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From the Dead to the Living: Death as Transactions and Re-negotiations

TERJE OESTIGAARD and JOAKIM GOLDHAHN

Apart from eschatological aspects, death is more important for the living than the dead. It is argued that funerals are one of the most important settings for recreating society through the re-establishment of alliances. When an important person dies, his or her former social relations and alliances come to an end and have to be re-established from a societal point of view. At funerals not only are gifts given to the deceased, but it is equally important that the ritual participants make new alliances and re-negotiate old ones by the exchange of gifts. Thus, the distributions of artefacts, or the construction of different funeral monuments, are here seen as the outcome of such transactions. By emphasising transactions and re-negotiations of alliances in different funerals we argue that the distribution of prestige goods in Europe is not only part of trade or warfare. Exchange of gifts and prestige items as part of reciprocal relations was crucial in the structuring of inter-regional areas. Funerals were such occasions where the descendants and the living could legitimate future hierarchies by transferring the deceased's social status and power to themselves by re-negotiating former alliances and creating new ones.

'Change equals death' (Woody Allen)

INTRODUCTION

In this article we want to turn the quotation from Woody Allen upside-down and argue that 'death equals change'. It is therefore important to make a shift or at least add a new perspective to the study of death in archaeology. Traditionally, archaeological approaches to death, in the past as well as in the present, are concerned with the dead; his or her social status, rank and/or gender (e.g. Brown 1971, Tainter 1978, Chapman *et al.* 1981, O'Shea 1984, Wason 1994, Keld Jensen & Høilund Nielsen 1997, Parker Pearson 1999, Arnold & Wicker 2001). We will not discuss the dead itself, but rather stress how death was a means for change among the descendants and the living. Obviously, the dead did not bury themselves, and we will argue that funerals are occasions where the living are not necessarily mourning the dead, but come together to make new alliances and re-create society.

Death rituals and celebrations of new social structures can be seen as an opportunity and a possibility to re-negotiate and re-create society and the social order. Funerals are ritual events where every important

Terje Oestigaard, Centre for Development Studies. University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway.
E-mail: terje.ostigard@sfu.uib.no
Joakim Goldhahn, Department of Archaeology, University of Göteborg, Göteborg, Sweden.
E-mail: joakim.goldhahn@archaeology.gu.se

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person wants to be, has to participate, and is obliged to come. It is in the funerals that old structures are buried in the ground, or cremated to ashes, and the descendants and the participators perform the transactions of power and obligations by rituals which re-negotiate the current social structure and hierarchy. We also want to emphasise that death is not only a problem and a threat to the current society (e.g. Hocart 1954, Hertz 1960); it also involves great, new possibilities. In social sciences, most analyses are conducted when social structures are at the most static; that is when people are alive. When people die, social structures are at the most dynamic because the loss of a person by necessity implies that a family or society has to be restructured.

We will suggest that the social structure and the re-negotiation of power and hierarchies in prehistoric northern European Bronze and Iron Age societies were mainly located and situated to funerals. Our arguments focus on death rituals as the most important spheres for transactions where alliances were re-negotiated through enhancing solidarity and social obligations. There are no free gifts (Mauss 1990), and in funerals there were competitions for achieving the most valuable gifts and the most important obligations through alliances with the most powerful persons. The constructions of new alliances by ritual performances in funerals created and legitimated the contemporary and forthcoming social structures and hierarchies.

The funerals we will discuss have most likely been the main festivals and celebrations in their contemporary societies; from a very local level to the regional, and finally, inter-regional levels, where various social groupings from northern Europe participated in the rituals. Before turning to prehistory, we start by a present example that may illuminate the processes we would like to discuss, and then we turn briefly to anthropological approaches before relating our perspective to the current debate by developing a model of death as transactions. This approach will be explored with four examples where we suggest different ways to trace how the living negotiated, re-negotiated, and manifested themselves and their alliances in the funerals. This is possible by:

1. *analysing the distribution of grave goods*, which we will exemplify with the Late Hallstatt Iron Age Hochdorf 'princely' grave in Germany;
2. *analysing how the living has participated in the rite*, which we will exemplify with the Bronze Age engravings from Bredarör in Kivik, situated in south-east Scania in Sweden,
3. *analysing how a monument is constructed*, which we will exemplify with the Bronze Age monument Mjeltehaugen at Giske in western Norway; and finally
4. *analysing the funeral rituals' intermediary period*, which we will exemplify with the aristocratic Lusehøj mound from Funen in Denmark.

These levels have to be seen as different but interrelated approaches to analysis of how various identities and relations have been re-negotiated in the sphere of death.

CREATING AND RE-CREATING ALLIANCES – THE FUNERAL OF KING HUSSEIN OF JORDAN

Clifford Geertz summons the essence of political rituals in this way: 'A royal cremation was not an echo of a politics taking place somewhere else. It was an intensification of a politics taking place everywhere else' (Geertz 1980:120). Although not a royal cremation, this statement is best illustrated with the funeral of King Hussein – Jordan's monarch for 46 years – who died on 7 February 1999. The 63-year-old monarch was given a state burial the next day. It was estimated that more than 800 000 Jordanians were grieving in the streets of Amman.

Fig. 1. *The mourners at the funeral of King Hussein. AP/Scanpix.*

Kings, presidents, and delegates from almost 70 countries participated in the funeral (Fig. 1). It was the largest gathering of royal and political leaders since the funeral of the Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995, and sworn enemies were standing next to each other. The world leaders hailed the deceased monarch as one of the greatest statesmen of the 20th century and as one of the crucial architects in the peace process in the Middle East. Hussein's charisma and skills were central to breaking many impasses in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

President Bill Clinton and the former US presidents Bush, Carter, and Ford represented the United States. Iraq was represented by vice president Taha Marouf, and former president George Bush, who attacked Iraq, was at the same funeral. Hamas was present with several representatives. The Czech president Vaclav Havel and the Russian President Boris Yeltsin, both of them seriously ill, came to the funeral, Yeltsin against the advices of his doctors. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and his wife participated as well as the president of the European Union, Jaques Santer. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu led the Israeli delegation. From Israel there was also a delegation led by Chief Rabbi Yisrael Lau and a representative of families of seven teenage girls, slain by a deranged Jordanian soldier in 1997, and the king to be personally consoled the families.

King Hussein's funeral brought together enemies, including the leader of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Nayef Hawatmeh, who approached the Israeli President Ezer Weizman, praised him as a man of peace and shook his hand. However, Syrian President Hafez Al Assad and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, harsh enemies, did not meet personally during the funeral, but it was the very first time that they came together at same place.

In this context we will argue that the importance of this mass gathering was not only to grief and pay respect to King Hussein of Jordan, but equally important, to re-establish the alliances which he took with him in the grave. Bitter enemies came together, and even if they did not speak to each other, the possibilities of making new alliances were there during the funeral, irrespective of whether they were reconstitutions of old alliances or constructions of new ones. The most important persons for the future had to be at the funeral.

Thus, it is possible to imagine similar situations in the past. As a point of departure we will discuss two different but important scholars, who dealt with theoretical issues we find essential in this context; Marcel Mauss in *The Gift* (1990) and Clifford Geertz in *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali* (1980). We are very well aware that these approaches cannot be applied directly as universal explanations of how social interactions and formations took place in the past, and we view these perspectives as constructive and analytical ways of approaching the past, which may on certain premises shed new light on parts of the northern European Bronze Age and Iron Age.

