

## Buried in secrecy, surrounded by mystery, saved as curiosity

### Animal grave from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in the town of Lahti (Finland)

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**Abstract:** In 2013, a surprising find was made in the city of Lahti in Finland in connection with large archaeological excavations carried out on the market square. A small pit containing the remains of a horse and a giant snake was unearthed together with an assemblage of artefacts, which date the grave to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At that time, giant snakes were not kept as pets in Finland and consequently it is most likely that it was left behind by a circus visiting the town and giving the performance on the market square of Lahti. The grave with its contents is a unique find in the Finnish archaeology and its mystery has attracted a lot of attention, especially among the public beyond academic circles. In this paper, I am tracing the story behind the burial, which has not yet been presented with or without technology. Even though, the questions related to the composition of the burial (when and why it was made) are central in this study the more important issue is the significance of the burial in archaeological discourse. This individual burial with its intriguing contents can be used as a concrete example in the discussion about culture historical values, archaeological research and the importance of the context.

**Keywords:** Animal grave, snake, circus, Lahti, Finland

### Excavations in Lahti

Lahti is a young town (Fig. 1), which is much more famous for winter sports and design than for its history and urban archaeology. However, the place has a history dating back to many centuries. The town was preceded by a village, which is mentioned in written documents for the first time in 1445. According to taxation records, there were 23 houses in the village in the 1520s. Unfortunately, the information related to the village and its inhabitants is very limited before the mid of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The village started to flourish from the end of the 1860s onwards with the construction of the railway via Lahti to St. Petersburg. The boom of the village lasted only for a decade since the village destroyed in a fierce fire on the 19<sup>th</sup> of June in 1877. Soon thereafter, the remains of the village were leveled and a town was established with a large market square covering the heartland of the old village (AIRAMO 1999: 53–54; HASSINEN 1999: 20–21, 32–35; TAKALA 1999: 41–45). (Fig. 2)

In early summer 2013, the market square of Lahti was surrounded with a solid high fence and a large construction project was launched in the area with archaeological excavations. The aim of the project was to build a parking lot underneath the market square and the main objective of the excavations was to trace and document the material remains of the village before its destruction in 1877. The excavation area covered c. 12 500 m<sup>2</sup>, which made the excavations the biggest urban archaeological project so far in Finland and attracted lots of attention in the media as well as among the townspeople. The fieldwork period lasted for six months and the excavations revealed abundance of constructions and finds related to the history of the village. One of

the most interesting find was not, however, related to the history of the village, but to the events on the market square in the town of Lahti in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

