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DELIBERATELY DAMAGED OBJECTS IN IRON AGE CREMATION CEMETERIES

With reference to the objects from the cremation cemeteries of Ylipää in Lieto and Päivääniemi in Lempäälä

Abstract

Archaeologists have often paid attention to the broken and incomplete objects found in the Finnish cremation cemeteries and have suggested various interpretations. This article evaluates the relevance of these interpretations by examining and comparing objects found at the cremation cemeteries Ylipää, Lieto (Finland Proper) and Päivääniemi, Lempäälä (Satakunta). These cemeteries are from approximately the same period but differ in type. It is possible to indicate interesting differences between the cemeteries in how the objects were damaged. Notably, at Ylipää the long weapons, especially the swords, were usually whole but rendered useless by bending, while at Päivääniemi these weapons were mainly cut in pieces. The hypothesis is presented here that this difference between Ylipää and Päivääniemi was due to the different ritual treatment of these objects in mortuary practices. However, it was not possible to offer any exclusive explanation to the broken condition of the objects and the question of deliberately damaged objects remains still open.

Keywords: Iron Age, religion, mortuary practices, weapons, funeral rituals, cremation, grave goods.

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INTRODUCTION

Broken and fire-patinated objects and especially weapons which are rendered useless by bending are a typical phenomenon of Iron Age cremations in Europe and the Baltic region. There are different explanations for the broken condition of these objects but a very widespread interpretation is that the grave goods were deliberately damaged during the funerals (see e. g. Gräs-lund 1989: 69; Jahn 1916, 16-21; Jazdzewski 1965: 139, 146; Mandel 1991: 126; Petré 1984: 204; Purhonen 1996: 122; Selirand 1989: 89-90). In addition to the cremations, objects deliberately damaged in a very similar way have been found in Scandinavian bogs where various items, especially weapons, were sacrificed in the water during the Iron Age.¹

Deliberately damaged fire-patinated objects and bent weapons can be found in Finnish cremation graves from at least the beginning of the Early Roman Iron Age (50-175/200 AD). Especially in the cremations of the so-called Kärämäki type, weapons and sometimes also ornaments were deliberately damaged by bending and beating (Salo 1984: 208). This treatment of the grave goods, typical in the Kärämäki type of cremations, spread among other types of graves during the Later Roman Iron Age (175/200-350/400 AD) (Salo 1984: 229). In fact, it is possible to generalize that since the Early Roman Iron Age, the deliberately damaged objects and bent weapons remained typical of Finnish cremations until the close of the Iron Age when cremation was abandoned through the adoption of the Christian faith.

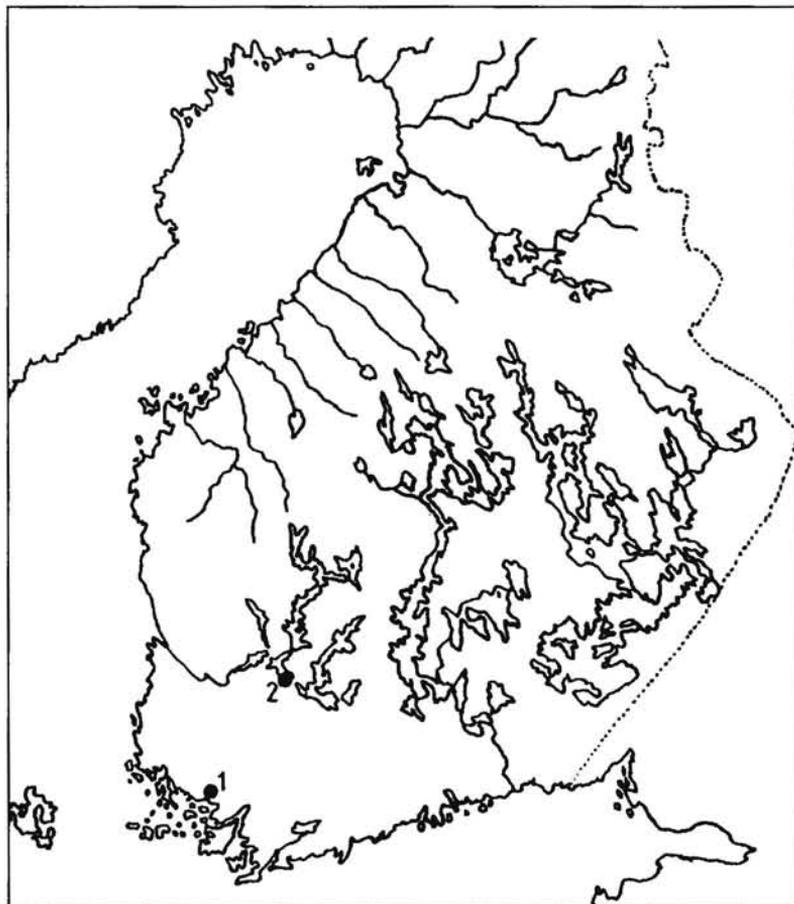


Fig. 1. The locations of the Ylipää cemetery in Lieto (1) and the Päivääniemi cemetery in Lempäälä (2).

