

A Red-ochre Grave of the Comb Ware Period from Hartikka in Laukaa

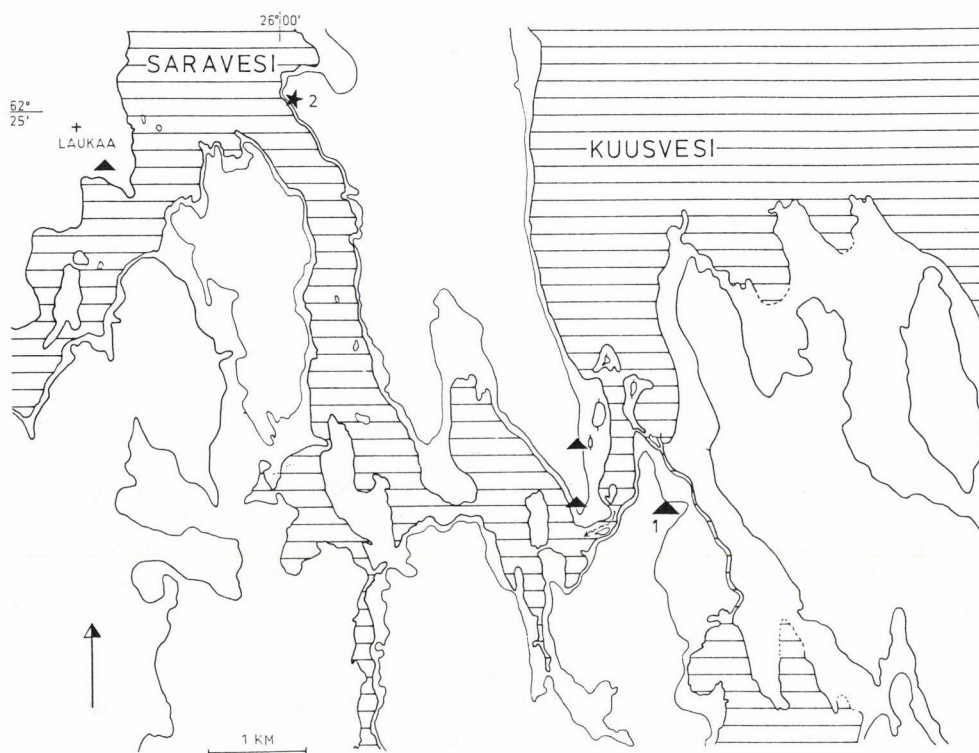
In the autumn of 1986 a hitherto unknown Stone Age site was found at a gravel pit on the Hartikka estate at Tarvaala in the village of Kuusvesi of the commune of Laukaa. Along the edges of the pit were finds, traces of occupation layer, two hearths and a distinctly coloured streak of red ochre (Katiskoski 1987). In the summer of 1987 a trial excavation was carried out at the location to define the extent of the site (Taskinen 1988). In this connection the red-ochre feature was investigated, which revealed a red-ochre grave.

Laukaa adjoins the city of Jyväskylä to the northeast. The water routes of the area lead most of the waters of numerous lakes of Central Finland to Lake Päijänne and from there via the Kymijoki River to the Gulf of Finland. The Rotalampi water route from the east passes through the Tarvaalankoski rapids, about eight kilometres south-east of the church of Laukaa. Archaeological surveys revealed two dwelling sites on the west bank of the rapids at elevations of 90 to 95 metres above sea level. The Hartikka site is one pine-grown point jutting to the northeast from a long sandy ridge to the east of the rapids.

The 1987 excavation did not reveal the total extent of the Hartikka site. The finds of lowest elevation were around 90 metres a.s.l. and the highest finds were at 96 metres. At the site there are at least three shallow depressions, resembling hut-floors of the so-called Madeneva type as well as a number of pits of uncertain character. Most of the finds are of Typical Comb Ware. The material also includes a small amount of thin-walled asbestos-tempered ceramics, which may be of the Pöljä type (Lic.phil. Matti Huurre, personal communication). Along with normal finds of quartz the site also yielded flint, burnt bone and a fragment of the foot of a curved clay idol figurine (NM 23412, 23584, 23697).

