

ARCTOS

ACTA PHILOLOGICA FENNICA

VOL. X

HELSINKI 1976 HELSINGFORS

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ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE HAMMER AND OTHER TOOLS DEPICTED ON CHRISTIAN FUNERAL INSCRIPTIONS

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It is a well-known fact that tools and instruments delineated on pagan funeral stones could suggest the craft or profession of the defunct.¹ This in part made up for the paucity of records of occupations in epitaphs.² Tools and instruments were common on Christian funeral inscriptions, too. Here, however, their significance is more problematic. In Christian use, many a common tool may have acquired spiritual significance. Thus the balance, *libra*, could symbolize the Last Judgement, and *iugum* submission to the Christ.³ Even such a common article as the shoe could be suggestive of Christian ideas.⁴ One of the most-debated symbols is the *ascia*, which has baffled scholars for hundreds of years.⁵ In Christian material, the nearest guess may be that it functioned as a substitute for the cross, as a *crux dissimulata*.⁶

On the whole, however, the tools depicted on Christian funeral slates have received scant attention. It seems to have been tacitly assumed that they, like their equivalents on pagan stones, suggested the occupations of the deceased.

The purpose of the present paper is to find out whether these assumptions can be accepted. The tools discussed here are listed on p. 52. There are some important omissions and limitations. I have excluded some implements and utensils which are generally considered specifically Christian, such as the anchor.⁷ The representations of vessels of every type have also been omitted. The Christian significance of *calix*, *dolium*, *modius*, *vas*, etc. is patent.⁸ With few exceptions (*libra*, *ascia*), the tools included in my list have not been given an acceptable Christian interpretation.

1 Cf. H. Gummerus, *Darstellungen aus dem Handwerk auf römischen Grab- und Votivsteinen in Italien*, MDAI(R) 28, 1913, 63ff.; E. Cahen, *Sepulcrum*, *Dar.-Sagl.* 4, 1918, 1237; J.E. Sandys, *Latin Epigraphy*, 1969=1927, 78; F. Cumont, *Recherches sur le symbolisme funéraire des romains*, 1966=1942, 26; J.M.C. Toynbee, *Death and Burial in the Roman World*, 1971, 251—52; 271.

2 P. Huttunen, *The Social Strata in the Imperial City of Rome*, *Acta univ. Ouluensis, Ser. B Human.* No. 3, 1974, 48: "an occupation is indicated for only 10 per cent of the people."

3 P. Bruun, *Symboles, signes et monogrammes*, *Sylogae Inscriptionum Christianarum veterum musei Vaticani (Acta Instituti Romani Finlandiae 1:2,73ff.)*, 1963, 104f.

4 Cf. D. Forstner, *Die Welt der Symbole*, 1961, 134—38.

5 Cf. my discussion of the problem in *Le iscrizioni dell'area sacra del Largo Argentina* (forthcoming) No. 95.

6 *Ibid.*; cf. C. Cecchelli, *Il trionfo della croce*, 1954, 60—62; J. Carcopino, *Le mystère d'un symbole chrétien, l'ascia*, 1955, *passim*.

7 Cf., however, Bruun 83.

8 *Ibid.*, 84f.; 99; 126; 152f.

The material has been gathered from ICVR I-VI. Unfortunately, the identification of the objects is not always certain. This is especially so in regard to Volume I, edited by A. Silvagni. The editor often gives only a rough drawing of the object leaving its interpretation to the reader. Moreover, this volume has no supplement of photographs. In the volumes edited by A. Ferrua (III-VI), the objects are usually described and delineated more accurately. Moreover, many of them can be studied from the photographs. Nevertheless, Ferrua is himself sometimes uncertain of the identification of some representations, e.g. 14565, a sickle or a hanging wreath? 15049, by Ferrua hesitantly described as writing-tablets and as three ink-bottles: *pugillares, atramentaria tria?* 1701 depicts a tool which according to Ferrua may be a hammer or a two-edged axe. But I think the margin of error is not so large as to vitiate the general conclusions.

It is certainly true that in many cases the tool delineated on the funeral slate referred to the occupation of the defunct. Thus ICVR 1041, *locus Martiniani medici*, depicts medical instruments; 7583, the epitaph of *Felicissimus siricarius* (= *sericarius*), portrays an *acus textoris*, a clear indication of his trade, a maker of silks; 14193, *Domitius Taurus Pernarus de platia* (= *platea*) *macelli*, bears a butcher's knife on his epitaph. These are, however, the only cases in ICVR I-VI in which the significance of a tool represented on an inscription is verified by the epitaph. It is problematic whether 6114, *Gerontius et Ursa, pomararii*, with the image of a *culter*, belongs here. The knife was not a typical implement of fruit-sellers.

