Funerals and Fertility

- A Case Study of Sammallahdenmäki as an Archaeological Source for the Study of Religion of the Bronze Age and Pre-Roman Iron Age

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Funerals and Fertility - A Case Study of Sammallahdenmäki as an Archaeological Source for the Study of Religion of the Bronze Age and Pre-Roman Iron Age

Tässä uskontoarkeologisessa tapaustutkimuksessa pyritään selvittämään pronssikautisia ja esiroomalaisen rautakauden uskomuksia tutkimalla Sammallahdenmäen röykkiöitä ja läheistä Huilu2 asuinpaikka, joka on samanikäinen kuin nuorimmat röykkiöt. Kohteella tehdystä kaivauksista kootaan arkistotiedot, joiden perusteella röykkiöiden sijainnin, muodon, rakennusmateriaalin ja sisällön merkitystä uskomusten ja rituaalien selvittämisessä arvioidaan.

Kaivauksen ja inventointiraporttien lisäksi lähteinä on käytetty myöhäisempää kirjallisuutta, alueen uskomuksista, suomalais-ugrilaisia ja indoeurooppalaisia etnografiota, kansanrunoja, loitsuja, sekä vertailua laajemman alueen arkeologisen löytöjen yleislukuun. Sammallahdenmäki kuuluu Suomen lounaisrannikolle, jolla oli pronssikauden aikana selviä yhteyksiä Etelä-Skandinaviaan ja Baltiaan. Tästä syystä tutkimushistoriaa on kerätty Suomen lisäksi myös muista Pohjoismaista ja Virosta. Sisämaan samankaltainen varhasiinalaikaisi oli saanut vaikutteita idästä, mutta röykkiöiden ja röykkiöiden yhteyksiä uskomuksiin yhteydessä arvioidaan. Metodeina käytetään etnografiointi- ja fenomenologistinen lähestymistapa.


Avainsanat – Nyckelord – Keywords
pronssikausi, esiroomalainen rautakausi, Sammallahdenmäki, Rauma, rituaalit, uskontoarkeologia, röykkiöt, auringonpalvonta, hedelmällisyysrituaalit
Säilytystapa – Förvaringställe – Where deposited
Keskustakampuksen kirjasto
Muita tietoja – Övriga uppgifter – Additional information
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1. Introduction

Belief in the past is a controversial topic among scientists. Often archaeologists are accused of using ritual as an easy way out. When a practical purpose of an artefact or a site is unclear, one may presume that it had a ritual purpose of some sort, and then it does not have to be explained any further. This way of thinking has had an impact in the research of religious beliefs of the past people. The current secularization of the Nordic European culture also had its effect. Ritual interpretation is often seen as less reasonable or rational than a profane interpretation. However the current separation of religion and secular knowledge or every-day life is a fairly recent phenomenon. The pre-Christian religion of the North Europe in general was more a way of life. This is why it is essential to study it as an influential part of culture that it used to be.

Early metal impulses mark an interesting time in the Finnish coastal area. The slow emergence of bronze artefacts in Finland also roughly coincides with a new feature of large stone cairns which often contain cremated human bones. Since the dead were previously buried in the ground and not cremated, this certainly suggests a distinct shift in the belief systems of the people of that time, at least concerning the rituals after the death of some individuals. The big stone constructions are often situated on a higher level. It has been suggested that they were used as landmarks. This possible explanation is profane and practical. While not denying they could have been used as landmarks, there is no reason why a practical function couldn’t coincide with a very profound sacred function as well. This sacred function of the stone settings, in connection to funerary and other rituals, is what this research is about.

These drastic changes were likely foreign influences. Practical evidence of outside contacts is found from the bronze artefacts. Since bronze is made of copper and tin, and copper is not found in its metallic form in Finland, all the bronze has been brought from abroad, one way or the other. From the typology of the bronze artefacts it may be concluded that the culture of the people on the west and south-west coast of Finland was clearly different than in the inland. The coastal area has more similarities with the Southern Scandinavian culture, like many parts of the Northern Baltic region. The Finnish inland was more autonomous with contacts to the east. (Huurre 1979: 108–113; Carpelan 1999: 268–271.) The nature of these different contacts is unclear; trading
trips and exogamy are likely possibilities. Although, immigration of small groups from Scandinavia has usually been suggested (e.g. Salo 1997b: 87).

There are similar stone and earth mounds in the inland called lapinraunio Lapp cairn. It was previously believed that this tradition came from Sweden to the coast and slowly spread towards the inland, but recent studies show that some of these inland cairns are actually older than in the coastal area. Their function may also have been different.

In addition to the analysis of the structure, form, location, and content of the cairns there is not very much archaeological data about the religion in the Bronze Age. Artefacts are very few in number. Other clues are gathered from ethnographic analogies about the meaning of cremation, usage of fire rituals, beliefs about souls. Both Indo-European and Finno-Ugrian samples are looked at. The Scandinavian rock carvings of the time period have been interpreted to depict sacred symbols. Although there are not any carvings in Finland, these are necessary to take under consideration. There might also be some hints in the folkloristic data gathered during the last couple centuries in Finland and neighbouring areas.

Special interest is paid on World Heritage Site Sammallahdenmäki (Image 1). The site is used as a case study. There are dozens of burial cairns and stone constructions there that represent the time period from early Bronze Age (1300–1000 BC) to Pre-Roman Iron Age (170 BC–AD 82). (Raike & Haimila 2003: 19.) There is also a settlement site nearby that has been dated to correspond with the younger graves. (Haimila 2002: 191-195.) Unfortunately older settlement sites are unknown.

What makes this place so interesting for the study of ancient religion are the several variations in the inner and outer structures of the stone settings. Two of the most unique stone settings are the large flat square stone setting called Kirkonlaattia (Church Floor) and the long and winding cairn called Huilun pitkä raunio (the Long Ruin of Huilu). All of the cairns that have been excavated contain inner features of coffins, circles and lines made with stones.

Both Kirkonlaattia and Huilun pitkä raunio were excavated as early as 1891 by Volter Högman who also opened three other cairns. Documentation is somewhat lacking but interesting. In 2002 eight more cairns were excavated and some of them were dated with radiocarbon technology. Documentation was also more to modern standards. Excavations on the nearby settlement site of Huilu were done in 2002–2004. (Högman 1891: 93-101; Raike 2002; Raike 2003; Raike 2004a.)
Image 1. Map of Sammallahdenmäki and the cairns
By using Sammallahdenmäki and all its cairns as a case study, I intend to discuss several questions about the Early Metal Period beliefs. Although not all the human activity that took place on the hill, was necessarily religious, my questions are about the funerary rituals and possible other rituals as well.

- Why was this location chosen for all those cairns to be built on?
- What rituals and other practices can one reconstruct to have taken place there?
- What can be told about the beliefs and world views on the basis of the evidence of this case study?
- Are there signs of changes in the beliefs?

These questions can hardly be answered by researching one site, so comparisons to neighbouring areas and time periods will be discussed, as well as interpretations done by other researchers.
2. Definitions, Chronology and Sources

2.1 Bronze Age, Pre-Roman Iron Age and Early Metal Period

Defining the research topic is made problematic by the fact that both of the terms Bronze Age and Religion have been coined long after the beliefs in question were forgotten. Traditionally pre-history is divided into three periods by the main material used for weapons and tools. Thus the Bronze Age is between the Stone Age and the Iron Age. Sammallahdenmäki, the case study site, has constructions from the Early Bronze Age to first centuries of the Iron Age. There are very few metal finds dated to this time in Finland, but the time is nevertheless divided into periods according to the typology of these metal artefacts following the model set in Sweden. These artefact typologies give us a relative dating method, which has been modified by later research with absolute dating methods. Presumably the people using these artefacts did not reckon their time according to the type of sharp objects and decorative styles they used, especially, because these types and styles were often overlapping.

Some would even get rid of all the period names as the source of unsound epochalism. Radiocarbon dating and other absolute dating methods would make this kind of periodization unnecessary. (Connah 2010: 62–64.) Mental attitudes and beliefs cannot be dated absolutely. Many Bronze Age ideas took shape during the Stone Age and some remnants have continued until historical times. Thus I am not suggesting any new chronologies, but will use the traditional names for the time periods to give readers some guidelines of approximate dating of certain phenomena.

Dividing the Scandinavian Bronze Age into periods is attributed to Oscar Montelius, a Swedish archaeologist, who published his work titled *Om tidsbestämning inom bronsåldern med särskilt afseende på Skandinavien* in 1885. It was a dating method based on typology of ornaments and their combinations in grave finds. He divided the Bronze Age in six periods I–VI. The first three periods belong to the Early Bronze Age and the last three periods represent the Late Bronze Age. Later Montelius’s dating was further verified by stratigraphy and it is still more or less used all over Europe north of Donau. (Edgren 1992: 117.)
The term Bronze Age has been problematized in Finland. If the Bronze Age is defined as a period characterized by the use of copper and its alloy bronze as the chief hard materials in the manufacture of implements and weapons, it can be questioned whether there ever was such a time in Finland. The earliest bronze finds date to c. 1700 cal. BC, eastern artefacts brought by the Seima network are mainly found from inland settlements. Oldest Scandinavian bronze artefacts are from the early part of period II, so the Bronze Age was established on the coast of Finland around 1500 cal. BC. (Lavento 2012: 151; Edgren 1992: 117.) The bronze finds are so very few that stone more likely characterized as the chief hard material for blades until iron came along. This is especially true in the inland and a more neutral term of Early Metal Period was suggested, which would also include Pre-Roman Iron Age (500 BC – AD), since the iron finds from this period are also very few.

Only the south-west coastal area of Finland follows the Scandinavian traditions in the artefacts and building cairns. There are signs of continuance in the pottery from earlier periods. Also connections to the Baltic are shown in the bronze artefacts. The inland Early Metal Period is very different. They got their bronze from the east. Russian and East Baltic bronze artefacts are found among the textile- and asbestos pottery groups, though the bronze could also be cast again into more localized forms. (Huurre 1979: 108–113; Carpelan 1999: 268–271.)

Estonian periodization is quite similar. The beginning of period I is 1800 BC, a century before the Scandinavians, even if the findings from the Early Bronze Age are very few. The Early and Late Bronze Age in Estonia are clearly different. The Late Bronze Age is characterized by rich and versatile material. New evidence however suggests that the social, economic, and cultural development towards the society characteristic of the Late Bronze Age might have begun several hundred years earlier than previously thought. An Estonian archaeologist Valter Lang has suggested singling
out the period of Middle Bronze Age in Estonia. This would mean a triple classification of Early (1800–1300 BC), Middle (1300–900 BC) and Late (900–500 BC) Bronze Age.

(Lang 2007: 15.)

According to radiocarbon dating the oldest cairns on Sammallahdenmäki are from the II period. The youngest graves are dated to the Pre-Roman Iron Age. (Raike & Haimila 2003: 25–26.) Pre-Roman Iron Age spans the last five centuries BC. This period is also sometimes divided to Early and Late Pre-Roman Iron Age, but the line between them is not fixed. (Wehlin 2013: VII; Lang 2007: 15.)

2.2 Defining and Classifying Religion

Religion is a commonly used word, but defining it, is not so simple. The spectrum of human religiosity is huge and colourful. It is difficult to fit all of it in one definition. Furthermore, religion as a term was first coined up by Christians and it has a historical burden. The dichotomy of religious and profane is quite Western and it does not apply to all cultures. Not all languages even have a word which would translate to religion even though they clearly have religious parts in their world views (Pentikäinen 2004: 86–87). How can one define religion so that it covers the religious qualities of life during the Early Metal Period?

Classic scientific definitions of religion may be roughly divided into three groups by which term the definition is anchored to: ‘supernatural’, ‘sacred’ or ‘ultimate concern’ (Ketola 1998: 30). They are also often closely connected to how people thought religion began in the first place. This is illustrated by some examples of classic researchers of religion.

As an example of defining religion through supernatural we have Edward B. Tylor. He was an anthropologist who was interested in the evolution of religion. By way of his thinking the lowest and simplest form of religion would also have been the first. He deduced that the minimum requirement of religion is belief in spirits. He imagined that seeing death, trances, visions and especially dreams made the early humans think that there was an immaterial part of them that could act on its own. This thought would then have been generalized to the world around. Not just humans, but everything had a spirit. This belief, Tylor called it animism, which would later evolve to polytheism and monotheism. (Tylor 1871: 1.)

The critics have pointed out that a Victorian scientist can’t intuitively know how early humans felt about their dreams, as it varies from culture to culture even
today. Evolutionary idea about religions evolving from simple to elaborated, is also outdated and racist. Belief in spirits still co-exists with other religions and with atheism, and there is no objective reason to suppose polytheism or monotheism more developed than other religions. (Lewis-Williams 2008: 26.) Supernatural being as a defining key is weak because there are religions, Buddhism for an example, that have no god, or concept of supernatural beings. There are also many kinds of beings that modern science would term as supernatural, aliens from other planets for an example, that are not considered to be religious. Modern Western science is based on the ideal that reality can be observed through the natural senses and governed by natural laws. This reality is in distinct contrast to the un-observable supernatural that religious ideas belong to. It can be presumed that a culture with different views on science would not have the same central dividing principle. (Ketola 1998: 30–31.)

Tylor’s theory was soon overshadowed by the writings of a French sociologist Émile Durkheim (1912: 64). His definition is centred on the sacred: ”A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden - beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to it”. For Durkheim religion was bound to society and its main purpose was to unite its members closer to each other (Durkheim 1912: 61–62). Sacred is however as difficult a term to define as religion or supernatural, because of cultural differences.

A third way to define religion has been through the ultimate concern. Paul Tillich (1963: 4) a German American theologian has defined religion as “the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern, a concern which qualifies all other concerns as preliminary and which itself contains the answer to the question of the meaning of our life”. Religions are viewed as different ways to answer the big questions. What is the meaning of life? What happens when we die? How should we live through life? Religion is a way of coping with difficult times in life. This however does not draw a line between a religion and an ideology very clearly.

The other side of the coin with a definition through the ultimate concern is shown in strong critiques of religion, like the definition of religion in Marxism. Marxist views have had a powerful impact on archaeology and the research of past religion in the Baltics and all over former Soviet Union. Much of Marxist philosophy derives from Karl Marx himself and his long-time friend and colleague Friedrich Engels. Probably the most famous phrase by Marx (1964: 42) on this matter quotes: “Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of
spiritless situation. It is the opium of the people”. In other words religion is tied to the social inequality and class struggle. Marx saw religion as a source of happiness or comfort to the oppressed proletarians, but as an illusory happiness that alienates them from ever trying to change their circumstance. Thus religion becomes a tool in the hands of the elite. Marx said that the superstructure of politics and religion is really controlled by the economic base, and this superstructure is held up by the endeavours of artists, politicians, and theologians. Marx did not suggest that these people do this intentionally, but that they reflect a hidden social need to justify things as they are. The thinkers, including religious leaders and theologians, are always the servants of the rulers. (Pals 1996: 138, 141–143.)

Marx’s economic reduction offers insight into the ways religion is tied to social and economic life. His analysis of religion is however limited to mainly Christianity and other religions that stress belief in God and the afterlife. Also the scientific base of his theory on the ties between change in economic life and change in religion may be questioned. One might for an example agree with Marx that the rise of capitalism caused a shift from Catholicism to Protestantism, but then we have no explanation for capitalism in areas that did not give up Catholicism. His suggestion that economics is always the cause and that ideologies are its mere expressions, does not seem to fit into the record we have of the evolvement of culture or economics of the Western civilization, let alone along the paths of development that may have been followed in other societies. (Pals 1996: 146–148.)

As there does not seem to be any one specific essence that all religions have, there have been suggestions that a concept of family resemblance may be applied. Family members don’t necessarily all share one trait with each other, but collectively they reveal a multiplicity of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing. (Saler 2000: 159–160.) One example of approach through family resemblance is found in Ninian Smart’s book The World Religions. Instead of a definition he names seven dimensions that are found in religions:

1. The Practical and Ritual Dimension
2. The Experiential and Emotional Dimension
3. The Narrative or Mythic Dimension
4. The Doctrinal and Philosophical Dimension
5. The Ethical and Legal Dimension
6. The Social and Institutional Dimension
7. The Material Dimension (Smart 1998: 13–21.)
The point of this list was to “give a balanced description of the movements which have animated the human spirit and taken a place in the shaping of society, without neglecting either ideas or practices” (Smart 1998: 21). Some of these dimensions can also be applied to ideologies and world views that are generally thought to be secular. Although adherents to these ideologies like scientific humanism or Marxism are often anti-religious it can be said that ideologies and religions “play in the same league”. They all help to express the various ways in which humans conceive of themselves and act in the world. (Smart 1998: 22–25.) There are also religious movements where one or the other dimension is so weak as to be virtually absent. For an example newly formed religious groups may not have much of a material dimension, and some non-literate small-scale societies have limited means to express their doctrinal dimensions. (Smart 1998: 21.)

Religions have often been classified to two groups: World Religions (e.g. Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism) and Primal Religions (e.g. African and Australian Aboriginal religions). As an anthropologist of religion Fiona Bowie (2000: 26) is highly critical of this classification, but notes that they are not without utility.

"The supposed features of a 'world' religion:

1. It is based on written scripture.
2. It has a notion of salvation, often from outside (a 'coming deliverer').
3. It is universal, or has universal potential.
4. It can subsume or supplant a 'primal' religion.
5. It often forms a separate sphere of activity.

The supposed features of 'primal' religions:

1. They are oral – if the culture is literate, the religion lacks written scriptures and formal creeds.
2. They are 'this worldly' in orientation.
3. They are confined to a single language or ethnic group.
4. They form the bases from which 'world' religions have developed.
5. Religion and social life are inseparable and intertwined, and there is no clear division between the 'sacred' or the 'profane' or natural and supernatural."

This categorization has lasted a long time, but it begs many questions when applied. Not many world religions other than Western Christianity fit description and there are many traits of ‘primal’ religion in more popular folk manifestations of the
so-called world religions. These are at best intellectual constructs rather than descriptions of reality. (Bowie 2000: 25–26.)

It is quite certain that during the Early Metal Period, religion of the Finnish west coast could best be described as a primal religion. Unto Salo (1997a: 122 transl. by me) has described the pre-Christian era: “In Finland the myths and beliefs did not develop to an organized entity, a proper religion. We know no Iron Age cult buildings... [nor] ...any specialized cult persons”. Salo’s definition of proper religion seems close to the category of world religions. Even if it seems a little narrow minded, this point highlights the problem with the study of traditional primal religions. Should we talk about religion when the people we study have no such concept? Should the term be something more open, like cosmology? “Cosmology is a theory or conception of the nature of the universe and its workings, and of the place of human beings and other creatures within that order” (Bowie 2000: 119). Cosmology includes religion and other ideologies. I personally defend the term religion, because cosmology only describes some dimensions of religions.

Lack of specialized cult buildings has led researches like Unto Salo to conclude that there was no organized priesthood in the area of prehistoric Finland (Salo 1997a: 122). There is however, folkloric evidence of shamans or witches (Fin. noita), who would fall into a trance of some sort for the purpose of gaining wisdom. This tradition is believed to be very old. The Stone Age rock paintings have been interpreted to depict shamanistic visions. (Lahelma 2008.) Witches were later replaced by wise men or magicians (Fin. tietäjä) in Western and Southern Finland. Tietäjä would use magic that did not include trance. However, the noita tradition was continued among the Sami people in the north until historical times. (Siikala 1992.)

Scandinavian sources also tell of a similar tradition. Women and men who had knowledge of “the old way of life” were called with several names, but most commonly the völar, staff-bearers, and they would use sejd, sorcery for a variety of purposes. (Andren 2007: 90–92.)

The difference between a priest and a witch has classically been explained by Durkheim (1912: 58): “a [witch] has a clientele not a church”, magic used by witches “does not result in binding together those who adhere to it, nor in uniting them into a group leading a common life”. This separation seems superficial in cases where the noita was considered a religious expert by all the members of the population. The whole emphasis of a difference likely stems from societies where magic and religion were
considered in contrast with each other. This was not the case during the Bronze Age and Pre-Roman Iron Age.

