

Chapter 8

Reuse in Finnish Cremation Cemeteries under Level Ground – Examples of Collective Memory

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ABSTRACT This article presents site reuse in the cremation cemeteries under level ground, one of the dominant burial forms in Finland and Estonia during Middle and Late Iron Age (AD 450-1100). These cemeteries are sometimes erected on top of older burials and settlement sites. It is probable that either the memories of these other monuments or the landscape influenced the choice of location. Towards the end of the Viking Age occasional inhumations have been dug into the cremation cemeteries. The idea of making inhumations in an older cemetery suggests a degree of continuity even if the ideas changed. By re-using a site the dead becomes a part of a shared past and the same group of ancestors. The moraine hills were important places because they gave the people a stronger identity, especially during a time of change. The repeated rituals performed at the sites helped the people to sustain their collective memory.

Over the past decade Memory studies have become an increasingly important part of burial archaeology (e.g. Hallam & Hockey 2001; Lucas 2005; Van Dyke & Alcock 2003; Williams 2005). It seems that archaeologists have accepted the idea that the cemeteries are not only static containers for the dead, but also important places for creating and maintaining the collective memory. Past peoples did not passively read meanings of the surrounding landscape with its ancient monuments, they also manipulated them. Monuments, landscapes and specific sites evoked memories of mythical or historical events. These memories could have been reminiscent of certain persons, people or actions. Even though the concept of time was probably different to past people, they were naturally conscious of the passing of time (e.g. Tilley 1994; Johansen 1997; Zachrisson 1998; Bradley 2002).

Memory is a socially constructed phenomenon, associated with repeated actions that can be either inscribing or incorporating practices (Connerton 1989:72). While inscribing practices are needed to be taught and explained in order for them to be understood (e.g. learning the alphabet), incorporating practices have to do with bodily actions. Incorporating practices are thus practical experiences performed with the body, often called embodied memory. Embodied memories are maintained and remembered through repeated actions such as performing a certain ritual, learning how to type or ride a bicycle (*ibid*: 22pp; Bell 1992:118).

The French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs first introduced the term collective memory to a broader public. His main point was that personal memories and also the community's shared memories of the past are influenced by social processes. Therefore, our recollections are not completely personal; memory goes

beyond the individual capacity (Halbwachs 1992). "It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories" (*ibid*: 38). Different groups of people might in addition have completely different memories of the same event. The collective memory is thus connected to the social group that you experience it with, such as in families, among believers of a religion or in social classes (*ibid*). Memories are also often connected to a certain place. When we return to this place, even after a long time, it starts to evoke memories. Places can thus become sites of memory (Nora 1996; Holtorf 2001).

Secondary burials are sometimes found on top of older cemeteries. This re-use of sites that was formerly believed to be accidental has lately been understood as intentional behaviour (e.g. Zachrisson 1994; Gosden & Lock 1998; Bradley 2002). This article will present some cases of cemetery re-use from Finland, namely in cremation cemeteries under level ground. There are quite often layers from older settlement sites or burials under the cremation cemeteries.

The cremation cemeteries under level ground were used during several hundreds of years, and one particular cemetery might have been used for over 500 years. The connection between cremation cemeteries under level ground and older graves indicates that there is something special in the place or in the location of these cemeteries. There must have been a reason for the continuous burials at the site. Also, the long chronological continuity in these cemeteries suggests that the place remained important. The place of burial might have contained several different meanings, all connected with history, identity and social structures. Certain landscapes and sites are thus deeply rooted in both the individual and collective memories (Tilley 1994:27).

Well-organized cemeteries or messy and chaotic fields of debris?



Fig. 1. A part of the stone structure in Vainionmäki A cemetery in Laitila, SW Finland. Excavation layer 1. Photo: National Board of Antiquities 1993.