MAUSS AND GEERTZ: THE GIFT AND POLITICAL RITUALS

The Gift is what Marcel Mauss (1990) called a 'total social phenomenon' because it involves legal, economic, moral, religious, aesthetic and other dimensions. We will argue that death in prehistoric Europe was the perfect and preferred social setting for this kind of transaction. According to Mauss, the gift-exchange was as related to individuals and groups as much as to the objects themselves (e.g. Kopytoff 1986, Gell 1998, Hoskins 1998, Gosden & Marshall 1999). Gift cycles engage persons in permanent commitments that articulate the dominant institutions, and distance is crucial in this system (e.g. Helms 1988, Kristiansen & Larsson 2005).

Mauss' idea of the gift system was an attempt to record the total credit system of a community, and Mauss presented a theoretical framework, which gave an idea of how persons in a pre-marked social system acted in their own interests and how these individual interests made up a social system (Mauss 1990, see also Munn 1986, Douglas 1990, Godelier 1999). Importantly, what we will focus on in the archaeological contexts is the assumption that these gifts were given in a context of public drama.

God is a concept and a rule for human action and therefore cannot be efficacious without human action. This implies a human recognition of the god's status (Valeri 1985:103). Political rituals emphasise human representations of the divinities. Men and kings are gods, or rather the opposite; gods take the form of men and kings. In his book *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali*, Clifford Geertz (1980:102) argued that:

> The state cult was not a cult of the state. It was an argument, made over and over again in the insistent vocabulary of ritual, that worldly status has a cosmic base, that hierarchy is the governing principle of the universe, and that the arrangements of human life are but approximations, more close or less, to those of the divine.

The importance of the political rites was to define what power was, and to define it in such a way that power was what the kings were (Geertz 1980:124). The king himself was a political actor. It was the king's cult that created him, because without the dramas of the theatre state, the image of the king as a composed divinity could never take form (Geertz 1980:131).

> The ritual extravaganzas of the theatre state, its half-divine lord immobile, transcend, or dead at the dramatic centre of them, were the symbolic expression less of the peasantry's greatness than of its notion of what greatness was. What the

Balinese society was to cast into sensible form a concept of what, they were supposed to make of themselves: an illustration of the power of grandeur to organize the world (Geertz 1980:102).

Political rituals are not a simple form of giving power, but rituals actually construct power. Political rites are elaborate and efficacious arguments about power and how it is made, and display of material wealth is one of the most prominent strategies within the frame of political rituals. The rites create divine legitimacy because when rituals are the principal medium by which power relationships are constructed, the power or the material embodiment of the political order is usually perceived as coming from divine sources (Bell 1997:129). 'In its cosmological mode, this ''dramaturgy of power'' involves the creation of comprehensive ritual systems that raise the ruler above normal human interaction' (Bell 1997:130). Political rituals aim to demonstrate that the values and forms of social organisation the ritual testifies are neither arbitrary nor temporary, but follow naturally from the way the world is organized (Bell 1997:135).

APPROACHING THE PAST: PREMISES FOR THE MODEL

It is widely held both in anthropology and archaeology that funerals have been central places for renegotiation of society and social reality (e.g. Goody 1962, Bloch & Parry 1987, Parker Pearson 1999, Gansum 2004). Bearing in mind the analyses of Mauss and Geertz, we may add or extend certain aspects of how the world of the living was structured around the dead and in particular the funerals. Fundamental in the understanding of these processes is 'the prestige goods system' (e.g. Friedman & Rowlands 1978, Kristiansen & Rowlands 1998). According to Richard Bradley, prestige goods are not freely accessible, 'they are essential for the performance of particular types of transactions, for example marriage payments, with the result that through limiting access to those objects an elite is able to control the transactions in which they are used. The important element is that the supply of prestige items should be restricted to one section in society' (Bradley 1984:46–47). Moreover, these kinds of object were probably exchanged in a person-to-person relationship (Bradley 1984:55). This is a very crucial aspect, since 'the prestige goods were personal: they could not be bought but had to be obtained through personal relationships and connections; either when the elite received them from far away or when the elite undertook their local redistribution' (Hedeager 1992:89).

The prestige goods system is dependent upon the mutual dependencies and obligations that are created through the gift-giving system. Without the social obligations of the gift, the society and the prestige goods economy could not work (e.g. Mauss 1990). It is for this reason that it is of uttermost importance for the descendants or the other part of an alliance to restore their status and position in society.

However, rather than emphasising diffusion and redistribution in order to understand the pattern of distribution of different artefacts in prehistoric Europe (e.g. Renfrew 1973, Renfrew & Cherry 1986, Scarre & Healy 1993, Sherratt 1997) or, most recently, travelling chiefs (e.g. Kristiansen & Larsson 2005), we will argue that these are to a certain extent the results of transactions which took place as parts of grandiose, funeral parties where local, regional and inter-regional leaders came together with items and aims to create new alliances. It was their social and moral obligation as leaders. And similar, when other leaders died, all the circles of acquaintances were obliged to participate and re-create the alliances (Fig. 1).

Thus, in order to proceed, it is necessary to make some premises and limitations for the model. First, the living participants may be separated into two categories: the mourners

(descendants), and the opposites; because their roles in the ritual are often radically different (Kas 1989:125). As we will argue, it is often the group of the living apart from the family who make the transactions in funerals. It is the descendants who initiate these transactions because power is linked to the presence of persons, and this potential loss or change of power when people are dying is seen as a threat to society and the social hierarchy (Hertz 1960:78). The descendants reconstitute their own power, but the leaders who attend the funerals may also make alliances among themselves.

Secondly, in prehistoric societies we will expect a duration of time between the moment of death and the performance of the rituals. In the case of King Hussein this intermediary period was only one day. The world's leaders attended the funeral in Jordan the day after his death, which is possible today in an industrial world. In prehistory, the length of the time for the preparations of funerals may have varied, but we will assume that the higher the rank of the deceased, the longer the preparations for the celebrations. Every person in position of power who will manifest, confirm, or change their social status or role in society has to participate in the funeral. Thus, as will be shown with archaeological examples, this intermediary period may have lasted for months and even years.

Thirdly, although this intermediary period may bear resemblance to van Gennep's liminal phase (1960), it is different; although it may have been identical in time in some cases. The liminal phase as a *rite de passage* is basically concerned with the deceased and his or her transformation from one stage to another. The intermediary period as we use the term here is, on the other hand, concerned with the descendants and the others who need time to re-organise social relations and society.

Fourthly, the empirical case studies we discuss are elite groups from northern European Bronze and Iron Ages, and a modern state burial in Jordan. These societies are highly different in complexity in terms of territorial organisation (e.g. chiefdoms, state or nation) and their leaders (e.g. chiefs, princes, kings or presidents). We are not discussing the differences between these types of organisations, but merely point out that in these cases it is possible to identify some social and structural aspects the role of death had in the re-constitution of society.

Finally, this model seems plausible for northern European societies in the Bronze and Iron Ages as well as modern states, at least for segments of the people, and the model is probably applicable in other periods and places. Nevertheless, the role of death in society and cosmos is culturally and religiously defined, or in other words, there are limitations to any model which aims to explain parts of the lived life. Following Gananath Obeyesekere and his interpretation of Max Weber's 'ideal types' (Weber 1949), 'Models of the sort I construct in this work are simplifications of the complex empirical data and are never exactly replicated in reality. They are … ''ideal types'', constructs that re-present in topographical form the world of empirical reality' (Obeyesekere 2002:16). The ideal conditions put forward in the model can serve as an understanding exemplifying the complex conditions which occur in empirical reality (Obeyesekere 2002:130), or in this case, the archaeological record.