### 2.3 Sources

#### 2.3.1 Written Sources

No contemporary written description of the Scandinavian or Coastal Finnish religion from the time period is available. The pictorial language of the rock carvings of Southern Scandinavia, symbols on bronze artefacts, and the language of the graves are as close as we can get. There are however some written sources that can be used. Roman official and historian Tacitus mentions a Germanic tribe of the Semnones in his Germania (AD 98). These Semnones believed in a supreme god who ruled other gods. Although the name of this god is not mentioned he states that the Germanic tribes above all worshipped the equivalents of the Roman gods Mercury, Hercules and Mars. These have been suggested to mean Odin, Thor and Tyr. There is also another account told by Tacitus about the worship of Nerthus, a fertility goddess, a cult practiced by many Germanic tribes believed to have settled in Southern Denmark or Northern Germany. There is also a mention about the area east of the Baltic Sea where the Aesti practiced a cult of the mother of gods. There has however been discussion about how reliable Tacitus’s account is. How much did he learn from primary sources, and how much was hearsay rumours and earlier written data? As a Roman official he had served in the province and been in direct contact with at least some of the tribes he described. However he never crossed the border of the Roman Empire himself. (Näsström 2001: 12–13; Kaliff 2007: 58; Lang 2007: 245–246.)

There were other historic texts from the sixth century, Jordanes and Procopius, these mention people from the north, but it was not until the Vikings attacked the monastery on Lindisfarne AD 753, that Christian missionaries were sent to Scandinavia and more detailed descriptions are written. (Näsström 2001: 13) These later texts written in the Late Viking Age and Early Middle Age may also be used with some caution. Because the written sources are so late, some scholars emphasize that what we know of the Scandinavian religion concerns the Viking Age at most, and that a great deal becomes uncertain as soon as we try to go further back in time. Some believe that the religion had its origin in an ancient Indo-European religion, which can also be traced, for example, Greek, Iranian and Indian religions. Some religious expressions found in later texts could thus be very old, going back to the Bronze Age or even the
Stone Age. (Andrén 2007: 262.) Anders Kaliff (2007: 59) states that cosmology and beliefs are often tenacious structures, with a powerful capacity to survive for a long time. Thus he considers it probable that central ideas in the Scandinavian Bronze Age also lived on (albeit in a changed form) during the Iron Age (and to some extent later).

Rimbert wrote about the travels of Anskar, one of the earliest missionaries in the north during the ninth century. As the Vikings also went east on their voyages there is also an account of learned Muslim Ahmad ibn-Fadlan who witnessed a burial of one the chiefs among the Vikings during the 10th century AD. A German historian Adam of Bremen wrote a chapter about the islands in the north around AD 1060–1070, where he describes Scandinavia as Christians, but also a pagan temple of Uppsala. (Näsström 2001: 13) Although interesting glimpses on the Nordic myths and rituals are given in these texts the biases are obvious due to the political aims of the texts and religious and cultural differences between the historians and the people described.

Most of our knowledge of the Old Norse religion comes from Icelandic manuscripts, and, to some degree, from records of Christian missions among various Germanic tribes. The majority of the written material consists of indirect sources: the Icelandic family sagas, the legendary sagas of ancient times, and the law codes, which are partly coloured by Christian ideas or entirely created in a Christian environment. For direct information about the ancient Scandinavian myths one may turn to the poems of the Edda and skaldic poems. Snorri Sturluson (1178–1241) was an Icelandic chieftain and a skald (poet). He wrote the first systematic survey of Old Norse mythology in a handbook for skalds, which is known as the Prose Edda. (Kaliff 2007: 59–60; Andrén 2007: 262.) His aim apparently was to write a handbook for poets so that they would recognize allusions to the myths and use them correctly. The style of his text implies his appreciation of the imaginative beauty and the dry humour of the tales he told. (Davidson 1975: 17.) Snorri’s contribution to the recording of the old Scandinavian myths is perhaps the most neutral one we have. However his writings were done two centuries after the Christianization of Iceland. It can be questioned how much of the old myths and their meanings were known to Snorri and how much Christianity affected his view of them. On the other hand other manuscripts of poetry, place names and archaeology seem to correspond well with the prose Edda. (Andrén 2007: 262.)

The Poetic Edda was written down sometime during the early half of the 13th century by an anonymous scribe. In 1643 a manuscript (a copy of an earlier version) of Poetic Edda was found on an Icelandic farm. Some of the content was known as stanzas that Snorri had cited in his Edda. It seems however that the 29
carefully ordered poems were copied more for their poetic form and only secondarily for the content as a source of information. The poems give powerful images of the past, but they may be bewildering to a modern reader. The manuscript of the poetic Edda affirms Snorri’s retold version, but the prose Edda is often needed to understand the old skaldic poems. (Raudvere 2007: 273–274.)

Another local historian lived around the same time as Snorri. Saxo Grammaticus was a Danish ecclesiastic historian who lived in East Denmark, which is today called Skåne. He included many tales about the gods in the first six books of his lengthy history of Denmark *Gesta Danorum*. He wrote in Latin, which makes the old poems cited very difficult to read. He portrays the ancient gods and heroes in the worst possible light as if he found their doings stupid and distasteful, but he has preserved many stories and traditions, including the story of a Viking called Amletus which later inspired William Shakespeare to write a very well-known play. (Davidson 1975: 16–17; Näsström 2001: 18.)

Getting closer to home, the written sources about pre-Christian religion are even scantier and later. Finland was, however peripheral in many ways, and it can be presumed that some layers of even Bronze Age religion may have survived very long. Mikael Agricola (c.1510 – 9 April 1557), a clergyman and founder of Finnish literature, translated many parts of the Bible into Finnish. In a preface to Psalms he gave a poetic warning against superstitions and false gods. He provides the reader a list of names and function of eleven gods from Häme region, and of twelve gods from Karelia. Although his list has proven to be quite accurate, it is brief and partly cryptic. He clearly condemns the worship of these gods as giving into the temptation of the devil. Despite the attitudes of the clergy people, in the 18th and 19th centuries the old folk traditions were still alive enough to be collected by enthusiastic scholars, Eric Castrén, Christian Erici Lencqvist and Christian Ganander to name a few, who then saw them as national treasures. (Haavio 1959: 3–4.)

**2.3.2 Ethnography**

Ethnography (Greek: *ethnos* folk, *grapho* I write) is a written description of the culture of a group. Usually ethnographies are written through field research, but they can be gathered from written sources as well. Comparisons to Finno-Ugrian
hunter-gatherers and Indo-European agrarian societies could shed light on the research. They have frequently been made by other researchers as well.

Ethnographical information about the Saami religion can be gathered from the records written by 17th and 18th century missionaries mainly in Norwegian and Swedish Lapland, and in a few cases, also in the territory of modern Finland. (Lahelma 2008: 15.) In the 19th and early 20th century there were enthusiastic Finnish scholars like Elias Lönnrot, M.A. Castren and A.M. Tallgren who made field research among the Saami people in Lapland and among small groups of people speaking languages related to Finnish in Russian Karelia, Siberia and Caucasia and other areas. They collected linguistic data, folklore, and made observations about the culture.

Indo-European ethnographies are mainly gathered from ancient texts. There has been general scepticism about comparing Mediterranean and farther cultures to Northern Europe, not the least because of historical abuse of such studies pursued by German scientist under Third Reich, but there has been a new interest during last decades. American historian of religion Bruce Lincoln (1991) has compared Vedic, Iranian, Greek, and Roman texts and also early Slavic and Scandinavian traditions to study general Indo-European themes on myths, rituals, and societies. Text-based ethnographies have also been used by Kristian Kristiansen and Thomas B. Larsson (2005) who cite Rigveda and Hittite and Greek sources in their interpretation of archaeological artefacts and rock carvings. (Kaliff 2007: 37–39.)

Cremation in modern Northern Europe is usually based on practical reasons and not ritual. Thus ethnographical studies have been made among Hindu people and others who have long traditions of cremation as a ritual. To study cremation and fire sacrifices Swedish Archaeologist Anders Kaliff (2007: 12) has travelled to India and Nepal, with visits to the sacred Hindu cities of Allahabad and Varanasi (Benares) in India, and the temple of Pashupatinah at Kathmandu in Nepal. Norwegian archaeologist Terje Oestigaard (2004) has studied death rituals and cremations, water and religion, and political archaeology through fieldwork in Bangladesh, Egypt, Ethiopia, Greece, Jordan, Nepal and Palestine.

Ethnographic data on the field is collected by interviews and observing people in their normal habitat. The goal is to describe the entire culture as a whole, but this kind of study is always an interpretation by the researcher. He or she may have misunderstood, ignored or overemphasized some parts. The studied people may also have intentionally led the researchers astride, if they were unwilling to share their knowledge. The text-based ethnographies are no exceptions of these hazards.
2.3.3 Folklore

Finnish and Karelian oral tradition or folklore has mainly been gathered during the last three centuries. There are many genres of oral tradition with many modern folklorists studying children’s games, jokes and urban legends. For the purposes of this research even ballads, fairy tales and belief narratives are too young as they mainly mirror the mentalities of the medieval people. For the studying of Bronze Age religion one might look into the incantations, used by the village Wise men (fin. tietäjä). These contain material from the past mixed with Catholic influences. (Siikala 1992: 28.) Also the traditional Kalevalaic or Karelian runes (the old metric poetry that the Finnish national epic Kalevala was compiled and edited from in 1849) may be helpful, even if runes have been heavily influenced by Christian beliefs and other modern narratives. Some layers of the past have remained. Alongside of the official canon taught by the church and scientist, people have relied on other kinds of old traditions. Especially in the remoter parts of Karelia, where the Greek Orthodox Church was not quite as eager to pluck out the superstitious heresies of its members (Lahelma 2008: 122).

These layers are all mixed up. Making a chronology is problematic, even in some cases impossible. It is usually possible to construct lines of evolution in the language of the poetry, style issues and topics. However, it is important to keep the styles and topics separated when it comes to their ages. Each might have a different history. (Siikala 1992: 29-32.) Matti Kuusi (1977: 44–47) has researched the chronology extensively and suggests that poetry themes may be divided into four relative periods and themes into 7 periods.

The oldest style period Early Kalevala (varhaiskalevalainen) he dates to the millennium before Christian era. Theme roughly corresponding the same era is Myth poetry, “which describes cosmogonic acts of creation at the beginning of time, the creation of the world and of human, animal and plant life, with particular reference to those factors which condition man’s relation to his environment such as the need to ensure fertility and to protect himself.” Other kinds of poetry that stylistically appear to have taken shape during this era include laments, lyric poetry, wedding poetry, and curses. (Kuusi 1977: 25, 44–46.)

The second group of poetry themes is Magic and Shaman poetry, in which the characters achieve their ends by magic, and which tell of a shaman’s journey to the
otherworld in search of a particular object or item of knowledge. This theme Kuusi connects to the centuries immediately before Christian era and contacts with ancient Germanic tribes. The style also changed and the Middle Kalevala (sydänkalevalainen) period appears to have developed steadily and flourished during the first millennium of the Christian era. (Kuusi 1977: 45, 47–49.)

Third group Adventure poetry, “often about journeys in search of wives or plunder, and about escape to a place across the sea”, is a theme which appears to have taken wind during the Late Iron Age, especially Viking period. However, some of these poems have links to shamanistic poetry like Lemminkäinen. (Kuusi 1977: 47, 50.) The last two style periods Medieval Kalevala (keskiajan-kalevalainen) and Late Kalevala (myöhäiskalevalainen) and the remaining four theme groups of (4) Fantasy poems, (5) Christian legends, (6) Ballads, narrative poetry and lyrical epic, and (7) Historical war poetry all appear too young for the study of Bronze Age (Kuusi 1977: 45–47).

2.3.4 Rock Carvings, Cairns and Other Archaeological Material

The sources that most reliably are connected to the people of Bronze Age are the archaeological material remains of their lives. The South Scandinavian rock carvings are the closest to written data we can get. Many books have been written about these interesting images in the stones and a few years back Joakim Goldhahn (2006) has made a great overview of the research about this theme in Nordic Countries in his book Hällbildsstudier I Norra Europa – trender och tradition under det nya millenniet.

The Finnish rock paintings are older and concentrated on the inland lakes. Although there might have been activities on the rock painting sites during the Early Metal Period, they appear to have been painted during the Stone Age, and are connected to hunter-gatherer groups. No pre-historic rock carvings are known from Finland, apart from cup-marks that are usually dated to the Iron Age.

The rock carvings and paintings in the Altai region of Siberia, Northern Sweden and Norway are also separated from the Southern Scandinavian rock carvings by age and imagery. The southern carvings contain signs of agriculture. (Ohlmarks 1966: 7.) Norwegian archaeologist Kalle Sognnes (2002: 2) stresses that although this separation into two groups exists, the line between them should not be viewed as so stark. Some motives are found in both, like people, animals, different geometric patterns and boats. There are also areas in Mid-Norway where these two traditions are represented close to each other.
The boats in Southern Scandinavian rock carvings are shaped differently than the boats in northern images. Further differences are ploughing scenes, chariots, cup marks and other round symbols, and giants, or human figures of giant proportions compared with the rest of the images. These are all typical in Southern Scandinavian rock carvings.

The dating of the carvings to the Bronze Age was not always clear. Past researchers have also suggested interpretations that vary from idle works of not so artistic youth to historic documents or hieroglyphs. (Ohlmarks 1966: 11–14.) Today it is hardly even questioned that the rock carvings depict past worldviews and their production was surrounded by different ceremonies and rituals (Goldhahn 2006: 111). The fascinating images still maintain their mysteries. In themselves they do not give us a clear image of what the Bronze Age cosmology was like. Some carvings may actually not depict myths or rituals at all.

In this research the carved images are discussed in connection with Scandinavian research of the Bronze Age religious beliefs. Since the carvings are absent in the Finnish archaeological material, I will not delve into the matter. Possible cup marks are reported to be found from one of the cairns on Sammallahdenmäki and these will naturally be discussed further.

Another group of source material is composed of the cairns and other stone monuments. Since burned human bones and signs of inhumation have been found in cairns, we may presume that the building of cairns is connected to the eschatology of the Bronze Age people. Eschatology means the doctrine of final destiny. The term can refer to individuals, and what happens to them after death, or to humanity collectively. Different realms of the dead, or ideas about transmigration and rebirth, are thus parts of eschatology. (Kaliff 2007: 62–63.)

There are different variants of the cairns, in shape, size, location, and number of individuals in them. Different stone circles, mounds and urn fields have also been used. It seems some areas had a mixture of mortuary practices during a certain period. There may have been several alternative notions about life after death, or even an absence of a fixed idea about what happens after death. There are ethnographical evidences however that mortuary practices and burial rituals may vary even within a relatively consistent tradition of beliefs. Perhaps different people had different destinies. (Kaliff 2007: 64.) This is further implied in the observation that the work required to build the monumental cairns implies there were more people than we have graves. The
other people’s bodies were dealt with in other ways, and we may never find traces of them.

In addition to other forms of burial customs there is also the problem of identifying the Bronze Age cairns. Some cairns were also built during the Iron Age and similar monuments even after that.” Stone heaps of all kinds have been built through centuries, for example, when clearing fields, marking shipping lanes and sometimes as a recreational activity” (Jansson 2011: 128).

Location and outer surface of the stone heaps may give us clues on whether they are prehistoric cairns or something else. More definite knowledge is gained from excavations, but this always destroys the original monument. Often reconstructions are made, but it is not exactly the same. The amount and quality of documentation and analyses of the samples taken are essential. Sadly these have not always been so great. Even treasure hunters have damaged some cairns with no regard for scientific research. Some alterations have happened already during prehistoric times, for an example, when reburials have occurred. This is good to remember before one presumes symbolism on the current shape of the cairn; it might not be the original shape.

Answers to what kind of eschatological beliefs existed during Bronze Age may be found from the surroundings of the graves, exterior and interior construction of the graves, burial methods, artefacts in the grave and remains of rituals at or near the grave (Andersson 1999: 12). The source material is just what is left in the end after the last rituals and centuries in between. Even if we are able to reconstruct some of the deeds that must have taken place, we still need other sources to understand the possible meanings behind them.

Religious beliefs may also be studied from the artefacts and their decorations. Some of the decorative images are similar to the rock carvings. Settlements may have signs of how the space was divided indicating boundaries based on religious beliefs. Dirt piles suggest what things were valued, and what things were not. Fields, and their connection to fertility, may contain symbolic meanings. Mundane things should not be automatically presumed to have been profane. The same limitations, however, comply on all archaeological source material, as with the rock carvings, and the cairns. A level of uncertainty is always present on this research field.
2.4 Methods

Religious beliefs are a challenging research topic even among living people. Analyses of the archaeological remains, their structure, form, finds etc. can only lead to so far, until uncertainties arise. However, without the pursuit to understand the beliefs, there is a huge gap in our understanding of the meaning of these remains. Ethnographic analogies and phenomenology can be tools in constructing our view on the ancient beliefs.

An Ethnographic analogy means utilizing the observations of anthropologists or ethnologists made of contemporary communities in the interpretation of the archaeological evidence left by ancient people. The appearance of similarities in the features of two different cultures does not necessarily guarantee that the reasons behind them are the same. This is the reason why most archaeologists are hesitant in using them, and even advise against it. (Halinen et al. 2009: 501–502; Renfrew & Bahn 1996: 176; Insoll 2004: 53–59.)

The strength of an analogy increases though with every similarity between the research subjects. These similarities can be: social structure, technical level, natural environment, livelihood, geographical and/or chronological closeness, and religious ideas. Especially strong analogies are those with a proof of cultural continuance from the archaeological material to the living community. (Johnson 1999: 60–61; Kaliff 2007: 35.)

Actually analogies are always used in archaeology, either consciously or unconsciously. Like Swedish archaeologist Anders Kaliff (2007: 35) wrote “a really bad analogy is the absence of a conscious analogy”. If we do not consciously choose our analogies, then we are likely using our own assumptions and our own time as an analogy, without reflection. Everyone does it to some degree, but we can compensate by using other methods. Consciously and carefully selected ethnographic analogies can be invaluable instruments for interpretation of archaeological contexts.

Phenomenology is a study of things as they appear. In religious studies groups of religious phenomena have been collected in order to study the deeper meaning of religious phenomena. Scholars using phenomenology have often been criticized of being too sweeping and ahistorical. (Kaliff 2007: 33–34.) German theologian and historian of religion Friedrich Heiler (1961: 16–17) has described phenomenology as a way to dive through the outer shell of religion into the core of
religious experience. Phenomena is studied as its self, and not explained as a superstition or illusion. This kind of empathy does not mean adopting the world views of the research in question, but realizing that their conceptual world is reality to them. Although the sources are scattered and riddled with uncertainties, the goal is to find coherent theories about past beliefs and test them against the archaeological data we have.
3 Research History and Suggested Mythological Themes

3.1 Bronze Age Religion in Scandinavia

The Scandinavian research of Bronze Age Religion has a long tradition. In the beginning of the 19th century archaeology was still a new branch of science. For a while myth and rational work coincided. Megalithic graves and stone artefacts had been discussed long and all over Europe. Mostly connected to Celtic religion the scientists of the time populated the ancient world with Celtic druids, temples, offering altars and other symbols of religion and ritual. They have later been criticized of romanticizing the mythology in the past and even about using archaeological evidence, folklore and wild imagination as equal sources. (Notelid 1996: 316; Notelid 2000:5-7.) In 1816 Christian J. Thompson became the head of antiquarian collections in Denmark. He is often attributed the three part division of prehistory to Stone, Bronze and Iron ages, but also the dichotomy between sacred and profane interpretations. In 1818 his letter shows that he has divided the pre-Christian artefacts into eight categories the last one being the sacred or the things that are presumed to have been used in pagan worshipping or have been connected to it. Thomsen’s mercantilist rationalism had a big impact on the Scandinavian archaeology. (Notelid 1996: 316–317.)

In the beginning of the 20th century M. P. Nilsson, Oscar Almgren and Åke Ohlmarks studied the Minoan and Nordic Bronze Age religion on comparative grounds. However, since the new archaeology of the 1960s abolished diffusion as a historical phenomenon, and turned to natural sciences and social anthropology, there existed no generally accepted theoretical or methodological frame of reference for comparative studies of ancient religion. (Kristiansen & Larsson 2005: 251-252.)