Records of occupations were, however, quite as exceptional in Christian as they were in pagan epigraphy. Hence it could be argued that in Christian epitaphs, too, an implement depicted on the slate suggested the craft or profession of the departed even if the epitaph was mute on this point.

Some facts seem to lend support to the argument. In several cases, women's epitaphs depict tools which refer to women's household work or in general to female occupations. ICVR 6918, *Seberina*, dead at the age of six, bears an *instrumentum textorium* on her funeral slate. Because she died at so tender an age, the tool can only have suggested her future occupations as a woman. Again, 7162, a fragmentary inscription with the name of 'ΑΥ]ΤΩΝΥΙΑ delineates a reel, *alabrum*, with *lanae pensum cum filo et fuso*, and 7547, *Eleuth[eridi coniugi]*, a *fusus*. The spindle and/or the distaff were found on some other women's epitaphs also: 8040 Γεμέλε, bears on the left *pala*, on the right *colus vel fusus cum filo*; even *pala* suggests women's work: Cato agr. 11,5, records *palas ligneas*, wooden scoops. This is the particular implement suggested by the image cut on the stone (cf. Tab. xi a 10). The epitaph of *Sotice*, 14749, also depicts *fusus* and *colus*.

It is probable that these utensils suggested the same as the epithet *lanifica*, etc., in some women's epitaphs: CIL I² 1211 *domum servavit lanam fecit*; 2161 *sepulta haec sita sum verna quouis aetatulae gravitatem officio et lanificio praestitei*; VI 10230 *probitate pudicitia opsequio lanificio diligentia fide par similisque*; 34045 *pulcherrima pia frugi casta lanifica domiseda*. Making the wool was a symbol of the life of a housewife.⁹

Some other symbols of women's life were also represented on Christian funeral slates. Thus 15146, the epitaph of Χαριτ(υ)νη ετ Λουκῆνα Καλήπολις¹⁰ portrays a *pecten* and an *ancora*. The comb unlikely suggested any real occupation, only a utensil of women's toilet. Again, 15997, a fragmentary inscription with no name, delineates an *acus crinalis* and a *speculum*, obvious symbols of womanhood. The mirror, however, was found in men's epitaphs, too, 15999, dated a. 409: the funeral slate of *Priscus*, with a *speculum* on the left margin. Again, 11938, *Leo et Annibonia domu eterna se vivi fecerunt cum suis*, depicts a *pecten* and a *malleus*. Though the real significance of the hammer as a symbol is debatable, it is not impossible that in this particular case the comb refers to the wife, the hammer to the husband.

In some men's epitaphs, the tools depicted were combined in a way to suggest a particular occupation. Thus 8988, *Leoni in pace*, delineates a spade (*pala*), a *falx*, a dog, a tree, and a man (= *Leo*) with a mattock (*ligo*) in his right hand. Though the tree, especially if associated with animals, was a symbol of the Paradise,¹¹ the other tools suggest a gardener, which may indeed have been the occupation of the defunct. Again, 4299, the epitaph of *Alexander*, bears a *dens* and a *forceps*, which imply a dentist. In all the cases in which the funeral slate depicts shoe-repairer's instruments, this may have been the trade of the departed, e.g. 8876, *Exuperius*, dead at the age of 23, with a *culter* and *acus sutoris* as well as a *calceus* represented on his epitaph.¹² In the other cases as well (listed in fn 19), the defunct persons were adult men and may thus very well have been shoe-repairers.

Writing utensils depicted on some slates may suggest a school-boy's life. Thus 13350, dated a. 386, records *Barrucinus*, dead at the age of seven, with *pugillares* and a *stilus* cut below. The representations of these objects may recall his days as a learner of the art of writing. However, in the other cases in which similar implements were delineated, no age was given, and the interpretation of the objects is accordingly difficult: 14691, *spiritus Beneri*, with a *stilus*

9 Cf. Sandys, op. cit. (fn 1) 65.

10 Probably two women, see Ferrua, ad loc.

11 Bruun 142.

12 Here, as well as in the other similar cases (fn 19), the shoe seems to be devoid of spiritual significance.

on the left, *pugillares* on the right; 15049 ἰανουάριος, with objects which are hard to identify (see p. 50). In one case, the defunct was an adult, 15844, *Trebius Iustus signo Asellus*, dead at the age of 21, portrayed as sitting *inter instrumenta artis scriptoriae*. He had been buried in a hypogaeum, with frescoes depicting scenes of a country gentleman's life. It has been concluded from these frescoes that the father of the defunct was a nouveau riche.¹³ In all these cases, writing tools may refer to an occupation.