The red-ochre grave was located near the upper part of the gravel pit at an elevation of 95.81 metres a.s.l. In the upper part of the pit, along its west and northwest edges and in trial pits dug near the grave finds were scarce and there was hardly any uniformly coloured occupation layer. Present information suggests that the main area of the site is below the gravel pit at the tip of the point between the 90 and 94 metre elevation contours. The excavated grave was thus at the outer perimeter of the site and at a higher elevation. The damages caused by the excavation of sand and gravel can only be guessed at.

There were no signs of the grave visible on the surface and the extent to which it had been destroyed could not be estimated before excavation. In the upright wall of the gravel pit at a depth of half a metre was a distinct red-ochre streak 5–8 centimetres thick and some 50 cm long of dark red colour. The sand which had fallen down from the wall at this location was partly of red colour and contained a few pieces of red ochre. Imbed-



Map 1. Tarvaala in Laukaa with environs: 1. Hartikka, 2. Sarakallio. The unnumbered symbols are dwelling sites found in surveys. The 90-metre contour marked on the map mainly corresponds to the shoreline of the period when the Hartikka site was occupied.

ded in one of these was a button ornament of amber (NM 23584:1) which was found prior to excavation.

A strip of land hardly two metres across remained between the edge of the pit and a path passing it to the southwest. Due to lack of time only a square of 2 x 2 metres was opened at the location of the red-ochre streak which was excavated in layers of 2 to 5 centimetres. Eight of the excavation layers were drawn and photographed as well as the wall of the pit.

The Structure of the Grave

A 6–8 cm layer of light-grey podzol was uncovered beneath a 7–10 cm thick layer of turf. Below the podzol was a mottled brown enrichment layer. At a depth of 26 cm a long-shaped greyish feature of discoloured soil could be weakly observed. This feature was in an east-west direction and its east end was cut off by the edge of the gravel pit. On the sides of the soil feature were three stones, 6–10 cm in diameter, which were the only ones found in the grave. The discoloured soil continued to a depth of about 40 cm in a brownish colour and mixed with other soil. At the latter depth it could still be observed as having the same orientation, but was now 80–100 cm wide and almost

220 cm long with weakly observable patches of red ochre. The feature differed clearly from the surrounding light-coloured sand. At a depth of ca. 52 cm an intermittent streak of red ochre 2—5 cm wide appeared at the edges of the area of brown soil. It west end consisted of two adjacent curved lines at different levels and wider than the lines or streaks at the sides. The inward ends of the curved lines widened into red-coloured patches. It could now be seen that the excavation of sand and gravel and removed only a small part of the grave, its northeast corner. Also noted in this connection were the two hues of the red-ochre streak bounding the grave pit. On the north edge the colouring was as dark as in the profile of the pit, while the streak of the south edge and its adjoining curved part in the west end were of a more brown-hued shade of red, almost brown in places.

At a depth of ca. 58—60 cm two adjacent long and oval features of red ochre (A and B) could be discerned in the grave pit. Characteristic of these features was the above-mentioned difference of hue. The feature on the north side (A) was preserved to a length of 175 cm (its original estimated length was 180 cm). Feature B, to the south, was 160 cm in length — thus indicating two deceased persons of different height, possibly a man and a woman. The features were 40—50 cm wide and in both the west end was slightly narrower than the east end. In places the features are joined to each other and in the middle part there is an intervening area less than 10 cm wide which was only partly coloured with red ochre. The red-ochre layers are thickest at the east ends of the features (10—11 cm), narrowing to 5—8 cm at the west ends.