For a long time the proof required for a site to have a ritual interpretation was much larger than for a profane interpretation. The general thought was that a cultic interpretation could only be acceptable if there was no rational and reasonable profane interpretation to be found. Situation has changed since the post-processual framework in archaeology has brought new interest in cognitive issues. In the 1980s dissertations and articles contained only cautious approaches to interpretations of religions and beliefs,
but these became gradually bolder and more frequent by the mid-1990s. (Kaliff 2007: 8, 18-19; Kristiansen & Larsson 2005: 252.)

*The Sun*

Probably the most famous artefact that has been connected to the sun worshipping in Scandinavia is the Trundholm carriage (image 2). It was found from Trundholm’s bog on north-western Zealand in 1902. This bronze sculpture dated to the second Montelian period (c. 1500-1300 BC). It depicts a horse pulling a sundisc, both mounted on a rod that is carried by three pairs of four-spoked wheels. The disc is made up of two convex, circular halves joined together, but one is covered with a thin layer of gold, making it brighter than the other side. The golden side is seen when the item is rolled from left to right and the darker bronze side is seen when it is rolled from right to left. (Kristiansen & Larsson 2005: 294–295.)

*Image 2 The Famous sun-chariot from Trundholm, Denmark. Photo: Christer Åhlin. (Kristiansen & Larsson 2005: 295.)*

Ever since this sculpture was found it has been generally accepted that the Bronze Age religion was centred around the sun's rebirth every morning (Goldhahn 2006: 111). The left to right journey reminds the sun travelling through the sky during the day and the right to left movement could be the sun going through the Netherworld during the night. Wagons are frequently depicted in the rock carvings. They are being drawn by horned beasts or alone. The disc is a very common element in the carvings. It often resembles a wheel. The disc is sometimes held up, and sometimes borne like a shield, or given hands and feet. Sometimes the disc is above or on a ship. Other
elements often connected with ships are horses and birds, namely water birds such as ducks or swans. (Davidson 1969: 22–23.)

Swedish archaeologist Carl-Axel Moberg has been very critical against Scandinavian studies that always interpret the round shape as a symbol of the sun, whether it was depicted on bronze artefacts or the rock carvings. His opinion is that they could just as well be wheels or shields. The Trundholm cart could also be carrying the moon with its light and dark sides. (Moberg 1977:100.)

Danish archaeologist Flemming Kaul has studied the ship motifs on bronze razors and has connected the sun mythology to the soul beliefs of Bronze Age people (image 3). The ship motif and the Netherworld are also associated with the dead.
The sun mythology can be connected to the escathological beliefs about individual souls after death. (Kaul 2005: 268–269.)

The Swedish archaeologist Kristian Kristiansen (Kristiansen & Larsson 2005: 283–284) has interpreted the Southern Scandinavian rock carvings as northern representatives of Indo-European mythologies about sun god and/or sun goddess. As an example he gave the Hittite religion, meaning the cultures occupying Anatolia during the period c. 1700–1200 BC. The two leading figures in the Hittite pantheon were the weather god and the sun goddess. They ruled the Heavens and the sun goddess was also seen as the mistress of the Netherworld because of her nightly voyage in the underworld. This Netherworld was connected to the earth. In the Hittite texts she was called the sun goddess of the earth and her name was Wurunsemu or Urunzimu.

The weather god Taru was sometimes depicted in the iconography riding a cart drawn by bulls. The bull was the sacred animal of the weather god and was attached to thunder and the forces of the weather and the sky. Bull horns and carts are common elements in the Bronze Age carvings and figurines in Southern Scandinavia. Kristiansen connected this with the Trundholm cart: “The golden side, as seen when moving the chariot clockwise, is associated with daytime, light and the sky and its sun or weather-god. When pulled in the opposite direction it is night and the horse is pulling the bronze disc through the dark Netherworld, where the sun-goddess is the mistress. The two points of liminality in this model are sunrise and sunset – the times of day when the sun crosses the horizon: when light becomes dark, when gold is replaced by bronze, when the powers of the sun/weather-god of heaven are turned over to the sun-goddess of earth and Netherworld.”(Kristansen & Larsson 2005: 285, 295.)

**The Twins**

Old Indian *Veda* and Greek mythologies have almost identical narratives about the sun goddess that also include her twin brothers. The sun goddess, Usha (Old Indian), Eos (Greek) or Aurora (Roman), drives the sun over the sky in a chariot drawn by white horses. Sometimes she is represented by a sun disc. At dusk the sun-goddess is captured and held prisoner. Fortunately her twin brothers rescue her and she is able to rise again to the sky in the morning. (Images 4 and 5.) The twin brothers are called the Ashvins (Old Indian) or the Dioskouroi (Greek). The twins are mostly symbolised through white horses and their name derives from *asvah*, meaning horse. The chariot of the sun goddess and the chariot of the twin brothers can sometimes be drawn by swans. (Kristiansen & Larsson 2005: 297.)
These twins, that are a common theme in Proto-Indo-European mythologies, were multi-functional gods. They were gods of light rescuing the sun. They were magic healers and physicians. They were also warriors and gave aid in battle. In addition they invented the weapon dance and the flute accompanying the Spartan weapon dance. Unlike other gods they were frequently in contact with humans disguised as mortals. Twin kings and chiefs were thought to be incarnations of the mythical Divine Twins, also among Nordic Bronze Age chiefs. (Kristiansen & Larsson 2005: 264–265.)

The twins can thus fit into the interpretation of almost any dual occurrence of axes, male figures, horses, swans, poles, helmets and so on. Kristiansen provided many examples from Scandinavian contexts both in rock carvings and ritual objects deposited as pairs. (Kristiansen & Larsson 2005: 267–280.)

Image 4. “Model of the sun journey during Montelius periods 1 and 2 with the (day) sun-horse from Trundholm, twin chiefs and priestess with the sun disc. Night ship with the sun and two axes of the twin brothers is represented from rock art panel in Simris from Montelius period 1. The twins rise in the morning and accompany the sun now drawn by the horse.” (Kristiansen & Larsson 2005: 306.)
Another Swedish archaeologist Anders Kaliff (2007: 65–66) has raised another interpretation of twin duality relying on the work of Bruce Lincoln (1991: 7 ff.), American professor of the History of Religions. The primordial creature Ymer of the Old Norse mythology was the first living creature. The name Ymer means twin. There are variants of this story in the Eddic poems and also in ancient Indian and Iranian mythologies where the primordial creature is called Yama and Yima respectively. The names are similar and all mean twin. This may seem strange since the creature is alone in the narrative. However the primeval Indian and Iranian gods have a female counterpart that is so closely connected that they may be regarded as hermaphrodite.

Destruction and Creation

In the different variants of this myth the primordial being is often described as the first man, or as the first king, sometimes as a healer/priest, but also as a god, demon, or giant. Animal variants are usually cow or bull, but also horse and goat occur. The common theme is that the primordial beings violent death sets the creation in motion, when the different parts of his body become the different elements in the world that humans and other creatures inhabit. The norse variant Ymer is found in the Grimmismal or Sången om Grimner, which is part of poetic Edda and was written down
during the 1300th century. The later version in Snorri Sturluson’s *Gylfaginning* depicts Ymer being killed by the first gods, Odin and his brothers Vili and Ve. (Kaliff 2007: 66; Lincoln 1991: 7.)

Av Ymers kött
åstadkoms jorden,
böljan av hans blod;
berg skapades av benen,
buskar av häret,
och av huvudskålen himlen.

From Ymir’s flesh
the earth was made
and from his sweat, the sea;
Mountains from his bones,
trees from his hair,
and heaven from his skull.

Av hans ögon bryn
gjorde blida makter
Midgård åt människörs söner,
och av hans hjärna
gjordes de tunga
møln, som på fästet flockas.

(Sången om Grimner 40-41.)

And from his brows
built the gentle gods
Midgard for the sons of men;
And from his brain
shaped they all the clouds
Which were hard in mood.

(Lincoln 1991: 8.)

The Indian version is found in *Rigveda* and it depicts Manu (man) as a companion to the primordial being. Manu is the first god to invent sacrifice and Yama (or Purusa as he is called in this version) is the first sacrifice. This vedic narration also goes on explaining not only the creation of different parts of the world but also the creation of the social system with priests (*brahmin*), chieftains or warriors (*ksatriya*), and tribe members or farmers (*vais’ya*). (Kaliff 2007: 66.)

These pairs of body parts and parts of the world are homologies that are found in the mythologies from many Indo-European traditions. They are alloforms or alternative guises for each other. Meat and earth, for an example, are believed to be the same material and so one can change from one into the other. These homological pairs are:

1. Meat/Earth
2. Bone/Stone
3. Hair/Plants
4. Blood (or other bodily fluids)/Water
5. Eyes/Sun
6. Mind/Moon
7. Brain (or thoughts)/Cloud
8. Head/Heaven
9. Breath/Wind
These alloforms are represented in every individual’s physiology. The human organism is a microcosmic model and the source of the cosmos, while the cosmos is the macrocosmic projection of the human body. The idea behind Indo-European rituals is that this creation from the original body can also be reversed. Many texts show the creation myth of man to correspond to these same alloforms. (Lincoln 1991: 8–9; Kaliff 2007: 68–69.)

*Fire, having become speech, entered into the mouth. Wind, having become breath, entered into the nostrils. The sun, having become vision, entered into the eyes. The four quarters, having become hearing, entered into the ears. The plants and trees, having become hairs, entered into the skin. The moon, having become the mind, entered into the heart. Death, having become the downward breath, entered into the navel. The waters, having become semen, entered into the penis.*

*(Aitareya Upanishad 1.4; Translation Lincoln 1991: 9.)*

This is fundamental to the meaning of sacrifice and funeral rituals in the Indo-European traditions. Kaliff goes on introducing *Agni* the Vedic fire god. He discusses the signs of possible fire sacrifices made in Sweden on the burnt mounds found in many settlement sites and burial grounds. Also the cremation and possible grinding of the bones of the deceased people is tied to the same theme and in fact very similar to sacrificing animals. The rituals concerning the dead may have been regarded as a precondition for fertility and the new life. By dividing the elements of the body back to the elements they were made of, the people were re-enacting or helping the creation. (Kaliff 2007: 69–70, 83, 99–119.)

Also the different parts of the burial mounds may represent the different parts of the world. Kaliff wants to problematize the term grave all together. Often there are very little or no remains left of the body, but the construction is still called a grave. This may bring about powerful associations of graves in our own time when it is usually seen as merely a final resting place of the body. Kaliff suggested a description of altar, because there are signs that may be interpreted as sacrifices were made there. They may even have put part of the remains of the dead there because it was a special ritual place to begin with, practice sort of similar to relics of saints in Catholic altars. (Kaliff 2007: 77–84.)
Funerals

Funerary customs are variable all through the Scandinavian Bronze Age and pre-Roman Iron Age and in different areas. General outlines are that inhumation was prevalent during the early Bronze Age and that later, during periods III to IV, transition to cremation occurred. From the late Neolithic up to and including the early phases of the Bronze Age, the dead were also buried in gallery graves or gallery-grave-like stone cists beneath stone settings and cairns. Cremated bones are found in different stone structures, cairns and mounds and to some extent also on settlement sites. Towards the later Bronze Age and Pre-Roman Iron Age inhumations are known to happen again as well as urn-pit-burial grounds and scattering of cremated bones. (Eriksson 2005: 237; Sigvallius 2005: 167.)

The most typical burial monuments of the Bronze Age are the cairns made of boulders and situated in topographically interesting places. Although these cairns are easy to discern in the environment they do not represent the whole population. There are far too few of them and they often contain less bone fractions that could be anticipated at least one human cremation would leave. (Eriksson 2005: 237; Frisberg 2005: 152 – 153; Kaliff 2007: 80.)

Variations in the ways people dealt with the bodies of the dead may imply different beliefs between areas and time periods. It is however common to have variations in mortuary customs even within a tradition that has fairly uniform eschatological beliefs. For an example in present-day Nepal the variations are due to factors such as age, gender, civil status, parenthood, religious status, and more practical circumstances such as the availability of firewood etc. In majority of the cultures that have practised cremation, a basic aim is to release one or more aspects of the dead person: soul, spirit, life force, etc. Fire is often seen as a quickening of the process of releasing different parts of the person, but there are other ways as well. Dismemberment by cutting up the body or exposure to beasts and birds also function the same way. Tibetan Buddhist and Vedic-Hindu traditions also treat the bodies of holy men, the highest lamas or saddhu, differently than other bodies. Instead of cremation, they are preserved or buried. Their perfection has grown to such level that the usual precautions aimed to help people keep in the cycle of incarnations are not necessary. (Kaliff 2007: 89–90.)

Fredrik Svanberg has studied houses and house symbolisms in connection to the burials. There have been real longhouses from the late Neolithic that have been used during an early Bronze Age burial. In Divershøj on Jutland it seems that the
Bronze Age grave disturbs an older grave, and it seems that the old house was a more or less well-preserved ruin when the later burial rituals were carried out, but the house seems to have been deliberately damaged by a wooden plough before the burial. Svanberg also goes through later Bronze Age examples of mortuary houses, symbolic house models and stone-built monuments. Svanberg suggests a connection to the Greek hero cult, where the house was a way of worshipping or revering the deceased. Some of the buildings may also have been used for different ceremonies, and lit de parade could have played an important role in this. (Svanberg 2005: 77, 94–95.)

Two different realms of the dead are mentioned in the Old Norse written sources: Hel and Valhalla. Hel is the name of both the kingdom of the dead and its goddess. The majority of the dead were believed to go to Hel. Hel might also refer to death itself. Valhalla was ruled by Odin and it was the place to which those slain in battle came. (Kaliff 2007: 63.)

*Fertility and Hieros Gamos*

Danish archaeologist Peter Glob (1969: 185–189, 310–311) has suggested that the Sun mythology gave way for a fertility goddess in the Late Bronze Age. The spiral, interpreted as a symbol of the Sun, almost disappeared as ornament on bronzes during Period III. New motives in rock carvings like swimming birds, snakes and goats’ heads first appear on the next period. Wheeled cauldrons also have been found from graves and female figurines first appeared on this time. These all Glob connected to goddess of rain and fertility, and to Early Urnfield culture of the Danubian countries.

The Old Norse literature, the Eddic poems and the sagas, features two groups of gods: Æsir and Vanir. The Vanir seem to be closely associated to the fertility cult, but they were also connected with water, growth in nature, and the dead in the earth. The gods among the Vanir include Njord, Ull, Skadi, and Freyr and Freyja. Freyja especially had a role as a fertility goddess, but she was also connected with the dead. The same dual role can be attached to several of the Vanir. They are generally connected to the earth and the underworld while the Æsir seem to have been regarded as sky gods. However, Ull can also be connected to the sky and the sun. He may be a divinity with a central importance that has decreased towards the end of the pre-Christian era.

According to Snorri’s account in *Ynglinga Saga*, the chief gods among the Vanir were taken into the pantheon of the Æsir after a war and the subsequent peace. There has been discussion whether this contains a memory of cultic battle between
immigrants and local religions. The Vanir would then represent an older agriculture and fertility religion and the Æsir arrived later as a religion of warriors and rulers. There is however no immigration story-line in the *Ynglinga Saga*, and the Æsir Odin, Tyr, Thor and others also have been suggested to have counter parts in the many Indo-European pantheons we have written records of. (Kaliff 2007: 60–61.)

Kristian Kristianssen and Thomas B. Larsson (2005: 342–343) suggest that many images of females in the rock carvings of Southern Scandinavia may be interpreted to depict a fertility goddess. The rock art site at Bohuslän, Sweden (image 6) is given as an example. Among all the presumed hunters and warriors there is a figure that well could be a fertility goddess. If we interpret the line from the head to be a pony tail and thus female, the cupmark between her legs would further indicate her female sex and fertility. The extremely accentuated calves of her legs are a common feature of many rock art representations. Kristianssen and Larsson also took notice of the symbol under the female figure. They say it is quite a rare motif. “It may be a mere coincidence, but the divided circle is actually the Hittite hieroglyph meaning ‘divine’, and placed under an image of a female figure it automatically creates the word ‘goddess’.”

The dual function of the fertility goddess is not surprising when one considers the cyclical Indo-European notion of destruction and creation. In death matter is moved from the human microcosm to the universe, but this is not the final fate. The matter is indestructible, infinitely transmutable and both the living organism and the physical universe are composed of one and the same substance. (Lincoln 1991: 13–14.) Thus the rituals concerning the dead can be regarded as a precondition for fertility and the new life.

Some rock carvings also seem to depict sexual intercourse between two human figures, a man and a large animal (image 7), or animals between each other. The sacred marriage of god and goddess is offered as an interpretation. Even the scenes of a man copulating with, what might be a horse, has been connected to the sun and the divine twins by Kristansen and Larsson (2005: 329).
Saranyu, the wife of the sun god Surya, flees from her husband in the shape of a mare, but leaves a copy of herself, Savarna with her husband. After some time he recognizes what has happened and starts to search for his real wife. In the shape of a stallion he takes to the meadow (under the name of Vivasvat ‘the lightning’) where his wife is grazing (under the name of Asvini ‘mare’). From their horny copulation came the Divine Twins (Asvinau).

This story is found in the old Vedic texts. There are several records of the royalty emphasizing their own role through a ritual of sexual notion with a horse. Horses are linked to the warrior way of life and chiefs and kings tend to arise from among the warriors. The medium that linked the paramount powers of the sun-god and –goddess with the human rulers was the horse. Irish mythologies imply that copulation with a white mare was an initiation ritual for the kings. Christian text says that the act was just symbolic, but the origin might not have been. The horse was then sacrificed and cooked. The king ate the flesh and drank the broth to gain the power of the divine horse goddess. (Kristiansen & Larsson 2005: 324–329.)
The Old Norse records also suggest another possibly sexual way that people communicated with the gods and other beings. This channel of communication is similar to shamanism that seems to have been practiced all over the Circumpolar area. The southern Scandinavian sorcery or magic was usually called *sejd*. The sources relate that Odin learned the mastery of *sejd* from Freyja. It was later learned by humans too, but mainly women used it. Men were known to use *sejd*, but the usage brought a strange dishonor. *Sejd* was used for many purposes, to find out about the future, to bring good luck, to seduce someone, to make a battle charm, and so forth. Several scholars have suggested that the very practice of *sejd* was either a simulated or real sexual act. If the sexual act, with an emphasis on the woman’s physically receptive role in intercourse, was really a part of completing the *sejd* ritual, this might explain why it held such negative connotations for men. At least during the time of the Vikings there were extremely strong prejudices held against homosexuality. (Price 2007: 288–290.)

### 3.2 Bronze Age Religion in Estonia

There are clear similarities between the Finnish and Estonian prehistoric archaeological records. This is not surprising since they are geographically quite close. The development of the archaeological thought process followed similar lines in Scandinavia and the Baltic states until 1940. After this however, the Iron Curtain had a strong impact in archaeology too. The theoretical changes in attitudes towards archaeological data that happened in the United States and Western Europe hardly reached the Soviet Union, nor the Baltic countries that were annexed to it. The only approved theories in the Soviet Union were theories that supported the Marxist philosophy. (Mägi 2002: 8.)

According to Marxist historical materialism there was a unilinear sequence of stages in the past, called social formations: primitive society, slave society, and feudal society. The primitive society was further divided into successive pre-clan, matriarchal clan, and terminal clan stages. The changes between the social formations were based on the increase of the forces of production - like technological advances - that led to increase in production, which in turn caused intensity in social relations that finally made the society to develop to the next stage. (ibid.) Marxist views on religion have already been discussed in chapter 2.2 as one of the ideologies that the elite used to maintain current economic circumstances. Archaeology’s quest was to support this philosophy and prove its universality. (Insoll 2004: 51.)
The Marxist interpretation of the development of the society was a compulsory part of every field of education. However, the Marxist paradigm was generally not supported in the Baltic area. Any theoretical thought outside the frames could not be discussed or published, so the opposition was less direct. Archaeological research focused on artefacts and single archaeological sites. More general theoretical approaches were avoided and archaeology remained on the level of the cultural-historical schools of the first half of the 20th century. After the 1990s collapse of the Soviet Union, a nationalistic orientation has been characteristic. Improved political circumstances in the 1980s and especially 1990s also enabled archaeologists in the Baltic area to become acquainted with archaeological thought in Scandinavia and Western Europe. (Mägi 2002: 8-9.)