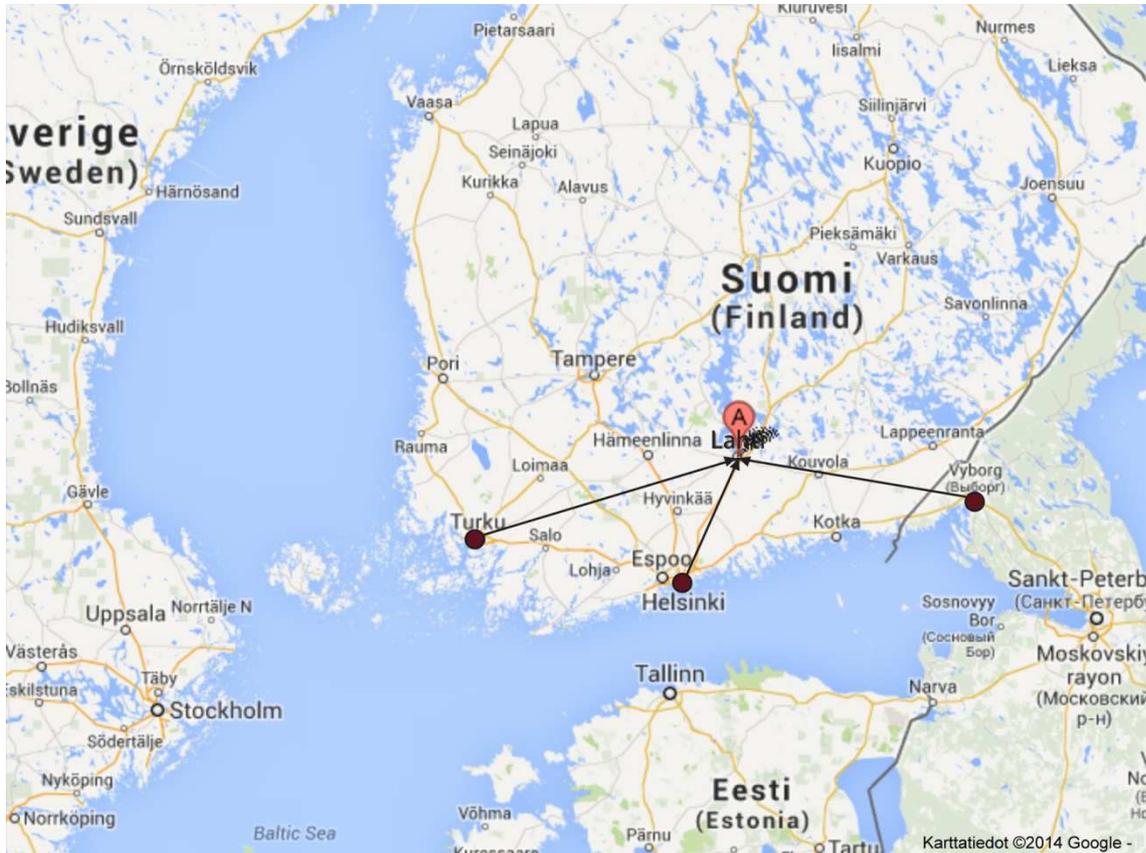


Fig. 1 – The city of Lahti situates in the southern part of Finland, c. 100 km north of Helsinki. The present market square of Lahti situates in the midpoint between Turku and Vyborg, which were two important towns of Finland from the 14<sup>th</sup> century onwards. (Copyright: Google Maps, additions Liisa Seppänen)

## Two animals, one grave and a few finds

On the easternmost corner of the excavation area, an indistinct pit with the size of c. 1 m x 0.8 m was discovered during machine excavations. The pit contained a skull, cannon bone and pastern of an older horse. Furthermore, the pit contained remains of another animal, which turned out to be a giant snake. (Fig. 3 & 4) The number of the preserved vertebrae was 191 and the number of ribs 328 in total with 110 left ribs, 73 right ribs and 34 ribs that cannot be identified more specifically. The estimated length of the snake was c. 2.5 m and the diameter of the snake was c. 10 cm (LIIRA 2014). The archaeo-osteologist of our team compared the bones with the ones of the boa, which was donated to the Natural History Museum in Helsinki in 1884 (Boa Constrictor 899/1960). The rib bones and vertebrae of these two animals were identical. (Fig. 5) However, we cannot say in certain whether the snake found in the excavations on the market square of Lahti was a boa or a python, since we did not find the skull of the snake, which would have told us the difference between these two species.



Fig. 2 – The map illustrates the village of Lahti in 1870. A village situated at the crossroads of two important roads. Ylinen Viipurintie was an important route running from east to west, from Turku to Vyborg. The road from the south linked with this route in the centre of the village. The market square of the town (marked with gray) covered the ruins of the central part of the village after the fire in 1886. (Copyright: Takala 1999: 40 & Liisa Seppänen)



Fig. 3 – The skull of a horse attracted the attention of an archaeologist before the remains of the other animal were found. (Copyright: Lahti City Museum)



Fig. 4 – The remains of the other animal at the bottom of the pit consisted of 191 vertebrae and 328 ribs, which proved that the animal was not a hare as was first thought when the first ribs of the animal were revealed. (Copyright: Lahti City Museum)