There are roughly three different types of cemeteries in Finland during the Later Iron Age, understood here as the period from the beginning of the 7th century until the end of the Iron Age (ca 1150 AD): 1) cremation cemeteries on level ground in SW Finland, 2) inhumation cemeteries in the region of Pyhäjärvi in Satakunta and 3) cremation cemeteries of cairns in the region of Häme and in the valley of the Kokemäenjoki river in Satakunta (Lehtosalo-Hilander 1984: 284). If we choose to examine the cremation cemeteries of the Later Iron Age, it would be interesting to compare the objects from cremation cemeteries on level ground with those from cremation cemeteries of cairns, for in addition to the different method of constructing the graves, the mortuary practices and the ritual treatment of the grave goods might be different. The existence of inhumation cemeteries during that period makes it also possible to compare the finds from inhumation cemeteries with cremation-cemetery finds. For the present study, I chose the Ylipää level-ground cremation cem-

etry Ylipää in the Aurajoki river valley and a cremation cemetery of cairns called Päivääniemi from the region of Lempäälä because both cemeteries are quite rich in finds and have been extensively excavated (Fig. 1). At Päivääniemi there are about 130 cairns of which 18 have been excavated. However, while the Ylipää cemetery has been excavated almost totally, only 13-14% of Päivääniemi cemetery has been excavated. We have to accept this problem because in any case Päivääniemi is the best excavated cemetery in comparison with other cemeteries in the region. The material from both cemeteries chosen for this study dates from approximately the same period, from the Late Migration Period (ca 500-600 AD) to the beginning of the Viking Age (800-1050 AD), although most of the objects are from the Merovingian Period (600-800 AD).²

The material in this research consists of all the objects and fragments thereof found in the archaeological excavations at the sites. Also some sporadic finds without precise context are included if there is good

description of when and how the object was found. On the other hand, pottery is excluded because of the obvious difficulty of observing deliberate damage in sherds. Besides pottery, also iron slag, burnt clay, daub, burnt bone, a number of very corroded or melted metal fragments which are impossible to identify and boat rivets are excluded from the material.

RITUAL EXPLANATIONS FOR BROKEN OBJECTS IN GRAVES

Different explanations for the broken condition of the objects found from the Iron age cremations can be roughly classed into ritual and functional explanations. When I speak about ritual damaging of the grave goods, I mean that the breaking of the objects was motivated by some kind of belief concerning the religious or supernatural world. Ritual explanations are the following: 1) The breaking of the grave goods was a way to kill the objects and so to liberate their "souls" to be able to follow the deceased to the otherworld, 2) Breaking was a precaution against the deceased (to protect the property of the living by "marking" the deceased's property, or to prevent the deceased from coming back and injuring the living) and 3) Breaking the grave goods was caused by the belief that the otherworld is reverse, a kind of mirror image of this world. Especially the two first are very common in the archaeological literature (see e.g. Lehtosalo-Hilander 1984: 309; Selirand 1989: 167; Pälsi 1938: 32; Seger 1988: 42).

A lot of examples of these kinds of beliefs are also found in the folk beliefs of various tribes related to the Finns. Animistic beliefs about the spirits of inanimate objects like tools are very common among the peoples of North Asia (Harva 1933: 174-175; Siikala 1992: 52). The Mari, for instance, believe that everything that has a soul can be killed, which means that a tool can be killed by breaking it (Holmberg 1914: 59). That is why among the Mari the wooden spoon and a cup which are placed with the deceased must be destroyed so that the deceased can take them with him to the otherworld (Holmberg 1914: 24). According to Thomas (1987: 451), there are various widespread precautions against the deceased that prefer to bind him securely, mutilate him or lose him by returning suddenly from the cemetery by a detour. These precautions are taken to prevent the deceased from returning, but at the same time they also help him to accept his new position and to rejoin his ancestors (Eliade 1964: 207; Thomas 1987: 451). Deliberate damaging of the grave goods can be seen as

a means to protect the property of the living. For example in his study on the burial customs of the Skolt Lapps, Storå (1971: 181-182) writes:

"One common feature of the practice of presenting the dead person with gifts was that the gifts were broken in different ways". Later he continues: "By breaking an object emphasis was laid upon what the dead person could or could not take with him to the grave. It was a visible expression of a decision which had to be taken to prevent the dead person from coming back and taking other things. The practice was, then, a method of protecting one's own belongings". According to Eliade (1964: 205), the common idea among the peoples of North Asia is also that they conceive the otherworld as an inverted image of this world. This is why objects offered at the grave for the use of the dead are turned upside down, unless, that is, they are broken, for what is broken here is whole in the otherworld and vice versa (Eliade 1964: 205). This kind of idea might have originated from the mirror images reflected from the surfaces of different lakes and pools, and these mirror images might also have prompted the idea of the underworld (Dienes 1975: 89; Harva 1948: 297-298).

