To Dwell in the Centre of the World

On the Life-History of a Gallery Grave in Småland, SE Sweden

BY BJÖRN NILSSON & PETER SKOGLUND

Abstract

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The main purpose of this article is to integrate a long-term cultural biographical perspective with a short-term social biographical perspective. To elucidate the long-term perspective a gallery grave in Telestad, Småland, SE Sweden, is studied from the Middle Neolithic to the Late Iron Age. The short-term perspective is elaborated through a discussion of two Late Neolithic bracelets that were found in the grave. Through the integration of the long-term archaeology of place and the short-term archaeology of artefacts, we present a dynamic picture that shows consideration for both space-bound activities as well as societal action in a wider space. Different spatial and temporal levels are thus integrated in a pluralistic spatial-temporal perspective.

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Background

Philosophical setting: archaeological sketches of a multi-temporal past

Time is for us simultaneously an enigma and an obviousness: we are driven by time; our life, together with that of every being, is the dimension that makes time visible. The fragile freshness of childhood and the irrepressible decay of old age unfold the moving shapes: time appears when something is beginning to exist; time is the revelation of the intimate shaping of being. (Olivier 1999, p. 529)

The above reflection makes a good start for this article. Firstly, it reflects the increasing interest in temporal questions in archaeology. Secondly, it reveals some of the paradoxes of the properties of time which archaeology has to confront. In the following we would like to keep to this theme. The implicit, but subordinate, interest is the shaping of time, and thus the shaping of being and matter. Hopefully, and without falling into the pitfalls of philosophy – that is easy – we will take our point of departure in the world of multi-temporality. Thus, the living world simultaneously consists of both past and present. Moreover, and according to Laurent Olivier among others, this implies a renewed consideration of the archaeological record (1999, p. 535). Yet another philosophical fundament can be expressed, now through the insight of George Herbert Mead, the American philosopher (cf. Mead 1972 [1938]). Time is not only the history of beginnings and ends; time is the patience of the world and through this, structures are allowed to emerge. To create an atom of iron, the world must have patience with the revolution of the electron. Without certain amounts of time, structures would not emerge. The same goes for the archaeological structures – from the largest landscapes to the

simplest of artefacts. It does take time to become a monument, just as it takes time to become an atom of iron, or a planetary system, elsewhere in the universe.

Theoretical and methodological setting: biographies of monuments and of artefacts

Over the last ten years, the overall interest in archaeological landscapes, places and monuments has increased tremendously (cf. Barrett 1994; Bradley 1993; 1997; 1998; Gosden & Lock 1998; Thomas 1991; Tilley 1994). A popular landscape archaeological perspective is the focus on the prehistoric use and re-use of ancient monuments and landscapes – the past-in-the-past discussion (cf. Burström 1993; 1994; Bradley & Williams 1998; Karlsson 1999). Yet another tendency is the renewed focus on artefacts; now with a biographical approach considering the life-history and the social use-life of the artefact (cf. Gosden & Marshall 1999; Thomas 1996). We would like to present these two approaches as follows:

1. The study of archaeological *re*use-life histories, i.e. long-term *cultural* biographies of places – a life-history from a cultural-historical point of view.
2. The study of archaeological use-life histories, i.e. short-term *social* biographies of objects – a life-history from a societal point of view.

Though these two approaches are complementary, and share a theoretical fundament, they are seldom combined. This article will try to integrate these, often separate, approaches. We have chosen to elucidate different biographical aspects of a gallery grave at Telestad, Växjö Parish, Kronoberg County. In the following, we would like to show how these histories of landscape, place and artefacts are intensely interwoven. We hope to show how the lapse of time produces both continuities and discontinuities. The underlying goal is to discuss the complexity of the spatio-temporal domains, how society uses the time and space to justify action.

In order to present the study we will start with the story of the long-term landscape, and explore the related biography of a place and a monument in the centre of the world. As a contrast, but not in contradiction to the long-term study, we will integrate the short-term biography of two Late Neolithic armlets. The article ends with some concluding remarks on the synergetic effect of combining the social biographies with the cultural.

The landscape setting: in the middle of somewhere

Location

The area south of Växjö (Fig. 1) is rich in lakes, rivers and small marshlands. The drumlinoid landscape is large in its proportions but yet small and closed, due to the relative relief that ranges between 25 and 30 metres (Digerfeldt 1972, pp. 7 ff.), and in places dense forestation. Naturally, this landscape has undergone great changes during prehistoric and historical times. The most obvious alterations are not only those connected to the emergence and decline of the agrarian landscape, but also the horizontal growth of peat bogs and marshland (Wallin *et al.* 1997, p. 93). This area of Småland is a part of the large Mörrumsån catchment and thus integrated in a large area with presumably different prehistoric regions. Borrowing the geographer's map-wide eyes, one can easily understand that this is a zone of change and exchange. This is a node, a place of historical juxtaposition. In every direction you will encounter different landscapes. To the south, after passing the lake-spangled plateau, you will enter the lowland and the hilly parts of today's Blekinge, and the sea with a large archipelago. In the northerly direction, the highland builds up sharply, with lower enclaves of fertile land encompassed by mountainous landforms. To the east you will find a flatter environment, not so rich in lakes, which slowly levels out in the Baltic Sea. In the west a large area of great lakes and rivers connects the inland with both the west coast and the northern parts of today's Scania.