During the 1990s and the beginning of the 21st century there has also been new interest in studying the religious aspects of prehistoric cultures in Estonia. There is, however, a peculiar problem concerning the Bronze Age. The Early Bronze Age (1800-1100 BC) is characterized by very few archaeological findings. In contrast, the Late Bronze Age (1100–500 BC) has yielded rich and versatile material to be researched. This does not mean that the Early Bronze Age was not important, because the Late Bronze Age contrasts sharply with the Neolithic Stone Age, in economic and social aspects, especially on the coastal areas of northern and western Estonia. This suggests that major changes happened during the Early Bronze Age, even if the number and significance of the artefact types found from this period is so low. The religious aspects of this time period are however difficult to interpret. No burials or hoards dated to this period have been recorded. Some significance could be given to the fact that the settlement sites gradually shift to areas better suitable for farming than fishing and foraging. It has been suggested that the reason was not famine, but the grain-based alcoholic beverages that may have been used in rituals. Pollen diagrams also suggest that agriculture was indeed practised during this time period. (Lang 2007: 15, 19, 31, 35.)

**Funerals**

The lack of archaeological traces of burials from the Early Bronze Age is a very interesting phenomenon. There are not actually very many burials found from the Neolithic either and the visible burials in monumental stone constructions during the Late Bronze Age can’t represent the whole population. Based on paleodemographic calculations the number of known burial was too small for even a regular nuclear
family. With reference to anthropological evidence of some Siberian people, it has been suggested that the bodies were taken to a special place outside the settlement and left exposed. They may have been wrapped into skins or birch bark, but this would leave almost no traces of the body in just a few years. It is also possible that the bodies were cremated and the bones were scattered around such a waste area that finding them is only coincidental. (Lang 2011: 109–110; Lang 2007: 249.)

Estonian archaeologist Valter Lang (2011: 114–115) connected the spreading of stone-cist graves with other remarkable changes in the society, e.g. in the distribution of fields with permanent fences, fortified settlements, the knowledge of bronze casting, etc. He has argued that although the difference in burial customs may be interpreted in the terms of religious changes, more stress was on the importance of sharpening of social stratification. Whatever the initial factors were, the burying of the dead into stone graves or other cemeteries became gradually a custom of groups with a socially outstanding position.

The cists have been opened and bones removed from them already during the Late Bronze Age, as human bones have been found from settlement sites and correspondingly some bones are missing from the graves. It has been suggested that the reason for the monuments was exactly to provide bones of important people for ritual purposes. The meaning of the cut- and cleaning marks found from the bones is not clear, but ritual cannibalism has been suggested. (Kriiska & Tvaari 2007: 115.) There are also signs of separate handling of the body and head indicating possible skull cult (Lang 2007: 240).

Until recently the archaeological research has been focused on the visible monuments and neglected their surroundings. The signs of fire places, posts, large stones, platforms, and holes lined with stones near stone graves suggest frequent religious activity around the stone monuments. These activities may not even have had anything to do with the dead buried there. Though, the building, re-building and constructional peculiarities of stone graves, as well as the items placed with the bones likely reflect beliefs about the afterlife. (Lang 2007: 241 – 242, 249.)
Souls and Sacral Kingship

The practice of joined burials by making additions to older cairns or tarand-graves during the switch of Late Bronze Age and Pre-Roman Iron Age has had the researchers wondering about shifts in the religious ideas about souls. Tõnno Jonuks claims that the shift to cremation burials reflects the spread of the idea of a communal soul that consisted of all the souls of the ancestors. As noted, most people could have been cremated although the remains are only preserved in more substantial graves. Jonuks estimates that the stone-cist graves reflect a different religious and social system, namely sacral kingship. (Jonuks 2005; Lang 2007: 249–250.)

The term sacral kingship could be sacred chief or head of the family. As the stone-cist graves and later variations on the stone monuments seem to have been done by rather small and autonomous groups. Nevertheless the important point was that the rulers were divine and besides their social and military power they were also religious leaders. Anthropological and historical evidence suggest that this cultic role of the king would be evident during the calendar festivities and times of crisis. The king would collect taxes and gifts from the king would be given to people to link them more closely to the king during the festivities. The death of the king, his/her burial place and genealogies played a significant part in the sacral kingship. (Lang 2007: 249–250.)

Jonuks (2005: 89–92) suggested that the king, who could have been a man or a woman, was placed in the centre of the early stone-cist graves. Not all generations built stone-cist graves, but rather every second generation or so. The increase of the stone-cists, additions and different variations would indicate that more people were considered a part of the kingship. Tarand-graves express that by the time of their building an individual was rarely distinguished, and the religious role of the king (most probably the power that was inherent in his soul and body) was extended to his kin. This development may have reinforced the idea of the communal soul, and joined graves may be the material reflection of that idea in sacred architecture.

Fertility

Two things in archaeological material have been connected to a fertility cult in Estonia: cup-marked stones and hoards of ornaments found in arable lands (Lang 2007: 249). Cup-marked stones were previously called *cult stones with small cup-marks*. They are stones or boulders that have one or several round or oval cup marks engraved on them. These can also be found on cliffs. The size of these cups varies
between 3–10 cm (usually 4–7 cm) in diameter and 0.5–5 cm (usually 2–3 cm) in depth. (Tvauri 1995: 4; Lang 2007: 242.)

The cup-marked stones are difficult to date. They occur more or less in the same areas as stone-cist graves, but are also found near later tarand-graves. It seems that the tradition was carried on through the turn of the Late Bronze Age and the Pre-Roman Iron Age. The cup-marks are not however as closely connected with the graves as they seem to be in Scandinavia, where they are sometimes found from the graves. Anders Tvauri, who has studied the cup-marks both in Finland and in Estonia, connects the cup-marks to arable lands, agriculture and possible fertilization ritual for the fields. (Tvauri 1995: 70–72; Lang 2007: 244–45.)

Valter Lang (2007: 245–246) is not convinced that the location close to contemporary fields indicates that the cup-marks were linked to fields during the Late Bronze Age and Early Pre-Roman Iron Age. He connects cup-marks with fertility and rebirth as associated with femininity. Estonian folklore speaks about a number of female supernatural creatures that people believed in and feared. Tacitus also mentioned a cult of the mother of the gods that was practiced by the Aesti living on the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea.

There are hoards of ornaments found buried in the ground on arable land. Wetlands contain hoards of weapons and tools. The ornaments have been interpreted as sacrifices to a goddess for fertility and the weapons may be for a more military deity. However the hoards are mainly dated to Late Pre-Roman Iron Age and later. One Estonian hoard has been dated to the Late Bronze Age on Saaremaa Island, but it contained only scrap metal in the form of broken bronze items. (Lang 2007: 246–247, 249.)

3.3 Bronze Age Religion in Finland

The Finnish archaeologists have mainly focused on typology and later natural sciences. Starting from the mid-1990s there has been a new interest in religious aspects of the prehistoric life, but the Bronze Age has largely been ignored. Stone Age has attracted researchers via rock paintings, and there are several rich burials from the Iron Age. Although there are many cairns and other stone monuments from the Early Bronze Age, they are often without artefacts. Due to the lack of obvious symbolic material the Bronze Age, or Early Metal Period studies often concentrate on chronology and diffusion directions.
Direction of influence

Since my study relies on the question whether there was a link between the religious beliefs of the people building cairns on the SW-coast of Finland and the people building cairns in Southern Scandinavia, there is one chronology question I have to address. There are several cairns (or cairn-like stone structures) that can be dated to the Neolithic Stone Age in Ostrobotnia. These cairns, however, do not contain evidence of burials. No human bones or inner structures have been found. They are stone structures close to settlement sites, accompanied sometimes with quartz material and burned animal bones. Thus these structures seem to have different functions from those of Metal Period cairns. However it has to be mentioned that unburned bones could have decomposed, and the lack of evidence does not necessarily prove that these structures were not used for burials. (Okkonen 2003: 126–127.) The direction of the influence to begin building cairns for the cremated remains of deceased people may be disputed.

Traditionally the cairn building tradition was thought to have spread to the inland lake areas from the SW-coast, but the AMS dating proves that some of these inland Lapp cairns are older than the oldest cairns on the SW-coast. Thus many researchers suggest that the more probable direction of influence would be Ostrobothnia and the northern shores of Finland (Saipio 2011: 20–22; Taavitsainen 2003: 8–11.) Some Lapp cairns do contain human bones and very few have cists, but the oldest ones only have animal bones (Saipio 2011: 22, 24).

There are similar trends of early cairn building on the western shores of the Bothnian Gulf too (Forsberg 1999; Saipio 2011: 23–24). This seems to indicate that there were Nordic traditions of using stone for monuments or altars, possibly graves, and using fire to cremate at least the animal bones, even before the Bronze Age began. It may have made the transition of customs in Southern Scandinavia smoother. Most researchers agree that the connection between the SW-coastal cairn building tradition and Southern Scandinavian burial customs is clear.

Cairns and Funerals

During the Early Bronze Age the cairns were made of large stones and were situated on top of hills that were hard terrain. During the Late Bronze Age cairns were mixed with earth and closer to the settlement sites. The tradition of building cairns continued in one form or another for about two millennia. (Edgren 1992: 118-119.)
Although the cairn building tradition is often described as a clear indication of new religious beliefs, these beliefs have not been the subject of many studies.

The shape of cairns has been more the subject of chronological problems and description of differences between separate cairn building areas. Inner stone circles are interpreted by Unto Salo (2008: 108) to be a border of sacredness. Fi pyhä (sacred, holy) as a word is an early Germanic loan and Salo connects it to the same time period with the earliest cairns. According to his theory the stone circles were built to separate the area of the deceased. Several circles would then indicate reburials in the same cairn and a need for a bigger area to be bordered.

The location of the cairns has been explained in many ways. For an example, that the final resting place depicts the close relationship between the deceased person and the nature: the dead having been placed by the great elements of nature, solid rock, by the sea, and under the sun (Meinander 1954: 94). This very poetic description by Meinander seems to be based on his own subjective landscape analysis and does not open up what this relationship was like.

Unto Salo has suggested that the cairns far away from the settlement sites might have declared family ownership of the wilderness and interests on the nearby fishing waters. The burned or unburned bones inside the cairns may have been a dangerous taboo especially from the outsiders point of view. (Salo 1997b: 90.) This has been criticized by Tapani Tuovinen (2002: 248). He notes that the visibility of the cairns has been overestimated. “The cairns were simply too small details in the landscape to be distinguished if the distance was even a little longer. In other words, the cairns could not possibly have meant anything to people who came from somewhere further away, and did not know the landscape before.” Tuovinen does not completely reject the function as a sign of land property, but suggests it might have been directed at the more penurious members in the community, who did not themselves possess any land property, or at neighbours who knew the terrain well enough.

Ritual meaning of the location has been briefly discussed by Matti Huurre (1979: 106–107). He connected the Early Bronze Age cairns to sun worshipping because they were situated on higher altitudes than the younger cairns. This was the same time when Ekhnaton tried to raise the Sun god Aton as the only god in Egypt. Huurre implied that it spread from Egypt all over Europe. Sun and weather would have been important to everyone not just farmers, but the Late Bronze Age cairns were closer to arable land and Huurre suggested this was for some sort of fertility magic through ancestor worshipping.
Tapani Tuovinen (2002: 243–244) compared the viewsheds from the cairns in the Archipelago of Åboland and concluded that the Bronze Age cairns were directed towards the land whereas the Iron Age cairns were directed towards the sea. Also the viewshed was more often open from the Iron Age cairns than from the Bronze Age cairns. Tuovinen connected his viewshed studies to subsistence strategies of the cairn builders. When the Bronze Age cairns were directed towards the land it might have represented cultivated land, meadows, and pastures. Tuovinen suggests that the viewsheds represent idealized landscapes, and express a request to gods of desired success. The shift to the viewshed of the sea from the Iron Age cairns Tuovinen explained to represent fishing and seal hunting. The introduction of iron tools decreased the risks of agriculture by increasing the yield of cultivation. Thus fishing and seal hunting were not necessarily more important, but agriculture was less risky.

Unto Salo takes notice that some cairns from the Late Bronze Age seem like places for waste. He excavated one in Näkkila Rieskaronmäki. This cairn contained animal bones, shattered ceramics, burned clay, pieces of bronze moulds, scrap metal, etc. In short all kinds of waste. The ceramics was dated to the V period of Bronze Age. Salo comments that this cairns structure was similar to those of burial cairns and it might have contained a deceased human without artefacts. As there are several other cairns like this and they seem to get more common during the Pre-Roman Iron Age, Salo suggests that this had to do with the belief system. If the spirit was released from the body in cremation, then gradually the ashes and left over burned bones were no longer seen as important but only waste. (Salo 2008: 109.)

Although Anna Wessman has concentrated her studies on Late Iron Age burials, her general assessments on cremation burials, and burned bones may be applied to earlier cremations as well. Following the example of a Swedish archaeologist Tore Artelius she divides the cremation burial rituals into stages; 1) the preparation of the deceased and the cremation, 2) post-cremation treatment of the dead, the funeral, and 3) the building of the grave monument. Wessman also added another stage: 4) commemorative rituals. (Wessman 2010: 47; Artelius 2000: 207.)

**Fertility and Agriculture**

The dating of the beginning of farming and animal husbandry in Finland is difficult to find from the archaeological material, but both were definitely already embraced in the coastal area of South-West-Finland before the Bronze Age (Nunez 1999: 138). Possible connection between the subsistence methods and religious ideas
Paula Purhonen refers to Mircea Eliade’s texts when she mentions that many mythologies about the origin of agriculture are similar among primitive farming societies. These mythologies include a killed divinity from whose grave the food sprouts from. Eliade believed that cyclic timeframe and fertility cult began simultaneously with the earliest agriculture. (Eliade 1978: 37–42; Purhonen 1998: 35.) Eliade’s analogies have received much criticism (eg. Insoll 2004: 53–54) and Purhonen does not make it clear how she feels about its appliance to the Finnish Bronze Age religion. She does however stress that farming must have had an effect on the values of people and particularly on their attitudes towards earth. Difference between land usage and owning land had an impact on the relationship towards nature and environment. Farming and animal husbandry also require more planning and perseverance. (Purhonen 1998: 35.)

Veikko Anttonen, a professor of comparative religion, has studied the term sacred as a cultural category. He connects the original meaning of the Indo-European words for sacred, including the Baltic loans into Finnish-Ugralian languages (pyhä Fin. püha Est.), to corporeal and territorial boundaries. He suggests that the sacredness is actualized in the boundaries that separate certain times, objects, persons or phenomena apart. His claims are based on linguistics and ethnographic evidences of the usage of the term. Linguistically the Finnish word pyhä may be dated to the Bronze Age. Anttonen suggests that due to agriculture people started to stress boundaries and claim land as their own. It could be used to describe the geographical boundaries between the area of the slash and burn fields and their surroundings, but also the boundaries between the living and the dead. (Anttonen 1996: 91–93, 108–110.)

In his study of Ostrobothnian lapp cairns Jari Okkonen notes that agriculture there was very small scale and did not take over the importance of fishing and hunting. He presumes that grain cultivation may have had more impact on group identity building, than nourishment. In other words planting seeds may have had ideological and ritual meanings. (Okkonen 2003: 222.)

This is a very interesting point. The mainly ritual function of agriculture seems likely especially when it is quite small-scale. The closest settlement site to Sammallahdenmäki is the Huilu site from the Pre-Roman Age. There were signs of barley being cultivated, but hunting and fishing were still the main sources of food.
In his studies of the sacred Anttonen (1996: 91–93, 213) concluded that the boundaries between sacred and profane are not absolute, but often relative. Individuals and groups may cross these boundaries, but there are usually certain actions that are believed necessary to prevent any harm coming from these crossings. The crossing of the boundaries between one cultural category to another requires a transformation, which can be physical, psychological and/or social. Religious rituals and symbols are used at the boundary-crossing situations. Many hunting and agricultural rituals are about crossing from the inside to the outside and from the outside to the inside, but also, symbolically, crisis rituals and rites of passage.

Occasionally these rituals may include some kind of offerings to gods, elves or dead relatives. Offerings or sacrifices are very religiously valued words and it is always questionable which kinds of archaeological finds can be interpreted as offerings. Artefacts that are found from under water or in bogs, have often been interpreted as such, though other explanations also exist, like accidents while crossing a lake when ice was too thin. Most of these finds are dated to the Iron Age and very few are from the Bronze Age. According to Purhonen (1998: 36–37) possible Bronze Age offerings are flint scythes that have been placed under water and two bronze axes with spiral decoration that were found in Helsinki Tapanila.

Water has been used to cleanse men after bear hunt or a woman after childbirth by Siberian Ob-Ugrian hunter-gatherer tribes (Anttonen 1996: 137–147). Same kind of behaviour may have been common in Finland since the Stone Age. Water has also been an important element connecting the world of the living to the underworld. In Finnish the world of the dead, and a potential source of great wisdom, was called Tuonela or Pohjola. It is described to be both in the mythical North and below. The way to the Underworld is through a hollow or a stream of water. Boats or spirit helpers may be used to travel this stream. (Siikala & Hoppál 1998: 83.)

Another medium to purify and transform is fire. Its importance grew during the Bronze Age. Anttonen presumes that the usage of fire in the slash and burn cultivation and also in the casting work of bronze may have been the reasons. (Anttonen 1996: 108–110.) The cremation of the dead is usually interpreted to have been for the purpose of helping the spirit separate from the body (eg. Salo 2008: 109). Fire offerings, as such, have not attended much attention by Finnish archaeologists.
Thunderbird, Ilmarinen, Ukko

In the epic poems and incantations God of Thunder has many names. Unto Salo (1997b: 205–207; 2004: 134; 2008: 70–71) has studied them and suggests that the oldest form was a thunderbird *ukkoslintu* or fiery eagle *tulinen kotka*, who ruled the skies before agriculture spread into Finland. Siberian and native North-American beliefs of thunderbirds have survived longer. The sound of the thunder came from the feathers ruffling when the bird flew. Thunderbird could also transport or protect a traveling spirit of a witch. Only fragments of the bird are found in the Finnish poem and they are mixed in the mentions of the god in human form *Ilmarinen* or *Ukko*. Sometimes the god is depicted to have birdlike qualities, like claws of stone to rip trees and earth, or there is a servant bird used by the man.

Salo (1997a: 186 - 191) interprets the battle axes that appear in the archaeological material on wide areas over Europe, and also on the south-west coast of Finland in 3200–2500 BC, as signs of belief in an Indo-European God of the Skies and Thunder. The beautiful boat-shaped hammer-axes of stone could not be used for carving. The edge was not sharp enough and the hole for the handle would have made them too brittle. As a weapon they gave prestige for their bearer, especially since the earliest pictures of the Indo-European God of Thunder had a stone or copper battle axe in his hand.

However, Salo (1997a: 192–200) presumes that the Proto-Finns did not accept this new god until later during the Kiukainen culture (2300–1600 calBC). There were perforated axes also used during this time, perhaps with new immigrants from Estonia and Sweden, and they remained in use during the Bronze Age. Salo traces the origins of the God of Skies and Thunder with an axe or a hammer, to the Black Sea, or to the north of that region, but the name *Ilmarinen* or *Ilmamoinen*, was not foreign. It comes from an old original Finnish word *ilma* meaning air. Also the Karelian name for *Ilmarinen*, *Ukko*, old man, has spread to the western areas. Perhaps it was a term of respect, or a euphemism to avoid uttering the real name. The Finnish words for the sound of thunder *ukkonen* and thunder weather *ukonilma* are also derived from *Ukko*.

Both Ukko and Ilmarinen are mentioned by Agricola:

*Ilmarinen /Rauhan ia ilman tei /
 ia Matkaniehet edhes wei.*

(Salo 2012 I: 357.)

