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Editorial address:
Folklore: Electronic Journal of Folklore
Vanemuise 42–235
51003 Tartu
Estonia
phone: +372 737 7740
fax: +372 737 7706
e-mail: folklore@folklore.ee
home page: http://www.folklore.ee/folklore

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ARCHAEOLOGY OF HOLINESS: SESSION HELD AT THE 12TH NORDIC TAG CONFERENCE IN OULU, FINLAND, APRIL 26–27, 2012

Ester Oras, Tõnno Jonuks

This special issue of the journal is dedicated to the archaeology of religion. It is based on papers presented at the session *Archaeology of Holiness* at the 12th Nordic Theoretical Archaeology Group meeting in Oulu in 2012.

The session was initiated by the research project *The Materiality of Religion: Religious Artefacts in Estonian Archaeological Collections*, financed by the Estonian Research Foundation (ETF 8956) in 2010–2013. The main results and general conclusions of our project are discussed in this volume (see Jonuks et al. pp. 151–176). One of the aims of the project was to discuss the theoretical and methodological issues of the archaeology of religion. This led to a more general discussion about the terminology, including the meaning of this particular notion, which resulted in discussing the concept of 'holiness' in the archaeology of religion. Why namely holiness? Archaeology of religion is tightly connected with the concept of ritual. Our aim was to push the discussion further from and beyond this main focus and change the debate from religion and ritual to the numinous part of past religions. There are also other similar attempts made for using such alternative concepts (see, e.g., Rountree 2012). It is true that the further we step from the actual sources and physical remains of rituals in particular, the more speculative the interpretations will be. Nevertheless, we believe that it is important to bear in mind the mental background of religious practices and to speculate about those parts of religion that do not leave direct traces for archaeology. This led us to organising the session at the 12th Nordic TAG Conference, which resulted in seven interesting papers on the relationships between the concept of holiness and the archaeology of religion in the Baltic Sea area, five of which are published in this volume.

A selection of different pendants (AI 1977) found in Cēsis (Võnnu), Latvia, in 1888. Photo by Tõnno Jonuks 2013.

During the session the question of terminology appeared as a key-feature in several papers. These discussions also gain a significant position in the following articles. In fact, definitions and explanations of terms and concepts should be central in our studies. However, we have witnessed numerous cases, in which a loose usage of terminology ends with problems in final conclusions. Such an outstanding position of terminology in relation to religious studies led us to the next session, *Archaeology of Religion: Thinking about Terminology*, at the 34th Annual Conference of the Theoretical Archaeology Group, Central TAG, in Liverpool, in the same year.

This volume is organised from concrete topics and case studies to more general discussions. The first two articles, by Maria Petersson and Anne Carlie, are dedicated to the topics of rituals and ritualisation in archaeology. They both concentrate on the Swedish archaeological material from around the first half of the first millennium AD, providing very interesting case studies of deposits

of simple and mundane objects relating to various Iron Age ritual activities. Both of these articles open up questions related to interpreting various private and communal rituals and their relation to contemporary social developments.

The following three articles discuss in addition to religion, also terms and concepts. Tõnno Jonuks and Tuuli Kurisoo focus on the concepts of Christianity in Iron Age and Early Medieval Estonia. They discuss both theoretical and practical issues of what constitutes Christianity and the idea of conversion in the prehistory, presenting examples from Estonian material. Sonja Hukantaival analyses terminology-related issues in relation to folk religion and magic. She emphasises the multifaceted development of the widely used but underanalysed idea of folk religion and its relation to contemporaneous official religious systems, and possibilities for studying folk religion, with case studies from Finnish historical material. The last paper in this volume by Ester Oras focuses on the specific terms of 'sacrifice' and 'offering'. The definitions and use of those concepts in anthropology and religious studies are introduced, and the problems of applying those ideas to archaeological material, especially on the example of intentional artefact deposits, are discussed. The section of articles ends with an overview paper about a three-year project that was dedicated to the materiality of religion and to the discussion about terminology in the archaeology of religion. The first preliminary results will be presented about the mapping of religion-related objects in Estonian archaeology collections, which will be followed by a short discussion about terminology.

We hope that the readers will benefit from the papers in this volume in their contributions to wider theoretical and terminology-related issues in the archaeology of religion and in tracing holiness in archaeological material, but also in the interesting case studies that they provide. We hope to provide a small section of some of the topical issues in this field around the Baltic Sea area in the early 2010s.

Finally, we are very grateful to all the presenters who were kindly willing to participate in our session and, furthermore, found some time to write an article for this special issue of *Folklore*. Unfortunately, not all of the presentations evolved into an article. However, we hope that these valuable thoughts will be used in some other forms. We would also like to thank our audience for their fruitful ideas and contributions to further discussions. As clearly exemplified in this session, further formal and informal debates, but also in the current volume of articles, the discussions are lively and waiting to be developed further. We are convinced that the archaeological material and theoretical debates deriving from these topics will provide plenty of food for thoughts in the decades to come.

REFERENCE

Rountree, Kathryn 2012. Introduction: Exploring New Approaches to the Archaeology of Spiritualities. In: K. Rountree & C. Morris & A. Peatfield (eds.) *Archaeology of Spiritualities*. Springer, pp. V–XII.

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HULJE: CALENDRICAL RITES ALONG A SMALL STREAM

Maria Petersson

Abstract: In 2010, a ceremonial site dated to the Late Bronze Age and the Iron Age was excavated. The name of the site is Hulje and it is situated a couple of kilometres to the north of the town of Mjölby in Östergötland (East Gothland) County, Sweden. A small rocky hillock with several hundred cup-marks dominates the area of the ceremonial site. Approximately 50 metres from the site, a small stream once flowed. From the Late Bronze Age and Early Pre-Roman Iron Age to Early Medieval Times (c. 700 BC–AD 1100) the area around the stream was a site of activities charged with religious meaning. There were cooking pits of an exceptional size, in which most probably ceremonial meals were prepared. Fire-cracked stones and other waste materials from ceremonial meals were specially treated and deposited in the bed of the stream or along its banks. A few boulders might have constituted the foundation of a platform projecting out into the stream. Dug into the side of the stream there was a well, in which religious ceremonies were held, mainly during the Early Roman Iron Age (AD 1–200). Extremely well-preserved wooden artefacts have been found in this context.

In this article, my aim is to give quite a detailed overview of the site and the excavations. Some further aspects to be discussed concern the type of the site, the origin of the people who performed the ceremonies that we can see traces of, the time when the ceremonies were performed, and their purpose. Finally, Hulje is compared to other similar sites in Sweden.

Keywords: Iron Age, Old Norse religion, ritual meals, sacrifices, well, wooden objects

INTRODUCTION

In 2010, the excavation section of the Swedish National Heritage Board (RAÄ), UV Öst, conducted an archaeological excavation of a ritual site dated to the Iron Age (Petersson 2013a). The name of the site is Hulje and it is situated a couple of kilometres to the north of the town of Mjölby in Östergötland County, Sweden (Fig. 1).

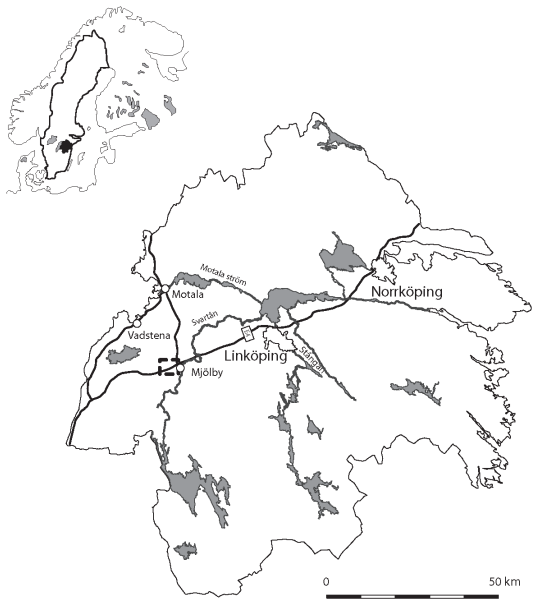

Figure 1. *The location of Hulje in western Östergötland, Sweden. Map by Lars Östlin, RAÄ.*

The remains discovered at the site might best be described in ritual terms. Amongst many other remains, traces of meals dated to around 700 BC–AD 1100 were found. Furthermore, exceptionally well-preserved wooden artefacts dated to the Early Roman Iron Age were recovered from a well.

In this article, my aim is to give quite a detailed description of the site and the excavations. The reason for this is that there have been few excavations in Sweden of similar sites; this is due to their location in the landscape and their unassuming assemblages of finds. An approach based on a landscape perspective and on comparative religion was included in the theoretical background used to make the site apprehensible. These theoretical perspectives constitute the starting point in discussions concerned with the type of the site, the origin of the people who performed the ceremonies that we see traces of, the time when the ceremonies were performed, and their purpose. Finally, Hulje is compared to other similar sites in Sweden.

THE SETTING

Hulje is situated in a slightly undulating countryside, on the edges of the Östgöta Plain. The area constitutes a spatially well-defined prehistoric section of the landscape delimited by burial sites, which demarcate and emphasise the topographic boundary (Molin 1999; cf. Fallgren 2006). In recent times, the southern part of this prehistoric landscape was farmland and the northern part was formerly marshy. Until recently, a stream flowed along the southern side of the marshy land. In the entire area, there were no less than 13 cup-mark sites; a notable number of these were located near running water (Fig. 2).

The Early Iron Age society in Östergötland was stratified (Petersson 2011). A current research project, focusing mainly on the region around Linköping (located 50 kilometres to the east of Hulje), has shown that the Iron Age society consisted of farmsteads of different sizes and of varying significance. The highest stratum appears to have consisted of large farmsteads, each of these dominating their local society. Scattered around the landscape, surrounding these large farmsteads, there were a number of smaller subordinate farms, which are assessed to have been heavily dependent on the larger farms. Moreover, there

Figure 2. *The ceremonial site at Hulje was situated in the same place as the pond, in the middle of the picture. Photo by Rikard Hedvall 2010.*

seem to have been medium-sized farms, which were relatively independent in their relation to the dominant farmsteads. Yet another stratum of society seems to have consisted of farm workers, who did not own land but who lived together at the large farmsteads.

In the surroundings of Hulje, the prehistoric remains could be interpreted as representing this type of social structure during the Roman Iron Age. Smaller settlement sites have been encountered, which were dispersed throughout this well-defined section of the prehistoric landscape. The large settlement site at Hulje (RAÄ 89), of which roughly half has been excavated, is situated in the centre of the spatially defined prehistoric landscape (Carlsson et al. 1996; Kaliff 1999; Petersson 2013b). There were traces at this site of permanent settlement dating from the Late Pre-Roman Iron Age to Roman Iron Age, as well as from the Migration Period (c. 200 BC–AD 550). Parts of a very large farm site (c. 50,000 square metres) were excavated. This site is best described by the Scandinavian term 'gårdstun', meaning a site with the farm buildings including the adjacent area regularly used for a diversity of activities. The farm site was divided into functionally separate parts, including a workshop area and an area with furnaces for producing iron. Farm sites of such a size, divided into functional areas, are characteristic of high-status farmsteads of the Early Iron Age (Petersson 2006: 37f.). The buildings belonging to this elite farmstead are estimated to have been situated outside the area so far excavated.

The extensive burial site, Kungshögagravfältet, on Mjölbyåsen Hill, with 125 registered features, dominates the landscape. It is situated at a distance of 300 metres from Hulje and could have functioned as the burial site of the large farmstead during both the Early and Late Iron Age. No substantial excavations have been conducted at the burial sites in the area, which makes it difficult to use the burials in any interpretation of the arrangement of society in this region.

Another high-status characteristic in the Hulje area is the paved road, dated to the Early Iron Age, on the eastern side of the settlement site. This road has been partly excavated (Carlsson et al. 1996: 56). Paved roads from this period have only been discovered in exceptional cases. However, a network of roads dated to the Early Iron Age, surfaced with fire-cracked stones and edged with larger stones, was recently discovered in the region of Linköping. This system of roads was related to a regional power centre established during the period around AD 1. The construction might have been inspired by the Roman art of building roads, although in Östergötland the road was surfaced with fire-cracked stones instead of a paving of flat stones (Petersson 2011). The roads seem to have passed close by the buildings of large farmsteads.

EXCAVATIONS AT HULJE

The excavated site at Hulje was located approximately 300 metres to the north of the large settlement site. Formerly, a stream flowed through the site, but currently the area is drained. The site is situated aside from other known settlement sites, in a shallow basin where the stream once flowed.

Around 60 metres to the east of the stream and 100 metres to the south of the excavated site, there is a small hillock constituting the highest point in the landscape. This is the site of Östergötland's second largest occurrence of cup-marks, containing 275 registered cup-marks.

In 1994, trial trenches were excavated between the hillock with cup-marks and the currently investigated site. Several hearths were discovered, but no postholes indicating prehistoric buildings (Zetterlund & Helander 1995). Nor were any traces of buildings found at the currently excavated site when the preliminary archaeological investigation was conducted in 2009 (Holm 2009). On that occasion, about ten test pits were excavated in an approximately 20-centimetre-thick layer beside the stream bed. The layer contained fire-cracked stones, unburnt animal bones, one or two potsherds and a blue glass bead. A few hearths were also observed. These remains were radiocarbon-dated to the Roman Iron Age. The character and geography of the site along with the assemblage of finds, particularly the bead, was a possible indication of ritual activities, although the archaeologist who performed the excavation also maintained that the site included profane features.

During the excavation in 2010, the stream bed was surveyed along a stretch of around 170 metres. In the surroundings of the entire section, there were traces of a variety of activities, but the remains were particularly concentrated in the lower part of the stream towards the outlet into the marshy stretch of land. There is a clear spatial division of the site. In part, this is chronological, but above all, it features a functional division (Fig. 3). The clearest and most easily understood traces are associated with meals. The exploration covered an area that was 18,500 square metres in size. The topsoil of 5,500 square metres was stripped with a machine excavator. Along with previously investigated parts, the examined area now amounts to 25,000 square metres. It should be particularly noted that there are still no traces of buildings.

Pollen analysis of the material in the well situated in the part of the site excavated in 2010 shows that the ground along the valley of the stream was intensively grazed (Bergman 2012).

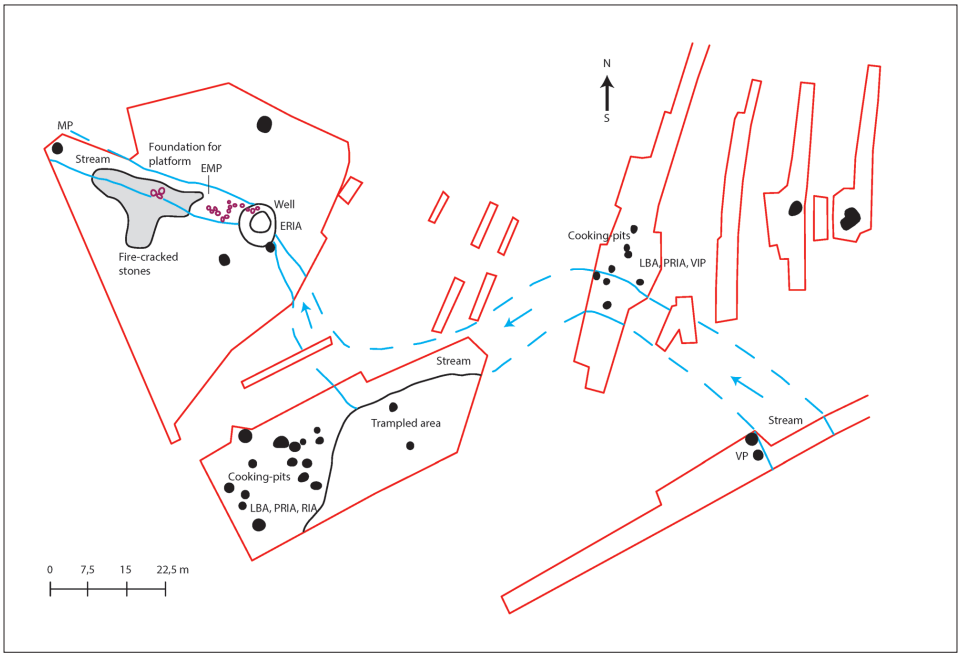

Figure 3. *The ceremonial site at Hulje. Illustration by Lars Östlin, RAÄ.*

Cooking

By the side of the stream at the site at Hulje, meals were cooked in cooking pits and hearths dated to the period between the Late Bronze Age, the earliest part of the Pre-Roman Iron Age and the Vendel Period, continuing until the Early Middle Ages (about 700 BC–AD 1100). These hearths and cooking pits were considerably larger than those at other settlement sites dated to the same period (cf. Petersson 2001; Petersson 2004: 117ff.). The reason for the substantial size of the cooking pits was that food was cooked for so many more people than usual in normal everyday contexts.

On the site, there were two clearly defined areas where meals were cooked. One of them was an area, 25 x 25 metres in size, situated on the western side of the former stream, on a slight slope down towards the stream bed (Fig. 4). Among other features within this area, there were 12 comparatively large hearths and cooking pits.

Figure 4. *The area of large cooking pits. Photo by Maria Petersson 2010.*

The other area used for cooking meals was 15 x 10 metres in size, situated in the eastern part of the excavated surface, close to the former stream. In this part of the site, there were hearths, pits and postholes. Moreover, the hearths and cooking pits were scattered over the entire excavated surface.

Meals

The archaeological finds from Hulje might in part illuminate what meals were like, what ingredients they were made of and how they were prepared (Fig. 5). The animal bones discovered on the site amounted to 2.2 kilos, mainly interpreted as waste from meals (Vretemark 2012). Furthermore, analysis of macrofossils was carried out, in which burnt seeds were identified mainly as grain.

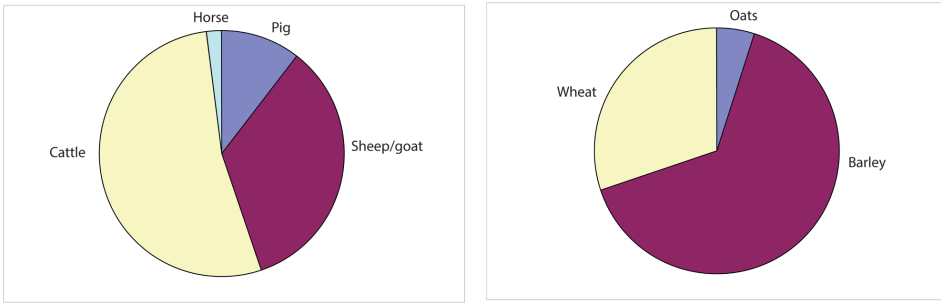

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Figure 5. *Chart showing a) the proportions of species of animals used for their meat, based on the total number of identified fragments [NISP], and b) types of cereals. The chart is based on the data in (a) Vretemark 2010 and (b) in Heimdahl 2012.*

The skeletal material of the site consisted of animal bones, which for the most part were unburnt bones of cattle, sheep/goats, pigs, horses and dogs. All the fragments of bone belonging to sheep/goats that could be determined by their species were from sheep. Cattle bones dominated among bones from animals used for their meat, followed by sheep/goats, pigs and horses.

Most of the bones of cattle came from fully-grown individuals, while the bones from pigs or sheep largely came from younger individuals; these were around 2–3 years old. The two teeth from horses came from adult individuals, at least five years old, but most likely older.

There was a clear predominance of bone fragments from meaty parts; most of the fragments came from the trunk of the animals and from the upper meaty parts of the extremities. This means that the skeletal material mainly consists of the remains from preparing and cooking meals and from the remains of meals. Consequently, the actual slaughtering and butchering was done somewhere else.

In 72% of the samples collected in cooking pits and hearths, burnt grain was identified. This shows that grain was regularly included in the food that was cooked and eaten (Heimdahl 2012). Hulled barley was most common, naked wheat also occurred, and there was some hulled wheat and oats. Further finds discovered in the macrofossil samples from Hulje showed that herbs such as, for example, Summer Savoury (*Satureja hortensis*), were included in the food.

The discovery of a large drinking vessel (see below) is a sign that beverages were an important part of the meals consumed on the site. There are no indications as to what kind of drinks existed, but it seems highly probable that it was some kind of beer or a similar beverage.

Refuse from cooking

The cooking process by the stream at Hulje resulted in large amounts of fire-cracked stones. These brittle stones were deposited in the stream bed and along the banks. There were unburnt bones among the fire-cracked stones. It is striking that the stones were not transported to other places to be used as building material. Instead, the people using the site chose to keep them in the area of the stream.

The platform

Along the stretch of the stream where fire-cracked stones were deposited, about ten boulders were found, approximately 0.5–0.8 metres in height (Fig. 6). The boulders lay on the western side of the stream bed and were interpreted as a foundation for a 4-7-metre-long and 2-metre-wide platform. According to the stratigraphy, the boulders were placed in the stream either during the period when the site was still in use or later. Fire-cracked stones were found underneath the boulders. An indication in favour of this interpretation is the clear spatial connection between the boulders/foundation and a layer of fire-cracked stones situated in the slope, proceeding down towards the area with the boulders. The surface of laid cracked stones was clearly confined to this particular part of the slope; it continued all the way down to the bank of the stream. A possible interpretation is that the surface of laid stones was part of a paved road.

Figure 6. *Boulders at the edge of the stream, which may have constituted the foundation of a platform. Photo by Maria Petersson 2010.*

Finds discovered alongside the stream

By the side of the stream, near the largest area of cooking pits, a blue glass bead was recovered, as well as part of an iron knife or sickle. Further, the metacarpal bone of an adult dog was discovered in this part of the site.

Immediately beside the other cooking area, we found a ceramic pot placed on the shore of the former stream. This is a vessel with thick walls, most likely used for storage or cooking. A posthole was discovered about 1.5 metres from the pot, implying the occurrence of a pole. Most likely, there is a connection between the posthole and the pot.

A well with unusual content

Almost in the centre of the site, a well had been dug into the side of the old stream bed (Fig. 7). The well was surrounded by a layer of laid stones, the main part consisting of fire-cracked stones. The actual well was funnel-shaped, with a diameter at the upper edge of around 7 metres and a depth of just over 1.5 metres. At the bottom of the well, a boulder was naturally embedded in the

Figure 7. *The well. Note the layer of fire-cracked packed stones surrounding the well. Photo by Maria Petersson 2010.*

moraine, which would have come as an unexpected consternation for the people digging the well. In the upper parts of the well, there were traces of a wicker basket lining with stakes of oak and weaves mainly of alder. The analysis of the wood species showed that the material for the basketwork was harvested during the spring and summer, most likely before July. Thus, the basketwork must have been woven shortly after that (Strucke 2012).

There were signs of various types of intentional activity in the well. In the middle of the well, on different levels in the fill, loosely lying sticks of alder, hazel and non-specified *Salix* were encountered, several of which were sharpened to a point. The context was difficult to understand, but the sticks did not seem to belong to the basketwork in the well. These long sticks had been thrust into the well, either while the well was still in use or after it had been abandoned.

Several well-preserved wooden artefacts were encountered in the well. Among the objects there was a complete wooden drinking vessel, which was found near the big boulder. There was also part of a rake head and a board decorated with chip-carving, which had been a part of a composite object (Fig. 8). It was painted in black in such a way as to enhance the decorative design. These three objects were dated to the Early Roman Iron Age (AD 1–200). Further, wooden artefacts were found, such as fragments of pot and plate rims. Wooden plugs, a sawn-off horn of a fully grown cow, two polished handstones for grinding and potsherds from a ceramic vessel were also discovered in the well.

Towards the bottom of the well, seeds and fibres from flax were encountered (Heimdahl 2012). The fact that fibres of flax were found shows that the entire plant occurred in the well, which might mean that bundles of flax had been placed there.

Furthermore, remains of meals in the form of unburnt animal bones were found in the well. Bones from the front part of a young dog, 10–12 months old, were also recovered.

A 2-3-months-old ram was discovered in the well, dated to the end of the period when the well was still in use. It lay *on top* of the layers that had accumulated during the period of use. After this, the well had fallen into disuse; a layer of shells indicates that it was still damp and at times filled with water, but that the water was somewhat stagnant. The period of use was limited to the Early Roman Iron Age, and extended throughout 200 years at the most.

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Figure 8. *Wooden artefacts from the well: a) chip-carved and painted board; b) part of a rake head; c) drinking vessel; d) ear of a drinking vessel. Photos by Acta Konserveringscentrum AB.*

The chronology of the site

At the former stream in Hulje, traces of a variety of activities could be found, which were radiocarbon-dated to the period 730 BC–AD 1160. The dated material included charcoal from hearths and cooking pits, animal teeth (remains of meals), and burnt cereal and flax seeds. Moreover, three of the wooden items from the well were dated, as well as material from the wicker basket of the well (Fig. 9).

Most of the dated features or artefacts are associated with meals; the dates cover the entire period. Only one date is from the Late Bronze Age, but during the period between the Pre-Roman Iron Age and Early Middle Ages the dates are quite evenly distributed. A striking point is that the most recent finds associated with cooking are situated on the outer edges of the site, on the southern and northern sides. A tooth of a horse, dated to AD 1010–1160, represents the latest known meal on the site.

The well was dug around the year AD 1, and it was abandoned around AD 200. Thus, the traces of activities that are centred around the well represent a limited period in the history of the site.

The rock with cup-marks is also regarded as a part of the context of the site at Hulje. In the west of Sweden, rock carving sites consisting entirely of cup-marks are dated mainly to the Early Iron Age (Bengtsson 2004).

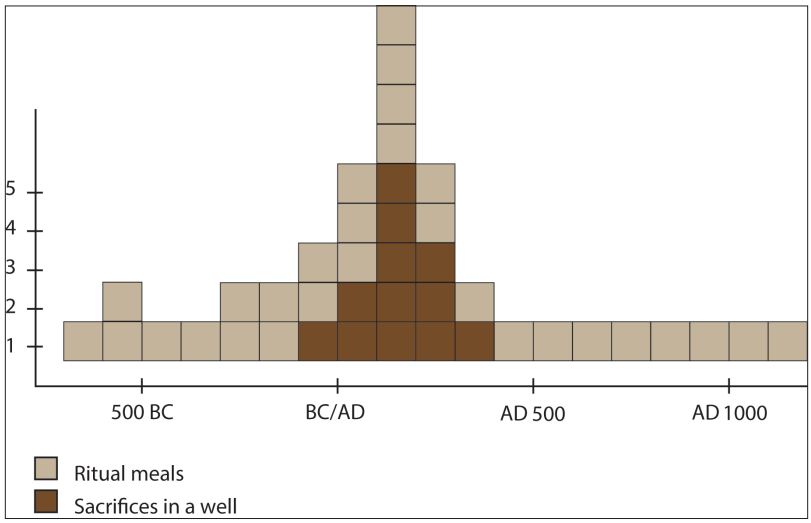

Figure 9. *Dating of the ceremonial site. The lighter shade represents meals and the darker shade shows dates from the well. Illustration by Lars Östlin, RAÄ.*

INTERPRETATION OF THE EXCAVATED SITE AT HULJE

The oldest written sources in Scandinavia that describe prehistoric religion originate from the 13th century AD. So they date from a period more than 1000 years later than the times of the most intensive activity at the stream at Hulje. During the period of around AD 400/500–700, the prehistoric society in Östergötland underwent fundamental changes and most farmsteads were abandoned (Lindeblad & Petersson 2008; cf. Pedersen & Widgren 1998: 309 ff.). Changes also occurred in the religious sphere; old burial sites were abandoned and new cemeteries were established. New burial practices were introduced and even the pantheon of deities appears to have changed (Nilsson 1987; Kaliff & Sundqvist 2004). In other words, there is a reason to be cautious about using written sources from the 13th century AD as a key to the religious life of Östergötland around the year AD 1, i.e., 1200 years previously.

All the same, many researchers consider the written sources to have some bearing on pre-Christian religion (Näsström 2002; Steinsland 2007).

Some points of reference

Traces of human activity constitute the primary sources of archaeology. In Norse sources, descriptions of the activities related to religion and rituals are scarce. Instead, archaeology sometimes provides independent information about the religious world expressed in certain activities. Offerings under the foundation of houses and in wells are examples of this. Traces from ritual cooking are further examples; these occur at around 80% of all burial sites dated to the Early Iron Age in Östergötland (Carlie 2004; Århäll 1995; Petersson 2006).

My analysis of the excavated site at Hulje is founded on a landscape archaeological approach, which has been inspired by the past twenty years of research, in which Scandinavian researchers have played an important role (Asmore & Knapp 1999; Fabech & Ringtved 1999).

It is possible to discern three different levels on a geographical scale; this might prove to be a useful analytical tool when dealing with Early Iron Age society. In the archaeological finds, we have been able to observe rituals associated with each of these levels.

- The first level consists of buildings or separate farms. Rituals associated with this level comprise initiation rituals and closing rituals related to the abandonment of buildings and farms (Carlie 2004). There are also other types of rituals connected to wells and waterholes (Århäll 1995).
- The second level concerns the settled local area and local society. There are sites where out-door rituals were performed, which feature various kinds of offerings. The finds from these sites usually consist of artefacts for everyday use (cf. Lindeblad & Petersson 2009).
- The third level is regional; the sites are significant on a larger scale than the local level. At this type of sites, the assemblages of finds are much more diversified and there are indications of several different ritual themes. There might be buildings on this type of sites, but in most cases these sites are void of them (cf. Hagberg 1967).

When working with the analysis of the site at Hulje, I adopted the methods and terminology of comparative religious studies, applied by the American scholar of religion, William E. Paden (1994). Paden's categorisation is well suited for the conditions of the Early Iron Age in Scandinavia.

Paden uses the concept of 'world' in the analysis of different religious systems. His view is that "religious systems are more effectively understood as 'worlds' than as 'beliefs', and that these worlds are embodied in the languages of myth, ritual and other expressive forms" (ibid.: xiii).

According to Paden, religious "reality" is primarily constituted through the following:

(1) Mythic language and prototypes. Myth articulates the foundations of what is sacred. In addition, myth serves as the matrix of religious practice, of lived religious time and space, providing authoritative, sacred prototypes for human behaviour.

(2) Ritual times. Ritual is "the deliberate structuring of action and time in order to give focus and expression to what is considered sacred. Ritual connects its participants with the sacred through (a) calendrical observances that renew what is foundational to the religious system, and (b) special observances that deal with changes or crises in one's world".

(3) The engaging of gods. The term 'god' is used here as a thematic label to include any beings that humans engage in a religious manner.

(4) The distinction between pure and profane behaviour. Every religious system observes distinctions between proper and improper behaviour, acts that foster sacred order and acts that diminish it (ibid.: 8f.).

The setting of the site in the landscape

A circumstance that determined the outcome of the excavation and the interpretation of the finds was that such a large area as 25,000 square metres was surveyed by trial trenching. The results indicated that these were not the outer edges of the settlement site; in such a case, remains of buildings with postholes and similar features would have been uncovered. No traces of burials appeared either. Consequently, the interpretation of the site should be sought in another sphere. A possible interpretation of the remains that are associated with neither the settlement sites nor with burial sites is the context of the outlying land. The Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age focal places in the grazing landscape are characterised by single hearths and groups of hearths (Petersson 2006). These places were frequented by shepherds and grazing animals. Some other usages of the outlying land might also be considered, such as iron production places, or even specialised forms of gatherings may have generated traces at a resting place (Svensson 1998).

Yet another type, usually situated at some distance from a contemporary settlement, was the ritual sites of the Early Iron Age (Hedeager 1989; Carlie 2009). These sites are often located close to water or marshland. Votive deposits in bogs characterise the period. A typical feature of archaeologically excavated ritual sites is traces of ritual meals found in the form of an abundance of fire-cracked stones, along with bones that were left over from meals. Hearths for

cooking commonly occur on these sites. According to Lotte Hedeager, the Early Iron Age is characterised by outdoor cult and sacrifice in marshland (Hedeager 1989). Her conclusion is that this practice ceases during the Late Iron Age when the cult moves indoors, into the houses of the elite.

Cooking and meals

At Hulje, traces of a considerable variety of activities can be found, but one practice that occurred repeatedly through the course of the centuries is cooking and eating meals. Meals were prepared in cooking pits and hearths on the site. These structures are much larger than the corresponding structures at excavated settlement sites. The twelve structures in the western part of the site were between 1.6 and 2.8 metres in diameter. This can be compared with hearths found on the settlement site at Hulje, which were between 0.6 and 1.6 metres in diameter, with an average of 1.1 metres. This size corresponds exactly with the results from the excavated settlement site at Abbetorp, located ten kilometres to the west of Hulje (Petersson 2013b). Single hearths associated with pasturelands in the western parts of Östergötland had an average diameter of 0.94 metres (Petersson 2006: 158). The comparison with the size of hearths at settlement sites is most informative. At settlement sites, hearths have primarily been used for everyday cooking. The substantial hearths and cooking pits at Hulje imply that another kind of cooking occurred here; probably, food was cooked for a larger number of people. There was room for at least four times the amount of food in these structures compared to the corresponding structures at settlement sites. Large amounts of food indicate a context of either storage economy or cooking for a feast, with more people participating than usual. Remains associated with specialised cooking, which may have been part of storage economy, had previously been excavated at Abbetorp. These remains were situated within the site (*gårdstun*) of a large farm, at a distance of 40 metres from the main building (Petersson 2004). The hearths of the grazing land are also much smaller than those at Hulje. The conclusion is that the size and position of the hearths at Hulje indicate an association with cooking for a large number of people on festive occasions.

The dominant ingredient in the food at Hulje was probably meat, beef being the most important kind. A relevant question for the understanding of rituals at Hulje is whether the assemblage of animal bones is representative of the consumption at an ordinary settlement site, or whether particular species were preferred for these meals. A comparison can be made with the finds from the large settlement site at Hulje (Carlsson et al. 1996) (Fig. 10).

Species	***The settlement site at Hulje, proportion of identified species (%)***	***The ritual site at Hulje, proportion of identified species (%)***
Cattle	38	53
Sheep/goats	36	34
Pigs	21	10
Horses	4	2

Figure 10. *Comparison between the proportions of identified fragments (NISP) of animal bones from the large settlement site (RAÄ 89) and the ritual site (RAÄ 281) at Hulje.*

Figure 10 shows that the proportion of cattle was much larger at the site by the stream than it was at the settlement site at Hulje. The large proportion of cattle is associated with high status settlement sites in Östergötland, but also with ritual sites (Petersson 2006). An important conclusion in this context is that the higher quota of cattle bones among the animal bones reflects the fact that beef was a more important part of the food here than it was at other places. In Old Norse stories, it is clear that beef was the most highly valued kind of meat. The high proportion of beef in the assemblage of bones further emphasises the festive character of the meals. The dominance of bones from the meatiest parts is also a prominent feature of the site.

Burnt grain occurred in most of the cooking pits and hearths, indicating that it was an ingredient in the food that was cooked by the stream at Hulje. The distribution of different types of grain, as well as the combination of species among the edible animals, illuminates the character of the site. The most common grain at Hulje was hulled barley, which was predominant at most farms during the Early Iron Age (Pedersen & Widgren 1998: 379). In Early Iron Age society, consumption of wheat was related to high status. At the farm at Abbetorp, which belonged to a higher social level, the majority of the grain was wheat, while hulled barley dominated at a neighbouring subordinate farm (Petersson 2001). In this respect, the predominance of hulled barley at Hulje shows that the site did not belong among high status farmsteads.

A circumstance of considerable interest is that seasoning was included in the festive meals that were cooked in the large cooking pits at Hulje. Summer Savoury (*Satureja hortensis*) is a herb that spread to the Roman provinces during the expansion of the Roman Empire; it shows how Roman influences extended to places far beyond the borders of the Empire (Heimdahl 2012). Roman influence is mainly prominent in the ideas that were adopted by the elite; maybe the practice of growing herbs was an idea originating in Roman contacts. In this context, the inclusion of herbs further accentuates the impression that this was a case of a specific kind of meal.

The cooking of such substantial amounts of meat in these gigantic cooking pits implies a process that would have taken a long time, several hours. Perhaps the grain was placed with the meat to absorb the juice from the meat.

Beverages are rather difficult to trace in the archaeological material. In rare cases, glass goblets have been found, and sometimes fine pottery occurs, which can be interpreted as fragments of drinking vessels. Several researchers consider beer to be a better way of preserving the nutritional value of grain, which is otherwise liable to be spoilt in storage. An almost complete wooden drinking vessel was found at Hulje. It was not possible to identify the original content, but the vessel may well have been used for drinking beer. It could have contained several litres and might have been passed around in a company of people.

The meals were eaten on the site, out of doors, by the side of the small stream. The finds that support this interpretation include the drinking vessel, pieces of a wooden plate found in the well and pieces of pottery occurring in the vicinity of the stream; another circumstance is the lack of any traces of buildings in the area.

Supplies of food and beverages were unevenly distributed in Early Iron Age society. There were groups of people who regularly starved (cf. Brøste 1984). However, at the ceremonies held at Hulje, there was probably an excess of food and drink. Since the festivities were not held at one of the large farms, it is feasible that other persons than the elite took part. It is possible that one or several of the leading farmsteads in the neighbourhood contributed all or at least a large part of the food for the feast (Steinsland 2007: 306).

Remains from cooking

Waste from cooking consists largely of fire-cracked stones. These stones were heated in the large cooking pits and hearths, and kept heat for a long time. Once they had cooled down, the stones cracked, sometimes after repeated use; after this, they could no longer be used for cooking. The cracked stones were deposited in the immediate surroundings. They were placed in the running water and along the edge of the stream. The stones were also used for paving the slope down towards the stream; this may have been part of a road. There were also unburnt and burnt bones amongst these cracked stones. Clearly, waste from meals was not transported away from the area around the stream to become building material somewhere else; instead, it was kept in the surroundings of the stream. It seems that particular conceptions were associated with this specific waste material, concerning how it should have been handled

and where it could be deposited. Waste material can be discussed in terms of clean – unclean, as a way to understand boundaries (cf. Paden 1994). Evidently, this waste material was treated in a specific way due to its association with holiness (see below).

Deposition of artefacts

Another occurrence at Hulje consisted in intentional depositions of artefacts. Maybe waste from cooking should also be included in this category. However, I decided to treat it separately because of its uniform origin.

Along the edge of the stream, a blue bead was encountered, as well as part of an iron knife or a sickle. Beads are almost never found on settlement sites, although they are common in burials from this period. They regularly occur, although sparsely, at ritual sites dated to the Early Iron Age (Lindeblad & Petersson 2009). Furthermore, a bone of a dog was discovered close to the stream.

Along the water's edge, beside the remains of a pole, a ceramic pot containing food was deposited. Lipid analysis shows that the pot contained traces of a terrestrial animal, although maybe not a ruminant animal. Moreover, it contained traces of vegetables. The results of the analysis distinctly showed that the substances that are usually formed through heating were not present; this implies that the pot of food had nothing to do with cooking. One interpretation is that this is a small-sized storage jar, set into the side of the stream to keep the food cool. Nonetheless, other ideas are also conceivable. At a neighbouring ritual site, Abbetorp, a similar arrangement occurred (Petersson 2004); a ceramic pot had been placed on the ground next to a pole. Due to the context at Hulje, the pot and the pole are thought to have been part of the ritual setting of the site.