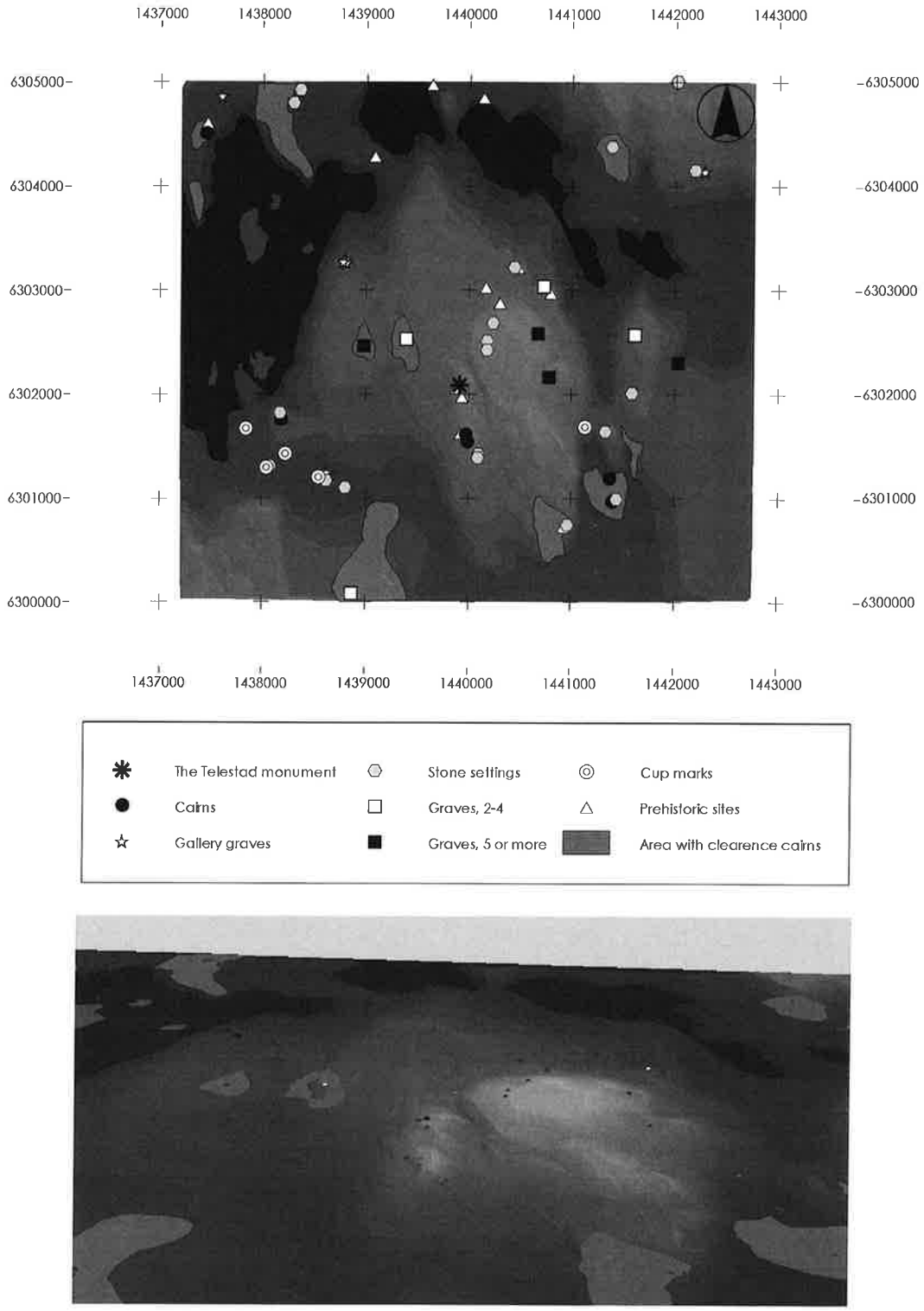

Fig. 1. The Telestad landscape and its archaeological record.

Palaeoecological history

In 1972 a pollen analysis was carried out in Lake Trummen (approx. 1 sq. km), situated 2500 metres north-east of the Telestad monument (Fig. 1) (Digerfeldt 1972). The aim of the analysis was to study the regional vegetation history, water level changes and palaeolimnology. The C14 samples were taken from bulk gyttja. However, recent research has proved that bulk dating results in older values than selective dating (Lagerås 1996). We can only draw some general conclusions about the pale ecological history of the landscape.

During the Middle Neolithic or early Late Neolithic period there was an opening of the landscape, connected to pasture. Clearances were made in the woods and small glades emerged. At this point, we find the first evidence of agriculture; single pollen grains of Cerealia. During the course of the late Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age, the pasture economy tends to develop further, as does cereal production.

The archaeological landscape and the monumental setting

The prehistoric remains in the area are shown in fig. 1. The gallery graves occur solitary or together – two or three – then forming distinct groups in the landscape. Their location varies from hilltops to lower positions, close to the lakes. Cairns and stone settings occur more frequently. The recurrent use of the landscape from the latest Neolithic to the Iron Age is evident – cairns and stone settings occur in the direct neighbourhood of gallery graves. Together with settlements, cup-marks and ancient fields, the grave monuments often form complexes with a long time depth. The Telestad Late Neolithic gallery grave, once surrounded by a monumental cairn, is perhaps the best example, because of the well-known archaeological record and its diverse life-history.

Standing on the hill, where the monument is erected, you have a view of a large area. The choice of place is by no means particularly remarkable, as regards the topographical situation. As can be seen (Fig. 1) the gallery grave lies on a drumlin limited by distinct slopes. It is accompanied by two slightly smaller cairns on the southernmost hilltop, only some 500 metres away. The north-western and the highest part, where the gallery grave is located, forms an esker-like feature stretching in a north-north-westerly direction. The esker is quite narrow and one can hardly walk along it without noticing the monument. Apart from the eastern part of the drumlin, which is some four metres higher, the monument rests on the highest point within a radius of about five kilometres. However, when the monument was crowned with a cairn, it became the highest crest in the surrounding landscape. Even today the view is tremendous, especially to the west. It seems reasonable to conclude that the high position of the grave, and the view from it, connected the monument with a wider area. As a mediatorial place, the Telestad monument was important not only for the esker area but also for the slope and the low ground at the lakes to the west and north.

The archaeological setting: the monument and the artefacts

The 1892 excavation and the 1929 demolition

In the summer of 1892 Carl Wibling made an archaeological journey to Blekinge and Småland, on behalf of the National Heritage Board (Wibling 1893). He stopped for some days at Telestad, wanting to study the three cairns along the ridge. He selected the northernmost one because of its relatively good preservation. There was a funnel-like disturbance in the middle, but the stone layer at the bottom was not dislodged. He decided to make a quick excavation of the cairn, which at that time was about 4 metres high and 80 metres in circumference. In the middle of the cairn, and after 2.5 metres of stones, he detected a smaller cairn earthwork, which – rich in smaller stones – covered the gallery grave. After the removal of the smaller cairn, about 0.35 metres thick, the cist appeared. It was 4.5 metres long, 1.0 metres broad and 0.7 metres deep. Ten slab-stones covered the grave, which, according to Wibling, had an internal division between a forecourt and a main chamber. The southern part of the grave was delimited

Archaeological data, number of find (F) or feature (A)	Context	Dating, calendar years[1]
10 decorated BAC potsherds, type ad FGHJ, at least 4 different vessels	Concentrated in the area around and beneath the chamber, in a layer above the sterile till	Malmer period 3–5, est. 2550–2350 BC
C14-dated post pit (A12), LuA-4726	Distant from chamber	1960–1730 BC (63% confidence)
2 LN II armlets (F60, 61)	Outside the chamber. 0.3 m distant from each other	1950 –1700 BC
1 LN flint dagger (F73)	Outside the chamber	Lomborg type II, est. 2300–2000 BC
1 EBA lancet-shaped flint arrowhead (F17)	Outside the chamber	Lomborg type C
Cremation grave (A3), bronze spearhead (lancet) (F45)	Finds of Bronze Age pottery, burnt bones, retouched porphyry	Montelius period IV, 1000–800 BC
C14-dated cremation grave (A11), LuA-4728	Possibly together with, or a part of, A3. Burnt bones	360–60 BC
C14-dated cremation grave (A9), LuA-4727	Distant from chamber, covered by stones. Burnt bones	560–770 AD

[1] C14 dates are calibrated according to Stuiver *et al.* (1998) and presented with 68.2% confidence if no other value is given. Other datings rely on typological chronologies.

