

**MONO
GRAPHS^{OF}**
THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SOCIETY OF FINLAND



Entangled beliefs and rituals

Religion in Finland and Sápmi from
Stone Age to contemporary times

Tiina Äikäs & Sanna Lipkin (editors)



Published by the Archaeological Society of Finland www.sarks.fi

Layout: Elise Liikala

Cover image: Tiina Äikäs

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ISBN 978-952-68453-8-8 (online - PDF)

Monographs of the Archaeological Society of Finland ISSN-L 1799-8611

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Table of content

| | | |
|----|---|-----|
| | Tiina Äikäs, Sanna Lipkin & Marja Ahola: | |
| | Introduction: Entangled rituals and beliefs from contemporary times to prehistory | 2 |
| 1 | Hanna Puolakka: Ancestors and additional bones: Mixing of burial traditions in Late Iron Age Finland | 16 |
| 2 | Ulla Moilanen & Markus Hiekkanen: Atypical burials and variations in burial customs in the church of Renko, Finland | 35 |
| 3 | Sanna Lipkin: The clothed dead body in Northern Ostrobothnian Finland between the 17th and mid-19th centuries | 54 |
| 4 | Sanna Ritari-Kallio: A bottle of spirits for Saint Peter? Grave goods in Finland during the modern period | 70 |
| 5 | Mirette Modarress: Turkansaari chapel and the material linkage of religious and socio-economic activities in the Oulu region in the 17th century | 91 |
| 6 | Minerva Piha: Archaeological and lexical perspectives on indigenous South Saami religion | 110 |
| 7 | Marja Ahola & Tiina Äikäs: Heritage of past and present: Cultural processes of heritage-making at the ritual sites of Taatsi and Jönsas | 158 |
| 8 | Sonja Hukantaival: Vital scrap: The agency of objects and materials in the Finnish 19th-century world view | 181 |
| 9 | Noora Hemminki: From professional educator to labour movement agitator: The Devil's role in an industrial context | 200 |
| 10 | Vesa-Pekka Herva & Oula Seitsonen: The haunting and blessing of Kankiniemi: Coping with the ghosts of the Second World War in northernmost Finland (Photo essay) | 225 |
| 11 | Janne Ikäheimo: The rescue excavation and reburial of late pet animals as explorative archaeological autoethnography | 236 |
| 12 | Howard Williams: Entangled rituals: Death, place, and archaeological practice (Discussion) | 253 |

Introduction: Entangled rituals and beliefs from contemporary times to prehistory

Tiina Äikäs, Sanna Lipkin & Marja Ahola

When the grandmother of one of the authors passed away, her children placed a certain brooch into her coffin. This brooch had been of special importance and pride for the grandmother: it was made from the golden lyre-shaped pins that she had received from her children when they graduated from upper secondary school, as is a common habit in Finland. In addition, woollen socks knit by her sister were put on her feet. These objects were important not only to the deceased but also to her relatives, and they felt that the rightful place of these items was in the coffin with the deceased.

Although the grandmother was buried in accordance with a Christian funerary practice, the items placed in her grave do not encode Christian tradition. Indeed, if the burial should ever be investigated by future archaeologists, they would be in trouble if they blindly followed the idea that grave goods (with the exception of some adornments) indicate non-Christian burials (e.g. Purhonen 1998). This is, however, often the case with archaeological research that studies material remains instead of living tradition. Indeed, Timothy Insoll (2011: 3, cf. 2009) has stated that because archaeologists often study static material residues, “in turn, perhaps albeit subconsciously, this static image is transferred onto the beliefs and ritual practices of both individuals and communities that generated the archaeological material. Instead it can be posited that some of this material is perhaps structured by much more fluid, dynamic, and active behaviours.” Indeed, as the example mentioned above shows, even in contemporary Lutheran Christian society, there is a need to give something to the deceased. This does not indicate that people today believe the deceased needs these objects in the afterlife but is rather an indication of their own needs and wishes. In other words, of the fluid and dynamic behaviour of the community.