It is, however, improbable that all the tools and instruments delineated on Christian funeral stones could be interpreted in so rational a way. This will be evident from a list of the tools in ICVR I-VI:

TOOLS AND INSTRUMENTS DEPICTED IN ICVR I-VI

object	number of instances
<i>malleus</i>	53 ¹⁴
<i>ascia</i>	28 ¹⁵
<i>scalprum</i>	28 ¹⁶
<i>instrumenta mensuralia</i>	14 ¹⁷
<i>culter</i>	10 ¹⁸
<i>instrumenta sutoria (acus, culter)</i>	8 ¹⁹
<i>calceus</i>	7 ²⁰
<i>instrumenta textoria</i>	7 ²¹
<i>incus</i>	5 ²²
<i>forceps</i>	5 ²³

13 P. du Bourguet, *La pittura cristiana primitiva*, 1965, 32; cf. table 56.

14 The passages will be given on p. 55; 793, "signa fabrilia", is included here.

15 For the material, cf. fn 5.

16 710 with *malleus*; 1515; 1518 *malleus*; 1800 with *malleus*; 2066 with *libra* and *triangulum*; 2837 with *malleus* and *rota*; 2958 with *malleus*; 4634; 6790 with *malleus*; 6546 with *malleus*; 6817 with *culter*; 7589 with *malleus*; 8901 with *malleus*; 9434 with *malleus* and *libella*; 9694 with *libella*; 10812 with *malleus*; 12767 with *malleus*; 13870b; 13870c with *malleus* and *pes mensorius*; 14237 with *malleus*; 14985 with *malleus*; 15293 with *malleus*; 15457 with *malleus*; 16956 e, f, g with *malleus*; 17185; 17286.

17 2066 *libella* with *scalprum* and *triangulum*; 3089 *libella* with *malleus*; 5757 *libra*; 6074 *libra* with *specillum*; 9434 *libella* with *malleus* and *scalprum*; 9694 *libella* with *scalprum*; 9878 *libella* with *pes mensorius*; 13450 *pes mensorius*; 13870c *pes mensorius* with *malleus* and *scalpellum*; 14112 *libra* with ?*solea* or ?*lagona*; 15203 *mensa ponderaria* (= *mensa cauponis*?); 15888 *pes mensorius*; 16271 *pes mensorius*; 16958 *libra*.

18 6107; 6114; 6299; 6917 with *scalpellum*; 8430; 12318; 14129 with *forcifex*; 14193; 15500b; 17347.

19 8876 with *calceus*; 9305 with *calceus*; 14187 with *calceus*; 14620; 15515; 15520c; 16956m with *calceus*; 17099 with *calceus*.

20 In addition to fn 19: 2582 fragm.; 3128.

21 6918; 7162; 7547; 7583; 8040; 9781 *telarium*; 14749.

22 4642 with *malleus*; 15254a with *malleus* and *forceps*; 15254b (uncertain) with *malleus*; 15442c with *malleus*; 17243 scene of a blacksmith's shop.

23 4299 with *dens*; 5941; 14124 with *malleus*; 15442c with *malleus*; 15586f.

<i>serra</i>	4 ²⁴
<i>instrumenta scriptoria</i>	4 ²⁵
<i>ligo</i>	3 ²⁶
<i>falx</i>	3 ²⁷
<i>pala</i>	3 ²⁸
<i>speculum/specillum</i>	3 ²⁹
<i>pecten</i>	2 ³⁰
<i>instrumenta medici</i>	2 ³¹
<i>trulla</i>	2 ³²
instrumenta varia: <i>acus crinalis</i> , ³³	1 each
<i>cuneus</i> , ³⁴ <i>dens</i> , ³⁵ <i>dolabra</i> , ³⁶ <i>forcipes</i> , ³⁷	
<i>lancea</i> , ³⁸ <i>mola</i> , ³⁹ <i>organum</i> , ⁴⁰	
<i>pedum</i> , ⁴¹ <i>spatula</i> . ⁴²	

