

Interpretative trajectories toward understanding personhoods in prehistory

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ABSTRACT – *This paper presents the genesis of discussions of individual and dividual aspects of personhood. It discusses actual interpretations of different modes of personhood: individuality and indivisibility, dividuality, partibility and fractality, and permeability in archaeology and anthropology. It focuses on the heterogeneity of past identities in European Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age contexts.*

IZVLEČEK – *V članku predstavljamo genezo diskusij o individualnem in dividualnem vidiku osebnosti. Analiziramo aktualne interpretacije različnih vidikov osebnosti: individualnost in nedeljivost, dividualnost, (raz)deljivost in fraktalnost v arheologiji in antropologiji. Posebno pozornost namenjamo raznovrstnim identitetam v evropskem mezolitiku, neolitiku in bronasti dobi.*

KEY WORDS – *Prehistory; identity; individual; dividual; personhood*

Prolegomenon

Parallel to Gordon Childe's (1925) notions of ranked societies and associated farmer's and craftsman's 'personalities' and male and female 'personages', Marcel Mauss (1925) put the concept of the person on the anthropological and sociological agenda in France. The person appears as what he called a 'total social fact', a specific complex of a particular society, and what was later recognised as the Western conceptualisation of the person as a unique and indivisible unity. Mauss began by distinguishing between the terms 'person' and 'individual' and between the social concept of the person and any human being's self-awareness, which he regarded as universal. He contrasted consciousness of the self, an individuality (compounded of an awareness of the body and spirit) with the social concept of a person. The person, he suggested, is a compound of rights, and moral responsibility. He later recognised the archetypes in the classical Greek perception of 'the actor behind the mask', and in the development of

Roman law, which 'first dissolved the distribution of personhood on the basis of clan genealogies and reconstituted it on the basis of the citizen's role in the Republic'. The later development within Christian institutions of religion and morality leads to the emergence 'of a system in which the status and attributes of personhood are attached to an inner principle of monitoring and control: conscience and consciousness' (*La Fontaine 1985; Hunter, Saunders 1995*).

Personne morale and bounded, indivisible and autonomous individuals

In a seminal essay '*A category of the human mind. The notion of person, the notion of self*'¹ Mauss ([1938/1985]) provides 'a summary catalogue' of the concepts of person that had been assumed 'from extremely ancient history to that of our own times'. He proposed an evolutionary trajectory from the

1 Mauss's essay was given in French at the Huxley Memorial Lecture for 1938, and appeared under the title 'Une Catégorie de l'Esprit Humain: La Notion de Personne, Celle de "Moi"', in the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 68 (1938).

'role' (*personnage*) to the 'moral person' (*personne morale*). The concept of the person, he said in the opening paragraph, "*originated and slowly developed over many centuries and through numerous vicissitudes, so that even today it is still imprecise, delicate, fragile, one requiring further elaboration*".

Mauss began with the 'role-player' (*personnage*), organised around ascribed roles in a bounded tribal society of totemic clans, each clan having a fixed list of names transmitted by recognised procedures, the bearers of a name being reincarnations of their predecessors back to mythical times. They "*installed in their settlements a whole social and religious system where, in a vast exchange of rights, goods and services, property, dances, ceremonies, privileges and ranks, persons as well as groups give satisfaction to one another. We see very clearly how, from classes and clans, 'human persons' adjust to one another and how, from these, the gestures of the actors in a drama fit together. Here all the actors are theoretically the sum total of all free men. But this time the drama is more than an aesthetic performance. It is religious, and at the same time it is cosmic, mythological, social and personal*" (*ibid.* 7-8).

The membership of a clan and the sets of roles within the clan thus conceptualise a person and its social identity. It is the life of the clan which constitutes agency, and personhood (or social identity) is symbolised by the 'ceremonial masks which an actor wears in sacred dramas'. The 'role' played by the individual is extended to the whole group and, society as a whole arrives at the notion of 'role-player'. However, all members of a clan are not necessarily *personages*, and it is not clear whether people who are not *personages* are 'non-persons' in the same sense as social outcasts.