In this book, we use 11 case studies from Finland and Sápmi¹ to challenge the static image of the archaeology of religion. Since in a wider European perspective, this area was Christianized relatively late (Purhonen 1998; Kylli 2012), placing the geographical spectrum of the articles in Finland and Sápmi enables the study of dynamic processes related to rituals and beliefs. Indeed, as the articles in this volume demonstrate, even after Christianization, old traditions of both the Saami religion and Finnish folk beliefs lived side by side with Christianity for centuries. By examining the changes and entangled relations in belief systems from contemporary times to prehistory, we aim to demonstrate the dynamic, fluid, and entangled nature of both past and contemporary rituals and beliefs. At the same time, we show that the archaeology of religion is a current topic within Finnish archaeology. Indeed, even though the field of archaeology of religion is relatively small in Finland, within the last two decades or so, a growing interest towards the study of religion and religious rituals has nevertheless risen and topics like shamanism, memory, and ritual landscape have been studied in a Finnish context (e.g. Lahelma 2008; Wessman 2010; Äikäs 2015; Lipkin and Kallio-Seppä 2020).

¹ The cultural region traditionally inhabited by the indigenous Saami people in Northern Norway, Sweden, Finland, and the Kola Peninsula.

To bring together Finnish archaeologists working with ritual and religion, Tiina Äikäs, Sanna Lipkin, and Sonja Hukantaival arranged a workshop entitled “New research on Archaeology of Religion in Finland” in Tvärminne, Finland in March 2017. The articles in this book are mainly based on papers given at this workshop. Even though the cases come from Finland and Sápmi, they reflect themes that are of importance to researchers in other areas too, such as the heritagization of ritual places, changes and continuity in funerary practices, the fluid border between mundane and ritual, and the long roots of contemporary ritual practices. In this sense, the chapters relate to wider international debates on these topics (e.g. Bradley 2005; Insoll 2007; Williams 2011a, 2013; Mytum 2013; Coleman 2019). In the future, transnational studies in the north could shed even more light onto the entangled processes of religious change and ritual practices.

Past (death) rituals in contemporary society

Death is constantly around us, even though in contemporary society it is often hidden and left as the responsibility of hospitals, hospices, and funeral homes. Since burials are an important source of information for archaeology, archaeologists often mediate narratives of the dead for the living. For contemporary people, the narrative of past death offered by archaeologists can be used as a safe, distant place to deal with the current discomfort surrounding death, dying, and mourning. (Williams and Atkin 2015; Williams 2018; Büster et al. 2018.) Indeed, as Howard Williams and Alison Atkin (2015) state: “[funerary archaeology] connects stories of past lives and past deaths with experiences and anxieties surrounding mortality and commemoration today. Engaging with the archaeology of death and burial is in part about exploring one’s own mortality, and beliefs and perceptions about death and the dead.” As Williams (2011b: 93) describes it, archaeologists can also act as “a form of modern-day mortuary ritual specialist mediating remembrance of the distant past.” In this book, Herva and Seitsonen (Ch. 10) demonstrate how archaeologists can help individuals to reconcile with a past burden. Similarly, during the fieldwork Äikäs and Ikäheimo carried out at the hanging tree of Taavetti Lukkarinen in Oulu, Finland, the archaeological excavations and the documentation of the hanging tree memorial provided an opportunity for the relatives of the late Lukkarinen (hanged in 1916) to visit the site. One of them described the work of the archaeologists as “purifying work that eases the tragedies of generations” (Ikäheimo and Äikäs 2018: 178).

As the example in the beginning of the chapter showed, death might also raise a need to return to old rituals. Reasons for placing objects into graves may vary. It can be seen as a respectful way of disposing of the possessions of the deceased (Ucko 1969) or it may relate to emotional ideas about the dead loved one (Lipkin et al. in press). For example, even though the rational mind may tell a different story, the deceased could have been provided with woollen socks because it was thought that the dead person might otherwise feel cold. Interestingly, providing the deceased with woollen socks echoes some past funerary traditions. In Finnish funerary tradition between the 17th and 19th centuries, the deceased wore often stockings on their feet (Lipkin and Kuokkanen 2014), although to prevent haunting, the left sock was sometimes placed on the right foot and vice versa (Waronen 1898: 56–58). In relation to this, in this book Sanna Lipkin (Ch. 3) examines post-medieval funerary attire, beliefs, and folklore in relation to the dressing of the body and the ways in which a clothed dead body was perceived by contemporary people. It was important that the deceased were comfortable in their coffins, and for this reason they were given items they were thought to need while waiting for the Resurrection. During the 18th and 19th centuries in Finland, grave goods were also left in burials inside churches, churchyards, and cemeteries, as Sanna Ritari-Kallio (Ch. 4) describes in this book. These items are evident both in folklore records and less prominently in archaeological material.