Fig. 5 – The bones of the snake found in excavations (on the right) were compared with *Boa constrictor* (on the left) donated to the Natural History Museum in Helsinki in 1884. (Copyright: Liisa Seppänen)

Besides the bones, the pit contained a few finds, which date the burial to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The set contained an iron bar, shackle, iron fastener with a piece of chain, two fuses, tea spoon and glass jar for shoe polish called Nigrolin. (Fig. 6) Furthermore, there were fragments of fabric made of hemp and pieces of a corset with remains of yellow and red paint (REPO 2016: 61). (Fig. 7) One needs to confess that without the bones the pit would have been quite easily interpreted as a modern waste pit without further documentation. Although the pit was beyond our time scale of the investigations of the village, it was an intriguing find and brought along many questions: Where did the snake come from? Why these two animals were buried together on the market square of Lahti and when? Why only the skull and fragments of the other hind limb of the horse were buried? Why was the skull of the snake missing? Why on earth these bones were in the same pit with this strange collection of finds?



Fig. 6 – The set of finds found from the pit together with the bones included one tea spoon, two fuses, a glass jar and three metallic objects. (Copyright: Lahti City Museum)



Fig. 7 – The fragments of a painted corset made the find even more intriguing. (Copyright: Lahti City Museum)

## Tracing the origin of the snake

Although, there are snakes in Finland, giant snakes do not belong to Finnish fauna. Nor were they kept as pets in Finland in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, so the most reliable explanation is that the snake came from a circus. The first circus performance in Finland was organized in Turku in 1802 when French Jean Lustre with his group came to Finland from Sweden (HIRN 1982: 26; NEVALA 2015: 4). In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the circus groups from different parts of Europe came first either to Turku or Helsinki from where they continued their way via Vyborg to St. Petersburg, which attracted many kinds of performers and artists at that time. On their way to the capital of Russia, the circus groups gave performances in Turku, Helsinki, Vyborg and in smaller towns in the southeastern part of Finland as well as on the biggest and most famous markets along the road (HIRN 2002: 10–11). Lahti had been a market place since the 17<sup>th</sup> century at the latest and markets in Lahti were the main attraction in this area. Since 1900 there was a market every Wednesday and from 1932 onwards markets were arranged on the daily basis (HASSINEN 1999: 30; HEINONEN 1999: 96).

In Europe, the circuses were very popular especially in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which affected the establishment of the first Finnish circuses from the 1870s onwards (NEVALA 2015). The booming time of circus performances in Finland started in 1896 when drinking and selling alcohol was prohibited in variety performances in Sweden. New orders diminished the attraction of circuses and therefore many Swedish groups tried to make money in Finland. The booming time lasted until the breakout of the WWI in 1914. The final collapse in the frequency of the performances took place in 1917 when Finland gained independence. The borders to the east were closed and Finland served no longer as a transit area for artists trying to get to the markets of the East. In 1919, Finland announced a total Prohibition, which decreased the attraction of performances of this kind. Furthermore, foreign artists were no longer granted residence permits and circuses were subjected to high entertainment taxes, which shriveled this field for many decades (HIRN 2002, 10–11). This general development of events affecting the popularity of circuses in Finland gives us reason to believe that circus performances were not that many in Lahti after 1914 either. According to town records, in 1933 funfair performances were prohibited on the eastern part of the market square of Lahti, where the pit containing the snake and horse with the set of finds was found in 2013. This reasoning and the collection of finds suggest that the pit and the burial were made between the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and 1933. In how many circuses there were giant snakes as attractions at this time in Finland and how many of these circuses visited Lahti during those years?