DEATH AS TRANSACTION: A MODEL

Death transfers social absence to social emergence of new forms. Thus, we will emphasis that:

- It is not only the deceased that dies in the funeral. All of the deceased's social relations end as well, and these social relations need to be recreated and renegotiated by the successors or descendants. Moreover, old alliances may prescribe the re-creation of the former

structures in a way that it occurs within the total context of inter-generation transmissions that in no way involves an alienation from the corporate unit.

- This re-negotiation of social positions, roles, and statuses gives rise to competition, exchange, and creation of new alliances. Even though there are prescribed rules and regulations for these transactions, the society is at its most vulnerable point where power may easily be transferred.
- The importance of participation in these rituals necessitates that people from great distances come, perform, visualise, and manifest their role and position in the society that is re-negotiated, created and become manifested. As a consequence, non-invited chiefs and groups may also turn up at the funerals because they have the possibility to make new alliances and to compete for social status in open ranked societies. Thus, the funerals prescribe a huge amount of 'friendly' as opposed to 'hostile' participators.

Alliances made in funerals may be traceable in the archaeological record as 'imported' or 'exotic' grave goods, or as we shall see below, manifested symbolically in the burial monument itself. Gift giving is crucial in making and maintaining alliances, and based on Mauss' gift-theory the items in themselves embody the alliances. If the alliance was made in an earlier funeral, the rituals ensured and guaranteed the pact between the involved members. When a person dies, this affects the objects. In some cases it seems that the items that created and symbolised the alliances are placed in the grave, such as in the Hochdorf grave discussed below.

One may imagine three different kinds of rationality behind this. First, it is the deceased's personal items that he or she receives as grave goods because they symbolise the alliance or the status obtained by this relationship. Second, it might be the counter-part who deposits the objects in the grave as a means of manifesting that the particular alliance is over. Third, both the objects that belonged to the deceased as well as the items belonging to the other part in the alliance, are given as grave goods.

In the archaeological record it seems that all of these three alternatives are plausible. The first explanation is the most common in archaeological interpretations emphasising that the grave goods reflect the deceased's status. The importance in this case is that it opens up for a wide distribution of objects in prehistoric Europe. If a person from place A made an alliance in a funeral at place B with another person from place C, ideally each person travels only half the distance compared to the traditional notion that a person has to travel from A to C and back (e.g. Kristiansen & Larsson 2005). The exchange of gifts at funerals will therefore enable larger circles of distribution than ordinary trade – partly because one meets numerous people from very different regions – and it may explain why there often exist 'strange' finds in graves from areas where there are no other finds (Fig. 2).

The two last alternatives, where the counter-part deposits his or her object in the alliance, may also explain why there are a variety of grave goods in some funerals. In some cases there are pairs of a particular type of an item, which may indicate that the identical objects represented the alliance. In other cases, these precious objects would have been removed from the burial monument itself as a ritual closing of the 'dead alliances' (cf. Randsborg 1998).

Most often, however, gift-giving involves transactions of different kinds of objects, which are representative for a particular area or social group. Thus, 'grave goods' may comprise objects which normally are referred to as 'exotic', but if the counter-part deposits his or her object from the alliance – which was locally produced or procured from the deceased's area – it will be difficult to

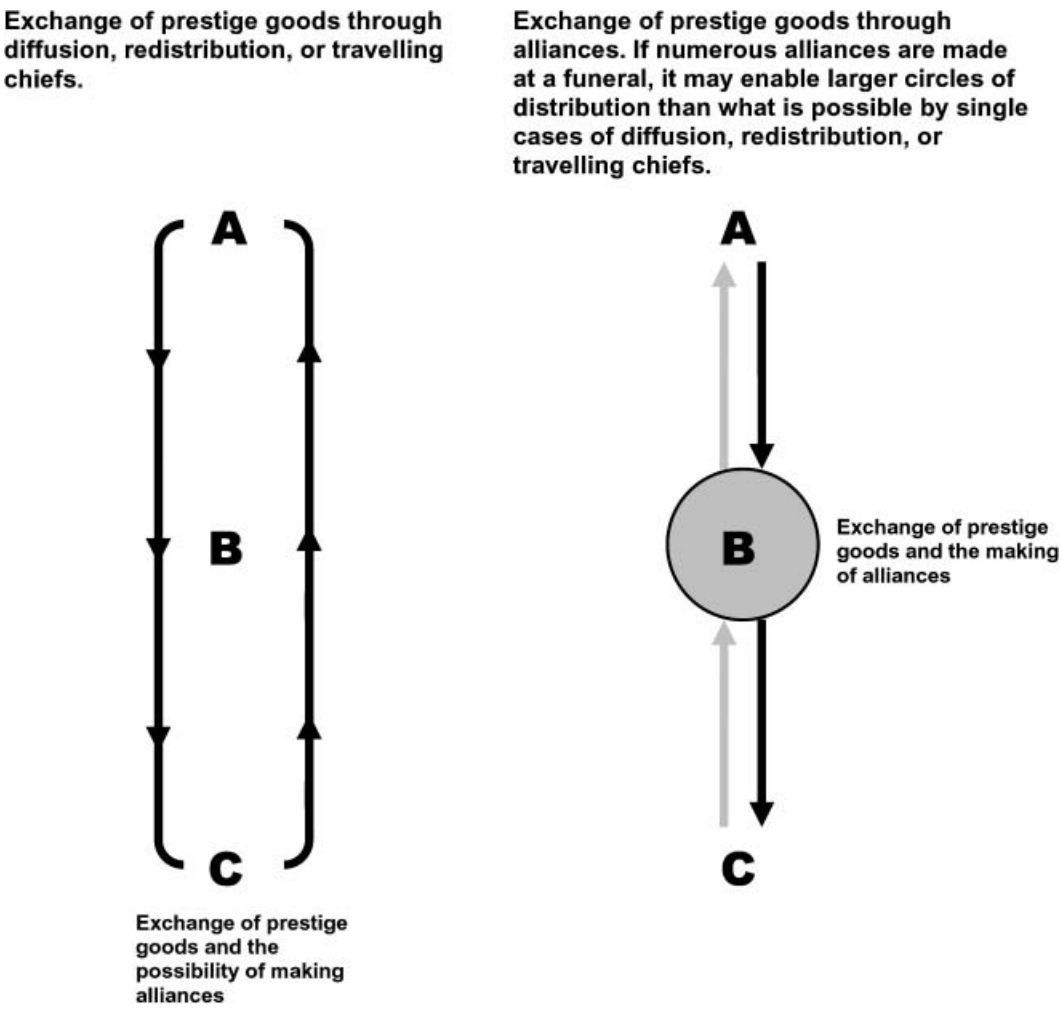

Fig. 2. *A schematic model of exchange of goods through funeral alliances.*

distinguish this object from other locally made items.

In the following we will use this model as an 'ideal type' for an understanding exemplifying parts of the empirical reality (Weber 1949, Obeyesekere 2002). Thus, this model is a framework for understanding parts of the archaeological record, and we will argue that with this model it is possible to shed new light on these aspects of the past: the distribution of grave goods, how the living has participated in the rite, how a monument is constructed, and the funeral rituals' intermediary period. Together, understanding these aspects of the past from this perspective may enhance our knowledge of northern European Bronze and Iron Age societies as well as the importance of death in modern state funerals.