The well

In many places, wells appear to have been centres of activity, which cannot be explained in any other way than in ritual terms. There are wells in the region that have been used as a source of water, although they also include indications of sacrifice associated with both the inauguration of the well and its abandonment. They also contain traces of other ritual activities. If we look beyond Östergötland, wells occur that were constructed entirely for ritual and religious reasons, in which a variety of things have been sacrificed (Lindeblad & Petersson 2012; Carlie personal communication). Gunilla Århäll's study shows that there are several similarities between Scandinavian wells and the deep wells with an entirely ceremonial function occurring in the Celtic area, where

both humans and animals were sacrificed along with other offerings (Wait 1985; Århäll 1995).

At Hulje, there were artefacts in the well that may be understood as having been intentionally deposited. These included a wooden drinking vessel, fragments of the rims of a vessel and a plate, a rake head, a carved and painted board, an object that might have been a wooden club, wooden plugs and two handstones for grinding, together with some other wooden objects that could not be identified. The composition of finds combined with similarities to material from ritual sites in Östergötland and adjacent areas supports the interpretation that the finds in the well at Hulje might be ritual depositions.

The drinking vessel could have contained several litres of drink. It is possible that it was passed around and the contents were shared among the assembled company. The drinking vessel may also have been used in libation ceremonies, in which sacred liquid was poured out on the ground – "blood from sacrificial animals, beer or other sacred beverages" (Steinsland 2007: 291).

The rake is a tool used for raking up hay as fodder for domestic animals. The alleged sickle was a small tool for cutting grain crops. Both tools are related to the annual crop growing in meadows and fields.

One of the less well preserved wooden items may have been a club. If it really is a club, we could draw interesting parallels. Often enough, wooden clubs are found at ceremonial sites, frequently together with rope and pegs for tethering cattle. It is thought that wooden clubs were used for killing sacrificial animals. Objects belonging to the animal were then deposited; perhaps they could not be taken back into a secular context again (Carlie 2009: 255).

Handstones used in pairs with quern-stones are a common category of artefacts in Early Iron Age contexts. They can be found in stone paving, but less often as foundation depositions; quern-stones are more common in those cases. Handstones also occur regularly in superstructures covering burials from this period. In this context, the grinding of grain may have a significant symbolic value associated with life-giving, fertility and reproduction (Carlie 2004: 83 and references therein).

The front half of a young dog was also found in the well. No traces of butchering could be seen on the bones, which means that it was not included in the ritual meals. It was a common practice to sacrifice dogs in particular, complete or in parts, in wells and in bogs throughout the entire Iron Age (Nilsson 2009: 89). Erika Räf (2012) points out the connection between dogs and the underworld or the abode of the dead in Celtic and Norse mythology.

Seeds and fibres of flax discovered in the well indicate that bundles of flax had been deposited in the well at an early stage. Linen is complicated to produce, which gives it a higher status; it was thus associated with important festivities.

Religious historian Maths Bertell (2009) considers flax to be a symbol related to religious activity, presumably linked with fertility. In this context Freya, the great goddess of fertility, should be mentioned; she was also the goddess of linen (Viklund 2012: 161f.). Her second name was Härn or Hörn, a word that etymologically can be traced back to another word for linen or flax. Flax and linen were associated with women; seeds of flax were supposed to be sown on a Friday, the women's day (Viklund 2012: 162). Bundles of flax occur at the ritual site by Lake Käringsjön and at Skedemosse (Carlie 2000; Räf 2001; Monikander 2010). Flax seeds have been found in many prehistoric wells; in some cases, these have been interpreted as traces of processing flax for linen (Viklund 2012).

Besides depositions of artefacts, there were traces of another type of activity. Sharpened sticks of alder, hazel and unspecified *Salix* (willow) had been thrust into the well. According to folklore, hazel was associated with magical and religious ideas related to death, ghosts and rebirth. Hazel sticks were found in early Christian graves in Lund, dated to the 11th and 12th centuries (Östnäs n.d.: 24ff.). In Mörtlösa in Östergötland, a number of hazel switches, several metres in length, had been thrust into a well where a still standing ceramic pot had also been deposited (Lindeblad & Petersson 2012). The results of pollen analysis of the material from the well in Hulje indicate that no trees grew in the immediate surroundings of the well; the closest tree had stood about fifty metres away (Bergman 2012). This means that it was not a case of clearance of bushes around the edge of the well, which might subsequently have fallen into the well. It seems more likely that the sticks are traces of ritual activity.

Finally, a complete skeleton of a 2-3-months-old ram was found in the well; it lay *on top of* the layer that had accumulated during the period of use. In other words, it may have been associated with the events at the time when the well was abandoned. A feasible interpretation is that it was part of a sacrifice performed to seal the well. This kind of sacrifice is common in various prehistoric contexts, for instance, to mark the end of use of houses (Gerritsen 1999). At the neighbouring settlement site at Hulje, there was also a well, sealed with an offering. It had been placed on top of the well, which had been filled with fire-cracked stones (Kaliff 1999). The well at Mörtlösa had been sealed with an enormous round boulder (Lindeblad & Petersson 2012).

An analysis of parasite eggs from domestic animals, conducted on the contents of the well, implies that there could have been an enclosure around the well during the time of use (Bergman 2012). Since there are so few parasite eggs in the well, the only explanation is that the domestic animals that usually grazed in the area were not allowed near the well. Preservation conditions were excellent; if domestic animals had been allowed to graze around the well, a considerable amount of parasite eggs would have been present.

The platform

Several boulders were encountered in the stream bed, which might have formed the foundation of a platform. Platforms occur at a number of sacrificial sites dated to the Early Iron Age and the Migration Period; they have been found at sites at Käringsjön, Frösvi, and at Hassle in the Äverstaån stream (Arbman 1945; Lindqvist 1910; Annuswer 2007). These platforms are built of wooden poles. At Käringsjön and at Hassle, they follow the shore, but at Frösvi, there is a footbridge leading out to the platform. The distribution of recovered artefacts at these three sites indicates that sacrifice has been performed from the platforms. At Hulje, the platform was built along the southern shore on the same side of the stream as the well. No artefacts have been discovered that might have been thrown or deposited from the possible platform. Despite this, the most likely interpretation is that it was a platform.

THE CHARACTER OF THE CEREMONIES AND THEIR PURPOSE

Ceremonies associated with a certain time of the year are sometimes termed calendrical rites (Paden 1994). Paden describes the purpose of these rites, saying: "They are points where a community renews and acts out what it holds most sacred, and these times are as central and definitive in world construction as myths" (ibid.: 100). Religious historian Gro Steinsland mentions three annual *blóts* (sacrifices) described in ancient Norse sources; these are the autumn *blót*, midwinter *blót* and spring *blót* (Steinsland 2007: 290). The spring *blót* was meant to benefit a good year's crop and peace, the old prayer saying "til árs ok fríðar" (for a good year and firth (peace)). Another religious historian, Britt-Mari Näsström, also mentions the midsummer *blót* (Näsström 2002: 222).

There are several indications of the rites at Hulje, which were performed during spring and early summer. Switches used in the basketwork for the well were collected during spring or summer, most likely before July, and the basketwork was made shortly afterwards. The young ram that was used as a possible closing sacrifice in the well was two to three months old. The lambing season in the region normally occurs in April or May (Insulander 1956: 88f.), which implies that the lamb was killed during early summer. There are two separate indications pointing towards two occasions when the ceremonies at the well were performed during early summer. One possibility is that they took place at midsummer.

Ritual meals constitute a ritual activity that is most often mentioned in Norse sources. These ritual meals were prepared in cooking pits (Näsström 2002: 225). According to Näsström, they can be understood as communion sacrifice, in which the human participants receive one share and the deity receives the other. As a rule, the deities were given the blood and entrails while the humans ate the meat. The purpose of this sacrifice was to influence the gods. Näsström maintains that communion sacrifice, a meal eaten together with the deity, was a common type of sacrifice in Scandinavia during the pre-Christian era and was associated with calendrical rites (ibid.: 251f.).

The sacrificed material at Hulje is quite unassuming and is related to everyday life. There are no weapons, no precious metals or imported goods. The deposited artefacts of the site originate from the everyday sphere of life. Several of the artefacts might be seen as expressive of a female aspect – the bead and the alleged sickle and maybe the ceramic pot for food. The possible deposition of bundles of flax might also represent female presence. In the past farming tradition, the rake was a tool that was strictly reserved for women. Men cut the hay or the grain crops with a scythe, while women followed behind and did the raking. Sickles often occur in women's graves from the Early Roman Iron Age, but are seldom found in men's graves (Björk 2005). If the find by the stream was part of a sickle, this presents yet another connection with the female sphere.

Other aspects manifested among the assemblage of finds concern domestic animals, grain and harvesting. The rake is a find related to domestic animals (cf. Arbman 1945), which was used to rake up hay for winter fodder. Moreover, it would imply early summer: the first harvest of hay usually occurs around midsummer. Besides the connection to the female sphere, the sickle is associated with grain, the annual crop and late summer or early autumn. Handstones for grinding would be related to the same sphere. In addition, Norse sources mention the idea of grinding for happiness (Carlie 2004).

Bringing the results of observations, comparisons and analysis together, it all points towards the interpretation of Hulje as a site where calendrical rites were performed during the early part of summer or possibly around midsummer. There are connections with both domestic animals and grain. It is close to hand to interpret this as indications of ceremonies that were part of a fertility cult. A female aspect is also manifested on the site. Maybe a female deity, possibly the prominent goddess Freyja, was in the centre of attention in the ceremonies. Britt-Marie Näsström claims Freyja to have been the great goddess in Scandinavia; the cult of Freyja had the characteristics of fertility rites (Näsström 2002: 143f.). The ritual meals that constituted a significant part of the activities at the site might be understood as communion sacrifice, when people tried to influence the great goddess to bring them a good year's crop and fertility.

The location and arrangement of the site

A number of prominent characteristics could be observed concerning the location in the landscape and arrangement of the ritual site at Hulje.

The site was situated in a secluded area in comparison with the contemporary settlement site. The area of the ceremonial site was substantial, probably around 25,000 square metres. Included in the ceremonial area is the highest point in the landscape – the small rocky hillock containing around 300 registered cup-marks. The rituals were concentrated in the area alongside the stream, maybe around the point where the stream flowed into marshland. It is possible that different sections of the stream were of significance during different periods.

We also know that the site is one of at least two sites in a ritual ceremony performed in several stages. Animal bones indicate that the animals eaten during ritual meals were not slaughtered on the site, nor were they butchered; this was carried out somewhere else. A common occurrence is that slaughter was included in the rituals. Per Vikstrand (2001), a historian of place names, has studied place names with religious connotations. He has observed indications in the use of place names that several neighbouring places were involved in the religious ceremonies, but has not discerned how this could have occurred. Hulje might represent a small-scale example of this practice (ibid.). It is possible that one stage of the ceremonies was performed at the rock with cup-marks and it was continued by the next stage at the stream.

The ceremonial site at Hulje was divided into different areas according to functions. This is a characteristic in common with the high status farmstead from the same period (cf. Petersson 2006: 37f.).

Ceremonies related to society

In my estimation, the ritual site at Hulje was of importance in the neighbourhood, but hardly outside the local community. The location set apart from the settlement, and the sparse assemblage of finds supports this interpretation. Thus, we should probably regard it as a place where the local inhabitants gathered. During the same period, there were ritual sites with other types of finds of a more manifest character, which would have been of importance for a wider region. Such a place has been discovered in connection with archaeological excavations in Motala, at a distance of around 20 kilometres from Hulje.

Of particular interest is the existence of a paved prehistoric road, which was constructed during the Early Iron Age. There is reason to believe that the road was a status marker when it was built and that it passed close by the leading

farm of the neighbourhood. It is possible that it led to the ceremonial site. In the slope down towards the stream, there is a layer of fire-cracked stones, which could have constituted a part of the road. If this is the case, this might imply that the leading farm in the neighbourhood had a role in the management of the site.

Ceremonies at Hulje were performed during a period of around 1500 years, commencing at the end of the Bronze Age (c. 700 BC). Rituals conducted alongside the stream continued until the 12th century AD, during the same period as Christianity became established in this region. During the Early Roman Iron Age (AD 1–200), the use of the site was intensified and traces indicate a greater variety in the ritual activity. This is the period when the well at Hulje was used for ritual purposes. During the same period archaeologist Anne Carlie has observed a corresponding intensification in the south of Scandinavia. She assumes that it is connected with substantial "social, economic and political changes" in Scandinavian society during this period (Carlie 2009: 258). According to her, the observation of the cult was probably a way for the leading families to strengthen their position in society.

However, it is interesting to note that traces of ceremonies can be found that are dated to a period covering the *entire* Iron Age. Despite considerable changes that occurred at the beginning of the Late Iron Age (AD 400–600), the ceremonies continued, although to a lesser extent. Evidently, the ideas behind the custom of holding ritual meals at the small stream at Hulje stretched well into Christian times.

HULJE IN A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Many of the major or minor features that characterise the ceremonial site at Hulje are also encountered in various combinations at other ceremonial sites. Per Vikstrand (2001: 189), a historian of place names, claims that place names with religious connotations in the east of Sweden indicate an ideological affinity between communities – people largely belonged to the same religious world. The eastern region of Sweden, where these place names occur, has demonstrated a notable stability over time. These parts also had a similar building tradition during the Early Iron Age. This means that Hulje should primarily be compared with other ceremonial sites within the same region. However, we should keep in mind that there were no normative written sources; therefore, variations in ritual activity and religious ideas would have been considerable. Maths Bertell, a religious historian, states that a fundamental characteristic of pre-Christian religion in Scandinavia was that it changed continually (Bertell 2009: 59).

Below I will provide a brief overview of a few places in western Östergötland that have various characteristic elements in common with Hulje. I will also shortly describe the site at Käringsjön in Halland, on the western coast of Sweden, since there are many similarities between these sites. A significant reason for this selection is the large amount of wooden finds from Käringsjön, which are also well published.

Väderstad in Östergötland

At Väderstad, around ten kilometres to the west of Hulje, a ceremonial site with many similarities to Hulje was excavated in 2007 (Karlsson 2012). These resemblances concerned both the position in the landscape and the natural features that were included in the site. There were traces of ritual meals and ritual depositions consisting of pottery. The site was dated to the Late Bronze Age and Pre-Roman Iron Age (980–50 BC).

On the site, there was a low rock with quite a number of cup-marks, just a few metres from the former stream bed, which by now has been filled in. In total, a hundred-metre-long stretch of the stream was excavated. Hearths occurred in and around the former stream bed. The hearths were dated to the Late Bronze Age and Pre-Roman Iron Age (760–50 BC) and were interpreted as cooking hearths. Pottery was encountered near the rock with cup-marks; decorated fine ware pottery was among the finds. In one case, a complete vessel had been intentionally placed at the edge of the stream bed.

Abbetorp in Östergötland

Abbetorp, in the parish of Rinna, is situated about one kilometre to the south of the ritual site at Väderstad and ten kilometres west of Hulje (Petersson 1999; Petersson 2004; Lindeblad & Petersson 2009). A complex ritual site was excavated in 1998. It consisted of a great number of different elements and covered an area of at least 10,000 square metres. Abbetorp included a sacrificial site, dated to the Late Roman Iron Age and the Migration Period, but with traces of occasional rituals continuing until the Early Medieval Period. Chronologically, the site was in use immediately after the ritual site of Väderstad. The site at Abbetorp was located by the side of a marshland and was adjacent to a contemporary burial site. Offerings were centred on two boulders at the edge of the marshland, and consisted of hundreds of ceramic pots, some sherds of glass vessels and a piece for a board game, along with beads of glass, amethyst

and amber. Some of the ceramic vessels appear to have been intentionally smashed against one of the boulders. Around a hundred hearths bear witness to the cooking of ritual meals on the site, even though the farmstead that most likely organised the rituals was situated just a few hundred metres from the spot. Remains from the ceremonial meals, bones and fire-cracked stones, were deposited around the boulders and along the edge of the marshland, indicating that the meals were eaten in the open air. Furthermore, abutting a rocky outcrop, there was an area enclosed by a stone wall. A posthole was encountered on the outer side of this enclosure; immediately beside this, two complete ceramic pots had been placed on the ground during the Roman Iron Age. There were also burnt bones of horses and cattle. The circumstances of this deposition are very similar to the one with a complete pot at Hulje, which might also have been associated with a posthole.

Like at Hulje, the ceremonial site at Abbetorp comprises a large area, which had clearly been divided into different functional sections. The categories of finds encountered at Hulje were also present at Abbetorp; particularly pottery that may indicate offerings of food and drink. Moreover, there was a small but varied assemblage of around twenty beads of different sizes.

The proportions of different species of domestic animals at the ceremonial site at Abbetorp corresponded entirely with the species at the neighbouring settlement site. This was interpreted as an indication of the fact that no special selection had been made for ritual purposes (Lindeblad & Petersson 2009). On this point, Abbetorp differs from the site at Hulje. However, it should be stressed that the settlement site was interpreted as a high status site.

The ritual site at Abbetorp was used during the parts of the year when the ground was not frozen or covered with snow. Despite the nearness to the burial site, there was evidence that the rituals did not have any immediate connection with the burials (Lindeblad & Petersson 2009). The ceremonies appear to have been performed once a year and it is reasonable to believe that these were calendrical rites.

The ritual sites at Väderstad and Abbetorp were probably important in a local perspective. At Abbetorp, there is a clear relation to the local elite, while there is no such link to be observed in the assemblage of finds from Väderstad. The association with pastureland, probably also with fertility, is particularly distinct at Väderstad.

Hassle in Närke

The site at Hassle, by the stream of Äverstaån in Närke, is a parallel to Hulje in view of landscape, arrangement of the site and chronology. Minor archaeological excavations were carried out at Hassle during the late 1990s (Annuswer 2007). Ritual activities at the site focused on running water and a cup-mark site was part of the ceremonial area. Votive deposits were encountered in the stream of Äverstaån, with dates spanning the entire period from the Late Bronze Age to the Viking Age (c. 600 BC–AD 800/1050). There is thus a chronological correspondence with Hulje.

The oldest find from the site is the 'Hassle-find' dated to 600 BC, containing, amongst other items, a bronze situla. Along the stream, at a site located around one kilometre from the findspot of the bronze situla, offerings of war booty were discovered, which were dated to the period around the beginning of our era. During the Vendel Period, a platform was built at the side of the stream, from which sacrifice was performed. Around the platform, the bank of the stream had been reinforced with fire-cracked stones, twigs and branches. There was also a layer of fire-cracked stones. The assemblage of finds consisted of loom-weights, a grinding stone, pottery, a piece of flint for fire lighting, two studs for horses and nails (Annuswer 2007). A difference between Hulje and the site at the stream of Äverstaån is that, apart from finds of a peaceful and everyday character, items alluding to warfare were encountered in the stream. In contrast to the fertility-oriented calendrical cult, war booty offerings should be regarded as action related to "changes or crises in one's world" (Paden 1994: 8).

Frösvi in Närke

The sacrificial site at Frösvi in Närke, which was excavated at the beginning of the 20th century, seems to have come into use during the Migration Period (Lindqvist 1910). Ritual activities were mainly performed in the marshland, i.e., with a connection to water, but also on dry land. There were traces of depositions of objects and of ritual meals. The site may have covered 10,000 square metres.

At Frösvi, an eighty-metre-long narrow footbridge extended out into the bog: at that time, it was marshland with a small area of open water. At the end of the footbridge, there was a cultural layer, 15 x 7 metres in size, containing charcoal, burnt bones and a great amount of fire-cracked stones. Two pieces of flint were encountered in the cultural layer, which were thought to be fire-striking flint. Further, there was a small rectangular whetstone with a hole

for hanging, as well as two thin potsherds and three small beads of glass flux. An equal-armed bronze bow-shaped brooch was encountered at the bottom of the cultural layer, dated to the end of the 6th century AD. Timber of various types lay on top of the layer. All the longer stakes and planks were oriented in the east-west direction. Most of the bones came from a hearth in the layer; the bones were identified as young individuals of sheep (three animals) and pig (at least two animals). Lindqvist estimates that the three sheep and two pigs originated from one occasion. He states that "there were quite a few participants taking part in this […] meal" (Lindqvist 1910: 134). Outside the actual cultural layer, two molars belonging to a cow or an ox were found.

Around 50 metres to the north of the cultural layer, an oval boulder was encountered, which was judged to have been transported to the site. Hundreds of pointed sticks had been stuck into the ground around the boulder, but Lindqvist does not mention which species of wood they were. Lindqvist (1910) associates the site with worship of the god Frö.

Käringsjön in Halland

Käringsjön is a ritual site dated to the Late Roman Iron Age (AD 200–400). This site holds a unique position in Swedish archaeology because of the rich and varied assemblage of finds (Arbman 1945; Carlie 1998; 2000; 2009). Now the area is a bog, but earlier on Käringsjön was a small lake with marshy edges.

The find material is dominated by almost a hundred ceramic vessels containing food and drink, which were deposited in the lake. There was pottery for storage and cooking as well as fine ware pottery in the form of drinking vessels and bowls. Chemical analysis has shown that the food offerings consisted of a mixture of blood and malt or grain, and some may have contained entrails (Carlie 2000: 21). Some of the pots had been intentionally broken.

Around forty wooden items were also recovered. These included two rakes, a pick-axe, a spade, a swivel (Swedish *lekane*), a peg for tethering animals, a turned wooden box, a sliding cover decorated with a geometrical square pattern, a rectangular wooden trough and a wooden board probably used for cooking. Archaeologist Anne Carlie states that many of the items evidently possessed a symbolic significance, and that the items, on the one hand, were associated with cooking and grazing in the spring, and on the other hand with harvest and slaughter (Carlie 2000: 23). Furthermore, there were two bundles of flax and a flax holder. Several white stones of quartz and quartzite were interpreted as offerings thrown into the lake (ibid.: 23f.).

Wooden platforms had been built along the bank of the lake, to improve access for sacrificing in the lake. The finds are concentrated along the side of the marsh, partly in the east and south-east, partly along the western bank.

By treating objects as symbols for various farming activities, Carlie (ibid.: 29) has studied the time of the year when the sacrificial ceremonies were performed. She found that sacrifice had been performed both in spring and autumn and, to some extent, also in midwinter. Carlie also claims that sacrifice on the site was initially performed in the morning, but later on in time, it was shifted to the evening. According to Carlie (ibid.: 33), Käringsjön functioned as a ceremonial site concerned with fertility, for the local community consisting of just a few neighbouring farms.

SUMMARISING DISCUSSION

Thematically, Hulje is related to several other sites where peaceful sacrifice was performed. They have much in common in their placing in the landscape. Several of the sites were located either by the side of standing water bodies or alongside running water. In several cases, a rock with cup-marks was included in the site. Ritual sites are often of a considerable size, 10,000–25,000 square metres, and they used to be strictly divided into functional units. This is a characteristic similar to settlement sites of the elite during the Early Iron Age. At all sites, rituals were performed outdoors; this was also the case with the ritual meals.

At many of the sites, the continuity of use stretched over a long period, spanning over prehistoric periods and times of fundamental change. At both Hulje and Hassle, the sites were in continual use throughout a period from the Late Bronze Age to the end of the Iron Age / Early Middle Ages. It is particularly notable that the ceremonial practice was continued throughout the entire Iron Age, despite substantial changes in society at the beginning of the Late Iron Age, as well as changes in burial practices and in religion. This was the case at Abbetorp, at the well-known ceremonial site at Skedemosse, and at the well containing offerings in the Iron Age fort at Eketorp; both of the two latter sites are situated on the island of Öland (Monikander 2010; Århäll 1995).

My interpretation is that Hulje is a site where calendrical ceremonies were performed; the well was taken into service during the early summer and closed for use during the same time of year. According to some researchers (Steinsland 2007: 290; Näsström 2002: 222), during the pre-Christian era, calendrical rites associated with fertility were performed in spring or even midsummer. On such

occasions, matters that were basic for the religious system were renewed, people were reminded about the myths that articulated the foundations of what was sacred, and the gods were invoked (Paden 1994: 8f.). At Abbetorp there were indications that the ceremonies were performed during the time of year when the ground was not frozen or covered with snow. Considering the number of hearths, including signs of reuse in some of the features, we might presume that ceremonies occurred once a year (Lindeblad & Petersson 2009). At Käringsjön, the placing of sacrificial platforms implies that the ceremonies were conducted in spring and autumn (Carlie 2009).

Traces of ceremonial meals were present at all the sites that have been discussed here, and several researchers' considered opinion is that such meals were the most important ritual activity practiced during the pre-Christian period – a meal shared between humans and gods (Näsström 2002; Steinsland 2007). Meat, preferably beef, was cooked in cooking-pits and seems to have been the main ingredient in the meals. This is also indicated in Norse sources. While the practice of sacrifice and offerings has varied over time, it can be seen that ceremonial meals have been carried out during the entire period when the sites were in use.

Refuse from the ritual meals, mainly fire-cracked stones and bones, was one of the occurrences that particularly characterised the ceremonial sites. Usually, there are large amounts of fire-cracked stones that have been deposited in the water, at the side of the water, or gathered into substantial layers. This consistent treatment of the refuse illustrates the fact that it was connected with special conceptions, which meant that the refuse was not permitted to be taken from the sacred site. In such a way, the distinction between pure and profane behaviour at the ritual site was expressed (Paden 1994: 8f.).

The female aspect of the ceremonial site at Hulje is specifically expressed in the finds, through the bead and the alleged sickle. For instance, a brooch was found at Frösvi, which may also be indicative of female presence. Cup-marks have been regarded by many researchers as expressing a female aspect (Hauptman Wahlgren 2002: 58ff.).

Repeated depositions of ceramic pots containing food and drink are one of the main characteristics of Iron Age fertility offerings (Carlie 1998: 21). Moreover, pottery is the most common category of finds at the discussed ceremonial sites. Depositions of complete pots occur regularly and many of these contain remains of food. On one level, it is clear that the pottery represents offerings of food. The assemblages of finds from the ceremonial sites at Abbetorp, Väderstad and Frösvi are constituted in a distinctly similar way and could be understood in the same terms as the site at Hulje.

The arrangement of the ritual site at Hulje, and the fact that the area also includes a rock with cup-marks, gives an indication of a close association with the central parts of the pastureland and, consequently, also with animal husbandry. In the west of Sweden, sites with cup-marks have a clear connection with the grazing land of the Early Iron Age (Bengtsson 2004). Indirectly, this also indicates a fertility theme. In the finds from Hulje, there is also a distinct connection with the fertility of the land and with domestic animals. The rake head is associated with the growth of grass as well as with domestic animals, while the sickle is related to the yield of the cultivated land. The sticks in the well might also be understood in terms of fertility. Handstones for grinding found in the well may have a connection with grain, but could also be associated with the general theme of food and drink in excess.

The connection with domestic animals is most distinctly manifested at Käringsjön. This may depend on the fact that it is the only site, apart from Hulje, among the discussed sites, in which preserved wooden artefacts were found. Artefacts associated with harvest and grain occur at Hassle.

There are indications of strong ties between the farmstead that could have been the dominating farm on a local level and the ceremonial site at Hulje. There are remains of a paved road that may have connected the farm with the ceremonial site. The relatively large amount of beef that was consumed at the ceremonial site implies that people from a high status farmstead may have contributed meat of a particularly appealing kind. This argument is supported by the predominance of choice meaty parts among the bones. Being generous with food and drink was an ideal among the elite and was an indication of a good leader (Steinsland 2007: 306).

The ceremonial sites at Abbetorp, Väderstad and Frösvi are notably similar in their placing in the landscape, the arrangement of the sites and the assemblages of finds. They could be interpreted in a similar way as the site at Hulje. Maybe calendrical rites were performed at all of these sites, dedicated to a female deity for a good year's growth and peace, for "árs ok fríðar". The sites were important on a local level, but not within a wider geographical area. Instead, a number of similar places existed, which had connections with the local community. Perhaps the regular procedure was that the local elite acted as a support for the activities at the site.

The ritual sites that I have discussed clearly differ from such sites as Gullborg in Östergötland (Nordén 1938). Topographically, this site consists of a prominent peak of a rock, surrounded by a stone wall, rising sharply above the surrounding plain. Finds at the site consist of weapons, precious metals and imported artefacts. This is associated with a male aspect, in which rituals express warrior ideals, even if artefacts of the same types as those found at

Hulje also occur. Perhaps a site such as Gullborg was devoted to other deities than those of the site at Hulje; maybe this site was mainly oriented towards the elite level of society.

Sites such as the one at Hulje have chiefly been encountered in later years during development-led archaeological excavations. These remains are often found in unexpected locations in the terrain and are only understood when larger areas are stripped of the covering topsoil. This means that development-led archaeology provides a unique opportunity to uncover remains that illuminate ceremonial activities and religious beliefs from a period for which no written sources exist in this northerly area.

Translation by Judith Crawford

ABBREVIATIONS

RAÄ – Riksantikvarieämbetet (Swedish National Heritage Board)

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ARCHAEOLOGY AND RITUAL: A CASE STUDY ON TRACES OF RITUALISATION IN ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS FROM LINDÄNGELUND, SOUTHERN SWEDEN

Anne Carlie

Abstract: The aim of this article is to discuss traces of ritualised actions in archaeological material. The basis for the discussion is the archaeological site Lindängelund, near Malmö, in southern Sweden, where recent excavations have revealed a large settlement complex dating from Neolithic, Iron Age and Early Medieval Times. I focus here on the period 150 BC–AD 300, in which traces of ritualised actions stand out in the archaeological record, represented by wooden poles/artefacts, assemblages of animal bones, sherds of pottery vessels, etc. It is suggested that a small wetland area with wells/waterholes containing ritual waste, lying next to the Iron Age village, was used as a ceremonial place for ritual feasting. Later on in the same period, as traces of ritualisation decline in the archaeological record at the central place, similar deposits of ritual waste have been found in private wells on big farm sites. This shift in the ritualisation strategies is suggested to reflect a strengthening social competition between the leading families in the village.

Keywords*:* archaeology, Neolithic Era, Early Iron Age, ritualisation strategies, ritual killings and feasting

INTRODUCTION

This article is concerned with the identification of traces of ritual actions in archaeological material. In previous research rituals were mainly linked to sacred phenomena. However, in later years this approach has been criticised by scholars in the field of ritual theory, who from a practice perspective see rituals as a social activity with its own participants. Thus, the criteria often used to separate rituals from acts performed in everyday life – that is, their formalism, constancy and repetitive character – can also be used to describe other types of social actions (Bell 1992: 88–93, with reference to, for example, Julian Huxley 1966). What Catherine Bell is interested in is why certain actions distinguish themselves by being ritualising, and thus are assigned greater importance than other social acts. Here she compares the qualities of the ritual with a kind of separation strategy, which also includes the ritualisation of agents (ibid.:

140–142, 220). Through its qualities the ritual creates and reproduces social relations, for example, hierarchical relations. The ritual becomes a strategy to create and maintain power relations, i.e., a strategy to keep social control (ibid.: 169–181). On the other hand, ritualised actions are not to be seen as instruments of social control, but rather require both the consent and, to some degree, also resistance of the participants (ibid.: 200–221).

Swedish archaeologist Ann-Britt Falk has tried to use the concept of ritualisation in her thesis on building sacrifices (Falk 2008). According to Falk, there are several benefits in using ritualisation as an analytical concept when reading the archaeological record. One of the benefits is that the focus is moved from the meaning of the ritual to the social action as such, which we know was actually performed. By applying a ritualisation perspective, new questions can be addressed to the actions themselves. What characterises the ritual? How does it change over time and why? Why were rituals carried out, in what context and in whose interests (ibid.: 55)? Here Falk emphasises changes in the archaeological record as a point of departure for the analysis, as change gives an opportunity to confront different records with each other. Thus, changes in the structures or patterns of the archaeological record could be interpreted as changes in meaning (ibid.: 59).

The aim of this paper is to discuss the possible traces of ritual actions in archaeological material, and to explore how people in the past used ritualisation as a strategy for social change. The point of departure is taken in recent excavations of a settlement complex at Lindängelund, Malmö, in southern Sweden (Fig. 1), dating from the Neolithic and Iron Age to Early Middle Ages (c. 3000 BC–AD 1200).

Figure 1. *Location of the Lindängelund site, Malmö. Map by Henrik Pihl 2013.*

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

The excavations at Lindängelund were carried out in 2008–2010, by the Swedish National Heritage Board excavation department in Lund. During three seasons an area of some 90,000 square metres was excavated (Strömberg et al. forthcoming; Carlie & Lagergren forthcoming). Altogether, remains of about 70 houses were found, mostly post-built longhouses, but also outbuildings and pithouses. In two periods, 150 BC–AD 300 and AD 700–1100, when the population was slightly bigger in the area, the farms probably belonged to a village-like structure. It is also during these two periods that traces of possible ritual actions are more profound in the archaeological record (Strömberg & Carlie 2012; Schmidt Sabo & Söderberg 2012).

In this article I will focus on the period 150 BC–AD 300, during which the settlement was organised in three phases as a dispersed Iron Age village. In the first phase, c. 150 BC–AD 1, it consisted of four farmsteads. Three of them were large units, consisting of a multifunctional longhouse, 25 to 35 metres long, with four or five rooms. One of the farms, located in the northern part of the village, stands out, as it had a separate granary and its own well on the plot.

In the two following phases, from AD 1 to c. AD 300, the village consisted of five to six units. During this period several changes occurred in the settlement. Besides a greater variation in house sizes, from 15 to 40 metres, some farm sites were given a more structured organisation by adding a post-built fence surrounding the plot, complementary buildings or its own well. Some farms were also distinguished for having a burial site on the plot. It is highly likely that these changes in size and organisation indicate an increase in social differences between households.

There was a small wetland area in the vicinity of the Iron Age village. As the peat layer was removed during the excavation, numerous wells/waterholes of different sizes were found in the ground. None of the excavated structures contained any wooden or stone constructions, for example, to support the earth walls or to sift the water. Therefore the structures should not be characterised as wells in the proper sense, but rather as some kind of water sources. Thus, in the following they are called wells/waterholes.

The structures consisted of a pit dug in the ground to reach the water-bearing sediments. They usually had a round shape, between 1.5 to 3 metres in diameter. However, there were also larger structures, c. 10–12 metres, containing several small wells/waterholes. Based on radiocarbon dating, the wells/waterholes had been constructed over a very long time, from c. 3300 BC to AD 1200.

Many wells/waterholes contained archaeological material, consisting mainly of animal bones and wooden poles/artefacts, but also finds of pottery, grind-

ing- and hammerstones, fossils and human bones. Some wells/waterholes also contained huge amounts of fire-cracked stone. The most numerous and complex archaeological record was found in three areas of wells/waterholes contemporary with the Early Iron Age village. Judging by radiocarbon and pottery dates, most depositions dated from the period 150 BC–AD 150. In the 2nd century of our era, the activities seem to have decreased or were perhaps exercised more sporadically. This could indicate a change in the functions of the site.

TRACES OF RITUAL ACTIONS

There are many traces of action in the archaeological record from Lindängelund that may represent ritual acts. However, as human practice may be seen as acts in a continuum of formalism, from everyday routines to formal ceremonies, we cannot equalise a high degree of formalism with ritual. Instead, we may apply Catherine Bell's concept on ritualisation, based on the idea that all acts can be ritualised to make them more important (Bell 1992). Thus, ritualised actions could be carried out on special occasions or at particular places, which were not accessible to everyone. Strategies of ritualisation also often include material things, as, for example, objects, particular clothing or buildings with a special function – all categories that can be identified in the archaeological record.

A way of identifying strategies of ritualisation in the archaeological material could be to look for special objects or features at a site, in what context they appear and if the spatial distribution shows particular patterns that may indicate some kind of separation from everyday activities (Berggren 2010: 114–123). Furthermore, as meaning created by ritualisation is relational, the relations between people, places and things are part of these acts, reflected in the archaeological record (ibid.: 379–380).

There are in particular two find categories from wells/waterholes at Lindängelund, which due to their special character may reflect traces of ritual actions: wooden poles/artefacts and bones from human skeletons (Fig. 2). These two categories were mainly found in wells/waterholes lying in or near the small wetland area, which could indicate a ritualisation strategy. This assumption is supported by the spatial distribution of other find categories in the archaeological record, such as animal bones, pottery and grinding-/hammerstones, which appear not only in the same area but also in the same archaeological contexts (Figs. 3–4).

In the following I will discuss four categories in the archaeological record, which due to similarities in spatial distribution and specific traces of practice probably reflect ritualisation strategies.