The cremation cemetery under level ground is a complex burial form currently known only from Finland, Estonia and the Karelian Isthmus in Russia. In Finland the burial form is commonly known from the historical counties of Finland Proper, Satakunta, southern Ostrobothnia, Häme, western Uusimaa, Savo and Karelia. This means that the northernmost frontier for this burial form goes around the 63rd latitude. The burial form has not been observed in the Åland Islands or the archipelago. What distinguishes the cemetery from others is that it is only faintly visible above ground, since it lacks an outer grave marker. The cemetery is built of stones of varying size that form a compact but irregular structure (Fig. 1). The burned bones and artefacts have been strewn over a large area on this stone pavement (Hackman 1897:82pp; Tallgren 1931:113p; Salmo 1952:12pp; Kivikoski 1961:161pp; Mandel 2003), and after this the grave goods have been covered with a layer of smaller stones. There are often only 5 cm of soil on top of these cemeteries. The lack of an aboveground structure and the flatness of this cemetery type transform it into an almost invisible cemetery, meaning that it disappears very easily into the landscape. Still, the cemeteries are often placed on small moraine hills, slopes or ridges, especially in western Finland. These hills are often situated in an agrarian landscape which makes them prominent in the surrounding topography (Fig. 2). It seems appropriate to say that the society buried their dead in an invisible way but still made sure that the hills of the ancestors were visible in the topography (Wickholm 2005).

The scattering of the grave goods and burned bones makes this a collective form of burial. The burned bones are scattered randomly into the cemetery in such a way that it is difficult to distinguish the burials from each other. Pieces from the same artefact can be found several meters from each other. It is possible that the bones from one individual are buried in several different places within the same cemetery, creating a burial form with a

very complex and mixed manifestation. The dispersal of the body seems to conceal the identity of the dead, and de-individualising the community at the same time. It is difficult to believe that this could have been the result of plundering, grazing animals or later activity (cf. Söyrinki-Harmo 1984:114; Taavitsainen 1992:7-10). The collective nature of these cemeteries looks therefore intentional (Meinander 1950:69; Keskitalo 1979:133; Söyrinki-Harmo 1996:103).

The material from these cemeteries is often quite rich, even though it is bent, broken and burned. Most of the grave goods have been on the funeral pyre and they also show signs of being deliberately broken before being strewn into the cemetery. Amongst the grave goods are imported swords of high quality from Scandinavia and Central Europe, many different domestic weapon and ornament types, Oriental and European coins and jewellery of both Scandinavian and Fenno-Baltic origin. There are often also scattered iron rivets implying that there have been at least occasional boat cremations (Karvonen 1998; Wickholm 2005; Wickholm & Raninen 2006).



Fig. 2. Stora näset cemetery in Karjaa, S Finland, is situated on a small moraine hill at the shore of Lake Lepinjärvi. Photo: Anna Wickholm 2005.

However, the data show that clearly discernible individual burials are also found inside cremation cemeteries. These are weapon burials, buried in pits, from the Merovingian period and early Viking Age (ca AD 550-850). A typical weapon grave consists of a shield boss, a sword, one or several spearheads, a seax and/or knives and sometimes horse gear (Fig. 3). This tradition seems to exist only for a short period of time; from the Viking Age onwards the weapons are also strewn about the cemetery. The amount of weapon graves is significant during the Merovingian period but it regresses towards the Viking Age. Hence, there is something special in these individual weapon burials that could derive from their different concepts of personhood or identity within the Merovingian period society. It is possible that the male elite felt a need to distinguish themselves from the

rest of the society during this time. This would have resulted in an individual burial practice during a time that was otherwise practicing collective burials (Wickholm & Raninen 2006).



Fig. 3. Weapon grave 4 from Vainionmäki A cemetery in Laitila, SW Finland. The weapon combination consists of a shield boss, a bent sword, a so called typical Finnish angon, a knife and a ringed pin. Photo: National Board of Antiquities 1994.

During the end of the Viking Age and the beginning of the Crusade Period (ca. AD 1000-1050)¹ the first inhumation graves appear inside the cremation cemeteries under level ground. It is important to point out that not all cemeteries contain inhumation graves and that there are usually only a few inhumations per cemetery. However, this practice could relate to the concept of memory. A closer study of these graves and their meaning will be presented in the next chapter of this article.