He continued with the notion of 'person' (*personne*) that he recognised in classical Greek and Latin societies. The institutions of "*the same kind as ceremonies of clans, masks and paints with which the actors bedeck themselves according to the names they bear*" has remained, but the *personne* has become "*more than an organisational fact, more than a name or a right to assume a role and a ritual mask. It is a basic fact of law*". It has become synonymous with the "*true nature of the individual ... moreover, the right to the persona had been established*", and only slaves (*'servus non habet personam'*) were excluded from it. And "*to its juridical*

meaning is ... added a moral one, a sense of being conscious, independent, autonomous, free and responsible"; the conscious moral person was born (*ibid.* 15-17). In the Latin perception of *persona*, the emphasis moved from masks to the privileges of those with a right to masks – to the *patres* which represent their ancestors – to anyone with ancestors, a cognomen and family property. The notion of the person as a possessor of rights, a group from which only slaves were excluded, thus appeared. The Stoics had introduced the perception of the person as a kind of private *prosopon*, and contributed a notion of the person as a moral fact that embeds a concept of moral conscience in the juridical concept of a right.

However, it is only with the coming of Christianity and after the rise of the awareness of religious power that "*the true metaphysical foundations of 'personne morale' ('moral subject') became fully established*". The perception of the transition from the notion of 'persona' to the notion of man, that of the 'human person (personne)' Mauss suggested was introduced by the Council of Nicaea pronouncement "*Unitas in tres personas, una persona in duas natura* ... *Unity in three persons – of the Trinity – unity of the two natures of Christ* [i.e., one person with two natures]. *It is from the notion of the 'one' that the notion of the 'person' (personne) was created – I believe that it will long remain so – for the divine persons, but at the same time for the human person, substance and mode, body and soul, consciousness and act*" (*ibid.* 20).

The main focus of Mauss's essay is the distinction between the concepts of the individual and the person. By the individual, he means 'the unstructured biological and psychological human being', whereas the person is embedded in social organisations and cultural institutions, and relates to positions, statuses, rights, duties, virtues and traits through which societies organise the lives of their members. He argued against a simplistic conceptual equalisation of the person and individual by describing various societies in which not all individuals are persons, and in which those who are, do not possess personhood as individuals. In clan societies, persons are special constructs of rights, statuses, abilities and traits which are attached to trans-individual entities such as totems, naming systems, masks, ritual genealogies *etc.* These entities are responsible for a distribution of personhood to individuals that may not be universal and permanent. Some individuals obtain their persons through ritual practices in which

they reincarnate the person of an ancestor or spirit. This practice was associated with public rituals and ecstatic dance, and was not an expression of their (inner) selves.

Mauss took the 'modern Western' perception of the person as self to be the marker of a cultural form in which personhood is elaborated and ascribed to individuals. He suggests that our *persona* (e.g., rights, duties, abilities, virtues and traits) is inalienable and rooted in the conscience and consciousness of each individual. This perception relates to the emergence and set of transformations of the notion of the subject that appeared in the contexts of law and morality. The first transformation relates to the emergence of the idea that person(hood) is a status that should be attached to all individuals. Mauss attributes this idea to an archetypal mode of distributing names, genealogies, masks and insignia of personhood, together with their attached rights, obligations and statuses in the Roman period. It was Roman law, he argues, that first dissolved the distribution of personhood on the basis of clan genealogies, reconstituting it on the basis of the citizen's role in the *Res Publica Romanorum*. The introduction of a new 'universalizing regulatory institution' (Hunter, Saunders 1995:73) resulted in the distribution of personhood to individuals and in the appearance of the legal person. Only slaves were excluded from this *modus operandi* of distributing personhood to individuals.

The second set of transformations occurred in institutions of religion and morality. To be a legal person is not yet to be a self, as the attributes of the individual's legal *persona* delimited by a set of legal rights, positions and duties have not been attached to an inner principle responsible for their conduct. Mauss notes that in the context of religious radicalism and economic progress, the Stoics first developed a language of conscience that relates to the practice of establishing an inner regulation of the public attributes of personhood, and that the Puritan ethic constituted a partial dissolution of a system in which individuals acquired their religious persona through the distributive rituals of the church. As Max Weber (1950:104) puts it, "*in what was for the man of the age of the Reformation the most important thing in life, his eternal salvation, he was forced to follow his path alone to meet a destiny which had*

been decreed for him from eternity. No one could help him. No priest, for the chosen one can understand the word of God only in his own heart". However, for Weber, it was through the 'doctrine of predestination' and dissemination of the 'set of ethical techniques and practices' – labour being one of them² – that individuals came to conceive of themselves as objects of their own ethical attention and learned to conduct their lives in the absence of collective guarantees of salvation (Hunter, Saunders 1995).