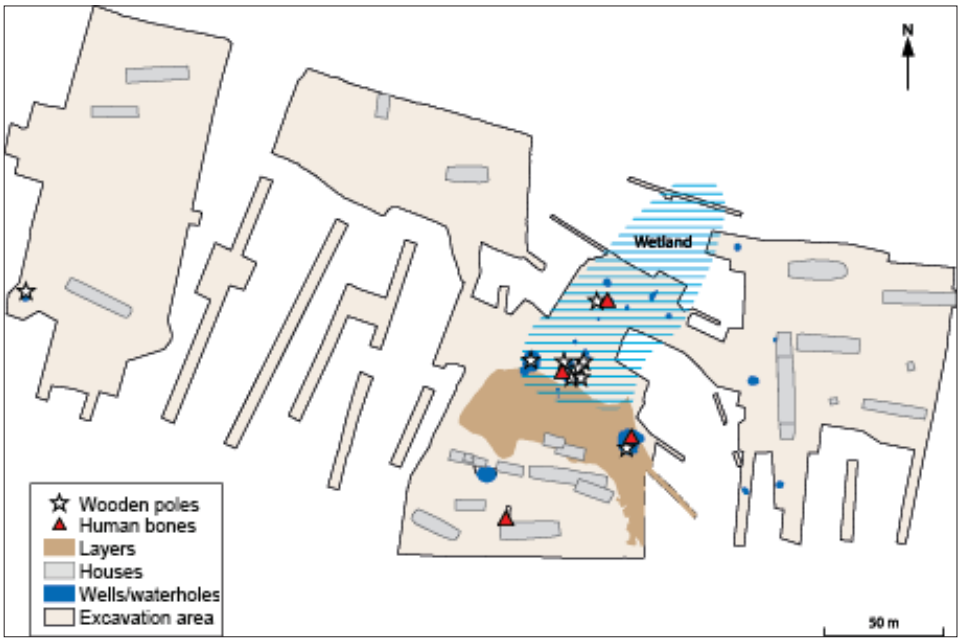

Figure 2. *Spatial distribution of wooden poles and human bones at Lindängelund. Illustration by Henrik Pihl 2013.*

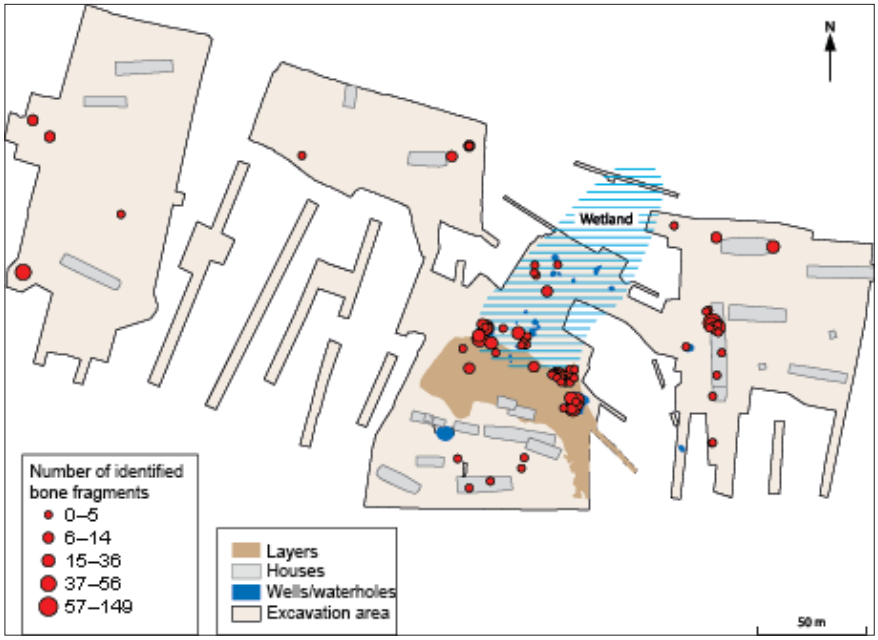

Figure 3. *Spatial distribution of animal bones at Lindängelund. Illustration by Henrik Pihl 2013.*

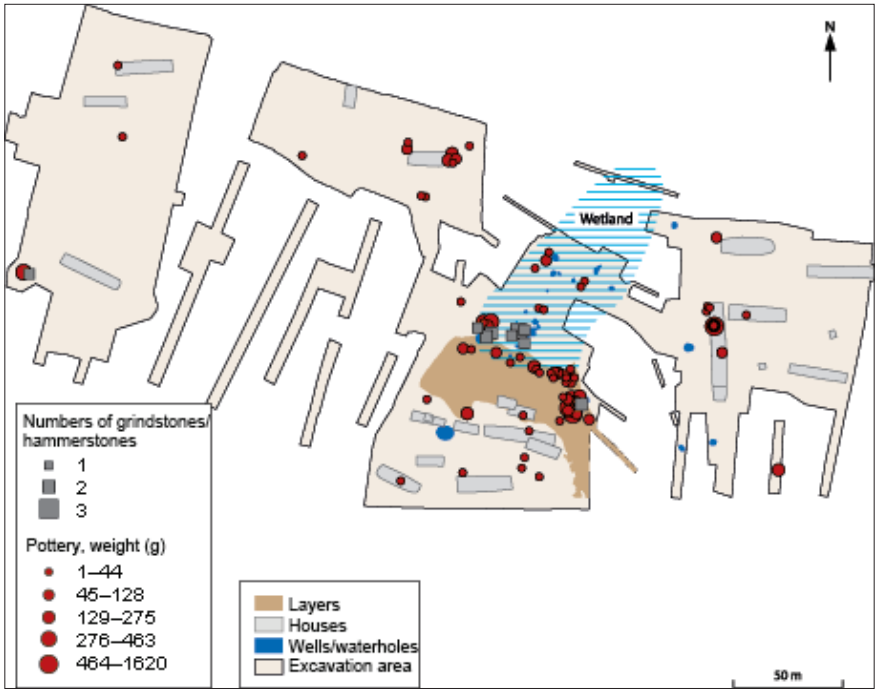

Figure 4. *Spatial distribution of pottery and stone artefacts at Lindängelund. Illustration by Henrik Pihl 2013.*

PRACTICES WITH WOODEN POLES/ARTEFACTS

Altogether fourteen finds of wooden poles/artefacts appeared in the wells/waterholes that dated from the Neolithic to the Viking Age. An interesting feature that reappears over time is that the objects were found in a standing position, having been hammered into the bottom of the waterholes. Thus, the poles/artefacts were put in place when the waterholes were dug, which indicates that they were part of some kind of foundation rituals.

In the Neolithic and Bronze Age, the people at Lindängelund used natural branches or small stems sometimes chopped at the base in the rituals (Fig. 5a). In the Early Iron Age, the practice changed and, instead, people used different wooden artefacts, complete or in parts. Among the objects found at Lindängelund, where it has been possible to interpret their functions, there is an ard share, a wooden nail and the axle of a small cart. The first two objects date back to the Early Iron Age, while the latter dates from the Viking Age (Figs. 5b–d).

a

b

c

d

Figures 5a–d. *Examples of wooden poles / artefacts from wells / waterholes at Lindängelund: a) natural stem – Early Neolithic; b) wooden nail – Early Iron Age; c) ard share – Early Iron Age; d) axle of a cart – Viking Age. Photos a, c–d by Anne Carlie 2009 & 2010, photo b by Håkan Svensson 2010.*

In the case of the ard share, it was found, stuck into the ground, with the point downwards, in the bottom of a small well (Fig. 5c). At the time of deposition the share, which was made of oak, was new and almost unused, with only discreet traces of wear and some marks of fire. This could indicate that the share was used in other rituals before being placed in the well/waterhole (Fig. 6) (Carlie & Lagergren forthcoming: Appendix 3).

In archaeological literature finds of complete or partial ards in wetlands have often been interpreted as having been deposited in connection with ritual ploughing. In support of this interpretation, archaeologist P.V. Glob emphasises that many of the objects were not designed for practical use; i.e., they are incomplete or made of soft wood, which makes them unsuitable as working tools. But there are also examples of tools that are completely worn out (Glob 1951: 104–105).

The ard share from Lindängelund perfectly fits into this picture. As mentioned above, the share was not only practically unused, but was also made of oak sapwood, which is not as resistant to wear as heartwood (Melin & Linderson forthcoming). Furthermore, it had marks of fire, indicating that the ritual actions probably included the use of fire. In this context it seems likely that the ard share, before it was placed in the well, was used in ritual ploughing, perhaps in order to fertilise Mother Earth to ensure soil regeneration, fertility and regrowth.

Many of the wooden items from wells/waterholes are difficult to interpret in terms of function. Thus, a four-sided pointed artefact could either have been used as a wooden nail to fix road planks to the ground in waterlogged areas, or it may have been used as a tethering pole (Fig. 5b). Also, there is a pointed tool which, judging by the use wear, was probably used as a digging stick (ibid.).
The wheel axle mentioned above was found in a well situated at a short distance from the small wetland. It is radiocarbon-dated to the Late Viking Age and is thus between eight and nine hundred years younger than the ard share (Strömberg et al. forthcoming: Appendix 7). The almost complete axle was found in a standing position in the middle of a well basket, where it had been hammered down some twenty centimetres into the underlying subsoil. This position, as in the other cases from the small wetland, indicates that the axle was deposited in the well basket in connection with inauguration rituals. The axle, made of beech wood, is likely to have belonged to a small wagon or cart with spoked wheels (Melin & Linderson forthcoming). Unlike the ard share above, the axle had extensive traces of wear, i.e., it had been in practical use before it was deposited. Could it be that the wheel axle had been a ritual object used in fertility rites before it was placed in the well?

Figure 6. *Ard share dating from the Early Roman Iron Age. The share is 65.5 centimetres long. Photo by Staffan Hyll 2012.*

In the Norse sources there are several examples of stories where gods and goddesses travel in chariots in processions of a religious character. In the *Flatey Book*, a medieval Icelandic script on the old Norse kings, there is a story about a young priestess who would go, with God Frey's image placed on her wagon, around the villages to secure the year's growth and crop for the farmers. A young man named Gunnar followed her on the trip. The party was taken by surprise by bad weather and stopped to rest. This angered the god, who wrestled the young man down. When Gunnar felt his strength decline, he swore in his mind that he would have himself converted and serve King Olav Tryggvasson. Then the devil that had lived in him disappeared and Gunnar broke the image of Frey into pieces, and it became a lifeless block. The story ends with Gunnar and the priestess managing to escape back to Norway, to be baptised by King Olav (after Näsström 2009: 273–274).

Regarding the use of wagons, one can also recall the much older Nerthus cult, which according to the ancient writer Cornelius Tacitus was practised by some Germanic tribes, who probably lived in today's Schleswig-Holstein, Jutland and the surrounding islands (Tacitus 1969: 144–145). Also, in the cult of Goddess Nerthus, whom Tacitus compares with *Terra Mater* – Mother Earth – there is a story about a procession in which the goddess, accompanied by a

priest, travels around in a holy chariot drawn by cows. The description has been interpreted by various scholars to mean that the goddess, or rather an image of the goddess, was taken around the villages by her servants to promote the fertility of humans, animals and fields (ibid.; Näsström 2009: 273).

In this context, religion historian Britt-Mari Näsström has drawn attention to Tacitus's statement which claims that when the festivities were held there was "peace and quiet" (*pax et quies*) (Tacitus 1969: 90–91). The Germanic word for peace (in Swedish *frid*) actually derives from a verb meaning "to love", which according to Näsström shows a direct link to sexuality and the time when all living beings could reproduce (Näsström 2009: 274).

Thus, there is plenty to indicate that ritualisation strategies at Lindängelund were conducted in connection with religious ceremonies, in which fertility rites were a dominant feature, in order to ensure the continuity of fertility and regrowth of the earth.

In the more than four thousand years that the ritual acts of poles in wet holes can be observed at the Lindängelund site, the rituals changed in character to a certain extent. It is possible that the changing practice of poles in the Early Iron Age, ranging from natural stems to various tools related to tillage and agriculture, reflects new elements and an increased complexity in the rituals. Furthermore, it is possible that changes in ritual practice, besides cosmology and myths, were also based on changes in social structure and social relations. In the following sections I will look more closely into how other traces of ritualised actions stand out at Lindängelund in the Early Iron Age.

PRACTICES WITH HUMAN BONES

Six finds of human bones occurred in four wells/waterholes, of which three were situated in or near the small wetland. The oldest find is radiocarbon-dated to the Late Neolithic period (c. 2000 BC). It consists of an almost complete skeleton belonging to a five-year-old child. The skeleton, which unfortunately was partly damaged at the excavation, was found in a sitting position with both legs in front of the body. According to the field observations made by osteologist Caroline Arcini, the upper body and head were probably folded over the legs (Arcini & Magnell forthcoming). The forensic analysis of bone marrow from the upper right arm (humerus) shows the presence of diatoms of a similar type as the ones found in reference samples from the well sediment. This, according to professor Henrik Druid from Karolinska Institute, Stockholm, who conducted the analysis, indicates that the child died from drowning (Druid & Risberg forthcoming; Carlie et al. forthcoming).

In the same well/waterhole that contained the child, three wooden poles and three complete digging sticks were also found. The poles had been hammered into the subsurface of the well/waterhole, while the digging sticks were found in the same sediments as the child's skeleton (Carlie et al. forthcoming).

The other five finds of human bones are all radiocarbon-dated to the Early Iron Age (c. 160 BC–AD 75). The human bones are mainly fragments of skulls, but there are also fragments from two femurs (Carlie & Lagergren forthcoming: Appendix 3). The identification of the bones shows that they come from three or four individuals, two of whom were probably of female gender. The individuals were all adults at the time of death (Arcini & Magnell forthcoming). There are no traces of cut marks on the bones to suggest violence. However, gnawing marks on the two femurs show that they had been exposed for some time before being covered with sediments. Of special interest for the interpretation of the human bones are the remains of an almost complete cranium from a woman probably in her thirties (Fig. 7). The skull was found in the same well/waterhole as the ard share mentioned above, but in the sediments in the well, indicating that the two depositions took place on different occasions. The cranium had old fractures and the facial bones were missing, which indicates that the skull was old at the time of deposition. This, along with the absence of violence marks, could indicate that we are not dealing with human sacrifice, but rather with ritual practices of "old" bones, perhaps from ancestral burials.

Figure 7. *Human skull belonging to a thirty-year-old woman, found in the same well as the ard share in Figure 6. Photo by Staffan Hyll 2012.*

PRACTICES WITH ANIMAL BONES

In addition to the ritualised actions with wooden poles/artefacts, the handling and deposition of bones from slaughtered animals is the most prominent feature in the material from Lindängelund. From Lindängelund 1 site alone, some 32 kilos of animal bones including 1,300 identified fragments were recovered. The majority of the bones date back to the Early Iron Age. Most of the bones were found in wells/waterholes, in particular in the small wetland area mentioned earlier, but also in wells at individual farm sites.

Most of the bones were thrown into the wells/waterholes when they were no longer used for water supply. However, one big well/waterhole stands out, which was used for depositions already from the first days of its construction. The osteological analysis shows that the animals selected for ritual killing were mainly domestic animals, especially cattle, sheep/goats, pigs, horses, and dogs. However, there is also a small marine element present in the form of seal bones (Cardell forthcoming). In many societies ritual killing is not associated with rare species, but mostly with animals that form a central part of the economy (Magnell 2011: 194).

The osteological analysis also indicates that young animals in particular were chosen for ritual killings. Here we are mainly dealing with young adults (> 3.5–4 years), but there are also several very young individuals aged between a month and one year (Cardell forthcoming). In the rituals different body parts were deposited. Thus, there are bones both from meaty parts such as from the trunk, represented by vertebrae from the neck, chest and lower back (spine and pelvis), but also bones from parts with less meat, such as the head (skull and jaw) and feet (metapodes and phalanges). Bones from the latter parts are usually seen as debris from slaughter, while bones from meaty parts can be assumed to represent remnants of meals. An examination of the occurrence of bones with cut marks and bones split to extract the marrow shows that most of these bones were found in watery places. This, according to Annica Cardell, supports the assumption that ritual waste from slaughtering and butchering carcasses was thrown into wells/waterholes (ibid.).

As argued above, it is probable that bones from meaty parts come from meals. In addition to these finds there are several examples of very young individuals (a sucking calf and two yearling lambs) which are represented by bones from all body parts. This could indicate that the bodies were cooked in one piece and that these bones also represent remnants from meals (ibid.).

PRACTICES WITH POTTERY, STONE ARTEFACTS AND FIRE-CRACKED STONES

Besides animal bones, the wells/waterholes also contained finds of pottery and various kinds of stone artefacts. The pottery vessels are in general highly fragmented (approx. 8 kilos, 855 sherds). This is probably due to the ritual handling of the objects, as well as bad preservation conditions and our excavation methods. However, there are also a few finds of almost complete vessels. Among the ceramics there are sherds both from thicker-walled vessels, which were probably used for storage or cooking, and thin-walled, occasionally polished sherds of fine ware. Among the fine ware pottery there are parts of a pedestalled beaker and an almost complete cup – vessels that were probably used as dishes for serving foods and drinks (Brorsson forthcoming) (Fig. 8).

The stone artefacts consist of some thirty items made of rock and flint (Fig. 9). No analysis of the material has yet been performed. Judging by their appearance and traces of use wear, the stone artefacts had different functions. Thus, some stones were probably used for grinding cereals, while others look like hammerstones, although we do not know exactly for what purpose they were used. Similarly to the animal bones and pottery, most of the stone artefacts were found in the same wells/waterholes, indicating that they too were part of the ritualisation strategies. Perhaps the stones were used in the different processes of preparing food and drinks in connection with the ritual meals?

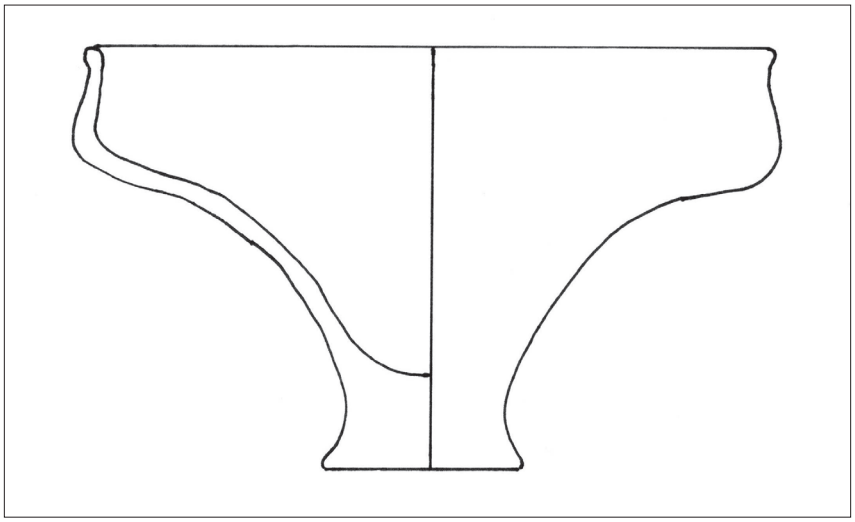

Figure 8. *Example of pottery from wells / waterholes at Lindängelund 1: Ceramic vessel – pedestalled beaker. Drawing by Torbjörn Brorsson (forthcoming).*

Figure 9. *Example of stone artefacts from wells/waterholes at Lindängelund 1: Grindstones and hammerstones. Photo by Staffan Hyll 2012.*

A third element that occurs at Lindängelund is large amounts of natural stones, often with traces of weathering or cracking from fire and heating. The stones vary in size, but usually they are the size of a fist. Most stones were found in the fillings of wells/waterholes, both in the bottom layers and along the edges. In the latter case, the stones were probably used to stabilise the moist soil close to water. As for the stones deposited in the centre of the wells/waterholes, the fact that they lie mixed together with bones, pottery and stone artefacts indicates that the stones were part of the rituals as well. We may assume that the fire-cracked stones come from cleaned-out fireplaces. Thus, traces of an activity area with a number of hearths and pits contemporary with the Iron Age wells/waterholes were found on an elevation near the small wetland area. The use of fire-cracked stones in rituals is well known from other ceremonial places, both in wetlands, such as Hindby votive fen (Berggren 2007: 66–78) and Röekillorna in Skåne (Stjernquist 1997), and in a so-called ritual field with hearths and cooking pits (Fendin 2005: 374–378).

To conclude, I present my interpretation of the archaeological record from wells/waterholes at Lindängelund as remains of ritualisation practices, probably related to feasting. The interpretation is based on different characteristics, which have often been used in the anthropological and archaeological literature to identify ritual feasting, such as the selection of special foods, the use of special vessels for preparing and serving food and drinks, as well as for greater

wastage than normal (Hayden 1996: 137–139; Groot 2008: 106–108). Thus, the ritualisation strategies at Lindängelund included not only the selection, killing and butchering of a large number of domestic animals, in particular young individuals, but also the handling of special serving vessels and different stone items. Furthermore, large quantities of ritual waste from the feasting activities – mainly animal bones and fire-cracked stones – were deposited at the site.

CONNECTIONS WITH CALENDAR FESTIVALS

Certainly, an interesting question in this context is how often the ceremonial site was used for feasting activities. One way to elucidate this issue is to estimate the number of sacrificed animals. Here, a calculation based on animal bones from the two biggest wells/waterholes (features 58377 and 152645), shows that a relatively large number of animals (approx. 50 individuals) were killed and consumed at the site. From feature 58377, there are bones of at least 33 animals, including 12 cattle, 7 sheep, 5 pigs, 4 horses and 5 dogs. Bones from cattle and sheep also dominate in feature 152645. Of the 20 animals represented among the bones from this well/waterhole, 7 are cattle, 5 sheep, 3 pigs, 2 horses and 3 dogs (Cardell forthcoming). Although the above calculations are based on a minor part of the bone assemblage (386 of roughly 1,300 identified fragments), the figures still give some idea of the proportions of animal killings at the site.

One problem that arises when we try to estimate the scale of feasting is that the dating evidence, based on radiocarbon and pottery, gives little guidance as to the time frame of the ritual activities. Are we dealing with many recurrent activities or events in just a few decades, or were the wells/waterholes used for gatherings on special occasions over several centuries? In fact, we do not know and will probably never get a clear picture of this. Therefore, we can only suggest different scenarios.

If we take a closer look at the animals selected for ritual killing, we can conclude that no less than half of the individuals from the two big wells/waterholes are big meaty animals (19 cattle and 6 horses). The ritual killing of a cow or a horse cannot be considered a minor gift, but rather a special killing carried out on occasions when a greater number of people took part in the ritual activities. This could indicate that at least some of the ritual killings were carried out in connection with big religious ceremonies or social events, which required large amounts of food. This type of feasting may have gathered not only the inhabitants of the local village, but also people from villages in the neighbouring area. If the wells/waterholes were used more or less at the same time as the archaeological record and dating suggest, it is also possible that different wells/waterholes were used by people from different farms or villages.

We do not know what the ritual calendar looked like in the Early Iron Age, but it probably resembled the annual festival cycle in pre-Christian times, mentioned in the Old Norse written sources. From these sources we know that the festival cycle contained at least three, but probably four, major religious festivities, linked to the year's four quarters. In the old Norse folk tale *Ynglinga saga*, Chapter 8, Snorri Sturluson recounts: "One should sacrifice (*blóta*) towards winter for regrowth, in the middle of winter for harvest and the third time at the beginning of summer" (after Nordberg 2009: 285).

Furthermore, we know that in addition to the annual festival cycle, which was linked to the lunar year, there were also large religious gatherings which, according to contemporary written sources – Adam of Bremen's *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum* and Thietmar of Merseburg's *Chronicon*, both recorded in the 11th century – took place "once every nine years". According to religion historian Andreas Nordberg, there is much evidence that this festival cycle was related to the eight-year cycle of the bound lunar year. This would mean that the very large sacrifices in fact took place every eight and not every nine years (ibid.: 294–295).

RITUALISED ACTIONS IN SOCIAL EVENTS

If we briefly return to the question of which animals were selected for ritual killing, the analysis of bones from the two big wells/waterholes mentioned above shows that the other half of the sacrifices is small animals: 12 sheep, 8 pigs and 8 dogs. Of these, we may assume that the sheep and pigs were killed for their meat. As for the dogs, however, they were probably killed for other reasons.

Feasts are often part of different kinds of rites of passage, which serve to secure the transition from one social status to another, such as childbirth, weddings and funerals. In traditional societies, the lives of important buildings are also often accompanied by foundation or closure rituals, to promote a long life or a safe transition when the house is abandoned. Different kinds of rituals may also have been practised at events of a more private nature, such as to promote fertility in the event of childlessness or to cure diseases (Carlie 2004: 28–30 and references therein).

There are several finds in the archaeological record from Lindängelund 1, which could be interpreted as parts of rituals in connection with rites of passage, represented by the handling of special, perhaps magical, objects such as fossilised sea urchins, animal skulls and selected human bones (Carlie 2004: 136, 141–143, 155–160).

Another interesting find from one of the big wells/waterholes consists of hemp remains. The hemp has been radiocarbon-dated to the Early Roman Iron Age (AD 55–130) (Carlie & Lagergren forthcoming: Appendix 3). The palaeoecological analysis shows that all parts of the plant are represented in the sample: straws, seeds and pollen. This suggests, according to palaeontologist Mikael Larsson, that the plant remains are probably waste from retting (Larsson & Lagerås forthcoming). Whether retting was done in the well, or the waste was ritually deposited there, cannot be stated with certainty. However, the small amounts of plant material found at the excavation could speak in favour of the latter.

Generally it can be said that hemp was grown in Scandinavia throughout most of the Iron Age, with an expansion during the Late Iron Age and Viking Age, along with the increasing need for materials for ropes in connection with ship construction. Besides ropes, the hemp was also used for making nets, warp yarn and fabrics. After the Viking Age the use of hemp in Scandinavia is supposed to have decreased (Pedersen & Widgren 1998: 381–382).

As for the plant as such, we do not know if people in the Early Iron Age used hemp for its narcotic properties. The fact is that we do not even know whether the kind of hemp that was cultivated in Scandinavia at the time contained such levels of cannabinoids that it could have been used as a drug or for medicinal purposes (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cannabis, last accessed on October 9, 2013).

For whatever purposes hemp was grown and used by the Iron Age people at Lindängelund, the find is interesting as the plant remains were probably used in the ritualised actions at the site.

CHANGES IN RITUALISATION STRATEGIES

Gradual changes can be seen in the archaeological record from Lindängelund dating from the 1st and 2nd centuries AD. In the period when the central ceremonial place was still used for gatherings and feasting, traces of ritual actions began to appear in wells/waterholes at individual farm sites in the Iron Age village.

The archaeological record from these wells shows many characteristics similar to those of the ceremonial place, i.e., assemblages of bones from domestic animals (mainly cattle), sherds from pottery vessels, stone artefacts and clusters of fire-cracked stones. In one case we also found a wooden stick with an edge, hammered into the bottom of a well. From these finds we can conclude that ritual feasting did not take place only at the central place, but also on

individual farms in the village. The question is: why? How should we interpret the changes in ritualisation strategies?

As I mentioned earlier, there are signs in the archaeological record of an increased social stratification between households and farms in the Iron Age village in the first centuries AD. The increasing social and economic differences are mainly manifested in the construction of large multifunctional longhouses, often provided with a small outhouse and a private well. Sometimes these big farms also had a surrounding fence or a private burial site on the plot.

The increased prosperity and social stratification most probably resulted in a growing competition between different households/families in the village, in which ritual feasting was used as a strategy to create or maintain social status and control. What supports this presumption is that the traces of ritualisation in wells on individual farm sites were often related to closure rituals, i.e., as the wells were taken out of use and closed. This could indicate that the ritualisation strategies on single farms were not performed at calendar festivals, but rather at social events related to important transitions or rites of passage. This could have happened when village leadership changed from one family (farm) to another. Hopefully, research continued in this field will shed further light on this issue.

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TO BE OR NOT TO BE... A CHRISTIAN: SOME NEW PERSPECTIVES ON UNDERSTANDING THE CHRISTIANISATION OF ESTONIA

Tõnno Jonuks, Tuuli Kurisoo

Abstract: The Christianisation of Estonia has been a subject of extensive research already for a couple of centuries. Archaeologists generally agree that some elements of Christian religion were present in Estonia already prior to official Christianisation at the beginning of the 13th century. Still, speculations about what those elements were and what they meant have been avoided. We suggest that the materiality of Christianity is wider than traditional cross pendants, and other objects carrying Christian symbols should be considered as well. As a conclusion, we outline some Christian elements that were probably used by local people before the official baptism; to describe these people, a new concept – prehistoric Christians – has been taken into use.

Keywords: Christianisation, cross, pendants, symbolism, baptism

INTRODUCTION

Christianisation can be regarded as one of the most important research issues in the studies of the history of religions in Estonia. It became an actively debated issue in Estonian religiosity already during the 18th-century Enlightenment, when Baltic-German scholars developed the first general approaches to Estonian and Livonian history (e.g. Merkel 1798; Hupel 1774). Since then it has remained the fundamental issue in a majority of studies concerning the religions of ancient Estonia (e.g. Selirand 1961, 1974; Kala 1998, 2006; Valk 2003; Mägi 2002, 2004 and references therein). Christianisation is a crucial issue not only in Estonia, but could be regarded as one of the main topics also in the whole of northern Europe. It certainly has several reasons in addition to religious change, and for a researcher one of the most important of them is differences in sources. It is common that writing skills (at least in today's meaning) spread together with Christianity, which also brought along literary sources more informative than the previous limited inscriptions or archaeological remains.

But Christianisation also meant a new administrative system, in many senses new nobility and new, urban culture. Such a difference was especially

dramatic in Estonia but could also be observed all over northern Europe. In addition, Christianity carried a new kind of identity, in which the earlier, origin-based cognition was replaced by a new, world-based religion. In conclusion, all of this indicates that Christianisation led us to a new period of history, which also justifies such a great interest in the origin of the process.

But the issue of identity is also important in studying the Estonian nationality. The first researchers, the Baltic-German enlighteners in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, created an approach of a cultural gulf before and after Christianisation, pointing at free and pagan Estonians before the violent Crusade (e.g. Merkel 1798: 235). As this is also the core of Estonian Grand Narrative, Christianisation, often seen as hostile and alien, has become a milestone in studying the Estonian identity.

In these approaches two different views on the process of Christianisation can be seen – sudden and gradual. The latter is predominantly accepted by the academic audience and Christian influences are also stressed in Late Iron Age religion. The former approach – the sudden conversion – is often used by the authors of popular and more ideological studies. Similarly to enlighteners, the cultural gulf is emphasised as having been created by Christianisation as a chronologically limited event (early 13th century). According to this view, after the conquest the pagan prehistoric religion changed into conservative folk-religion under Christian rule, preserving many features from the old times. Being rather an ideological approach, it will be excluded from here further on and, instead, we will focus on a more academic tradition and try to dwell more on what those "Christian influences" might have meant in the 12th-13th-century Estonia.

Religion has never been a favoured topic of discussion in Estonia, both for historical and political reasons (see Jonuks 2009: 32ff.), and it becomes manifest when Christianity is discussed. Too often the personal scholarly background plays a crucial role, and also influences interpretations. One and the same phenomenon has been interpreted considerably differently, or perhaps too much stress has been laid on a single feature. Thus the opposition to inhumation-cremation burials, orientation of the body, presence or absence of grave goods, etc., has been used for justifying or opposing Christianity in Late Iron Age society. The main problem in many of those studies, at least according to current authors, is the simplified approach to the concepts of 'Pagan' and 'Christian', which allows for such loose interpretations about the archaeological source material.

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE IDEA

When following the general approach to the studies of Christianisation, it becomes evident that scholars have mostly focused on either the conquest or the church history and institution. Without any doubt this is the safest approach as most of the available sources refer to these issues. At the same time the actual religiosity of the missionised folk has largely been ignored, the main reason for it being sources – all that has been written is either *about* official Christianity or comes *from* those sources, leaving little ground to speculate what local people really thought or felt. When addressing the religiosity of local people, the statement that pagan topoi of Christian clerics are used in chronicles is most often followed (Tamm & Jonuks forthcoming). And indeed, none of the 12th-13th-century chronicles and clerics were anthropologists and what local people believed either prior to or after Christianisation was never an issue for them. It was more important to make the crusaders' achievements immortal as it is presented in the introduction of crusade period chronicles (Selart 2008: 199). Another, religiously even more crucial goal was to express otherness, the pagan side of those strange savages, therefore legitimising also Christianisation as such (Kaljundi 2008; Tamm forthcoming, and references therein).

One can point to several examples in the approach, some of the most colourful of which are descriptions of pagan burial customs. According to the words of chronicles from the 12th and 13th centuries only cremation was used by locals. Even though cremation has been used in Christian contexts throughout history as an accepted burial custom in extreme situations, it had become a characteristic feature of pagan societies by the time of Livonian mission at the end of the 12th century. All chronicles from that period mention cremation only in connection with locals, stressing the pagan and alien religion and culture. As it is known from archaeology, inhumation cemeteries were widespread all over Livonia and Estonia at that time and it is highly unlikely that priest Henry of Livonia, the best known chronicler of the period, did not know about it. Thus, the prevailing description of cremations should not be regarded as a description of local culture, but rather as a pagan topos that was interesting and important to Christian chronicles. Subsequently, the study of the history of Christianisation in Estonia has recently focused especially on crusades and on how foreign crusaders saw the last pagan part of Europe (Kaljundi 2008; Tamm 2009). Thus, the research focus has slightly shifted among historians and it is the viewpoint of foreigners and the wider European perspective that is being taken into account now.

Still, the issue of Christianisation has preserved its prominence in archaeological studies, and has resulted in a reinterpretation of many archaeological

finds. Scholars have been remarkably unanimous when stating that people who lived in what today is Estonia had some Christian influences that had reached them already before official Christianisation at the beginning of the 13th century (Selirand 1961, 1974: 186; Loorits 1962: 218; Pauts 1997; Valk 2001; Mägi 2002, 2004; Leimus 2009). Unfortunately, suggestions of what these influences *mean* have been considered too speculative and this issue has been avoided. But before we start to speculate about the religiosity of Final Iron Age Estonia, we have two crucial issues to resolve: Which archaeological material can be related to Christianity? What are Christianity and Paganism altogether?

ARCHAEOLOGICAL APPROACH

As compared to literary sources, archaeology offers richer and more varied material; however, in the latter interpretations are in many ways more speculative than those in written sources. Estonian archaeological material in general is very poor in symbolism and the most widespread signs are abstract marks to which different meanings could be ascribed (see Jonuks 2009). Considering the wide use of different ornaments, it rather seems more appropriate to suggest that these might have been simply aesthetic marks without any symbolic meaning. Even though some ornament styles, like the triangular 'wolf-teeth' signs on brooches and bracelets, have been interpreted as 'pagan' (Pauts 1997) or magic symbols (Tamla & Kiudsoo 2009: 48), they rather seem to appear in all possible connections with other symbols and thus cannot be interpreted as carrying some specific 'pagan identity'. The shortage of signs is especially eye-catching considering the rich variety of Christianity-related symbolism in the 12th and 13th centuries.

We are not going to present the spread of cross symbolism in Estonia in detail as it can, to some extent, be studied on the basis of previously published researches (Selirand 1974; Leimus 2009; Kurisoo 2012). In short, it can be stated that cross pendants first appear at the end of the 11th century and by the late 12th and early 13th centuries the cross is the most popular and widely used symbol in Estonia. In addition to cross-shaped pendants, similar kind of symbols decorate round silver pendants, but the cross also appears as an ornament motif on bracelets, sword sheaths, penannular brooches, etc. The earliest forms of pendants appear mostly in wealth deposits dating from the end of the 11th century onwards, while by the end of the 12th century cross pendants also occur among burials, mostly in those of females or children (Kurisoo 2012), and thus the situation is similar to that in north-western Russia (Musin 2012: 508). This is quite interesting as Estonian data have mostly been gathered from the

Figure 1. *A selection of 12th-13th-century jewellery with cross symbolism (1 – TLM 16373; 2 – TLM A93:134; 3 – AI 3884: 2956; 4 – AI 3579: 4; 5 – TÜ 1777: 1257; 6 – TÜ 1777: 1256; 7 – AM 290; 8 AM 1036: 156; 9 – AI 2670: 7; 10 – AI 4116: 138B; 11 – AM 1036: 124; 12 – AI 4133; 13 – TÜ 1777: VI; 14 – AI 2513: 19). Photos by Tõnno Jonuks and Tuuli Kurisoo 2013.*

northern and western part of the country. At the same time, just across the Gulf of Finland, cross pendants in southern Finland are more characteristic of male burials (Purhonen 1998: 150). But either way, in all those countries, and also more widely in northern Europe, cross symbolism is characteristic of wealthy burials (Staecker 1999; Gräslund 2000).

Round silver pendants with cross signs also occur in burials dating from the end of the 12th and largely from the beginning of the 13th century, still being more numerous in wealth deposits. Among other cross pendants, a more unique item is known from Viltina cemetery, Saaremaa, where an encolpion was found from a cremation burial stone grave (Jonuks 2009: 296) (Fig. 1: 3). This find clearly represents an import that can also be associated with exotic souvenirs, magical objects, etc., and despite its originally Christian meaning this might have changed while the object was taken out of its original context (cf. Schülke 1999). However, taking into account the fact that at least four cross pendants were found in the same grave, it is likely that the original meaning of the encolpion, which was associated with Christianity, was preserved.

Another unique find, a cross pendant from a hoard found in Tartu, should be mentioned here (see Tvauri 2001: 74). It is the only example from Estonia of a pendant depicting crucified Christ, while the same style is more widespread both in Western Europe (see Staecker 1999) and northern and western Russia (Musin 2012).

Conventionally, cross pendants have been divided into two types, based on their possible origin – the 'Scandinavian' and the 'Russian'. Russia has traditionally been considered a source of Christian influences for Estonia (e.g. Selirand 1961). Jüri Selirand (1974) was the first in Estonia to raise the issue of locally made cross pendants, which created the basis for considerably different interpretations (see below). As some recent studies have shown (Kurisoo 2012), at least a quarter of cross pendants from inhumation burials are of local origin and, as such, carry the local meaning instead of an imported tradition. The same is also valid for round silver pendants that represent the 'Finnish-Estonian type', have been locally produced and thus, carry the meaning that local people have ascribed to them. Ivar Leimus (2009) has suggested multiple influences for the cross to become a central motif of the aforementioned pendants, and it seems likely that in many cases it is actually the cross pendant that is represented on a silver disc (Fig. 2).

Figure 2. *Cross pendants and a round silver pendant from Savastvere and Kumna hoards (1 – AI 3355: 42; 2 – AI 3355: 38; 3 – AM 434; 4 – AM 580: 6161). Note the similarities between cross pendants and the cross on the round pendant. Photo by Tuuli Kurisoo 2013.*

Thus, we could suggest that cross pendants and round pendants with a cross sign actually carry the same meaning. While checking the position of such pendants in burials, it is apparent that round pendants were really worn in the same way as cross pendants. But, in addition, cross pendants have also been represented in the extensions of some penannular brooches, suggesting semantic similarities as well (cf. Ó Floinn 2012: 18).

Theoretically, it is much easier to ascribe magical meanings to foreign objects as they are moved away from their original context. However, cross symbolism created, used and reinterpreted locally indicates that the symbol that (it must be stressed here again) was the most widespread in the Late Iron Age, had a meaning also in officially pagan Estonia and the purport most likely derived from the general Christian framework. The same argument has also been used in the studies of early Christianity elsewhere, for instance, in Bulgaria (Pluskowski & Patrick 2003: 48 and references therein). But the numerous imported cross pendants of more widespread types most likely carry the same meaning and, considering the wider sense of symbolism during that period, cannot be interpreted as magical amulets.

As a brief conclusion, it can be stated that most probably the cross in the 12th-13th-century Estonia had a rather uniform background and it was not important from the semantic point of view in which form it was represented. On the contrary: crosses worn as pendants, as symbols on round silver pendants or as extensions of penannular brooches all seem to carry the same wider idea (see also Leimus 2009). But what could it be about?

Traditional interpretations of cross symbolism

In the interpretations of cross symbolism two main approaches are used, both of which are connected with the cross as a sign. The first of them can be exemplified as 'magic'. The wider background to this approach is that the cross is an ancient and pagan symbol and, as such, should be interpreted as a universal pagan and magical sign and should not be exclusively connected to Christianity. Without any doubt the cross as a rather simple and universal symbol appears in various contexts, starting from the Palaeolithic cave paintings, and is represented universally in many cultures throughout the entire prehistory and history. It is also obvious that the cross occurs in many 'pagan' contexts, for instance, together with teeth-pendants (Laul & Valk 2007: 123 and references therein) or numerous cross pendants combined in the same necklace (Kallis 2010: 160f.) (Fig. 3).

Figure 3. *A necklace from Kaberla burial CLXXXIII. Note the multiple cross pendants. The third from the left is made of an ornamental pin. Photo by Irita Kallis (2010: 165).*

None of those cases really resemble the way that the cross should have been worn in Christianity, hence magical interpretations seem to be reasonable. But we should also recognise that the meaning of a sign is determined by its temporal and cultural context. Bearing this in mind, we can see that cross symbolism actually appears in Estonia only from the late 11th century onwards and not before[1]; it spreads more widely in the 12th century and is most widespread in the early 13th century. Thus, the spread of cross signs in Estonia corresponds well with the Christianisation of the neighbouring countries. Considering the latter, it is more likely that the cross in Final Iron Age Estonia had its meaning derived from Christianity and not from a sort of universal paganism. The actual

use of the cross symbol is another issue and without doubt the cross might have been in use as a magical sign, as a protective amulet, etc. But the supernatural power of the symbol derives from Christian religion, hence it should still be considered as a Christian symbol even though its actual use was different from that in traditional Christianity (see also Samdal 2000: 88f.).