As the woollen sock example shows, sometimes the ritual practice has stayed the same even though the meaning of the action has changed. The idea behind this statement lies in Catherine Bell's (1992) definition of a ritual. According to Bell (1992: 7), a ritual is not a set of practices that rise from theory or thought but a strategic way of acting that differentiates certain acts from others, an act of *ritualization*. Indeed, it is ritualization, not the dogmas of faith, that separates the sacred from the profane. When the focus is moved from theory to practice, it is easier to understand why ritualization can include both the repetition of a centuries-old tradition and intentional improvisation: the focus of these acts lies in differentiation, not in rewriting dogma (Bell 1992: 90–91). From this perspective, the act of dressing the dead in woollen socks can be seen both as a repetition of an old tradition and as an act of ritualization in which the dead body is set apart from the living. Despite the historical continuity, transformation, and flux of belief systems and related rituals, it is evident that they also preserve elements of social memory (Silva 2015: 169–170).

If we return once more to the example of the woollen socks, we see how the meanings of ritual traditions can change during the course of time and might not even be the same for everybody to begin with (Barad 2007: 335; Keesing 2012). Indeed, in relation to prehistory, Liv Nilsson Stutz (2003) has suggested that people may repeat ritual practices as they had been done before – even if the original meaning of the action has already been forgotten. At the same time, new practices also emerge. In the Netherlands today, for example, people are allowed to scatter and divide cremation ashes (Mathisjssen 2017). This has resulted in the birth of new post-cremation ritualization of the ashes that includes tattoos, art, and jewellery made from the cremains (Heessels 2012). Rather than being in line with Christian funerary traditions, these practices echo past funerary practices in which human remains have been treated in various ways. For example, on Neolithic Gotland, new burials were placed vertically in relation to old burials and the skulls of the old burials were removed (Andersson 2004). Through prehistory and history, pendants or amulets have also been made from human bones and human remains have been used for magical purposes (e.g., Fuglesang 1989; Pettitt 2010; Lee and Johnston 2015). In the Finnish historical context, they were often related to the power of death and haunting (Moilanen 2015; Tittonen 2008; Koski 2010: 242).

People can have different reasons for wanting to interact with the departed in this material way. In a contemporary context, Heessels (2012) suggests that cremated human remains have the potential to evoke physical and intense relationships with the dead, thus providing a way to commemorate – and even converse with – the dead. Although there are no written records, this could well have been the case in the deep past too (e.g., Nilsson Stutz et al. 2013; Larsson 2017; Ahola 2019). Indeed, the funerary traditions recorded from Neolithic Gotland are no exception in the archaeological record. On the contrary, burial reuse is known worldwide and is commonly accepted as intentional behaviour relating to how people comprehend the material remains of past generations (Bradley 2002; van Dyke and Alcock 2003; Borić 2010; Williams 2013). Another way in which the departed are still among us is demonstrated in the photo essay by Vesa-Pekka Herva and Oula Seitsonen (Ch. 10). While excavating German sites from the Second World War in Finnish Lapland, they came across a prisoner-of-war camp where the past deaths had caused a haunting effect on the site that needed reconciling. Even though many people in contemporary society deny the existence of ghosts, the popularity of different theme walks related to ghosts and horror stories in different parts of the world demonstrate a constant fascination with these things (see Holloway 2010; Bucior 2019). Some of the ghosts also need to be brought to peace in different ways, as was shown by the deposition at the hanging tree memorial in Oulu (Ikäheimo et al. 2016).

A continuing relationship with the deceased is not limited to humans but also involves non-human animals and can be seen in the wish to rebury one's companion animals. In his photo essay, Janne Ikäheimo (Ch. 11) makes an autoethnographic study of the excavation and reburial of his dead gerbils, an event that seemed to evoke strong feelings as well as offer an opportunity to reflect on the

memorialization of companion animals. Removing deceased companion animals from an endangered resting place demonstrates that death does not break the bond between humans and their companion animals. This is also witnessed by the maintenance of and visits to animal graves (Äikäs et al. in press).