Before drawing any conclusions from the above tabulation, a comparison with the pagan material may be apposite. Unfortunately, the limitations of the *Corpus* are here very patent. The reliefs are only described, not delineated. Moreover, the competence of an editor to identify the representations of the tools may sometimes be called in question. The editor has often given up all attempts to specify the tool, describing it only as "instrumentum" or even "nescio quid", cf. XIII 2988; 4698; 5504; 5829, etc. Moreover, the *Corpus* does not give photographs, which makes an independent study of the objects impossible. Finally, most of the indexes have altogether omitted the *anaglypha*. They have been listed only in II, III, XII and XIII. It is especially regrettable that CIL VI, the inscriptions from the city of Rome, has no analytic index.

Because of these limitations, I have only checked the *anaglypha* from Spain, the Balkan countries, and Gaul. Even here, it is only CIL III and XIII that provide material sufficient for comparisons.

24 3410? 6995; 9595 "culter dentatus" with *lagona*; 10802e.

25 13350; 14691; 15049 (uncertain); 15844.

26 8988; 16956 l; 17028.

27 7759; 8988 (cf. p. 51); 14565.

28 8040; 8988 (cf. p. 51); 15500 "iuxta videtur vas in puteum demitti".

29 6074 with *libra*; 15997 with *acus crinalis*; 15999.

30 11938 with *malleus*; 15146 with *ancora*.

31 1041; 7696.

32 13384 with *malleus*; 15846 with *pedum*.

33 15997 with *speculum*.

34 14260 with *malleus*.

35 4299 with *forceps*.

36 13870.

37 14129 with *culter*.

38 8745.

39 4645.

40 5466.

41 15846 with *trulla*.

42 6292.

In Christian and pagan material, *instrumenta fabrilia* were the largest group of tools and instruments. But within this group, the assortment of tools was much more even in pagan than it was in Christian epigraphy. In the latter, the most significant fact was the frequency of the hammer, the characteristic tool of *faber ferrarius*, the blacksmith. As to the pagan material, the inscriptions from the Balkan countries, CIL III Suppl. p. 2584 f. and 2679, record *ascia* 8, measuring instruments (*gnomon*, *gruma*, *norma*, *perpendicularum*, *triangulum*, *regula*) 8, *forceps* 5, *malleus* 5, *dolabra* 4, *terebra* 2 cases, one *falcula* and one *securis*. In CIL XIII, a similar calculation is handicapped by the fact that the editor has been unable to identify many of the objects. However, the distribution of the tools was very similar here, too, except that the hammer was a little more frequent, *malleus* 14, *ascia* 11 cases.

In CIL III and XIII, the association of *malleus* with *ars ferraria* was brought out by the frequent representation of *incus* and *forceps*, the anvil and the tongs, together with the hammer.⁴³ In one inscription, XIII 2036 = ILS 7723, the association was verified by the epitaph: above *forceps* and *malleus*, one defunct described as *iuvenis incomparabilis ingeni, artis fabricae ferrariae*.

It is, however, different in the Christian inscriptions of Rome. This will be evident from the tabulation below recording the tools depicted together with the hammer:⁴⁴

<i>Malleus</i> with <i>scalprum</i>	20
with <i>incus</i>	5
with <i>forceps</i>	2
with measuring instruments	3
with <i>cuneus</i>	1
with <i>pecten</i>	1
with <i>trulla</i>	1

The *incus* was always found together with the *malleus*. It is probable that in all these cases it was the trade of the blacksmith that was referred to. A case like 17243, described by Ferrua thus: "vir malleo in incude ferrum cudit, alter libramentum tractat", unlikely has any spiritual significance.

The most common tool depicted together with the hammer was, however, the chisel, *scalprum*, no less than 20 cases out of a total of 53. The chisel was found without a hammer in only eight epitaphs. Besides, it is possible that in some fragmentary cases, a chisel had been delineated but has not survived, and vice versa a hammer in an inscription depicting only a chisel. There was usually only one chisel, occasionally two: 1800, 9694; three: 15457; even four: 8901.