According to another approach, which is the most frequently represented one in academic studies and is also crucial to this study, the cross represents Christian symbolism and reflects Christian influences in Estonian Final Iron Age religion (e.g. Moora 1927: 5; Selirand 1961; Mägi 2002; Valk 2003). Even though it is widely accepted, it differs in how we understand 'Christian influences' and what labels of identity we are allowed to ascribe to those people. Depending on this, the understanding of 'Christian influences' can be dramatically different, starting from indirect influences and reaching up to baptised persons. But according to the dominating tradition the abstract notion 'influences' is no more precisely determined.

Other Christianity-related archaeological materials

Traditionally it is the cross that has been regarded as the main source material for Christian religion. However, the cross is not the only symbol – the symbolism of Christianity can be much more varied. Pentagram-signs are quite rarely found on round silver pendants, which should probably be interpreted as Christian symbolism and, similarly, the four-legged swastika on some round silver pendants can be considered as the interpretation of the cross. Some unique examples include round pendants made of bronze, which carry a depiction of Christ and were found in Savastvere hoard, originating from the second half of the 12th century (Tamla & Kiudsoo 2009: 42) and in Kobratu stone grave. The style and position of Christ on both of these indicate that the East is the source of the aforementioned pendants (Fig. 4: 1, 2).

Among other rarer examples are the separated heads of cross-headed pins, which were also worn as cross-pendants (Tamla 1993; Kurisoo 2012). Deliberately smoothed surfaces of the fracture indicate that heads of those pins were remanufactured by intension (Fig. 4: 3).

But in addition to symbols, there have been a few more exotic cases, such as pieces of painted ceramic eggs, which were found in Tartu (Tvauri 2001: 162) (Fig. 4: 4, 5) and associated with the Easter egg tradition symbolising the rebirth of one's soul. Such items were especially popular in Russia, and Kiev is considered to have been the major production base for them. Closely connected to the latter, a red ochre-painted bird egg dating from the early 13th century,

Figure 4. *A selection of other Christianity-related artefacts: fragments of ceramic Easter eggs from Tartu, a cross pendant made of an ornamental pin from Viru-Nigula, and pendants depicting Jesus. (1 – AI 3355: 40; 2 – AM A 593: 53; 3 – AI 3357: 267; 4 – TLM A 102: 897; 5 – TLM A 70: 2115). Photos by Tõnno Jonuks and Arvi Haak 2013.*

which was found in a wealthy female burial at Kukruse, should probably be interpreted similarly (see below; Jonuks & Mänd & Vahur in prep.).

Some alternative sources have been connected to Christianity, such as *lunula*-shaped pendants. Baiba Vaska has associated those pendants with Christianity, especially when found as part of a necklace carrying also cross-pendants (Vaska 2003: 99). *Lunulae* dating from the Late Iron Age and the Middle Ages have been identified with solar and moon symbolism and therefore could be seen as symbols of Virgin Mary (Vaska 2003: 114; Engemann 2004).

Toomas Tamla (1997) has also associated numerous bronze vessels found all over Estonia, but most numerously from the northern part, with the Christian mission. Danish priests are described in the *Chronicle of Henry of Livonia* (HCL 1982) to send holy water to distant villages where they could not go on their

own to baptise folk before the Brethren Order. According to Tamla (1997), the bronze vessels, many of which are decorated with Christian symbols, could have been used for carrying holy water and ended up in the hands of local peasants who buried the vessels as hoards.

In addition to symbolic artefacts, there are three main features from the archaeology of burials that have been referred to in the discussion about Christianity – inhumation, orientation and grave goods. As a starting point, usually the dogmatic approach of a Christian burial is chosen. According to this it must be an inhumation burial, orientated to the west, facing to the east, and the grave is supposed to be void of grave goods. It is apparent that most Christian burials from Christian society do look like this, but exceptions to such a dogmatic approach can be found everywhere, including deeply Christian societies. Therefore, a question should be raised about if it is at all justified, while interpreting Christian symbolism, to look for dogmatic Christian customs in officially non-Christian contexts?

According to the Christian tradition, **inhumation** is preferred. At the same time cremation has always been known in the Christian world and was widely used in Early Christianity (Mitchell 1981: 457). But cremation was practiced in extreme situations also in the Middle and Modern Ages. This was supported by a letter from Pope Innocent III in 1214/1215, which allowed local neophytes in Livonia to choose their burial custom according to their preferences (see Leimus 2011: 11 and references therein). From Estonian sources we know from the *Chronicle of Henry of Livonia* (HCL 1982: XXI, 4) how the body of Livonian chief Kaupo was cremated after the battle in Estonia. He was lethally wounded, received sacraments and bequeathed everything to the church. After his death he was cremated and his bones were taken back to Livonia. Such descriptions can also be found elsewhere; for example, a Russian soldier cremated on the field after the battle, according to the *Livonian Rhymed Chronicle* (Vahtre 1960: 73). But even if cremation among the neophytes was officially tolerated by the church, the cases of when it was used can still be considered unique. The most obvious explanation for such instances is that the corpses of Christian warriors, killed far away from their homes, were difficult to transport and so exceptional burials were used. But considering the papal permission and cases known from the chronicles, it means that it is not justified to handle all cremation burials from the Middle Ages as pagan.

In spite of the legal permission for cremation it is clear that inhumation has always dominated in the history of Christianity. On the one hand, inhumation is connected to Christian theology through the resurrection of the soul and the Last Judgment, while during cremation both the body and soul would be destroyed. The preservation of the body became important in order to reconnect

the soul and body after the Last Judgment, hence cremation was excluded. But, on the other hand, there was also a political reason as cremation was widely used by Iron Age people in northern Europe, against whom missionary wars were started in the 8th century. So cremation became a symbol of paganism and was officially sanctioned by Charles the Great in 789, in the context of a missionary war against the Saxons (Sanmark 2004: 37). From this time onward cremation became a symbol of Paganism, despite the fact that it has always been used in Christian context as well.

Another important feature in the archaeology of burials is the **orientation** of the body, by which the head should be orientated to the west, facing to the east. According to theology, the body stays in the grave until the Last Judgment Day, when bodies and souls are reunited and they rise to face God coming from the east. Simultaneously another and probably more popular version was spread, according to which the soul of the deceased moved directly to Heaven or Hell. Both concepts separately or their symbiosis was simultaneously in use and caused no contradiction, at least not for common people (Baun 2008: 615).

During Estonian Late Iron Age, literally every single direction was used for orientation (Kurisoo 2011: 27). Still, Kaberla and Pada cemeteries stand out from the generally heterogeneous picture. Both of them include more than one burial using Christian symbolism, but the orientation of Late Iron Age burials was dominantly towards the west (ibid.: Appendix 5). At the same time, the majority of burials orientated to the west contained no other signs referring to Christianity. When considering the orientation as an indication of Christianity, the best example should be Kukruse cemetery (Lõhmus et al. 2011). All major directions for the orientation were represented among fifty inhumations. A specific group of six persons stood out – there were two male and four female burials close together, all orientated to the west and all wealthier than other burials in the studied part of the cemetery. In addition, Christian symbolism was represented only in the four female burials. This grouping is in a certain contradiction with other examples, as was the case in Pada and Kaberla cemeteries, where it was not possible to determine such groups (Kurisoo 2011: 27).

But despite the example from Kukruse, and having the cases of Kaberla and Pada in mind, the orientation alone should not be considered as a primary indicator of a Christian burial. The orientations of Late Iron Age burials are open to different interpretations, in addition to the possible connection to Christian theology, but most of them are not traceable any more. One should keep in mind that the orientations of burials from the Middle and Modern Ages have varied as well, including those of Christian origin. This issue is also well-known elsewhere (see Jonsson 2009: 98f. and references therein) and some studies value more the position of the burial – either in the church or close to it – and not so

much the orientation of the body (Poulík 1975: 99; Lucy 2000; Pluskowski & Patrick 2003: 46 and references therein).

The issue of **grave-goods** is the most widely discussed issue in connection to Christianity besides cross symbolism. Again a dogmatic view is accepted, according to which in the case of a Christian burial the grave is supposed to be void of grave goods. Similarly to cremation, this is also a ban that was imposed in the 8th century in the context of the Saxons' mission. During the crusade the opposition between paganism and Christianity became an essential topic and northern European Iron Age tradition of using grave goods became a pagan symbol. Some scholars suggest that nothing in the Christian doctrine bans the use of objects at a burial (Kiefer-Olsen 1997: 187). This means that the rule not to bury grave goods should be understood similarly to cremation – neither of them is proscribed in script or in theology, but during the crusades they became symbols of Paganism due to historical reasons. This suggests that even though they were officially prohibited, grave goods have been found from burials throughout the Middle Ages and Modern Times (Valk 2001) until today. It is generally known and accepted that objects such as swords, bishop regalia, etc., which were used in Christian burials from Early Christianity through to Modern Ages, indicate the deceased's rank (see Kiefer-Olsen 1997; Gräslund 2000: 84ff.; Staecker 2003). The majority of grave goods used in pagan burials (e.g. weapons) are usually also interpreted as symbols of rank. In addition to the aforementioned obvious symbols of position, there is also food placed in Christian burials, for instance, in Denmark during the Middle Ages (Kiefer-Olsen 1993), which makes such burials look pagan. Still, there is a clear theological difference in the meaning of goods placed with burials in pagan and Christian contexts. Grave goods in pagan burials, as it is commonly thought, should guarantee that the soul of the deceased could continue its existence and therefore the food, rank equipment, and seldom also tools, were placed in the grave with the body. In Christian theology, on the contrary, such items were not necessary as the soul of the deceased did not need them while waiting for the Judgement Day in the grave, enjoying Heaven or suffering in Hell.

In addition, the concept of grave goods can also be understood very differently. Some authors have a radical view, regarding all the preserved objects found from the grave as grave goods, including jewellery, metal ornaments for clothes and fastening instruments like brooches. These have been considered as evidence of syncretism and it has been proposed that the medieval church in Estonia had to compromise with old beliefs and let people add grave goods to a Christian burial (Tamla 1993). In fact, ornaments of clothes and other attachments should not be considered as grave goods (Thunmark-Nylén 1995: 162; Gräslund 2000: 84), and the custom to bury the dead in richly ornamented

festive dresses was followed in Estonia until the end of the 13th century and it was in any way against the Christian doctrine or common customs.

To conclude the discussion on sources, it has to be stated that the source material about Christianity is much more varied than just cross symbols. But as all these symbols and burial custom features occur in different cultures and times with different meanings, the concrete context must be considered. Thus, the wider context in Northern Europe in the 12th and 13th centuries suggests that new symbols and changes in burial customs originate from the Christian religion spreading to the north. But what does it mean? As explained above, there is no reason to look for some universal pagan background and those changes should be interpreted as emanating from Christianity. Traditionally it has been stated that during the Late Iron Age 'Christian influences' were introduced into pagan religion. But what did those influences mean, how did they change religion as a whole and – most speculatively but methodologically interestingly – how to describe the identity of such people who use Christian symbolism while living in a pagan society?

DISCUSSION: PAGANS OR CHRISTIANS?

There are several different patterns created to study the spread of Christianity to northern Europe (e.g. Birkeli 1973; Lager 2002; Sanmark 2004; Musin 2012). Considering the major cultural centres around Estonia in the Final Iron Age, the 11th–13th centuries, the most important of them are studies about south-Scandinavian and north-west Russian Christianity. However, none of the patterns proposed for these areas seem to apply to the Estonian material. We presume that one of the major reasons for this is the different historical context of how and when Christianity reached Estonia. The spread of Christianity from the 5th century Mediterranean to northern Europe lasted for almost a millennium, during which the original religion met different cultures, societies and religions. Simultaneously, the social context changed as in many parts the shift to Christianity meant centralised power systems, changed trading routes and a new, cross-European identity. All this suggests that Christianity also changed during the process and missionary tactics varied in different cultural and political contexts (e.g. Muldoon 1997; Edwards 2005: 122). In this respect it is important to note that in the early days of Scandinavian and Russian missionary work, the first missionaries had to accept strong and powerful non-Christian societies and thus different kinds of compromises were usual (e.g. *primsignatio*, simplified Christian teachings, etc.; see more in Sanmark 2004). By the time of the Baltic Crusade the situation was different, Christian com-

munities were in an increased position of strength and therefore compromises such as *primsignatio* were not necessary and no longer practiced.
Besides different missionary practices, the methodological aspect needs to be considered – we tend to assume that Christian symbolism indicates Christianity in whatever form it appears. Alex Pluskowski and Philippa Patrick (2003: 30) have stressed that the approach towards Christianity is simplified everywhere and there is a need to re-conceptualise the notion of 'Christianity', even though a good alternative is yet to be found. To us it seems more promising to focus on the general picture, which might not even contain classical references to Christianity, but the general view is nevertheless Christian. According to our material it seems that the situation might have been much more complicated and there could have been 'Christians' who had nothing to do with the 'real' Christianity.

As explained previously, it is very dangerous to build interpretations on a single aspect, such as burial orientation, presence or absence of grave goods or cross symbolism. Moreover, many of these aspects come from dogmatic Christianity or from another time period and have therefore nothing to say about medieval Christianity[2]. It is a well-known problem that Christianity is seen as one unit and the definition of Christianity derives too often from our modern understanding of religion or occasionally from medieval but dogmatic Catholicism (see also Kilbride 2000). But contemporary northern European Lutheranism and medieval Catholicism, especially in the context of crusades, are more or less different religions, whereas in the latter Christ himself does not represent an innocent martyr but a victorious warrior, and to defend the Christian society, pagans were permitted to kill (e.g. HCL 1982: XXIII, 10; Gräslund 2000: 95; Jensen K.V. 2011; cf. also King 2008).

Moreover, most of our literary sources about medieval Christianity are about the official religion, which says little, if anything at all, about the religiosity of common people outside urban culture, especially about the eastern side of the Baltic region before the 13th century.

Still, the rich use of Christianity-related symbolism points clearly to the position that religion had in the Baltic area in the 12th and 13th centuries, right before the North-East Crusade brought the last 'pagan' stronghold in Europe to an end. One of the most recent finds allowed us to have a closer look at a 40+ years-old female inhumation from the early 13th century Kukruse cemetery in north-eastern Estonia (Fig. 5). She was not wearing the most classical item, the cross-pendant, and she was accompanied by a number of grave goods but, nevertheless, we can speculate that this was a burial of a Christian female. Her body was covered with a set of numerous breast chains, there were eight and nine circlets around her right and left forearm, respectively, her clothing

was decorated with different patterns made of small bronze spirals, etc. At the foot of the burial there was a ceramic vessel, once filled with food, and also a rich set of grave goods – a scythe, a knife, etc. On her left shoulder, there was a small bronze horse-shaped pendant, which had most probably been originally attached to the breast chain or clothing. From the religious perspective, the most interesting find was a necklace with seven round silver pendants carrying different signs in between glass beads. The most central and prominent pendant depicted a cross, and on both sides of it, pendants were decorated with lunula-shaped imprints. Often a cross symbol is created by combining four of such motives, but on these pendants no more than three signs could have been placed. The next pair represented pentagrams, which is rather unique in Estonia, and until then only one example of a similar kind had been known – from Ubina hoard, dated to the beginning of the 12th century (Tamla et al. 2006: Fig. 3:2). The set ended with two smaller pendants with a significantly simpler ornament. The set was probably made by one master and possibly also ordered as one unit. Thus, we could assume that the symbols and the pattern in which they were arranged had a specific meaning for the owner as well as the rest of the community.

Figure 5. *Burial VII from Kukruse early 13th-century cemetery. Close-ups of red ochre-painted egg and necklace. Note the symmetrical position of pendants in the necklace. Photos by Marko Usler, Signe Vahur and Tõnno Jonuks 2010.*

In addition, an egg was found in between her thighs, on top of the clothing and ornaments, and thus on display to all mourners. Small preserved fragments of red colour were discovered on the eggshell. This find is the first of its kind in Estonia, while many are known from the lower reaches of the River Daugava in Latvia, from the 12th and 13th centuries. It can be speculated that in some cases an egg buried with the deceased was there simply as food (Stenberger 1977: 472; Urtāns 1973), but considering the coloured shell and displayed position it is likely that this has more to do with the symbolic meaning. We could consider both interpretations here – the pagan and Christian symbolism. According to the former, the egg could be connected with the creation myth, according to which the world originates from an egg, and birds have also been associated with soul-birds (Nazarova 2006: 152). According to the latter, the colourful egg in the grave could be connected with the Easter egg tradition, symbolising the resurrection of the soul. The spread of eggshells in graves is eye-catching: in the eastern Baltic region these cases appear predominantly in the wealthy graves in coastal areas, and are limited to the 12th and 13th centuries, which points to some external influences rather than a local pagan mythical tradition. Considering the fact that eggs were coloured and found from graves, the latter interpretation – the egg as a symbol of the soul's resurrection – seems more plausible. But it does not necessarily mean that it was placed there just as a symbol of Christianity. The egg could just as well have transformed into a symbol of the soul's resurrection in pagan societies (Shepard 2008: 145), but even then it would probably have preserved something from its original meaning.

In the Kukruse case we are seemingly dealing with a wealthy female burial, and deciding by her grave goods and the food in the grave, her soul most likely had to continue a way of life similar to that before her death. At the same time Christian symbols were clearly demonstrated in her as well as the three neighbouring female burials (see above). It is interesting that among fifty studied burials this group of six burials was clearly distinctive – they were all buried close by (four females, two males), one male and all females were richly equipped for the Afterworld and all four females had either round silver pendants with cross-signs or a cross pendant on them. The latter, the biggest of its kind found in Estonia, was probably of local origin. While cross symbolism is present in the case of those four, it is interesting to note that the rest of the burials of the explored part of the cemetery did not include anything to symbolise their religion – neither Christian nor pagan.

The combination of crosses and rich grave goods can also be traced in other cemeteries, although not conclusively. So far only the appearance of cross pendants has been studied (Kurisoo 2012), according to which it could be concluded that it was mainly females and children that wore cross pendants, and they

were very rarely found in male burials. Also, burials with cross pendants do not differ by any other features from the rest of the burials in the community – but for this, the burial ritual seems to have been similar. So the main conclusion so far is that in the late 12th and 13th centuries some of the deceased were marked with Christian symbolism, but buried in the same way as the rest of the members of the community. This apparent mixing of religious phenomena shows that people of that time, who used Christian-related symbolism, did not differentiate themselves from the rest of the community. It is possible that the rich, locally produced and used Christian symbols had a meaning in society at the time, so it seems plausible to suggest that a kind of local interpretation of Christianity was represented in the religion of the 12th and 13th-century Estonia. So, what was the reason and what was their religion?

Who is a Christian? What about a Pagan?

It seems that even though 'Christian influences' proposed traditionally as an interpretation of such Christian symbolism is a relevant term, the term itself is very diffuse with complicated meanings, and needs to be reconsidered (Pluskowski & Patrick 2003). Too often archaeologists and historians of religion seem to identify the early Christian as someone who has changed the religious identity together with all necessary sacraments, who excludes the pagan gods and follows Christian doctrines (cf. also Musin 2012). In other words – a Christian in these early medieval societies could have been a person who corresponded to the doctrinal definition of the religion. Without any doubt such a narrow definition does not apply to transition societies and the features of one's religious identity were more diffused. It is even more obvious when studying the use of terms 'Christian' and 'Pagan' in Medieval Chronicles. It is widely known that the term 'Pagan' was not merely used when talking about religious opponents but in many cases about political opponents as well, irrespective of their religious background (Mägi 2002: 152; Tamm & Jonuks forthcoming). The medieval rural population in Estonia has constantly been called 'neophytes' in chronicles, even though the land and the folk had officially been Christianised for centuries (Kala 2006). Such a use of the term in Medieval Chronicles appears most clearly in the context of heresy, even though heretics considered themselves to be Christians (e.g. Janson 2003). And this is where we reach the issue of religious identity that we have traditionally based on seemingly objective and opposing official definitions – 'Christian' and 'Pagan'. Yet, especially in transitional societies the situation was much more merged and therefore it happened too often that people who considered themselves Christians were

labelled as Pagans. In this context it has not been discussed what could have been the religious identity of the people that used Christian symbolism but lived in a pagan society.

As in those days Christian symbolism spread among part of the Estonian population, we should focus on both personal and group identities. Identity has been thoroughly explored in archaeology and therefore multiple different definitions are in use. Margarita Díaz-Andreu and Samantha Lucy have defined identity as "inextricably linked to the sense of belonging. Through identity we perceive ourselves, and others see us, as belonging to certain groups and not others" (Díaz-Andreu & Lucy 2005: 1). Although we agree to the aspect of belonging, the distinction between 'us' and 'others' seems to be too clear-cut in the definition. In light of the archaeological finds from the Estonian Final Iron Age and their context, Timothy Insoll's study (2007) about religious identities in the Arabian Gulf region seems much more relevant. According to him, religious identities may be overlapping and vary much depending on the observer's position. We understand the religious identity as both personal and collective self-identification, and as something that is marked by using religious symbolism. The crucial aspect of this definition is the way the person in the past understood him/herself and what could have been the word to describe him/her. This means that the official definitions of 'Pagan' and 'Christian' based on doctrinal categories are of no more importance than the more speculative and subjective assumptions of what those people thought about themselves (cf. also Makarov 2009: 114).

Considering the rich local variety in using the cross and other Christian symbols at the time when all the major cultural centres around Estonia were experiencing a shift in religion, it seems plausible that the Estonian nobility (or at least a part of it) identified themselves as 'Christians'. In this context it must be kept in mind that characteristically of the 12th-13th-century religious worldview 'Christianity' and 'Paganism' did not eliminate one another. It is apparent in many medieval chronicles that pagan gods and supernatural beings existed in the Christian world as well and represented evilness (Jensen C.S. 2011). What mattered was who was more powerful (Kala 2006: 3). We may assume that such an approach was also represented in the Late Iron Age Estonian religion and Christ as a god could have been regarded merely as one of the many in the gods' family, and in the 12th and 13th centuries more powerful than others.[3] Thus, from a very basic standpoint we can assume that from the 11th century onwards the local population, and especially the nobility, was aware of Christianity as a new religion and its adoption did not result in a religious shift and exclusion of the existing or former gods. The wearing of crosses and other Christian symbolism in plain view indicates that it was

important for them to express their religious identity despite whatever the official or theological understanding of a 'Christian' was. It is also well known that Christian symbolism most often occurs in pre-Christian contexts, in which people possibly had to express their identity (Golubeva 1997; Staecker 2003; Jonuks 2009: 298; Madgearu 2012: 310). With all this in mind, the local nobility could have had closer relations with foreign and 'proper' Christian nobility. Medieval Christianity was mostly based on collective identity (Sanmark 2004: 182), which probably gave some ground for the locals to identify themselves as part of the wider nobility as well.

But what could have it meant to be a Christian in the 12th-13th-century Estonia? What could have been the themes in medieval Christianity that were attractive to pagan societies and could therefore have been the first to be integrated into the pagan religion?

Themes

In spite of wearing Christian symbolism and possibly considering themselves Christians, the religious knowledge of local folk differed considerably from the doctrinal treatment. If we presume that one of the major attractions of the new religion was its prestigious image, it is most likely that some elements of the Christian teaching were taken over as well. When studying the latter, we must remember that this sort of knowledge spread in a liminal situation from one newly Christianised society to another, or even in military contexts. And this definitely designated the topics that were significant and shaped the form of Christianity. It is most likely that we can leave aside complicated and doctrinal concepts, like the sin, the Holy Trinity, etc. (Sanmark 2004: 184). As Alexandra Sanmark has suggested, the Christian teaching in transition societies could have been made simpler in order for it to be more compatible with the former religion and in some cases it could have ended up even with what was heresy for the official theology (ibid.: 100).

The first of the attractive themes was probably eschatology together with the concept of the soul's resurrection and the Afterworld. These were some of the central motives in medieval Christianity and without a doubt existed in the Iron Age religion as well. The presence of 'proper' grave goods – i.e., objects placed into graves other than ornaments or articles of clothing – can be regarded as a proof of this. From the Migration Period onwards, the number of grave goods increased, comprising mostly weapons, and sometimes also tools or pet animals. According to the present view, these were the items that either belonged to the deceased or symbolised them, and the reason for placing those in the grave or

on the pyre was that the deceased's soul needed them in the Afterworld. Since the richly furnished inhumation graves started to appear in the 11th century, they also included ceramic vessels. Some of them contained charcoal (Jaanits et al. 1982: 347), but the majority seems to have been once filled with food. The presence of food in graves seems to be the best argument to suggest the existence of the Afterworld as a place where souls of the deceased continue a similar way of life and where they also need tools, weapons and food.

In medieval Christianity the souls of the deceased left the body and entered the purgatory for purification. The purgatory could be multiform, depending on cultural and historical backgrounds, but had a common element of souls being punished or awarded according to the life that they had led. During the Last Judgment souls and bodies were reunited to enjoy the eternal life in Paradise. Along with the official theological treatment, a more popular interpretation was simultaneously in use, according to which souls received an award also prior to the Last Judgment (Baun 2008). If a person led his/her life according to Christian teachings, the soul could have been provided with better conditions, or was punished in the opposite case, already before the Eternality (ibid.: 615). Those two views on afterlife were mixed in medieval religion and even though we could find a contradiction in the theological point of view, they were not in conflict in folk religion (Bernstein 2009: 204).

While the concepts of sin and purification most likely remained unfamiliar to locals, the idea of eternal afterlife in ideal Paradise was probably something that befitted the existing concepts and added some new valuable nuances. It is interesting to note that in many cases the burials with Christian symbolism included a most numerous set of grave goods. A good example of this was seen in Kukruse cemetery, where female burials with Christian symbolism were also accompanied by a rich set of tools and meal pots. This is partly connected with the nobility as they could afford investing in grave goods. At the same time such a connection is striking, emphasising again that there was no semantic contradiction between Christianity and Paganism in these societies.

God was probably another attractive topic besides the Afterworld. The concept of the Holy Trinity has often been considered too complicated for the local people to understand, but it was central in medieval Catholicism. As already mentioned, during the Middle Ages concessions were made in teaching Christianity. Therefore the Holy Trinity was probably not viewed as Trinity but as three different gods. And it is likely that this was acceptable and understandable in Iron Age societies and could have been introduced into their religion and pantheon. In addition to the three supreme gods, a legion of saints was also introduced by Christianity. When looking at medieval folk religion in Western Europe as a close analogy with rich sources available, there are no serious dif-

ferences between Iron Age pagan and medieval Christian folk religions, and Christian saints were venerated in the same way as gods formerly.

The changed concept of Christ needs to be borne in mind when talking about gods. While the first Christian influences reached Estonia in the 11th and 12th centuries, the Christian world had entered the age of crusades. The concept of god had also adjusted to it and Christ from the crusade period was not a suffering martyr but a victorious warrior. Such a concept was understandable and attractive to both newly baptised and non-Christian societies. And that was most likely the reason why Christian symbols can be found in Estonian Late Iron Age burials, and especially among wealthier ones. But Christianity was characteristic of nobility not only in pagan countries but all over Northern Europe. The first known Estonian Christian originated from the nobility – it was a local chief, called Thabelinus from Virumaa, who was baptised in Gotland, possibly by the priests of the bishopric of Riga (Vahtre 1997: 14). Nicholas and Johannes, two boys from Estonia who were on a pilgrimage to the cathedral of Nidaros (currently Trondheim, Norway) (see Blomkvist 2009), could also be regarded as members of nobility. Otherwise it would have been rather difficult to accomplish the pilgrimage from Estonia to Norway in the memory of their father. There are also some examples that suggest the initiative role of the local nobility in church-building (Johansen 1933: 209; Mäll 1998).

Bearing all this in mind, we can suggest that several individuals from the nobility may have added Christ into their personal pantheon, that the new approach to the Afterworld was probably attractive and, judging by the Christian symbolism on display, they apparently regarded themselves as Christians.

But was it Christianity?

Although in the 12th and early 13th-century Estonia there were people whose identity could be regarded as Christian and who most probably managed to create their own version of Christianity, they were not Christians for the rest of the Christian world. A crucial issue in speculations about Christianity prior to Christianity is that there have been many versions of the religion. Leaving aside extreme examples, such as eremites, the medieval Christianity was communal (Sanmark 2004: 182) – people belonged to congregations and bishoprics, they visited churches and received regular sacraments, etc. None of these phenomena were possible in Estonia when the church administrative system was absent, there were probably no priests, etc. Despite the fact that Bishop Fulco had been appointed Bishop of Estonia already in 1165, he probably never reached his bishopric. From as early as a century before, there is a message from Adam

of Bremen (Adam 2002: 16) who says that there was a church being built in Kurland. Such a claim could have partly been propaganda to demonstrate the spread of Christianity, but at the same time it is very likely that the German merchants, who regularly visited the eastern coast of the Baltic, had erected a sacral building for themselves (see also Kala 1998: 44; Rebane 2001: 39; Mägi 2002: 156). As merchants of the period stayed in the same place for a longer time (e.g. for winter), they were probably accompanied by a priest and it would only have been natural to also have a small church or a chapel for services. Nevertheless, those occasional events probably exerted merely negligible influence on the locals. It is more likely that instead of systematic teaching only random elements were obtained from Christianity and reinterpreted in the existing system. Therefore the local Christians could not have been considered 'proper' Christians by the rest of the Western world. Despite the possible Christian identity of the locals they were still considered Pagans and therefore the crusade at the beginning of the 13th century was non-contradictory.

CONCLUSION

As any other religion, Christianity has changed in the course of time and also through different contexts. This rather obvious statement seems to have often been neglected when discussing the most complicated phase of Christianity – the transforming society. Far too often claims and concepts of dogmatic Christianity have been ascribed to the mission of northern Europe during those 500 years. During this half a millennium religion changed considerably and as the mission always depended on the local context, there could not have been two similar examples of missions. So, the Christianity that reached the eastern side of the Baltic region during the 11th and 12th centuries was also unique. Christianity in the north was still marginal at the time of the Saxons' or even Scandinavians' missions in the 10th and 11th centuries and thus, mission tactics had to consider this. Indeed, the situation was different thereafter and by the 12th century, when the first Christians appeared in Estonia, religion was in power position. This also changed the mission strategy as reflected in such black-and-white depictions of local pagans and foreign Christians in medieval Livonia.

Along with the Christianisation of the most important centres of the Baltic region – south of Scandinavia and north-west of Russia – at the end of the 10th century the first cross-shaped pendants appeared in Estonia. It is characteristic that in the beginning, during the 11th and early 12th centuries, crosses appeared mostly in hoards, but from the end of the 12th century and especially at the beginning of the 13th century Christian symbolism was widely used, locally

interpreted and – most importantly – had a meaning in local religion. Considering the temporal circumstances, we can safely argue that the primary meaning of symbolism came from Christian religion, but the actual use and meaning in each single case could vary. The cross could have also been worn as a protective amulet (but the supernatural power of the symbol derived from Christianity) or as a prestigious symbol of nobility (with the origin of the tradition rooted in foreign Christian nobility), etc. But most likely Christian symbolism was used to mark either a Christian person or somebody who had accepted Christ as one of the gods. Yet, it must be stressed that this self-appearing form of Christianity was not acceptable for the rest of the Christian world. Instead of different forms of Christianity, the crusade at the beginning of the 13th century brought just the 'one and only' version of it to Estonia. So, at the beginning of the 13th century, when the Saxons and Danish started an organised crusade to Estonia, they most likely fought with the nobility, considering themselves, at least partly, Christian. But the crusaders did not regard themselves as Christians as they did not belong into the Christian world but simply practiced their own version of the religion. Therefore it was justified for Christians to call locals pagans, despite whatever the locals' identity and their symbols were. And so, in the end, a crucial question remains: While discussing the religiosity of those years, what should we consider more important: our seemingly objective (and always problematic) characteristics that we apply to an ancient religion on the basis of our sources, or our speculations of what those people thought about themselves?

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NOTES

[1] There are some cross-shaped pendants from the Roman Iron Age, but those clearly represent a special sub-group of the cross, which is determined by the era (3rd–5th century AD) but also by the form, and are therefore not comparable or connected to the tradition of using the cross in the Late Iron Age (Jonuks 2009: 228).

[2] This is not a methodological problem of Christianity alone but can also be traced among other religions. See Insoll 2007 and references therein for a similar problem of Muslim identities based on different standpoints.

[3] It should be mentioned that we purposely avoid using the term 'syncretism'. As William G. Kilbride has pointed out, the usage of this term is based on a false assumption that it is possible to clearly define early medieval Christianity or, moreover, paganism, which means that the concept of syncretism is founded upon a false antithesis and should therefore be rejected (Kilbride 2000: 8).

ABBREVIATIONS

AI – Archaeology collection at the Institute of History, Tallinn University
TLM – Archaeology collection at the Tartu City Museum
AM – Archaeology collection at the Estonian History Museum, Tallinn

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FINDING FOLK RELIGION: AN ARCHAEOLOGY OF 'STRANGE' BEHAVIOUR

Sonja Hukantaival

Abstract: Archaeology is not only about describing things; we also seek to understand what we find. Sometimes a find can seem puzzling, unexpected in the context in question. It is argued here that evidence of non-Christian elements of religiosity in a historical context can constitute such surprising finds. These finds become less confusing in the light of other sources, such as folklore accounts and historical records. Still, archaeology can offer something not accessible to other disciplines.

This paper discusses the phenomenon of folk religion, and the ways that we can take to find the meanings behind the material remains of practices, which may perhaps seem odd to us. A multidisciplinary approach is favoured, and the contribution of archaeology is crucial in gaining information about past practices. The paper also offers a short survey of some archaeological approaches to questions of folk religion. Another issue addressed is why we might be surprised to find evidence of 'strange' practices in historical contexts. It is suggested here that historical constructs about the 'civilising' effects of Christianity, Reformation, and Enlightenment, respectively, have affected the way that religiosity has been seen in the context of historical Europe.

Keywords: folk/popular/vernacular religion, historical archaeology, multidisciplinarity, ritual deposit

INTRODUCTION

If, for example, an upside-down turned goat skull is found, clearly deliberately deposited at a border-mark (see Fig. 1), archaeologists' interpretations easily turn towards a potentially religious action behind the find. In a prehistoric setting, such a find may be discussed without any unconcealed value-charges, but what if it was found in a historical, Christian, context? The find in question was unearthed during archaeological excavations in the town of Turku (in south-western Finland) in 2006 (Hukantaival 2007: 72; Saloranta 2010: 70). It was dated to the 14th century, and it lay right next to the cathedral; thus it was situated in the middle of the religious centre of the area.

Figure 1. *Deposited goat skull at a 14th-century border mark. Photo by Sonja Hukantaival 2006.*

As historian Stephen A. Mitchell points out, Western historiography has revealed a tendency to portray the conversion to Christianity in a triumphalist manner, resulting in a complete, uniform, and evenly distributed spiritual hegemony. Any controversial evidence has generally been dismissed out of hand (Mitchell 2011: 38). One can easily suspect that the original reasons behind this conduct have been political, but I suggest that this attitude is still unconsciously with us scholars, even though the importance of the political reasons has diminished.

Many scholarly works offering a general survey of religious matters reveal this aspect. It is perhaps not so surprising that the general surveys offered by archaeologists, who traditionally have concerned themselves with prehistoric contexts, often present Christianity (and other 'world religions') as a final chapter. They often only discuss the 'origins' of these traditions, which suggests that after the 'triumph' of the world religions, the questions of religion become of merely marginal interest to archaeologists and, to a greater extent, the concern of other disciplines (see, e.g., Steadman 2009; less blatantly Insoll 2011).

The 'controversial evidence' against the cohesion of religion is often called 'folk religion' (e.g. Yoder 1974; Christian 2004). Other terms also used are 'popular' (e.g. Crummey 1993) and 'vernacular' (e.g. Primiano 1995) religion. The most openly problematic term is naturally 'superstition', because of its strong negative connotations (see Cameron 2010: 4–6). I have here chosen to use the term 'folk religion', even though it also has its subtexts (I will return to discuss these further below). Nevertheless, it is the term I am accustomed to since it translates most closely to the Finnish *kansanusko* (more precisely 'folk belief'), which is the general term for these phenomena in Finnish research (see, e.g., Koski 2011; Enges 2012). I might on some occasions use the term 'folk belief' as a synonym for 'folk religion', but I prefer 'religion' over 'belief' as a broader concept including practices as well as beliefs. The definition of folk religion will be discussed in the next chapter.

I am proposing that the aforementioned believed 'triumph' of uniform Christianity causes (unconscious?) presumptions about religiosity in historical times. As a result, archaeologists who are working with material from historical times have had difficulties interpreting evidence inconsistent with the expectations of past religiosity, as has, for example, been noticed by Roberta Gilchrist (2008: 120). This is why I call the archaeology of folk religion an archaeology of 'strange' behaviour in the title of this paper; a title that may seem slightly provocative, but is meant to be playful and self-critical.

The aim of this paper is to bring forth for archaeologists the complex nature of religiosity in European historical times and to discuss how our understanding of different phenomena can be increased. I will address questions about the nature of folk religion, about who the 'folk' in question are, and what the role of archaeology is in gaining an understanding of the phenomena. I will also offer a brief and limited overview of the current relationship of archaeologists and folk religion in (mainly) northern Europe.

'OFFICIAL' RELIGION AND FOLK RELIGION

The term 'religion' has been recurrently discussed among scholars. It may even seem like the only commonly shared view on religion is that it is difficult to define (see, e.g., Goody 1961; Asad 1983: 238; 1993: 29, 54; Insoll 2004: 5–23; Whitehouse 2004: 1–3; Steadman 2009: 21–23). When 'folk', another term facing considerable definitional problems (see, e.g., Foster 1953), is added to the equation, this task becomes even more confusing (see, e.g., Yoder 1974; Primiano 1995; Christian 2004). I have elsewhere (Hukantaival in press) discussed a suggestion that the core of the definitional problems of 'religion' and 'ritual'

lies within the relationship between language and reality, and the difficulties to satisfactorily divide and confine the complexity and dynamic nature of reality. Also, Veikko Anttonen, professor of comparative religion, has pointed out that both 'religion' and 'folk religion' are ultimately nominalist constructs rather than realistic categories (Anttonen 2004; 2012: endnote 3).

This notion does not, however, remove the need for definitions (see also Bell 2007).[1] For the purpose of this paper, I will leave the discussion of the definition of 'religion' aside, and concentrate on 'folk religion'. The classic way to categorise in scientific approaches has been to form a list of criteria that a member of the category should fulfil (about discussion on this see, e.g., Koski 2011: 110–118). In human sciences, these lists are seldom absolutely strict, and often some flexibility is allowed. Also, a list of possible components belonging to a category can be given, as in the example below.