In Finnish research the cremation cemeteries under level ground have been seen as quite disorganised and difficult

¹ The Finnish Iron Age does not end with the Viking Age, as the case is in Scandinavia. In Finland the Viking Age is followed by the Crusade Period that in SW Finland ends ca. AD 1200, but continues in Eastern Finland and Karelia until AD 1300.

to study. These cemeteries have often been understood as mere containers of grave goods, without a proper context, because the bones and the artefacts have been scattered in a random fashion into the cemetery. Most of the studies that have involved these cemeteries have concentrated on typological details of the artefacts (e.g. Salmo 1980:57; Söyrinki-Harmo 1996:102pp; Salo 2003:57pp). However, there are many possibilities to analyse them if only one looks beyond the mixed nature of the grave goods.

The cremation cemeteries under level ground are sometimes, as mentioned above, built on top of older cemeteries or settlement sites. These older remains are of various dates and thus quite heterogeneous. Previous research has seen this as random or accidental. It could, in my opinion, also be a result of an intentional way of reclaiming an older site. This is an additional activity which connects the site to memory. It seems that the hills, slopes and the ridges were places that were repeatedly visited throughout the centuries. This meant that as time passed the site received new meanings.

A break in the tradition

An interesting phenomenon occurs in the cremation cemeteries under level ground towards the end of the Viking Age. Occasional inhumation graves are now dug into the cremation cemeteries and at some places both inhumation and cremation is practiced at the same cemetery. This time could be understood as a transitional period in Finland between the practices of cremation and inhumation, and also of pagan and Christian times (Purhonen 1998:115pp, 143; Hiekkänen 2002; Wickholm 2006:201).

Over 20 cremation cemeteries with inhumations are known from Finland.² There are usually only a few inhumations per cemetery, but some bigger inhumation cemeteries that are built on top of older cremation cemeteries are also documented (e.g. Purhonen 1998:253; Pietikäinen 2006:4). As a result, the cremations become disturbed. One could ask why the cremation cemeteries were reused in this way. It is possible that the status, the personal character of the deceased or his/her affinity

² Cremation cemeteries under level ground containing inhumations:

Hauho Männistönmäki, Hauho Kalomäki, Janakkala Makasiininmäki, Kalvola Pahnainmäki, Uusikaupunki (Kalanti) Kalmumäki, Uusikaupunki (Kalanti) Varhela Vähävainionmäki, Uusikaupunki (Kalanti) Hallu Nohkola, Lammi Honkaliini, Lempäälä Lempainen, Lieto Haimionmäki, Mynämäki Franttilannummi, Raisio Mahittula, Raisio Siiri, Tampere Vilusenharju, Turku (Maaria) Ristimäki II, Turku (Maaria) Saramäki, Turku (Maaria) Virusmäki, Turku (Kaarina) Kirkkomäki, Tuulos Haaksivalkama, Tuulos Toivonniemi, Valkeakoski Kiillä, Valkeakoski Jutikkala Kokkomäki, Ylöjärvi Mikkola.

influenced who was buried inside the cremation cemetery (Wickholm 2006; Wickholm & Raninen 2006). The practice of inhumation burials among the earlier cremation cemeteries is mainly restricted to a certain period of time, which could be understood as a transitional phase in a religious, social and a political sense. However, the Crusade period (AD 1025/1050-1150) also has some difficulties. The inhumation burials are traditionally dated only on the grounds of their grave goods, e.g. typology. Unless coins are found in the graves, they are not possible to date precisely (Purhonen 1998). Without a proper chronology or radiocarbon dates these early inhumation graves inside the cremation cemeteries are problematic to date.