In contemporary society, which is often described as secularized and rootless, neo-spirituality, heritagization, and a connection to past traditions are ways to create meaningful relations to the past (see also Papastephanou 2018; Ribberink et al. 2018; Possamai 2019). In Sweden, Howard Williams (2011a, 2012; see also Back Danielsson 2011) has noted that contemporary memory groves make references to prehistory and to historical times both in their use of material culture and their location in the landscape. Some references take their form from an archaeological relic whereas others reuse old monuments, such as 19th-century stone and iron memorials. Some of the references seem to have been made by design, such as pseudo-runic inscriptions, whereas others are more subtle and may be involuntary. This has also been shown to be the case at the cemetery in Kirkkonummi, Southern Finland, where the planning of the memorial structure makes several references to archaeological remains such as Stonehenge (Ikäheimo 2011; Ikäheimo & Äikäs 2017). In addition to Kirkkonummi, the same phenomenon is present also at the cemetery of Hietaniemi, Southern Finland, where 19th-century tombstones resemble Bronze Age cairns or Viking Age rune stones, and even at some contemporary pet cemeteries (Figure 0.1).



Figure 0.1. a–b) 19th-century tombstones resembling prehistoric monuments (Photographs: M. Ahola, 2019) and c) a pet memorial in Turku resembling a Troy Town (Fi jatulintarha, Sw jungfrudans). (Photographs: T. Äikäs, 2019.)

At the same time, old sites can gain new meanings. The cases presented by Tiina Äikäs and Marja Ahola (Ch. 7) in this book show how sacred places and rituals can be reborn in contemporary society either as part of modern spiritual practices or of a heritagization process. Interestingly, the Stone Age burial site in Jönsas has not regained a new spiritual meaning but has become a part of modern urban planning. On the other hand, the Iron Age and historical Saami offering place in Taatsi has also in recent years been visited by tourists, as well as those seemingly seeking a spiritual connection. Another aspect of the heritagization of sacredness is its museumification by means of presenting sacred places and objects in museums. This might change the status of religious objects from something that is interacted with to something that is looked at, although some museums encourage their visitors to interact ritually with the objects in exhibitions. (Paine 2013.) Also Saami sacred places are presented in museums, but they are often described as something belonging to the past without references to their contemporary spiritual meanings (Äikäs 2019).

Changes and continuity in churches and burials

Just like contemporary cemeteries reusing old memorials and utilizing references to the past in the form of memorials, also prehistoric burials have sometimes been made in connection to the past. For example, at the Stone Age cemetery of Jönsas, presented as a case study in the chapter by Äikäs and Ahola (Ch. 7), new burials were likely dug among older ones to connect with the past generation (Ahola 2017). Like the meaning of other ritual practices, the meaning of the burial sites might also have changed during the course of time. Indeed, Sarah Semple (1998) has shown how the Anglo-Saxon people reused Bronze Age burial mounds and Neolithic long barrows for burials that she interprets to be those of criminals whose crime demanded a punishment after death in a burial place inhabited by scary creatures, such as dragons. During the course of time, the initial function of the site could also have been lost, and while the location of the site might still have been remembered, it could have been reinterpreted within a framework that is nowadays considered mythological. For example, the Finnish name for a Bronze Age cairn (Fi *hiidenkiuas*, which could be translated as ‘(sauna) stove of the hiisi’) refers to a mythical creature, *hiisi*², that is often considered malevolent. Similarly, Kevin Grant (2016: 162–163) describes how in 19th-century Scotland burial mounds were described as ‘*cnocan shithichean*’, fairy mounds, as they had gained this interpretation in folk belief. According to Grant: “*sithichean* [fairies] could at once be real characters in the landscape, the subject of tales about the past, explanations for ancient landscape features, and allegories for the land of the dead”.

However, as stated above, rituals can also be performed in a certain way – or a certain place – because this is how the ritual is supposed to be done. For example, many non-religious people in Finland are buried in a Lutheran cemetery because there are very few secular cemeteries. Many of these are owned and maintained by local freethinkers’ associations and do not allow burials of non-members. The first secular cemetery in Finland was established in 1929 in Kotka. Nevertheless, even for atheists, the sense of belonging and burial rituals are important. (Pajari in press). At the same time, personal death rituals – such as dressing the dead in woollen socks – also exist. Accordingly, the ritual practices people engage in during and after the primary burial can be evoked by a mixture of personal, communal, rational, and emotional reasons and hence may not be entirely connected to changes in the world view shared by society.