The following elements can be seen as part of folk religion (Enges 2012: 59–60):

> 1) Understandings about the genesis of the universe, its structure, and the forces operating within it, understandings of human essence and life-course, death and afterlife, natural and supernatural, society, and its relationship with nature and the universe.
> 2) Different supernatural agencies, such as gods, spirits, and ancestors.
> 3) Calendar rites and rites of passage, and corresponding cult places, benign and malignant magic, folk medicine, and its understandings of diseases and healing.
> 4) Religious specialists, such as cunning folk, witches, and healers.
> 5) Popular modes of thinking, e.g. understandings of morals, norms, sanctions, and luck.
> 6) The religious genres of folklore, like memorates, myths, spells, and spiritual songs.

As folklorist Pasi Enges points out, this list is extremely extensive and quite close to the way that many researchers define 'worldview'. It seems that these kinds of definitions easily become too broad in an attempt to include every possible angle of the phenomenon in question. Personally, I prefer a simple definition as the one given by Don Yoder (see below), especially if we keep in mind that definitions are always problematic to some extent and one should not regard them dogmatically (see also Hukantaival in press).

The above list does not offer any means for distinguishing folk religion from 'ethnic' or 'indigenous' religions, such as the religiosity before contact with Christianity. This may cause problems if folk religion is, as a result, perceived only as a relic from pre-Christian times. The relationship with the 'official'

religion is the element that is relevant to folk religion as discussed here (see also Rydving 2004). This can be seen in Don Yoder's useful definition:

> Folk religion is the totality of all those views and practices of religion that exist among the people apart from and alongside the strictly theological and liturgical forms of the official religion. (Yoder 1974: 14)

Historian Euan Cameron, who has studied how European religious authorities have defined and outlined the 'wrong' religiosity, or 'superstition', at different times, calls this the relationship between 'the theory and practice' of religion. He stresses the importance to remember the distinction between the two:

> Much writing on the area of superstitions has been bedevilled by a failure to distinguish adequately between what people were instructed to think and do on one hand, and what evidence suggests they thought and did on the other, between norms and reported realities. (Cameron 2010: 6)

On the other hand, folklorist Leonard Norman Primiano, who criticises the terms 'folk/popular' religion and prefers 'vernacular' religion instead, points out that, since vernacular religion is religion as it is lived, it is impossible for the religion of an individual not to be vernacular (Primiano 1995: 44). The critique offered by Primiano is partly directed towards the dichotomy in the terms 'folk' or 'popular' religion against 'official' religion. He suggests that the terms misleadingly imply that somewhere religion exists as a pure element, which is then transformed and contaminated into folk religion (ibid.: 38–40).

The term 'vernacular' is borrowed from linguistics and has meanings such as 'indigenous', 'personal', 'private', 'native', and 'local' attached to it (ibid.: 42–43). Primiano also stresses that even the institutionalised elements of organised religion have a vernacular nature and, in fact, what scholars have referred to as 'official' religion does not exist (ibid.: 45). At this point, Primiano's reasoning raises a question: Why discuss 'vernacular religion' and not just 'religion'? Perhaps Primiano is overstating a bit to make his point clear? In my mind, if we continue taking analogies from linguistics, one could compare the relationship between 'official' religion and folk religion to the relationship between literary language and spoken dialects. One is based on rules agreed upon by a specific group of people while the others are more 'alive', being constantly recreated in use (with a base in tradition, naturally). Still, literary language is also re-discussed, and rules are modified, so it is not static either, just as 'official' religion.

I agree with Primiano about 'official' religion being mostly an ideal type (ibid.: 46), and Cameron's notion of 'theoretical' religion is also somewhat similar (Cameron 2010: 6). Nevertheless, even if 'official' religion only exists in

theory, it still does exist. As with the above given analogy of literary language and spoken language, the 'official' form and 'folk' form of religion both affect each other. However, the influence of the 'official' religion has perhaps been more prominent because of authority issues.[2] In addition, as Cameron's study reminds us, the border between (official) religion and 'superstition' has also been constantly negotiated, thus the categories are always dynamic.

Researchers within the cognitive approaches to matters of religion, such as, for example, Harvey Whitehouse and Ilkka Pyysiäinen, point out that there are types of religiosity that are more natural to human cognition (cognitively optimal religion), and types that are more complicated, which need to be learned and rehearsed (cognitively costly religion). Theologically correct religion is cognitively costly while many aspects of folk religion stem from ordinary, everyday thinking, which originates in the immediate experience of individuals. Thus, folk religion aims at practical solutions to everyday issues, not at creating general theories. The 'naturalness' of everyday religiosity leads also persons who are explicitly committed to orthodox concepts to occasionally 'slip' into this mode since it is both easier to handle and more relevant from the everyday point of view than fixed theological systems (Pyysiäinen 2004; Whitehouse 2004: 29–59, 127–134).

The beliefs and practices of religion that have not followed the teachings of the church constitute the folk religion discussed in this paper. Some of these elements could have been inherited from pre-Christian times, but they would still have been reinterpreted from another point of view. Moreover, these elements would be mixed with Christian features, also as interpreted by people. The result is a dynamic, non-consistent whole that includes many elements that could be seemingly contradictory, but still no conflict is experienced in the mind of the practitioner. In the words of folklorist Laura Stark:

> [...], folk religion represents neither Christianity's 'contamination' of ethnic folk belief nor the 'misinterpretation' of Christianity by the nonliterate rural populace, but a functional system in which the most useful elements of each belief system are adopted and fashioned into a syncretic whole. (Stark 2002: 30)

As Cameron puts it, the different forms of supernatural power overlapped and intermingled in people's minds (Cameron 2010: 62). This can be illustrated by a folklore example of a building ritual that was recorded in Pihtipudas (in Central Finland) in 1885, and has been published in the *Suomen Kansan Muinaisia Taikoja* (Ancient Magic of the Finnish People) series (SKMT):

> When a stable is rebuilt, a silver coin is split in four pieces and one piece is put in the middle of each first log-joint. Then a guardian-spirit comes

> to the stable. One should say the Lord's Prayer and blessings while doing this. (SKMT IV, 1: I 237§; translation from Finnish by the author)

As the name of the publication mentioned above (Ancient Magic of the Finnish People) shows, 'magic' is one aspect of folk religion that has attracted much interest. Thus, a quick definition of this term is also in its place before continuing. Magic is also a term with many connotations, and especially classic scholars of religion made a considerable effort to exclude magic from religion (e.g. Frazer 1992 [1922]; Durkheim 1964 [1915]). Magic has been defined in different ways, but I have adopted a view where magic is a means to a certain desired end (see, e.g., Frazer 1992 [1922]: 11–12). Again, the category is dynamic, but the difference with other means to ends is that although the effect is believed to be a result of the action (not necessarily caused by a helping 'supernatural' being), the relationship between cause and effect does not follow the causality of action of a more 'profane' nature (or, as scientifically understood) (see Malinowski 1954 [1948]: 27–33). Thus, for example, placing a horse skull in the foundation of a hearth to prevent cockroaches from breeding in the house is counted as magic[3] since, according to the everyday reasoning, the connection between cause and effect is not similar to lighting a fire to stay warm. Of course, it must always be kept in mind that the distinction between magical cause and effect and 'mundane' causality has probably not always been as clear-cut to the practitioners as it is to present scholars.[4]

FOLK RELIGION IN SURPRISING (?) PLACES

As mentioned above, the assumed Christian 'triumphalism' that Mitchell pointed out has affected our expectations regarding evidence of religious phenomena. However, as Robert W. Scribner remarked, another construct of historiography also affects the way that we see 'superstitious' beliefs in Europe's past. In the parts of Europe affected by it, the Reformation has been seen as the 'modernising' and 'civilising' moment in history, which ultimately abolished the popular culture of magic and superstition. Later on this view has been contested, and historians have pointed out that after the Reformation intelligent Protestants continued to believe in demons and spirits, and the Reformation did not remove the threat of witchcraft and hostile sorcery either (Scribner 1993; Cameron 2010: 10–14).

What about the Enlightenment then? As historians Owen Davies and Willem de Blécourt state, it is too crude and misleading to portray the Enlightenment as a period when Europe (finally) cast off the belief in witchcraft and magic.

The changes that took place were subtle renegotiations rather than huge intellectual and social leaps. What did happen was that intellectual interpretations of aspects of folk magic shifted from being a very real and satanic offence to being a merely fraudulent and morally reprehensive crime. Still, after this decriminalisation of witchcraft, the majority of Europeans still felt the same way about the matters they had before, and the considerable intellectual interest regarding diabolic intervention in human affairs also continued (Davies & de Blécourt 2004: 1–5). As Cameron put it: "Therefore, it is not in the least surprising if evidence survives of popular 'superstitions' long after the supposed 'decline of magic'" (Cameron 2010: 14).

Davies and de Blécourt also remind us that the Enlightenment has been simplistically portrayed as a period when the beliefs and worldview of the 'elite' and the 'people' irrevocably pulled away from one another (Davies & de Blécourt 2004: 1). This brings us back to the question of 'folk' in folk religion. Traditionally 'folk' has been connected with rural peasant populations (small, isolated, homogenous, 'primitive') and contrasted with 'urban' cultures, or at least a distinction has been made between 'elite' and lower class 'folk' (see, e.g., Foster 1953; Crummey 1993; Christian 2004). It has been pointed out that both 'folk' and 'popular' carry the same connotation (Crummey 1993: 702; Primiano 1995: 39–40).

The example of the deposited goat skull given at the beginning of this paper was found in the middle of an urban centre, but since it dates to medieval times, the find could be dismissed as belonging to a still 'superstitious' time (before both the Reformation and the Enlightenment). Also, questions about the (truly) urban nature of a medieval town in such a peripheral area as Finland could be put forward. Another example, also from Turku, was found at excavations in 2011 by the residence of Gustaf Gadolin (1769–1843), who was the professor of Hebrew, Greek, and theology at the Academy of Turku (Väisänen 2000). On the bottom of a storage pit, the bones belonging to a hare's left hind leg were found in a position indicating that they had been put there as a hare's foot (see Fig. 2). The storage pit could not be precisely dated, but stratigraphically it belonged to the times just before the Great Fire of 1827, thus coinciding with professor Gadolin's lifetime, or at least the lifetime of his father, professor Jacob Gadolin, who owned the property before him (Pihlman et al. 2012: 3–5). During this time (the late 18th and early 19th centuries), the urban nature of Turku cannot be contested, and again the proximity of the cathedral is striking. The possible connection to the clearly educated 'elite' position of the owner of the property is also interesting. The hare's foot could certainly have belonged to a servant, giving it a more 'proper' lower class connection, but this need not be the case.

Figure 2. *A hare's foot at the bottom of a storage pit on professor Gadolin's premises. Photo by Sonja Hukantaival 2011.*

The hare's foot is an ancient magical object, known already c. AD 77–79 by Pliny the Elder. He explains in his *Natural History* that the hare's foot is known to cure joint pains and gout if the patient carries it as an amulet (Plinius Secundus 1963: 149). The hare's (or rabbit's) foot has since become one of the best known lucky charms and evil-averting objects, but there is little scholarly discussion on the origins and meanings of this custom (see Ellis 2002). In Finnish folklore, the hare's foot is not particularly common when compared to other magical objects. This may point to it being a fairly new (Indo-European?) introduction into the magical repertoire in this area. This could explain why 17th-century finds of this object are known in the south-western town of Turku (Hukantaival 2007), where new influences were first felt. However, there is some evidence of the use of a hare's foot as a protective magical object in the late 19th century from even such remote areas like Lapland (SKMT IV, 2: XII 41§; SKMT IV, 3: VI 820§, n6), so this matter definitely requires more investigation before anything conclusive can be said.

The possible connection between the hare's foot and a respected family of professors and clergy may seem puzzling at first glance. It could be pointed out that just two generations before, Gustav Gadolin's grandfather was born a peasant (Väänänen 2000). However, I would still refrain from insisting that magical beliefs can only be connected to lower-class people. For example, the educated elite of the 18th-century Finland still debated whether cattle plague was caused by poisonous air, bad fodder, or witches' projectiles (Nikander 1937). Also, as Laura Stark has discussed, in Early Modern Finland magical practices and beliefs were taught to children as situated knowledge, which means that it was learned by doing in the context of everyday life. For this reason, magic became an unconscious habit: the right way to do things in a certain situation (Stark 2006: 71). In this light, it may be easier to understand that even church men had assimilated certain habits and customs, and did not always question the nature of these (see also Falk 2008: 162). In addition, as discussed above, many aspects of folk religion are cognitively natural, which could also cause persons with theologically correct education to 'slip' in everyday life (Pyysiäinen 2004; Whitehouse 2004: 29–59, 127–134).

Research has shown that evidence of folk religion can be found from all periods, from centre and periphery, in urban and non-urban, as well as lower and upper class contexts (e.g. Valk 2004b: 309; Swann 2005: 116). Also, Primiano points out that the distinction between the clergy and the laity is not absolutely clear since some members of the clergy undoubtedly share many of the beliefs and practices of their lay followers (Primiano 1995: 702). Again, folk religion is to be found where evidence shows that what people thought and did was not the same as they (in theory) were instructed to do (see Cameron 2010: 6), no matter who 'the people' were. Also, folk religion is not confined to 'profane' contexts: as sacred locations, for example, churches and cemeteries are particularly central places for folk beliefs (see, e.g., Koski 2011: 105–108; Falk 2008: 152–163; Valk 2004b: 300).

The believed 'civilised' nature of Europeans (see Cameron 2010: 10–14) has also caused a tendency to see folk religion as something belonging to 'others' (see also Mitchell 2011: 106–107). This has been especially outstanding in the USA, where such archaeological sites where protective charms and divination or conjure items have been found have traditionally been interpreted as occupied by people of African American heritage (Fennell 2000: 281). The same attitude can naturally also be sensed in the idea that folk religion is something belonging to rural, 'simple' people as opposed to civilised, modern, urban people (see above).

The difficulty to understand 'superstitions' among 'civilised' people is still visible in contemporary scientific research, especially outside the humanities. An interest in different 'superstitious' beliefs has risen in the field of psychology

at the University of Helsinki. The resulting studies are interesting, although they are also quite 'painful' reading for someone with a background in culture studies. The main idea seems to be to try and explain how it is possible that many kinds of 'irrational' beliefs still exist among otherwise 'civilised' people. The attitude towards the object of study (the people who believe) is arrogant in a very '19th-century anthropologist' way (see, e.g., Lindeman & Aarnio 2006; Aarnio 2007).

Nevertheless, these studies offer some benefits that can be useful for understanding folk religion also for researchers in humanities. As a result of their studies, psychologists have deduced that humans use both an analytical and an intuitive system of reasoning. These systems are independent in a way that makes it possible for an individual to be simultaneously rational and have 'irrational' beliefs, and further:

> The finding that paranormal beliefs mainly arise from an intuitive system, instead of a malfunctioning analytical system, explains why the beliefs do not vanish with the increase of education, scientific knowledge, and rational thinking. (Aarnio 2007: 6)

Psychologists' studies did indicate that individuals with a higher education are more sceptical than individuals with a lower education (e.g. Aarnio 2007: 6), but this view is challenged in another analysis of contemporary beliefs, made from the viewpoint of a folklorist (Hänninen 2009: 51–52).

Since psychologists are puzzled by 'superstitions' today, it surely should not be surprising to find evidence of folk religion at any time in the past. I also hope to have shown that evidence of folk religion should not be surprising in any context: rural or urban, domestic or ecclesiastic, educated or illiterate, upper or lower class and no matter what ethnicity is in question. There have certainly been differences both between individuals and between times and places, but the nature of these differences can better be discussed after some more research without obvious preconceptions has been carried out, hopefully with valuable contributions from archaeologists, in addition to other disciplines.

THE MULTIDISCIPLINARY ARCHAEOLOGY OF FOLK RELIGION

How can we then reach the 'practice of religion', as Cameron expressed it? In Finland, research on folk religion has traditionally been the interest of the disciplines of folkloristics and comparative religion. As a result, the material culture of folk religion has largely been excluded from study, thus serving only

as illustrative material if considered at all (see, e.g., Issakainen 2006: 1–2). At the moment, there seem to be a rising interest among scholars of different disciplines in matters of folk religion in Europe. As Mitchell remarks, a positive development is currently taking place in the research:

> Finally, after years of working in relatively atomistic parallel universes, such necessarily interrelated fields as folklore, history, philology, and archaeology are once again recognizing the advantages of a comprehensive approach to such subjects as witchcraft, magic, and religion, [...]. (Mitchell 2011: 22)

In an ideal situation, a truly multidisciplinary research would be realised through a joint project, comprising professionals from different disciplines all treating the phenomenon in question from their own viewpoints and discussing different ways of approaching the material. However, in practice it is often up to the individual researcher to try to operate with the different sources available. This calls for carefulness and good knowledge of source-criticism involved in each type of source. As always, special caution should be employed in combining evidence if different sources are temporally and/or regionally distant from each other (see, e.g., Gazin-Schwartz & Holtorf 1999: 13).

In addition to archaeological finds, other sources that can be used for understanding folk religion are, for example, historical sources, such as witchcraft-trial records, legal texts, and 'superstition treatises' (see, e.g., Mitchell 2011; Cameron 2010), as well as folklore material; for example, accounts on magical practices, and ethnological sources (mainly the material culture of folk religion not collected archaeologically). This list is by no means exclusive, and the possibilities vary in different countries with distinct research traditions and a different emphasis on the sources available.

Since extensive folklore collections exist in Finland, and I am using these sources in my own research on building magic, I chose to discuss some source-critical aspects of this material as an example (see also Gazin-Schwartz & Holtorf 1999; Valk 2006).[5] Most of the folklore accounts concerning Finnish folk religion have been recorded in the late 19th and early 20th centuries – a point that is important to bear in mind when working with this material. Other vital aspects of understanding are concerned with how the material has come to be as it is – the 'formation processes' of folklore material, to use a term familiar to archaeologists (see Schiffer 1987).

Recently, these questions have been discussed, for example, by folklorist Kaarina Koski. She reminds us that at the time that most of the material was collected, the so-called 'Finnish research method' was prevailing in folkloristics, and it exerted significant influence on how the material was formed. According

to the mentality of the period, folklore accounts were understood as a collective 'voice of the past', and individual accounts were detached from their context. On the other hand, the benefit of the research paradigm was that it needed large collections to achieve its objective to find the believed 'original forms' of the traditions. The influence of the individual collectors on the material was also considerable and researchers of the period controlled the 'authenticity' and 'folksiness' of the accounts. Collectors were not interested in asking about traditions in central areas since these were not thought to be places where the 'original' elements had survived (Koski 2011: 28–39; see also Anttonen 2004: 74–75). For these reasons, it is also crucial to familiarise oneself with the collector's guides (e.g. Mustonen 1936 [1885]) of the period for a better understanding of the formation of the folklore material.

As we are aware of the source-critical issues involved, knowledge of folklore material helps our understanding of matters of folk religion and more broadly the 'mentality of the past' (see Valk 2006: 316; also Stark 2006). Since all these different potential source materials are at hand, one could ask what the role of archaeology is in the research of folk religion. The neglected material culture of folk religion has already been mentioned, but also one critical point about many of these other sources has been remarked by historian Cameron as follows: "Nothing intrinsic to the pastoral superstition-treatises proves that any identifiable group of people actually practiced the activities that it condemns" (Cameron 2010: 69–70).[6] To discuss whether the practices were actually real and not just imagined, Cameron turns to their survived physical evidence (Cameron 2010: 69–72). Who else than archaeologists are most competent to discuss the physical evidence of past actions?

As a result of the different 'formation processes' of varied source materials, only parts of the 'practice of religion' have been recorded and have survived. One example is given by Ralph Merrifield, who could be called one of the pioneers in discussing matters of folk religion from an archaeological perspective. When ruminating over the numerous finds of deliberately concealed shoes in the constructs of buildings, he points out that no surviving folklore or other accounts exist about this practice, even though the physical evidence shows that it has been a common custom (Merrifield 1987: 133–134; see also Swann 2005[7]). A similar example can also be given from Finland. It seems from the archaeological material that whetstones (both used and unused) have often been concealed in buildings (Hukantaival 2007: 68; 2011: 49). However, in over 700 folklore accounts on concealing objects in buildings thus far examined by the author, no whetstones are mentioned (although they are mentioned, for example, in hunting-magic, see SKMT I 306§). Concealed whetstones in buildings have also been found in southern Scandinavia (Falk 2008: 115). The whetstone "on which

iron tools have been often sharpened" is also one of the magical objects known to Pliny the Elder in his *Natural History* from circa AD 77 (Plinius Secundus 1963: 35; see also Mitchell 1985 on whetstone symbolism).

Archaeologists can also contribute to the research of folk religion by observing different phenomena in a long-term perspective. For example, Swedish archaeologist Ann-Britt Falk has studied changes in elements of folk religion (building concealments) through changes in the archaeological material, building on the idea that the latter refer to changed meanings (Falk 2008: 59). According to her studies, the Reformation had a bigger effect on folk religion than conversion to Christianity, which is quite an interesting observance (ibid.: 74, 184–201).

As Cameron remarked, there is a difference between how people were instructed to think and behave and what evidence suggests that they actually did. Archaeological finds tell us about what people actually *did,* in a highly reliable way, compared to many other sources that are often heavily influenced by authorities. To access what they *thought*, other sources may be more informative. In any case, there is no sense in confining the study of folk religion to only one type of source material, while a much broader understanding can be achieved from multiple sources.

ARCHAEOLOGISTS AND FOLK RELIGION

Even though the 'archaeology of folk religion' is a marginal offshoot of the also quite marginal 'archaeology of religion' (see, e.g., Insoll 2004: 1–5), it is still not a complete novelty. In this chapter, I will not attempt a comprehensive view on the subject, but rather make a short survey of some of the themes connected to folk religion, which have been discussed by archaeologists. Because of my own northern location, this survey is biased towards studies made in the northern parts of Europe.

One of the first serious attempts to define an archaeological field of research connected with folk religion is the aforementioned Ralph Merrifield's book *The Archaeology of Ritual and Magic* (1987). The intention of the book was to guide archaeologists to pay attention to evidence of religion in any period, but its unprejudiced attitude towards matters of folk religion in historical times might have had a most noticeable impact. The most obvious follower of Merrifield is Brian Hoggard with his 'archaeology of counter-witchcraft' (Hoggard 2004). Matters of folk religion in connection to death and burial have also interested British archaeologists. Roberta Gilchrist's awarded article on evidence of magic in medieval burials is a relevant discussion on the matter (Gilchrist 2008), and recently Sarah Tarlow (2011) has discussed attitudes towards death and the

dead in Early Modern Britain and Ireland from multiple angles, including the viewpoint of folk belief.

In Scandinavia, an archaeological plea for noticing the unused potential of research in folk religion was made by Norwegian Volker Demuth in a presentation at *Kontaktseminaret* in 1999. As an example, he discussed how matters of folk religion can be reached through the decorations on Early Modern ceramics (Demuth 2000). In Finland, Marianna Niukkanen has touched upon the same subject of magical meanings in the ceramics decorations (Niukkanen 2007). Both Demuth and Niukkanen refer to the Dutch researcher Maria Garthoff-Zwaan, who discussed the symbolic meanings (fertility, regeneration and protection against evil) of the decorations already in 1988 (Niukkanen 2007: 34 > Garthoff-Zwaan & Ruempol 1988).

Since my own research subject is ritual concealments made in buildings (Hukantaival 2007; 2009; 2011), I focus on this topic specifically. The phenomenon of deliberately concealed objects in buildings has attracted the interest of many archaeologists studying historical times, perhaps since similar phenomena had first been discussed in prehistoric contexts (e.g. Capelle 1987; Henriksen 1998). The most extensive work made in northern Europe on building concealments in historical times is the licentiate thesis by Swede Ann-Britt Falk, already mentioned above (Falk 2008). Articles about the topic have also been written, for example, in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland (Vařeka 1994; Daróczi-Szabó 2010; Baron 2012), to mention but some studies outside the Nordic countries.

As well as it seems to be in other parts of Europe (see, e.g., Mitchell 2011: 22), the amount of recent publications indicates a rising interest in the matters of folk religion in Finland, after some more silent times. This can be seen as a growing amount of publications grazing the topic also among archaeologists. Juha Ruohonen is conducting research on cemeteries on islands, which in itself can be seen as part of folk religion since they differ from 'official' instructions on burial (see, e.g., Ruohonen 2010), but he has also written an article about evidence of a magic practice involving a coin wrapped in red woollen thread in one of these island cemeteries (Ruohonen 2011). Also, Timo Muhonen's research topic is related to matters of folk religion. He studies stone cairns connected with offerings and other practices and beliefs besides the better known connection to prehistoric burials (e.g. Muhonen 2010; 2011). Some interest in folk religion has also been visible in the studies concerning contexts in northern Finland and Lapland (e.g. Herva & Ylimaunu 2009; Äikäs & Guttorm 2011).

In Estonia, especially Heiki Valk has repeatedly discussed matters connected to folk religion. He has, for example, discussed evidence of folk religion in burial customs, like beliefs connected to village cemeteries (Valk 1995), and

urban furnished graves, from the point of view of regional and ethnosocial differences (Valk 2004a). Additionally, he has studied the relationship between Christian holy sites and different sacred places of folk religion, noticing that Christianity has influenced these places in various ways (Valk 2004b; 2008). To mention another recent Estonian archaeological study connected to folk religion, an article has been written discussing a find of a stone disk engraved with symbols (most likely some sort of talisman), a unique find in Estonia (Jonuks et al. 2010). Also, the phenomenon of re-using Stone Age tools as magical 'thunderbolts' has recently been discussed in Estonia (Johanson 2009). These 'thunderbolts' have attracted the attention of archaeologists also elsewhere in Europe (e.g. Carelli 1996; Muhonen 2006).

In addition to more traditional topics of research on folk religion (such as pre-Christian survivals, offerings and magic), some interest has also risen towards the dynamic 'border area' between 'official' and folk religion. Private devotion (see, e.g., Webb 2005) is one example of such a 'border area', certainly involving many elements approved and encouraged by the 'official' religious authorities, but at the same time a 'dangerous' zone with a profound possibility for folk interpretations of religion (see Cameron 2010: 50–62). Also, for example, Christian magic is a subject that has certainly been avoided as an unorthodox topic for discussion, but this, too, is now being explored by daring researchers (e.g. Cameron 2010: 58–62; Mitchell 2011: 43–73). Janne Harjula gave a presentation at the Annual Meeting of the European Association of Archaeologists in 2012, discussing some finds of medieval wooden vessels with parts of prayers carved on them as rune inscriptions (Harjula 2012). The fluctuating border between private devotion and magic is an interesting question to be discussed in this connection as well.

One thing that can be noticed in many of these studies mentioned above is that there is little consensus among archaeologists about what folk religion is. Every researcher certainly defines the terms he/she uses according to his/her own research tradition, but the source of the confusion might in this case be that, in general, research discussing folk religion is not well known among archaeologists. It seems that the idea that folk religion is pre-Christian religion surviving in defiance to Christianity or as a relic in peripheral areas is quite common (see, e.g., Daróczi-Szabó 2010; Valk 2004b). This is the traditional view that has influenced much of the discussion and the formation of folklore records as mentioned above. Perhaps the other extreme is the 'relational ontology' preferred by Herva & Ylimaunu (2009), in which matters of folk religion are tried to be explained outside religion altogether.

The 'archaeology of folk religion' is not a uniform field, and perhaps few of the researchers in question even consider themselves to be part of such a genre.

I do not see this as a problem in itself, but discussing the theories and methods in use, and the needs for developing them, is easier after a field of research has been defined. Most of the research on folk religion carried out by archaeologists has concentrated on single find groups without wider connections to other aspects of folk religion, which is understandable since the phenomenon of folk religion is overwhelmingly vast and one could say that the 'archaeology of folk religion' is still in a basic research phase. However, it is also refreshing to notice that matters of religion are being integrated more widely into archaeological research of historical times, as in Roberta Gilchrist's recent book on medieval life in general (Gilchrist 2012).

CONCLUSIONS

Folk religion as defined in this paper is religion interpreted and re-interpreted by people in their everyday life. Different traditions have certainly had their part in this interpretation, but folk religion is still not static, and I would like to stress that folk religion is more than only survivals and persistence of pre-Christian religion. The relationship between 'official' religion and folk religion is a complex matter that will hopefully be discussed more deeply in the future.

Archaeologists have much to add to the research of folk religion since the real 'practice of religion' is to be reached most reliably through the material remains of actual customs. Nevertheless, without other sources these material remains have less potential than if they were combined with them. Since folk religion as defined in this setting is a historical phenomenon, the utilisation of historical and folkloristic sources is less problematic than in case they are used together with prehistoric finds. Still, a good knowledge of source-critical issues is needed.

If archaeological research is combined with the research on folk religion more comprehensively, it may become possible to trace the traditions (the ones that are manifested materially) and their changes back in time. This kind of research could help us answer questions about how elements of religion are preserved and how they change, and this could potentially also contribute to the study of prehistoric religions, for which additional sources are not available. There have been speculations and assumptions about the survival of religious elements, but a comprehensive study on the subject is still lacking. In this connection, a crucial question is if evidence of static customs can be considered as evidence of static beliefs, in the same way as changing customs have been interpreted as evidence of changing beliefs (see, e.g., Falk 2008). The connection between practice and belief should also be discussed more widely to answer this question.

Even though I strongly support the use of additional sources when interpreting archaeological remains connected to folk religion, I do see the 'archaeology of folk religion' as a part of the 'archaeology of religion', not as a separate field. It has been suggested within the field of comparative religion that the concept of folk religion has served its purpose by pointing out that religion is more than theological, only textual, elitist, etc., and could thus already be discarded (Rydving 2004: 149). I do see the point in this: folk religion *is* included in religion, but I still feel that folk religion as a concept has not yet 'done its duty' in the field of archaeology. The discussion that has been conducted within comparative religion is not so well known outside it, so a 'set of training wheels' is in its place for the time being.

It is also good to remember that folk religion is not only to be found in the past. When looking around today, with the role of 'official' religion partly replaced by a scientific worldview, there are numerous different 'folk interpretations' about matters of religion and other beliefs (for example, about health and diet), as has been noticed by the psychologists mentioned above (Lindeman & Aarnio 2006; Aarnio 2007). Magical thinking has not disappeared either, as the example below (Fig. 3) of modern folk religion circulating in the social media on the Internet in the year 2012 shows.

Figure 3. *Modern folk religion as spread in the social media (Facebook) on the Internet.*

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NOTES

[1] In my opinion it is more fruitful to accept categories without strict borders, and give a definition according to this (see Hukantaival forthcoming), than leave the difficult task undone altogether, as has also been done recently (Issakainen 2012: 21–22).

[2] See also, e.g., Mitchell 2011: 39–40 about the influences of 'paganism' on Christianity.

[3] There are around fifty examples of this custom known to the author, mostly in the collections of the Folklore Archives of the Finnish Literature Society in Helsinki (SKS KRA) (e.g. SKS KRA Oulu A. Leino b) 608. 1892).

[4] Although Malinowski did observe that the distinction was very clear indeed in the society he studied in Melanesia (Malinowski 1954: 27–33).

[5] This part has been influenced by fruitful discussions with Timo Muhonen. I am grateful, but also accept all responsibility for the current outcome.

[6] The same limitation to the folklore material on magic has been noticed by Tenka Issakainen. There is no way to be sure if the magic described has actually been practiced or if folklore describes the ways that certain circumstances have been explained. Thus she is not discussing magic as *rites* (Issakainen 2012: 12).

[7] June Swann started researching these finds already in 1958 (Swann 2005: 115).

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SACRIFICE OR OFFERING: WHAT CAN WE SEE IN THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF NORTHERN EUROPE?

Ester Oras

Abstract: This article analyses the concepts of sacrifice and offering, with a further aim to discuss how to decode and differentiate these practices in archaeological material. The main criteria for distinguishing sacrifice and offering from anthropology and comparative religious studies are presented. The focal points are the relationship between sacrifice and offering, questions of linguistic preferences, and qualitative criteria such as concepts of value, destruction and sanctification. The problems of making a distinction between the two concepts are discussed on the basis of the archaeological record of intentional artefact deposits in northern Europe, especially Estonia. As a result, it is argued that there can be no universal and strictly distinguishing definitions for these religious practices. They share a common idea of communication with the supernatural via giving, but any further distinction depends on the specific cultural context of both the practitioners and contemporary scholars investigating the archaeological record. Therefore, any universal definitions that result from trying to distinguish between sacrifice and offering are problematic, and they should be seen rather as scholarly categories, which, however, help to acknowledge the multifaceted and variable nature of these religious phenomena. This article stresses the importance of acknowledging the context-dependency of any religious and ritual activity and dismissing a quest for defining and applying concepts related to such activity cross-regionally and -temporally.

Keywords: archaeology, deposits, northern Europe, offering, religion, ritual, sacrifice

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the archaeology of ritual and religion has developed into a flourishing discipline with its own specialist publications, methodological and theoretical discussions and various regional case studies. A clear emergence of such publications was evident in the 1980s and early 1990s (e.g. Renfrew 1985; 1994; Garwood et al. 1991; Carmichael et al. 1994), but a considerable increase has taken place since the turn of the millennium (see, e.g., Insoll 2004a; Insoll 2004b; Barrowclough & Malone 2007; Kyriakidis 2007; Hays-Gilpin & Whitley

2008; Rowan 2011). *The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of Ritual and Religion* (Insoll 2011a) was published in 2011. The topics covered in these numerous books and articles are varied, including different geographical regions, temporal scales, and general abstract questions. Debates about religious and ritual practices, such as sacrifice and offering, are represented among them. However, the way that these two terms are utilised in different publications often contains some fluidity and vagueness. There is also not much of a clear and in-depth discussion as to which term – sacrifice or offering – is preferred in specific research contexts and why.

Intentional artefact deposits, be it hoards, wealth deposits, special or structured deposits, votives, etc. (for discussion about terminology see, e.g., Osborne 2004; Garrow 2012; Oras 2012), are one of the find groups which often involve the use of the terms 'sacrifice' and 'offering'. This group of archaeological material is a widespread phenomenon with a long-term history. In the northern European context, it is possible to talk about the emergence of artefact deposits as a separate and specific archaeological find group from the Mesolithic onwards (e.g. Stjernquist 1997; Berggren 2010). The material from northern European intentional artefact deposits is very rich in the Bronze Age (e.g. Levy 1982; Čivilytė 2009) and abundant in the Iron Age (see, e.g., Fabech 1991; Hedeager 1992; Ilkjær 2000; Jørgensen et al. 2003; Bliujienė 2010; Oras 2010). The aim of this article is to discuss the choice of terms that archaeologists use when talking about various practices of artefact depositing in northern Europe. Which term – either sacrifice or offering – should be used in discussing northern Europe prehistoric contexts and why? Can we differentiate between sacrifice and offering in northern Europe prehistory on the basis of archaeological material and how? Are there any universal applications of these terms regardless of time and space? Is the differentiation important for the practitioners or is it purely a scholarly endeavour? These are the questions taken into consideration in the following pages.

I start by introducing some general explanations and issues related to the definitions of and distinctions between sacrifice and offering. The traditional use and definition of these two terms in the social sciences and humanities is discussed, and the main difficulties of distinguishing these two concepts at both the mental and material level are analysed. These difficulties are approached via what I call the four main confusions: confusion of language, value, destruction and concepts of sacred/holy (see below). Thereafter, I discuss if and how these differences can be traced in material culture alone, i.e., whether we can separate those two concepts in archaeology. This analysis and discussion is based on the material of the northern Europe intentional artefact deposits.

The broader aim of this article is to contribute to the debate of terminology-related issues in the archaeology of religion and ritual. It has to be emphasised that I am not planning to analyse long-term and detailed developments of any specific religion(s) and/or religious practices. This article is rather terminology-based, aiming to provide a polemic discussion on the choice of terms that archaeologists prefer to utilise in their academic research on past religions.

SACRIFICE AND OFFERING: GENERAL DEFINITIONS

Although several important qualitative differences can be distinguished in the concepts of sacrifice and offering (see below), there are certain common characteristics in the general definitions of these terms. The Oxford English Dictionary Online[1] entries define them as follows:

> Offer n.: An act of offering something for acceptance or refusal; an expression of intention or willingness to give or do something if desired; a proposal, an invitation.
>
> Offer v.: To present (something) to God, a god, a saint, etc., as an act of devotion; to sacrifice; to give in worship.
>
> Offering n.: Something presented or sacrificed to God, a god, a saint, etc., in worship or devotion; a thing (as fruits, a slain animal, money, etc.) given as an expression of religious homage; a sacrifice; an oblation.
>
> Sacrifice n.: Primarily, the slaughter of an animal (often including the subsequent consumption of it by fire) as an offering to God or a deity. Hence, in wider sense, the surrender to God or a deity, for the purpose of propitiation or homage, of some object of possession. Also applied *fig.* to the offering of prayer, thanksgiving, penitence, submission, or the like.
>
> Sacrifice n.: That which is offered in sacrifice; a victim immolated on the altar; anything (material or immaterial) offered to God or a deity as an act of propitiation or homage.
>
> Sacrifice v.: To offer as a sacrifice; to make an offering or sacrifice.

Very often the word 'sacrifice' is preferred in dictionaries and encyclopaedias as the main entry. For instance, in the *Encyclopedia of Religion* edited by Mircea Eliade (1987), there is no special entry for the word 'offering', and instead the words 'almsgiving', 'sacrifice', and 'tithes' are referenced. The same applies to the *Religion Past & Present: Encyclopedia of Theology and Religion* (Betz 2007),

The Concise Oxford Dictionary of World Religions (2000), and *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Archaeology* (2008).

In the *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Joseph Henninger (1987) defines the word 'sacrifice' as a religious act on its highest level. He also points out that it is often used as a synonym for 'offering'. According to him, the latter forms a wider category that refers to presenting a gift in general, and sacrifice can form one part of that act. He also emphasises that it is the receiver of the gift that matters, i.e., the supernatural being with whom one wishes to communicate via the gift.

In the most recent encyclopaedia of religious studies, Philippe Borgeaud (2012) gives a rather specific definition of the word 'sacrifice':

> […] *Sacrifice* denotes both the living creature or offering sacrificed and the ritual action (e.g. destruction) through which that creature or object is dedicated to a supernatural being. […] Etymologically *sacrifice* suggests an action in which the sacrificed object is "made holy / sacred" (Lat. *Sacrum facere*).

In *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of World Religions* (2000), the term 'sacrifice' is defined as follows:

> (Lat., 'that which is made sacred'). The offering of something, animate or inanimate, in a ritual procedure which establishes, or mobilizes, a relationship of mutuality between the one who sacrifices (whether individual or group) and the recipient – who may be human but more often is of another order, e.g. God or spirit. Sacrifice pervades virtually all religions, but it is extremely difficult to say precisely what the meanings of sacrifice are – perhaps because the meanings are so many.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Archaeology (2008) defines the same word as follows:

> The slaughter of an animal or person or the surrender of a possession as an offering to a deity. […] Although generally seen as ceremonial in context, sacrifice may have functional ends institutionalized in the practice itself, for example the regulation of population and the creation of an instrument of political terror.

The main link between these two concepts according to those definitions as well as the classical works on this subject (e.g. Firth 1963; Baaren 1964; Turner 1977; Bourdillon & Fortes 1980; Hubert & Mauss 1964; Hicks 2001; Girard 2011) is that they both form an important means of communication with the supernatural via giving up or presenting something in order to attain its (his/her)

favour. However, there are different opinions about the main elements of these practices as well, and this is where it all becomes confusing and complicated.