In folk beliefs collected from Finland there is also one example about the custom that the object given as a gift to the deceased to take with him must be damaged (Krohn 1915: 44). Also in Finland the dead were feared and different precautions were made against them (Harva 1948: 488-489). The idea of the otherworld as an inverted image of this world is known also from Finland in beliefs connected with gnomes (Harva 1948: 288-289, 293).

The fact is, however, that it is mistaken to think that folk beliefs could directly reflect the religious world of prehistory (see Siikala 1992: 106). We must also keep in mind that the examples listed above were associated with inhumation burials and here we are dealing with cremations. Despite this it is not excluded that similar beliefs about the ritual damaging of grave goods could also have existed in prehistoric times, since these ideas about animism and precautions against the deceased are very widespread among primitive societies. In any case, these examples of the ritual damaging of the grave goods collected among the peoples related to the Finns have influenced archaeological interpretations of broken objects in prehistoric burials in Finland (see e. g. Pälsi 1938: 32).

If we try to interpret the finds from Finnish Iron Age cremation cemeteries according to the ritual explanations listed above, we shall find some problems. For example, if the weapons were destroyed because of a

fear of the deceased or the grave goods were damaged as a means to liberate their "souls" to follow the deceased, it is strange that in cremation cemeteries there seem to be a lot of weapons and other objects which are not damaged at all (Huurre 1979: 207; Purhonen 1996: 122). Also, if the meaning of breaking the grave goods was that they would be whole again in the reverse otherworld, or if the meaning was just to distinguish the property of the dead and the living, one would expect logically that all the objects are destroyed. If the weapons were destroyed because of fear of the dead, the unbroken weapons will show that this fear did not concern everyone (Huurre 1979: 207-208). However the fear of the dead seems to be the most improbable reason for damaging of the grave goods, because also ornaments are sometimes clearly damaged. According to Kaliff (1992: 93), the fear of the dead and different beliefs concerning ghosts and haunting etc. are normally not shared by everyone. That is why Kaliff maintains that we should not in the first place attribute the different features of mortuary practices observed in the archaeological record to fear of the dead.

According to Siikala (1992: 105), we should not expect beliefs concerning the deceased to be completely uniform in a given prehistoric society. Just as tools of different traditions were used simultaneously, similarly the religious world could embrace different and even contradictory ideas. Accordingly, different beliefs concerning the ritual damaging of grave goods are not necessarily exclusive.

FUNCTIONAL EXPLANATIONS FOR BROKEN OBJECTS IN GRAVES

Besides the ritual deliberate damaging there are also other possibilities to explain the broken condition of the finds in the cremation cemeteries. Swords and other very long weapons and objects could have been bent or cut in pieces because they had to fit into a very small space (Huurre 1979: 207). According to Hirviluoto (1976: 67), this explanation is highly possible at least in the case of the individual cremation pit graves where the grave goods had to fit into the bottom of a very narrow pit in a chest. On the other hand, Hirviluoto notes that cremation cemeteries on level ground have revealed damaged weapons which were obviously were thrown on the cemetery stone setting without any kind of chest to store them in. Hirviluoto proposes that the custom of bending and cutting the weapons might have originated from these cremations in narrow pits and was

maintained though it was no longer necessary in the cremation cemeteries on level ground. Even if we accept this very plausible functional explanation, it does not deny the possible simultaneous symbolic meaning of this practice. It is more problematic for the functional explanations is that sometimes weapons were clearly damaged by spoiling and blunting the blades by hacking (Huurre 1979: 207).

Characteristic features of many cremation cemeteries and burial mounds are their mixed nature. According to Taavitsainen (1992: 7), one plausible explanation for the mixed nature of cremation cemeteries is repeated looting in which case they were sources of scrap metal for reuse. The making of iron was a labourious and time-consuming process and it is easy to understand that broken and damaged metal objects were valuable because they could be recycled by the blacksmiths (Taavitsainen 1990: 40). It is known for instance that prehistoric scrap metal was even used by 19th-century blacksmiths (Taavitsainen 1990: 41). Despite the sacred nature of the cemeteries, they could also be looted during prehistoric times. In Migration Period (ca 400-550 AD) Sweden, for example, some graves were obviously looted in quite a short time after they were constructed (Stenberger 1964: 526). This wave of looting is probably connected to some kind of interruption in society such as changing beliefs or general restlessness (Stenberger 1964: 527). In Finland, the adoption of Christianity could have been the event in society which made it possible to loot pagan cremation cemeteries because the possible tabus concerning pagan burials no longer existed (Taavitsainen 1990: 44-45). If cremation cemeteries were looted repeatedly, it is easy to understand why they became disturbed fields of mixed fragments and broken objects.