In this book, Hanna Puolakka (Ch. 1) discusses the meaning of different burial customs, especially the presence of cremations and additional bones within inhumation burials in cemeteries from AD 1000–1400. She interprets these as signs of a slow process of Christianization where hybrid ritual practices were in use. This case demonstrates how changes in religion do not necessarily reflect direct-

2. Interestingly, the original meaning of the word referred to a pre-Christian sacred place, but during Christianization the word changed its meaning first to refer to this often malevolent creature and then to Hell (Anttonen 2008).

ly on ritual practices, but the elements of old and new ritual traditions can remain entangled. Not only do traditions change but they are also endowed with different meanings and perceptions by the performers of rituals. This becomes evident in Lipkin's chapter (Ch. 3), which discusses the flux of traditions and open-ended material practices related to an intra-active clothed dead body during the post-medieval period and beyond.

The slow and entangled process of Christianization is also evident in the studies of Saami offering places. Even though there was a decrease in offerings in the 17th century in accordance with missionary activities in Lapland, offerings did not cease altogether but lived side by side with Christian rituals (Äikäs 2015; Äikäs and Ahola Ch. 7). People visited both offering places and churches and also gave offerings to churches. Especially in relation to livelihood, the old sacred places were considered to have provided better protection than churches. In Enontekiö, Northern Finland, offerings were given as late as the end of the 19th century in spite of the long Christian influence, and the idea of offerings had not yet disappeared by the 20th century. The offerings that shifted from old offering places to churches may be considered as one example of how Christianity was perceived more as a continuation of the old world view than as a turning point. Christian views were filtered through old beliefs. (Miettinen 1943: 102; Lehtola 1997: 28; Kylli 2005: 119, 140; Äikäs 2015: 156–157.)

Similarly, the slow and entangled process of Christianization can be seen in the elements of folk belief side by side with Christianity. Folklorist Kaarina Koski (2018: 59) has mentioned bringing offerings to churches also as an example of Finnish folk belief. She states that “[a]mong the Finnish folk, old interpretations such as the necessity of sacrifice as implementation of a reciprocal relationship with God still permeated religious life in the 18th century. For example, the believers found it important to bring offerings, such as wool and squirrel skins to the communion table.” In accordance with this, in this book Mirette Modarress (Ch. 5) describes how the offering tradition remained in use especially in churches with a reputation as a sacrificial church (Fi *uhrikirkko*). Ethnologist Laura Stark (2002: 30) has stated that “[...] folk religion represents neither Christianity's ‘contamination’ of ethnic folk belief nor the ‘misinterpretation’ of Christianity by the non-literate rural populace, but a functional system in which the most useful elements of each belief system are adopted and fashioned into a syncretic whole.” In a world view with no strict border between the natural and supernatural, things that we might describe in the sphere of belief represent just the world the way it was. Beliefs may concern invisible and supernatural powers, but they may also represent knowledge and actions that have commonly been agreed on. Believing is giving value to a conception, idea, or action as though it were the truth, and when most of the community values certain norms or understandings, they may collectively be trusted. (Koski 2010: 15.)

One peculiar example of the ritual use of churches are the tens of miniature wooden coffins with the remains of a frog inside that were found in seven churches, one in Turku and the others in Eastern Finland. Sonja Hukantaival (2015a) has described these finds in connection to folk beliefs for multiple purposes, the most common purpose being to punish a witch who was held responsible for misfortunate incident. But here, too, the belief was complex and dynamic and there were variations in both the buried animal and the reasons for the burial. Hukantaival states that the power of the frog burial came from the church but “in the case of the church and churchyard this power was not divine, but rather that of the deceased buried there.” This example shows how the meaning of the church as a powerful place also had multiple manifestations. If folk belief was flexible, dynamic, and entangled with Christian tradition, burial traditions that could be considered to follow traditional Christian rituals were not static either. We have already discussed the use of grave goods in Christian burials. In addition to these, the placement of the deceased did not always follow Christian practices either. In this book, Ulla Moilanen and Markus Hiekkanen (Ch. 2) discuss how ‘atypical’ features should be interpreted in the context of fairly late post-medieval church burials. Harold Mytum (2017) has noted that after the Reformation, there was wider variety in burial forms in Europe due to increased litera-

cy, the expansion of the middle classes, increasing consumerism, and changing ethical and scientific attitudes to the body. The ‘atypical’ burial forms of different ages might derive from both individual and practical reasons.