Based on the definitions provided above, different ideas about the distinction of sacrifice and offering can be traced. For instance, Theodorus Petrus van Baaren (1964) has emphasised that offering is an element of sacrifice, the materiality of it. According to him, offering plays a crucial role in the act of sacrifice along with other elements, such as the active agent conducting the sacrifice, the time and place, the method, the receiver and the motives behind it. Another example is by Jan van Baal (1976: 161–162), who states that sacrifice and offering are both gifts, but that "a sacrifice is not necessarily a more deeply religious ceremony than an offering. […] Reversely, an offering can be a highly impressive religious ceremony without including a sacrifice". Thus, it is easy to see a certain contradiction already. While Henninger (1987) categorises sacrifice under offering as a special kind of gift giving, and Baal (1976) seems to handle them as two sides of the same coin, then Baaren (1964) prefers to leave offering solely in the position of one, albeit crucial, element of the sacrificial act – the material part of what is given away (Fig. 1). At the same time, Borgeaud (2012) barely mentions offering as a term related to the actual action of sacrifice, but rather uses it to refer to the object that is sacrificed. The definitions also diverge in more specific aspects, such as the importance of destruction, animate or inanimate objects, dependency on value and changes in the quality of participants and materialities used (see further below).

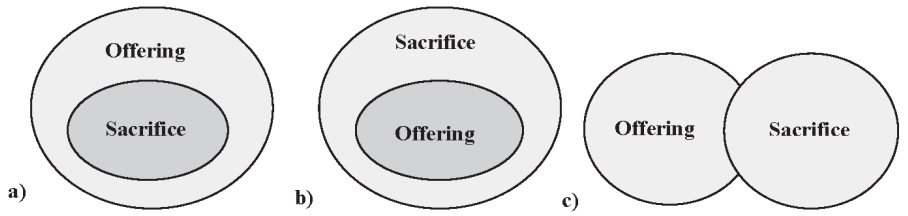

Figure 1. *Relations between sacrifice and offering according to a) Henninger (1987), b) Baaren (1964) and c) Baal (1976).*

The more one reads about these concepts and terms, the more evident it becomes that all the possible simplicities of making sense of and comparing those two terms vanish quickly. Not only is there disagreement in discussions on the general relationship of these two concepts, but different scholars also emphasise different qualitative aspects and characteristics of each, drawing distinctions between them accordingly. In other words, there is no general consensus on the relationship between sacrifice and offering, and the defining criteria vary scholar by scholar. It all becomes even more complicated when considering relevant archaeological literature about these phenomena and trying to apply the concepts of sacrifice and offering as distinct categories to the prehistoric archaeological record.

SACRIFICE OR OFFERING: THE FOUR MAIN CONFUSIONS AND NORTHERN EUROPE ARCHAEOLOGY

The four detailed qualitative and distinguishing aspects can be found in the literature about the definitions, characteristics and meanings of the concepts 'sacrifice' and 'offering'. First, the separation of the terms and their use in specific case studies seems to depend on who is writing about them and where this person is situated. I tentatively call it language confusion. Second is the question of what specific criteria apply to sacrifice or offering and what qualitative changes are expected to happen as a result of sacrifice or offering. I have divided these aspects into the confusions related to the concepts of value, destruction and sacred/holy (see below for details).

Language confusion

The first of the aforementioned issues – the question of language – relates partly to the tradition of the scholarship in the specific region where a scholar is based, but more importantly to the terminology and native language of the scholar him/herself. These two terms – 'sacrifice' and 'offering' – do not have equivalents in all languages. Looking at the dictionary results, it strikes the eye that in some languages only one possible answer is suggested whilst others include more variable words (see Table 1).

Language	**Sacrifice**	**Offer / Offering**
Estonian	-	Uri (noun), urjama (verb) Kahi, and Ohver(dus)
Finnish	-	Uhri
Danish (applied to Scandinavian languages in general)	-	Ofring
German	-	Opfer
French	Sacrifice	Offre, offrande
Italian	Sacrificio	Offerta
Latin	Sacrificium	Offerre (verb), oblatio
Lithuanian	Pasiūlymas	Auka
Latvian	Upuris	Piedāvājums
Polish	Składanie	Oferta, ofiara
Russian	Жертвоприношѐние	Подношѐние (religious), предложение

Table 1. *A selection of dictionary results to words 'sacrifice' and 'offering'.*

It seems that the word 'sacrifice' does not have an equivalent in either the Germanic branch of the Indo-European languages or in the Finno-Ugric languages. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the verb '*offer*' is an old Germanic root (documented use in Old English) that predates 'sacrifice' as a later loan from Romanic languages, which in primary use related to slaughter and altar.[2] In this context, it is interesting that differentiation between the two seems to exist in the Slavic and Baltic languages, which are part of the Indo-European language family. However, in those languages, it is difficult to draw a relation with Latin equivalents of sacrifice. Thus, in geographical terms, we can see that one word relating to 'offering' prevails in northern Europe, mainly among the Finno-Ugric and Germanic languages, while a distinction is made in the Romanic, Slavic and Baltic languages. It makes one think about the specifics of the choice of words and the related meanings of those actions for the practitioners. At least in the case of the Estonian language and etymology, there seem to exist two word categories: old and practice-specific local words (*uri*, *kahi*, *and*), and general, more abstract (loan?) words that relate to the word 'offering'. Might it also reflect the essential differences in the religious practices of different cultures?

According to the *Estonian Etymological Dictionary*, the Estonian word '*ohver*' is a loan-word from Low German (EE 2012: 335). The background of this word is closely connected to history, especially the northern crusades in the 12th and 13th centuries. During the conversion of the country in the 13th century, when the official language of the period was Latin, the words used in the written sources for this specific ritual practice were derivations from *sacrificere* and *immolare* or other Latin words relating to the victim and the act of killing (cf., e.g., HCL 1982; Tamm & Jonuks forthcoming). As the main interest groups in the region at the time were of German origin, it is likely that the German words 'Offeringe' and 'opperen/offeren' were utilised in spoken language as well. Germans, or at least the German-speaking population, remained a ruling class over the following centuries, and their language dominated in official documents and history writing. Native dialects and relevant terminology, including those in relation to religious practices, became marginalised and remained at the level of oral tradition. As a result, the native terms were left out of history recordings for centuries, and the concepts that were familiar to higher class were used instead. Although it cannot be entirely excluded that the Estonian word '*ohver*' is an earlier loan from Scandinavian languages, e.g. from the Viking Age or even before that, it is most likely that its origin is directly connected to the German conquest and long-term reign in the region.

Therefore it can be argued that there is no Estonian primary and old word that would precisely accord with the abstract terms of either 'sacrifice' or 'offering'. The word '*and*' means literally a gift, and derives from the verb '*andma*' (to give) which is an old Finno-Ugric word that can be found in several languages. '*Kahi*' is referred to as a drinking offering. This too has an old Finno-Ugric root relating to (alcoholic) drink, possibly mead, and it most likely comes from Finnish (EE 2012: 115–116). '*Uri*' means an offering and derives from Finnish '*uhri*', but it seems to have been borrowed into written Estonian language in the early 20th century (EE 2012: 579) and in contemporary Estonian it is related to poetic language. If we were to take language as one argument explaining the origin and time-depth of specific activities, it seems that the whole picture of activities that we would call a phenomenon of offering in Estonia(n) was not something abstract and universal, but more nuanced and action-specific. Additionally, the qualitative distinction between sacrifice and offering does not seem to be of any importance at all. The native speakers of other languages can probably provide similar examples of other specific words that can be translated and reduced to the academic terms of 'sacrifice' or 'offering', but which actually have a much more variable and subtle field of meanings in the native language.

Another intriguing cultural differentiation in the use of the terms 'sacrifice' and 'offering' derives from the language of the researcher. Although there are

more particular and specific Finno-Ugric words available, most of the contemporary scholars still tend to use the widely spread and academic words 'sacrifice' and 'offering'. This is most likely related to the development of academic disciplines and scientific writing of the Modern Era. It has to be remembered that the scientific language in the 19th century was very rarely a native one. In the context of the eastern Baltic and as a result of long-term historical development from German conquest to centuries of foreign rule by mainly Germans and Russians, the scientific and academic terminologies were largely based on German or Russian, with a dominance of the former. It seems that the terms and concepts picked up at the beginning of the academic discipline became the norm and tradition. Additionally, there is no escape from this terminology issue when writing in foreign languages, such as German or English. One simply has to decide which foreign word best applies to a relevant concept in the native language and culture.

However, even if the word in one's local language and the possible translation of it in another language are directly related, the use of foreign terms is sometimes inconsistent. One such example is the derivation of 'offering' in Scandinavian languages. For instance, in the writing on artefact deposits in Iron Age Scandinavia, one can easily recognise that the word 'offering' is preferred in Scandinavian languages (e.g. Hagberg 1964; Harck 1984; Ilkjær 2002; Hansen 2006). However, quite often when the same or similar material is presented in English, the term 'sacrifice' is used instead (Fabech 1991; Randsborg 1995; Carlie 1998; Helgesson 2004; Berggren 2006; Nørgård Jørgensen 2008), sometimes even by the same authors (Ilkjær 2003; Hansen 2006). The same tendency of the mixing of the two terms concurrently in English texts is evident in publications by Finno-Ugric scholars as well (e.g. Jonuks 2009b; Wessman 2009; Oras 2010; Salmi et al. 2011). The words 'sacrifice' and 'offering' often occur simultaneously and are utilised as synonyms. This altogether contributes to some extent to the general confusion as to which term is more suitable and why, as well as whether there is or should be any differentiation.

Value

The second confusion relates to the concept of 'value'. It is mainly Raymond Firth (1963) who in his cross-cultural analysis of the organisation of sacrifice and offering stressed that sacrifice means presenting something valuable for the favour of the supernatural. Not everything is suitable for sacrifice, but the act must be related to giving up something at a cost. He sees such gifts as one part of a process of general allocation of resources, in which the degree and quality of what is given within this act is important. At the same time,

he regards offering as something that is just given away — something that is available and not extraordinary.

However, there seems to be some disagreement about this concept of value. Namely, as Michael F.C. Bourdillon (1980: 12) implies, the recognisable economic value is not the main characteristic of the sacrifice. He points out ethnographic examples in which ordinary and mundane objects can be regarded as suitable for the sacrifice. Firth himself also arrives at the conclusion that quite often the value of the sacrificed is not obvious or clearly measurable. It can be manipulated, with objects of high value substituted for lower ones, communal participation included, etc. Thus, although the idea of giving up something at a cost is to some extent inscribed in the sacrifice, there is in practice a rational calculation and manipulation of value in it. It is the aim, intention and quality of the practice – "the spirit of the gift", according to Firth (1963: 23) – that dictates the suitability of the object for sacrifice. Thus, the distinction between offering and sacrifice on the basis of an object's value is a very problematic and complicated one. The same can be followed in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of World Religions* (2000), which states that an object is given a value by the actual act of sacrifice itself.

These difficulties are particularly significant in archaeology. How can we estimate an object's value in the past, and is this concept of value universally recognisable? Literature about the value and evaluation of objects both in archaeology and anthropology is vast. Value can be attributed via materials that are rare, durable and attractive, but also acquired in certain ways, including being part of certain assemblages (Randsborg 1973: 565; Haselgrove 1982; Renfrew 1986: 148–149; Lesure 1999). But value is not only economic and measurable on a material basis. One only has to think in terms of object biographies (*sensu* Appadurai 1986; Kopytoff 1986) and culture-specific or emotional or individual values (Davenport 1986; Thomas 1991; Weiner 1992; Lillios 1999; Mauss 2002; Miller 2001; Myers 2001). Therefore, it is often very complicated to decode and assess the value of a gift without further ethnographic record or the attestations of the participants themselves. It altogether means that besides the complications stated above by the anthropological scholars themselves, the concept of value in distinguishing sacrifice and offering can be highly problematic in archaeology.

One good example of the shifting concepts of valuables and context specific evaluation of objects in Estonia is the tradition of deposition of stone axes (see Johanson 2006; 2009). These items were most certainly rare and expensive valuables in their context of production and initial use. They acquired practical, economic and symbolic meaning. However, in later periods when stone was replaced by other production materials, some of these items were still clearly

Figure 2. *A selection of different Iron Age wealth deposits from Estonia: silver ornaments from Paali II (AI 3235), iron axes from Igavere (AI 2712: 45–49), and bronze ornaments from Reola (AI 4102) finds. Photomontage by Ester Oras 2013.*

regarded as valuables. They were used for healing purposes and deposited in ritual activities. The concept of giving something away at a cost is thus very different from one context to another in the case of these stone axes. However, it would be farfetched to classify Mesolithic and Neolithic stone axe deposits under 'sacrifice' and later period finds under 'offering' due to the objects' relative material value in their contemporary depositional context.

Another good example is the comparison of different Iron Age intentional artefact deposits in the eastern Baltic (see, e.g., Oras 2010; 2012). The phenomenon as such is very similar: there is an acknowledged and intentional selective deposition of different objects in different contexts. The deposits include gold, silver, a vast amount of iron and bronze, but also organic and stone items (see Fig. 2). Surely they all had different values in the Iron Age, but it is hardly reasonable to call some of them 'sacrifices' and others 'offerings' on the basis of the relative economic value of objects.

Destruction

The next qualitative confusion is the idea of destruction. Numerous scholars, such as Firth (1963: 13), Baaren (1964: 9–10), Baal (1976: 161–162), Bourdillon (1980: 10), Girard (2011) and especially Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss (1964: 12), emphasise that sacrifice should include, if not destruction of, then at least considerable physical transformation of objects. It is important to change the physical characteristics of an object or living being in order for it to be acceptable for the supernatural. The destruction mainly relates to the blood-letting of the

victim (be it human or animal), which can be followed by communal consumption of its remains, or more general destruction, such as the burning or crushing of other items (plants, paper, ceramics, etc.). Hubert and Mauss (ibid.: 12–13, 99) stress that we are dealing with 'sacrifice' if the items are destroyed, but with 'offering' if their physical state is not altered. They also conclude that the efficiency and religious energy is thus higher in the case of sacrifice as opposed to offering, and that the ceremonial destruction of an object is crucial to creating a communicative link between the supernatural-sacred and the profane world.

Similar ideas have also been expressed by archaeologists. As Timothy Insoll (2011b: 151) describes, there is a difference between sacrifice and offering, because the latter lacks a destructive element. He develops this thought even further with the ideas of personified material objects that therefore can be regarded as 'living victims' and the tradition of artefact destruction prior to deposition applies to them as well (ibid.). Discussions of the material agency of objects, which relates to the personification of artefacts that make people act in certain ways and do certain things, are of relevance here (see, e.g., Knappett 2005; Hoskins 2006; Knappett & Malafouris 2008).

The ritual killing of objects prior to deposition, either as separate deposits or as burial goods, is a widespread cultural phenomenon (in Estonian context see, e.g., Jonuks 2009a: 252, and literature cited therein). Perhaps this idea of destruction also explains why Scandinavian scholars studying Iron Age deposits prefer to use the term 'sacrifice' in English texts as opposed to 'offering' in Scandinavian languages. Quite often a previous ritual manipulation, such as burning, bending and smashing objects, can be traced in the Scandinavian Iron Age bog deposits (Ilkjær 2000; 2002; 2003). However, not all the items in these so-called Scandinavian booty deposits are destructed, and the amount of objects handled in such a way varies from one site to another. Are we talking about different religious practices – separated sacrifices and offerings – during the same event?

Another example from Estonian material is the comparison of different intentional artefact deposits. In Estonian folkloristic and historical material, there are several examples of leaving different kinds of waste, from food remains to wool, ribbons and glass, on sacred stones or trees (Fig. 3.; see, e.g., Loorits 1990; Paulson 1997; Hiiemäe 2011). Some of those traditions are carried out even today (see, e.g., Valk 2007). To draw a difference between sacrifice and offering on the basis of destruction here is rather complicated. If the wool is not burnt, does it mean it is an offering? If the glass bottle is left behind, is it an offering? But if it is broken, does it turn into a sacrifice? Thinking in archaeological terms, what if the bottle breaks as a result of later activities or weathering after its initial depositional act?

Figure 3. *An offering stone with shards of glass bottles and pieces of horse shoes from Varbla from 1936. Photo source: ERA f 262.*

As it can be drawn from these questions, there are examples in which the concept of destruction turns out to be quite problematic. Destruction might be a good and archaeologically recognisable criterion for distinguishing sacrifice and offering. Indeed, as seen in most of the definitions given above and from the several ethnographic and archaeological examples, killing, i.e., blood-letting and also consumption of the being, is a crucial element in performing sacrifice, which distinguishes it from offering (for northern Eurasian context see, e.g., Jordan 2003: 123–129; Vallikivi 2004: 94–95; Äikäs et al. 2009). I agree that destruction is very useful for emphasising inherent differentiations in the meanings and symbolism of ritual practices in the case of living beings. However, it remains a matter of debate whether this particular physical criterion should be a universal distinguishing criterion applied to artefacts and plants as well. Peter Metcalf (1997: 416) raises the problem: very often one talks about offerings in the case of different goods, but about sacrifice in those cases in which living beings are involved. He also points out that even the latter does not always necessarily include physical destruction.

So should we take destruction as a decisive characteristic that separates sacrifice and offering? Perhaps the whole idea of destruction is one specific form of sacrifice, directly related to the practicalities when dealing with the nature of a living 'victim' – they just would not stay put! The idea of destruction might be an important element in the cases where living beings are involved, but not necessarily in the case of objects. Therefore the distinction of sacrifice and offering on the basis of whether destruction is evident is a somewhat biased approach. I would rather agree with Henninger (1987: 545), who concludes that the destructive element can be decisive for decoding sacrifice for some scholars, but it is not universal and applicable to every case.

Sacred/Holy

The final and perhaps the most classical confusion in relation to distinguishing sacrifice and offering is the question of the intrinsic quality of the act and the object. As a simple translation exercise indicates, sacrifice in Latin derives from the word *sacrificium*, where *sacer* means 'holy' and *facere* 'to make', resulting in 'to make holy/sacred'. The concepts, distinctions and definitions of 'holy' and 'sacred' are problematic, and there is an ongoing discussion about whether these terms can or should be used as synonyms (see, e.g., Oxtoby 1987). Here I use them as synonyms in order to explain the supposedly qualitative change happening as a result of a specific religious act, i.e., 'to sacrifice' means 'to make something holy' or 'to sanctify'.

The idea of qualitative change as a distinctive criterion is the main point that Hubert and Mauss support. They state that sacrifice is a religious act through which the moral conditions of the participant and the presented objects alter – they are sanctified (Hubert & Mauss 1964: 9–11). The same idea is followed by Firth (1963: 13), who describes that certain mental state or moral quality changes are supported or renewed in the sacrificial act. What people and objects were before the sacrifice is different, perhaps even culturally and religiously lower, from what they are after this practice. From this, it can be derived that if in sacrifice something or someone is made special, holy and sacred, then the concept of offering does not necessarily have to include such a qualitative alteration (Hubert & Mauss 1964: 11). The main problem, especially for archaeology, is that this meaningful difference is applied to the objects and subjects on a mental and qualitative scale, given by the participants.

Nevertheless, not all scholars agree with such separation. For instance, Baal objects to the idea of the sacred nature of the gift by saying that it is too accidental a feature (1976: 161–162). In archaeological perspectives, making a

distinction on the basis of a moral and mental qualitative change of the objects in question is difficult, especially when relying solely on the material remains of the acts in which those objects were involved. Although such questions and specifications might be available for anthropologists, it is an almost impossible, or at least highly speculative, field of analysis for prehistoric archaeologists. The differentiation between the two is particularly problematic if we think of distinguishing acts of sacrifice and offering that both might have taken place in religious-related places and times concurrently, and might also share similar depositional context. All the archaeological examples discussed above lack necessary information about the changing quality of an object that is impossible to deduce without the participants' input. We do not know if depositing objects in a peat bog or leaving stone axes in the ground meant a qualitative difference in the meaning of the object and whether they were thought to become sacred themselves. It is impossible to pursue such meanings on the basis of material culture. Indeed, even ethnographic studies cannot always provide examples in which all participants agree with the general aim, meaning and qualitative changes of their religious actions (see, e.g., Humphrey & Laidlaw 1994). Thus, the criterion of changing qualities and sanctifications cannot be a universal or single answer for making a distinction between sacrifice and offering. I agree that the qualitative change of the items, places and people involved is an important aspect in acknowledging different intensities and scales of religious acts. However, it largely relies on the mental affiliation of the participants in such acts and is thus open to variable interpretations. As a result, it is the most difficult criterion of those being discussed to apply to the archaeological record when trying to distinguish sacrifice and offering.

DISCUSSION

As can be seen above, there is no general agreement as to what distinguishes sacrifice and offering on a qualitative basis. In fact, there are even different opinions about the relationship of these concepts to one another: are we talking about two different practices, or are they parts of each other. The distinctions drawn by anthropologists or scholars of religious studies are very problematic when it comes to archaeological data. As soon as one goes in depth with the analysis of sacrifice and offering and tries to apply specific distinctions to archaeological material, it often happens that the top-down universal definitions and criteria just do not fit with the matter at hand. So why is it such a hard task to distinguish sacrifice and offering, especially in archaeology?

The answer lies in the consideration of the context. It is the cultural and religious context of a specific act – be it religious activity or research practice – that determines the essential criteria for sacrifice and offering as well as if, and on what basis, they should be distinguished from one another. As contexts vary in spatial and temporal terms, so do the characteristics and ideas about those specific religious phenomena. In some contexts, there is no importance in the distinction, while in others, the categories and definitions provided above seem to be alien or considerably more nuanced, while still in others, the distinction might be an essential part of the local religious system. Therefore, problems in applying those terms to specific material are inevitable as long as one tries to use universal criteria and definitions. The context-dependency is in fact one of the main reasons why universal categorisations and definitions often do not match with specific archaeological material.

The context is not only the past cultural background. It also includes the context in which a specific term has developed, and the context of the researcher with his or her historically set research traditions. Every term has its research history, which influences its definitions and relating categorisations. Scholars themselves are carriers of their cultural context and cannot leave it behind when dealing with past and distant cultures. The educational and broader cultural context as well as scholarly tradition influences the terms that are used in a particular research. In this sense, one cannot escape the concepts of sacrifice and offering, including questions about the differentiation of the two, because they are an intrinsic and important part of the researcher's contemporary cultural and work atmosphere with its own historical background. Therefore, although most probably arbitrary from the practitioner's perspective, the analysis of sacrifice and offering and their elements is to some extent unavoidable from the scholarly point of view. The question is rather if and how scholars can apply the distinctions and definitions derived from the academic research of the last 200 years to thousands of years before the point when we started to actually think about such categorisations of religious practices. Secondly, it is worth keeping in mind that the definitions and distinctions derived from the in-depth study of one religion do not necessarily have to apply to another.

Starting from the past context, its importance is best demonstrated by the archaeological examples of intentional artefact deposits discussed above. The whole idea of intentional artefact deposits is a long-term and widely spread practice in northern Europe. It covers a variety of materials and objects in a variety of contexts from different times. It would be naïve to presume that the idea behind and meaning of intentional artefact concealments was the same over time and in different regions. There was a changing and developing belief system behind those practices. In the case of Estonia, we can talk about a

nature-oriented animated worldview with totemic and shamanistic practices in the Mesolithic and Neolithic societies, celestial fertility as well as agricultural and ancestor-related rituals in the Bronze and Early Iron Ages, and later period polytheistic systems until the very end of the prehistoric period; and some of those religious systems (e.g. natural sacred places or ancestor cults) were probably followed over millennia (Jonuks 2009a). With the conversion and arrival of Christianity, the religious system kept developing according to its local context, and there are several examples of enduring so-called pagan practices throughout the Middle Ages and Modern Period despite the arrival of the new world religion. These practices also include intentional artefact deposits (see, e.g., Valk 2004; Jonuks 2007). The picture of the long-term religious development in Estonia is colourful and gradually evolving, and within it different ideas and practices are combined, accepted and rejected. Some of them are the result of inner socially derived and large-scale political or economic developments (e.g. change from hunter-gatherers to agriculture), and others relate to short-term historical events or foreign contacts (e.g. Crusades in the 13th century). Therefore, it is in essence problematic to apply the same universal definitions and distinguishing criteria to such broad categories of religious practices as sacrifice and offering without considering the different contexts in which they take place.

Turning to scholarly context, as discussed under language confusion, there are no such distinct terminology categories of sacrifice and offering in Estonian at all. Unfortunately, we have no solid evidence of what terms pre-Christian Estonians used for their ritual practices. However, the fact that the word '*ohverdus*' is not a native one and most likely derives from Germanic languages suggests that this abstract concept is rather late and foreign for the indigenous Estonian culture. Its use by religious practitioners and in relation to specific rituals most likely relates to later historical and scholarly developments, which have direct connotations with German tradition and historical events. This is also supported by the fact that Estonian native words are more specific or have a considerably wider meaning attached to them. The concept of offering was preferred in the local scholarly tradition as a result of developments in the academic research in religious studies. Through a process carried out by German-speaking scholars, the words chosen became deeply rooted for the next decades. It makes one wonder why, if at all, the concepts of 'sacrifice' and 'offering', as defined and discussed above, are even considered in discussing Estonian pre-Christian religion. They seem to be relatively later conceptual additions in Estonian religion and closely related to the academic and modern worldview. I certainly do not wish to infer that the idea of communication with the supernatural via particular gifts was missing in prehistoric or the following

historic religion in what is now Estonia. I would rather argue that these periods had such different contents, contexts and connotations that the definitions of 'sacrifice' and 'offering' as based on institutionalised religions do not seem to apply to prehistoric northern Europe quite as precisely. In addition, the whole idea of distinction does not necessarily have to be an intrinsic problem for the past practitioners at all.

This altogether leads to the conclusion that distinguishing sacrifice and offering in the archaeological record and analysing the relationship between these two concepts might be a purely scholarly pursuit leading to categories that do not have much importance in the eyes of the practitioners themselves. Depending on culture, these two concepts may, but do not necessarily, have to exist as separate entities. They might merge into one whole idea of communicating with the supernatural via particular gifts or have much more specific subdivisions that relate to either a particular place or specific form or quality of the objects used. What actually matters is that we are dealing with the religious practice that aims at communication with the supernatural (in the widest sense) by means of rendering something. Perhaps the whole conglomeration and variability of those cultural actions of communication with the supernatural is the reason why scholars feel a need to classify and subcategorise their subjects of research. It just helps to approach the material and make the entangled and changing elements of sacrifice and offering better understandable for the outsider.

In this sense it might also help to think in terms of *emic* and *etic* categories (*sensu* Harris 1976) when talking about sacrifice and offering and their distinction in our scholarly work. In the former, it probably does not play a decisive role for the practitioner to make a difference between offering and sacrifice as long as the ways, aims and directions of communication are appropriate according to his/her cultural context. From the *etic* perspective, the distinctions between various culturally intertwined elements and questions about their relations help to translate them into the words and worlds of contemporary scholars. However, in the case of archaeology, it has to be acknowledged that the *emic* category is something very difficult to grasp because of the fragmentary nature of our data, as well as time and cultural distance from the subject of study. The mental and motivational basis of participants is something that is often unavailable to archaeologists. We have to rely on the materialities of the past practices and derive the meanings and motivations of the past people from them. Moreover, if the separation of and relationship between sacrifice and offering are not always clear in the ethnographic instances, in which both physical and mental aspects of those practices are evident and available, then what are we aiming to accomplish using only the fragmented archaeological record? One solution might be to supplement our material with ethnographic or

historical parallels, which, if critically evaluated and close in terms of cultural context, might help to attain different details and nuances about the intentions and ideas of the practitioners in the past. However, in most cases, such comparisons can only broaden our perspective and provide food for thought rather than give us a firm argument or proof. Therefore, the whole idea of distinguishing sacrifice and offering in prehistoric archaeology might remain at the level of *etic* categorisations due to the nature of this specific source material.

So, in terms of archaeology, what can we do with these two concepts – sacrifice and offering? Or perhaps it is better to ask if it is a necessary endeavour to do something about them at all. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of World Religions* (2000) states, "Sacrifice pervades virtually all religions, but it is extremely difficult to say precisely what the meanings of sacrifice are – perhaps because the meanings are so many". Several scholars have actually agreed that there is no single and generally applicable definition or theory for sacrifice, because it varies from one society to another. Providing a universal definition for sacrifice and offering is a mission impossible, not to mention distinguishing them from each other (Baaren 1964: 1–2; Bourdillon 1980: 23; Metcalf 1997; Hicks 2001; Carter 2003: 6–7; Girard 2011: 32). Of course I do not propose that one should give up thinking about possible distinctions and definitions of these terms. They are important parts of our scholarly reasoning. I rather see a need to analyse critically if and how much universality there can be when it comes to defining and distinguishing sacrifice and offering for archaeological research, and if one should expect those or perhaps some completely different distinctions in archaeological material in the first place.

As a result, the answer to the question – do we see sacrifice or offering in northern European archaeology? – is that we see both, but neither of them is as distinguished or clear-cut as expected from universal definitions. There is evidence of communication with the supernatural via giving, but further distinctions and elements depend on the specific spatial and temporal context, as well as the ideas and aims of the practitioners. Sometimes it is possible to draw distinct qualitative categories between the objects or subjects included in those acts. In other cases, the emphasis seems to be quite different from what is supposed to apply according to the universal definitions. The way contemporary society and scholars understand and divide sacrifice and offering cannot always be expected to be part of the mind-set of people in the distant past.

CONCLUSION

Different religious systems contain different beliefs, practices and concepts, as well as different relations and distinctions between them. The same applies to sacrifice and offering. We cannot create any checklist for either archaeologists or anthropologists to distinguish sacrifice and offering with specific criteria, such as value, destruction or sacralisation. The maximum achievable generalisation is the above-mentioned concept of communication with the supernatural. If we see that, we see sacrifice or offering, perhaps both at the same time. The choice of what, at what cost, and how exactly is given and what happens to it next is prescribed and inevitable for practitioners – these aspects derive from the cultural tradition of the particular society. The characteristics that look so important for contemporary scholars for making a distinction between sacrifice and offering might not be an issue for the practitioners themselves. That is why finding universal definitions and ways of distinguishing sacrifice and offering is intrinsically problematic if not impossible. Instead, it is necessary to explicitly think about the use of specific words in and concepts applied to particular cultures and languages, keeping in mind both the contemporary context of a particular practice and the influence of the scholarship tradition.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AI – collection of archaeology at the Institute of History, University of Tallinn
ERA f – Estonian Folklore Archives, Estonian Literary Museum

NOTES

[1] http://www.oed.com, last accessed on October 10, 2013.

[2] http://www.oed.com, last accessed on October 10, 2013.

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MATERIALITY OF RELIGION: RELIGION-RELATED ARTEFACTS IN ESTONIAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL COLLECTIONS

Tõnno Jonuks, Ester Oras, Kristiina Johanson

Abstract: In the following, an overview will be given about the progress of a three-year project, the purpose of which was to map and study religion-related objects in Estonian archaeology collections and to discuss the terminology for the archaeology of religion. As a result, a database has been created, consisting of descriptions of over 2000 objects across Estonia, which can be related, one way or another, with religion. An additional outcome of the project is a glossary of the main religion-related terms, which aims at encouraging scholars to define or describe the definitions that are employed in their studies, and especially at helping them to distinguish between different terms utilised.

Keywords: archaeology of religion, material culture, terminology

INTRODUCTION

Archaeologists' interest towards religion has a long-term history. The relevance of the topic and approaches to these issues have changed over time and developed in accordance with the main theoretical schools, evolution of methods and general interests of archaeologists. Often enough, the material is approached through site-specific or narrower material cultural corpus. More abstract questions about the concept of religious materiality and the focus on terminology are the results of more recent scholarly work. However, these questions have gained very little attention in Estonian archaeology. This situation initiated the project *Materiality of Religion: Religious Artefacts in Estonian Archaeological Collections* (ETF 8956), which was kindly agreed to be funded by the Estonian Science Foundation. Our aim was to map religion-related objects and discuss the relevant terminology based on Estonian archaeological material. These two fields have been studied to a lesser extent in Estonia; yet, in the near future, they might form some of the most crucial research problems in the archaeology of religion. In the following, we will provide a brief overview of the general development of the archaeology of religion and its main traditions in Estonian scholarship, and the main results of our research project with a special focus

on terminology and evidence of religious materialities in Estonian archaeological collections.

ARCHAEOLOGY OF RELIGION: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

Archaeologists have always been interested in religion. Although approaches have changed since the very first excavations in the Near East during the 19th century, it has often been one of the key issues. Scholars studying past religions have witnessed various traditions of handling their material. In the very beginning, archaeology had mainly a technical role, offering new sources and finds that were interpreted within mythological frameworks. Interestingly enough, such an enthusiastic tradition, in which finds were fitted into mythological narratives, was influential not only in the Near East and Mediterranean countries, but literally everywhere in Europe. In Eastern Europe, where a rich written material about mythology was not present, folklore was raised to that importance (e.g. Gimbutas 1974) and thus archaeological finds were interpreted on the basis of narratives from considerably later oral tradition.

This optimistic approach got an offensive reaction from the New Archaeology (Hawkes 1954) and for decades religion was not considered to be a proper and serious subject for archaeologists. Nevertheless, as it had been recognised widely, religion played a crucial part in the lives of past people and thus religion as a subject still emerged from time to time. In those cases rather the old traditions were followed, in which the narrative (be it a mythological text or a folk story) formed the general frame. It all changed in the late 1980s, during the period of post-processual archaeology (e.g. Garwood et al. 1991; Renfrew 1994 as the first milestones), when the interpretations made by archaeologists themselves started to be highlighted. This created a new framework, which was more independent of written or spoken narratives and relied on archaeological data. It took almost a decade until a real explosion in the field happened in the 2000s. Since then multiple studies have been published and a new concept – the archaeology of religion – has emerged. Multiple conferences have been held (e.g. Garwood et al. 1991; Andrén et al. 2006), studies have been published (e.g. Insoll 2001, 2004a; Kyriakidis 2007; Fogelin 2008), first textbooks have been written (Insoll 2004a; Wesler 2012) and a massive handbook concluding the present theories and approaches has been compiled (Insoll 2011b).

RELIGION AND MATERIAL CULTURE

Even though the leading theorists have not often regarded religion as an appropriate academic field of archaeology, there have always been attempts to interpret past beliefs. One of the reasons behind these attempts has included finds (figurines, pendants, artefacts with mystical and unknown inscriptions, etc.) that, by common knowledge, are associated with religion. A clear trend can be followed, in which mainly the attractive figurines, human sculptures in particular, have dominated in archaeological interpretations, while more common and thus tedious finds have remained somewhere in the background. A well-known example of the tendency to prefer attractive finds in interpretations is the treatment of the Scandinavian Bronze Age religion, which probably brings the Trundholm sun-chariot before the eyes of most readers. Despite a few analogies with rock-carvings or razors, in which the sun and horse appear together, it is a unique find, which still largely shapes our approach to the religion of the entire period.

The desire for the attractive and exotic finds, something 'different', can be followed already from the very early studies of religion and the critique of this approach is nearly as old. It can be observed in several cases. The study of sacred kingship would be the best known example of how an exotic concept of a social system has attracted scholarly interest and how its critique has emerged (Rowlands 2004 and references therein). The concept of associating appealing, yet also odd finds with religion can possibly be considered as universal, which is best expressed in the well-known joke about archaeologists having trouble with interpreting objects – if nothing else comes to mind, it must be religious, cultic or ritual.

Besides the problematic utilisation of actual archaeological finds, the term 'materiality' itself has also been interpreted vaguely. Various phenomena have been labelled with it, from archaeological finds to monuments and sites and even to the landscape itself (e.g. Droogan 2012). Preference of landscape indicates the emergence of a more general trend in studying religions and in many regions or periods landscape is the main source. The aforementioned 'attractiveness' has a certain role here because scholars tend to choose more charismatic and thus seemingly more informative examples as their source material. Two extreme examples can be provided in this connection. First, we could think about the richness of Neolithic figurines in south-eastern Europe, where most of the studies about religion are based on sculptures (e.g. Gimbutas 1974; Biehl 1996; Chapman 2000). On the contrary, we rarely find studies based on finds from the British Isles; the research of prehistoric religion there is based mainly on monuments and landscape analyses (e.g. Bradley 1998; Edmonds 1999; Pollard

2009). Such a choice of sources emphasises or overemphasises some sides of past religions and leaves others unstudied.

The past few years have witnessed a rising interest towards the materiality of religion by archaeologists but even more by the anthropologists of religion (e.g. Fogelin 2008; Insoll 2009; Morgan 2010; Engelke 2011). Along with the discussions about the agency, the studies of material culture have acquired a new perspective and since then religious and symbolic meanings have often been debated. Still, following the aforementioned attractiveness, archaeologists have often chosen figurines as an example of the materiality of religion (e.g. Meskell 2004). Besides figurines, another clear topic is the tendency to set an emphasis on power systems. It is common for many periods and regions to talk about the religiosity of the nobility, chiefs, etc., and attempts to focus on common people are rather recent (see, e.g., Hansen 2006; Hukantaival 2007). This partly seems to be a matter of choice for scholars, while at the same time the religiosity of the nobility is better represented and objects connected with them seem to be more explicit.

Another topic, closely related to the aforesaid – the question of termino-logy – has emerged as well. How to label religion-related artefacts and what sort of terms should we use at all while discussing past religions? In studies so far it is common that different terms have been used, while too often inconsistencies manifest themselves. If we look at the most widely applied terms, such as 'animism', 'magical', 'ritual', etc., we can see that they are used in such a wide array of contexts that the words are already losing their content. Scholars have often avoided defining or interpreting the terms themselves and usually some wide and universal definition is used. Such a practice has resulted in the misuse of terms and thus the same phenomenon can appear in very different contexts. As for one solution, each author should define or describe how they understand the concepts they use, which is partly necessary for the readers to understand why the terms have been chosen, and partly also for the authors themselves to realise what each term actually *means* and thus to avoid empty labels, the meaning of which remains obscure (cf. also Insoll 2004a; Kaliff 2005).

ARCHAEOLOGY OF RELIGION IN ESTONIA

While the previous sections were striving towards the generalisation of a wider context, the situation with studying past religions in Estonia is slightly different. Due to various historical reasons religion was never a systematic field of study for archaeologists until the 21st century. The very first archaeologists from the 19th century focused mainly on stone graves as the richest monuments in Estonia. For the archaeologists from the beginning of the 20th century it

was more important to study 'the history of Estonians' and thus hillforts and Stone Age sites were added to the previous selection. As at the same time folklorists offered their own narrative view about the past religions, archaeologists were satisfied with that and thus there was no need for the archaeological approach. During the second part of the 20th century, within the frame of scientific atheism, religion did not become a special field of interest and only single publications touched upon this field (e.g. Jaanits 1961; Tamla 1985). As a by-product, religion was used for interpretation in several contexts (e.g. numerous small-scale studies by Vello Lõugas), but especially in interpreting graves and cemeteries (e.g. Valk 1994; 2001 [1999]). Following the more general trends in Western and Northern Europe, the landscape has attracted the interest of archaeologists since the 1990s, when religion first appeared as a specific field in Estonian archaeology (Lang 1999; Vedru 2011; Jonuks 2007).