The mixed nature of the cremation cemeteries makes it often difficult to distinguish cremation cemeteries from house-floors and in many cases the latter may have been excavated under the assumption that they were cemetery sites (Taavitsainen 1992: 7). Smithy sites are characterized by old and broken artefacts, melted pieces of metal, bent and broken pieces of iron, slag, organic materials such as animal bones as catalysts for lowering the melting temperature, burnt stones and soot which are also typical finds in cremation cemeteries (Taavitsainen 1992: 7, 12). Furthermore according to Taavitsainen (1992: 9), we must also take into account the possibility of several functions for a single site: some of the cemeteries may also have been dwelling sites.

E. O. James (1957: 141) claims the widespread custom of breaking grave goods was a precaution against

reuse rather than, as has been often supposed, a means of liberating their "souls". He maintains that at any rate this taboo precludes theft or disturbance as it renders the articles useless to the living, though later this custom may have become interpreted in animistic terms (James 1957: 141). If the grave goods were destroyed in order to prevent anyone from using them, it is easy to understand that it was not necessary to break every single object. Damaging the grave goods may have concerned only the most expensive and valuable objects such as swords.

Also Purhonen (1996: 122) has a similar interpretation of deliberately damaged objects in the Merovingian Period cremation cemetery of Vainionmäki. All the swords at Vainionmäki were rendered useless by bending the blade. On the other hand, not all the knives or spearheads were destroyed. According to Purhonen a possible explanation is that the sword had a special role in the Iron Age. Unlike spearheads and knives, swords were foreign imports that only few could obtain. Furthermore, swords were specifically personal weapons. Many swords even had their own names. Because many symbolic meanings were associated with the sword, Purhonen proposes that it was important that no one else could use it after the death of its original owner.

THE QUESTION OF IDENTIFYING DELIBERATELY DAMAGED OBJECTS

There are three fundamental distinctions that should be made before the traces of deliberate damaging can be observed. Firstly, the damage caused by humans should be distinguished from damage caused by natural mechanical forces. Secondly, damage dating from prehistoric times should be distinguished from later damages (e. g. when found or during museum storage time). Thirdly, one should be able to estimate what kind of damage the normal everyday use of an object could have caused. It might be possible, for example, that it was not necessary to give fine, new objects to the deceased. Symbolically, old and broken objects may have served their purpose just as well. Here, an object is considered to be deliberately damaged if it bears damage clearly caused by human activity and making it unusable or at least significantly restricting its use.

An another problem in this study is the question if it is always possible to observe ritual damaging in the objects. For instance, according to Karjalainen (1918: 99), the Khanty (Ostyaks) ritually damage the grave goods of the deceased by making a little scratch or notch

on the axe with a knife, by carving a chip from a wooden object, by cutting a little scrap of clothing, by breaking the bottom of a pot etc. It is obvious that signs of this kind of ritual damage are impossible to observe from the objects which are often badly corroded and rusted. We must also remember that objects such as spearheads or shield bosses are only a minor parts of whole artefacts. Although the spearhead is the most important part of the spear, the spear could have been damaged by cutting the handle as well.

Despite these uncertainties four different types of damage in the study material could be interpreted as caused by human activity: 1) various kinds of bending in the objects, 2) cutting the objects in pieces, 3) various kinds of damage caused by hacking and beating such as notches in blades or crushed shield bosses etc. and finally 4) marks of being in fire.

Group 4 differs from the others because it is not directly caused by active violence. Marks of fire are also natural and understandable because we are dealing with cremations. However, objects have not followed the deceased to the pyre always and everywhere. For example, during the Bronze Age in Scandinavia metal objects were not laid on the pyre with the deceased (Salo 1981: 188). It should be noted that burning as a ritual act can be a means of liberating the vital essence of the sacrificial offerings to the supernatural recipient (James 1957: 131; Henninger 1987: 547). Furthermore according to various ethnographic and written sources, the basic idea of cremation, regardless of religion and culture, is that the fire is above all a liberating factor, releasing the human soul very quickly from the bonds of the body (Gräslund 1989: 69; Thomas 1987: 457). It is very likely that the same idea was already linked to cremation practices in prehistoric times (Gräslund 1989: 69). According to this, the burning of the grave goods should be considered as an act with a definite purpose rather than a natural consequence of cremation.

In practice it is problematic to distinguish objects which have been in a fire from those which have not been in a fire. The lack of fire patina in an iron object does not directly mean that the object has not been in a fire. For example, the heat may have been too low to be able to form patina and observing fire patina is also impossible if the object has been cleaned completely from patina by the conservator. Unfortunately, especially among the Päiväniemi finds, the objects conserved in that manner are common. The same uncertainty also applies to bronze objects because even if the object has been in a fire, the heat may have been too low to leave

any traces. Furthermore, all the fire patina that can be observed in iron objects is not necessarily caused by the pyre (cf. Taavitsainen 1990: 38). Because of these uncertainties I gave up trying to distinguish objects which were "damaged" by fire from those which have not been in a fire. I examined the deliberate damaging by observing damage in groups 1-3.