Table I. The main archaeological data, its immediate context and dating.

by a natural boulder. The northern part was disarranged, probably due to the heavy pressure of the younger cairn. Inside the cist, he found two shaft-hole axes and a lancet-shaped spearhead of flint (Segerberg 1978, pp. 200 f.). Since the findings were too insignificant, he avoided the two cairns on the southern ridge, and headed for some other monuments and, eventually, Stockholm.

In 1929 Knut Kjellmark, the local inspector, found out that the landowner had illegally sold the monument to the Road Maintenance Authority. The once covering cairn and most of the stone-slabs were turned into road surfacing. Extraordinary photographs in the archives of ATA, Stockholm, show the stone-crusher and a small lorry, standing on a soon levelled monument (Kjellmark 1929).

The results of the 1990 re-excavation and the 2000 re-examination

The demolished gallery grave (without its cairn) was now used as a dump. Fortunately, and due to a nearby building project, the remains of the monument were re-examined in 1990. Of course, the history of archaeological excavation and demolition made the task hard (L. Nilsson 1993). Nevertheless, some quite amazing findings were exposed, and new, revealing details of the place's biography could be detected.

Not only the grave was examined. A field survey and a phosphate mapping preceding the excavation gave indications of a settlement area west and south of the grave. Test-trenches delimited the settlement area, which seemed to surround the grave and extend in a westerly direction. Finds of battle-axe culture (BAC) pottery suggest a dating of the settlement to the late Middle Neolithic.

Due to lack of money, the construction work was postponed. The settlement and a large part of the demolished grave place remained unexcavated.

In 1999–2000, the find material was re-examined, primarily because two metal rings – which had been classified as recent – looked like Únětice bracelets dating to the late Neolithic. Interestingly, the metal analysis carried out by Peter Nort-

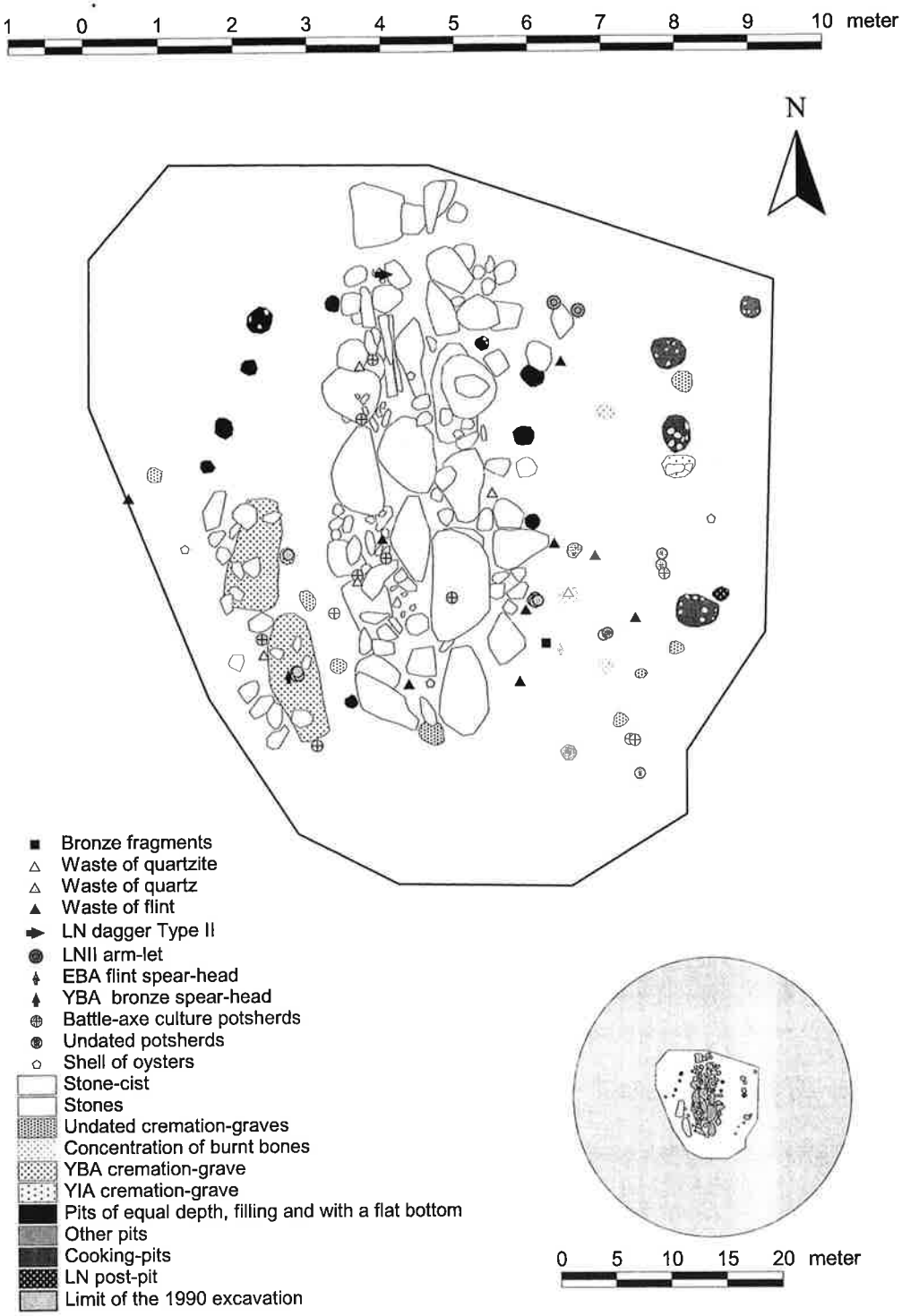

Fig. 2. A simplified plan of the constructions and the main archaeological data from the excavation in 1990. Bottom right: A plot showing the extent of the now vanished cairn, according to Wibling (1893).

hover of the Department of Metallurgy and Science of Materials at the University of Oxford proved the Neolithic dating. The find material and the excavation were – now for the fourth time – put under archaeological examination.