Mauss's perception of the role of social settings in the formation of the self and the evolutionary trajectory from the *personage* to the *personne morale* are related to Weber's 'life orders' and the evolution of authorities that he identified as 'traditional', 'charismatic' and 'legal-rational'. Weber distinguished between class and status, which he identified as the primary basis of social dynamics. While class is based solely on economic power, status is determined by 'life orders' that produce particular types of personhood (Stillman 2010:51). The 'life orders' thus became recognised as sets of daily practices and techniques in which the status and attributes of Christian personhood are attached to an inner principle of monitoring and self-control, to conscience and consciousness. Paul du Gay (2007:53) noted that "*Weber's Puritan internalizes in the form of an ever watchful inner conscience the public norm embodied in the predestinarian doctrine or code, rather than externalizing that norm in religious ceremonies and images or, for that matter, in a legal system*". The question for Weber was thus not "*how well a particular persona equates with the truth of human experience or subjectivity in general, but how one gets individuals willing and competent to bear that form of personhood which fits the circumstances of a given sphere of life ... Like Mauss, Weber is concerned with constructing a practical account of the ways in which individuals learn to conduct themselves as certain sorts of person, an account that shows the actual 'conducts of life' involved and the technical conditions for producing and deploying them*" (ibid. 54).

For Michel Foucault (1990:10, 11) 'life orders' and 'ethical techniques' are synonymous with 'arts of existence' and 'techniques of the self'. He suggested that "*those intentional and voluntary actions by which men not only set themselves rules of con-*

² The old Puritan doctrine states that "*works are not the cause, but only the means of knowing one's state of grace*" and that "*calling and the premium as placed upon ascetic conduct was bound directly to influence the development of a capitalistic way of life*" (Weber 1950:141, 166).

duct, but also seek to transform themselves, to change themselves in their singular being, and to make their life into an oeuvre that carries certain aesthetic values and meets certain stylistic criteria". Individuals have been 'subjectified' through a process of 'self-problematisation', and the practices on the basis of which these 'problematizations' are formed that can be seen as 'inventions for taking an interest in oneself as the subject of one's own conduct'. There are different ways, he continues, "to 'conduct oneself' morally, different ways for the acting individual to operate, not just as an agent, but as an ethical subject of this action" (*ibid.* 26). Every morality thus comprises two elements: a code of morality and forms of subjectivisation, which are differently balanced in different cultures. The archaeological dimension is embedded in the actual forms of subjectivity which appeared in different contexts at different points in time, he suggests. The 'techniques of the self' thus resulted in the 'Western' perception of individuals that conceive of themselves as objects of their own ethical attention. In the modern West, the attributes of personhood thus have become attached to the conscience and consciousness of individuals, because individuals have adopted techniques for relating to themselves as the subjects of their own conduct and capacities. As Mauss (1985.19, 20) suggests, "our own notion of the human person is still basically the Christian one" in which the modern conception of 'self' is built on the conception of a unity comprised of "substance and mode, body and soul, consciousness and act".

Just before Mauss conceptualised the distinction between individual and person, Alfred Radcliffe-Brown (1922.284) introduced into British social anthropology the notion of 'social personality', which he recognised in the social structure of the Andaman islanders. He relates the 'social personality' to the sum of 'those qualities of a person by which he is able to affect the society'. In other words, his 'social value' depends on his (individual) social status. Much later, he made a distinction between the individual and person, stating that "every human being living in society is two things: he is an individual and he is also a person. As an individual he is a biological organism ... as a person [he] is a complex of social relationships" (Radcliffe-Brown 1952.193–194). The statement has been read as a direct adaptation of Mauss's concept of the *personne morale* (Fortes 1973. 287).

However, it was Kenneth E. Read (1955) who first emphasised the basic Maussian premise that the per-

ception of the individual is exclusive to Western thought. The Gahuku-Gama people in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea, he argued, lack a concept of person. There is "no essential separation of the individual from the social pattern; social roles and social status are not distinguished from the individuals who enact them" (*ibid.* 276).