A possible lead for tracing the snake was found in a local newspaper called Lahti published on Sunday the 30<sup>th</sup> of August in 1908. On page four there was an advertisement inviting the citizens of Lahti to a circus Hippodroon National, which was visiting the town and giving two performances on that very Sunday (Lahti 30.09.1908). According to the notice, the show included skilful performances made by ten artists, six well trained horses, bear brothers, a clown with a donkey, a dwarf called Little Martha and “a snake tamer” Laura with a big giant snake. Did the snake and the horse found during the excavations belong to this circus visiting the town in 1908?

It is quite tempting to think that the burial was made on that Sunday evening the 30<sup>th</sup> of August in 1908. However, we cannot be certain of that, since this was not the only time when a circus visited the town of Lahti, but how many of them provided performances with giant snakes? Animals formed an important part of performances and especially dangerous and exotic animals were used as crowd pullers. Unfortunately, there

are only some circus contracts, which are preserved from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with limited information about animals. According to the preserved information, it seems that giant snakes were not very common. There are only four contracts mentioning snake theatres and snake temples from the 1920s and 1930s when the circus performances were no longer very popular. From 1929 there is a contract made between The Fair of Finland and Väinö and Aurora Bono. According to the programme, “the snakes of the snake temple were big giant snakes, as thick as the smokestacks of small ships, as long as pine trees and as scaly as dragons in the books of fairy tales”. The snake temple of Bonos’ included also a cycling bear of Finnish origin (MATTILA-LAHTINEN 1983: 55).

The Bono family appeared into the Finnish circus circles in 1890. The family originated from Torino, northern Italy and one branch of the family ended up in Finland. Unfortunately, there is not much information available of the Bonos in Finland. It does not make it any easier to follow the phases of the family, since the circuses changed their names quite frequently and the names are not always mentioned in the advertisements. For example, in 1903–1904 the Bonos used at least six different names (Sirkusareena, Urheilutareena, Sport-Arenan, Urheilunäyttämö, Italialainen Sirkus Bono and Italialainen Hippodrom). Furthermore, it was not unusual that two circuses collaborated for some time under a different name and separated after a few shows and continued with their own roadshows under new names.

From 1894, the Bonos’ team included also exotic animals and gradually the Bonos became the biggest actor in animal performances in Finland. In 1897, the number of their animals was about 80 and the team included many exotic animals like lions, orangutans, leopard, tiger, jaguar and alligator (NEVALA 2015: 27–29).

The advertisement in the newspaper called Lahti from 1908 mentions “a snake tamer Laura”. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, there is one member in the Bono family with the name Laura Franciska Elvira. She was known with an artist name Moppe, too. Laura started her career in the circus very young as a dancer and gymnast. There is at least one poster where she is presented with a giant snake, possibly with a boa. In 1908, she was 15 years old if the information about the year of her birth (1893) is correct (<http://www.geni.com>). Could a girl of that age have handled a giant snake 2.5 m long?

According to another advertisement, the Bonos performed in the city of Kotka ten years earlier. Already at that time the group included an artist called Miss Laura who, according to the advertisement signed by F. Bono, “performs with a big giant snake (boa constrictor) which is 90 kilos heavy and more than 20 feet long”. (Kotkan Sanomat 02.04.1898.) Probably this kind of snake would have been too much for a 5-year-old Laura girl, even though she is said to have started her career very young. Since 1893 “Miss Laura” is often mentioned together with a snake in the programmes of the Bonos’. Of course, there could have been more than one Laura in the Bono family or in the circus team, but probably “Miss Laura” was rather a stage name in the Bonos’ team used generally by the ones who performed with the snakes than a name referring to any particular person.

Although, the circus was generally a family business, the circus performers were basically independent artists, who changed the company frequently staying in one circus only for one season or two (AULANKO 2004: 6). Unfortunately, the contracts have not preserved nor they were not always even made and therefore following one person’s career is nearly impossible in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Laura Elvira’s career, however, was probably over in circuses sometimes between 1910 and 1913 when she had a serious accident and moved after that to Lapland (LIDMAN 1964: 183–186; NEVALA 2015: 31).