Above we discussed the continuous use of old burial places and the changed meanings given to them. Also Christian burial places, the function of which remains known to people, have been reused for various purposes. Because of the strong symbolic value of graves as places of memory (Zerubavel 2003), gravestones have been used for erasing memories and taking control of areas. For example, on the Karelian Isthmus, an area that Finland lost to the Soviet Union in the Second World War, Finnish gravestones have been removed or used for building bridges. Taking objects with a sacred function into mundane use is a powerful sign of control over land, memory, and heritage.

An interesting example of the altered meaning of gravestones can be found at Greyfriars Kirkyard in Edinburgh, where people have started to commemorate fictional characters from Harry Potter books by J. K. Rowling (Fig. 0.2.). The name Tom Riddell, on the grave of a man who passed away in 1806, has been said to have inspired Rowling to name her villain Lord Voldemort, a sobriquet for Thomas “Tom” Marvolo Riddle. Hence the late Tom Riddell, who might otherwise have been forgotten, receives visitors and flowers on his grave. This unrelated attention could be seen as a new meaning in the site biography of the grave, but as one of the visitors mused: would Riddell have appreciated the flowers he received as the villain Riddle? Riddell’s is not the only grave at Greyfriars Kirkyard that has gained a new meaning following the Harry Potter books. Other headstones are said to have played into the names of characters – there is a Moody (Alastor Moody) and William McGonagall, who was known as one of the worst poets in Scotland in his time, but who is now remembered as a Head of Gryffindor. And as testimony to the audience’s need to have a physical place for remembering fictional characters, also Harry’s godfather Sirius Black, whose name cannot be found at the cemetery, has gained a place for remembering: a gravestone where the original names have vanished but have been replaced by the name Sirius Black written in ink, perhaps not elegantly but serving the purpose. These graves are an example of literary or film tourism which encourages “a re-imagining of the landscape where (f)actual and imaginary geographies exist side by side” (Lee 2012: 52).



Figure 0.2. a) A burial stone at the Greyfriars Kirkyard, Edinburgh with the name Sirius Black written on it to commemorate a character from the Harry Potter books and b) another one with the name of Thomas Riddell, who is commemorated as Thomas Riddle aka Lord Voldemort from the same book series. (Photographs: T. Äikäs, 2019.)

Rituals and beliefs entangled in everyday life

Rituals and beliefs are not entangled only within the spheres of religion and fiction but also with everyday life. Indeed, as Tim Insoll (2004) has proposed with regard to archaeological contexts, religion should not be viewed as separate from daily life. In the past, people could have seen different daily activities, such as livelihood, death, social organization, and technology, through the lens of religion. In other words, ritual and rational or mundane aspects were not separated, as ritual was tightly interwoven into daily activities and matters of livelihood and health (e.g. Brück 1999; Bradley 2005; Hukantaival 2015b). As Äikäs et al. (2009) have shown, in Saami ethnic religion, livelihood and rituals were also closely intertwined and, for example, offerings were given in relation to livelihood and in places connected to subsistence.

In this book, Minerva Piha (Ch. 6) demonstrates how language and religion are also connected in Saami history. She studies the correlations between archaeological and lexical data, which can be seen in offering tradition, burial traditions, and matters relating to death. Later, Saami gathered in their winter villages not only to take part in church services but also to trade and strengthen their social relationships. The interconnectedness of ritual and mundane can also be seen in other cultures. For example, in this book Mirette Modarress (Ch. 5) describes the connections between religious and socio-economic practices on the island of Turkansaari, where excavations were conducted near a chapel that was built in 1694. Turkansaari served simultaneously as a marketplace and a church site, and people could carry out both ritual and mundane activities while visiting the island.

As stated above, in the Saami world view, offering places retained their importance especially in connection to livelihood. The connection between livelihood and rituals can be seen also in the contemporary world where, for example, in shipbuilding the idea of a foundation deposit is still alive and new ships are supplied with a deposit under their mast to bring good luck (Hukantaival 2017). There are also a lot of beliefs related to fishing. For example, on the Finnish fishing discussion forum *kalastus.com* (*kalastus.com* 2003), people listed their ‘superstitions’ related to fishing, such as wearing a certain cap, giving some alcohol to Ahti (the old Finnish god of water) after each caught fish, and not having a hand net along when you are trolling from a rowing boat. Fishing-related items are also common among contemporary deposits at Saami offering places, for which examples can be found in both Finland and Alta, Norway (Äikäs 2015; Spangen and Äikäs in press). People seem to feel a need to seek help from rituals and offerings especially in connection to livelihood.