The Finnish Christianisation process is considered by researchers to have happened in three stages. The first stage, beginning in ca AD 1100, is identified by inhumation burials in east-west orientation that still contain grave goods, even though these goods are decreasing. This stage can not yet be considered as Christian, but as a time when religious ideas started to change. During the second stage, approx. AD 1150, the inhumation graves are without grave goods or alternatively they contain only a few items mostly related to the dress. This stage is distinguished by the first crusade to SW Finland in the 1150's by the Swedes, and by missionary activity. This was followed by colonisation of large areas of Finland. During the third stage, which started at the beginning of the 13th century, the church had already begun to collect taxes (Hiekkänen 2002:488-491). The inhumations from the cremation cemeteries are most likely predecessors to the first stage, but because of the lack of an accurate chronology it is likely that some graves also belong to the first stage.

The occasional inhumation graves that are found from cremation cemeteries could be explained in many ways. I do not consider these graves as Christian, but merely as a sign of breaking a tradition due to influences from new ideas. It is also possible that at least some of the inhumations were placed inside the old cemetery as a normal continuation, at a time when no other burial place was yet established. The people who were inhumed in the cremation cemeteries were probably part of the same group of people that had been using the cemetery for centuries. It is thus understandable that they would wish to be buried inside the old cremation cemetery with their forefathers, even if the burial tradition had begun to change. There are some cemeteries where inhumation and cremation have been practiced simultaneously, which means that the transition from cremation to inhumation happened slowly. However, there are also cremation cemeteries that were first used during the Merovingian period and again during the Crusade period after a 200 year break. This means that there was some other reason for returning to the place. The way these inhumations are placed in the old cemetery, either in the centre or at its boundaries, seem to resemble some sort of statement or desire to express continuity. These cemeteries are

particularly interesting in the view of commemoration. There might have been ideological or religious changes that contributed to this tradition. It is possible that the people needed to bond with their ancestor because of the pressures that the incoming new religion brought to the community. Hence, the old burial sites became important and they came into play once again.

The past in the past: continuity or repossessions of older sites?

Two different concepts of time are possible to distinguish in the reuse of ancient monuments and landscapes. First, there is the genealogical history, where a site has been in use continuously for a long period of time. The people who have been reusing the site can thus prove a direct link to their ancestors. Secondly, there is the mythological history that is not possible to associate with the immediate past of the people. This means that certain myths and stories can be associated with the place, but the people have no direct history to it anymore (Gosden & Lock 1998).

For an archaeologist it can be difficult to assess which kind of reuse is present at a certain site. As a rule, one can look at the time gap between the different actions that have been performed at the site. If a Bronze Age cairn is reused during Late Iron Age it is difficult to prove that there is a direct genealogical link between these two groups of people. It is thus possible that the people that are buried inside the cairn are not direct ancestors to the Iron Age people, but the place itself is important for some other reasons to the Iron Age society (Wickholm 2007).

As stated above, many Finnish cremation cemeteries under level ground have either an older settlement layer or an older cemetery under the cremation cemetery. Why are the cremation cemeteries under level ground built on top of these places? Was this intentional or merely accidental? In my opinion, too many sites have been reused in order for them to be the result of random selection of location for a new burial site. It is probable that the earlier burials or landscape features influenced the choice of location. It is likely that these locations were selected carefully and became embedded with different memories through time (Tilley 1994:26-29, 67; Williams 1997:2pp; Bradley 2002).

The traces of earlier cemeteries or burials found under these cemeteries are quite diverse. There are cremation pits and urn graves from both the Roman Iron Age and Migration period (e.g. Salo 1968:57-60, 87). Tarand graves and traces of cairns from Bronze Age and pre-Roman Iron Age are also found under cremation cemeteries (e.g. Kivikoski 1941a, Kivikoski 1941b; af Hällström 1946; Pietikäinen 2005).

It is possible that there is some kind of connection between burials from the Roman Iron Age (AD 1-400)

and cremation cemeteries under level ground. It seems that most of the re-used sites are urn graves and cremation pits from this time period. This means that the place of burial has either had a special character (e.g. topography) or that the burials have been marked somehow in the landscape. The small moraine hills or slopes might have been treeless, which would make them quite visible in the landscape. The grave markers might have been either stones or wooden poles. The cemeteries could also have been surrounded by a fence (Söyrinki-Harmo 1984:118; Seppälä 2003:49pp; Wickholm 2005).