43 III 6397; 10038; 10739; XIII 2036; 2760? 2965; 5467; 11136; 11858.

44 For the passages, see fn. 16ff.

The hammer and the chisel belonged to the tools of the *lapidida*.⁴⁵ The *scalprum* or *scalpellum* was, however, used by some other artisans as well.⁴⁶ But neither *lapididae* nor the artisans working with a chisel were a very numerous group. It could, of course, be argued that the carvers of inscriptions were especially fond of immortalizing their craft on their funeral stones. But it is difficult to understand why the epitaphs of the *lapididae* should be decorated with the representations of their tools precisely in Christian epigraphy. In pagan material, I have found only one similar case, II 5189, *scalprum et ?malleus, libella cum perpendicularo*, in an epitaph dedicated, among others, to *Apon(ius) Lupianus*, who may well have been a carver of inscriptions. But otherwise examples of the representations of *lapidida*'s tools are not very numerous.⁴⁷

All this seems to imply that the hammer may have had significance other than a simple sign of the defunct's worldly occupations.

However, if it could be shown that the hammer was exclusively an attribute of men's epitaphs, one could reasonably argue that it really suggested the craft of the defunct. To find out whether this is so, I have tabulated the material according to the defunct recorded in the epitaph:

Fragments	16 ⁴⁸
adult men	9 ⁴⁹
men of unknown age	9 ⁵⁰
married couples	3 ⁵¹
women	9 ⁵²
children	3 ⁵³
only the symbol	4 ⁵⁴
	<hr/>
	53

Excluding the fragments and the inscriptions exhibiting only the symbol, 33 cases are left.

Now the high frequency of adult men suggests that at least in some cases the hammer may have symbolized the occupation of

45 Hübner, *Exempla scripturae epigraphicae Latinae*, 1885, xxx f.: Dar.-Sagl., *Inscriptiones* 3, 1900, 533.

46 Dar.-Sagl. 4, 1918, 1110f.

47 Examples in Hübner, op. et loc. cit.

48 3089,8; 7346; 7347b; 10159; 10751; 10805a; 13870i; 14290b; 14927d; 15254 a-b, d; 15239; 16956 e, f, g.

49 1518: 17 years; 1800: 20 years; 1856: 35 years; 3524: 26 years; 6546: 40 years; 7589: 20 years; 8901: 15 years; 14237: 23 years; 15457: 25 years.

50 793; 2958; 3572; 5942; 9731; 10812; 14100; 14124; 14985.

51 4642: *se vivum cumparaverunt*; 11938: *domu eterna se vivi fecerunt*; 14704: *se bibi fecerunt*.

52 2277: 29 years; 2864: 39 years; 6790: 21 years; 9433; 9434; 12767: a girl? ("pars puellae velatae"); 13384, a. 404: 60 years; 14998; 17101.

53 2837: one year; 2855: 7 years; 3147: 11 years.

54 710; 16957c; 17243.

the defunct. The proportion of men: women, 18:9,⁵⁵ is higher than the normal distribution of sexes in Christian epigraphy, which is 56 0/0 : 46 0/0.⁵⁶ However, there is no epitaph in the material recording the occupation of the defunct, which makes it impossible to verify the argument. On the other hand, there are a conspicuously high number of people who were unlikely blacksmiths, nine women and three children.⁵⁷

The above discussion has shown that the hammer cannot always be taken for a sign of the defunct's worldly occupation. The blacksmiths, and especially the artisans working with a hammer and a chisel, cannot have been relatively so numerous as is suggested by the representations of their tools on inscribed stones. Moreover, these implements decorated the epitaphs of not a few women and children. All this makes it probable that at least in some cases the hammer may have had spiritual significance. But to ascertain this new significance is far from easy. There is considerable disagreement on the interpretation of many emblems of even undoubted Christian meaning.⁵⁸ *Ascia*, the nearest case in point, has so far defied attempts to unravel its mystery (see p. 49).

It is often in literature that clues to the interpretation of a symbol can be found. Now *malleus* was sometimes used in a figurative sense in Christian literature.⁵⁹ It was a symbol of destruction, and even a metaphor for the Devil.⁶⁰ But it is highly improbable that the Christians should have decorated their funeral slates with an emblem suggesting the Devil! The hammer was also a symbol of death, especially as an attribute of the Etruscan god Charun.⁶¹ It is, however, difficult to conceive of any real connection between Etruscan and Christian religious ideas, not to speak of the chronological difference. Even otherwise, Christian epitaphs scarcely displayed symbols of death. The emblems, when used in a Christian sense, suggested resurrection, Paradise, and other similar ideas.⁶²

We are thus reduced to hypotheses in trying to ascertain the Christian significance of the hammer. Obviously this significance should not be too different from that of the well-established Christian symbols.