In the red-ochre layer at the east end of feature A, near the edge of the gravel pit, was an oval and sticky patch of yellow-grey soil measuring 23 x 12 cm with small fragments of bone, apparently the remains of the skull and the teeth. Among the bone fragments was an amber button ornament and a drop-shaped flat amber pendant (NM 23591:1—2). At the east end of the patch of soil was another amber button ornament (NM 23591:3). The difference in elevation of the artefacts was 2 cm. At the west end of feature A in similarly thick and in places »clay-like« red ochre were flat fragments of some organic material and a patch of clay measuring a few centimetres across. At the time of writing analysis results are not yet available.

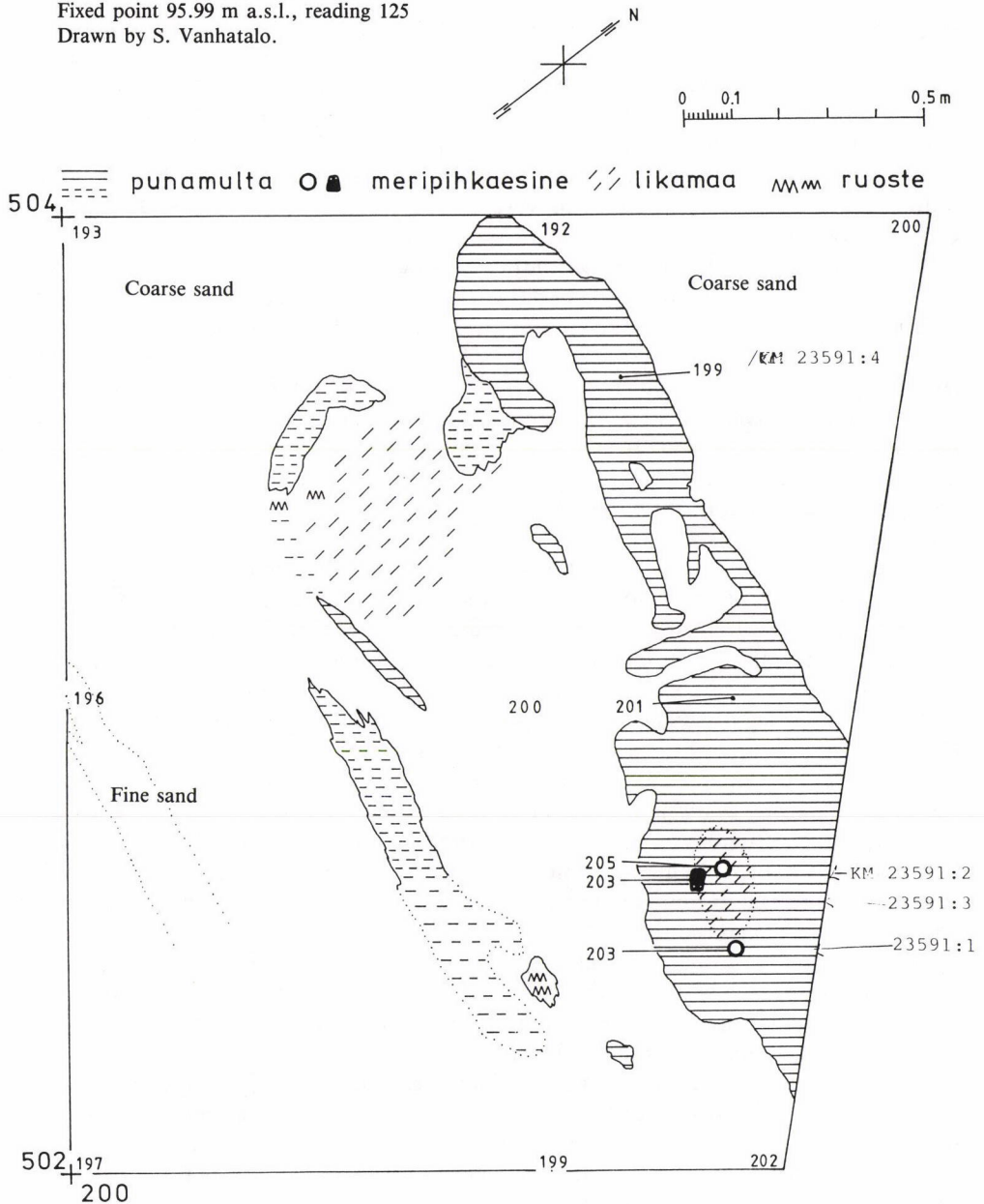
At the southwest edge of feature B were small dark-coloured patches of soil. There were no finds or bone remains from this feature. A lighter-coloured patch of soil in the red ochre of the east end contained darker spots resembling concentrations of rust, which may have been the remains of a skull. At a depth of 64 cm a figure resembling the lower extremities of a body could be weakly observed in the west end of the feature.