Individual and dividual aspects of person(hood)

Meyer Fortes (1973; 1987) took the opposite view, suggesting that all societies have (had) a concept of person. He argued that the notion of the person in the Maussian sense "is intrinsic to the very nature and structure of human society and human social behaviour everywhere" (Fortes 1987.253). His approach was based on the distinction between the individual and person, and on the conceptualisation of the self as the connection between the 'inner man' and the 'outer', socially formed, person. The person, he suggested, is culturally defined, socially generated and conferred on the individual. Persons are, however, "kept aware of who they are and where they fit into society by criteria of age, sex, and descent, and by other indices of status, through acting in accordance with these norms" (*ibid.* 282). It was the Tallensi ethnography in West Africa which allowed Fortes to premise society as the source of personhood, which can confer it on any object it chooses, whether human or non-human, living or dead, animate or inanimate, material or imagined, and above all, on both individuals and on collectivities. However, animals are not persons; only particular animals can be invested with personhood and associated with 'the particular collective person, that is, the clan whose dead elders rise up again'. In this context, the "personhood comes thus to be in its essence externally oriented. Self awareness means, in the first place, awareness of oneself as a person-morale rather than as an idiosyncratic individual. The moral conscience is externally validated, being vested, ultimately, in the ancestors, on the other side of the ritual curtain. The soul, image as it is of the focal element of individuality, is projected on to material objects that will outlast the living person. Person is perceived as a microcosm of the social order, incorporating its distinctive principles of structure and norms of value and implementing a pattern of life that finds satisfaction in its consonance with the constraints and realities ... of the social and material world" (*ibid.* 285–286).

Fortes suggests that Tallensi person(hood) is dividual and partible. Full person status is perceived as some-

thing attained gradually over the course of a lifetime. Adulthood is the first step in a linear ritual trajectory which the person completes only at death, when it becomes fully incorporated into the total society by accessing the ancestry. Fortes describes the Tallensi person as primarily defined by roles and statuses, and as constituted of detachable parts external to it, but shared by both humans and other living entities (see also Comaroff, Comaroff 2001; Tsekénis 2011). The person (individual) and the corporate group are images of one another on a different scale, as ‘the descent-based collectivities are perpetual corporate bodies’ that replicate on the collective level the model of the person on the individual level. *“Individual and collective are not mutually exclusive but are rather two sides of the same structural complex. The scheme of identification employed for individual persons is the same scheme of identification as serves to distinguish lineages and clans. The mechanics of this pattern is obvious if we bear in mind that the individual person is constantly obliged to be aware of himself and to present himself as a member and representative of such a collective unit. In ceremonial situations, [e.g., funerals, sacrifices, and the rituals of the ‘Great Festivals’] ... no matter what kind of transactions an individual or a group is engaged in, ... the context of the collective interest is always present. But the idea that a lineage is a collective person because it is the perpetuation of its founding ancestor in each of his descendants is seen in other ways too”* (Fortes 1987.283).

Mauss’s interpretation of the Western notion of the person as self as the sign of a particular cultural elaboration of personhood and a particular cultural mode of distributing personhood to individuals became recognised in anthropology as the *“notion of the ‘unitary subject’ that is “reflected in cultural (ideological) conceptions of the person derived from Cartesian metaphysics and bourgeois (capitalist) political theory, which depicts the human person as an isolated, asocial, bounded and homogeneous entity”* (Morris 2000.47). In archaeology, it has been suggested similarly that *“in the modern, Western world, the human individual is conceived of as a bounded, stable and independent entity, existing prior to and above the social relations into which it enters. The notion of an autonomous and transcendent self consciously shaping its own destiny can of course be traced to the radical individualism and liberal political theory of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries”* (Brück 2006.308).

The notion that the person is a homogeneous and internally consistent entity is certainly not cross-culturally shared. The initial perception of the self in many societies involves an amalgamation of elements brought together through parenthood, marriage, exchange and other interpersonal contacts. Indeed, the ‘dividual self’ was introduced into anthropology by McKim Marriott (1976) as an opposition to the indivisible person. He noted that *“persons single actors are not thought in South Asia to be ‘individual’, that is, indivisible, bounded units, as they are in much of Western social and psychological theory, as well as in common sense. Instead, it appears that persons are generally thought by South Asians to be ‘dividual’ or divisible. To exist, dividual persons absorb heterogeneous material influences. They must also give out from themselves particles of their own coded substances, essences, residues, or other active influences that may then reproduce in others something of the nature of the persons in whom they have originated ... What goes on between actors are the same connected processes of mixing and separation that go on within actors. Actors’ particular natures are thought to be the results as well as causes of their particular actions (karma). Varied codes of action or codes of conduct (dharma) are thought to be naturally embodied in actors and otherwise substantialized in the flow of things that pass among actors ... Proper separability of action from actor, of code from substance ... that pervades both Western philosophy and Western common sense ... is generally absent: code and substance ... cannot have separate existences in this world of constituted things as conceived by most South Asians”* (ibid. 109–10).