Although giant snakes were not that common in circuses in Finland, it is possible that Bonos' had more than one snake and that the boas were not the same ones in Kotka and Lahti. However, it is more than likely that the size of the snake given in the advertisement in 1893 is an overstatement since boas can grow up to 4 meters (13 feet) and 45 kg (100 pounds) (<http://animals.nationalgeographic.com>). On the basis of this information, the snake found in Lahti could have weighted approximately 25–30 kg. It would not have been impossible for a 15-year-old Laura to dance with a snake of that size.

However, we cannot say for sure that it was Laura's snake, which was killed and buried with the remains of a horse and collection of objects on the market in 1908, since we do not have an exact time of death of the snake at our disposal. According to the preserved circus contracts, there were circus performances in Lahti at least in 1930 and 1933, which included a snake (MATTILA 1983: 34, 46). It is quite possible that the specimen found on the market in 2013 might have belonged to one of these groups or some other teams as well. There is nothing particular in the pit, which would refer that the burial is made in August in 1908 and that the dead snake belonged to Laura.

When we look at the objects found in the pit, it is more likely that the pit was made later than 1908. The fuses of this kind were not commonly used in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (E-Installation 2013). Unfortunately, I have not been able to find out when the production of shoe polish Nigrolin started, but it was advertised in newspapers and magazines at the end of the 1920s and 1930s (E.g. Hakkapeliitta 27 / 1936; Kotilieden Joulu 1933; Suomen Kuvalehti 1932 / 46; 30–31, 1933). Since today the name Nigrolin with associations with word Negro is considered very inappropriate, it is no wonder that the companies are not eager to highlight the production of this brand in their histories. According to the product record from 1920, a company called Oy Teknika Ab produced amongst other things shoe cream called "Neekerikiilto", which can be translated something like "Negroshine". Furthermore, the records mention shoe cream, which is called with a common noun "neekerisaappaanrasva" translated as "negro boot cream". However, the company did not start the production of shoe cream when it was first established in Parola. In 1918, the company was moved to Tampere (<http://www.porssitieto.fi/>), which at that time was one of the leading shoe production centres in Finland. On the basis of all this, it is more likely that the burial was made in the early 1930s than 1908. The burial, however, still calls for an explanation, what is the story behind the burial?

### **Tracing the story behind**

In the following, I try to find an explanation to the burial fully aware that my story may sound more like a result of imagination than academic reasoning. However, interpreting and tracing past events on the basis of a few material remains calls for imagination in archaeology, in some cases more than in others. In Lahti, one possibility is that the snake for some reason, probably during the night, got loose and was crawling free in the circus camp and found its way among the horses. It is very likely, that the presence of a snake of this size made the horses nervous who in turn ruffled the snake with their anxiety. The agitated snake attacked the nearest horse and wrapped herself around the neck of the horse making a lethal grip, which restricted the blood circulation of the horse. (About the technique and death caused by boas see e.g. BOBACK ET AL. 2015.) Naturally, all this caused disturbance and noise among the horses, which attracted the attention of the

circus team. There was no other means to quiet down the situation than to kill the horse and the snake twined tightly around the neck of the horse.

We need to remember that at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, circuses were not only connected with excitement and entertainment in Finland. For some people, circuses with their strange members, dangerous and exotic animals as well as travelling life-style represented immoral and irresponsible life. There is evidence about intolerant and negative attitudes towards circuses among officials and citizens especially in the 1930s, but there were people who disapproved circuses in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, too. According to the people who disfavored performances of this kind and the life-style of circus artists, circuses lured children and youngsters into bad habits, immoralities and crimes. Especially in the countryside and in small towns, the teachers and priests often expressed their deep concern about the negative impact of circuses on children. It is quite understandable that when the circus arrived in the village or a small town with all its attractions and excitement, the motivation of children to go to school and study decreased. In the 1890s and 1910s, the majority of circus visitors were between 6 and 15 years of age. In the 1920s, the majority of circus visitors were between 10 and 20 years. In the 1930s, the circuses attracted audience with a wider range of age including young children less than five years up to adults around their 30s. All in all, the majority of circus visitors were underage. According to the knockers, the circuses had far more reaching effects on the lives and moral of the youngsters to whom people working in circuses surely offered different role models than the people living and working in a small town (MATTILA 1983:120–123; liite 8).