In summary it can be observed that two persons were buried next to each other at a depth of 65 cm in a more or less straight-walled and even-based pit in sandy soil in the upper slope slightly outside the dwelling site. The deceased were laid into the grave in an elongated position with their heads facing east and possibly wrapped in hides or furs. The uncoloured streaks in the upper parts of the red-ochre features can be assumed to be fill that had flown into the folds of the furs. The dark substance and the patch of clay at the foot of feature A were in such a small area and in such a position that they may have the remains of grave-goods.

The red-ochre streak situated above the features can be explained if we assume that the deceased were buried wrapped in furs or covered over with red ochre. As the bodies decayed the centre of the grave gradually fell in and the brown soil filled in the space from above, leaving an outline at the original level that was coloured by red ochre.

Red ochre in graves has commonly been regarded as having belonged to the ritual of burial. This practice dates back to the Paleolithic and is known from various parts of the world (cf. Edgren 1966, Torvinen 1978). Danish archaeologists excavating the

Map 2. LAUKAA Kuusvesi Hartikka
 Mirja miettinen 1987
 Red-ochre grave. Scale 1:10, level 6.0
 Fixed point 95.99 m a.s.l., reading 125
 Drawn by S. Vanhatalo.



Mesolithic burial ground of Vedbaek observed that red ochre was mostly found at the head, pelvis and lower extremities of the deceased. With reference to this observation they suggest that, in addition to serving in the burial ritual, red ochre could also have been used in dyeing the body and clothing of the living (Albresen-Brinch Petersen 1976). At Vedbaek the dead were buried clothed, which was probably the practice elsewhere as well.

The bodies of the twin burial at Hartikka were covered with a thick layer of red ochre throughout their whole length. There were several centimetres of red ochre above and beneath the amber ornaments and the skull remains. The possible shroud of furs may also have been coloured with red ochre, which would explain the differences in the shades of red in the features. The grave, however, contained such an amount of red ochre that it seems natural to assume that it had been placed in the grave in connection with the burial.

Red ochre was familiar to the inhabitants of Hartikka in other ways as well. Comb Ware from the site contains several sherds with traces of red ochre on the surface and some sherds even have grains of red ochre among the paste. This feature of ceramics occurs in Finland already in the Early Comb Ware Period. Red ochre has also been observed in clay idol figurines in some cases (Luho 1961).