For observation I used microscopy, visual inspection and subjective evaluation. The significant consideration at first was how corroded the object was. Was it possible for example that due to the strong corrosion of the object, the damage could have been caused by mechanical forces during the find situation or later? In the case of bronze objects traces of melting were important. Bronze objects could be partly melted or on the surface of the object there might be small melting bubbles which could be seen by microscope. This means that the object was in such heat that breaking in the pyre has to be taken into account (cf. Petré 1984: 204). If the bronze object has a sleek green copper carbonate surface, it means that it was at a very high temperature. In the case of iron objects, melting is not possible since the heat in the pyre could hardly have reached the melting point of iron (see Petré 1984: 204). On the other hand, different bends in the iron objects could originate from the pyre especially if the object has been under some kind of weight. Here the strength of the bending is important. The bending of the object was definitely considered as deliberate, if the bending was 90 degrees or even more.

To be able to understand damage in iron objects I made some experiments with modern steel knives, in which the knives were bent and cut before and after heating in a camp fire. Although the metal in modern steel knives possibly differs from the metal in prehistoric tools and weapons, these experiments are interesting enough to be considered here more closely. The heating was continued until the knives were red-hot, after which they were left to cool slowly. The main result was that before heating the bending usually made the knife break immediately. With some knives it was possible to bent them to a right angle, but even these knives broke immediately when I tried to straighten them again. After the knives were heated and cooled, the situation was completely different. Then it was even possible to bend them several times at the same point without breaking. According to Erkki Honkanen (blacksmith of the Kurala Kylämäki laboratory of experimental archaeology of the Turku provincial museum), this phenomenon is normal and could be expected because heating changes the crystal-line structure of the steel. The knives which were used

in this experiment came from different makers and were of different age. Therefore, the differences in how much knives could be bent without breaking them before heating arise from differences in the quality of the steel and differences in the methods with which the knives were made. Bending an iron object without breaking is, of course, more possible if we are dealing with malleable iron. I had no possibility to make specific analyses of the nature of the metal in the study material. At any rate, there were also damascened weapons in the material (e. g. NM 6164: 1).

Another important result of these experiments was that the breaking of the knives always caused a straight cut which seems to be typical feature of all iron objects which have been deliberately broken into pieces. In iron objects broken by the corrosion, the cut is often uneven and the fragile condition of the metal be clearly seen.

Besides bronze and iron, there were very few objects made of other materials. These other objects were mainly beads of glass or clay and rarer bone artefacts. Because bone and glass break naturally in the heat of the pyre, deliberate damaging could not be observed in these objects. Despite this, these objects were included as uncertain cases of deliberate damaging.

The objects examined were classified into three different classes: 1) objects definitely or at least very likely to have been deliberately damaged, 2) objects in which deliberate damage is uncertain but in any case possible, 3) whole and intact objects and finally 4) broken objects and fragments of objects in which traces of deliberate damage cannot be seen or are impossible to observe because of poor condition. Every intact object and fragments of over half the intact object were counted as one single object. Furthermore, some fragments which are half or even less than half of the whole object were counted as a single object, if the type or decoration of the fragment makes it clear or very likely that the fragment does not belong together with any other fragment already counted as a single object. In all likelihood, the original number of different objects included in this study is larger, because there were a lot of fragments with no specific features that could prove whether or not they belong together with other fragments or not.

RESULTS

The examination of the materials showed that deliberate damaging is most clearly manifested in weapons and

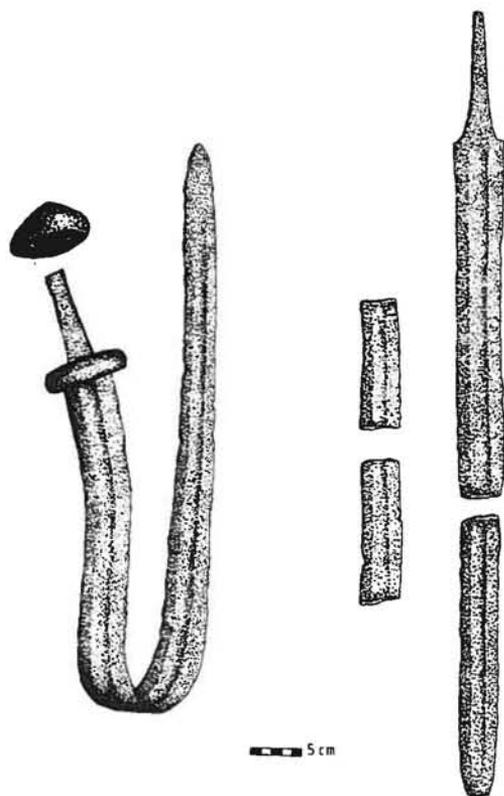


Fig. 2. Bent sword (NM 6366: 232) from the Ylipää cemetery and cut pieces of a sword/swords (NM 3304: 8-11) from cairn 17 in the Päivääniemi cemetery cairn 17. Drawing J. Karvonen.