Before we continue with the analyses and interpretation, we will briefly present the main results of the excavations and the re-examination. The archaeological data are based on the technical report (L. Nilsson 1993). The C14 analyses have been performed in connection with the recent re-examination, such as some further interpretations of the artefacts and the features. The digitized plan of the monument (Fig. 2) is based on the original field drawings, archived at the Småland Museum, Växjö. The datable artefacts and features are presented in table I.

According to the 1990 excavation, it is obvious that Wibling did not recover all the archaeological material from the site. On the contrary, the archaeological "leftovers" are quite rich. Chronologically, several phases may be detected. With the present data, we would like to propose five prehistoric phases:

Phase 1. Middle Neolithic and early Late Neolithic. A wooden construction in a north–south direction. Activities inside the construction are traced by the finds of decorated potsherds. The lithic waste is mainly found outside the construction. The array of cooking pits probably dates back to this first phase.

Phase 2. Late Neolithic. A stone cist, with covering earth- and stonework, is erected on the exact place of the wooden construction. Late Neolithic findings such as daggers and shaft-hole axes are found inside the chamber. Adjacent to the cist – and beneath the earthen cairn – two Neolithic bracelets are found. A post-pit indicates a probable contemporaneous construction, and activity, outside the gallery grave.

Phase 3. Early Bronze Age. A cairn of large stones is successively raised on top of the gallery grave. Outside the chamber, a flint spearhead dates to this phase.

Phase 4. Younger Bronze Age and Early Iron Age. Graves are laid out alongside the old stone cist. The cairn is opened during these occasions.

Phase 5. Late Iron Age. The hitherto youngest grave is placed on the bottom of the old cairn. This grave is located quite distant from the chamber, but in the middle of the large cairn.

Accordingly, the content of this *gallery grave* reveals a long and changing life-history. However, before going any more deeply into that, the bracelets call for specific attention.

Two Late Neolithic bracelets from Telestad

One of the bracelets is well preserved while the other is demolished (Fig. 3). The well-preserved ring (F60) is oval-shaped (4.6 x 5.8 cm) and made of a 17 cm long bar that tapers towards the ends. The cross-section of the ring is not perfectly circular but faceted with impressed sides. The other ring (F61) is broken at one end and the shape is deformed. It seems reasonable to assume that the deformed ring once had a similar character to the well-preserved ring (F60). It has been suggested that the rings should be considered primarily as bars. However, the fact that bracelets – at least in one case – have been found around the arm of a skeleton (Montelius 1917, p. 34) clearly support the idea of an ornamental function.

Peter Northover of the Department of Materials at the University of Oxford has carried out a metal analysis of the two bracelets. The results are presented in table II.

From the metal analysis it can be seen that one ring is a high-tin bronze object (F60) while the other ring (F61) is made of tin copper (Class 6 and Class 3 respectively; Vandkilde 1996, p. 30). The analysis also show that the rings have been made of SAM *Materialgruppe* C2D/C5, *Ösenring+*, i.e. objects with impurities of As, Sb and Ag and moderate Ni content (Vandkilde 1996, pp. 29 f.). This copper alloy is frequent in Danish LN II metalwork and it does not appear in the Bronze Age (Vandkilde 1996, p. 163, fig. 154). The rather high Ni content in *Ösenring+* metal compared to the genuine *Ösenring* metal – which is often

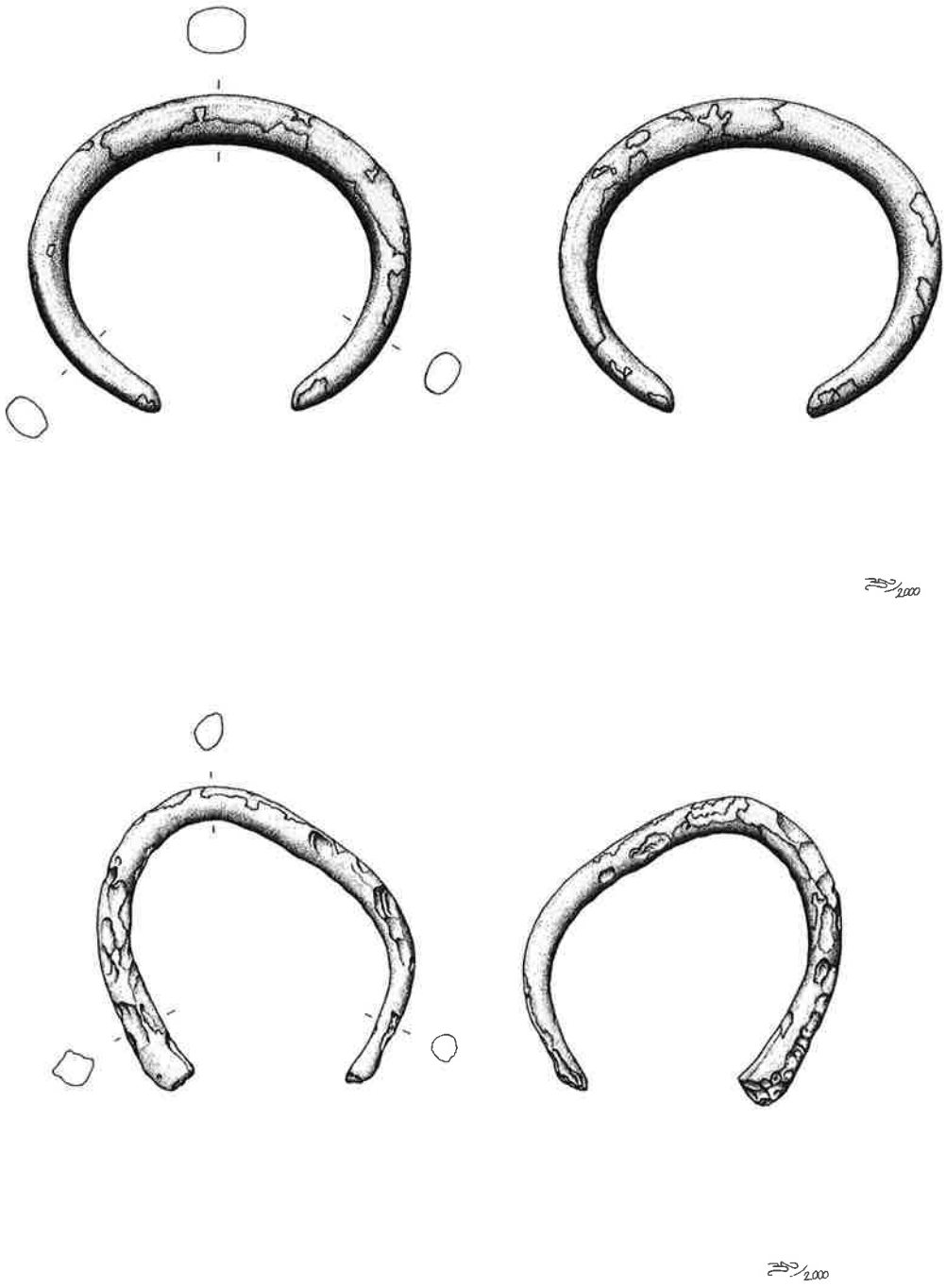

Fig. 3. The bracelets, 1:2 of their original size. The above ring is F60.
Illustration by Björn Nilsson (not the author).