It was not only the artists, but also the exotic animals, which caused anxiety and concern among decent citizens. Especially snakes evoked mainly negative feelings related to fear, disgust and danger. Although the performance with a giant snake was surely exciting, the snake of this size probably evoked more fear and rejection than liking and fascination. If the people in Lahti had found out that the giant snake had been loose and killed a horse, it would have meant a big scandal and increased negative attitudes to circuses. The situation would have been probably the same in 1908 as in the 1930s although the expressions of negative ideas about circuses increased in the 1930s. The circuses did not need this kind of negative attention and therefore it was important to get rid of the dead snake and horse quickly and with as little evidence and attention as possible.

Since there is no record or news of any kind telling about the events in Lahti causing the death of a giant snake, it is quite obvious that the burial was made in secrecy on the market square. Even in 2015, in the local newspaper in Turku, there was news about a boa, which had left its terrarium but remained inside the apartment. However, five firemen were needed for recapturing the snake (TS 1.3.2015). If this was news 100 years later in a much bigger city when giant snakes are much more common and treated as pets, we can assume that the events in Lahti 100 years earlier would have got into the news too, if that event had not been kept in secrecy.

When the circus came to town, they put up their tents in the area meant for this purpose and made a closed circus camp surrounded by a fence marking the border between strange visitors and the ordinary life of the town. The circuses stayed normally only one or couple of days in one place and continued their journey in the following morning to the next destination (AULANKO 2004: 6). It is very likely, that in Lahti, which was a small town at that time, the visit lasted generally only for one day. The burial was made during the night in the shields of tents and the fence before pulling down the camp and leaving for the next destination.

This was not the only burial that was made inside the circus camp in Finland in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1908, the director of the circus Bono, Louise Bono, was charged with burying a newborn premature baby in Lappeenranta (about 150 km from Lahti to the East) under the circus tent from where the local children found the body afterwards when the circus team was already in Lahti. Louise was arrested in Lahti and the incident got lots of attention in newspapers. Louise was not punished, since the investigations proved that the baby was born dead. Anyhow, the incident with negative publicity affected the popularity of the Bonos' for a long time and they were remembered notorious rather than skilful and attractive (NEVALA 2015: 30).

Luckily, we did not find newborn babies in Lahti, but why did we find only the head and other back foot of the horse? There can be two reasons for this. Firstly, burying the whole corpse of the horse would have required a large pit, which would have been easier to detect by the citizens in Lahti afterwards. A large pit would have needed more work and time to dig, too and if the meaning was to get rid of the evidence of this unwanted event as quickly as possible, it was the better the sooner the pit was made and covered. The body of the horse was taken along and possibly used for feeding the animals as well as people alike.

Consequently, only the head of the horse was buried together with the snake, which probably was buried without the head, since the skull of the snake was missing. One possibility is that the head of the snake was smashed in the tumult of the battle and it was buried along with the other body of the snake, but pieces were decomposed or carried away later on and never found. Another, more intriguing possibility is that the head of the snake was never buried but was taken as a memento, a token of devotion and affection or as an instrument for magic. We need to remember that giant snakes were not very common at that time even in circuses (MATTILA 1983: 55) and the death of the snake meant a big loss for the one whose show and income were based on the performance with the snake.