GRAVE GOODS AS AN INDICATOR OF ALLIANCES: THE FUNERAL OF THE 'PRINCELY' GRAVE IN HOCHDORF

The famous Hochdorf grave from Baden Württemberg in Germany belongs to the category of the Late Hallstatt 'princely'

graves, which includes approximately 100 wagon graves dated to the second half of the sixth century BC, primarily grouped in eastern France, western Switzerland and south-western Germany. These burials are commonly placed in chambers covered with monumental burial-mounds. The Hochdorf grave was excavated between 1978 and 1979 (Biel 1985), and due to limitations it is impossible to give a detailed account of the grave and all of the grave goods (Fig. 3). However, Laurent Olivier (1999) has analysed the internal chronology of the grave and the funerary assemblages, and this analysis will be used in the following discussion.

Most scholars believe that the wagon-graves or sites functioned as direct intermediaries for Greco-Etruscan commerce where local raw material and products were traded with Mediterranean luxury products. This may be true, but based on the given premises above one may present another interpretation. Olivier divides the grave goods into three main categories based on the spatial distribution defined by the association with the corpse. These items and categories are generally related to three main activities: body-care, hunting, and exclusive consumption of beverages and food (Olivier 1999:113–115):

- *Corporal grave goods*, including grave goods worn on the body (clothes, jewellery, and a bronze dagger placed beside the belt), grave goods in contact with the body (a bag with fishing equipment and toilet implements, combs, razor, and blankets which the body laid on), and grave goods associated with the body (arrowheads, a big sheet-iron drinking horn with strips of gold, and a small drinking cup of gold).
- *Funerary-endowment grave goods*, including the four-wheeled wagon with various articles deposited on it (among

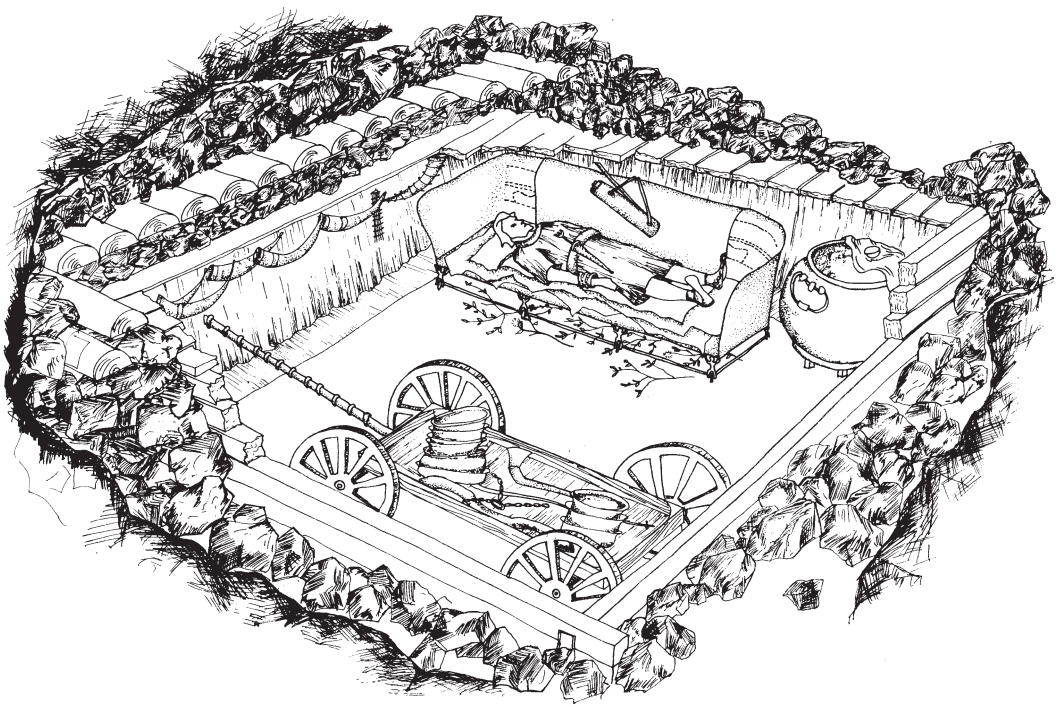

Fig. 3. *The Hochdorf burial chamber (after Parker Pearson 1999).*

other things, decorated harnesses of two horses, a goad, a set of three bowls, nine bronze dishes and plates).

- *Furniture and fittings in the grave*, including carpets and wall hangings, a bronze bench on which the body was laid, and nine drinking-horns were attached to the southern wall. Eight of them were made of aurochs horns, and the ninth, which is more splendid than the others, is the one mentioned above. Finally, in the north-eastern corner of the chamber there was a large bronze cauldron of approximately 500 litres used for hydromel.

Of special importance here is the sharing of food and drink, which has been interpreted as a parallel to the Mediterranean *symposium*. The practice of a funerary 'banquet' is indicated by, on the one hand, articles for drinking (the eight plus one drinking-horns, and the cauldron with hydromel), and on the other hand, objects probably used for consumption of meat (the nine bronze plates and bowls). The latter group of objects is of purely local origin whereas those objects for drinking are 'imported'. The cauldron has a Greek origin, but it has been modified locally. The drinking-horns are more problematic because they are objects that do not belong to the Hallstatt culture-area. In the Hochdorf grave these horns seem to come from Eastern Europe or they were locally made and influenced from this area. The horns were probably not connected to consumption of the hydromel in the cauldron because the small golden cup was better adapted to this beverage, and the cup was placed on the cauldron. Thus, the drinking-horns were most likely for another drink, which is not apparent in the grave (Olivier 1999: 118–119).

The various objects that were deposited in the grave did not arrive there at the same time. The stratigraphy of the tumulus shows that it took several weeks from the beginning of the construction of the funerary chamber and the sealing-up after the installation of the grave. During this period the body must have been kept somewhere else, and probably this period was extremely important because most of the preparation of the body and the grave goods took place prior to this event. There are no archaeological records of these rituals, which may have included for instance animal sacrifices and feasting involving sharing out of food and drink (Olivier 1999:122–123).

Importantly, 'if the selection of these objects is connected to different moments in a process which begins during the life of the deceased, and is prolonged until after his death, then the grave goods do not have just a single, unique, significance in their relationship with the deceased' (Olivier 1999:127). Based on wood found in the tumulus, it is estimated that the burial mound took five years to construct. An access corridor to the central grave was first built and it is estimated that the funerary chamber probably was left open for at least one month when the initial construction of the mound took place. How long the placing rituals of the body in the grave took is uncertain, but the chamber was probably closed accompanied by a deliberate obstruction of the access corridor. Before this was done, some of the grave goods, such as the golden shoes, were finished in the grave chamber itself, perhaps by a craftsman who was brought to Hochdorf just for this occasion. Finally, the mound was built, into which secondary graves were placed (Olivier 1999:128–129).

> Archaeological funerary assemblages are the result of a variety of interactions which occurred in diverse scales of time and space, between a local milieu and the cultural, economic or social environment in which it participated. […] The spatial scale of these conditions extends from purely local situations, the community of the Hochdorf person for instance, to global relationships which are expressed with Mediterranean people (Olivier 1999:132).

Thus, the funerary assemblage has to be seen in relation to the three main ritual sequences: (1) the time before the deceased is placed in the chamber, which lasted for several weeks; (2) the rituals which took place in the chamber before it was closed, which could have lasted from hours to weeks; and (3) the construction of the tumulus, which took five years.

Starting with the last ritual sequence, the construction of the mound itself should be regarded as an important ritual: 'By a deconstruction of a mound into different rituals or actions within stratigraphic sequences, faces and time-sequences, it is possible to illuminate some of the practices and religious perceptions of the past. Each stratigraphic unit from the bottom to the top of the mound represents a distinctive and special ritual practice with its own meanings, prescriptions and performances' (Gansum & Oestigaard 2004:69). Hence, only those who were ritually fit for this religiously defined task could carry out the construction of the mound.