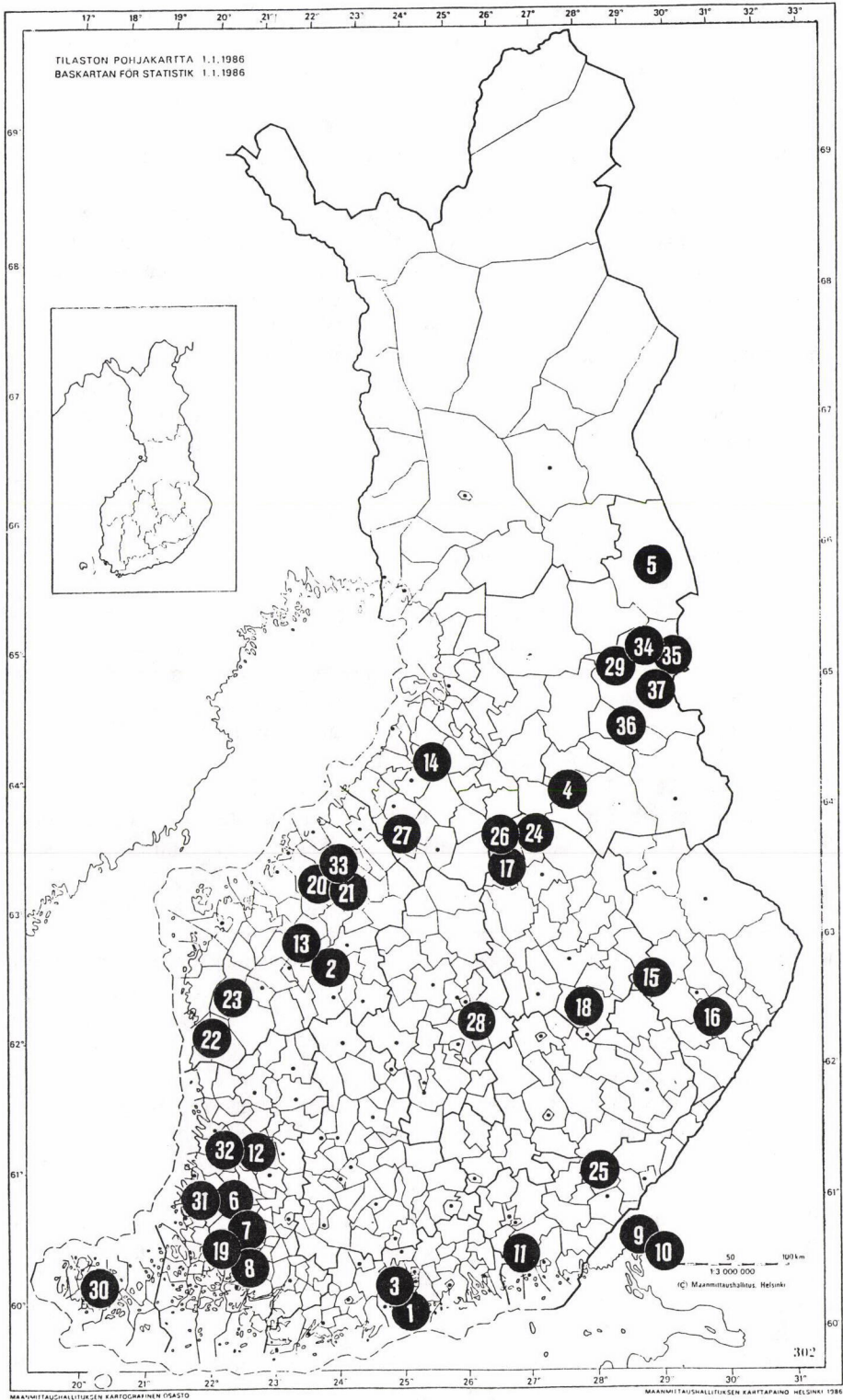
It must also be mentioned in this connection that one of Finland's major rock art sites, Sarakallio at Laukaa is less than 5 kilometres to the northwest downstream of the Hartikka site. The rock paintings at the site mainly depict boats, elks and human figures and appear to have been painted over a long period of time. In the paintings various shades and hues of red ochre can be observed.

Artefact Finds and the Dating of the Grave

Three amber ornaments — two buttons and a pendant — were found in the excavation of the grave. Judging from the colour of the red ochre, the slightly damaged button ornament of amber found prior to excavation belonged to the same group as the artefacts near the head of the deceased in feature A. At the time of writing the finds are undergoing conservation measures. The round buttons measure between 29.8 and 22.8 millimetres in diameter. The largest one was found separately and the smallest one was next to the amber pendant. Each of the buttons has a round hole 5—7 mm in diameter which appears to be slightly conical in all of them. The largest button is 7 mm thick and of flat section. The other buttons are also of flat form. The pendant is drop-shaped, measuring 32 at its widest in the lower part and 19 mm in the upper part. In the upper part are two adjacent round holes. In all of the amber artefacts the surface is strongly coloured by red ochre and weathered.