*Ilmarinen made the Calm and the storm,
 and brought Travelers forward.*
The language of the 16th century clergy man is far from clear and my translation above relies on the interpretation formulated by Unto Salo (2012 I: 357, 373–376.) One thing is clear: at some moment Ilmarinen and Ukko have separated into two different deities. Salo suggests that the Scandinavian contacts brought with them the Scandinavian gods Thor and Tyr and they may have given their attributes to Ukko and Ilmarinen respectively. This could have happened already during the Bronze Age. Ilmarinen became associated more with winds and sea travel. Later the maker of the original fire, and wind became the god of iron making and the smithy, perhaps as early as Pre-Roman Iron Age. In some poems he seems to have no divinity, but is portrayed as a heroic smith, the maker of the miraculous sampo. (Salo 2008: 112; 2012 I: 357.)

A rowan tree once saved Thor from drowning, and Rauni might be a Scandinavian loan word associating Ukko with the same myth. Rauni is often thought to be the name of the female deity mentioned by Agricola, but the female gods did not usually have names that we know of. Salo suggests that Agricola simply did not use a hyphen to connect the two words Rauni and Vkko together. Ukko is also occasionally named Father like Thor was, or it could be influence of the Christian era. (Salo 1997b: 213.)

Agricola also wrote about how Ukko was worshipped. Every spring when the seeds were planted people drank for Ukko. Even women from serving girls to matrons were drunk, and shameful things were done. The verses about Ukko and his woman give an idea of the nature of those shameful things. Ukko seems to have been in charge of the harvest by providing rain. (Salo 2012 I: 373–376.) Lightning can cause fire, and Salo connects oval flint stones to Ukko. These were used from River Weichsel to Finland in the Late Roman Iron Age 50–200 AD. The flint stones do resemble vulvas and might have been used to symbolize the hieros gamos of Ukko every time a spark was struck. These are also often found from water, ditches and swamps. Salo argues that the poems indicate that there was a female god of water whose bare breasts tempt Ukko to strike a lightning. Thus placing flint stones in the water could have been a sacrifice not for Ukko, but for his woman, so that she would lure the rain needed for the harvest. (Salo 1997b: 160–167.)
Unto Salo’s theories are quite compelling and far reaching. He relied mostly on linguistic data, and folklore, and archaeological finds played a lesser role. As my linguistic and etymological knowledge is limited it is difficult to judge how much of the theories are applicable on the Bronze Age setting.
4 Grave Forms

4.1 Grave Types and Other Stone Structures Associated with Graves

Bronze Age monuments, or heaps of stone, are the most monumental prehistoric structures there are in Northern Europe. In this research cairn is the most often used term for the monuments, but it likely does injustice to the variety of monumental building that shifts from one location, and time period to another, not to mention the different local terms for the monuments. It would be impossible to describe all the nuances of the whole tradition, but I will briefly go through some variations (image 8).

Southern Scandinavians had monumental grave structures even before bronze came along. The Neolithic Stone Age megaliths can be divided into three groups: dolmen, passage graves, and stone cists. Dolmens are the oldest megaliths. There are thousands of them in Denmark, but just a few in Sweden. They consist of a four-sided chamber of large stones with a huge roofing block on top. They were usually surrounded by a small mound and a circle of upright stones marked the edge. The passage graves had an oval or rectangular chamber with a long or short passage leading into it from the edge of the surrounding mound. These were used in Denmark and Southern Sweden. Stone cists had a wider spread to Central Sweden and were common during the Late Neolithic Stone Age. Cists were narrow rectangles with sides, roof and ends of large stone slabs, the whole sometimes 10 metres long. These monuments were communal-, or family graves containing several inhumation burials. Some may have still been used during the Early Bronze Age. (Klindt-Jensen 1957: 34–57; Stenberger 1962: 42–62.)

The Neolithic megaliths did not take root in Norway (Hagen 1967: 55), and only one communal stone cist is known from Finland. This monumental cist was found in Uotinmäki. It was 9 metres long and 1.7 metres wide. (Salo 2008: 83.) Continuance of the stone cists may be seen, in smaller versions of them, under cairns or barrows.
The basic cairn is a man-made heap of stones. If the cairn is covered with soil and grass, it is called a barrow or a mound. Barrows diameter is usually 12–20 m, and the barrows are located in open parts of today’s cultural landscape. The barrows appear also in close connection to settlement areas of the same periods. They generally contain several burials of various shapes, most often in relation to a centrally located primary grave. The sheer size of the monuments and the artefacts found in them suggest that the barrows were for the elite. (Artelius 1998: 43.)

The Barrows concentrate on the Southern Scandinavia. They were mostly built during the II and III periods. Some areas in Scania and Halland (Sweden) and Fyn (Denmark) continue the tradition into the Late Bronze Age, but mostly the barrow
building ends during the Late Bronze Age in Southern Scandinavia. (Andersson 1999: 9–10.)

The cairns are in many examples chronologically equivalent to the barrows, but they are primarily located in a different way. They are on mountain tops and larger ridges, often at spectacular and carefully chosen points in the landscape from where there was a very good view of the surrounding territory and other cairns. Generally the cairns are not found close to settlements, and they tend to contain fewer burials than barrows and stone-settings. (Artelius 1998: 43.)

The Finnish Bronze Age monuments are mostly cairns. They are usually round, but some oval and rectangular cairns are known. The average diameter is about 10 meters. The largest cairn is from Panelia Kiukainen: diameter 36 meters and height 5 meters. Stone cists and circular stone settings are common, covered with smaller stones. The cairns concentrate on the south-west coast of Finland. (Huurre 1979: 95, 103.)

The stone settings, mostly circular, are occasionally a part of the cairns or mounds inner structure, but they are also a stone monument type on their own. The round, large and shallow settings appear in two kinds of settings: in the vicinity of a cairn or in a close spatial relation to a settlement area. The stone settings often contain many burials spanning most of the Bronze Age. (Artelius 1998: 43.) The non-circular stone-settings are ship-shaped, rectangular and square constructions. (Widholm 2006: 23.) The geometric forms of the stone settings are self-explanatory. The ship-shaped settings are also called ship graves or stone ships. The oval shape with pointy ends strongly reminds a ship as viewed from above. The stones are set on the edges to create a shape. The area in the middle may be left open or is filled with stones. Circular stone settings are sometimes constructed around a large natural stone, which marks out the centre (Widholm 2006: 23). There might also be smaller stone settings or cists inside.

There are some stone ships on the Åland island that are filled with smaller stones. There are a few stone ships from the continental Finland: one in Laitila, four in Kotka, and three in Vehkalahti. The continental stone ships, however, are not so clearly shaped. According to Timo Miettinen two of them (one in Kotka, Höyteri, and one in Vehkalahti, Kuorsalo) would be closest to the Scandinavian stone ships. The others could be called long settings. Stone ship in Kuorsalo is situated too low to have been built during the Bronze Age and has to be younger, probably from Iron Age. (Huurre 1979: 104; Miettinen 1999: 72–73.)

Three stone ships have also been found from the shoreline of Estonia: two ships on Saarenmaa, and a smaller one close to Tallinn. (Kriiska & Tvauri 2007: 101–
Stone settings of all forms are very rare outside of Southern Scandinavia, unless decked with a cairn.

There are no burial sites definitely dated to the Early Bronze Age in Estonia. The Late Bronze Age brings along the stone-cist graves. More than 800 stone-cist graves are known mostly from the northern shore of Estonia and to a lesser amount from the west and on the islands. They were used until the Early Pre-Roman Iron Age (1100–200 BC). (Lang 2007: 147, 161.)

The stone cist graves are above-ground structures that have a stone cist (or several cists) usually made of limestone in the middle. There are different kinds of cists, but the most common cists have dry stone construction limestone walls. The bottoms of the cists were made from large limestone slabs, which could be placed either on the original ground surface or on a layer of stones. There are cists with vertical limestone slabs as walls, but these are three times less common than the piled walls. The cists made from granite stones are even less common. The size of the cists is fairly uniform in Estonia 2–2.5 m in length and slightly less than 1 m in width. Orientation is typically north–south. The cists are enclosed by one or several circular stone walls, filled with soil and stones, and covered with a stone heap. (Lang 2007: 151–152.)

Before excavation stone cist graves are often identical to cairn graves, because cists are covered with a stone heap. The main difference, which can only be found by removing the upper layers of stones, is the absence of a cist. The Finnish cairns occasionally have cists made of granite or sandstone (Huurre 1979: 104–105). They are quite rare though. Less than 7 % of all the Bronze Age and Early Iron Age cairns excavated by 1992 contained stone cists. More than one third of cairns had circular stone settings. (Salo, Tuovinen, Vuorinen 1992: 95–122.) There have been more excavations after this data was collected, but the ratio is likely roughly the same.

There are also simple cairns in Estonia, like those in the Finnish coastline, but Valter Lang suggests, that some absences of the cists might only appear so due to the inexperience of the excavators, especially, in reference to excavations performed during the 19th– and early 20th century. Cists may have been destroyed during the excavation or gone unnoticed. (Lang 2007: 166.)

Cairn graves, with and without circular walls, are common in eastern Sweden and south-eastern Finland throughout the Bronze Age, but they are quite young in Estonia. The grave goods from northern and eastern cairn graves indicate that they were used from Early Pre-Roman Iron Age to even the last centuries of prehistoric times. (Lang 2007: 168–169.)
Cairns were still built and reused during the Pre-Roman Iron Age, but they were often smaller and on lower levels. Mixing earth and stones as building materials for cairns was also an Iron Age custom. (Huurre 1979: 119; Wessman 2010: 31.) There was also a new form of graves. The tarand-graves appear in the Estonian, Finnish, and central Swedish coastal areas in the last centuries BC or Pre-Roman Iron Age and become more prominent and spread south to Latvia during the Roman Iron Age. (Huurre 1979: 125; Lang 2007: 188 – 189.) Tarands are quadrangular stone enclosures built on the ground, with the straight flat sides of the walls facing outwards. If there are more than one tarand, they are joined together. The early tarand graves are characterized by irregular and carelessly built tarands joining round graves, cairns or stone-cist graves. (Lang 2007: 170.)

As mentioned above, there were some areas where the barrow building tradition continued, but most Southern Scandinavians began depositing the burned bones of their dead in urns during the Late Bronze Age. These urns were buried under shallow earth creating cemeteries, or as reburials in older barrows. (Edgren 1992: 122; Andersson 1999: 10.) The earliest Bronze Age burials seem to have been inhumations, but cremation became typical already during the II–III periods. Urn cemeteries were the norm during the V period, but not in Finland or Estonia. Cremation cemeteries became more varied during the Early Iron Age. (Kaliff 1992: 60.) In Finland cremation cemeteries were used much later; cremation cemeteries under level ground, *polttokenttäkalmisto*, are dated to Late Iron Age. (Wessman 2010: 31.)

### 4.2 The Symbolism of the Circle and Other Shapes in Stone Structures

Common denominator to Bronze Age monuments is the circular shape. All other shapes are rare. Iron Age monuments have a greater variety re-introducing such shapes as squares, rectangles and trapezoids from the Neolithic Stone Age. These can be seen in tarand-graves, stone settings and cairns. Other shapes that occur in Southern Scandinavian graves in the Iron Age are triangular and oval shapes. These are still deviations from the circle, which still dominates the shapes of the stone structures connected to burials. (Widholm 2006: 31.)

There are of course graves that don’t have an exterior shape to mention. People who were not buried in the monuments, those in cremation cemeteries etc., but
the shapes that are clear might have been powerful symbols in the Bronze Age religious beliefs.

“The perfect circle can only be constructed from its centre. When the circle is divided in four equal parts through its centre, the cross is created. From the cross the square can be constructed.” (Berggren 1993: 11.)

The circle is an old symbol. Often the round shape is connected to the sun (e.g. Kristiansen & Larsson 2005: 244), but other interpretations have also been given. Kristina Berggren is a Swedish Archaeologist, who has studied the spindle whorls in a Villanovan cemetery north of Rome (around 900 BC – AD 800). She connects the circular shape and especially circular motion of dancing, swinging, playing with spinning tops, and spinning yarn to a symbolic return to the first instant, when mankind became conscious of the earth as the centre of the constellations. While we are, in reality, far from the centre of the Universe, it seems that the constellations slowly move in a horizontal circle around and above the earth at night. This instant became a psychological and symbolical beginning. Thus circular movement awakes the same feelings and emotions as the mythical first time when the earth became fertile. It creates life by returning to the synchronic, mythical, and symbolic first time, which, against all logic, permeates the linear, historical one. (ibid.)

The above theory, heavily influenced by ideas promoted by Mircea Eliade, may be difficult to follow. Berggren begins her article by explaining that symbols cannot be wholly described because they are expressions of intrinsic values of such depth that they never completely rise to consciousness. The symbols make us human, but they remain hidden in the deepest recesses or our conscious. (Berggren 1993: 7.) Whether such innate and global feelings of divine beginning truly arise from circles, is quite uncertain, because “they remain hidden”.

More tangible is the notion by Berggren, that typically female works of spinning and pottery making, both transform nature to culture. Natural fibres of wool, flax, or nettle transform into textile, nets, or rope, while clay and sand transform into ceramics of different forms and functions. When spindle whorls are connected to cemeteries, Berggren claims that they represent the transformation of death into regeneration of life. To be clear, the regeneration of life does not necessarily mean reincarnation. This abstract idea may be understandable by the myths of spinning goddesses. The Moire, the Parche, and the Germanic Norns spin life, and when they cut the thread, they cut the life. (Berggren 1993: 8–10, 16.)
Björn Varenius (1994: 60) has studied Early Iron Age graves from Northern Småland in Sweden. Although both men and women are buried in round stone settings, but the men may be connected to other shapes as well, especially the square. If the circle represents the female fertility and regeneration of life, the square would be its opposite, the male gender. As a deviation from the normal roundness of stone setting, it manifests individualism.

Joakim Goldhahn (1999: 187–189) has continued this thought in his comparison between Late Neolithic stone cists and Early Bronze Age barrows. Large stone cists were built so that it was relatively easy to deposit new bodies into the monument, whereas barrows were generally made over one individual. The barrows were also a more visible part of the landscape. Every time a person was buried in a barrow the landscape changed dynamically, and the barrow remained as an active reminder to the living. Compared to the barrows, stone cists were more static, connection to the ancestors was accomplished by the reburials, which was not a part of everyday life. Thus Goldhahn suggests:

<table>
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<th>stone cist</th>
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<tr>
<td>linear</td>
<td>circle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>male</td>
<td>female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ancestor cult</td>
<td>fertility cult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>static</td>
<td>dynamic</td>
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Dag Widholm (2006: 49–51), however points out that the rectangular stone settings of the Early Iron Age were usually rich weapon graves, but there are also few exceptions where pearls, needles and weaving equipment seem to indicate a female burials in rectangular stone settings. He concludes that it was not the male gender *per se*, but the certain power that these individuals demonstrated, that was most significant for the deviant shape for the burial.

There are also four-sided stone settings that have been dated to the Bronze Age, but often these don’t have any bones, or just a few bone fragments are found. There are many interpretations for these. Perhaps most often they have been regarded as cenotaphs. Also border markers, inhumation graves where the skeleton has totally disintegrated, or floors of houses for the dead, where the bodies would have been laid on the stones, have been suggested. If they were graves, the four-sided constructions can have reflected the close connection between graves and houses which is evident in
several parts of the world. (Widholm 2006: 48–49.) The lack of bones and postholes has led Anders Kaliff (1997: 59–60) to reject the idea of a house for the dead. He suggests that the pottery pieces and stone tools and the few bones could also support an interpretation as a sacrificial altar or constructions with another ritual function on the grave sites.

The stone ships are easily interpreted as boats or ships, in both a symbolic and a concrete context, with reference to voyages at sea and to another world (Widholm 2006: 78). Flemming Kaul (2005: 268–270) has studied pictures of ships on bronze razors and rock carvings. He connects them with the mythological sun boat that carries the sun through the sky during day and in the underworld during the night. He suggests that the souls of the dead were freed from the body in cremation, and believed to go man this ship, helping the sun to rise again every morning and give light and life for their descendants. Joakim Wehlin (2013: 159) has studied the stone ships as indicative of meeting places for maritime people. He points out that the sun, the moon, and the stars are very different for the seafaring people than for the farmers. They were important tools in navigation on the sea. Perhaps the story of the boat symbols should be read the other way around: The sun is helping the boats to travel.

The ships on bronze artefacts and stone carvings are always depicted as viewed from the side, whereas the stone ships are viewed from above. They might actually symbolize other things just as well i.e. female genitalia connecting these settings to female gender and fertility. However, the maritime location of most stone ships on islands and coastal areas does promote the traditional interpretation. Some stone ships also have larger stones in the pointy ends creating a more prominent profile of a boat also from the sides. There could still be a double meaning to the symbol.
5 Sammallahdenmäki

5.1 Research History of Sammallahdenmäki

The first excavations on Sammallahdenmäki were done in 1891 during an archaeological field survey of the Lappi municipality by Volter Högman (1891: 93–101). He listed 17 cairns from the northern shore of Saarnijärvi lake. Five of these cairns he also excavated: the Long Ruin of Huilu, *Huilun pitkä raunio* (image 28), two smaller cairns close to it (images 17, 18 and 22), the square Church Floor, *Kirkonlaattia* (images 26 and 27), and another smaller cairn on a separate hill about 250 metres from Sammallahdenmäki (image 9).

The excavation report mentions small pieces of bone being found from the round cairns, but these have not been listed in the National Museums collections. All the inner structures have been drawn on roughly sketched maps (images 17, 18, 26 and 28) and there is a hand written description given in the report. (Högman 1891: 93-101; Raike & Haimila 2003: 21.)

The next field surveys of the area were done in 1959 by Anna-Liisa Hirviluoto and in 1960 by Martti Linkola. They reported quite a few more cairns in the area and Linkola assigned numbers for the cairns. These numbers are still in use when the cairns of Sammallahdenmäki are discussed. Someone has added the numbers on the margins of the excavation report made by Högman. According to these markings the Long Ruin of Huilu is cairn number 6, the two smaller round cairns on the north and south side of the Long Ruin were cairns 5 and 7, and the Church Floor was cairn number 21. (Hirviluoto 1959; Högman 1891: 93-101; Linkola 1960: 48-53.) The cairn on the eastern hill is called Sammallahdenmäki E, in the archives (Haimila 2002: 113).

In 1990 National Board of Antiquities (Museovirasto) suggested adding Sammallahdenmäki to the UNESCO World Heritage list. Päivi Kankkunen was assigned to measure and map the area in co-operation with Consulting Surveyors Oy. (Kankkunen 1990.)
Image 9. Map of Sammallahdenmäki and surrounding areas, with cairns and settlement sites.
In the years 2002–2004 there were further excavations on the area to improve its usage as a World Heritage Site. During the summer of 2002 an archaeological field survey of the area was also made. 36 cairns were listed on Sammallahdenmäki with several smaller concentrations or single cairns close by. However no Bronze Age settlement sites were known from this area. Thus the biggest goal for this survey was to find at least one Bronze Age settlement site that could be excavated during the project. Miikka Haimila did indeed find a settlement site Huilu 2, about 900 metres south-east of the hill (image 9). (Haimila 2002: 52–53, 191–195.)

The test pits revealed a hearth with over 15 cm thick dark layer of coal and soot, burned bone and pottery shards with scratched surfaces. Bones were analysed by Niklas Söderholm and Kristiina Mannermaa, but species could not be identified. There was one fish bone and a few bones of a large mammal, possibly bovine. Soil samples were also taken and charred seeds of two species of barley were recognized (hull-less and hulled barley). Soil samples also included charred seeds of rowan and three leaf buds. (Haimila 2002: 103.)