	Fe	*Co*	*Ni*	*Cu*	*Zn*	*As*	*Sb*	*Sn*	*Ag*	*Bi*	*Pb*	*Au*	*S*
F60	0.05	0.01	0.06	86.04	0.02	0.54	0.47	12.28	0.44	0.01	0.03	0.03	0.03
F61	0.04		0.07	97.31		0.53	0.51	0.60	0.71	0.06	0.07	0.03	0.07

Tab. II. The metal composition of the two Telestad bracelets (Northover, unpublished manuscript).

found on the continent – could perhaps be understood as a result of remelting. The local remeltings with various high-impurity coppers, usually rich in Ni, probably increased the Ni value (Vandkilde 1996, p. 204).

Cultural biographies of place: on the re-use of monuments and their life-histories

As time takes place and when the past does matter

We may assume that almost everyone who has lived near the Telestad monument, since the 24th century BC to the 21st century AD, has confronted the place in some way or another. The last chapter in the cultural biography is definitely not written. As we write this, people living nearby the monument are raising their voices and ordering the county administrative board to restore the grave. Ever as powerful, the old place takes care of the vicinity. The past affects us as we create it.

Consequently, it is evident that the Telestad place has accumulated lots of events and stories over the course of time. The archaeological material speaks for itself. The accumulated past is thereby a reflection of what has happened in a larger area, in the surrounding landscape. We know that the archaeological landscape around Telestad is rich in evidences of a long prehistoric continuity (Högrell & Skoglund 1995; Åstrand 2000). The striking thing is that the Telestad monument almost expresses the same temporal continuity. The place was in use from the Middle Neolithic until the Migration Period. Accordingly, the monument must have been altered through time, all according to very different societal acts. If, as an experiment of thought, one randomly selects an area of, let us say, 100 sq. m, one could not expect the same long-term evidence. In other words, some places represent – or archive – the pattern of long-term history better than others do. In addition to this, the accumulation of events seems to be a self-reinforcing and recursive phenomenon. Things that have happened (at a place) make things happen (at the same place). And again, those temporarily dense places absorb and give resonance to the events of the surroundings, and this makes them highly valuable archaeologically.

In order to gain a broader understanding of these places of the long term, we have to consider at least two theoretical notions. Firstly, we have to acknowledge the above-mentioned recursive and self-reinforcing character of the long term. Secondly, and consequently, we must not dismiss the multi-temporal aspects of history; i.e. that time, as we understand it, is a non-linear phenomenon. Experienced time is the juxtaposition of *many* times; a certain temporal point is constructed and lived in a material and non-material corpus of past time (cf. Olivier 1999).

From the above, one can conclude that (1) past time is a great societal power which (2) takes place and thus (3) affects future events, which eventually (4) affect the interpretation of the past.

In other words, if we want to understand the meanings of a certain monument, place or landscape at a certain temporal point, we have to understand *why* and *how* it all begun. We have to understand its life-history. We would like to address and expand this discussion by exploring the cultural biography of the Telestad monument.

In the latest long-term biographical trend, one can discern two different, but complementary, themes. On the one hand we have the past-in-the-past discussion, which focuses on the *prehistoric*

use of the past, and thus, the *knowledge of past* as a prehistoric societal resource. Here the past people play the active role (cf. Burström 1993; 1994; Bradley & Williams 1998). On the other hand, we have – in our terms – the *meta*-biography of the long term. Here the memoirs of an ancient monument or place are written, often as a meta-archaeological consideration. Hence, the archaeologist plays the active role (cf. Holtorf 1998a, 1998b, 2000; Karlsson 1999). These two themes are explored and evaluated further on.

The Telestad past-in-the-past

What then, are the evidences of past-in-the-past action at the Telestad monument? According to the archaeological record, one can isolate some more obvious events where the people of the past have confronted history, and where the past – as an interface of societal knowledge – has played a directional role. Let us write the archaeological phases into a tentative prehistoric biography and focus on the historical continuities and discontinuities.

Generations 1–6 (2500–2350 BC). On the large hill, and overlooking the three large lakes, a dwelling emerges. Here the soils are sandy, and it is not far to the almost evergreen wetlands, where the cattle graze. As times goes by the settlement grows and becomes more manifest and permanent. It grows and moves down the slope. At the old dwelling on the crest, and in the shelter of some solitary rocks, the deceased first-dwellers rest. As the settlement on the slope lives on, the dwelling of the dead grows. The shelter is enlarged by a small wooden construction, a replica of the houses down the slope.

Generations 7–28 (2350–1800 BC). The dwelling has changed character. People want to live near the lakes instead. With a large amount of cattle and fields of crops, it is preferable. Yet the hilltop dwelling of the dead still exists, mostly in the stories of the old. The younger generation is fascinated by the old place. One of the most important families, direct descendants of the ancients buried on the hilltop, wants to put their cist on the hilltop. Since they are prosperous, and they have important contacts with the world beyond, they do thing differently. The decaying wooden shelter is thus rebuilt and replaced by an earthen construction, and in the middle of that a rectangular stone cist. It is a house of the old and the dead. The dwelling of the dead grows. The cist is inhabited as well as the earthen cairn.

Generations 41– (1500 BC–). Following the rules of that time, the hilltop itself is the place to rest in. The "stone house" is not used, but burials take place around it. To protect the place a cairn of large stones is raised. Stones from a large area are selected and heaped. The settlement and the oldest graves are forgotten, and the old stone cist at the centre of the cairn is soon invisible.

Generations 61–100 (1000 BC–0 BC/AD). The large cairn, visible from a long distance, contains both people and secrets. When someone dies, the cremated and fragmented body comes to rest beneath tons of stone. The opening and sealing of the cairn is an important part of the burial. The absolute centre – where the earthen core is situated – is avoided, though the middle part of the cairn is the most preferable place to rest. The thick shelter of the heavy stones is important. Stones are piled, laid up and ordered, and stones are taken away, exchanged and thrown away.