in ring ornaments such as torcs, bracelets and finger rings. Also knives were often deliberately damaged. In other objects deliberate damaging is rare in spite of traces of being in a fire. These results are, in fact, very easy to understand, since the other objects are mostly small bronze ornaments closely associated with the costume of the deceased. In the first place, it is easier to observe deliberate damaging in large ring ornaments and weapons than in the small bronze ornaments such as brooches, pins etc. Secondly, it has to be taken into account that the costume of the deceased may have been interpreted as a whole which was destroyed in the pyre together with the corpse. In that case, it is easy to understand that it was no longer necessary to destroy every single ornament of the costume separately since the costume itself was already destroyed by the pyre. After all, I would like to stress that even if there is not a single completely whole and unbroken ring ornament,

deliberate damaging is still uncertain in many cases and furthermore in both cemeteries some of the weapons, even luxury ones (e. g. NM 6366: 3, 185 and NM 3151: 5) are unbroken, or at least seem to be.

In both cemeteries the ring ornaments were damaged similarly by bending and cutting. There are clear differences between the cemeteries only in the method used for destroying the weapons. The main difference is that while at Päivääniemi the swords, spearheads, seaxes and knives were mainly cut in pieces and the sword blades were often damaged by hacking, at Ylipää the weapons are mostly intact although very often rendered useless by bending (Fig. 2). Also, as far as I could observe, at Ylipää cemetery the sword blades were not damaged by hacking as they had been in the Päivääniemi material. According to my experiments with modern knives, it can be stated that while at Ylipää the swords were bent after being in the pyre, at Päivääniemi the swords were already cut into many pieces before they were placed on the pyre. If that is so, this certainly implies a difference in the ritual treatment of the grave goods between Ylipää and Päivääniemi cemeteries. However, the possibility that the swords at Päivääniemi were cut in pieces after they were in the pyre cannot be excluded either. Unfortunately, it is also impossible to examine whether or not the weapons of the Päivääniemi cemetery were in the fire because, owing to the method of conservation, the possible fire patina was cleaned away and could not be observed anymore.

A typical feature of cremation cemeteries on level ground is that the pyre debris with the objects was strewn over the stone setting of the pavement so that the different burials are mixed. Despite this, these cemeteries might also contain objects in piles which each are clearly a single burial (Lehtosalo-Hilander 1984: 282). Also at Ylipää objects were found in these kinds of piles (see Tallgren 1914: 34-35). It is interesting to note that here the bending of the weapons clearly concentrated on the long weapons such as swords which were often found from in single piles of objects in a closed context. This might give support to the idea that one motive for bending the weapons was to fit them in a small space. At Päivääniemi cemetery the bending of the weapons was not as common as at Ylipää cemetery and it did not concentrate on the long weapons as at the latter (the long weapons were all cut in pieces in Päivääniemi).

Besides differences in the damages of the weapons, the deliberate damaging of objects seems to be more common at Päivääniemi than at Ylipää. For example,

while the percentage of class 1 objects at Ylipää is 18%, it is as much as 38% at Päivääniemi. However it has to be noted that not all the cairns at Päivääniemi contained burnt bone, which could be expected if we are dealing with cremations. No burnt bone at all was found in cairns 9, 12, 15, 21 and 44 (Heikel 1899: 12-19). Furthermore, two cairns had contained very little burnt bone (in cairn 17 only one fragment and in cairn 29 only three fragments) (Heikel 1899: 8-9, 13-16). If burnt bone is not found we must seriously ask if these cairns really are human graves at all. It is interesting to note that the percentage of class 1 objects in the objects in cairns 9, 12, 15, 21 and 44 is 50%, and if we add to this objects from cairns 17 and 29, the percentage of class 1 objects from all these cairns is 58%. This means that the class 1 objects at Päivääniemi cemetery are much more common in these "uncertain" cremation cairns than in those in which burnt bone was found.