‘Dividuals’ are thus dividual and ‘multiply-authored’ composites, and their components originate outside of the person. Marriott relates these to ‘substance-codes’ transmitted between bodies, persons, and castes. Bodily substance and codes of conduct mingle within bodies, but are inseparable from the ‘outside’ world. The coded substances are blood, cooked food, alcohol, soil, alms and even knowledge. They continually circulate and are transformed through social interactions. The exchange of substances (giving and receiving) affects a person internally, and influences the whole of their social identity, including gender and caste. Actions enjoined by these embodied codes are thought of as transforming the substances in which they are embodied. When a woman marries, her body is considered to be transformed, and so too, is her code of conduct. The ‘code’ for a particular group or family unit is thought to be car-

ried in the bodily substance shared by persons belonging to that group. Throughout life, each person is internally divided and composed of many different coded substances at once that can be extended from the person through exchanges and given to others. The continuous mixing and separation of elements occurs through processes of parenthood, marriage, trade, feasts, the exchange of services and knowledge and other inter-personal contacts.

Parallel to Hindu 'dividuals', in the New Guinea Highlands, Marilyn Strathern (1987; 1988) identified the 'sociocentric' Melanesian dividual and partible personhoods as alternatives to 'egocentric' Western indivisible, individual personhoods. Each person is a composite formed of relations with a plurality of other persons. The person can be considered a dividual being, as a composite formed of relations with a plurality of other persons. Melanesian persons are, she argued "as *dividually as they are individually conceived. They contain a generalized sociality within. Indeed, persons are frequently constructed as the plural and composite site of the relationships that produced them. The singular person can be imagined as a social microcosm. This premise is particularly significant for the attention given to images of relations contained within the maternal body. By contrast, the kinds of collective action that might be identified by an outside observer in a male cult performance or group organization, involving numbers of persons, often presents an image of unity. This image is created out of internal homogeneity, a process of de-pluralization, manifested less as the realization of generalized and integrative principles of organization itself and more as the realization of particular identities called into play through unique events and individual accomplishments*" (Strathern 1988.13).

In this perception, a person is a product of the gifts, contributions, or detachments of others. Persons are regarded "as composed of gendered substances, such as father's bone [e.g., semen] and mother's menstrual blood, plus lifetimes of donations of embodied and non-substantial labour by other kin and relatives such as food, magical knowledge, ceremonial wealth, land, etc.". These personal gifts should be reciprocated, for example, "since my mother contributed womb blood to me during conception and gestation, at appropriate later points I am obliged to give her analogous parts of myself acquired from still other persons" (Mosko 2010. 218).

Thus the "the widespread 'identification' of women with the growing crops or with the pigs that they nurture is to be juxtaposed to those rather few contexts in which women engage in (external) collective activity. The maternal relationship between a woman and her products appears in an image of internal multiplication and replication. The image is one of a body and its as yet undetached parts. It is the mother, as it were, who grows. Once grown, however, the detached things (food and children) can be used in either a mediating or no mediating manner" (Strathern 1988.250). Indeed, "identification of the crops with the woman's person lasts only as long as they are also in explicit relation to the ground with which her husband (or son or sometimes brother) is identified. The link between herself and the crop is via her particular concrete work. One could suggest an analogy here with men's contrivances in ceremonial exchange. The unitary connection the identification of the growing plants with the woman who watches over them is a deliberate achievement in this sphere. It operates to a precise effect to bring the plants to maturation. Once the crops are taken out of the ground, they are no longer the woman's own. Instead they are reactivated like the pigs that return to the household in terms of their multiple social sources. (The plants cared for by the wife were nourished by the husband's work on his clan land.) Thus a husband has irrefutable claims on a woman's harvested food, where he would never help himself to her planted gardens" (ibid. 165). It is that "men thus grow women. And the men do it through the effort they apply to prepare the land to yield food. Food is the product of a relation (husband's and wife's work), but in its encompassing male origin, its source in the soil, can also be thought of as paternal. A cross-sex relation is converted to a unique (same-sex) capacity. And this is the sense in which clans grow persons on its soil, sometimes referred to as its bones. Hence the 'grease' in clan territory that nourishes plants and people is food in male form, though the term itself refers to semen and breast milk alike" (ibid. 265).

