offer more profound experiences through spontaneous domestic tourism, facts and fiction on local destinations and events are needed. The internet and mobile technology are convenient tools for making geospatial data available to everyone. The charm of touristic destinations and routes is increased by the mental images related to them, which can be created and strengthened virtually. Modern mobile services allow us to quickly find the information we need about local destinations, a region's services and the cartographical environment.

The countryside offers a sense of space, silence, history and culture, which enhance the wellbeing of the local inhabitants and tourists in various ways. Today, the material and immaterial resources of the countryside are productised for tourism in an increasingly professional way, because they can be significant sources of income for entrepreneurs and actors in the third sector. Assigning a financial value to the countryside and utilising it does not contradict the spiritual and cultural values of the countryside that cannot be measured in money. Creativity is needed in combining these dimensions – in an ethically sustainable way.

The possibilities of ‘silence tourism’ in the countryside

The Sitra Landmarks Barometer 2011 demonstrates that Finns strongly associate the countryside with images of good life, stress-free living, space and peacefulness. One is supposed to be able to feel at home and refreshed in the country. According to the barometer, the countryside is also regarded as an important part of our own cultural heritage. So, there seems to be some sort of demand for the countryside, at least on the level of citizen opinions and attitudes. Actions don't always match our imaginations, but sometimes they do.

Clearly more citizens were optimistic (46%) than pessimistic (29%) when asked about their views on the state of multiform rural tourism in 2025. Experts, in particular, believed that diverse forms of countryside tourism will flourish in the future. Diversity can imply, for instance, that the tourism field has begun to take into account people's interest in so-called silent places. Unlike the daily blare of traffic in cities, the silence in rural areas is

associated with appeal, because it is felt to increase one's mental wellbeing. On the other hand, tourists can also be attracted by the harsh but exciting aural landscape of cities, at least for some time.

If silence is seen as a resource of the countryside, we naturally need to ask whether there are solid ethical grounds for trying to utilise this silence somehow, for example, in tourism. If silence is exploited by productising and pricing it, will it lose its original habitus and be spoiled by disturbing murmur? In any case, silence has been studied as well as turned into projects and touristic products in Finland for years.

In the mid-2000s, the University of Lapland implemented a project focusing on silence as a strength in Lapland's tourism (Hiljaisuus Lapin matkailun vahvuutena). The University of Eastern Finland is currently working on the project Silence and Listening as Resources of Tourism Expertise in North Karelia. In these projects silence does not mean total soundlessness (if such even exists), but it refers to the opportunity to relax and calm down in a silent environment and merge with the aural landscape of nature, either alone or in the company of others. In the Landmarks Programme of Sitra, which maps the meanings and mental images of the countryside, questions of silence are analysed through the cooperation of university-based experts and other experts. A concrete example of silence tourism is the network *Silentia*, the Land of Silence, which endorses three 'villages of silence' in Eastern Finland via its website. City dwellers are invited to the villages to enjoy a restorative, refreshing and revitalising nature and silence holiday.

But what is it about silence that attracts particularly the busy and stressed city dwellers so much that they are willing to pay for it, as long as sufficient, functioning supplementary services are available? One way to penetrate the philosophy of silence is to divide it into five dimensions: the silence of the senses, body, community, mind and spirit.

The silence of senses refers to a space in which aural, visual and odour stimuli are lighter or more pleasant than usual, for example, in the form of nature experiences. The silence of the senses can be experienced in natural and traditional landscapes, at natural formations and around bodies of water. Bodily silence can be present, for instance, while trekking in nature and rural environments: one's body movements and meditation are merged. But what could the silence of a community involve? We could experience it by familiarising ourselves with the settler stories of villages and the history of agriculture, silviculture and natural economy, among other aspects of rural life.

The silence of the mind can open up through sad and tragic place stories about wars and accidents, in which the experience traveller finds targets of identification and gets in the mood to reflect on questions about the meaning of life. The silence of the spirit is usually associated with religious and spiritual destinations (e.g. churches, parsonages, graveyards, and pilgrimage routes), retreats of silence and awakening stories, but also with folk religions. A secularised modern society, whose prime slogans include 'competitive advantage' and 'efficiency', needs counterbalancing through the experience of the sacred and the supernatural.

A person can experience these forms of silence separately from each other, but also as intertwined, as a kind of mystical mental universe of silence. Quoting the researcher Ilkka Luoto, “in a humanistic view, silence is an individual’s opportunity to listen to his or her innermost self and to calm down in a zone void of the daily hustle and bustle”. In the broadest sense, this refers to a holistic experience of serenity.

The silence of the countryside can be experienced in various ways without adopting the role of a tourist, for example, at a summer cottage, while picking mushrooms in the forest, and while visiting a graveyard. Silence is fortunately still a shared resource that can be experienced and “used” without a price tag. However, the increasing demand for wellness tourism has also generated a market for silence as more and more refined product and service packages. These are offered both by commercial enterprises and non-profit third-sector actors. An interesting way to integrate different dimensions of silence is the Green Care initiative, which also highlights the new concept of ‘green care’. Green care is an opportunity to diversify the activities of farms and enhance their vitality. All things considered, the countryside has a lot of potential for developing a wide variety of travel destinations and services that draw from the philosophy of silence – without generating too much disturbing noise.

The article was inspired by Ilkka Luoto’s unpublished text *Hiljainen seesteinen tienoo – Eheytyminen, elinvoimaisuus ja maaseudun paikkakertomukset* [“A silent, serene region – Empowerment, vitality and rural place stories”] and by the article *Maaseudun hiljaisuuden hyödyntäminen* [“Utilising rural silence”] (*Maaseudun uusi aika* 1/2013) written by Jouni Kaipainen and Olli Rosenqvist.

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