If the graves were marked, it probably meant that they were also maintained by someone, possibly even throughout the centuries. This could have been the case especially for the individual weapon burials that were probably perceived differently due to their status or gender conceptions (Wickholm & Raninen 2006). If these sites were used also between the funerals for other ritual activities it is possible that the landscape was kept open. I will address this issue through some examples.

Franttilannummi, in Mynämäki, SW Finland, is a long-term cremation cemetery under level ground. The cemetery has originally been erected on top of a large moraine ridge and the cemetery layers cover almost the whole ridge (Salonen 1927; Salonen 1928). The earliest signs of burial are from the Roman Iron Age, but the cremation cemetery was in use between the Merovingian and Crusade period. The context is quite difficult to distinguish, because the moraine in the ridge has been utilised by the landowners during the beginning of 20th century. A big gravel pit has thus unfortunately destroyed the central parts of the cemetery. In 1927, private entrepreneur August Laine found an urn grave from the edge of the gravel pit during an independent digging. The finds were all reclaimed by the National Museum in 1928. The grave consisted of the remains of a wooden urn, pieces from a bone comb and a number of burned bones. The urn had been covered with a slab of red sandstone. This burial can be dated to the late Roman period (AD 200-400). Another early burial was found during archaeological excavations in 1928. This cremation pit was also covered with a red sandstone slab. The pit contained charcoal, soot and burned bones (Salonen 1928; Salo 1968:59pp).

These two burial forms, the urn and the pit graves, are reminiscent of the well-known Käsämäki cemetery in Turku, SW Finland, which consisted of approximately 90 burials dated to the Roman Iron Age (AD 1-400). This place has also given the name to the burial form known as the Käsämäki type. The type consists of urn burials, cremation pits and occasional inhumations, often with abundant metal finds such as imported weapons and jewellery (Salo 1968:192pp; Raninen 2005:40-44).

A few artefact finds from Franttilannummi also belong to the Roman period. These are, for example, two bronze fibulas and their fragments, some spearheads and a knife.

The above mentioned graves and finds can be dated to both the early and late Roman period with reasonable certainty (Salo 1968:59pp; 205pp). After this there seems to be a 200 year break in the continuity before the area is used again.

Franttilannummi cemetery is an interesting example not only because it is re-used but also because it has a long continuity. The cemetery was in use from the middle of the 6th century to the end of the Crusade period, which means that the cemetery was in use over 600 years. Additionally, 11 inhumation graves have been excavated from the cremation cemetery. These were all quite badly preserved, but the deceased had all been buried in a wooden coffin which had been covered with a stone setting. In particular, the female graves contained remains of jewellery and dress such as bronze spirals from both the headdress and the apron. One of the female inhumations also contained silver coins, the youngest of which had been minted between 1023 and 1029 (Cleve 1933; Purhonen 1998:248).

A similar example is known from the nearby Saramäki cremation cemetery under level ground in Turku. It was originally believed that the burial form started as early as the Roman period, because the oldest finds seem to have been mixed into the cremation cemetery (Rinne 1905:8-12). However, later excavations revealed that there had been older burials under the cremation cemetery. One of them was an urn grave of the above mentioned Käsämäki type. Inside the ceramic vessel two knives and a spearhead was found among burned bones. According to the director of the excavation, the burned bones had been very finely ground. The urn grave had been covered with a layer of stones (Tallgren 1919:7pp). Two other weapon graves are also known from this period. Both of them included a sword, one being a *Gladius*. The Roman period cemetery seems thus to have been abundant in finds. Amongst the finds are different types of arm rings, fibulae, knives, a pair of scissors and ceramics. Of special interest are the bronze end-fittings from two drinking horns of a type that probably originated from the island of Gotland. These are quite rare in the Finnish material. However, the fittings were unfortunately collected as stray finds from the cemetery and thus their specific context is uncertain (Salo 1968:57pp, 174, 204pp).