Also new professions can be seen in a superstitious light. In this book, Noora Hemminki (Ch. 9) describes how beliefs in the Devil changed in relation with changes in a smith’s work from educator to labour movement agitator. In the early industrial context, the work of smiths was seen in relation to the Devil because of their ability to use fire, and even in contemporary times some smiths sustain this connection, for example, by the naming of their smitheries.

One example of the interrelation of ritual and mundane is presented in the chapter by Sonja Hukantaival (Ch. 8), in which she combines folklore and archaeological material to demonstrate how, in the area of present-day Finland, objects and materials were seen as potentially alive up to the early 20th century. In folk belief, agency was manifested also in everyday objects that might be considered rubbish today. This draws us to reconsider the distinction between mundane and ritual, as well as animate and inanimate. The latter can also be perceived in the way that even today, we give agency to things that we know to be lifeless; we talk to our cars, computers, and televisions, sometimes cursing them, thanking them, or begging them to do what we wish them to do. The problem of distinguishing ritual objects from rubbish arises when contemporary ways of reasoning affect interpretations. Sometimes one person’s rubbish might be another one’s offerings, and the interpretations can be heavily laden with value. The term ‘ritual rubbish’ has been used in this context. (Blain and Wallis 2007; Paine 2013: 58; Houlbrook 2015.)

As is shown, for example, in the chapter by Äikäs and Ahola (Ch. 7), places can also have both mundane and ritual meanings during their life cycle or even at a specific point in time. Even totally mundane places can gain a spiritual meaning through daily actions, as described by folklorist Reet Hiimäe (2019: 16): “A person who has the habit to listen to his favourite meditation music through headphones during a subway trip or a flight may be in some sense even ‘double-placed’: in the terms of his subjective spiritual geography, he may be in a transcendental place, yet physically he remains in a non-place.” In this sense, also shopping centres, railway stations, and roadsides can have sacred functions when they are used as venues of rituals. Simultaneously, the spiritual meanings of sacred places have gained an additional venue in the electronic public sphere, when people share their spiritual experiences and photos of old sacred sites on, for example, Facebook and Instagram (Huang 2016; Ruml 2020). However, aside from activities in the electronic sphere, there has also been a substantial increase in visitors to actual religious sites due to the democratization of travel and globalization (e.g. Gilchrist 2020). This goes hand in hand with the creation of new and invented religious and spiritual landscapes and the commodification and hybridization of religion and spirituality (Olsen 2019; Äikäs and Ahola Ch. 7).

Conclusions

As we have seen in the past paragraphs, a connection to archaeological sites – and possibly to archaeology – is important for people’s spirituality today. We can see how rituals and sacred places have transformed into heritage but also how ritual practices have changed and ritual creativity incorporates old traditions with individual beliefs and habits (Leskovar and Karl 2018; Äikäs et al. 2018). At the same time, churches revise old traditions by introducing elements of old traditions into their services and pre-Christian sacred places are visited for spiritual inspiration (Wallis 2003; Rountree 2006; Jonuks and Äikäs 2019). The importance of old sacred places in contemporary society can also be seen in their touristic use, their inclusion in town planning (Äikäs and Ahola ch. 7), and their maintenance by local groups (Lesell 2015). Indeed, as the articles in this book demonstrate, old rituals and sacred places can act as inspiration, comfort, and entertainment for contemporary people, and archaeologists can act as mediators between past and present.

However, even though the ritual and practical aspects of daily life are intertwined, this does not mean that everything is ritualized or that people constantly behave in a particularly spiritual manner. Instead, beliefs and world views give meaning to the surrounding world and human activity in it. The symbolic and functional aspects of this activity do not have to be mutually exclusive. (Brück 1999; Insoll 2004; Hukantaival 2015b.) This entanglement of ritual and mundane also explains the longevity of rituals and beliefs expressed in the chapters of this book. Even in contemporary society, we live surrounded by beliefs and ritual practices that we have inherited from the far and near past in their varied, intertwined forms.

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