Generations 120–130 (500–780 AD). Everybody in the villages around the large hills knows that people of the past rest in large stone-heaps. These are large graves and, for sure, they contain treasures. It is at least 20 generations since anybody dared to open the cairn. But still it is a important place. The people who live in a village just some 3000 metres away take the place for granted and for their own. On special occasions, they open the enormous stone-hill, and they find things from the past. The cairn is not as high as it once was, and in the middle there is a hollow entrance to the past. Although they bury their dead together – just by the village – some people are placed beneath the tons of stone, besides their past and their ancestors.

Of course, this vignette may be criticized. Many parts of the puzzle remain unsolved. However, this long-term story of the Telestad monu-

ment summarizes important aspects of *why* and *how* time has shaped the place. It shows that the biography is constructed upon both continuities and *dis*continuities. Furthermore, it suggests that the very place must be understood as a canonical node, a place of past-time *ethos* where knowledge can be gained and understood. The monument has accumulated large amounts of world experience, and it implicitly mediates a reflection of how the world rules and constitutes.

Archaeologically, the cultural biography reveals many interesting facts. The early transformation from settlement to grave is one example. Could it be that many Late Neolithic cists are fossilized reflections of a late Middle Neolithic settlement pattern?

The ongoing reshaping of the cairn is another. How should we deal with the secondary burials from the Early Bronze Age to the Late Iron Age? It clearly makes way for a more dynamic perspective on prehistoric cairn building. If the cairn was of monumental size when the secondary burials were put in the ground, tons of stones must have been taken away and put back again. Consequently, it is easy to imagine that the shape of the monument was heavily changed during the course of the Bronze Age and the Iron Age (Bolin 1999). Can we cope with the idea that the Bronze Age cairn could be a reflection of the Iron Age?

The biographical sequence of the Telestad monument is pluralistic and thus a result of discontinuities rather than continuities. There is no general biography; there are many juxtaposed use-lives, or rather, *re*use-lives. The process of reuse is conducted and directed through the force of social and cultural memories and historical myths (Gosden & Lock 1998, pp. 4 f.). Hence, the transformation from event to myth is of the utmost importance (Nilsson 1999). Paradoxically and most likely, collective forgetfulness – and not a good memory – is the *primus motor* in the making of long-term places.

A multi-layered past has draped the place with different stories. At a place like this, the past is within easy access. If you dare to dig in the ground or move some hundred stones, it is all there. Through these remains, and if you can read the signs of matter, you can obtain a glimpse into the world of bygone people. We call it the science of archaeology, when it takes place in 2000, 1990 or 1892. From these excavations, we know that people, during prehistoric times and on several occasions altered the old monument. This action, done by other *past-in-the-pasters*, we consider as a mere consequence of the structure of mythology or cosmology. One could ask: on a fundamental level, what are the real differences between archaeology and prehistoric past-in-the-past action? Of course, archaeology is explicit; our deliberate and professional goal is to gain knowledge of the past. The past-in-the-past action is not all that outspoken, as far as we know. However, both actions will result in knowledge of the past, which will affect the living society.

The Telestad meta-biography

In his hypertextual thesis as well as in an ordinary article, Holtorf explores the memoirs of the Neolithic dolmens in northern Germany (1998a,b, 2000). The similarities between the reuse history of the Mecklenburgian dolmens and the Telestad monument are striking. These similarities include their long-term use, the multifunctionality and the great antiquarian interest.

Diagrammatically, Holtorf acknowledges five stages of an ageing megalith: Birth and Childhood (1), Youth (2), Early Adult Life (3), Later Adult Life (4) and Old Age (5). These different stages are ordered in a linear sequence, starting in the Early Neolithic (Birth and Childhood), and ending in the present (Old Age) (Holtorf 1998b, p. 35). The biography of the megaliths follows the stages of a living organism. In systemic terms, it all falls back to the beliefs in a rise and a fall, as Holtorf has shown. Naturally, this linear way of thinking does not entirely encompass a contextual and multi-temporal perspective.

As we have shown before, the Telestad monument does not have *one single* birth or death. It has a full range of rises and falls that exists both synchronically and diachronically. Following the multi-temporal perspective, we must expect the

memories of a monument to be juxtaposed and non-linear (Olivier 1999). The archaeological record demonstrates that the time *before* the monument actually emerges physically has to be considered as a most important life stage. In the natural place and in the dwelling we see the embryo of the monument. Moreover, during the Bronze Age and Iron Age, large gaps in use are evident. Those discontinuities are most important. In the perspective of the monument, they are times of death, or at least periods of hibernation. During these long periods of sleep the monument regains mythical energy, and prepares for coming, active social participation. The ageing of the monument is a most complex process.

The archaeological interference of the life-history makes it all even more complicated. Paradoxically, when archaeology revives the monument – with its narrative kind of explanation – we simultaneously murder it. Thus, the monument can be understood as having its beginning at the end of its life, and finally ends up at its beginning (cf. Karlsson 1998 pp. 146 ff.). So far, archaeologists have murdered the Telestad monument alive three times.

Somewhat confused, we can state that this monument does not have a beginning fixed in time, nor an end. Yet it has a lifetime, a duration which the world has patience with. In this meta-perspective, it seems rather pointless to use the simple and arbitrary metaphors of a generalized human life. Such a simplification is a complete denial of the proved dynamics and contextuality of the monument.

In a more elaborate form, it could serve a purpose. The meta-perspective makes us see things with source-critical eyes. Hence, we could detect some of our own biases and understand the complexity of the archaeological sources.

The social biographies of objects: On the lives of metal, person and myths

Another way of using the theoretical concept of biography is to focus on the artefactual and social dimensions. The notion of a social biography of objects goes back to Kopytoff (1986). As a contextualist he argued that an object could not be understood at just one temporal point in its existence. The whole cycle of production, exchange and consumption – the life-history – had to be analysed. The advantages of a social biographical approach are obvious when one can expect that the status and meaning of material culture derive from its biography. Our aim in this section is to write a biography of the two bracelets. In an article from 1986, Igor Kopytoff asked some questions that he suggested should be posed to an object, in order to understand its biography:

> What sociologically, are the biographical possibilities inherent in its "status" and in the period and in the culture, and how are these possibilities realized? Where does the thing come from and who made it? What has been its career been so far, and what do people consider to be an ideal career for such things? (Kopytoff 1986, p. 66)

In the following, we will discuss the biography of the two arm-rings from this perspective.

Making the bracelets

We may conclude that the bracelets were made somewhere in south Scandinavia during LN II. The metal composition of the two bracelets is very similar to the composition of metals in the south Scandinavian flanged axe of type A (Vandkilde 1996, p. 64, figs. 44–45). Therefore, we suggest that the bracelets were made somewhere in south Scandinavia of metal from an axe of this type.