In a broader picture archaeological finds, either more or less related to religion, were used in single publications only. In those cases a careful selection of artefacts, such as cross pendants and tooth pendants in particular, served as illustrations for a general frame created by other disciplines, e.g. folkloristics or ethnology. Still it must be noted that, despite a few examples, neither folklorists nor ethnologists have had any systematic interest in artefacts. For example, in the course of folkloristic fieldwork on the Island of Saaremaa in the 1970s, local people offered to the students stone axes, which they called thunderbolts, but the latter were not interested (Mare Kõiva, pers. comm.). The approach has changed during the past few years and artefacts associated with religion have been more involved in discussions (e.g. Jets 2001; Johanson 2009; Oras 2010; Jonuks et al. 2010; Jonuks 2013).

This traditional situation, in which artefacts have rarely been used in the interpretations about religion, has created an extensive corpus of sources for past religions that has not been studied, and despite a few attractive examples (like figurines from Neolithic hunter-gatherer sites) has been left in storages. It was namely the lack of knowledge about the finds that have been scattered in different archaeological collections all around Estonia that created the necessity for a more systematic study.

THE DATABASE

The first purpose of the project was to study archaeological collections, map finds and create a database of artefacts that could be associated with religion. The first and most crucial question was of course: What is related to religion? How can we find, verify and define religion-related objects? It is widely known that in certain circumstances and depending on the context everything can

be connected to religion, but that was not a solution suitable for us. Thus a clear danger existed to either tumble into the same trap described above and focus on attractive or odd finds only, or fall into the other extreme and regard everything as potentially religion-related, thus stating nothing really. Some colleagues have even asked: Are those the beautiful things? – referring to the same concept of attractive items that have mostly been favoured in interpreting religion. As pointed out above, the usage of 'beautiful' things could afford us a one-sided picture based on exceptional artefacts; it was decided to have a broader view and involve the 'boring' finds to a greater extent. The latter gives us an opportunity to study and see a more conventional religious behaviour than single attractive finds permit. The mission was motivated by the fact that Estonian archaeological material is rather poor in really attractive finds. In general, Estonian archaeological collections are smaller than their counterparts in Western Europe, which made the grandiose aim – to go through all archaeology collections – possible in the first place.

But still, the question remains: How to recognise religion-related objects? First of all, the preference of the term 'religion-related objects' over 'sacred objects' needs to be explained. The latter has been favoured in analogous museological studies, in which the term has been directly associated with official religions (e.g. Brooks 2012). 'Religion-related' objects include artefacts that are more loosely connected with religion, like pieces of lime, melted together with human bones and teeth, but also grave goods from a funeral pyre. These could help to better understand the cremation process, as well as ritual activity and, in the end, also the wider religious background.

Figure 1. *Melted lime from Türsamäe stone grave together with pieces of human bones and a bronze ornament (AI 2012 I 34). Photo by Tõnno Jonuks 2013.*

Figure 2. *A selection of artefacts, the form of which is associated with religion, mythology and / or ritual: a) a cross pendant and a pendant of sheathed knife made of antler (AI 3578: 1766); b) a double-headed horse (AI 4008: 324); c) a sword bent in spiral form (AM A 580: 2020) and d) a dog or a horse figurine (AM A 554: 777). Photos by Tõnno Jonuks 2013.*

Two main criteria were chosen for the selection: the form and the context. According to the former, the shape of the object was derived from religious ideas. As a classical example, a pendant or a figurine can be mentioned here, the form of which directly originates from beliefs, mythology, cult, etc. Other objects, like

deliberately broken or damaged grave goods, were classified according to this as well, and here again the modified shape of the object, like a sword turned into a spiral, was decisive. The category of form also included symbols that had been used for the decoration of jewellery. Although most of the symbolism seems to be too uniform and universal to carry any specific (religious) meaning, some symbols (the cross and its derivatives in particular) seem to carry a purposeful belief. At the same time several objects, which may have had a symbolical role, like axes, swords, etc., were excluded. In the studies of the Bronze Age Scandinavia the symbolic objects (swords, razors) play a crucial role (see Kristiansen & Larsson 2005; Kaul 1998); however, it has not been possible to follow this in Estonia.

Another criterion – the context – is even more conditional. There are only single cases known from the entire prehistory of Estonia, in which deposits have been interpreted as sacrificed (see Oras 2010), and are thus included in a clear religious context. Rare examples are known in which finds have been gathered from particular holy places known from folk religion, like the surroundings of sacred stones or trees (Jonuks 2011). Based on context, several objects were recorded that did not (chronologically) 'fit' into their finding context; one of the reasons for that may have been the association of the finds with religion or magic. A classic example is the Stone Age axes and arrowheads from the Late Iron Age and medieval contexts (Johanson 2009). Most of the objects that were classified as 'religious' according to the context do not have any special external features and it was the context, or the place, that made those particular objects different and special. As an example, nails that were found from the trunk of the Ülendi offering linden (AI 2679) may be mentioned. According to oral tradition, nails were hammered into the trunk to hold ribbons that were carrying gleet from tumours, and so the tree was functioning as a scapegoat. Without oral tradition those nails would have nothing to do with religion. Oral tradition also initiated the recording of several magical or healing objects. These are usually the most ordinary artefacts – coins, fossils, stone axes, strike-a-lights, etc. It is only the oral tradition, mostly recorded at the beginning of the 20th century, which says that these were really used for magical or healing purposes.

The latter will raise another complex of questions concerned with the sources of the past religions. Differently from the rest of Europe, Estonia and Eastern Baltic in general have an influential tradition of using oral tradition from the 19th and 20th centuries for interpreting religion from the distant past (e.g. Kulmar 1992). Due to several historical processes, oral tradition gained its importance already in the 19th century and as archaeologists did not participate actively in the discussions about religion, the importance of folk tales became essential. As traditional written sources from the Baltic region, like medieval chronicles,

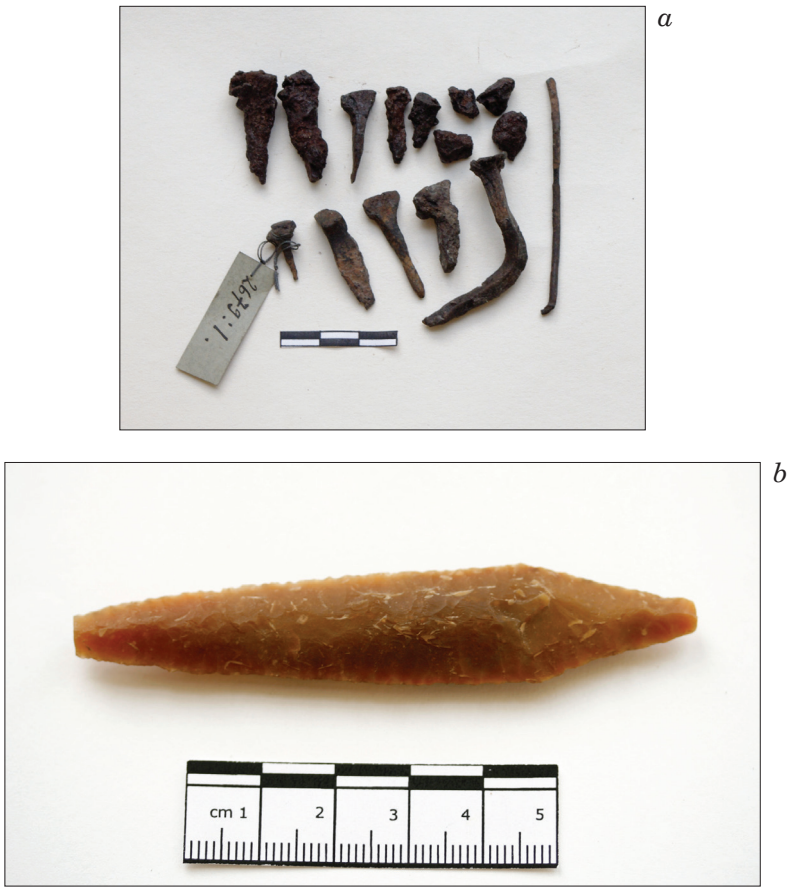

Figure 3. *A selection of finds, the religious meaning of which derives from the find context: a) iron nails (AI 2679, photo by Tuuli Kurisoo 2013) found from the tree trunk of Ülendi sacred tree, and b) a flint arrowhead found from the Early Modern context from Tartu (TM A 50: 449, photo by Arvi Haak 2010).*

contribute little, if anything at all, to the understanding of past religions, then folk tradition along with the ethnographic analogies of the Finno-Ugric tribes in Russia formed the main background, within which the meaning was given to archaeological finds. As such analogies came from different temporal and cultural contexts, it was only natural that many archaeological objects that did not fit with examples from living cultures, were overlooked.

It is clear without saying that there are no objective criteria to suggest that some things are more religious than others. So it must be remembered that the artefacts recorded during the project were selected by the team and decisions

were made according to our knowledge and backgrounds. Still, the choice was made on the broadest possible level, keeping in mind that the collection of data should be competent and suitable also for the future studies. Due to this, also exotic objects (e.g. rock crystal) or artefacts of unknown purpose (e.g. ceramic *things*) were included.

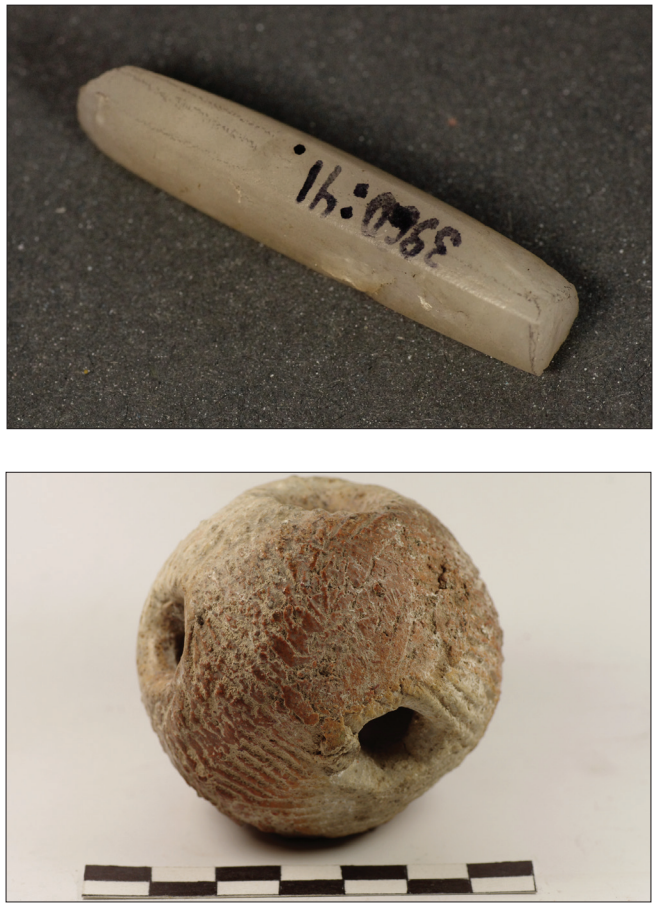

Figure 4. *a) A piece of a rock crystal (AI 3960: 41) from Tamula Neolithic fisher-hunter settlement and cemetery site and b) a ceramic 'object' of unknown purpose (AI 4510). Photos by Tõnno Jonuks 2013.*

TERMINOLOGY

Besides the mapping of religion-related artefacts and creating of a relevant database, another major aim of the research grant was to elaborate on the terms that archaeologists use in their research on past religions. We created a short glossary of most relevant and frequently used terms in the context of northern Europe, especially Baltic archaeology, including words like: cosmology/cosmogony, cult, magic, myth, sacrifice and/or offering, sacred/holy/numinous, religion, ritual, totem, votive. This list is by no means exhaustive, but reflects the main interests and problems that we tackle in our own research on the archaeology of religion. The following terminology discussion is certainly not a detailed overview of all the problems and solutions within the archaeology of religion. It rather aims to exemplify some of the issues that become evident when focusing on the questions of terminology and choice of words used in this field of study. In order to gain a broader perspective on terminology-related discussions, a conference session *Archaeology of Religion: Thinking about Terminology* was also organised at the 34th Annual Conference of the Theoretical Archaeology Group meeting in Liverpool in December 2012, as part of the research grant.

The classical starting point for the studies of religion, be it present or past, is the question of definition. Naturally in the context of our grant project, we should offer a definition to 'religion'. As follows from the above explanations for religious artefacts, the task is definitely not easy and can even be considered a dead end. So, instead of stating in the manner of Harvey Whitehouse (2004: 230), "religion is whatever we agree to say it is", we could try to understand religion in the framework of and through the opposition to other terms, which have been used in seemingly similar contexts. The first item to look into would be the distinction between religion and ritual. Such discussions have a long-term history in anthropology and religious studies. While the earlier scholars tried to provide universal definitions of these terms (cf., e.g., classical works by Tylor 1929 [1871]; Durkheim 2002 [1915]; Firth 1951; Geertz 2002 [1966]; Turner 1967), then later discussions debated about the usefulness and applicability of such endeavours (Asad 1983, 2002; Goody 1961; Lewis 1980). It is clear that neither religion nor ritual is easily defined and each attempt to provide universal explanations for those abstract concepts includes biases and hindrances. The implication of these discussions for archaeology is that religion as a very wide and abstract category is often left entirely undefined, and the concept of ritual(s) as more materiality-related and therefore visible to archaeologists is used instead (cf. Insoll 2004a; 2004b). The latter is most commonly inspired by the now classical works about the concept of ritualisation by Bell (1992; 1997). When talking about religion, plural forms, i.e., different religions

in the past and present, are used in order to emphasise the multifaceted nature of religious worldviews depending on spatial and temporal contexts (cf. articles and case studies in Insoll 2011b; for Estonian material see Jonuks 2005; 2009).

The main problem that haunts the use of the term 'ritual' is that, being indeed most wide and archaeologically best recognisable, it can be applied to almost everything. It often seems that 'ritual' has turned out to be an umbrella-word used whenever some religious, but also ideological and social events, are involved. The examples include a range of activities from feasting, witchcraft, votive deposits, and sacred natural objects to foundation deposits, waste pits, public show-off, etc. The discussion of non-religious rituals in anthropology (cf., e.g., Moore & Myerhoff 1977; Kertzer 1988; Connerton 1989) has certainly influenced these developments. Another debate that has unquestionably broadened the scope of the term 'ritual' in archaeology is the abandonment of strict and opposing profane *vs*. the sacred connotation of the term (e.g. Brück 1999; Bradley 2003, 2005; Insoll 2004b: 2–3). The strict division into sacred and profane, special and ordinary, is a by-product of the post-enlightenment worldview, from which the scholars find it hard to step out. As pointed out by several researchers, rituals can be practical and daily, rational and also differently interpreted and perceived by the practitioners themselves. Rituals can be ordinary, socially inspired, even daily activities just as much as they are sacred, religious and a special kind of practice.

The discussions that loosen our idea of ritual have certainly broadened our understanding of past societies and the widened scope of the concept of ritual. However, does that broadening of the concept also mean losing something from its essential quality and meaning? Even though we agree to the idea of the all-encompassing nature of ritual, not every formalised, repeated, structured and prescribed act is necessarily a ritual. One can think of a family dinner and the following washing-up, personal morning routines or daily factory work. As stated by Bell (1992; 1997) and Humphrey & Laidlaw (1994), there must be a special quality involved, because this special inner quality turns an act into a ritual. Indeed, every act can be ritualised and in this sense all the daily might become a ritual, if a special inner qualitative change is thought to happen. However, it is exactly this qualitative change that pulls the act away from the ordinary, gives it a special meaning, becomes ritualised and turns it into a ritual. The qualitative change involves the creation of a relationship with the supernatural and it has its symbolic connotations that can be applied to the act either physically or mentally. The methodological issues, such as how archaeologists can grasp those materially and mentally applied qualitative meanings, are a topic of another larger debate. What is important here is to note that even though ritual is a much wider concept than just religion in practice, it still has an

essential connection with religion and the supernatural. Perhaps this is also the reason why some scholars have turned their eyes back to the importance of religion when defining ritual (e.g. Garwood et al. 1991: vii; Fogelin 2007; Verhoeven 2011).

Ritual as a broad umbrella-term includes also several other terminology-related confusions when it comes to its subtypes and -divisions. The words that are most difficult to define and distinguish from each other, but which are commonly used in seemingly similar interpretations, are 'ritual', 'magic', 'cult', 'sacrifice' and 'offering' (with the addition of 'votive'). More than anything else, the use of those terms seems to be a matter of local scholarly traditions and geographically determined preferences.

A large area of confusion is the distinction and relation between religion and magic, and together with these the religious and magical practices as well as religious and magical artefacts. The dichotomy of magic and religion has been long discussed by historians of religion, whereas opinions have ranged from one extreme, in which magic and religion are viewed as in strict opposition with each other, to the other, in which the term *magic* has been regarded as a "semantic trap" and expelled from scientific circulation altogether (see more in Graf 1991: 188). The early anthropologists (Edward Spencer, Edward Burnett Tylor, James Frazer) made a clear distinction between magic and religion, seeing magic as a means to control events and religion as a way to explain events. However, the post-war intellectualists (Ian Jarvie, Jack Goody) regarded magic both as controlling events and as explaining them through attribution to magical agency, and religion as the means to explain events as well as influence them via divine intervention (see more in Cunningham 1999: 77). So, the clear-cut distinction between magic and religion was lost; however, a distinction between the magical agency and religious divination stepped in instead. For different researchers in the history of scholarship some aspects have played a more decisive role in acknowledging the presence of either magic or religion, and thus supplicative (religion) vs. manipulative (magic); symbolical (religion) vs. practical (magic); private/secret (magic) vs. public (religion) or individual (magic) vs. collective (religion) have been emphasised. However, most researchers from the 19th century onward, who deal with the topic of magic, have acknowledged the existence of grey areas; in fact, if we take the definitions and explanations as the basis, then the majority of practices seem to fall into this grey area between religion and magic. This is hardly a surprising conclusion for somebody dealing with definitions and terminology, but what is surprising is the number of researchers who still classify the artefacts they find either as magical or religious.

So, is there a difference between magic and religion and can it be grasped? The difference apparent on a conceptual level is not so obvious when discussing practices and artefacts; for example, using a religious prayer and a so-called magical amulet simultaneously in the same practice, or using the Bible in church rituals as well as in different popular healing practices, etc. Ideas from different initial sources intertwine in popular practices and their connection with clear-cut conceptions is not real. In that sense magic and magical practices are very practical, with a specific purpose and an unambiguous outcome; they are performed individually when needed and cannot be regarded as exceptional. This in turn means that any object can have a meaning in a magical procedure, and thus be regarded as a magical item (e.g. simple nails in the offering tree). On the other hand, like in the case of rituals, in which not all repeated actions are ritualised, not every practice with a focussed purpose and an explicit outcome is magical. In line with rituals, the relationship with the supernatural must be created here as well, which in the case of magic could be called the magical state of mind (Wax & Wax 1962), magical interpretation (e.g. Sørensen 2005), magical consciousness (Greenwood 2009), faith, or ritual sense (Bell 1992).

In this volume a detailed overview of the questions of sacrifice and offering is provided by Ester Oras. Looking at the definitions of and relations between ritual and cult, there seems to be a rather large gap between the use of these terms in religious studies and archaeology. The former tend to relate cult to non-traditional and innovative religious movements, which are often short-term and person-related, such as the cult of emperors (cf. relevant definitions in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of World Religions* (2000) and *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Archaeology* (2008)). In archaeology the concept has a much wider connotation. First of all, cult is most often used as a synonym to ritual in the studies of prehistoric and protohistoric Mediterranean contexts (cf. Renfrew 1985; Barrowclough & Malone 2007). The second larger use area is related to the cult of ancestors (Insoll 2011a), and as such has been widely applied to Estonian material as well (e.g. Lang 1999; Jonuks 2009). The third example of the utilisation of the word 'cult' is connected to different religious-related sites from both history and prehistory. In these cases it is noteworthy that different terminology can be applied to rather similar types of sites, e.g., for the eastern Baltic natural sites that have been used as religious sites the terms like sacred places, holy places, groves, or cult sites have been used (Tamla 1985; Vaitkevičius 2004; Jonuks 2007; Urtāns 2008). In those studies it is not always clear why one word is preferred to another and if there is any essential difference between the connotations of those specific words in the first place. It rather seems to be a matter of scholarship tradition in a particular geographical region which is decisive when it comes to choosing terminology for such a

specific dataset. The problem might also relate to the question of language and translation: the choice of words and their related meanings in native languages are not always directly transferrable to foreign languages such as English and German (see also discussion of sacrifice and offering in Oras, this volume). Thus the choice of terminology and related meanings are also constrained and influenced by the availability of concepts in specific languages.

There are also some terms and concepts that seem to have a rather strict chronological and spatial distribution. The question of cult and its relation to Mediterranean context was already pointed out above. Another such example is the concept of shamanism. This religious world view is most commonly discussed in the studies of Stone Age religions (e.g. Lewis-Williams & Clottes 1998) and the people living in the northern forest belt regions (Price 2001). Very seldom can we see such elaborate examples of shamanism in Bronze and Iron Age contexts (see, e.g., Randsborg 1993; Price 2002). It is rather obvious that the reason is indeed in the spread of certain religious concepts within a particular cultural and environmental context.[1] However, shamanism is a good example of context-specific religion-related terminology that most likely cannot be applied to and searched for in every region and period of time. It shows a high sensitivity of utilising at least some terms when studying past religions. Another such example of geographically and temporally constrained and traditionally developed terms would be the concept of 'votive'. This term most likely derives from the Mediterranean protohistoric and historic contexts and has been used in scholarship inspired by those case studies (see the definition of 'votive' in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Archaeology* (2008); cf., e.g., Renfrew 1985; Aitchison 1988; Crawford 2004; Osborne 2004). In northern Europe Bronze or Iron Age studies the words such as 'sacrifice' or 'offering' are usually employed even if those practices in different times and regions might share several similar characteristics.

As seen in most of those examples of terms and definitions, the main inspiration for archaeologists derives from anthropology, sometimes also from the religious studies. It is a whole new topic for discussion if and to what extent such loans have been fruitful, well-argued or misused. The main difference that is always worth re-emphasising is the question of sources. The information available to ethnographers and scholars of religious studies is usually very different from that used by archaeologists. If the former can rely on direct contact and evidence from the practice-in-happening, then the latter is based on the fragmentary remains of past practices, from which some (*sic*!) can indeed be related to religious and ritual activities. As can be seen in the example of relating or distinguishing magic and religion, very often the material remains solely do not reflect any religious-related activity involving the object. First, we

need ethnographic parallels or written sources in order to attain this interpretation. Second, we still lack firm arguments or direct evidence to provide final and single interpretations of something being religious. Therefore the question remains how reliable it is to borrow definitions from other social sciences if the source material is essentially different. Do we need our own, i.e., specific archaeologists' terminology and definitions for the study of religion, e.g., the network of terms for materialised religion or religious materiality? When do we have enough evidence from material remains to say that we are dealing with the same phenomena in the distant past that are described and defined in anthropology? The relevance of those questions might be best exemplified if we try to combine the source material that was under focus in our grant: objects in themselves as they lay on the shelves in museums and other research institutes.

Let us take a simple example of a cross-shaped pendant. Which religion-related term (if any at all) should be applied to it? Is it a religious object, a ritual object, perhaps a cultic or even magical one? Or perhaps none of those? For instance, as discussed by Jonuks and Kurisoo (this volume), a cross might be interpreted as a universal decorative element (ordinary design element), a sign identifying the wearer as a Christian (religious object? or ritual object?) or a protective amulet (magical object?). Or could a cross pendant be all of those at the same time and thus blur the differences between all those terms?

Figure 5. *A silver brooch from Lagedi with two crosses (AM 1100). Was the cross a symbol of faith or prosperity? Or was it a protective amulet? Or all of those together? Photo by Tõnno Jonuks 2013.*

To decide for one and against the other, further information about its find context, related objects and sites is necessary. However, the cross-shaped pendant is, to some extent, simpler and more universally spread phenomenon, which is familiar to us even in our contemporary world. But what can we think of pendants in the shape of a human face or a knife? Are they ritual, religious, magical, shamanistic, totemic or cultic? Or do they symbolise a craftsman? A wealthy person? Or is it just a nice piece of decoration?

Choosing the right term will be even more complicated if an example comes from the religious context but not from form. An ordinary nail, hammered into a tree-trunk as mentioned earlier, can be used as a good example of this. As it is known from folklore, nails were symbols of a wish or a pray. Or, for instance, a pair of ordinary scissors, used for divination: How shall we label such objects? They are not religious or cultic by themselves as they have not been made for that purpose or stored in any special way. They are not offered either. So we possibly need to consider another type of objects – magical mediums. Magical mediums would be objects that are part of mundane material culture, can be incorporated into religious behaviour and the explicit function of which is to be a mediator between the human and the supernatural, just like scissors in the divination mediate foretelling. Or like a coin that was put on an ill part of a body, was associated with the illness and if left in a spring or on a stone, the coin as a proxy should have tied the sufferings of the body with this place.

This is where the problems of terminology lie if we deal with objects only. Without any further information about the context, spatial and temporal belonging, relationship to other objects or features, attestations of the user or parallels from historic and ethnographic record, the interpretation of the artefact cannot go any further than symbology and possible religion-relatedness. With no regard to sites, practices, and use of the object, the label 'religious object' is the widest and safest, if we agree that it is religion-related at all. However, the answer and story that it provides is also very abstract and general, and does not embrace much of the essential meaning and function of the object. Therefore, the label 'religious object' calls for a need and encourages scholars to look for parallels and comparisons from other sources, or to ask for further archaeological information that would allow to go deeper into the meaning and function of the object, i.e., to interpret it in a more nuanced and detailed way.

FUTURE PLANS

The project has yielded over 2000 objects recorded in the database along with photos and descriptions. According to the original plan, which hopefully will succeed in the coming years, the database and a glossary of terms will be published online, with explanations in English. Apparently, there are so many single and unique objects, which are often stray finds, that only the publishing of raw data could help us to find analogies. This would also help to move further from the general term 'religious object' and find a more reasonable and detailed interpretation. The aim of the project was, first and foremost, to collect data, create an environment for future studies and map some of the most potential issues. The publishing of studies of some single items (Jonuks 2013) or groups (Oras forthcoming a; Jonuks & Joosu 2013) has started as well. A large-scale study has already been conducted within the project about the Late Iron Age cross pendants (Kurisoo 2012; 2013) and will be extended to all Late Iron Age pendants in the coming years. An analysis has been carried out of wealth deposits in all the Eastern Baltic countries (Oras forthcoming b) and another one is in preparation about the concept of magic in archaeology and about objects possibly used for magical purposes.

Although a few publications have already been completed, the actual study of religious objects in Estonia is just about to begin and this project merely created a basis for it. Predictions for the future are never appreciated, but on the basis of the past three years some changes as compared to the previous decades can be pointed out. As was mentioned previously, the early tradition of using archaeological finds was based on either folkloristic or ethnological frame, in which only suitable examples were used as illustrations. Later on the tradition reversed and archaeological finds started to be interpreted on the basis of folklore or ethnology. Due to this, interpretations of objects are largely only humanitarian. The current trend rather points to the more important role of a scientific approach and several new methods of study have been used already or are in progress for pointing out new perspectives for object biographies.

Another methodological possibility, especially for the unattractive mass-material, would be to apply some qualitative statistics to the material collected. A large-scale database that covers also ordinary mass finds, e.g. tooth pendants, allows us to see how this tradition has changed, what animals have been used, when they have been killed, etc. As interpretations of religion have often been based on some single objects, broader comparative analyses are necessary for many groups of finds, including pendants, fossils, lithic material from the Mesolithic and Neolithic in later contexts, etc. These are all crucial subjects when discussing religion in archaeology, but far too often scholars have based their

analyses only on single examples and stretched that result to other contexts as well, without any particular sources.

In conclusion, as a result of our project we have only just started to grasp the multifaceted problems that need to be tackled when studying religion on its material bases. During data collection and the following interpretations, we also became increasingly aware of the difficulties of providing more detailed definitions, conceptual categorisations, meanings and functions to specific archaeological material. Thus, this project emphasises once again the importance of multi-methodological and multi-source approaches in the archaeology of religion. We have gathered a good amount of data on religious-related archaeological finds in Estonia and started to grasp the theoretical and methodological issues that emerge when doing a paralleled and comparative study of specific object types within the frame of a larger data corpus. The initial ideas presented in this overview article are just tentative results and the data gathered during this three-year period will be developed further in future projects, publications and discussions.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AI – collection of archaeology at the Institute of History, University of Tallinn
ERA – Estonian Folklore Archives, Estonian Literary Museum
TM A – collection of archaeology at the Tartu City Museum
AM A – collection of archaeology at the Estonian History Museum, Tallinn

NOTE

[1] But according to the preferences of scholars in how to define the term, shamanism can appear also in Modern Age rural Europe (e.g. Ginzburg 1983), or in any temporal or spatial contexts, defined according to the neuropsychological features (e.g. Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1988; Whitley 2005) indicating again the importance of the scholarly interpretation of the word.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

THE SEVEN-YEAR CONFERENCE SERIES ABOUT HOLY PLACES HAD A WORTHY ENDING IN ST. PETERSBURG

In 2007, the first international conference in the series "Holy Places around the Baltic Sea" was organised at the Estonian Literary Museum in Tartu. The purpose of the conference was quite clear: it was supposed to bring together researchers studying holy places. The first conference aptly characterised the situation in this field of research: although researchers from different countries knew each other, contacts were casual and knowledge of sources in different regions was random. The one-day conference, which was hard to fill with papers, was followed by a two-day excursion to the holy places in the north-east and south-east Estonia. The tour turned out to be the most fruitful part of the event as discussions were initiated right on the spot, not on the basis of pictures shown on the wall. When a decision was made in Tartu to have another conference of the kind, obviously nobody imagined that it would develop into a series continuing for seven years and embracing the eastern and southern coast of the Baltic Sea.

The first conference in Tartu was followed by the next one in Kernavė, Lithuania, in 2008, then in Turaida, Latvia, in 2009, on Seili Island, Finland, in 2010, in Kętrzyn, Poland, in 2011, in Kaliningrad, Russia, in 2012 and in St. Petersburg, Russia, in 2013. All the conferences took place at the beginning of May and were combined with a tour of the neighbourhood, with an emphasis on local holy places. Although an excursion could be regarded as entertainment, it constituted an integral part of the conference, enabling the participants to gain firsthand experience of these places. However, personal emotions and impressions outweigh any good and detailed descriptions. Maybe gaining personal experience about holy places in different countries could be regarded as one of the most important results of the conference series.

When speaking about holy places in the Baltic Sea region, we often emphasise their *naturalness*, which is especially clearly expressed in the usage of a special term *natural holy place*. This was also demonstrated by several papers as well as the Turaida conference title "Natural Holy Places or Holy Places in Nature". At the same time, some of the presentations strongly doubted the whole concept of naturalness. It seems that in the Baltic Sea region the notion *natural* is mainly needed in contrast with sacral buildings (churches, chapels, etc.) which are also holy places. Therefore, it could rather be more sensible to use a notion *non-official holy place* or something like that when discussing alternative religious places in the Christian period.

Proceeding from the general term *natural holy place*, a concept has evolved of a relatively uniform phenomenon, which, although it has subdivisions, such as sacred trees, stones, springs, hills, forests, etc., is generally universal. It was this particular argument disseminated mainly in literary sources that was refuted during the excursions most clearly (at least in the author's opinion). While the holy places in Estonia and north of Latvia (where the tour of Latvian conference took place) were similar to each other, it was difficult to find any equivalents in the Estonian material to Lithuanian *alka*(sacred grove)-places associated with strongholds and other power centres.

Participants of the conference "Complexity and Regional Aspects of Natural Holy Places" on an excursion at Staraya Ladoga. Photo by Žilvinas Montvydas 2013.

This indicates that the traditions related to holy places have largely been different. In addition to these, conference papers have discussed a number of places which cannot be categorised as classical *natural holy places*, yet nobody contests their holiness. As an example, we could mention building sacrifices in medieval and early modern period towns, which are far from nature, yet still in a religious context. Also, examples from a more distant past have been discussed under the umbrella term of natural holy places, as, for instance, votive depositions of possible religious objects from the Middle Iron Age. All this indicates that the umbrella term should be further explained and expanded, in terms of the context, with a new content.

Just like holy places differ from each other, each country has also followed their own traditions in their studies. While in Kaliningrad, which suffered severely during the 20th century and featured changes in population, only one "classical" holy place was shown – an erratic boulder split in two – then in the Catholic-background Poland only pre-Christian archaeological sites were demonstrated as holy places. It is likely due to these differences that Estonia and the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea in general is regarded as the only region in Europe in which so-called natural holy places are preserved. To support this view, during the whole conference series no researchers could be found to deliver a paper on this topic in Western Europe or Scandinavia. However, it is more probable that the problem actually lies in the research situation and thus neither in Western Europe, nor in Scandinavia non-official holy places have become research objects. This was well illustrated by Ceri Houlbrook's paper delivered at the

last conference in St. Petersburg, which discussed wish trees in Scotland, the trunks of which have been covered by coins driven into the wood as tokens in order to gain the fulfilment of wishes. Despite a few exceptions, researchers from western countries are, as a rule, only negligibly interested in holy places, which is especially interesting if we consider the trend of the past decades to investigate non-conventional topics. One of the possible reasons might be that archaeologists were the initiators of the current conference series and also constituted the majority of the participants, whereas holy places have traditionally been the domain of folkloristics and linguistics. However, holy places in these fields rather seem to be a marginalised topic, and have largely become a sphere of research for archaeology.

The reasons why natural holy places became significant for Baltic researchers are certainly multifaceted. On the one hand, it is the material associated with the religion of the past times: there are no striking and (seemingly) easily interpreted ancient relics in the Baltic Sea region, such as henges or megaliths. Also, we lack such complete myth narratives as those in Scandinavia. On the other hand, however, during the 19th-century enlightenment and romanticism period, paganism became one of the attributes of national identity and, as its only material expression was landscape objects, these holy places deserved an unproportionally great interest on the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea as compared to other regions. Maybe these two factors, in combination with the private interest of researchers, are the reason why natural holy places feature the most well-established research tradition namely in the Baltic countries. Undoubtedly, the fact that holy places are still in use has also contributed to the interest of academic researchers in these studies.

Despite the Baltic-centred topic and negligible research elsewhere, the conference hosted several researchers of international renown, such as Timothy Insoll from Manchester University, Rudolf Simek from Bonn University, Leszek Słupecki from Rzeszow University, etc. However, the most significant result of the conference series is definitely the formation of an operating network and merger of several younger-generation researchers.

The series that continued for seven years has until now yielded three publications (*Folklore*, Vol. 42, in 2009, *Archaeologija Baltica*, Vol. 15, in 2011, and *Kulturas Krustpunkti*, Vol. 5, in 2011) and three more are forthcoming, so the series has undoubtedly justified its existence. Several conferences raised issues and topics for further investigation. Many presentations were case-based and focused on examples. However, instead of introducing the material, we would need a more methodological approach, and in addition to the comparison of traditional archaeology and folkloristics, other disciplines should also be involved. Only a few presentations dealt with the rich source material of modern age travelogues, and the issue of historic maps was never discussed. One of the future research directions could be co-operation with natural sciences to study ecology and land use throughout different periods and, on this basis, reconstruct the appearance and background system of holy places. Also, material culture associated with holy places and their preserved traces deserve more detailed research.

In the future, the temporal aspect of holy places should be studied further and the former ahistorical approach should be replaced by a context-based one. Considering the temporal factor would be a step further from the crucial question whether the natural holy places are pre-Christian. According to traditional approach, everything outside

the currently official religion belongs to the pre-Christian period. It is obvious that the concepts under the umbrella term *natural holy places* are not unambiguous and that non-official holy places could have been used also during the Catholic or Protestant period. However, even if the history of some holy places can be traced back to the pre-Christian period or even earlier, the activities and beliefs associated with the places have considerably changed in time. Therefore, the question of pre- or post-Christianisation is not relevant as practically all the source material about local holy places dates from the folk tradition of the late 19th and the 20th centuries. And the question of the position of non-official holy places in medieval or Modern Age societies would be even more interesting and important than speculations about their datings.

A new sphere of research that emerged during the past few conferences is the use of holy places today. It is not only academic circles that are interested in holy places, and the meaning of holy places in contemporary world is definitely wider than just providing evidence of a former religion. Here we should also emphasise that in Estonia the circle of people currently using the holy places is supposedly the most influential and partly also determines the academic approach. Yet, the users of holy places also influence the sources and shape the new meanings of these places. Considering the fact that such new religious movements are gradually gaining a firm footing, new opinion leaders emerge who determine the use of holy places.

A seven-year conference series on the same topic must be tiring and the past few conferences also indicated that the initial freshness and excitement were gradually passing. So we deemed it wise to finish the series after having provided examples from the holy places of all the countries on the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea and, what is even more important, after establishing a network and introducing different ways and traditions of research. Yet, no conference, especially a seven-year-long focused series, is enjoyable without participants, so we are grateful to all the participants and organisers. However, it would be wrong to leave the achieved results just drifting. Hopefully, after a certain pause and reconsideration of the topic, we can continue discussions about the tangibility and temporality of former religions as well as landscape phenomena.

Tõnno Jonuks

INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM "CHARMS ON PAPER, CHARMS IN PRACTICE"

The 16th Congress of the International Society for Folk Narrative Research (ISFNR) took place in Vilnius, Lithuania, on June 25–30, 2013, and within its framework an international symposium under the heading *Charms on Paper, Charms in Practice* was organised jointly by the ISFNR Committee on Charms, Charmers and Charming, and the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore.

The ISFNR working group has set an aim to coordinate research into charms in different countries, elaborate systematic methods of analysis and encourage studies into charming traditions, as well as to compile local and international catalogues of charms, corresponding scientific publications and databases. The chairman of the committee initiated in 2007 is Jonathan Roper (Great Britain/Estonia), and the members are Daiva Vaitkevičienė (Lithuania), Mare Kõiva (Estonia), Lea T. Olsan (Great Britain), Haralampos Passalis (Greece), Éva Pócs (Hungary), Emanuela Timotin (Romania) and Andrey Toporkov (Russia). The working group publishes an annual journal entitled *Incantatio* (http://www.folklore.ee/incantatio).

Conferences are organised regularly (at least every second year) and the proceedings are prepared for publication. The first conference was held in Pécs (2007), and was followed by similar events in Tartu (2008), Athens (2009), Bucharest (2010) and Moscow (2011). Two pre-conferences on the same topics were organised in London (in 2003 and 2005). An overview of the Moscow conference of 2011, *Oral Charms in Structural and Comparative Light*, was published in *Folklore: Electronic Journal of Folklore* in 2012[1].