Regarding the placing of the dead in the chamber and the successive rites, it seems that feasting and banqueting have been crucial, which may also have been of utmost importance in the rituals that took place when the chamber was constructed. The cauldron with several hundred litres of hydromel may indicate that the funeral was a huge feast, which included hundreds of people. The nine horns and the nine plates may have been reserved for special persons, and as indicated, they may have been used for another type of beverage. Thus, there have most likely been a hierarchy in the participation (cf. Fig. 1), and the most important, apart from the successors, would have been those who made the most powerful alliances.

As indicated, wagon-graves or sites functioned as direct intermediaries for Greco-Etruscan commerce, the horns have an eastern European origin, and the funeral itself seems to have been the time and location where these transactions took place. The time span from the actual death to the closing of the chamber may have enabled people from long distances to come to Hochdorf, or in other words, the most important rituals and the closing of the chamber would not take place before the right people had arrived. The remaking of alliances and exchange of gifts took place at huge feasts as an integrated part of the funerals. Alliances were created and re-created, negotiated and re-negotiated. There are no reasons to assume that the participation in funerals was less important in the past than it is today.

PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION AS AN INDICATOR OF ALLIANCES: BREDARÖR IN KIVIK

> These institutions have an important aesthetic aspect […] the dances that are carried out in turn, the songs and processions of every kind, the dramatic performances that are given from camp to camp, and by one, and by one associate to another; the objects of every sort that are made, used, ornamented, polished, collected, and lovingly passed on, all that is joyfully received and successfully presented; everything, food, objects, and services, even 'respect' […] is the cause of aesthetic emotion, and not only of emotions of a moral order or relating to self-interest (Mauss 1990:79).

Synnøve des Bouvrie (1990) has analysed Greek tragedies and focused on the audience. Some of her approaches may in a modified version be applicable to our case studies from Bronze and Iron Age Europe. In fact, she argues that we have to analyse the ancient theatre as if the dramas were performed for a non-literate society where the majority of the audience could not read and write. Thus, the aim with the performances was a 'value charging' and to recreate cultural boundaries and institutions. des Bouvrie argues that the Greek tragedies' ultimate goal was not to communicate any

ideas for the individual to reflect upon, but to set the audience in to different cultural loads of motions, because basic cultural truths were at venture (des Bouvrie 1990:116). The whole process and performances were somehow directed by a cultural need, some trans-individual force that put all participants into a set of motions. These motions aimed to create a feeling of oneness, 'guiding the community, and prompting its various members to play different voices for a symphony. This metaphor should suggest what might be going on within each culture, though we cannot see the orchestra playing' (des Bouvrie 1990:117):

> 'It seems to be a fact of culture that a thing may serve an end other than that which it professes to serve. The theatre audience, professing to honour their god and to gather for some enjoyable days, tacitly gathered to create their culture. […] Seeing that […] performances were a public, political institution, involving mass participation, and that one of its central features was to stir senses, emotions and imagination of the audience, we might risk the hypothesis that one of its primary effects was to 'create' the citizenry and its culture, each participant creating his 'self' in interaction with the collective, and the collective thus patterning itself in common identity'' (des Bouvrie 1990:118–119).

des Bouvrie's interpretation is based on Greek tragedies, but we will argue that these ideas of the performance may have wider and more general implications (e.g. Fig. 1). Death is a perfect social setting for creating personal and public identities if we think of funerals as public performances, especially since identities have been dissolved when a person died. Hence, it would have been of uttermost importance to re-create, re-negotiate and manifest the new social structure in collective performances.

As archaeologists it is very rare that we come in contact with ancient performances or the audiences which were involved in different funeral rituals. We are usually left with the end result of their acts and the only person not conducting rituals and making alliances at these events – the deceased. A faint exception to this rule may be seen depicted on some of the grave slabs from the fascinating Bredarör cairn from Kivik, situated in the south-eastern part of Scania (Randsborg 1993, Goldhahn 2005). The Bredarör cairn is among the largest burial monuments in Scandinavia (Larsson 1993), measuring 75 m in diameter, and about 7.5 m high (Randsborg 1993). The central cist contains eight slabs that are decorated with rock engravings (Fig. 4). The date of this famous burial monument is debated (cf. Thrane 1990, Randsborg 1993, Verlaeckt 1993, Kristiansen & Larsson 2005), but during the excavation of Bredarör back in 1931 some cremated and unburnt human bones were found, which have recently been radiocarbon dated to the 14th century BC (cal.). After these 'primary' burials, the cist was probably used for more than 700 years for recurrent rituals of different kinds, including the deposition of human remains (Goldhahn 2005:249).

What interest us in this context is not the presumed deceased chief and his international contacts and odysseys (e.g. Randsborg 1993, Kristiansen & Larsson 2005; cf. Goldhahn 2005), but rather that the participants of the funeral ritual may have manifested themselves on the slabs in the cist (see slabs 7 and 8 in Fig. 4). This particular funeral ritual seems to involve different kinds of engendered procession (see Coles 2003), including offerings of different animals, dancing, musicians, and other kinds of ceremonies (Fig. 5). Besides honouring the deceased it is tempting to suggest that what is depicted on these slabs is the negotiation and re-negotiation of different alliances and engendered social relationships that the deceased had possessed on this side of reality. On the other slabs in the decorated cist we find depictions of ships, horses, wheels (?), ceremonial axes and spears (slabs 1–6, Figs. 4, 5). These objects and animals are perhaps the means exchanged between

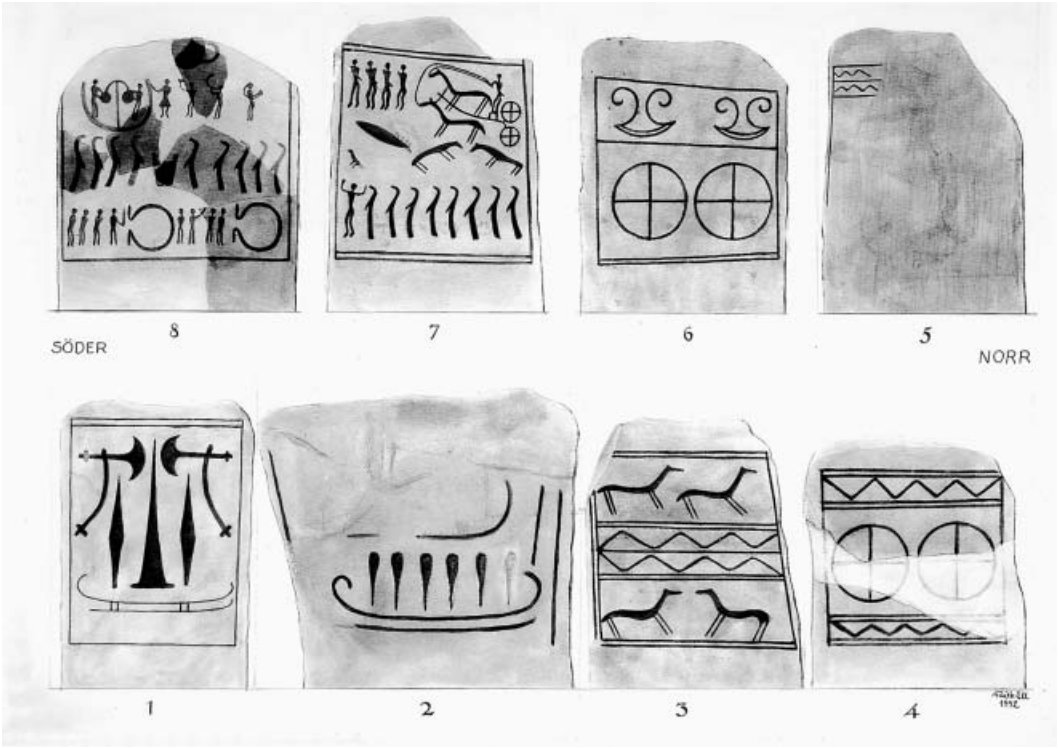

Fig. 4. *The rock engravings from Bredarör in Kivik (after Goldhahn 1999).*

the participants in the funeral rituals, and thus, the rock engravings can be interpreted as depictions of *death as transactions*: the making of alliances which in a very directly way was manifested in the impressive monument itself.