Reflecting over how metal was understood in south Scandinavia during LN II, the axes are important since they dominate the picture, making up three-quarters of the known Danish metal objects (Vandkilde 1996, pp. 205 ff. [cf. fig. 209]). Apart from being ritual objects, axes were valued as working tools. This is obvious from the fact that there often are traces of damage and resharpening (Vandkilde 1999, p. 258). We suggest that the option of making a high-quality work by using a hard metal axe was an important aspect

when the characteristics of metal were thought of during the Late Neolithic. The focus on axes during LN II is underlined by the fact that axes were the only items that were regularly made by the local smiths while other objects (halberds, daggers and ornaments) mostly were imported.

In contrast to the axes, ornaments only make up one-tenth of the total number of known Danish metal objects from LN II. A majority of these ornaments seem to have been imported (Vandkilde 1996, pp. 205 ff. [cf. fig. 209]). Accordingly, manufacturing bracelets must have been a rare occurrence in relation to making an axe. By making bracelets, the meaning of metal expands; now the brilliance and colour of metal was in focus, and moreover, the metal became intimately connected to a person and thus a body. If society understands and changes the world through its action and praxis (cf. Giddens 1984) – the idea of making metal ornaments implies that new values were added into the concept of metal, and that metal was brought into new social contexts.

Visualizing the bracelets

The metal analysis demonstrates that the copper in both the bracelets derives from the same source (see above). The conclusion is based on the fact that the impurities in both pieces are very similar. From the analysis alone it is not possible to tell whether the two bracelets stem from the same piece of copper. However, the find circumstances – the two bracelets are from the same grave – favours such a conclusion.

One of the rings is made of copper while the other is made of bronze. Postulating that the two bracelets are made of the same piece of copper, this means that a copper ring was deliberately made, and thereafter a bronze ring by adding tin to the copper. These different metal compositions give rise to two very different colours – the bronze bracelet being brown-yellow and the copper bracelet being dark red. Wearing the two bracelets together, their contrasting colours must have created a visual effect that was rarely seen. When the rings were used the colour slowly faded and lost its brilliance, but polishing could easily restore the colour of the rings and make them look shiny again. The ability to refresh the colour of the objects by polishing them is typical of metal but not other materials.

Looking at the bracelets also meant looking at one or two hands of a person. What this person was like we do not know since no skeleton was preserved. Table III demonstrates that there is a great variation in the diameter of the LN Swedish bracelets (from 5.6 to 7.8 cm in diameter). The relatively small size of the well preserved Telestad ring, (4.6–5.6 cm in diameter) suggests that a woman or a juvenile person wore the ornament.

In the use of the bracelets, a connection is created between the objects and the personality of the user. Hands are highly visible and a most important part of the human body. Most of our actions, in day-to-day life as well as in rituals, are carried out by means of the hands. Therefore, by wearing these rare metal bracelets, the wearer became associated with special values connected to the concept of metal – and perhaps the vast area of metallurgy.

Burying the bracelets

The find location of the two bracelets calls for attention. Metal objects are uncommon in graves in Scandinavia during the Late Neolithic. The best available data is from Denmark, where of a total number of 268 metal objects known from LN II only 14 have been found in burials (5.2%) (Vandkilde 1996, p. 205; 1999, pp. 253 ff.). Swedish axes seem to show a similar pattern, where no flat axes can be attributed to graves, and only 6 of 507 flanged axes have been found in burials (1.2%) (Magnusson Staaf 1996, p. 76; Oldeberg 1974–76, p. 144).

As can be seen from table III a similar pattern emerges when Late Neolithic open solid-cast rings are studied.

Six of nine finds are single finds without an exact location. A Late Neolithic bracelet is known from the Pile find. It is only with the Växjö find that Late Neolithic rings can be attributed to a grave. A similar situation can be found in Denmark where all the eleven known rings derive from

Province	*Parish*	*Single find*	*Hoard*	*Burial*	*Nr.*	*Ø (cm)*	*Ol. No.*[1]
Scania	Ivetofta	X			1	6.7	361
Småland		X			1	7.3	1945*
Öland		X			1	6.5–6.9	2077*
N/A		X			1	6.8	3156
N/A		X			1	7.0	3016a
N/A		X			1	7.8	3016b
Scania	Tygelsjö		X		1	6.7	832
Småland	Växjö (Telestad)		X		2	4.6–5.6	
Total		6	1	2	9		

[1] Accession no. according to Oldeberg (1974–76)

Table III. Open solid-cast rings from Sweden with a certain or probable (*) dating to Late Neolithic.

five different hoards (Vandkilde 1996, pp. 204 f.).

This picture discussed indicates that the biographical expectation of any metal object was production, consumption and hoarding. Therefore, it seems reasonable to argue that it is the specific life-history of the two bracelets and not general circumstances that is the background to why they are found in a grave context (Kopytoff 1986). The specific constituents we want to stress here are that the bracelets were made somewhere in south Scandinavia and that they were by their form and function connected to a person. Two different scenarios – explaining why the bracelets were deposited in the grave – will now be proposed from such a perspective.

Scenario 1 – rings as personal objects. One way of making an object closely connected to a person is by precluding further exchange by fiat (Kopytoff 1986, pp. 75f.; Davenport 1986, pp. 105 ff.). In many societies, medicines are treated in this way. The medicine man makes and sells a medicine that may not be exchanged further since it is only efficacious for the patient for whom it was intended. A similar situation could exist if someone made the two bracelets to fit a special person. If there was a strong relationship between metaphysical ideas connected to the locally or regionally produced copper and bronze ring, the design of the objects and the person the bracelets were intended for – this could explain why the objects could not be inherited but had to follow this person in the grave.

Scenario 2 – monopolizing the bracelets. In every society, there are things which cannot change context (Kopytoff 1986, pp. 73 f.). This applies to much of what one conceives of as fittings for a state, such as royal residences, monuments, insignia of chiefdom and ritual objects. Power often asserts itself symbolically by insisting on its right to singularize an object and thereby expand the visible reach of sacred power into new objects. Considering that the bracelets are unique in a regional perspective, it seems reasonable that the person buried in the grave was someone with a special status in the local society. Such a person with great influence on social norms concerning the production and consumption of metal objects could have singularized the bracelets and taken them out of the ordinary circulation sphere. It is a tempting thought that the process of making two bracelets from a presumed metal axe could have been part of such a singularization – facilitating the identification of the object with a special person.

Before continuing, the exact position of the bracelets demands special attention.