Four collections have been published with the proceedings of the previous conferences: *Charms and Charming in Europe* (2004, editor Jonathan Roper); *Charms, Charmers and Charming: International Research on Verbal Magic* (2009, editor Jonathan Roper); *Oral Charms in Structural and Comparative Light. Proceedings of the Conference of the International Society for Folk Narrative Research's (ISFNR) Committee on Charms, Charmers and Charming. 27–29th October 2011, Moscow* (2011, editors Tatyana Mikhailova, Jonathan Roper, Andrey Toporkov, Dmitri Nikolayev)[2]; and *The Power of Words: Studies on Charms and Charming in Europe* (2013, editors James Kapaló, Éva Pócs and William Ryan).

The Vilnius conference held on June 25–29 consisted of seven sessions with twenty-five presentations. Researches originated from the United States, Estonia, Ireland, India, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, Croatia, Greece, Lithuania, Latvia, Switzerland, Hungary, Romania and Russia.

Many of the presentations discussed the traditions of European charms manuscripts, as well as conformity between written and oral texts. A number of speakers touched upon the social practice of manuscripts and the possibilities for using them in reconstructing the ritual practices of the past.

The first session under the heading *Verbal Charms in Practice* dwelt upon Anglo-Saxon, Irish and Bulgarian manuscript charms. Lea T. Olsan (Cambridge, Great Britain) analysed the cases in which medieval Christian charms manuscripts had been supplemented with citations from Roman poets. Ilona Tuomi (Cork, Ireland) spoke about four Irish medical charms that are preserved in the Abbey of St. Gall in Switzerland.

Ciaran Arthur (Canterbury, Great Britain) analysed the literary methods used in an 11th-century Anglo-Saxon charm, which is preserved at the British Library. Svetlana Tsonkova (Budapest, Hungary) characterised medieval Slavic charms and non-canonical prayers, which have survived in manuscript form or in writing on amulets.

The central topic of the second session was contemporary charms. James Kapalo (Cork, Ireland) introduced a peculiar phenomenon in Gagauz culture: Mother of God appears to women in their dreams, providing healing powers to them and helping to acquire literacy. Yukari Nagayama (Sapporo, Japan) shared her observations about the usage traditions of protective and harmful charms in the native people of Kamchatka. Daiva Vaitkevičienė (Vilnius, Lithuania) introduced to the audience the research carried out among the Lithuanian community in western Belorussia in 2010–2012, which was aimed at detecting the influence factors of folk medicine practices as social phenomena, as well as the network of charming specialists. Rajketan Singh Chirom (Imphal, India) analysed the Chupsa Moithemba tradition in Manipur state, India, drawing attention to the usage of charms in ritual contexts.

The third session focused on the topics of charms and Christianity. Toms Kencis (Riga, Latvia) dedicated his presentation to the Latvian version of the *Super petram* charm (St. Peter sitting on a rock). Haralampos Passalis (Thessaloniki, Greece) discussed the motifs connected with St. Sisinnius and the demonic Gillo in Late Byzantium and post-Byzantium Greek tradition. Andrey Toporkov (Moscow, Russia) generalised the use of the beginning and particularly the first verse of St. John's gospel ("In the beginning was the Word") as part of a charm and magic practice on the example of Christians of different countries.

The fourth session dealt mainly with magical manuscripts. Emanuela Timotin (Bucharest, Romania) shared her knowledge of the codicological features and spread of Romanian manuscript charms dating from the 17th–19th centuries. Eleonora Cianci (Pescara, Italy) analysed, on the basis of German medieval and Early Modern Age manuscripts, the versions of the Three Good Brothers charm. Aigars Lielbārdis (Riga, Latvia) introduced Latvian charm manuscripts as well as heavenly and chain letters similar to them.

The fifth session was dedicated to charms studies. Jonathan Roper (Tartu, Estonia) introduced two significant archives of European charms: the texts archive on approximately 23,000 index cards, established by Adolf Spamer (1883–1953) in Dresden, and the one deposited in Copenhagen, which was created by Ferdinand Ohrt (1873–1938), researcher in the field of European word magic. Nicholas Wolf (New York, United States of America) spoke about charm manuscripts in English and Irish, dating from the years 1700–1850, which include materials on medicine, as well as prayers and secular poetry. Saša Babič (Ljubljana, Slovenia) discussed the research traditions of Slovenian charms, as well as the main types of healing charms. Davor Nikolić and Josipa Tomašić (Zagreb, Croatia) introduced the rich prayer-like charms collection in Croatian archives, the texts of which can be divided into exorcism and apotropaic prayers.

The sixth session dwelt upon charms, demons and fright. James Kapalo (Cork, Ireland) and Haralampos Passalis (Thessaloniki, Greece) compared Greek and Gagauz healing rituals against fright. These charms are used in the case of diseases and post-traumatic conditions caused by fright. Judit Zsuzsanna Kis-Halas (Tartu, Estonia)

presented the Hungarian versions of the same charms, supplementing them with comparisons from all over the world, including South America. Larissa Naiditch (Jerusalem, Israel) analysed dialogue in German charms ("Begegnungs Segen").

The last session focused on various phenomena bordering between charms tradition and social practices. Emese Ilyefalvi (Budapest, Hungary) discussed obscenity in Hungarian charms. Åsa Ljungström (Uppsala, Sweden) gave an overview of attitudes towards charms manuscripts preserved in family lore throughout four hundred years (from the 17th to the 20th century). Evgeniya Litvin and Anna Kozlova (St. Petersburg, Russia) analysed the new forms of charms aimed at losing weight and enlarging breasts, which are disseminated on the Internet. Julia Ladygienė (Vilnius, Lithuania) discussed, by way of communication theory, standard situations between the magic specialist and the patient.

The conference programme and abstracts have been published in the book entitled *Folk Narrative in the Modern World: Unity and Diversity*. *The 16th Congress of the International Society for Folk Narrative Research. June 25–30, 2013. Vilnius, Lithuania. Program and Abstracts. Vilnius 2013*.

Andrey Toporkov

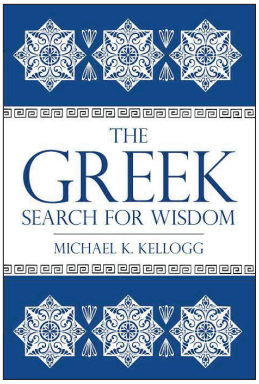
Notes

[1] Vol. 50, pp. 156–161, available at www.folklore.ee/folklore/vol50/n04.pdf, last accessed on December 4, 2013.

[2] The collection is in two languages and its parallel heading in Russian is *Zagovornye teksty v strukturnom i sravnitel'nom osveshchenii. Materialy konferentsii Komissii po verbal'noi magii Mezhdunarodnogo obshchestva po izucheniiu fol'klornykh narrativov*.

BOOK REVIEWS

MASTERWORKS OF ANCIENT GREECE



Michael K. Kellogg. *The Greek Search for Wisdom*. New York: Prometheus Books, 2012. 341 pp.

In Robert A. Heinlein's short story *By His Bootstraps* (Heinlein 1970), the main character Bob Wilson, who is writing a philosophical dissertation in a locked room, finds himself in the midst of weird events, and, as a result, he travels 30,000 years into the future. He is in a huge palace, part of which is suitable to be inhabited by people, while the rest is described as follows:

> *Great halls large enough to hold ten thousand people at once – had there been floors for them to stand on. For there frequently were no floors in the accepted meaning of a level or reasonably level platform.* [---] *He crawled gingerly forward and looked over the edge. The mouth of the passage debouched high up on a wall of the place; below him the wall was cut back so that there was not even a vertical surface for the eye to follow. Far below him, the wall curved back and met its mate of the opposite side – not decently, in a horizontal plane, but at an acute angle.* (Heinlein 1970: 75–76)

In this far future, Wilson also meets some people, who lead a rather primitive life in the palace, and who tell him that the palace was built by the High Ones, creatures of unknown origin and fate, who once visited the Earth.

In Greek mythology, Minotaur, a monster with the head of a bull, lives in a labyrinth on Crete Island, and he is killed by the Athenian hero Theseus with the help of Ariadne and a ball of thread given by her (Graves 1957: 336–339).[1] Historically, the labyrinth myth could be based on the palace of Knossos with its maze of halls and corridors, in which the plunderers of Athens roved around; also there was a labyrinth-patterned dancing floor in front of the palace (ibid.: 345–346). The word 'labyrinth' might have been derived from *labrys*, a ritual double-headed axe, the term being neither of Greek nor (most probably) of Indo-European origin (Frisk 1991: 67). The palace in Knossos dates back to the Minoan-Mycenaean era (3rd–2nd millennium BC), with Minoan non-Indo-European culture dominating in the first half. At the end of the Mycenaean era, in the 12th century, the legendary Trojan War presumably took place. So the ancient Greek culture was founded on the ruins of an alien culture, and drew material for its myths from the latter. Also, the ruins of antiquity have contributed to a large extent to the spread of the Renaissance, both directly and figuratively. As a specimen of physical heritage, we could mention the Colosseum in Rome, which was, among other things, also used as a quarry, as after the end of the era of antiquity no proper function was found for the structure. Here we also have to bear in mind that antiquity, which we tend to regard as the cradle of European culture, also presents a case of domesticating the alien,

which never completely succeeds. Occidental culture re-translates antiquity into the present day, both the texts and the culture in general. Beginning from the Renaissance, we can mention here the humanists, and from the recent past also Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, who are renowned even today, in the 21st century.

So, a simplistic approach to another culture could involve two possibilities: we can either look for similarities and interpret the alien from our own viewpoint or point out the differences and try to understand them as much as possible. The aforementioned citation from R.A. Heinlein describes an encounter with the alien and abstruse.[2] Michael K. Kellogg's popular science book entitled *The Greek Search for Wisdom*, on the other hand, focuses on the domestication of ancient Greek culture. This volume covers, in temporal sequence, the following Greek authors and their masterworks: Homer, Hesiod, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Herodotus, Thucydides, Aristophanes, Plato and Aristotle. This list of names indicates that the author focuses on the classical era in ancient Greece (the 5th and 4th centuries BC). The only ones who belong to the archaic, pre-classical era (ca 800–500 BC) are epic poets Homer and Hesiod. Also, the selection of authors is geographically rather limited: except for Homer and Hesiod, only historian Herodotus[3] did not come from Athens, although he also frequented this city and befriended Pericles (see pp. 189–191) and Sophocles (pp. 99–126), who were representatives of the classical spirit of Athens. On the one hand, in a certain sense it was the highlight of ancient Greek culture: Kellogg compares the creative outburst of the period in Greece to that of the 16th-century Western Europe, the time of Leonardo, Michelangelo, Raphael, Montaigne, Cervantes and Shakespeare (p. 101). On the other hand, however, the selection of authors can be traced back to the viewpoint of more recent culture. Classical Athens represents the values that the Occident has idealised commencing the Renaissance. However, we cannot overlook Homer and Hesiod, as they were the foundations of the entire ancient Greek culture. Without knowing Homer, we would not be able to interpret the heritage of the classical era. Kellogg represents pure tradition and re-produces the myth underlying European identity. He does not pose a question as to what extent contemporary ideals could have been transmitted to antiquity during the Renaissance or later on, when some of these did not even exist in this form. So, Kellogg speaks neither about the different nor about the alien; yet, now and then, domesticates rather boldly. For example, on page 57 he argues that the beginning of *Theogony* by Hesiod, which describes the emergence of the world from chaos, is, in a certain sense, like an ancient version of Steven Weinberg's book *The First Three Minutes* (Weinberg 1988). Also, according to Kellogg, Euripides's tragedies *Electra* and *Orestes* start in Aeschylus's world and end in that of *Pulp Fiction* (p. 129). Kellogg here discusses allusions and does not identify Hesiod's cosmogony with the modern theory of physics, or Euripides's tragedies with Hollywood cult movies; so such comparisons cannot be regarded as wrong; yet, they mediate the message by which we are direct heirs of antiquity and it is quite easy to skip the 2500 years and cultural differences that separate us from this era.[4]

The compilation principles of the book could be criticised to a certain extent. In the introduction, Michael K. Kellogg says that it was not difficult to select the ten most distinguished authors, as the heritage of lyric poets and pre-Socratics is too fragmentary, Pindar's odes "are an acquired taste" and "Xenophon [---] is not on a par with the others considered here" (p. 23). The latter two argumentations are clearly judgemental.

As concerns the fact that the works of lyric poets have survived only fragmentarily, we cannot, regardless, underestimate their impact on the Greek wisdom, which seems to be the main topic in Kellogg's book. Besides, the works of neither the elegists[5] nor the iambographers[6] are dwelt upon in more detail. Also, "[---] the Hellenistic[7] philosophers, who left only fragments behind, are properly considered only along with their Roman counterparts" (p. 23). The Greek authors of the Roman Empire (beginning the 1st century BC) are not mentioned at all; for example, Plotinus's name cannot be found in the index part at the back of the book (pp. 329–341), although he based his work on classical culture and left a permanent imprint on the more recent Christian tradition.

Although the absence of lyric poets, pre-Socratics and authors from Hellenistic and Roman Empire periods could be justified to a certain extent by focusing on the classical era, the cream of Greek culture, it still remains disputable why Greek rhetoric has been mentioned only fleetingly, although it is one of the intrinsic elements of the classical democratic Athens. Orator Demosthenes is mentioned only transiently in the chapters dedicated to historian Thucydides and comic playwright Aristophanes; yet, the name of Demosthenes's contemporary rival Aeschines is totally missing in Kellogg's book. We could recall here that Demosthenes's public political speeches against Philip II of Macedon, who jeopardised the independence of Athens, are regarded as the highlight of political speech by the same tradition that Kellogg represents. The term 'Philippic' denoting a fierce attacking political speech also derives from Demosthenes.

We have to admit that M.K. Kellogg's work *The Greek Search for Wisdom* can rather be categorised as popular science. For the most part, the author makes no attempts to say something new, but rather tells the story of an era and its culture and draws parallels with the present day. This is also testified by only infrequent references to secondary sources. Hereby the author cites the traditional and foundational treatments, such as Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis* (1973), Werner Jaeger's *Paideia* (1986), Friedrich Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy* (1968) and Alfred North Whitehead's *Process and Reality* (1985). Yet, the author also refers to some authoritative more modern treatments, so that at each topic the reader is given allusions of how to proceed. A commendable feature is suggestions for further reading at the end of the book (pp. 291–297), which offers a more detailed overview of secondary sources. However, practically all the sources referred to are English translations. In places, citations in the book are inconsistent.[8]

When speaking about the strong points of Michael K. Kellogg's book, we could first mention its comprehensiveness. If we leave aside the aforementioned criticism about the selection of authors, the book gives an excellent overview of Greek culture in the classical era. The reader is provided with a short biography and a list of the most significant works by all the ten authors. This is followed by a more detailed treatment of selected topics or some books. Kellogg places the writers and their works in a wider historical and cultural context.

In the case of Homer, Kellogg dwells upon *The Iliad* and its characters – Achilles, Patroklos, Hector and Priam – as well as hero ethics, the role of gods and so-called terrible beauty.[9] The other epic poem by Homer, *The Odyssey*, is mentioned only fleetingly. In the case of Hesiod, the significant topics to be discussed are conscious authorship, changing roles of gods in comparison to Homer[10], and farmer's ethics. Here Kellogg focuses on *Works and Days*. The following chapters are dedicated to three famous Greek tragedians: Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. In the chapter about Aeschylus, the

topics under discussion include Persian wars and democracy in Athens; here Kellogg also dwells on *Oresteia*, the only survived antique trilogy of tragedies. The chapter about Sophocles focuses[11] on the tragedies concerned with the Theban rulers: *Antigone*, *King Oedipus* and *Oedipus at Colonus.* Euripides's plays *Electra* and *Orestes* are compared to Aeschylus's *Oresteia*, as they are based on the same myths and feature the same characters. In more detail Kellogg discusses Euripides's *Medea* and *The Bacchae*. A recurrent topic for all the three tragedians is attitude towards the gods and its evolution throughout times; this is what people's own position is based on, which from Kellogg's point of view seems to be even more important.

The following two chapters are dedicated to the so-called first historians, Herodotus and Thucydides. Herodotus is mentioned by the title "The Father of History", conferred by Cicero, but here Kellogg also recalls the derogatory attitude of his critics in Early Modern Times, who branded him "The Father of Lies". Herodotus's travels, his attitude towards myths and his moral principles are also discussed here. The connecting element of his voluminous history study, *The Histories*, is the Persian Empire; on the one hand, the work describes the countries and peoples that the Persians occupied, while on the other, the background is constituted by the Greek-Persian Wars. In the chapter about Herodotus, M.K. Kellogg focuses mainly on Persian danger, the famous conflicts on the Plain of Marathon and at the pass of Thermopylae, on the Salamis Sea Battle, and repelling of the Persian attack near Plataea. Thucydides's *History* starts from where Herodotus's chronicles left off, and focuses on the Peloponnesian War. Here Kellogg discusses the following topics: growth in the power of Athens, conflict with Sparta, the plague, Athenian tragic campaign in Sicily, and the consequences of the war. A separate mention is made about the commanders – Pericles, Cleon and Brasidas, as well as Demosthenes.

The following chapter is dedicated to Aristophanes, the most renowned[12] representative of the Old Attic Comedy. First, Kellogg gives an overview of the Old Attic Comedy in general as well as the performances, which is followed by more detailed introductions of Aristophanes's so-called peace plays, *The Acharnians*, *Peace*, and *Lysistrata*, which feature a certain reaction to the Peloponnesian War that impoverished Athens. These are followed by discussions of *The Birds*, *Plutus*, and *The Assemblywomen*[13], which describe social utopias. A separate subchapter is dedicated to *The Clouds*, which lampoons philosophy, sophistry and mainly Socrates, and *The Frogs*, which ridicules tragedians.

The last two chapters of M.K. Kellogg's book are dedicated to philosophers Plato and Aristotle. In the case of Plato, the focus is only on his *Symposium*. The speeches in the praise of love are grouped as follows: Phaedrus, Pausanias and Eryximachus; Aristophanes and Agathon; Socrates and Diotima; Alcibiades. Diotima's speech enables Kellogg to also touch upon Plato's theory of Forms. In Aristotle's philosophy, M.K. Kellogg focuses on ethics, moderation, and recommendable way of life in this regard. More detailed are discussions of man as a "political"[14] creature and Aristotle's theory of politics.

The above description gives the reader an idea of the core of Kellogg's book, which is the human being[15]. It becomes most explicit in the chapters about philosophers. In the case of Plato, the analysis focuses on one of his middle dialogues about love. Undoubtedly, *The Symposium* is also an essential dialogue; yet, some others missing in Kellogg's book are just as important or even more so from the point of view of his theory of Forms. Focus on Aristotle's ethics and politics is also one-sided, as the philosopher's writings

on metaphysics and logic[16] as well as works dedicated to nature and literary criticism[17] have been practically overlooked. Yet, the latter have exerted a strong impact on the more recent tradition. But as concerns the human being, for Kellogg it is a constant that connects us to other cultures and eras.[18]

In conclusion we could say that Michael K. Kellogg's book, *The Greek Search for Wisdom*, is a gripping summary of the Greek authors of the classical era as well as their works, providing also a historic and cultural background of the era. The book revives the era of antiquity for the reader. Yet, the reader should bear in mind that the overview is not comprehensive, but constitutes a limited selection of authors and topics. Also, we have to be aware that there is a gap between the familiar and the alien, which was referred to in the beginning. Only after we have acknowledged it, we can start mapping unknown lands.

Neeme Näripä

Notes

[1] M.K. Kellogg also recommends his book (p. 291).

[2] As the palace also has rooms for people, it also has a familiar element.

[3] Herodotus was born in Halicarnassus, Asia Minor.

[4] Comparisons with the works of William Shakespeare are frequent (about Homer in more detail on p. 46, about Euripides on p. 129) and the Old Testament (e.g. on p. 124 the banished Oedipus in Sophocles's play *Oedipus at Colonus* is compared to Job in the Old Testament). From the viewpoint of antiquity, such comparisons are certainly anachronistic; yet, they help to make the texts of antique authors more reader-friendly.

[5] Theognis, Solon and Mimnermus could be mentioned among the most renowned ones.

[6] E.g. Hipponax and Archilochus. In the case of the iamb, a separate discourse could be seen, which existed in a certain form also during the classical period (see Steinrück 2009).

[7] The beginning of the Hellenistic era is marked by the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BC, and the end by the Battle of Actium in 31 BC.

[8] On pp. 122–123, the author claims, unreferenced, that according to Aristotle, tragedy was supposed to make people sympathise with the hero's sufferings and understand the vulnerability of the human "in a universe whose purpose and meaning we cannot fully grasp", whereas on pages 127 and 129 there are references to Aristotle's *Poetics*. On p. 114 the author quotes Hegel through George Steiner (1984: 4).

[9] The expression 'terrible beauty' can be found only in Robert Fagles's translation cited by M.K. Kellogg. Kellogg uses this expression to characterise the entire epic poem. Also we have to note that in Kellogg's citations the numbers of verses in *The Iliad* do not correspond to those in the more wide-spread publications (Kellogg refers here to verses 3.187–190, whereas in the more wide-spread publications these are 3.156–160).

[10] Mainly in Hesiod's *Theogony*.

[11] The content and themes of other plays by Sophocles are also briefly presented.

[12] Actually, Aristophanes is the only author in the Old Attic Comedy whose several works have survived virtually complete.

[13] Kellogg sees it as a parody of state organisation in Plato's *The Republic*.

[14] Here the relationship is, above all, to polis (Greek city-state), not politics in the modern sense of the word.

[15] In this respect, this book could be compared to Jean-Pierre Vernant's excellent collection *The Greeks* (Vernant 1995).

[16] In *Metaphysics* and *Organon*, respectively.

[17] About natural sciences, e.g., in the *History of Animals*, and *Parts of Animals*; about literary criticism in *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*.

[18] On pp. 43–46 Kellogg suggests that Greek gods could have been merely metaphoric aspects of the human *psyche*, i.e., general human archetypes.

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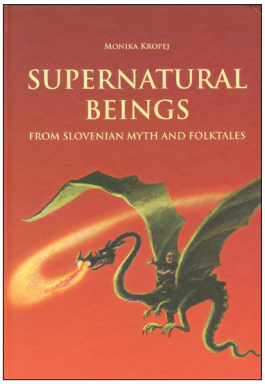
SUPERNATURAL BEINGS IN SLOVENIAN FOLKLORE



Monika Kropej. *Supernatural Beings from Slovenian Myth and Folktales.* Ljubljana: Scientific Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 2012. 284 pp.

The book entitled *Supernatural Beings from Slovenian Myth and Folktales* by Slovenian ethnologist Monika Kropej gives a detailed overview of more than 150 supernatural beings in Slovenian folklore. As source material, the author uses mainly folktales, along with historical and literary treatments, and draws parallels with the lore of other European countries (and, to a lesser extent, also non-European cultures), also suggesting possible literary influencers. In addition, the author's attention focuses on regional peculiarities (quite a few creatures are known only regionally or by different names in different regions). At the end of the book, the reader can find a sizable bibliography of cited works and a register of Slovenian supernatural beings.

In the introductory part, the author presents an overview of the history of myths studies and outlines the current situation in traditional Slovenian folk tradition. The author argues that, although folktales and other fields of lore have nearly ceased to be presented in traditional contexts, an overall increase of general interest in folklore can be observed. However, the modern spheres of folklore application (e.g. entertainment and tourism) largely differ from those of the past.

The main part of the book is presented in four subdivisions. The first one discusses supernatural creatures in cosmology. Here the reader can find depictions of the creatures related to the motifs explaining the creation and functioning of various phenomena in the world, such as a huge fish carrying the earth on its back, or a bull, whose movements cause earthquakes, as well as different deities, such as Kurent, Veles, Kresnik, or Mother Goddess Mokoš and her derivates. As an equivalent of St. George, Slovenian folklore has Zeleni Jurij (Green George), and the author gives an interesting explanation about the origin of beliefs related to him. The second subdivision gives an overview of mythical animals (e.g. the unicorn, the seahorse and the centaur), as well as dragons, snakes and birds, and also the roles attached to them. A well-known creature is the snake king (or -queen) guarding treasures, who, as many other mythical creatures, is depicted as white, as well as house snakes in the role of mythological home guardians. The next subdivision, 'Between Heaven and Earth', examines giants, creatures that are connected to concrete natural environments (e.g. forest and mountain beings, water sprites), creatures foretelling the future, and fairies. About a dozen water sprites with different names are mentioned, several of which have predominantly had the function of intimidating children. The last subchapter, 'Demons and Bewitched Souls', enables us to have a glance at the images in Slovenian folklore related to the afterworld. The reader is given the reasons why some people wander around on the earth as spirits; for example, people who have died an unnatural death or unbaptised dead children can turn

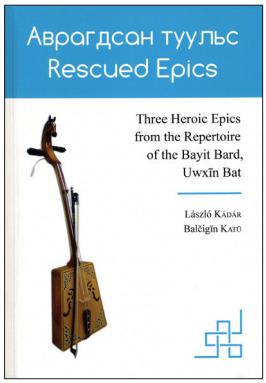
into restless spirits; nor can cursed people or unpunished criminals find their peace. This subchapter also includes descriptions of more commonly known creatures, such as werewolves and vampires. However, by Slovenian religious beliefs, some of the deceased return to the world of the living with good intentions, for example, to redeem a promise or reconcile with an enemy. An interesting overview is given about the personifications of various troubles and dangers, such as death, epidemics (e.g. plague) or voracity.

The book ends with a glossary of supernatural beings, which provides a concise summary of their main characteristics. In conclusion I can say that the book features creatures that are known both in Estonian and other beliefs, as well as those typical of only Slovenian folklore. Therefore, it serves as a valuable source material for all researchers interested in supernatural beings; yet, due to its affable style, it could also be well received by a wider readership.

Reet Hiiemäe

RESCUED EPICS[1]

Kádár, László & Katū, Balčigīn. *Аврагдсан туульс. Rescued Epics.* Three Heroic Epics from the Repertoire of the Bayit Bard Uwxīn Bat. Budapest: L'Harmattan Kiado, 2012. 215 pp.



Mongolian epics as a folklore genre are well known in Europe especially thanks to a multi-volume edition *Mongolische Epen* initiated in 1975 by Nicholas Poppe. Dozens of texts, published in their full length or as short presentations of plots, mostly in German, opened the wonderful world of epics to Western scholars as well as to the readers interested in the phenomenon. It is obvious that much less can be said about English translations of Mongolian epics; and it is exactly the reason why we are going to briefly present a new book, jointly prepared by László Kádár and Balčigin Katū under the editorship of Ágnes Birtalan and Zsolt Szilágyi.

The history of this volume goes back to 1962, when a young doctoral candidate László Kádár tape-recorded three epic stories from the storyteller Uwxīn Bat in Ulan Bator, Mongolia. It took 46 years for his tape-records to finally be digitalised and transcribed by the Mongolian folklorist Balčigin Katū and, after being translated into Hungarian and later also into English, appear in a printed form. In his very vivid preface to the book the collector describes his work with the storyteller, and one can but admire both

his achievements and his unselfishness: while working with Uwxīn Bat, he recorded everything that he was able to pay for. According to Kádár, the fee he paid him amounted to his monthly stipend, which, Kádár adds, he would deem "a very modest remuneration for his extraordinary performance" (p. 11). Many of us, especially from the former Soviet countries, who used to work with storytellers, often did the same in order to safeguard as many examples of the epic tradition as possible, even if we did not have any stipend at all. The preface also contains a short but quite informative biography of Uwxīn Bat (1899–1972?) (pp. 12–13).

The book includes three epic stories from the rich repertoire of Uwxīn Bat: *Bum Erdene – One Hundred Thousand Treasures* (pp. 43–144, 4987 lines), *Dalain Šar Bodon – Giant Yellow Boar* (pp. 145–190, 2212 lines), and *Tüšet Mergen Xānā Köwün Kölög Erdene – Son of Tüshet Khan, Valliant Treasure* (pp. 191–212, 1037 lines). They all belong to the Bayit epic tradition, even though *Bum Erdene* is also known among another Mongolian group called Dörböt (p. 15, 17). The story of *Bum Erdene* is already well known to epic researchers, whereas the second text appears here for the first time, and the third one recorded from another Mongolian storyteller in 1979 was published once in Mongolian (Katū 2001). All this makes the English edition especially valuable.

In order to better understand the context of Mongolian epics in general and some specific details of the published plots in particular, the book is supplied by a long introductory chapter written by Balčigin Katū, who is well known among folklorists due to many Mongolian epic texts published by him. In the chapter entitled 'About Uwxīn Bat's Epic Poems' (pp. 15–42) Katū tells us in detail about all the variants of the three epics recorded in the 20th century (pp. 15–17), compares some nuances of eight variants (we would say, versions) of Bum Erdene epos (pp. 18–39), and finally shares with us his ideas about the structure of Mongolian epics (pp. 39–42). The way of comparison (too general) and the language (not so well corresponding with academic terminology[2]) do not give much satisfaction, but anyway, as it is said, it helps understand some details of these three epic stories.

Finally we can add that the English translation (at least, for a non-native speaker) is absolutely readable, for it reproduces the charm and beauty, and sometimes even the rhyme (alliteration) of Mongolian epics. The only problem we can see is the editors' idea to consciously avoid including any remarks, notes or other explanations to any parts, loci communes, formulas, terms, or proper names of the published texts, which makes the readers' task quite challenging. The readers are advised to consult in all difficult cases the really good and professional description of the Mongolian mythology published by one of the volume editors (Birtalan 2001). All of this would be just fine, if the suggested reading were published in English. But this is not the case, which significantly limits the audience of the reviewed book. At the same time the book includes a CD with the voice of Uwxīn Bat, which significantly compensates for the lack of sufficient academic comments. By adding the CD, the editors have partly broadened the audience, because it makes the book attractive for linguists, dialect researchers, and ethnomusicologists as well. Even lay readers would benefit from listening to the beautiful voice of the singer.

The book really deserves its name "rescued epics". We would suggest reading it to all those researchers who are interested not only in Mongolian folklore but also in Asian cultures in general.

Dmitri Funk
Moscow State University / Tomsk State University

Elena Nam
Tomsk State University

Notes

[1] Written in the framework of the project "Man in a Changing World. Problems of Identity and Social Adaptation in History and at Present" (the RF Government grant No. 14.B25.31.0009).

[2] E.g. "matriarchal society" (p. 29); "before the period of married couples, women were not fewer than men, even outnumbered them, but later the number of women fell back and the search for wives began"; "at some developmental stage of Mongolian society" (p. 38), to name but a few.

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REFLECTIONS ON THE FIGHT AGAINST THE IMAGE OF SHAMANISM

Sundström, Olle 2007. *Kampen mot "schamanismen": Sovjetisk religionspolitik gentemot inhemska religioner i Sibirien och norra Ryssland.* Studier av inter-religiösa relationer 40. Uppsala: Universitetstryckeriet. [The Struggle against "Shamanism": Soviet Religious Policy towards the Indigenous Religions of Siberia and Northern Russia.] 221 pp. In Swedish.

In his book, Olle Sundröm explores the Soviet decades-long attempts to silence "shamanism". Sundström uses quotation marks in writing about this topic and argues that in Soviet sources the term "shaman" is taken out of its initial context and applied specifically as a negative category according to Marxist-Leninist worldview. Thus, this book is dedicated less to the analysis of Siberian indigenes' real life transformations and rather concentrates on the treatment of shamanism in Soviet ideology and religious policy. According to Sundström, the Soviets first created an image of the indigenous religious enemy and then executed a sophisticated strategy for demolishing their opponents, supposedly threatening the whole Soviet system at grass-roots level.

The monograph starts with extensive overviews of Marxism-Leninism, its approaches to religion and different periods of Soviet anti-religious policy. This context-building helps us to recall the main arguments of Marxist and Russian Communist classical authors and to understand the way that these ideas finally shaped Soviet political applications among the northern peoples.

The last and most important chapter is dedicated to the analysis of religious politics in Siberia and Russian North, concentrating predominantly on the early Soviet period (the 1920s and 30s). The author aims to provide readers with a really comprehensive frame for reflections, and his study also depicts a few features of shamanic revival, contextualised by post-Soviet developments.

Sundström's intention is to investigate ideological sources, the application and results of the Soviet religious politics in the case of indigenous groups of the northern areas of European Russia, Siberia and the Far East. In order to achieve his goal, Sundström explores the published sources and research of Soviet and Russian scholars as well as their international colleagues.

In the analysis of Marxist discourse, Sundström points out some meaningful controversies between the ideas of Marx and Lenin. As Sundström argues, Russian modifications of Marxist philosophy of religion had some specific and severe consequences for the northern peoples of Russia. Whereas Marx and Engels saw religion as a protest against human misery, Lenin interpreted religion as a hegemony over souls. Sundström also stresses that Marx's philosophical determinism was replaced by Lenin's activism.

So it becomes clear that Soviet approach to religion was shaped as rather hostile and aggressive.

Sundström points out that in the 1920s, the northern peoples and their shamans underwent a relatively peaceful period and shamanism's social position even strengthened. But during the following decade, shamans became considered exploiters of the working population of the northern peoples. Although a few anti-shamanic regulations were adopted already during the 1920s, in general this argument is clear and adequate. Consequently, shamans became repressed in the 1930s.

Repressions against shamans were ideologically prepared and followed by social campaigns meant to renegotiate the shaman's image. In popular and scholarly literature shamans became depicted as violent, cheating and profit-seeking representatives of the old capitalist system. Sundtröm considers evidence about shamans' misdeeds concerning their fellow northerners and the Communist regime, as well as official descriptions of struggle against shamans, "fragmentary and anecdotal". It is certainly complicated to compose a complete factual overview of the Communist-shamanic conflict in the Soviet Union.

Anyhow, I am not sure that the public image of shamans of that period can be categorised simply as anecdotal. It is true that during the 1930s even images of whole ethnic groups became extremely pejorative in the Soviet Union. The most famous of these is the Chukchi case. Beginning 1930, the Chukchi became the notorious heroes of Soviet anecdotes, being depicted as the most backward in literature and feature films. But if one reads papers from the 1920s, it appears that the Chukchi were then described as the most advanced people among the northern minorities, and relatively well off (developing trading business exclusively with the Americans, buying ships from Alaska, longing for American education, enjoying jazz). Definitely, beginning the 1930s, it was decided to introduce a totally different public image of the Chukchi in particular, and the same was basically done about all northern minorities.

Yet, it was not simply a mockery; this new image was carefully calculated. If people live well and shamans are smart and useful, there is no need for intervention. The new image of ridiculous northerners and particularly shamans prepared and supported reforms and repressions among the indigenous inhabitants of the North.

Sundström defines the public and official image of a shaman in early Soviet context as "a leading person among the peoples of the North who resisted the socialist reconstruction by referring to his or her indigenous worldview, ritualising this resistance in accordance with that worldview" (p. 199). So, according to Sundström, the Soviet ideologists produced an alleged causal relationship between the northern indigenous religion and people's resistance against the Soviet regime. But it is not clear whether it was an almost pure ideological invention or this image resembled the social reality of the period to a certain degree.

Ideologically unbiased researchers of later periods and indigenous sources from our fieldwork strongly support the concept of a prominent presence of religious issues in indigenous northerners' conflicts with administrators and party officials throughout the 1930s. It is worth considering that accents of pressure were different from the actual

effects of anti-shamanic campaigns. To illustrate with an example: when shamanism was abolished publicly, it went underground. Official ideology regarded shamanism merely as a superficial anti-communist ideology and actual reasons for contradictions were economic and power relationships. But indigenous people considered shamanism real and kept it going even if it was publicly dismissed.

My calculated impression is that there was a definite connection between religion, resistance and repressions. It can be admitted that, in general, the Soviet propaganda is adequate in this respect. But in more specific cases, ideologically accurate accusations in shamanism were often applied as formal arguments in repressing indigenous people.

Sundström reveals how the Soviet anti-religious policy was later changed periodically but remained basically the same. Changes in its implementation were simply tactical, depending on various political and social factors but also on the individual approaches of the current Communist Party leaders. The 1930s was a period of especially harsh measures, aimed at liquidating religion completely. Basically, the authorities managed to make religion (including shamanism) disappear from the public sphere.

In conclusion, one can easily recognise that the structure of the monograph is clear and logical. The main emphasis is laid on the analysis of the developments in the 1920s–30s and these are really decisive decades in the recent history of Russian northern indigenous minorities. Characteristically, the destiny of "shamanism" reflects these major changes in a distinguished way. The author has succeeded in providing a systematically conceptualised and creatively accomplished study of Siberian native peoples lives during the past hundred years.

Art Leete

OUR AUTHORS

Maria Petersson works as a project leader/archaeologist at the Swedish National Heritage Board, Contract Archaeology Service East (RAÄ, UV Öst). She specialises in the Early Iron Age, working mainly with large-scale archaeological excavations. Another of her fields of interest is agrarian archaeology, involving investigations of both arable land and gardens. Her doctoral thesis from 2006 deals with animal husbandry and cattle herding during the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age in Östergötland, Sweden. A project she has been carrying out since 2009 concerns a long-term perspective on settlement and landscape in Östergötland.

maria.petersson@raa.se

Anne Carlie is Associate Professor of archaeology. Since 2000, she has been working with archaeological excavations at the National Heritage Board in Sweden, specialising in the Iron Age period. Besides identifying traces of ritual practices, her fields of interest include the social organisation of settlements and sacrificial sites.

anne.carlie@raa.se

Tõnno Jonuks, PhD, is a senior researcher at the Estonian Literary Museum, Department of Folkloristics. He is interested in the archaeology of religion, especially in northern Europe. His main research interests involve studying of the processes of change in past religions, sacred places, and recently also artefact studies.

tonno@folklore.ee

Tuuli Kurisoo is a PhD student at Tallinn University and she works at the Institute of History of Tallinn University. Her research focuses on different symbols and their meanings in Late Iron Age Estonia. She is interested in understanding the importance of adornment use and questions of representing identities through material culture, as well as its connections to religion.

tuuli.kurisoo@tlu.ee

Sonja Hukantaival is a PhD student of archaeology at the University of Turku, Finland. The subject of her thesis is deliberately concealed objects in buildings from historical times in Finland. The topic is approached from the perspectives of both folklore accounts on magic practices involving concealed objects and factual finds of concealments. Her interests include also a wider perspective of material culture of folk religion.

sonja.hukantaival@utu.fi

Ester Oras is a PhD student of archaeology at the University of Cambridge. Her research focuses on the Iron Age and early medieval hoard finds, wealth deposits and other intentional artefact concealments in the eastern Baltic. Her main fields of interest include practice theory, agency, ritual, religion, history of archaeology, and archaeochemistry.

eo271@cam.ac.uk

Kristiina Johanson is a PhD student at the University of Tartu. Her research focuses on the secondary use of archaeological objects. The main emphasis of her studies is set on different interpretations of Stone Age artefacts from chronologically later contexts, e.g. apopotraic or healing magic.

kristiina.johanson@ut.ee

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Archaeology of Religion

On the cover: A gilded silver rivet dated to the 5th-6th cc. AD, from the excavations of Ojaveski stone grave, Kadrina parish. (AM A 349: 345)

A dog or a horse figurine. (AM A 554: 777)

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