In this context it is important to stress that the subject or the reason for this ceremonial occasion – the deceased – seems to be absent on the decorated slabs; which may be understood in line with the presented model – the deceased was a medium for other purposes (Figs. 1, 5).

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE MONUMENT AS AN INDICATOR OF ALLIANCES: THE MJELTEHAUGEN AT GISKE

The engravings from Bredarör underline the importance of performances and participations in different kinds of rituals when re-creating, re-negotiating and manifesting different social alliances and gender identities, especially when these structures are at the weakest and most open for change – during funeral ceremonies (see Figs. 1, 5). One way to grasp the essence of these re-negotiations is to focus on the monument and its different spheres of symbolic meanings. Therefore, we would like to proceed our venture to one of the most spectacular Bronze Age burials from present day western Norway; Mjeltehaugen situated on the small island of Giske in Sunnmøre.

Mjeltehaugen is the northernmost barrow in Scandinavia from the Early Bronze Age. It comprises also one of the largest finds of rock engravings in a grave context (Mandt 1983), only outnumbered by the famous Bredarör and Sagaholm burials from present day Sweden (Randsborg 1993, Goldhahn

Fig. 5. *The Bredarör cairn during the intermediary period. Reconstruction from 1936 by Arvid Fougstedt (1888–1949). Photo: Joakim Goldhahn after printed version in Norrköpings Skolmuseum.*

1999, 2005). The monument is about 22–25 m in diameter and 2–3 m in height, and it contained an inner cairn that was covered with a mound. It is dated to the Early Bronze Age, most likely Montelius' period II (Linge 2004). It was excavated three times during the 19th century by different means and standards. Thus, there are some uncertainties regarding the construction phases of the monument, but the most important finds in this context are the 120 fragments of decorated slabs with rock engravings (Figs. 6–8).

There have been several different interpretations of the finds of the engravings (Mandt 1983), but the recent work and re-examination by Trond Linge suggest that there have been two larger slabs that have covered eight smaller cists containing cremated bones (Linge 2005). The slabs are engraved with abstract, geometrical patterns and some ship motifs made in a very notable regional style (e.g. Mandt 1991, Sognnes 2001). According to Linge, the engravings were facing the deceased and every cist seems to be associated with one ship engraving (Fig. 6).

We will suggest that by analysing the construction phases of this monument (Fig. 7), one is able to trace the different circles and spheres of contacts who were involved in the funeral ceremonies when Mjeltehaugen was constructed. We may distinguish (1) a local level; (2) a regional level; and (3) an inter-regional level (Figs. 6–8). These three different contact spheres are, as we interpret it, manifested in the monument and represent the various levels of people who participated in the funeral ceremonies.

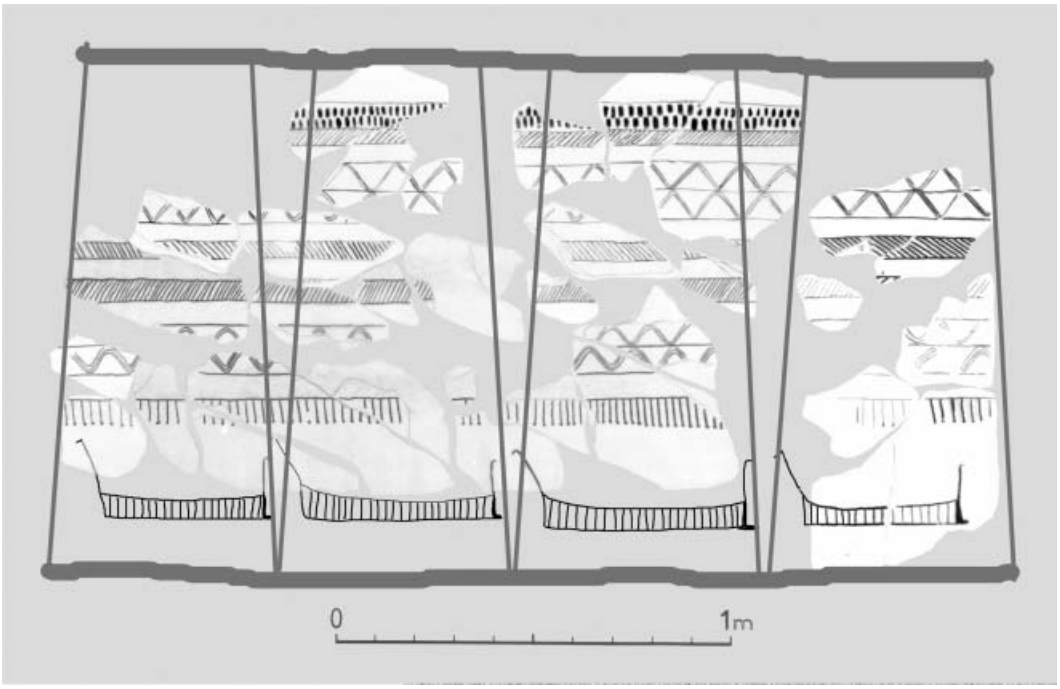

Fig. 6. *One of the reconstructed engraved slabs from Mjeltehaugen (after Linge 2005).*

A LOCAL LEVEL

Building a monument is a way of re-creating alliances and networks at the local level where the family and friends who live together are included in the funeral, which at a family level may represent some of the most important (and/or tragic) events in their lives. It creates common memories in the local community. These shared experiences created through ritual participation re-establish social bonds in the village or the community. In the case of Mjeltehaugen this involves the construction of the cairn, which is the most common way of building and commemorating the deceased in this region.