The bracelets were not found inside the cist but approximately one metre east of the northern part of the cist, still inside the limits of the Late Neolithic cairn. Following the line of argument

that been discussed above, we would like to view the position of the rings as a compromise between burial and hoard – something in between. This, of course, is a consequence of the archaeological scheme of categorization. The form and function of the bracelets favour their connection to a specific person, and by this logic they could well follow him or her into the grave. However, since metal objects are rarely found in graves, the deposition of the bracelets in the chamber would break the common scheme. To bury the body and to hoard the rings close to each other would solve this problem. The descendants could claim the connections between the family, the dead and the metal rings, while the community could claim a connection between the hoard and the local society. By this action, the old rules were re-negotiated and new values were created it could be understood as a part of a structuring of the world, understood in a Giddensian sense (cf. 1984).

It does not seem possible to put forward one specific interpretation to explain why the bracelets were put in the monument. The interpretations above, or some completely different ones, could have been plausible. However, it seems reasonable to argue that it is the objects' total biography *together* with their find context (and thus the long-term biography of the place), that best elucidates the question of why the two bracelets were put in the gallery grave.

The use of metal, knowledge and myth

When having a biographical approach to things it becomes meaningful to discuss the distribution of knowledge at various points of an object's career (Appadurai 1986, pp. 41 ff.). As been underlined by Helle Vandkilde there was great technological knowledge concerning metal in south Scandinavia during the Late Neolithic (1996, p. 263; 1998, p. 126). Different techniques such as casting, annealing and cold-working were probably practised. However, there seems to have been a lack of standard since the tin content in Late Neolithic metal objects varies a great deal, from almost pure copper objects to high-tin bronze objects. (Vandkilde 1996, p. 160 [fig. 144]). Late Neolithic metalwork is therefore characterized by great knowledge but a lack of standard and a high variability regarding the content of tin.

This variation is also present in the Late Neolithic metal finds from the Växjö area. As has been discussed above, the tin content in the two bracelets is very different, 0.60% and 12.28% respectively (Table II). Apart from the two bracelets, a flat axe and a flanged axe dating to LN I–II and LN II/BA Ia respectively (Vandkilde 1996, pp. 179 f., p. 191), are known from Växjö and the neighbouring parish of Tävelsås [Ol. no. 1872 and Ol. no. 1901]). The flat axe has undergone a metal analysis. The metal composition is copper without tin but with impurities of Sb, Ag and Ni (Cullberg 1968 [Nr. 808]). Since the cutting edge is damaged, one can conclude that the axe has been in practical use. High-impurity coppers like this are excellent alloys with a degree of ductility. However, adding tin to the copper makes the metal harder, something that was coveted in the case of axes, as shown by the cold hardening. In addition, as we have argued in this article, adding tin to the copper could be a way of changing the colour of the object.

It seems reasonable to argue that the Late Neolithic craftsmen, when re-using and re-melting older metal objects, were highly interested in the quality and composition of the metal. The biographical knowledge of objects was of great importance. Who made the object and where? What kind of metal was it made of? What were the properties of the edge, how often did it have to be sharpened? Questions like these probably emerged as the metal objects circulated from the continent to the Växjö area.

The character of the information that encompassed the objects probably varied greatly as metal was transported from the production areas to the consumers. The geographical distance between the metal sources in Central Europe and south Scandinavia created a distance between production and consumption (Appadurai 1986, pp. 41 ff.). A situation where no single person controlled the complete chain of mining to final consumption probably fabricated a segmented kind of

information. Presumably, this favoured a mythological understanding of the origin and circulation of metal. Such a mythology did not only connote the object itself, but also places and persons connected to the life-history of the object.

When the two bracelets were put in the grave, the myth became connected to a monument and a person. The person buried in the grave was probably a part of the local community, and it is reasonable to think that he or she had regarded the view from the grave as his or her home. Besides that, this person – to judge from the bracelets – enjoyed a special status among the local society. He or she was part of a greater mythological world of metal production and consumption. The decision to put the bracelets in the monument drastically changed the character of the myth. From having been connected to a mobile object closely linked to a person, the myth was now connected to a communal monument. We suggest that this process may be regarded as a deliberate incorporation of a mythological world into a specific place – the home of the descendants.

Accordingly, it is hard – or even pointless – to define the gallery grave's spatiality. The grave was – by its location – a part of the daily life and *the home.* However, the content of the chamber placed this home in the middle of *the world.*

Concluding words

The discussion above expresses two different themes. First we presented the cultural biography of the Telestad monument and thereafter we explored the social biography of the two arm rings. The perspectives have both advantages and disadvantages. However, it is evident that in combination they make a more holistic understanding of artefacts, places and the surrounding world possible. Such a combined perspective is of the utmost importance if one wants to understand the actions of prehistoric society.

Finally, we want to discuss some situations where these perspectives inspire each other.

Integrative results: the temporal and spatial domain

Apart from the philosophical considerations we have put forward, one could address some more archaeological reflections. The *cultural biographical perspective* elucidates the long-term history of a specific place. It reveals the place-connected history of the authoritative and allocative resource management, and its changes over time (Giddens 1984, p. 258). On the other hand, this perspective tends to neglect the complexity and unpredictability of human societal action. Here the *social biographical perspective* should be evoked, since it focuses on the particular and the individual. Hence, the interwoven relation between man and matter is explored. Accordingly, and to get the whole picture, one clearly has to combine the monumental biography with the artefactual.

The cultural biographical perspective is rather *place-bound* and immobile. It explores the past without always being able to capture the centre of events. Like a surveillance camera, it more or less continuously produces snapshots taken from the same angle. During some periods, a great deal of action is recorded; during other periods, the place remains – at least physically – the same. Contrarily, we have the social biographical perspective, which metaphorically can be seen as the private photographer. With his Kodak Instamatic, he or she takes pictures of important events and celebrations at *different places* and on special occasions. Those are collected and materialized through the family photo album. Likewise, the object – during its social life – passes through a whole lot of events. Only some – by virtue of social importance – are made into stories and retold. The biography – just like the photo album – is a selective story, which tends to focus on the extraordinary and leaves day-to-day life aside.

The title of this article, "To Dwell in the Centre of the World", reveals one of our arguments – the gallery constituted both a home and a centre of the world. What then, does it mean to dwell in the centre of the world? Probably not very much. The story we have told might give the impression that the experiences of the persons buried in the gallery grave were extraordinary. This was not our purpose. Reflecting on the constitution of the

world and how a home of one's own is a part of a greater whole is probably universal. From this point of view, the stories of the Telestad monument are just as common as any other.

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Notes

1. C14 dates are calibrated according to Stuiver *et al.* (1998) and presented with 68.2% confidence if no other value is given. Other datings rely on typological chronologies.

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