If these "uncertain" grave cairns are not graves, what could they be? It is clear that Päivääniemi is really a cemetery and there are also human cremation cairns. Bones from the cairn 37 were analysed with the result that 25.4% of the bones were human (Katiskoski 1988: 7). Unfortunately the analysis of the bones was made from only this cairn, but according to the finds there is really no good reason to doubt that at least those cairns which had burnt bone in their finds are human graves. Honka-Hallila has suggested that some of the cairns at Päivääniemi could be sacrificial cairns instead of being human graves (Honka-Hallila 1984: 33). This finds support in the fact that in cairns 9 and 17 there are some finds (NM 3304: 21, 22 and 45), which in my opinion could be interpreted as sacrificial offerings rather than as grave goods (see Karvonen 1997: 42, 58). In addition to graves and sacrificial cairns, a cairn can be simply a refuse heap or the remains of a house-floor (cf. Sarkamo 1984: 306). It is interesting to note that the class 1 fragments of seaxes (NM 3304: 12-14) from cairn 17 were cut in a manner highly similar to the knives found at the Kuhmoinen Hillfort and were possibly cut in smithing (cf. Taavitsainen 1990: 41). Also slag, which is typical of smithy sites, was found from cairn 17 (NM 3304: 24). In any case, cairn 17 could hardly be interpreted as a house-floor since in the middle of it there was a large stone 3-4 metres in diameter (see the drawing by Heikel 1899: 14).

If these uncertain grave cairns are not graves, the deliberate damaging of grave goods at Päivääniemi is not as strongly manifested as stated above. Even so, though deliberately damaged objects are more common in uncertain grave cairns, the percentage of class 1 ob-

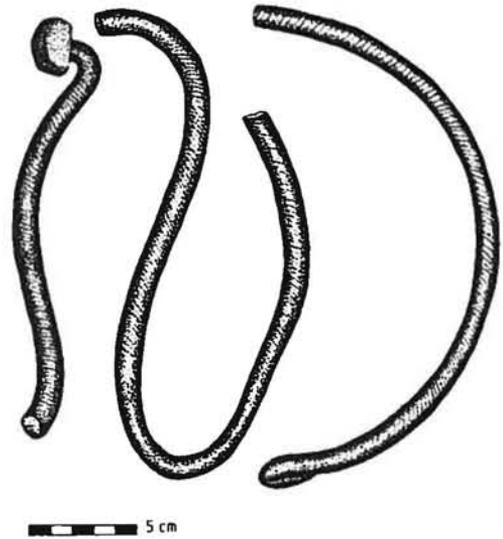


Fig. 3. Deliberately damaged torc (NM 6366: 32) from the Ylipää cemetery. Drawing J. Karvonen.

jects in the objects from those cairns where more than just a few fragments of burnt bone were found is about 24%. In any case, this is more than the percentage of class 1 objects found at Ylipää.

DISCUSSION

According to this study there were deliberately damaged objects in both cemeteries. In spite of this, there were no observed features significantly supporting or contradicting the various interpretations concerning broken objects in cremation cemeteries. It is still an open question why it was not necessary to destroy all the objects given to the dead, if for example the grave goods were damaged because of liberating their "spirits" with the deceased or because of the otherworld was believed to be as an inverted image of this world. On the other hand, these questions lose their relevance if we accept that deliberate ritual damaging may have left traces which can no longer be observed and that burning alone may have been a sufficient means to destroy the object.

If we accept that long weapons were bent at Ylipää because these weapons had to be placed in a very narrow space and that some broken objects were damaged by the metal collectors, we need no ritual to explain the broken objects recovered there. However, a find such

as the class I torc (NM 6366: 32) poses a problem, since despite being bent in many places and cut in to three pieces, the whole object was still left (see Fig. 3). The rod of the torc is about 1cm thick and the bronze metal is in good condition and without traces of very strong heat. Therefore the deliberate breaking can be considered as obvious. If this torc was damaged because of collecting metal, we could ask why someone took the trouble of breaking the torc but left all these pieces of useful metal in the cemetery unrecovered. This torc was found in one of the piles of objects in at Ylipää (see Tallgren 1914: 34), which makes it very likely that it was already damaged during the funeral. Furthermore, if we think that this torc was damaged because it had to be placed in a narrow place, it does not make any sense since bending and cutting in this case does not make the object any less bulky.

At the Päivääniemi cemetery (Fig. 4) all the swords were cut into pieces. One might interpret that this was done because the swords were placed in a very narrow space. However, also smaller objects such as many knives and spearheads were cut into pieces. If this cutting was done during the collection of metal from the cemetery, it could be asked again why so many pieces of good quality metal were left in the cemetery? I would

like to stress the violence in damaging the objects at Päivääniemi. For example a spearhead (NM 3304: 5 from cairn 17) was bent three times on the blade and crushed on the socket; the sword blades were cut into many pieces and often blunted by hacking etc. It is difficult to explain this damage as caused by the metal collectors because the motive of such marked violence in causing the damage would thus not be understandable.

If we take a look to the damages of the objects in the both cemeteries as a whole, the interpretation which raises fewest contradictions is that the objects were damaged in order to prevent anyone to use them again. It is very likely that the different damages in the objects of this study are caused by many different factors including possible rituals, looting, sacrificial offerings, smithy activities, later clearing etc. If that is the case, we should not try to find just one exclusive explanation for broken objects in these cemeteries. There was not enough data in this study to distinguish damage caused by different factors since for some objects it was even uncertain if they really are funeral gifts.