A REGIONAL LEVEL

One of the most fascinating features with this find is the petrographic analysis of the decorated slabs (Fig. 6). The slabs are made of a special type of slate that only occurs in two different regions in Western Norway (Askvik 1983:33). Thus, the slabs either originate from the Trøndelag-region some 250 km north-east or the Sunnfjord area some 100 km south of the Giske Island

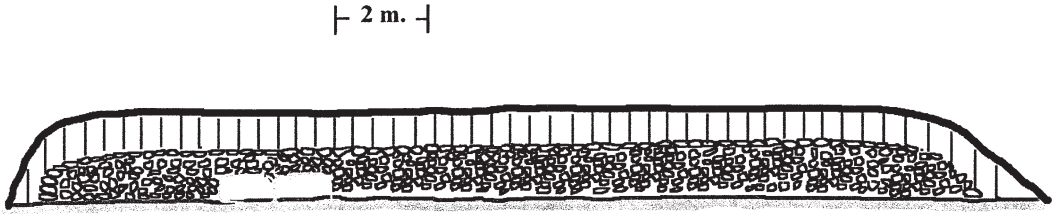

Fig. 7. *A schematic profile of the Mjeltehaugen monument (after Linge 2004).*

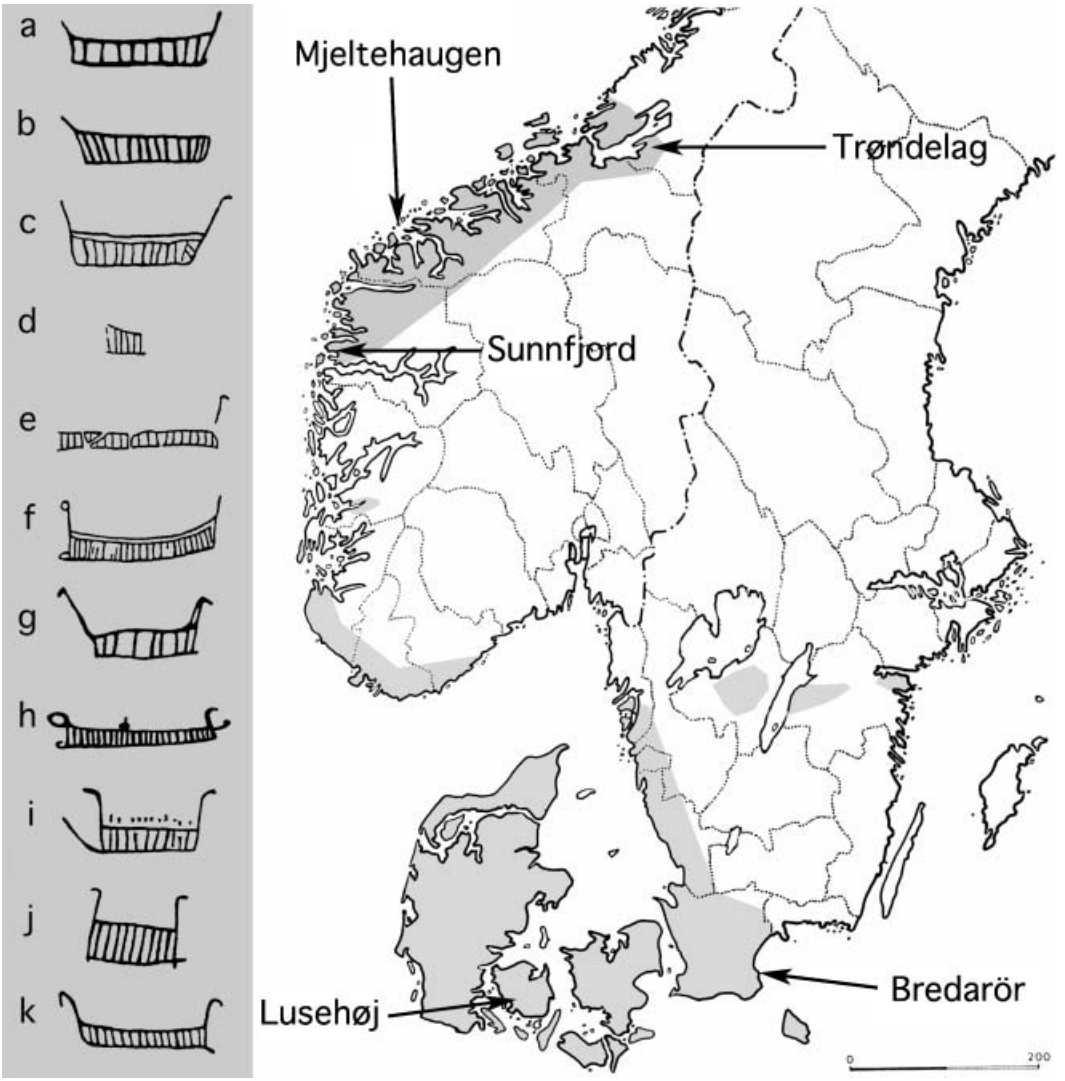

Fig. 8. *South Scandinavia with Mjeltehaugen, Lusehøj, Bredarör in Kivik, and the possible slate quarry in Sunnfjord or Trøndelag. Legend: dark grey area represents the major distribution area of the Mjeltehaugen regional ship style; a – from Auran in Trøndelag; b – Leirfall in Trøndelag; c – Røkke in Trøndelag; d – burial slab from Skjervoll in Trøndelag; e – Mjeltehaugen from Giske; f – Krabbestig in Nordfjord; g – Domba in Sunnfjord; h – Unneset in Sunnfjord; i – Leirvåg in Sunnfjord; j – Leirvåg in Sunnfjord; k – Vagndal in Hardanger. Light grey area represents the major distribution of Bronze Age mounds in Scandinavia (this figure is based on documentation and information in Askvik 1983; Mandt 1983, 1991, Sognnes 2001, Linge 2004).*

(Fig. 8). Regardless of whether the quarry was in the north or the south, the emphasis has been put on the importance of this special type of slate. Another remarkable feature is that this region, from Sunnfjord in south to the Trøndelag-region in the north, corresponds to the area where this particular type of ship motifs appears on rock

engravings (Mandt 1991, Sognnes 2001, Linge 2004). We interpret this pattern as a reflection of a regional identity (Fig. 8), perhaps associated with a warrior elite and its ideology.

AN INTER-REGIONAL LEVEL

The rock engravings themselves refer to the regional level, but the practice of carving them on slabs, which are incorporated in graves, refers to an inter-regional tradition stretching from northern Germany in the south to Trøndelag in Norway in the north (Kaul 2004: 137–239). The funeral practice using a mound, instead of the local and more common tradition of building cairns, also refers to this inter-regional level (Nordenborg Myhre 2004). This is important to stress since the Mjeltehaugen is, as indicated, the northernmost barrow found in Scandinavia from the Early Bronze Age (Fig. 8).

These different levels and identities are possible to interpret as various symbolic expression or spheres reflecting different engendered groups of people that have interacted with the dead and attended the funeral (cf. Figs. 1, 8). The burial practice with rock engravings on slabs buried in a mound may refer to both an inter-regional aristocratic tradition as well as a regional warrior group who joined the funeral, and who may even have engraved the huge, but fragile, slabs themselves. The fact that the slabs are transported from a quarry 100–250 km away indicates that people at a regional level have manifested their identities and relations to the deceased in the monument. This is also stressed by the regional ship style. At a local level relatives and villagers have participated and manifested themselves in a similar way by building the cairn.

One important thing to stress in this context is that all these levels of participation and alliances have worked simultaneously in the funeral ceremonies, since the rock-carvings are engraved on the slabs at a local spot where the funeral was conducted.

It is tempting, and not too far-fetched, to interpret the Mjeltehaugen complex as a monument that was raised over a locally based regional warrior group which had inter-regional significance. The eight cists with cremated bones, which have been covered jointly by the two precious engraved slabs of a rare slate, with one ship engraving facing each of the deceased individuals (Fig. 6), could then be perceived as a symbolic constructed ship crew heading for their last journey.

THE INTERMEDIARY PERIOD AS AN INDICATOR OF ALLIANCES: LUSEHØJ IN DENMARK

Both the examples from Bredarör and Mjeltehaugen show the great potential of the proposed shift *from the dead to the living* when studying past and present burial rituals. We may also perceive this as an analytic shift *from the finished monument to the intermediary phase of the funeral ceremony*, or more precisely, to the time period between the occasion of death to the completion of the re-negotiations of alliances in funerals. This might be illustrated with our final case, Lusehøj from Funen in Denmark (Thrane 1984).