Radiocarbon dating of the coal from the hearth gave the settlement sites time of usage as 360 BC–AD 30. It is almost the same time as the dating of cairn 31 on

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cairn 23 – Hela-645 : 3000±55BP</th>
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<tr>
<td>68.2% probability</td>
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<td>1370BC ( 5.6%) 1340BC</td>
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<td>1320BC (62.6%) 1120BC</td>
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<td>95.4% probability</td>
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<td>1400BC (95.4%) 1040BC</td>
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<th>Cairn 11 – Hela-644 : 2945±50BP</th>
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<tr>
<td>68.2% probability</td>
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<td>1260BC ( 8.2%) 1230BC</td>
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<td>1220BC (60.0%) 1050BC</td>
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<td>95.4% probability</td>
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<td>1320BC (95.4%) 1000BC</td>
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<th>Cairn 25 – Hela-646 : 2930±55BP</th>
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<td>68.2% probability</td>
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<td>1260BC ( 5.2%) 1240BC</td>
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<td>1220BC (63.0%) 1040BC</td>
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<td>95.4% probability</td>
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<tr>
<td>1320BC (94.2%) 970BC</td>
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<td>960BC ( 1.2%) 940BC</td>
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<th>Cairn 31 (stone coffin) – Hela-647 : 2020±55BP</th>
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<tr>
<td>68.2% probability</td>
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<tr>
<td>100BC (68.2%) 60BC</td>
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<tr>
<td>95.4% probability</td>
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<tr>
<td>180BC (94.2%) 90AD</td>
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<tr>
<td>100AD ( 1.2%) 120AD</td>
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<th>Settlement site KK17 – Hela-649 : 2095±50BP</th>
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<tr>
<td>68.2% probability</td>
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<tr>
<td>180BC (68.2%) 40BC</td>
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<tr>
<td>95.4% probability</td>
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<tr>
<td>360BC (5.0%) 300AD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>240BC (90.4%) 30AD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Radiocarbon datings, OxCal v3.5 (Raike & Haimila 2003: 25; Raike 2002: Appendix 2).
Sammallahdenmäki. Thus it was not a Bronze Age settlement site, but of Pre-Roman Iron Age. However, the close location, and the same age as the youngest cairns on Sammallahdenmäki, gives further knowledge about this World Heritage site’s build up and meaning to the pre-historical people. (Raike & Haimila 2003: 15-20.)

Eight cairns were also excavated during the summer of 2002 (cairns 1, 8 11, 13, 17, 23, 25 and 31). These excavations were led by Eeva Raike. The cairns were not the largest ones from the area, but they were chosen to represent the different topographical levels. The diameters ranged from 5 to 11 meters. All 8 cairns had inner stone structures: stone rings of different shapes, a north-south line, and one cairn (31) had two stone cists (images 12–16, 19–21, and 23–25). The only artefact found during this excavation was a fraction of a bronze bracelet from one of those stone cists. (Raike & Haimila 2003: 21–25; Raike 2002: 1–19.)

Six cairns (8, 11, 17, 23, 25, 31) had burned bone in them. The bones were in small pieces and the amount from one cairn varied between three to 240 grams. According to Niklas Söderholms analysis all the bones that could be identified were human and probably of adults. Least amount of bodies to produce these bones was one in all the cairns. Anything more specific could not be found out because of the small size and number of the bones. Radiocarbon dating was done from four cairns (table 1). (Raike & Haimila 2003: 21–25; Raike 2002: 1–19.) For more details about the cairns on Sammallahdenmäki see Appendix 1.

The excavations of 2003 and 2004 were concentrated on the Huilu2 settlement site. Excavations revealed traces of poles, sooty soil areas, lots of Morby style pottery pieces, burned bones, quartz shards, stone discs and some pieces of bronze artefacts. The few pieces of iron, that were found, seemed modern or too obscure to date. Bones from both years were analysed by Kati Salo. They contained pig, goose, and fish bones. (Raike 2004a: 9–12.)

During the excavations in 2003 a local resident Auli Lehtinen told the archaeologists of observations her late husband made while he had been constructing a road. One spot had been very dark and sooty. When archaeologists found a prehistoric pottery piece from the soot, excavations of this area were done in the years 2004 and 2006. (Raike 2004b: 4.) Two cooking pits were discovered, but very few finds accompanied them. This was interpreted as a work- or preparation area, not a settlement site. Cooking pits are located about 275 metres north of the Huilu 2 settlement site and they are both dated to Pre-Roman Iron Age. (Raike 2006: 9.)
5.2 Stone Circles and Stone Cists

Apart from the Church Floor and the Long Ruin of Huilu, the cairns on Sammallahdenmäki are very similar to each other. The size varies, but they are all round heaps of moss-covered stones (image 10). Cairns 28–35 are on the lowest level and separated from the other cairns by fields. These western cairns are also shallower and earth mixed (Raike 2002: 16–17).

Many of the cairns show signs of later destruction (image 11). People have taken stones for building materials and some may have been anxious to find valuable artefacts. This looting, although there probably were not very many artefacts to begin with, makes the interpretation of the shapes in the stone structures difficult. The original shape intended by the builders of these structures is already an interpretation by the excavators.

Image 10. Cairn 10 is quite small and has never been excavated. Picture taken from southwest by author.
Image 11. Cairn 16 is one of the larger cairns on the hill. It has never been excavated, but the middle part of the cairn seems disturbed. Picture taken from southeast by the author.

In the descriptions of the cairns the field surveyors have often written that there has likely been a circular wall lining the edge of the cairn, but only few stones remain, or can be seen, because the original form has been broken and stones cover a wider area now. Also slab stones, or somewhat wider, almost flat granite blocks, in the middle of the cairns have been interpreted as parts of stone cists. (Högman 1891: 93–96, 103–104; Linkola 1960: 49–53.) One third of the cairns have been excavated and inner structures documented. Raike described that the structures began to be clear almost immediately during the removal of the first layer of the stones while someone was standing on ladder stairs observing from above. (Raike 2002: 6, 8–18.)

Stone circles were found in nine of the twelve excavated cairns. However, circle may not be the best word since the shape varies. Settings on cairns 1, 5, 8, 17 and 25 are oval (images 14–17, and 19), although cairns 17 and 25 were quite damaged and the shapes are unclear (images 14 and 15). Cairns 7 and 11 have multiple circular walls and the walls on cairn 11 seem to be spiralling (images 18, and 12). Cairn 13 also has multiple walls, but they are almost rectangular (image 13). Cairn 6 is the long ruin of Huilu and its stone settings will be discussed later. Cairns 1 and 11 also had a smaller circle made of little stones adjacent to their sides (images 20, and 21). On cairn 1 there

Image 13. Cairn 13 had several concentric rectangular stone circles. Picture taken from west. MV124041. (Raike 2002: 40.)
was a small half circle on the north-east side of the oval ring. Cairn 11 had a full circle on the south side of the larger spiral. (Högman 1891: 96–100; Raike 2002: 8–16.) Linkola described signs of circular walls on seven other unexcavated cairns (4, 10, 12, 14–16, and 26). He also mentioned a separate stone circle close to cairn 9, but concluded it might be natural or accidental. (Linkola 1960: 49–51.)
Image 17. Map of the inner structures on cairn 5. Outer circle had fallen apart. The oval inner circle was 5.1 m long and 3.6 m wide. Inside the circle two slab stones were standing on opposite sides. Unburned bone was found from spot 1. Darker area with number 2 is where bone fragments were. (Högman 1891: 99.)

Image 18. Map of the inner structures of cairn 7. At least two stone circles around the central cist. Bone fragments were found from the darker areas. (Högman 1891: 100.)

Stone cists have been found from two excavated cairns (7 and 31). Northwest – southeast oriented cist in cairn 7 was in the middle of a round cairn and there were at least two circular walls around it (images 18, and 22). The cist was empty, but there were burnt bones between the cist and the inner circular wall by the south side. Some bone fragments were also found between the two circles. (Högman 1891: 100.) Cairn 31 consisted mainly of the double stone-cists with a north-west – south-east orientation (images 23, and 24). The cists shared a short edge of the rectangle. The cist on the south-west end was named cist I and the north-east end was assigned number II. These cists were filled with earth and stones. There were burnt bones and a fragment of a bronze bracelet in cist I. Cist II yielded no finds in the excavation. (Raike 2002: 17–18.) Linkola (1960: 51–53) and Högman (1891: 94–95, 104) described five other cairns to contain signs of possible cists or remains of one (14, 16, 18, 19, and 26). Cairns 28–35 were not described in the earlier surveys of the area. Some of them were only located during the 2002 investigations. (Raike 2002: 16–17.) As they are close to cairn 31 on a lower level than the rest of cairns, and seem alike from the outside, they are likely similar to cairn 31 from the inside as well.
Image 22. The stone cist was left open in the reconstruction of cairn 7. Picture taken from southeast by author.


Two cairns (21 and 23) had an almost north–south oriented line of stones. Cairn 21 is the Church floor (image 27), and cairn 23, the northernmost cairn on the hill, only 20 metres from the Church floor. Eeva Raike excavated cairn 23 and said, that this stone line does not seem to be a wall for a stone cist as suggested by Högman, but a structure on its own (image 26). There might have been a functional purpose to support the stones on the cairn, as the hill has an angle there. The line on the Church floor was 3.5 metres long and 10–30 centimetres high. The line in cairn 23 was 6 metres long and 50 centimetres wide. (Högman 1891: 104–106; Raike 2002: 14–15.)

In the field survey in 1960 Martti Linkola (1960: 49) reported a large boulder flat on the northeast side of cairn 1. He presumed it used to be a central stone in the cairn, but had been lifted from its original spot. In the 2002 excavation report this boulder is not mentioned. Probably it was removed from the hill and used as building material somewhere. It is possible there could have been central boulder on other cairns as well.


5.3 The Church Floor and the Long Ruin of Huilu

The Church Floor, or cairn 21, is a remarkable structure (image 27). Almost square and flat it is one of a kind in Finland. Bronze Age square cairns are very rare in Scandinavia too. It is a shame that Högmans documentation of his excavation is so sketchy (image 26).
He wrote that there were more stones on the edges than in the middle to make the structure flat, as it was built on a spot where the bedrock bulges upwards a little. Rounder stones were used in the middle and covered with one layer of slab stones on top. The stones on the sides were edgier and there were less slab stones. Larger stones were used on the edges here and there, but they did not seem to form an actual wall around. The measurements of the construction were 18,8 m on the north side, 16,8 m east, 15 m south, and 19,2 m west. Height is about 0,5 m, less in the middle, because of the bulge. The sides were not quite straight as they had sunk from the west side and the southern part of east side. The stones did not seem to be in any particular form, with the exception of the above mentioned line of stones. The line is drawn on the sketchy map somewhat to the west from the centre of the floor, and it is parallel to the west side of the structure making it north-north-west – south-south-east oriented. (Högman 1891: 108–111.)

There was 5–20 centimetres sand on the bottom between the stones. Coal and sooty dirt was found all over the structure, but not a pinch of burnt bones. Ground rock had eroded from the south side forming 0,3 m of gravel on the bottom. From the north-east part of the structure a small, round, light-coloured, gouged stone was found underneath other stones. Above this stone there was a heap of bird bones, also covered by stones. Högman suggests a possibility that these bones may have been added afterwards. (ibid.) Unfortunately there is no knowledge of what Högman did with the bird bones or the light stone.
Since the bird bones were covered by stones, it is unlikely they ended up in there due to natural causes. Perhaps someone placed the bird there for safekeeping and for some reason never returned to fetch it, or it was posited there in hopes of some magical influence. It is quite probable that the structure was believed to have special magic, since folklore connects it to mythical creatures called hiisi. The story goes that the Christian humans and the hiisi were competing for the space and decided that whoever built a church fastest could stay, and the others would have to leave. Humans cheated and raised a church bell between two timbers and rang it. The hiisi only had the floor of the church ready, when they heard the bell. They thought that humans had already finished their church, so they halted their own construction and left the area. (Simonsuuri 1975: 467–468.)

The Long Ruin of Huilu, cairn 6, is also very different from other cairns (image 28). Högman wrote that it had a well-made stone wall on its edges. They were straight on the sides and curving outside on the edges. The wall was made of slab stones, sometimes half a metre high, 22 m long and 7 m wide. Inside the wall the stones on the south side of the cairn were smaller and rounder than those in the north. About half-way down the excavators noticed another structure of slab stones on the north side of the cairn. The slab stones had been raised two by two each leaning to the opposite one. They apparently had formed a roof of sorts, but only one pair was still standing up.
Underneath the roof there were slab-like stones above sharper edged stones. Then round large boulders formed the bottom of the cairn on the north side. The stones were almost on the ground rock with only a few centimetres of black earth and pieces of coal. On the north-east side of the cairn there was a hole on the rock. It was 10 – 20 centimetres deep and contained water and eroded stone. On the dry area next to the hole there was a lot of coal. (Högman 1891: 96–99.)

The south side of the cairn was separated from the north by a curving wall with its back side towards the north. A similar wall was found from the south side quite close to the outer wall. These inner walls were 8.9 m apart from each other. The bottom stones were placed to resemble curves of the walls. There was more earth on the bottom of this side of the cairn. Yellow sand covered the bottom stones above half way up. There was a darker layer over the yellow, but no coal. Coal was spotted on the narrow area between the outer and the inner wall on the south, however. No bones were found anywhere in the cairn. (idib.)

Image 28. Cairn 6, the Long Ruin of Huilu, and a map of its inner structures (Högman 1891: 98). Cairn 7 is partly seen on the left side, and cairn 5 is on the right side of the picture. Panorama taken from northwest by author.

### 5.4 Cup marks in Cairns

Volter Högman (1891: 98–101) mentioned that there were stones with small round holes carved in them in three of the cairns he excavated in 1891. These were cairns 5 and 7, close to the Long Ruin of Huilu, and Sammallahdenmäki E, which is on a separate hill 300 metres east of the other cairns. Högman does not call them cup marks, but that is what his description sounds like. In cairn 5 there were two stones with one cup each, and a third reddish slab stone with three cups. Two of the cups on the reddish stone were quite small, only 1 cm diameter and depth. The third cup was larger.
In cairn 7 there were two stones that were covered with small holes side by side about 0.75 cm diameter. One of those stones was small and sandstone, the other one was larger and reddish. There was a third reddish slab stone that had 5 cups. Two of them had 2 cm diameter and one was on the narrow side. Sammallahdenmäki E had only two cups. One seemed to be unfinished. Only the outside was carved and the inside was still upwards. The other cup was on another stone and it had a small, but deep cup.

Högmén did not have a camera, and there are no drawings of these stones or maps of where in the cairns they were found. This is unfortunate since cup marks in cairns are extremely rare in Finland. Furthermore cup marks have usually been dated to the Iron Age. As all of these cairns were reconstructed, the stones with cup marks might very well still be there.

5.5 The Nearby Settlement Site of Huilu and Cooking Pits at Tahtmaa

Both of these sites were found because of tips given by a local Veini Lehtinen, who owned the Huilu farm. Test holes were dug on the Huilu 2 site during the 2002 survey by Miikka Haimila with the help of the excavation crew working on the cairn that time. Eeva Raike led excavations on the Huilu settlement site in 2003 and 2004. Tahtmaa is located just 350 metres north-north-west from the Huilu settlement site and the excavation crew worked both sites in 2004. In 2006 Raike continued excavations on the Tahtmaa site. (Haimila 2002: 191; Raike 2003; Raike 2004a; Raike 2004b.)

Huilu 2 is located on an old field about 20–21 m above sea level. Tahtmaa is on a higher level about 26 m above sea level. (Image 9.) Since the Bronze Age sea level ranged from 30 to 20 m, due the land upheaval, it was hoped that Tahtmaa could be a Bronze Age settlement site. The radiocarbon dates, however, showed the site to be just a little older than Huilu 2. Both are dated to Pre-Roman Iron Age. (Raike 2004a: 11; Raike 2006: 7.)

There are signs of a building on Huilu 2 site. Three post holes were found with supportive stones, three without stones. (Images 29 and 30.) There were additional 4–6 possible post holes, although the location of these post holes is not clear in the excavation maps. The post holes did not form a clear form of a building. Likely the post holes were from several buildings of different ages. There were also long distinct areas
of a darker colour. They may have been ditches or wall remains. The finds are roughly concentrated in between them, so a building could have been about 16 m x 6-7,5 m large. (Image 33.) A hearth was in the north-west corner of this area (Image 31). (Raike 2004a: 11–12.)

Other concentrations of pot pieces were found next to, or below two large stones on the west side of the supposed building. Sides of both stones were broken straight, possibly a man-made feature. On the north side of the northern stone there were signs of a fire being kept. Perhaps the stone split because of the nearby heat. (Raike 2004a: 12.)

There were three rather large cooking pits on Tahtmaa site (Image 32). Two of them were excavated in 2004 and 2006, but the third one was disturbed when a road was built over it. Finds were very few: some pottery pieces, couple of stones shards, small burnt bones, and parts of animal teeth. All the finds were similar to the ones on Huilu2 settlement site, but their low quantity would imply that this was a work or preparation area, rather than another settlement site. (Raike 2006: 9.)


Image 31. A hearth was found from the northern part of the Huilu2 settlement site. Map coordinates 1990-1992/3993-3994. Eastern half was excavated first. MV126357. (Raike 2003: 29.)

Image 33. Dispersion of the finds on Huilu2 settlement site might imply a rectangular building. The hearth found in the 2002 survey is located in the northeast corner. Sooty soil on the north side of a cracked boulder indicates fire was kept there, but a modern ditch disturbs the sooty area. More postholes were reported, but their location is not clear in the excavation maps. Original dispersion map drawn by M. Haimila and W. Perttola. (Raike 2004: 8–9, 23–33.)
6 Discussion

6.1 Funerary Rituals

Talking about the rituals that can be observed to have taken place at Sammallahdenmäki, one takes on a presumption that there was religious, or at least ideological, meaning to the practice of building the structures there. Although there might have been some people hauling the stones uphill, who did not really care for the spiritual aspects, but were perhaps forced to do so, the patterns that emerge from the way the stones were set makes the presumption of rituals reasonable enough. Since human bones have been found from the cairns, funerary rituals are discussed, but possibilities of other forms of worship, sacrifice and rituals should also be acknowledged.

Just a few members of the society had their remains preserved on the Sammallahdenmäki cairns. Even though there are dozens of cairns on the hill and surrounding areas, the time span of millennia suggests that most people were treated with in other ways when they died. Since the evidence is lacking about how these other corpses were handled, we might speculate on funerary practices that are quite or almost traceless.

Inhumation without grave goods leaves very little traces since the organic material decomposes relatively quickly in the Finnish soil. However, large scale inhumations of most of the population would have yielded enough traces in the ground, that the lack of evidence is proof of improbability. Some signs of inhumation however have been found from the cairns, so it was practiced alongside cremation.

Exposure, i.e. leaving the bodies on the ground, on top of trees, or elsewhere, has been suggested as a probable tradition. Exposure is still used by some Siberian and Mongolian tribes. Usually it is considered a good sign if the beasts and birds of prey quickly devour the body. Experiments on animal bodies have shown that it takes only a few years for the body to be quite traceless. (Lang 2011: 109, 121; Kaliff 2007: 89–90.)

Cannibalism seems foreign to modern Europeans, but it could have been used as fast way to separate flesh from the bones, and destroy the body. In cultures where ritual cannibalism has been used, the body was usually cooked first. (Kaliff 2007: 88.)
Scattering of the cremated bones to a larger area, or into water, would also leave very little evidence, unless the area was later decked with another deposit. Occasionally burned human bones have been found from settlement sites, arable land, or underneath later burial monuments. Cremated bones could also be used in many ways. Mixing bones in the clay during pottery-making have been reported. Later people used them in iron-making processes. Even ritual consumption of the bones cannot be ruled out. In Nordic folk tradition the bones of a dead person have been believed to possess supernatural powers that could help against most things. Especially the bones of mighty high-status people could have been used and spread to many places. (Lang 2011: 120; Kaliff 2007: 154, 160–161; Wessman 2010: 55.)

The amount of cremated bones that have been found from the cairns of Sammallahdenmäki indicate that only part of the bones was put in them (Raike & Haimila 2003: 24). Volter Högman only mentions that bone fragments were found from cairns 5 and 7 (Högman 1891: 99–101). It seems that they were not measured, analysed, nor even collected. The amount of cremated bones found from the cairns (8, 11, 17, 23, 25 and 31) in 2002 varied between 3–240 grams. The bone fragments from cairn 23 were too small and few for analyses, but the bones from those five other cairns were identified as human. Most of the identified bones were from skulls, and there were a couple of finger bones. (Raike 2002: 8–19). The average amount of bones from an adult varies between 1600 and 3600 grams, depending on the person’s weight and size (Wessman 2010: 51). Even considering the taphonomic reasons like animal activity, the Finnish weather and the effects of archaeological excavation, it seems likely that only a part of the bones were ever put in the cairns.