What explains the objects in the pit? A simple explanation is that somebody decided to get rid of some waste as soon as the pit was made and threw the iron bar, shackle, chain, tea spoon, shoe polish container and two fuses into the pit. The set of objects, however, is so strange that I have some doubts about this explanation. It is hard to believe that they were grave offerings either. Possibly, the iron bar with the ring, shackle and clamp with the chain were used for tying the horse that got killed and were buried in haste together with the head of the horse. The iron bar of this size could have been a killing tool as well. The corset was probably a grave offering for the snake given by the one, who lost her partner. In circuses, the biggest animals, including even normal cats and dogs, were generally treated not only as animals but as professionals compared with human colleagues (AULANKO 2004: 7). The snake had not meant only income to someone, but provided her with the position, occupation, attention and attraction. Losing the snake probably meant losing more than a colleague. Burying the corset, the performance uniform needed no longer, together with the snake expressed symbolically devotion to the snake and all the loss caused by its death. Pieces of hemp were probably from the sack where the remains were put before they were buried or which was used as a shroud for the deceased. What about fuses, teaspoon and shoe polish container without the lid? It is unlikely that someone would have given them as grave offerings. These objects have something in common: they do not degrade easily, they are impossible to digest, but they can be swallowed. One explanation is that these objects composed the last supper for the snake. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, black shoe polish was used in circuses not only to shine the shoes but to turn the pale skins to black ones of those members of the team who pretended to be "strangers" or "wonderchildren" from Africa (E.g. TUULISPÄÄ 1904).

### Valuing the finding and storytelling

As mentioned above, the main objective of the excavations in Lahti in 2013 was to trace and document the material remains of the village before its destruction in 1877. The burial, however, with its set of objects, was younger and represented the history of the town in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Although, the excavations attracted lots of attention all in all, the burial with its strange findings caught special interest in the media, too (e.g. Seura 10, 2014: 28–31). The excavations revealed hundreds of thousands of artefacts, which needed to be valued from different perspectives since only a small part of the findings was kept in the museum collections. After the evaluation, only 14 % of all finds are stored in the collections. The bones are not included in this amount but most of them are discarded. There was no question among the team of archaeologists, however, whether the bones and contents of the pit should not be saved. Today the contents of the pit are represented in the exhibition of Lahti City Museum. (Fig. 8) The set of findings in the showcase may attract the attention of museum visitors and fascinate their imagination, which is not restricted by a ready-made story of this kind offered for the readers of this paper.



Fig. 8 – The skeleton of the snake and the remains of the horse together with some finds are presented in the exhibition of the Lahti City Museum. (Copyright: Päivi Repo)

This finding is not only interesting as such, but it embodies the more general discussion about the importance and meaning of archaeological evidence and attractiveness of the past. The excavations in Lahti coincided with the intense discussion related to the value of archaeological finds of different kind in Finland. The discussion was launched in the spring of 2013 by the statement of Juhani Kostet, the general director of the National Board of Antiquities. This is the main organization responsible for protecting environments with cultural history value as well as maintaining archaeological and architectural heritage, and other cultural property. Besides, it collects and presents the culture historical national collection, studies material cultural heritage and supports and develops the museum field nationally. The statement was given in an interview for

a provincial newspaper (Savon Sanomat 19.4.2013) but it soon reached wider audience and national news. The statement was related to the imbalance between reduced resources and continuous increase in the material causing the lack of space in many museums. According to Kostet, the museums in Finland should screen out their collections and focus on local history. He proposed that the museums could sell a part of their collections and possibly a certain part could be disposed after the evaluation. The statement was especially directed to archaeologists, many of whom were astounded by his rhetoric question: "*Why on earth, we need to have 7000 kg of bones or huge numbers of quartz flakes which no-one studies?*" With the reference to 7000 kg of bones, the director reminded archaeologists about the excavations carried out in Turku in 1998, which resulted in abundance of finds from the Middle Ages including 6017 kg of non-artefactual bones (SEPPÄNEN 2012: 111). Even though, the excavations revealed all kinds of finds and especially organic material requiring conservation, the discussion launched by the excavations about the information value and problems related to research resources and storing was nearly merely focused on the bones.