If we accept that the difference in damage between objects from Ylipää and Päivääniemi might indicate different ritual practices, some very interesting ques-

Fig. 4. One of the cairns in the Päivääniemi cemetery (cairn no. 17). Photo J. Karvonen.



tions will arise. I have stated that fire patinated and especially bent weapons together with other broken objects could be seen as a certain tradition in damaging grave goods, which in Finland first appeared in the Kärsmäki type cremation graves of the Early Roman Iron Age, continuing throughout the Iron Age together with the custom of cremation (Karvonen 1997: 92, 111-112). The term tradition should be understood here in its broad sense and without any definite ideology in it that has survived throughout the generations. However, if we have a tradition starting in Finland from the Kärsmäki cremation graves where bending of the weapons is a typical feature, could it then be that the weapons cut in pieces at Päivääniemi represent another tradition of damaging the grave goods of a different origin? To be able to answer this question, a lot of further research is necessary. We should clarify whether this difference between Ylipää and Päivääniemi is a common feature in general among level-ground cremation cemeteries in the southwest parts of Finland and cremation cemeteries of cairns in the regions of Häme and Kokemäenjoki river valley. Secondly, if there really were different traditions, could it be possible to trace archaeologically the cultural connections of these different ritual traditions in the areas around the Baltic Sea? For example the Kärsmäki cremation grave type is not originally Finnish. Their best counterparts can be found in Sweden (Salmo 1931: 72-74, 80-81; Safo 1984: 209).

The discussion of the deliberate damaging of the grave goods in archaeological literature concerns almost exclusively cremation graves. As already stated, there was also inhumation cemeteries in the region of Pyhäjärvi during the period when the cemeteries at Ylipää and Päivääniemi were in use. According to Cleve (1943, 50-51), there was no deliberate damaging of grave goods practised in at the Merovingian Period inhumation cemetery of Kjuloholm. In this case, this is most likely the right interpretation (see Karvonen 1997: 97-99), but in general I would suggest the possibility that deliberate damaging could concern some inhumation graves as well although the method is not as visible as in cremation graves. According to Pälsi (1938: 32) notches in the spearheads of some inhumation graves may indicate that these objects were deliberately damaged. In fact the possibility should be taken into consideration that the cairns without burnt bone at Päivääniemi could be inhumation graves. As already stated, the method of conservation made it impossible to observe whether or not the Päivääniemi objects had been in a fire. It is also known that the same

cemetery can contain both cremation and inhumation graves which are similar in their finds and construction with the only visible difference of cremations vs. inhumations (see e.g. Pettersson 1979: 79-81).

Until now the question of deliberately damaged objects has unfortunately been often overlooked by archaeologists. Deliberate damage is also impossible to study by observing the photographs published in the archaeological literature since these photographs usually focus on typology. Thus, for example in the case of the swords the photograph/drawing of the hilt has often been considered as sufficient information about the object. The hypothesis of different traditions in the deliberate damaging of the grave goods is so far very preliminary but a question that should definitely be discussed.

NOTES

¹ For descriptions of damage to these bog finds see e. g. Ilkjär 1989: 54-61; Hagberg 1967: 9, 108; Gundelwein 1994: 247-258.

² The cremation cemetery of Ylipää in Lieto is dated to the period ranging from the Later Migration Period (6th century) to the beginning of the Viking Age (9th century) (Pihlman 1980: 126-127). The last burials at Ylipää were in to the northern and western side of the cemetery in the 9th century or at the latest during the first decades of the 10th century (Korkeakoski-Väisänen 1993: 4; Tallgren 1914: 33). However, most part of the finds from Ylipää are dated to the end of the Merovingian Period and to the very beginning of the Viking Period (Luoto 1988: 121). The age of Päivääniemi cemetery in Lemppälä is not as certain as that of Ylipää because most of Päivääniemi remains unexcavated. According to some sporadic finds without exact context, Päivääniemi could be dated roughly from the third century A.D. to the Crusade Period. Even so, all the excavated cairns at Päivääniemi that could be dated are from the Migration Period to the end of the Merovingian Period (Honka-Hallila 1984: 32-39; Katiskoski 1988: 9). I have excluded stray finds from Päivääniemi from my material. Because in this study there is only one object from Päivääniemi, a celt (NM 2001a: 1) from a cairn of indefinite date which cannot be given a precise date, I consider the finds from Ylipää and Päivääniemi chosen here as corresponding to each other on a temporary basis..

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ABBREVIATIONS

- NM National Museum of Finland
FM Finskt Museum
SM Suomen Museo
SMYA Suomen Muinaismuistoyhdistyksen Aikakauskirja