A person's composition constantly changes as they both attach others' contributions to themselves and detach personal tokens and capacities to be attached to others. The transactions compose persons, and relations create a chain of sequential reciprocities 'as so many capacities for future agentive action'. Thus for "children to be produced, the semen that coagulates to form a fetus must be separated from the encasing semen substance of the person's body

[i.e., that within the collectivising domesticity, the circulation and transaction of semen contributes directly to the 'growth of the brother's and sister's body tissue, and cannot be further transmitted'] ... *What enables them to 'produce' children is the separation which then becomes conceivable between the spouse's internal constitutions (the relation which makes each body both container and contained). Although the husband is thought also to contribute to the wife's body (the container), this is only a contribution. Her body is made largely of paternal material; instead he transmits his own partible substance that becomes contained within the wife's cavity as an entity separate from her encasing paternal body. Given that it is milk, rather than blood, which is the Sambia female version of male substance, there is a parallel between the emptying of the male body through insemination and female breast feeding. While getting rid of milk or semen may underline the vessel-like nature of the body, blood by contrast does not have the property of further flow. It is simply discarded, and in being discarded it is 'bad', in contradistinction to the vital filling and emptying of the semen sac/womb/breast" (ibid. 216–217).*

Strathern (1988:15) argues that gatherings and ceremonies bring together a whole clan as a dividual person, so that "*the bringing together of many persons is just like the bringing together of one*". It is suggested that clan and person have parallel compositions and conditions of personhood (see Fowler 2004:28). Indeed, they continuously move between being one person with many relations (dividual), and being presented as one of a pair in a relationship (partible). Thus "*the condition of multiple constitution, the person composed of diverse relations, also makes the person a partible entity: an agent can dispose of parts, or act as a part. Thus 'women' move in marriage as parts of clans; thus 'men' circulate objectified parts of themselves among themselves*" (Strathern 1988:324–325). However, the clan and the person are also internally differentiated in encompassing a series of distinct parts usually disparate from each other (including the people within it, but also pigs and shell goods). But at the same time, we must note that the "*exchange of detached, partible things stands in apposition to the flow of internal (lineal) substance within a single wife-exchanging or wife-receiving unit. Meat, women, and shells flow in exchange across relationships not internally unified by substance ... The conventional separation between internal and external relations is tantamount to the personification of the*

body itself. For the Melanesian image of the body as composed of relations is the effect of its objectification as a person. In the partibility of its extensions into relations beyond itself and in the internal relations that compose its substance, the body consequently appears as a result of people's actions" (ibid. 207–208).

In the context of the 'substantialization of attributes of persons and things', Cecilia Busby (1997:274–276) argues for a distinction in the conceptualisation of persons between Melanesia and South India. Both have been characterised as 'dividuals' in contrast to the 'individuals' of the West, and both have similarly been seen as 'making connections through the exchange of parts of the person, following Mauss's (1925) model of gift exchange'. She suggests that the perception of Melanesian bodies as internally divided creates 'an apparent homology between internal and external relations or parts'. The person composed of relations appears to 'extend beyond the skin boundary' and includes objects and persons considered to be objectifications of such relations. In India, however, persons are not internally divided. They contain substances from both the mother and father, but they are not 'separably identifiable in the body'. Persons are 'co-extensive with their skin boundary' and they are not 'partible', she continues. The boundary of the body is fluid, and substance can flow between persons, so that the person can be considered as 'permeable'. She thus makes a distinction between substance as 'a flow from a person' and 'substance as a part of a person' and a person 'who is internally whole and permeable' against those 'who is internally divided and partible'.