All Roman artefacts in the cemetery derive from cremations. Besides the urn grave and the cremation pits from the early Roman Iron Age (AD 1-200) there are also different stray finds from the late Roman period (AD 200-400) as well as sparse finds from the beginning of the Migration period (AD 400-550). It is possible that these finds derive from a partly destroyed tarand grave (Kivikoski 1939:16pp; Lehtosalo 1961).

If the finds from the Migration period are dated correctly, then it is possible that the place had been used continuously during the whole Iron Age, from the 6th century up to the Crusade period. If there was a gap, then

it was quite short, which could indicate that the memories stayed quite vivid to this place. Two weapon graves from the Merovingian period belong to the cremation cemetery under level ground. Four excavated inhumation graves, of which two were intact, date to the end of Viking Age or the beginning of the Crusade period. One of the intact inhumations belonged to a woman who was seemingly rich. It consisted for example of two round brooches of bronze with connected chains, a neck-ring, a penannular brooch, a bracelet and two finger-rings, all made of silver. Pieces of bronze spirals from the remains of the dress were also found (Tallgren 1919:1, 8pp; Kivikoski 1939:16; Purhonen 1998:255pp).

The best example of the past in the past is however found from Karjaa (Sw. Karis), on the south coast of Finland. Here, at Hönsåkerskullen, two earth-mixed cairns from the end of the Bronze Age were manipulated in different ways during the Iron Age. Two cremation pits from the Migration period were at the edge of one of the cairns, one of which with over 80 artefacts and 6.5 kg of burned bones. During the Merovingian period, a cremation cemetery under level ground was built on top of the cairn. The activity destroyed the earlier structure, and today the cairn is somewhat hard to detect. However, in the middle of the cemetery there is still a reconstructed rectangular stone coffin belonging to the original cairn. The other cairn, which until the 1990's was believed to be completely intact, had also been reused during the beginning of the Merovingian period. A weapon burial was found inside the cairn, near its edge. The burial was surrounded by a stone circle and consisted of 2 angons, one spearhead, two knives and some rivets and a mount that were probably from a shield boss (af Hällström 1946; Wickholm 2007).

It is safe to say that the earth-mixed cairns were visible in the beginning of the Merovingian period when the cremation cemetery under level ground was built. Even today, the cairn with the Merovingian cremation pit is still very prominent in the surrounding landscape (Fig. 4.). However, most of the reused sites have not been visible above ground. It is therefore relevant to ask how it was possible that both the Merovingian and the Viking Age society started to make cremations precisely above the older graves. I personally believe that it had to do with the manifestation of the collective memory. It is also possible that the Merovingian and Viking Age society wanted to express some kind of superiority over the older cemeteries and thus also the past. This might have originated from social, political or religious motivations.

Some interesting parallels to the cases from Franttilannummi and Saramäki are found in Sweden. During an excavation of a ship setting from 9th century in Vittene, in western Sweden, a cremation pit from the Pre-Roman Iron Age was found in the north end of the setting. According to the director of the excavation, the ship setting had been built at this place because of the older burial. The cremation pit had probably been re-

opened and a big stone had been placed on top of the burial as a marker. It is even possible that the cremation pit had been moved in order for it to fit inside the ship setting. There are also other similar examples from the same cemetery. Several Viking Age burial mounds seem to have been erected on top of Pre-Roman urn graves. It seems that the connection to the old burials has been emphasised by this behaviour (Artelius 2004:109-111). What is remarkable in the examples from western Sweden is that the reused sites have been cemeteries under level ground, not visible monuments like mounds or cairns. According to Artelius, these burials must have originally been marked by wooden poles and raised stones, but even after they had decomposed the site remained important on a mythical level (Artelius 2004:114-116). I agree with Artelius, but it is also possible that the graves have been tended by the community over centuries, creating a site of memory with "real" visible graves.