The closest parallels to these artefacts are from among the Comb Ware culture of Finland. Artefacts of highly similar type have been found in the rich red ochre graves at Honkilahti, Kokemäki and Lieto (Edgren 1966, Luho 1961, Torvinen 1978). These graves and their artefacts have been dated to the Typical Comb Ware Period.

At the Hartikka site the majority of the ceramics is of Typical Comb Ware. However, a few sherds with asbestos temper, mainly of the Pöljä group, show that this site, located along a main water route, was in use after the Typical Comb Ware Period. So far the Hartikka site has not yielded any amber button ornaments with V-shaped bored holes, which are regarded as chronologically significant. Nor have they been found at Honkilahti, Kokemäki or Lieto. However, they are known to occur at sites with asbestos-tempered ceramics (Torvinen 1978). V-bored button ornaments have subsequently been found at sites with asbestos-tempered ware of the Pöljä type, e.g. at Isokangas at Evijärvi (Hiekkänen 1984) and the Timonen site also at Evijärvi (Miettinen 1983). Also at these sites Comb Ware is the dominant ceramic component, with Late Comb Ware at the former and the Typical and Late styles present at the latter. On the basis of artefact parallels and the overall material of the site the Hartikka grave can be regarded as belonging to the sphere of Typical Comb Ware.



Map 3

Stone age graves with red ochre in Finland / 1988

Location	Dating	References
1. Jönsas, Helsinki/Vantaa	S	Edgren 1966 Purhonen 1984
2. Haavistonharju, Kuortane	S	Purhonen 1984
3. Kilteri, Vantaa	S	Väkeväinen 1975
4. Äkälänniemi, Kajaani	S	Huurre 1986
5. Tuovila, Kuusamo	S	Purhonen 1984
6. Kolmhaara, Honkilahti	CWJ + II	Edgren 1966
7. Aisti, Mynämäki	CWJ + II	Edgren 1966
8. Jäkärälä, Maaria	CW II	Edgren 1966
9. Sommee, Viipuri	CW II	Edgren 1966
10. Häyrynmäki, Viipuri	CW II	Edgren 1966
11. Nikeli, Kymi	CW II	Edgren 1966
12. Pispä, Kokemäki	CW II	Luhö 1961 Edgren 1966
13. Pitkämäki, Lapua	CW II/III	Edgren 1966
14. Pitkäsaari, Vihanti	CW II	Edgren 1966
15. Sätös, Kuusjärvi	CW II	Edgren 1966
16. Hammaslahti, Pyhäselkä	CW II	Edgren 1966
17. Kariaho, Kiuruvesi	CW II	Luhö 1961 Edgren 1966
18. Moninmäki, Leppävirta	CW II	Luhö 1967 Lehtosalo-Hilander 1988
19. Kukkarkoski, Lieto	CW II	Torvinen 1978
20. Timonen, Evijärvi	CW II/III + Pö	Miettinen 1983
21. Kotikangas, Evijärvi	CW II	Miettinen 1983
22. Björnåsen, Lappväärtti/ Kristiinankaupunki	CW II	Miettinen 1982
23. Komsinkangas, Teuva	CW II/III	Torvinen 1983
24. Hukkalanharju, Vieremä	CW II	Pohjakallio 1984
25. Vaateranta, Taipalsaari	CW II	Lehtosalo-Hilander 1988
26. Tuomelanharju, Kiuruvesi	CW II	Lehtosalo-Hilander 1988
27. Sopenkangas, Sievi	CW I	Torvinen 1979
28. Hartikka, Laukaa	KA II	Taskinen 1988 Miettinen 1988
29. Kellolaisten tuli, Suomussalmi	CW II / Epineolithic ?	Edgren 1966
30. Jettböle II, Jomala	Pitted Ware	Edgren 1966
31. Nästinristi, Laitila	CW III	Vikkula 1987
32. Hiittenharju, Laitila	CW Pyheensilta	Vikkula 1987
33. Evijärvi	CW II ?	Edgren 1966 Miettinen 1983
34. Kalmosärkkä, Suomussalmi	Multiperiod	Huurre 1986
35. TB:n ranta, Ämmäsaari, Suomussalmi	Multiperiod	Taskinen 1986
36. Saha, Hyrynsalmi	Multiperiod	Huurre 1983, 1986
37. Kukkosaari, Suomussalmi	Multiperiod	Huurre 1986