Prior to these excavations, the emphasis in archaeology in Finland was on prehistorical archaeology both in studies as well in research including fieldwork projects. Especially from the mid 1990s onwards, historical archaeology has become more relevant with an increased number of excavations, research projects and general interest of the students as well as the public. For example, in 2014 of all archaeological excavations carried out in Finland, 60 % were related to historical sites while only 36 % were related to prehistorical sites and 4 % to shipwrecks (SUHONEN 2014). The increase in the number of historical excavations has also led to the increase in the amount of archaeological material and problems related to keeping and storing the finds. In practice, the archaeologists responsible for historical excavations have decided what finds have been salvaged, recorded and stored. Therefore, the practices in historical archaeology have varied according to the views, values and decisions of each archaeologist responsible for the project.

The statement of Juhani Kostet, aroused protests and discussion especially among archaeologists working on prehistorical archaeology who had been used to collect and store all finds. In these discussions, the value of prehistorical finds was considered unquestionable and of the main importance to archaeology. Following these discussions, the director of find collections in the National Board of Antiquities gave oral guidelines to keep, record and store all finds from prehistorical contexts whereas the finds from historical sites are to be evaluated according to the rarity, uniqueness and ranking of the find including aesthetical and exhibition values. The archaeologists working on historical material and excavations were more or less confused or amused about this statement, which actually did not change the prevailing practices. In 2014, the National Board of Antiquity gave official guidelines to archaeologists according to which the finds from historical sites, especially from urban sites, are to be kept, listed and stored selectively and the selection should be done according to the information value and context of the find. However, all finds from prehistorical sites are still to be kept, listed and stored without selection (MUSEOVIRASTO 2016).

Valuing archaeological and cultural heritage is an extensive, complicated and multifaceted issue related to economy, politics and prevailing ideologies. The values of authorities responsible for archaeological and cultural heritage define the practices but their values and evaluations do not always match with the interest of the people (e.g. THOMAS 2008). Although all prehistoric material and quartz flakes are still preserved without question in Finland, in my opinion, the value and meaning of the finding is not always in its age or in its worth, not even in its uniqueness, but in its story. Stories give meanings and value even to the most worthless

findings, otherwise discarded without consideration, like the fuses from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore, it is important to be open and nonselective until we are certain about the interpretation of the find and the information value it contains.

Archaeology as a discipline is both about the remains of the past representing the reality that once was, and about the making of (hi)stories about this disappeared reality (NICKLASSON 1996:53). Since past does not exist as it was when it was present, we create the past with our explanations, interpretations, ideas and reconstructions. Reconstructing the story may sometimes include using imagination as in the case of Lahti. In the field of science and archaeology, imagination is often considered as antithesis for information. However, we may ask what is information without interpretation, without narrative growing from ability to imagine. I was happy to discover that many great thinkers, researchers and scientists including legends like Darwin and Einstein, have recognized the importance of imagination in science (GAITHER–CAVAZOS GAITHER 2012) and therefore I do not hesitate to acknowledge the importance of imagination in making narratives and (hi)stories of the past. Michael SHANKS (2012) has defined archaeological imagination with following words:

*'To recreate the world behind the ruin in the land, to reanimate the people behind the sherd of antique pottery, a fragment of the past: this is the work of archaeological imagination, a creative impulse and faculty at the heart of archaeology, but also embedded in many cultural dispositions, discourses and institutions commonly associated with modernity. The archaeological imagination is rooted in a sensibility, a pervasive set of attitudes towards traces and remains, towards memory, time and temporality, the fabric of history.'*

The works of archaeological imagination are presented generally in the museums and exhibitions of different kind. However, presenting the story for the public needs more than mute objects in the showcase, it needs a tale with words and visualization, which can be provided by using technology. However, the technology is only a servant for the stories related to the history of humans – and in this case of animals, too.

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