It is also possible that only some body parts were cremated. Unburned bones were found in the 19th century excavations of cairn 5, bone crumbs were reported from another spot within the same stone circle (Högman 1891: 99). Presuming these were human bones, and the bone crumbs were cremated, this would strengthen the theory of only parts of the body being cremated while the rest was inhumed. Without the actual bones analyses cannot confirm this presumption. However there are two cairns that have an empty cist. In cairn 7 the bone fragments were found between the inner stone circle and the cist, on the southern curve of the circle, and also between the first and the second circles, but not from the cist in the middle (Högman 1891:100). The second north-western cist of the double cist cairn 31 was also empty while there were burned bones found from the south-eastern cist (Raike 2002: 18). Less direct evidences of inhumation are the cairns (1, 6, 13 and 21) where no bones were found (at least not
human bones, for unburned bird bones were found from cairn 21) (Raike 2002: 8–12; Högman 1891: 97, 105). Unburned bodies could have decomposed completely, or these cairns never were graves.

The cairns contain signs of both cremation and inhumation, and they include remains of only few of the population. The varied funeral rituals are most often interpreted to be socio-political differences; only people in the leadership position were buried in cairns. It does take a lot of organised man-power to construct a cairn, probably not available for everyone. This would also hint that leadership was inherited by lineage, for it is not the dead person who overlooks their own funeral, but the living family members, other relatives, or friends.

Valter Lang (2011: 14) has suggested that there might also be other features that separate the people and their funerary ritual, i.e. differences in religious beliefs. “Remarkable differences in the treatment of bodies after death certainly refer to different understanding of afterlife.” Yet he concluded that these differences in beliefs were probably still socially determined.

Anders Kaliff (1992: 68; 2007: 89) has also argued that there can be great variations in funerary ritual, even within a tradition that, in principle, has fairly uniform beliefs about afterlife. For an example among Mongolian tribes of Lamaistic religion, the priest (Lama) looked for different signs in the sky to determine to which five elements the body was to be given – fire, air, water, earth or tree. Variation could also be due to factors such as age, gender, civil status, parenthood, religious status, and more practical circumstances such as the availability of firewood etc.

Among many religions the priests are often consulted about proper funeral rituals. The people who built the Sammallahdenmäki cairns likely also had someone who had more ritual expertise than others. Whether it was the shamanistic noita of the archaic Finno-Ugric people or closer to tietäjä wise man of the historic times is unclear. Ganander (1789: 20–21,) has written that by his time the Finns were different from the Lapps, as their tietäjä wise man would only gnash their teeth and jump around enthusiastically instead of falling into a trance. They could also use special magic objects and incantations. This change probably happened gradually rather than suddenly. Perhaps the connections to the Southern Scandinavian users of sejd resulted in the shift away from the outer body journeys. Suffice it to say, that a cult expert of some sort probably was consulted during times of death, especially a death of the most prominent figures of the society.
The leadership position of the people, whose bones are in the cairns of Sammallahdenmäki, is only based on the man power necessary for the building of the cairns. There are not any prestige items in them, only one piece of a bronze bracelet from the youngest cairn excavated, cairn 31. This does not, however, mean that the dead were not prepared to the afterlife, like they were during the Stone Age and later in the Iron Age. Swedish archaeologist Bo Gräslund (1994: 20) has pointed out that there generally are not any grave goods in cremation graves, but there are some, they usually show signs of having been on the pyre. In other words the grave goods were given to the dead people when they were set on the pyre, not when they were buried.

This is explained by the prehistoric soul beliefs of many preliterate settled societies. It seems that unlike the homogenous soul beliefs of Christianity and Muslims, people used to believe in dualistic or multiple souls. Dualistic soul beliefs divide the souls into breath soul or body soul, and free soul or dream soul. The breath soul leaves the body in the last sigh before death, but the free soul is still attached to the body until the corpse has collapsed or completely changed by decomposition, cremation, exposure, etc. (Gräslund 1994: 18.) These soul beliefs are found among the Finno-Ugrian people of Siberia, and some references have survived in old idioms. Salo (2012 III: 24–25) has suggested that Finnish terms *itse* (self), and *løyly* (the steam in sauna), originally corresponded to breath soul and free soul.

In other words the lack of grave goods could be explained by a hypothesis, that goods were placed on the pyre, because that was when the free soul was disconnected from the body. Just like only part of the cremated bones were placed in the cairns, as it seems, the remains of the grave goods were either completely burned or they were not chosen for the cairn. What then of the inhumations? Several explanations could be given as to why there are no grave goods found from them either. If the grave goods were mostly organic they would have decomposed as fast as the bodies did. Perhaps the cairn was secondary burial and was preceded by exposure or something else. Then the grave goods would also have been laid somewhere else. There are also several notions in the reports that the cairns seem to have been disturbed, it is possible that there was grave goods in them, but they have been pilfered.
6.2 Other Rituals

The cairns on Sammallahdenmäki constitute very prominent physical evidence of rituals. The bones found in them link them to funerary rituals. Archeological evidence of other rituals is harder to find. There might be some links though, some remains of rituals not necessarily connected with the dead. Or perhaps the dead were believed to be connected to other things in life.

Högman reported a groove of 10 – 20 cm on the bedrock at the north-east end of the Long Ruin of Huilu. There was water and eroded stones accrued in it, and heaps of coal beside it. The combination of fire, stone and water in rituals has been discussed by Kaliff (2007: 121–134). The audio-visual effect of pouring water over fire-heated stone could have been used to demonstrate the different elements of the cosmos and how they change each other. He also suggested comparison with Vedic ideas of Agni the God of Fire being born on fire altars. The stone was burnt to transform it in such a way that the fire became active in the material itself. This is also tied to Indo-European creation myth, with its homology and alloforms. When the elements were originally from the first man’s dismembered body parts, new life was created by combining the different elements again (林克 1991: 9).

The cup marks on the stones in three of the cairns are also interesting. The cup marks could be described as mass material of the Southern Scandinavian rock carvings. Sometimes they are used as details of carvings – heads of the ship crews, marking the bodily openings of people and animals, centre or pattern of circular motifs. Sometimes they are carved over or close to other carvings, and it is not clear if they were supposed to form a united picture, or if they were separate carvings. Mostly there are just cup marks without any pattern covered all over the surface. The cups that are carved on horizontal surfaces could have been used to hold something. The occasional chutes that combine two or more cups could indicate that they were used to hold something liquid, possibly even something flammable. (Malmer 1989: 25–26.)

Cup marks are also found on vertical surfaces rendering them unfit for holding purposes. There are multiple possible symbolic meanings, perhaps they have been a combination of different ideas. They may be viewed as passages into the stone, and as passages for the birth of fire from the stone. They can be representations of the sun, symbolic fire-drilling holes, symbols of fireplaces, and so on. (Kaliff 2007: 183.)

In Swedish folklore they are sometimes called älvkvarnar elf-mills, thus connecting the cup marks to elves and grinding (Kaliff 2007: 193). Offerings to elves
haltjia or tonttu have also been left on cup marks in Finland even during historic times (Simonsuuri 1984: 69). There are two theories that the Finnish elves evolved from some aspect of the ancestors or from animistic views of the nature. There are folklore references in support of both theories. Possibly they are a combination of the two, since different beliefs have mingled through time. The elves were usually believed to take care of the well-being of everyone on their domain, unless they were treated poorly. (Haavio 1935: 329–330.)

Fire-drilling and grinding also display a close symbolic similarity to coitus, thus referring also to human fertility (Kaliff 2007: 183.) Another connection between death and human fertility is also seen in a tradition of naming a child after a dead relative, usually grandparents. This is an old Finnish, Scandinavian, and Germanic tradition. It is believed to originate from a belief that something of the deceased lives on in the child. (Kaliff 2007: 63; Salo 2012 III: 143.)

Trying to date the time when this custom of name giving was first exercised is difficult since we have no record that would include names from the prehistory. Based on linguistic reasons, Unto Salo (2012 III: 44–46) has suggested that an Old Baltic loan word, kaima (a namesake, a person with a same first name) could be linked with the Battle Axe culture (3200 – 2600 calBC). This would imply that the tradition was much older than the cairns on Sammallahdenmäki, likely still practiced. Recorded complaints of the priests show that the tradition was alive as late as the eighteenth century in Sweden. The parents apparently feared that if they failed to name the child correctly the dead relative would haunt the mother or the child. Also, if the child became anxious and would not sleep, it was thought that perhaps it was not happy with the name, that it had been called after a wrong person. The name would then be changed. (Kaliff 2007: 63.)

Folklore and early law texts also show that naming the child gave him or her permission to live, as child abandonment was a common practice in Pre-Christian Nordic Countries. Icelandic records show that the people wanted to maintain several customs when the country was Christianized: child abandonment, eating horse meat, and allowance to perform private offerings. Child abandonment could be used by poor people to restrict the number of children, but it was not permitted if a child already had a name. Although the Christian church disapproved the custom, it was initially allowed for disabled children. In Borgartingslagen it is said that a child who could not support him- or herself as an adult could be left to die, with some conditions. The child should
be brought to the church for primsigning, and a relative should stay with the child until the death occurred. (Purhonen 1999: 19–20.)

Both funerary rituals and name giving are transition rituals. Rituals may be divided into three categories: transition ritual, calendar rituals and crisis rituals. In transition rituals member of a society is shifted from an old position to a new position in the society. For an example in funerary rituals the deceased transitions from one of the living to one of the ancestors. There are also transition rituals for the survivors, as they take on mourning, and later integrate back into the group when they are lifted up from mourning. Other incidents when transition rituals are often used are birth, childhood, social puberty, betrothal, marriage, pregnancy, fatherhood, and initiation into religious societies. (Van Gennep 1960: 3, 147.)

The cairns may have been the sight of initiating the young, to teach them all the knowledge they needed to know, myths and religious beliefs included. Imagine visiting a cairn that contains burned bones of your ancestor who also carried the same name as you, or at least you know someone with the same name. Using fixed objects and landscapes to store knowledge and stories in, is a powerful memory enhancer.

Calendar rituals are connected to certain regular times like winter solstice, new moon or harvest time. I have visited Sammallahdenmäki around winter solstice. It is a very dark and slippery time of year. It would not be practical to choose the icy hillside for any rowdy parties. Scandinavian sources mention that Yule (sw. jul) was celebrated with loads of food, and especially ale. Even if Christmas is called jul these days, the name originated in Pre-Christian times. Toasts were made for Oden, Thor, Frey and Njord and celebrations would go on until the household ran out of ale. Yule was a time for relatives and friends to gather together, even dead relatives might visit their homes during this time. Being on the border of the old and the new solar year, this time was also when the border between the dead and the living was partly open. The dead, who did not have a home, would wander about, and were herded by Oden. (Kaliff 2007: 146; Näsström 2001: 220–223.)

If the sagas and other sources depict the customs of the end of Iron Age, it is difficult to say, how much was already in practice during the earlier times, and what forms the celebration may have taken on the Finnish coast. The barley seeds and pig bones found from the Huilu2 settlement site likely prove that beer and ham were parts of feasts at least during the Pre-Roman Iron Age. If the names or functions of the gods, that toasts were made to, were different from the ones in Scandinavian sources, the one thing remaining is that there was lots of drinking. Christfrid Ganander (1789: 25) wrote
about Fin. *Joulu* in Mythologia Fennica. He mentioned an old proverb: *Juoman juoda Jouluna pitävä,* a drink shall be drunk at Yule. He also told that, even in the 18th century, the next year’s good harvest was thought to correlate with the drunkenness of the master of the house, or the one who sowed, during Christmas.

If the people of the Bronze Age or the Pre-Roman Iron Age believed the dead wandered around during the winter solstice is also unknown, but perhaps the Finnish custom of lighting candles on graveyards during Christmas is a remnant of very old traditions. Christian influences are strong in ghost stories where the dead gather to church during the nights of the holidays to have their own worship (Haavio 1935: 321–322).

The same difficulties apply to other calendar rites. Old customs have survived and connected to Christian holidays. But which customs, if any, are old enough to apply to the Bronze Age rituals? If the Sun was truly worshipped, then the summer solstice, or *Juhannus,* has to be mentioned. Despite the name *Juhannus,* referring to John the Baptist, the time of the shortest night is all about magic. Different decorations have been believed to bring good luck for the cattle and the harvest. Countless directions of improving the love lives of young maidens are also taught about the *Juhannus* night. (Vilkuna 1992: 153–164) Lighting the great bonfires *kokko,* could also be an archaic sun worship way.

Since agriculture was already introduced in the south-west coast of Finland during the Neolithic Stone Age, it is possible that some kind of *kekri* was also celebrated during the Early Metal Period. The end of harvest time in the fall used to be when the year changed. Perhaps industrialization has caused that *kekri* celebration is quite forgotten, but many of the traditions have survived. They have just been borrowed to Christmas and New Year. (Vilkuna 1992: 294–297.) For an example, in Finland and among the Baltic people the last straw of the field used to be folded into a man, woman, goat, cock, or some other animal shape. Also loaves were likewise baked in human and animal shapes. Anders Kaliff (2007: 146) has pointed out that in Sweden there are still straw goats made for Christmas decoration, and different shapes of gingerbreads baked likewise for Christmas. These days this is true in Finland too. He interpreted that the animal and human forms expressed a generative power, but they also represented the dead. “Close links between harvest, represented by the straw figures and the bread, and the dead may be an indication that the human body was handled like the products of the harvest. Just as the grain had to be turned into bread, a person’s remains had to be prepared for a new existence. Grinding releases new life, which can be symbolized by
bread. Breaking and eating such bread could mean a symbolic disintegration of the cosmological body.”

Mikael Agricola also wrote in 1551 about the spring time rituals:

Ja quin Keuekyluö kyluettiin / silloin vkon Malia jootijn.  
Sihen haetin vkon wacka / nin joopui Pica ette Acka.  
Sijtte palio Häpie sielle techtin / quin seke cwltin ette nechtin.  

And when the spring seeds were sown / then they toasted to Ukko.  
They brought Ukko’s drinking vessel / drunk became both Maid and Matron.  
Lots of shameful things were done / as was both heard and seen.  
(Translated by the author)

Researchers have long agreed this to mean that in the spring beer was again drunk, and public sexual rites were performed for the benefit of the crops (Salo 2012 I: 460). This practice was strongly disapproved by Agricola, and by the church in general.

The old poems and incantations contain several references to Hieros Gamos that provide background to this spring ritual. Unto Salo (1997a; 2012 I: 376–382), and several other scholars, have studied Ukko, and his indiscretions with the water maiden which resulted in thunder weather.

Perhaps an older layer is about Sampsa, spring youth, that slept with his emintimä, step-mother, or in some version with his sister, and then went on to plow the fields and plant the seeds. There are also verses that depict him sleeping or dead, until in the spring someone brings him back on a boat. It has been suggested by Salo that Sampsa was originally bringer of spring, and the plowing was only later added to his deeds. (Salo 2012 II: 127–142.)

If Ukko has been compared with Tor, the Scandinavian God of War and Thunder, Sampsa and Akka have close similarities with Frey and Freyja. These Scandinavian sibling gods are also depicted incestuous, although Freyja had many other lovers as well. They were in charge of love and fertility. Freyja was also connected to the dead. (Kaliff 2007: 60.) Akka manteren alanen, Matron below the continent, Sampsa’s partner, is depicted in the Finnish folklore to be connected with the dead, but also with the fertility of the fields and forests, and the wellbeing of the cattle (SKVR I4 1097, 1537, 1744). Salo (2012 III: 105–115) has connected Akka manteren alanen to Madderakka of the sami. He has also suggested that she was later inherited by Pohjan akka, Matron of Pohja. Pohjan akka is a prominent figure in the Finnish Kalevala metric poetry. Pohja may refer to the mythical North, or to the Bottom, the lowest, furthest
place. Akka may also be interpreted as a more pejorative term, and could be translated the old hag or the crone (e.g. Kuusi et al 1977: 111).

Different crisis rituals are used when catastrophe strikes, famine, war, epidemic, and so forth, even in smaller cases when something was lost, or someone had an injury. In times of crisis offerings may be given to gods or other helpful entities. Objects found from under water, or other unpractical places, have often been interpreted as such.

There were also more direct ways to actively work against a crisis. The old incantations used by Tietäjä or Noita show, that, if one knew the name and the origin of maladies one could demand it (Haavio 1935: 179). This knowledge could be found by spirit journeys, to leave the body one could fall into a trance using rhythmic drumming or alcohol or other hallucinogens. Some people have tried to gain knowledge from the dead by spending extensive time periods on a grave. One could also learn the knowledge from other people. (Andrén 2007: 282; Näsström 2001: 236–242.)

6.3 Meaning of the Location

The great number of cairns on the same hill implies that the place had a special meaning to the people. What made it special? The location is beautiful. There are cultivated fields around the hill these days, but in the Early Bronze Age the sea level was higher, so some of the current fields were still under water. There is an occasionally suggested theory that the dead were simply given a final resting place with a great scene. This is a poetic thought, but hardly the whole picture. Unto Salo (2012 III: 123) has commented that the thought is anachronistic, because the word maisema, scenery is first found in Finnish written text during the 1830s, era of romantics. Apparently proposing that the late occurrence of the word implies that enjoying the scenery just because it is pleasing to the eyes is a modern invention.

Supposing the location was seen from the point of view of what resources there were. The fishing waters, hunting, gathering and even cultivation areas could have been seen stretching to the horizon from the top of the hill. The trees these days are quite tall though, cutting the view somewhat shorter. The waters were also important traveling routes, and Unto Salo (1997b: 70) has interpreted that the Bronze Age cairns apart from the settlement sites would have worked as landmarks for outsiders that these areas are already used by the family of the deceased person whose remains are in the cairn. This very practical reasoning behind the location choosing seems possible, but I
am inclined to agree with Tapani Tuovinen (2002: 248) that the message was likely not so much for the outsiders from far away, but perhaps for the outsiders within the group of people occupying the same area.

Tuovinen (ibid.) based this interpretation on the fact that the cairns he studied in the archipelago of Åboland, SW Finland, were too small to be distinguishable from afar. They could be used as landmarks only closer to them, and by people who already knew the landscape. Some cairns on Sammallahdenmäki are quite high, but most of them are not. Moreover, many of them seem more spectacular when viewed from above, not from the sea level. Also wouldn’t a fewer amount of cairns also suffice to let people know these areas are taken? Why are there so many of them on the same hill and close to it? Tuovinen (2002: 245) hypothesized that building cairns in vicinity of the older cairns reflects “a consciousness of ancestors, a sense of ancestral existence in the sphere of specific sites and spaces in the landscape. Bygone generations were in conjunction with present as well as with future generations.”

To find even more reasons for the location, one might look into symbolism. Tuovinen (2002: 245–246.) mentioned the viewsheds to the sea typical to the cairns, and added that these frequently were associated with an effect of depth and exaltation. The elevated ground he connected to forward-upward motive of leaving the profane and ascending towards the sacred, a well-known motive from ancient Egypt, and the Christian, Gnostic, and Islamic traditions. Visiting and re-visiting the site created a sequence of familiar places that were passed. Likely this sequence was accompanied by a narrative expressed and shared orally. Through this sequence the children adopted their parents’ knowledge of the significance of the different places, essential beliefs, and ethical commitments – but above all, one could encounter the consciousness of the presence of one’s ancestors and superhuman powers.

The sea, the bedrock and the sky may also have been symbols of vertical layers of the world. The three-layered world view is evident in Saami shaman drums and ethnographic studies among the Finno-Ugric tribes. The middle world is inhabited by humans, while the lower and upper worlds are abodes of gods and spirits. The three layers are connected by a vertical axis mundi, typically imagined as a tree, mountain or a pillar. The nomadic people of northern Eurasia commonly believed that water was also a way to the Lower World. Thus the sea connected the place to the Lower World, the rock symbolized this Middle World of the living, but at the same time its top was higher, closer to the sky, the Upper World. (Lahelma 2005: 40.)
Furthermore, the location on mountains or heights and the usage of stone as building material for the cairns is often thought to be due to the hardness and the apparent eternal quality of the stones. In many cultures stones are regarded as containing spiritual properties. Stone can display the eternal aspects of human beings, their immortal qualities. “The widespread cult of certain stones in many cultures, however, need not suggest any general worship of stone itself. What is worshipped is the property the stone symbolically represents: a spiritual aspect dwelling in the stone. Rock and stone are believed in many cultures to function as a means of communication between god and man.” (Kaliff 2007: 175.)