Fig. 4. The earth-mixed cairn from the Bronze Age at Hönsåkerskullen in Karjaa, S Finland, also contained a weapon burial from 7th century AD. Photo: Anna Wickholm 2004.

In England, Bronze Age barrows were routinely re-used, especially during the Roman Period. The barrows were used for ritual purposes through the deposition of coins or other artefacts in their interiors. Sometimes burials were also dug either directly into the barrow or in its immediate vicinity. During the Anglo-Saxon period, the re-use seems to have been even more widespread. At that time, Roman settlements and different kind of fortifications were used in addition to the Bronze Age barrows. The reason for making Christian burials inside barrows might be related to an ancestor cult. The tradition was still so strong during early Christian times that the church could not break the bond between the Anglo-Saxons and their ancestors (Lucy 1992:97-99; Williams 1997:4-22; Semple 1998:121-123; Petts 2002:198).

In Sweden, it seems that site re-use takes place routinely during the Viking Age. Torun Zachrisson has stated that this could have derived from a need for the Viking Age

people to re-connect to their ancestors. The Viking Age inherited right to own a farm, the Odal, was often expressed through ritual activity. It was important to take care of both the living and the dead. This right could therefore be displayed in the landscape by erecting a burial mound on top of a Roman or Migration period cemetery. This was not only an expression of strong family connections but also a will to belong to the same group of ancestors that had once possessed that place. It was important to take care of both the living and the dead (Zachrisson 1994; *ibid* 1998:120.)

Mats Burström has pointed out that Viking Age re-use is a sign of interest in the past. In his opinion, the Viking Age people wanted to express their own unique local character, especially during times of social or religious change. By re-using the past the society could confirm the stability of history, even though times were changing. Cemeteries were thus important places for identity and the collective memory. The importance lay in the monumentality and the visibility of the burial mounds (Burström 1991: 144pp; Jennbert 1993:76, Burström 1996:25, 32; Artelius 2004:115).

Towards a site of memory

By comparing the above-mentioned examples of site re-use from Britain and Scandinavia with the Finnish cremation cemeteries, one might make some conclusions.

When older settlement layers and burials are found under cremation cemeteries I believe it could be connected to the cognitive landscape. The Finnish cremation cemeteries under level ground have a prominent location in the landscape and their visibility might have made them into sites of memory. The burial site, as such, might have possessed characteristics that made it important. These reasons might have influenced how the site was selected to become a burial place. Over a long period of time people came back to this place to bury their dead and to perform their cult. Even though there might have been intermissions between the burials, the site still lived on in myths. Through time the site received new meanings that may no longer have been connected to the landscape, but rather to the cemeteries. It is thus possible that the older sites were not connected to the later cemeteries through a direct genealogic link. However, the place stayed known to the people because of the stories that were connected to it. This might have been the reason that the site was taken into requisition much later.

The ritual activity that took place at the cemeteries gave the place a specific meaning for several centuries; the cemeteries became sites of memory that also strengthened peoples' identity. However, this tradition only lasted for a short period of time. When the original phase of crisis was over new inhumation cemeteries were established at new locations. It was no longer important to manifest the bond to the ancestors. This could also explain why there are only a few inhumations inside the cremation cemeteries.

Conclusions

In this article, I have presented some features concerning the Finnish cremation cemeteries. The reuse points out that certain places, especially cemeteries, have had a special meaning for past people and their identity. Memories, myths and tales that were connected to these sites kept them important for a considerable amount of time. Cemeteries could thus have a mnemonic value. This knowledge might have been transferred orally as a long chain from generation to generation.

I see the cremation cemeteries under level ground as sites of memory: places that bind the past and the present together and that have maintained the collective memory. Past people could relate to these places and they knew that not only did their ancestors live there but that their identity was also buried there. The cemeteries thus became places where a common and shared identity was stored. "Who are we, where do we come from and where are we going?" were all questions that could be answered at these places.

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