55 Married couples are excluded. On the other hand, some of the epitaphs recording men's names with no age may have belonged to children.

56 Kajanto, *Onomastic Studies*, 1963, 9: Table 3.

57 Even in pagan epigraphy, the hammer sometimes decorated the epitaph of a child or of a woman: III 1269, *Plaetoria Maxima*, age 3, with a relief showing a hammer, three adults and three boys; 10038, a woman's epitaph bearing a *forceps* and a *malleus*. In XIII, however, there are no similar cases.

58 E.g. the dove, cf. Bruun 86—92.

59 *Thes.l.L.* VIII 192,37.

60 Cf., e.g., Hieron. *epist.* 21,11,1.

61 M. Pallottino, *Etruscologia*⁶, 1968, 259.

62 Bruun 75f.

It is evident from the discussion above that the hammer as such cannot suggest any Christian meaning: it is only found as a symbol of destruction, death, and the Devil. On the other hand, the outer shape of the hammer can give us a clue. Now it is obvious that the *malleus* greatly resembles a cross. Because the axe, which was similar in shape to the hammer, and even the plough, were used as a substitute for the cross,⁶³ it is possible to postulate a similar use for the hammer as well.

The development may have been as follows. The hammer was used as a sign of a craft on pagan funeral inscriptions. It continued to be used in this sense in Christian epigraphy as well. However, because of its shape, it was also turned to use as a *crux dissimulata* in a period when the cross as such not yet appeared on Christian epitaphs. The cross came in use relatively late. It is of some significance that it is not found together with the *malleus*.

This is naturally only an unverifiable hypothesis. But it may be the nearest approach to a Christian meaning that can be thought of for the representation of the tool.

The difficulties of this interpretation should not, however, be disregarded. One of them is the frequent appearance of the chisel, the *scalprum*, together with the hammer. As shown above (p. 54), this was a Christian peculiarity. In pagan epigraphy, the representations of the *scalprum* were rare. The chisel may thus have some Christian significance.

According to Margareta Guarducci,⁶⁴ the *scalprum* is an equivalent of the letter I, the initial of the name of Ἰησοῦς. It cannot be denied that her interpretation is suggestive.⁶⁵ The cross and the name of Jesus as symbols of redemption would be a natural combination. But this interpretation is, at least in part, contradicted by the cases in which more than one chisel are depicted on the slate. It is not possible to explain them as representing the name of Jesus.

The position of the hammer on the inscribed slate is also of some importance. If it was really meant to be a substitute for the cross, it should be in a vertical position. To find out whether this really is so I have checked all the examples of the *malleus* in ICVR I-VI. Unfortunately, in not a few inscriptions, the editor only records "malleus", without a drawing or a photograph. All these cases have of course been excluded. There are 39 usable cases. In 17 of them, the hammer was depicted in a vertical position, the head upwards. But no fewer than 15 inscriptions delineate the hammer in a horizontal position, and six in a mid-horizontal one. In one case, 13384, two hammers were depicted, with the heads downwards.

63 J. Daniélou, *Les symboles chrétiens primitifs*, 1961, 97ff.

64 I graffiti sotto la confessione di San Pietro in Vaticano I, 1958, 324ff.

65 Cf., however, the criticism of Bruun, 116.

If thought of as a tool, the horizontal or the mid-horizontal positions are the natural ones for a hammer. This might explain why the hammer was frequently depicted thus. However, the position of the hammer does not seem to have much symbolic value. The epitaph of an adult man, 1518, bears a horizontal hammer, but so does that of a woman, 2277, etc. The epitaph of a boy of seven years, 2855, has a mid-horizontal hammer, with the head downwards. The inscription with two hammers, in a vertical position but with the heads downwards, 13384, belonged to a woman.

It may be that the position of the hammer was not considered significant. It may even have been in the nature of a *crux dissimulata* that it should not too strongly resemble the original. But one could with an equal conviction argue that the un-cross-like position of the hammer on funeral slates seriously undermines all attempts to interpret the tool as a substitute for the cross.

This paper cannot, then, give any definite answer to the problem of the symbolic use of the hammer on Christian funeral inscriptions. But I hope that my brief discussion has at least succeeded in showing that *malleus*, and no doubt some other common tools as well, probably had a Christian significance obvious to the contemporaries but very difficult for us to ascertain.