CW = Comb Ware

J = Jäkärälä

Pö = Pöljä

Concluding Remarks

The Hartikka find is exceptional among the Stone Age graves of Finland that are known at present, as it is the first known case of a twin burial. The rich Comb Ware Period red-ochre graves 1 and 1a of the Kukkarkoski cemetery at Lieto have also been referred to as a twin burial (Torvinen 1978). The difference with respect to the Hartikka grave is, however, clear. The graves in question at Lieto were partly superimposed with an intervening layer 35 cm in thickness which did not contain red ochre. At Hartikka, there appear to have been two corpses placed next to each other and apparently at the same time in the same pit.

In regions where osteological material is preserved in the soils and where complete cemeteries have been investigated twin and even triple burials appear to be a regular feature among individual graves. These have been found for example at the Mesolithic cemetery of Olenyi Ostrov in Eastern Karelia (Gurina 1965), the cemetery at the Valma site in Estonia (Jaanits 1965), the Zvejnieki cemetery in Latvia, with burials from the Mesolithic to the end of the Stone Age (Zagorskis 1974) and in the above-mentioned cemetery of Vedbaek in Denmark (Albrechtsen-Brinch Petersen 1976). Also at Dragsholm in Denmark one of the two Early Neolithic graves at the site contained a twin burial. In this case, two females had been interred with a large number of bone artefacts, including animal's teeth ornaments which were probably affixed to their clothing. The artefacts of a slightly younger grave of a male included a large number of amber ornaments, part of which were probably hung from a necklace with the others clearly sewed onto the clothing. Along with the ornaments the male had been interred with flint arrowheads, a battle axe, a bone dagger and a pot. (Brinch-Petersen 1974).

Although it is not possible to define the age or sex of the deceased in the grave at Hartikka, the above suggests the possibility that the longer red ochre feature A, with its amber ornaments could have been a man and the adjacent body with its bone artefacts was that of a woman. It is hard to imagine more beautiful testimony to human life that had expired thousands of years ago than the twin burial that had changed almost completely to red ochre.

Appendix

In the summer of 1988 excavations at the Hartikka site were continued and within a radius of about ten metres to the southwest of the twin grave six graves were discovered. Three of these were excavated completely. Some eight metres to the southeast of the twin grave the remains of the west part of a destroyed red-ochre grave were found at the edge of the gravel pit. The crest of the ridge had thus been the site of a cemetery, part of which had been destroyed in the excavation of sand and gravel. Of the remaining part eight graves, or remains of such, are known. They are all located in an east-west direction and measure 60–70 cm in depth.

The excavated graves contained a large number of amber artefacts, rings, pendants, buttons and thin tubular beads as well as flint points and two large slate rings. There were no finds of bone.

The 1988 finds are similar to those excavated previously. The ceramic finds are dominated by Typical Comb Ware and also in this case some sherds of asbestos-tempered ceramics were found. Flint artefacts outnumber quartz to some degree and consist mainly of flakes. The occupation layer also contained a piece of unworked amber.

In chronological terms the 1988 finds did not provide any new information. The Hartikka site is mainly from the Typical Comb Ware Period and the red-ochre graves are also of this stage. The material from the graves has several parallels in the grave finds from Kolmhaara and Kukkaroski among other locations.

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