The bedrock on Sammallahdenmäki is eroded in many places. This is not surprising since it is located on an area of rapakivi granite. There is even a small cave-like spot close to the Church Floor. A tunnel has been formed through erosion of the bedrock leaving a small bridge of solid rock on the top (image 34). One can see daylight through the tunnel, but there is too much dirt and stones on the bottom to crawl through. Despite the shallowness of the tunnel, it seemed like a way into the bedrock itself, and it certainly picked my curiosity and imagination. Maybe it did the same to people during the Bronze Age and Pre-Roman Iron Age. Although, I have to admit that erosion is a continuing process, and the whole tunnel may be a recent phenomenon. However, if the stone is prone to cracking, the surface must have been cracked then too, but possibly from different spots than today.

Some of the erosion may have been additionally increased by people keeping fires on the rock. Soot has been found from the cairns. At the settlement site of Huilu there are also two large stones that have a cracked straight side, and marks of fire on the ground beside the stones (Raike 2004: 12). The intentional cracking of the stones, and choosing a hill where the surface easily breaks, seem to contradict the intention of the material to be eternal. These actions could be interpreted as a desire to communicate with the above mentioned spiritual aspect within the stone.
Image 34. Cave-like tunnel close to the Church Floor created by erosion. Picture taken from south by the author.

6.4 Circles, Ovals, Rectangles and Other Shapes

Exterior grave form of most cairns on Sammallahdenmäki and surrounding areas is not always clear since it seems some of them have been disturbed. The standard form could be identified as round or somewhat oval. Two exceptions are the almost square Church Floor and the long rectangle with curved corners of the Long Ruin of Huilu.

The Long Ruin of Huilu has been interpreted as a result of second or more burials being added to the original. The Southern end of the cairn has a separate roundish area that has a different pattern of stones on the bottom layer. The soil was also of different colour from the rest of the cairn. If this was the original first structure, it did not really deviate from the norm.

The Church Floor, however, is clearly different. Högman only found bird bones from it, so its interpretation as a grave is not certain. It cannot be altogether ruled out since it is possible the excavation was not very thorough, or there has been an inhumation or few of them in this structure. Inhumed corpses could have decomposed completely. If this was a grave, the deviant form could likely indicate special death rituals reserved for a section of the population. This could also be said of the possible
additional burials in the long cairn, as the usual custom was to maintain the round shape and only add to the size of the cairn. For some reason, it was now made longer.

The rectangular form of the Church Floor could also mean that it had a different function on the hill. It could represent a house. No postholes have been reported, but it could have been a symbolic cult house of some sort, or maybe a large altar. Observing the stones from the outside, it seems some of them show signs of having been in the fire, but since it is a reconstruction after the 1891 excavation, the stones are not on their original places, and conclusions about whether fire was burned on the structure, are difficult to make. Högmans report does mention that the ground had lots of coal bits in it under the stones, so it is likely that something was burned there. Whether this could be cremation pyre, or whether other offerings were burned, remains open.

The forms of inner structures show more variety (image 35). The stone line in the north-south direction ties the Church Floor together with cairn 23. They are situated close to each other as well, only 20 metres apart. It is also not clear if cairn 23 was a grave, since the 3 grams of burned bones found from it, could also be animal bones. Pieces were too small for identification.

Cairn 11 has several concentric rings that are so close together that it is difficult to count them. The form of the bigger stones could also be described as a spiral. Concentric circles and spirals are common in Scandinavian rock engravings and motifs on bronze artefacts (e.g. image 36). The concentric circles are usually interpreted as a symbol of the Sun. Spiral is slightly less common and it has more variability in its interpretations. It is closely associated with the circle, but unlike the circle, a spiral has a beginning and an end. Coiled up snake, vortex of a whirlwind, and leaves of a plant are some of the natural things that a spiral could depict. Double spiral is often seen as a symbol of death and birth. (Berggren 1993: 12; Salo 2012 II: 143.)
Image 35. Inner structures on the excavated cairns. Original maps drawn by Volter Högman and Anu Kehusmaa (Högman 1891; Raike 2002). Black lines emphasizing the forms have been added.
Image 36. Utrike, Lofta parish, Småland. Engravings on a loose stone. Five ship figures, a ploughing scene, and four spirals. Two of the spirals are connected to each other. (Magnusson 1989: 79.)

The smaller stone circles of the cairns 1 and 11 are also interesting anomalies (images 20, 21, and 30). The half circle northeast of cairn 1 and the full circle on the south side of cairn 11 are made of smaller stones than the stone circles on the rest of the cairn. They seem like annexes, reburials perhaps. The smaller size of both the stones and the area of the circle could indicate a child or a person of lesser importance. However, the small circles were both empty. Either their content was organic and decomposed, or they were a part of the original design for the stone settings. Figuring out their purpose would require knowing what the larger cairns symbolized.

The stone circles of cairns 5, 8, 17, and 25 are actually ovals, almost resembling ship-shaped stone settings (images 14, 15, 17, 19, and 30). The forms are not quite clear though, so one shouldn’t draw too many conclusions from that. The direction of the ovals is northwest – southeast, deviating from the usual north-south direction of prehistoric graves in Finland. The same northwest – southeast direction also applies to the double cists of cairn 31 and to the Long Ruin of Huilu or cairn 6 (images 23, 24, 28, and 30). This direction could be because of the shape of the hill, or perhaps more likely, the shore line of Saarnijärvi-lake (images 1, and 9).
Saarnijärvi is slowly getting smaller and turning into a swamp due to glacial isostasy. Archaeologists have traditionally presumed that the cairns were built close to the shore line and calculated that the shore line in this area was about 28-25 metres above modern sea level during the early Bronze Age. Geologists, however have calculated that the shore line was only 20 metres above sea level in 1600-1500 BC. (Uotila 2007.) Thus in the beginning of the period II when the first cairns were built on the hill the sea level was at least 20 metres higher than today. The lake was still connected to the Baltic Sea forming a narrow bay next to the hill Sammallahdenmäki, but the rising land was changing the scenery 60-70cm/hundred years (ibid.). Since this vertical change in the sea level translates to dozens of metres in horizontal dimension, the phenomenon is clearly visible for one person to notice during his or her lifetime. It is likely that it had some effect on the religious views held in the Bronze Age and Pre-Roman Iron Age.
7 Conclusions

Due to the nature of my research topic I am tempted to rename this chapter as Suggestions for Possible Conclusions. The Pre-Christian religion of Northern Europe is well described by Anders Andrén (2007: 264–267) as a multifaceted hybrid or a cultural patchwork. The knowledge we have of the Pre-Christian mythologies and beliefs is mostly about those of the Late Iron Age people, or even later, when Christianity has been patched in and older beliefs have tangled with new ideas. Although the mythologies portrayed in oral traditions, of both Finno-Ugric people and Scandinavians, are fascinating, connecting them to the Bronze Age or the Pre-Roman Iron Age is very challenging, even questionable. Archaeological evidence of the myths is scarce and circumstantial at best. It is further difficult to draw conclusions about the religious beliefs of this long period, because the religion was not regulated. During this time religion shifted, changed, borrowed from others, was reinterpreted and actualized in different life situations of the people practising it.

Why was this location chosen for all those cairns to be built on?

The quantity and variety of cairns on Sammallahdenmäki show that this place was important somehow. Throughout the Bronze Age the same hill was used dozens of times to build cairns. At least some cairns were also reused. The special qualities of the local rapakivi granite and the location of the sunny hill by the shore are possible reasons for the continual use of this place. Even when the diminishing Saarnijärvi-lake was disconnected from the sea, there was still the element of water close by.

The largest and most spectacular cairns were also on the highest parts of the hill. Radiocarbon dates from the cairn close to the Church Floor would indicate that they were also the oldest ones. There are stories about the Church Floor among the locals in modern times. There surely were stories about the structure also during the Bronze Age, even if the original builders might have been forgotten. The special cairns and possibly special people, whose bones were placed in there, likely made the place even more sacred, and that is the reason, more and more cairns were built on the same hill.
What rituals and other practices can one reconstruct to have taken place there?

Stone structures were built on the hill. At least some of them were used during funerary rituals. Cremated human bones have been found from several cairns, one mention of an un-cremated bone in the 1891 excavation would hint that there might have been inhumations as well. However, the very low number of the bone fragments suggests that a grave may not have been the primary function of these stone structures. Small part of some of the dead members of the society was placed in them. Whether it was done to claim the stone structure and the surrounding area as the property of the descendants of the dead person, to honour these ancestors, to sacrifice the bones of the ancestor on an altar, or for some other reason, it remains a mystery.

A group of French tourists told me on my last trip on the site, that all the cairns look just the same to them. That is why they could not find the route back to their car. On closer observance they all differ from each other on the size and shape. Especially the inner structures are very varied. The stone circles of cairn 11 have been left uncovered in the reconstruction. They seem meticulously planned to form a meaningful sign. That drew my attention on first sight into the form language of the inner structures. Comparing it and other forms of the cairns with Scandinavian rock carvings and cairns has however raised more questions than answers. Also, not all of the forms are very clear.

Cremation was used in funerary rituals, at least sometimes. Grave goods have not been found from any of the excavated cairns, except part of a bronze bracelet in cairn 31. Grave goods may have been given on the pyre or during other funerary rituals, like exposure, or primary burial somewhere else. The placing of the bones on the cairns would then have been a secondary ritual.

Non-funerary rituals could have been connected to cup marks, reportedly found on stones of three cairns. Fire may have been used to further crack the already easily eroding stone of this area. There are signs of this on the Huilu2 settlement site. Both of these acts could be interpreted as ways to communicate with some deity or spirit that was believed to reside in the stone.

Other rituals have not left archaeological remains that could have been identified. The early adaptation of agriculture and animal husbandry on the southwest coast line could suggest that some of the old agrarian traditions that can be gathered from medieval and historic texts, and folklore, may be remnants of past beliefs, even from Bronze Age. Some traditions have survived even to our days. However, dating the beginning of these rituals is questionable.
What can be told about the beliefs and world views on the basis of the evidence of this case study?

The two themes commonly connected to the Southern Scandinavian Bronze Age religion are Sun and Fertility. There is very little archaeological evidence of either cult from Sammallahdenmäki. Unless one interprets the shapes of the stones on the cairns, and the poorly reported cup marks, as symbols of the Sun, or perhaps female reproduction organs of a fertility goddess. Both are possible, but more evidence is needed before we can make any definitive conclusions.

The Sun is not mentioned in the written sources of the Finnish beliefs, the Moon and the Stars were more important. It would seem that, if the Sun was worshipped in the Bronze Age, its importance has quickly diminished afterwards. However some traditions connected to joulu and juhannus that are very close to winter and summer solstices could be remnants of Sun worship.

Fertility, of the plants, the animals, and the people, seems to have been somehow connected to the dead, in the minds of Pre-Christian Finns. The Hieros Gamos of Sampsa, the spring boy who ploughed the first field, and Akka Manteren Alanen, Matron below the Continent, is an example of this, as she is also referenced as Tuonen Akka, which implies she was in charge of Tuoni, the land of the dead. There are not very many references to Akka Manteren Alanen in the old Finnish poetry, but Unto Salo (2012III: 105, 112) has connected her to Pohjan Akka, who is very prominent in many poems.

There are also several folkloric stories of heroes traveling to the land of Tuonela, Manala, or Pohjola. These are names for the land of the dead. Sometimes the reason of the travel was to gain knowledge or power, but often there is a fair maiden there that the hero wanted to marry. However, the poems, incantations and ballads that contain these stories, have been collected very late. Even if the themes could be old enough to originate from the Bronze Age, it is not certain. Let us therefore return to the archaeological material that we have from Sammallahdenmäki area.

The shapes of the cairns are better appreciated when seen from above. Perhaps they were intended for the Sun, or the Sky, or gods that are symbolized by them. The hill is not very high, but it is high enough for the sun to shine on it from dawn to dusk. However the most elaborate shapes, or the inner circles, spirals and lines were decked with other smaller stones, so they could not be seen from above. Were they meant to restrict the dead from leaving the cairn, or signs to be seen from below?
Perhaps they were made for some spirit or god that lived in the hill itself, or in the underworld. *Akka manteren alanen*, Matron below the continent, could be a strong candidate for the receiver of such signs. Connected with the dead and with the fields, forests and cattle, a deity like her would have been quite important for the early agrarian society.

The similar structures in cairn building show connection in religious beliefs stretching over the Baltic Sea. Yet the lack of rock carvings, with the possible exception of cup marks, speaks of local differences. It is possible that the scenes were not carved in stone on the Finnish coast, because the tradition of singing and relying in the power of the words was stronger here. There are, however, signs that fire was used to reshape rocks on the settlement site of Huilu2, possibly also on the hill. Remarks on old excavation reports mention cup marks on some of the stones inside the cairns. Thus, even if stories and myths that were told are not depicted on the stone, the stones were processed in some ways.

Interpretation of these activities could be made with the help of Indo-European analogies. If the whole cosmos was created from a single body of some dismembered primordial being, and all the living tissues were born from re-combining the elements of the nature, then the destruction of the dead bodies, was not only to free the soul from the dead body, but could be interpreted as a way to uphold the balance in the cosmos, and to ensure the future lives of the society. The compositions of both stones and bones together in the cairns would also be logical since these were alloforms of each other. Other natural elements were maybe given some parts of the dead bodies since there are such few bones in the cairns, but we don’t know where the rest was placed. This line of thought is different from modern Christianity influenced ideologies, but somehow similar to what we’ve learned in Physics about matter and its mass and energy. All matter in the Universe is reacting and changing to some degree, but the quantity of the mass and energy remains the same. Basically the different homologies of stone and bones, earth and meat, and so forth, perform the same idea.

Are there signs of changes in the beliefs?

Radiocarbon dating made during the 2002 excavations show that cairns 11, 23, and 25 are relatively same age. They each vary in size and location, and they have different inner structures. This could mean different beliefs were held, or the belief system allowed great variation in the funerary rituals, or in building of these stone structures.
Cairn 31 was dated to the Pre-Roman Iron Age. It is located on a separate hill west from Sammallahdenmäki. There are other similar cairns (cairns 30–35) close to it. These cairns are clearly different. The only artefact from the cairns was a part of a bronze bracelet from cairn 31. It was apparently placed in the cairn as a grave good, which are absent on the other excavated cairns. These cairns are all on a lower level, earth-mixed and more rectangular than round. There are rectangular shapes on the hill as well, the Church Floor and the inner structure of cairn 13, but the round and oval shapes are predominant.

The sheer quantity of the Bronze Age and the Pre-Roman Iron Age cairns on *Sammallahdenmäki* and their variations on the size, structure and form made it an interesting case study. This place is a spectacular sight, but many aspects of Bronze Age and Pre-Roman Iron Age religion still remain mysteries. Perhaps other sites would have been better suited for a case study, though I doubt all the questions will ever be answered.
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### Appendix 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cairn</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>MASL</th>
<th>Length and Width (m)</th>
<th>Height (m)</th>
<th>Stone circle</th>
<th>Cist</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Excavated</th>
<th>Finds</th>
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<td>6786754</td>
<td>218835</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3,5 x 3,5</td>
<td>&lt;0,5</td>
<td>Oval ring of bigger stones. Half-circle of smaller stones adjacent to the north-east side of the oval.</td>
<td>Large boulder fallen on the south-west side. Could have been a central stone.</td>
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<td>24</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>6786752</td>
<td>218754</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5,5 x 4</td>
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<td>Possible outer circle of small stones visible on the north and east sides.</td>
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<td>6786801</td>
<td>218747</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>7,7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Outer circle mostly broken, oval stone structure inside</td>
<td>Two slabstones inside the oval ring, opposite to each other.</td>
<td>1891 Högman</td>
<td>Unburnt bone, and bone fragments probably cremated</td>
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<td>25 x 7,5-8</td>
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<td>Outer ring has straight sides and curves at the ends. Two curving walls separate an area in the south side.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1891 Högman</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>0,7-0,8</td>
<td>Two rings inside.</td>
<td>Cist made of larger boulders</td>
<td>1891 Högman</td>
<td>Bone fragments probably cremated</td>
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<td>Oval ring inside</td>
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<td>Burnt human bones 218g</td>
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<td>218695</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0,4</td>
<td>There is a stone circle nearby, that may or may not be natural.</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>6786874</td>
<td>218717</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5,2 x 3,7</td>
<td></td>
<td>Possible outer circle of larger boulders.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>6786906</td>
<td>218706</td>
<td>27,5</td>
<td>7,6</td>
<td>0,5</td>
<td>At least two spiralling circles on the edges. Smaller circle of little stones connected to the south side of the outer circle.</td>
<td></td>
<td>2002 Raike</td>
<td>Burnt human bones 133,7g</td>
<td>1313 - 1002 BC</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Length and Width (m)</td>
<td>Height (m)</td>
<td>Stone circle</td>
<td>Cist</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Excavated</td>
<td>Finds</td>
<td>Dating</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>6786992</td>
<td>218685</td>
<td>30 3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Possible signs of an uneven outer circle.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>6787010</td>
<td>218686</td>
<td>31 8 0,85</td>
<td>0,85</td>
<td>Square stone setting inside, with three rows of stone.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2002 Raike</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>6787128</td>
<td>218687</td>
<td>30 11 x 10 2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Possible outer circle of slab stones.</td>
<td>Possibly destroyed cist. Head and foot stones are still up and visible in the disturbed middle.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>6786993</td>
<td>218653</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
<td>Possible signs of destroyed outer circle.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>6787082</td>
<td>218659</td>
<td>30 21 x 18</td>
<td></td>
<td>Possible circle of flat stones.</td>
<td>Possible headstone of a cist on the northwest end.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>6787210</td>
<td>218624</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
<td>Oval ring inside.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2002 Raike</td>
<td>Burnt human bones</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>6787311</td>
<td>218624</td>
<td>31 6 0,8-0,9</td>
<td></td>
<td>Possible remains of a cist, five slab stones visible in the middle.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cairn</td>
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<td>Length and Width (m)</td>
<td>Height (m)</td>
<td>Stone circle</td>
<td>Cist</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>6787295</td>
<td>218608</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1,2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Possible cist, one visible slabstone in the middle.</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>6787453</td>
<td>218671</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1-1,3</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>6787473</td>
<td>218667</td>
<td>41-43</td>
<td>16,8-19,2 x 15-18,8</td>
<td>0,5</td>
<td>A stone line 3,3 metres long, 0,1-0,3 metres high, roughly north-south direction.</td>
<td>1890 Högman</td>
<td>Bird bones and a small light-coloured carved stone (not in the archives)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>6787490</td>
<td>218668</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0,6</td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>6787499</td>
<td>218667</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0,8</td>
<td>North-south oriented stone wall</td>
<td>2002 Raike</td>
<td>Burnt bones 3g</td>
<td>1324-1107 BC</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>6787489</td>
<td>218614</td>
<td>39,5</td>
<td>7,6 x 5,4</td>
<td>0,3</td>
<td>Unclear oval ring inside.</td>
<td>2002 Raike</td>
<td>Burnt human bones 43,5g</td>
<td>1306-1002 BC</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>6787495</td>
<td>218609</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>4,6</td>
<td>0,6-0,7</td>
<td></td>
<td>Possible north-northwest - south-southeast oriented cist. Two larger boulder as headstones.</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>6786896</td>
<td>218447</td>
<td>19,5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Double stone-cists joined on the short side made of granite boulders.</td>
<td></td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Raike</td>
<td>Burnt human bones and a fragment of a bronze bracelet</td>
<td>170 BC-AD 82</td>
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<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>6787046</td>
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N, E = ETRS89 coordinates  
MASL = metres above sea level  