It is highly likely and reasonable, and indeed mandatory, that there are huge masses of people and leaders participating in the funerals discussed above, but the problem is: how is it possible to arrange such grandiose rituals from a practical point of view? In order to gather huge masses of people, and in particular leaders and elites from distances far away, it necessitates that the bad (or good?) news of an actual death is spread throughout large areas and that certain dates are set regarding when the main rituals will be carried out.

Physiologically, the corpse will immediately start decaying and the problem with the rotting flesh has to be solved in one way or

another. A minimalist and tentative definition of 'funeral' as a practice is that it is 'at least a ritual preparation of the flesh of the deceased' whether this preparation is consumption by fire or preservation of the flesh as with mummification (Oestigaard 2005: 202). Cremation as a funeral practice gives time to prepare the most grandiose rituals because it consists of an intermediary period, and a cremation can be divided into three phases: (1) the time and place where the body was cremated; (2) the intermediary period in time and space (this interval increases the room for manoeuvre in those aspects that are concerned with the renewal, reorganisation and re-legitimisation of relations between the living); and (3) the time and place where the cremated remains were deposited or buried (Oestigaard 1999). In short: the intermediary period is crucial because it enables a time depth in the rituals.

Based on the osteological analysis of the cremated bones from Lusehøj, together with stratigraphical evidences, Fredrik Svanberg (2005) has reanalysed and reinterpreted Lusehøj from Funen in Denmark, a large mound which is representative of aristocratic funerals in the Late Bronze Age. The exclusive grave assemblage dates the grave to the latter half of period V, e.g. the 8th century BC (cal.) (Thrane 1984). What is remarkable with the archaeological remains from Lusehøj is that it is possible to interpret the remains from the excavations as different stages in a prolonged burial ceremony (Svanberg 2005), equivalent to the already discussed grave from Hochdorf. The mound in Lusehøj covered both traces of the actual cremation of the deceased as well as a longhouse, and according to the stratigraphical evidence the house was built before the mound was constructed.

In his publication of Lusehøj, Henrik Thrane (1984) interprets the different finds of cremated human bones as individual cremation burials. Based on a reinterpretation of the original analysis of the cremated bones, which shows that it is highly probable that the cremated bones from Grave GX and AO in Lusehøj belong to one and the same individual (Svanberg 2005:87–89), Svanberg has suggested another interpretation of these finds. After the cremation took place at 'grave' GX (Fig. 9.1), parts of the deceased were gathered in a spectacular bronze vessel (Fig. 9.2), which according to traditional interpretations is 'imported' from northern Italy (Thrane 1984, Kristiansen 1993), and placed in grave AO (Fig. 9.3).

Before the burial ceremony was ended, Svanberg also suggests that the urn was placed in the house for a *lid de parade* (Fig. 9.2). After this grandiose event, which could have taken a considerable length of time, the urn was finally moved some few metres away where it was placed in a stone cist prior to the construction of the large mound (Fig. 9.3). Before this was done, the house was torn down as a part of the burial ceremony (Svanberg 2005:87–89). 'What function would such a house model, constructed right on top of a pyre site, have? A good deal of work had been put into its construction, presumably so that it could stand for a certain period of time and be admired' (Svanberg 2005:88).

Apart from mourning and grieving, the *lid de parade* in Lusehøj will enable both time and space for organising the setting where alliances could take place: *time* to inform about the death and for leaders to come to the ritual, and *space* where the transactions could take place. Alliances may be made both as a part of the *lid de parade* and when the deceased eventually was buried during elaborate rituals.

This interpretation works well for cremations, but what about inhumations where the intermediary period is drastically reduced due to the fact that the body decays? There might have been certain ways of delaying the decaying process. The corpse could have been smeared with wax or other preserving items, but apart from mummification, the decaying process is inevitable and cannot be stopped. Nevertheless, an inhumation also opens up for an intermediary period.

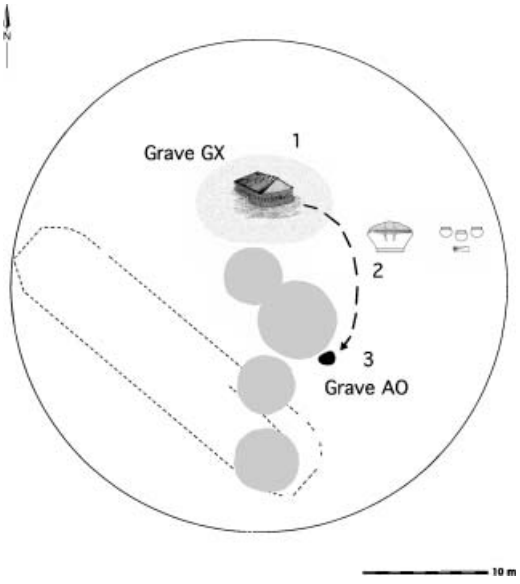

Fig. 9. *Different stages of the burial ritual in Lusehøj according to Fredrik Svanberg: 1 – cremation pit ('grave' GX), 2 –* lit de parade *and the intermediary period, 3 – the closing of the ritual (urn grave AO) (reworked after Thrane 1984 and Svanberg 2005).*

This leads us back to the magnificent Hochdorf grave where the time sequences of the burial mound show that it took several weeks between the beginning of the construction and the closing of the funeral chamber. It is during this period that various, hierarchical organised funerary 'banquets' were carried out. The construction of the mound itself took five years (Olivier 1999:128–129). Thus, there are two main ritual phases: (1) several weeks where feasting and banquets took place including the time when the chamber was open during the initial construction of the mound; and (2) a five-year construction phase of the mound. The first phase must have been the most important one, but the Hochdorf grave was for five years a ritual scene and axis where it was possible to re-negotiate relations and alliances.

CONCLUSIONS

In this model of *death as transactions* we have focused on elites and their funeral rituals, based on the assumption that personal alliances and gift-giving including marriage were crucial in northern European Bronze and Iron Ages. The importance of death as the context of social elaboration and social creation is based on encompassing principles of opposition and exchange (e.g. Holmberg 1996:190). Thus, the suggested shift – *from the dead to the living* – may have implications for interpretation of our traditional understanding of what a funeral is, what 'grave goods' represent, and the reason behind constructing monuments in the past as well as in the present.

Death is a problem of the living. Dead people have no problems. The contra-social aspects of death in a society are important because the funeral practices revitalise what is culturally conceived to be most essential to the reproduction of the social order (Bloch & Parry 1987:7). Hence, we had a dual objective with this analysis: first, to develop a new model of the importance of funerals in prehistoric societies, and second, to use this model to challenge traditional notions concerning exchange of goods whether these are based on diffusionism, notions of 'import' or 'export', or travelling chiefs exploring huge areas. If we move the focus *from the dead to the living*, one may suggest that funerals are symbolic representations of the ritual participants and the different levels of alliances they were parts of, which they re-negotiated during funerals. And as we have suggested above, this may be traceable both in different 'gifts' to the dead as well as in the burial monument itself.

If death is one of the most important social settings in a society, this implies that there are a lot of considerations to be made within a society regarding how the funeral rites should be performed. The descendants' performance of the funeral rite includes a concern for the spiritual world and the

ancestors as well as the society in general. However, these ritual performances may only be possible after a long social struggle where power is contested and combated. The ritual winners will be allowed to perform the rituals as they want in front of everyone, and thereby the participants in the funeral will witness and accept the new social order. Hence, we may conclude that as well as 'change equals death', 'death equals change', and in many cases were funerals more important for the living than the dead.

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