Parallel to 'permeable personhood', Nurit Bird-David (1999) introduced the concept of 'relatedness' that she relates to the 'totemic thought' and animistic practices of Nayaka forest-dwelling hunter-gatherers of Tamil Nadu in South India. The construction of a relational personhood is made 'by producing and reproducing sharing relationships with surrounding beings, humans and others'. This allows them to sense each other as "*dividuated personalities, each with a relatively persisting way of engaging with others against the relative change involved in their mutual engagement*" (ibid. S72). Comments on this paper introduced different perceptions of dividuals, each associated with a different type of social relations: the Melanesian that 'separate-while-connecting' and the Nayaka that absorb (ibid. S88). In other words, while south Indian dividuals 'engage in relations which integrate', Melanesian dividuals 'en-

gage in relations which separate elements of their selves and world', and individuals 'engage in relations which alienate'. In this perception, Melanesians are 'separating parts of their person from each other in order to keep up relations with others'. Conversely, South Indian persons are 'integrated with other persons' in terms of personal relations in a way that 'the two bodies have a shared boundary' and so operate 'as a single system'. Individuals are thus interpreted 'as alienated from each other and from their world', and to some extent even from their bodies through their relations with one another (Fowler 2001.140). Each of these modes of relations refers to bodily conception and experience.

LiPuma (1998) suggests, however, that the Melanesian person, like persons everywhere, has both, individual and dividual 'aspects of personhood'. He argued against the classic distinction between (Western) individuals as bounded indivisible entities possessing fixed innate attributes and engaging in relations of the capitalist possession of land, animals and things, but being in constant opposition to society, and dividuals as constituted in interaction with others, inseparable from the gifts they give and integrated within their world as a 'microcosm of society'. In his view, persons emerge from the tension between dividual and individual relations. It is a misunderstanding to assume either that the social emerges from individual actions or that the individual ever completely disappears by 'virtue of indigenous forms of relational totalization'. To assume that there exists an opposition between societies based on substance and those based on relations (*i.e.*, cultures of dividual persons versus a Western world of individuals), he continues, is not only to accept Western ideological perceptions of the person, but to use that ideology to construct the "*Other as its opposite image*" (LiPuma 2001.132). The individuality that is a defining feature of personhood should not be equated with bourgeois individualism. Each person thus negotiates a tension between dividual and individual characteristics, and in all societies, although embedded in different cultural and historical contexts, personhood emerges from the constant reconciling of one with the other. The person is thus to be taken as constituted of multiple identities, and as being a participant in a wide range of social relationships and groups based on locality, kinship, ethnicity, occupation, religious and political affiliations and gender, as well as being intrinsically related to the natural world in varied ways phenomenologically and ecologically (Morris 2000.47).

The recognition of 'individualised' personhood in prehistory was recently associated with the individual's task-based skills and capacities. Chapman and Gaydarska (2011; see also Budja 2011) introduce the kinds of embodied skills and associated social roles that created Mesolithic and Neolithic personhoods. They range from 'hunting' and 'plant-gathering' to 'farming' and 'herding'; from 'stone tool-making' to 'ploughing' and 'dairy producing'; from 'basket-making and string-bag-making' to 'house-painting' skills, *etc.* The acquisition and development of embodied skills and their combinations and competences are key facets of a person's individualisation and participation in social life. The shift from dividual to individual personhood is associated with transition to farming and settlement nucleation, they suggest. This namely leads to a wider diversity of persons with different skills and their linkages to material culture. On the other hand a greater likelihood of new skills combinations leads to more individualised identities (Fig. 1).

The fractal person and Neolithic pottery fragmentation

Fractality is another perception of dividuality introduced into anthropology by Roy Wagner (1991). He creates this by converting Strathern's notion of the person, who is neither singular nor plural, into the concept of the fractal person. The perception of fractality is based on "*holography and its fractal dimensionality that replicates its figuration as part of the fabric of the field, through all changes of scale*". He postulates fractality in opposition to singularity and plurality; and suggests that it "*relates to, converts to and reproduces the whole, something as different from a sum as it is from an individual part*" (*ibid.* 166). The basic premise of his work is that 'the person is a totality' of which any aggregation is only a partial realisation. Thus this totality is neither an individual nor a group, but a fractal person, an entity whose (external) relationships with others are integral (internal) to it. He relates the fractal person to the 'great man' system that "*force[s] us to comprehend a pre-existing sociality, and a pre-existing totality, of which any aggregate can be only a partial realisation. This totality is neither individual nor group but a 'fractal person', an entity whose (external) relationships with others are integral (internal) to it ... The task of the great man, then, would not be one of upscaling individuals to aggregate groupings but of keeping a scale that is person and aggregate at once, solidifying a totality into happening*" (*ibid.* 159, 172).



Fig. 1. A part of the Late Vinča figurine composition at Crkvine. It was suggested that the arrangement of figurines represents the individuals (figurine) within a given community (composition), and each individual role is marked by the tools and weapons (from Crnobrnja 2011.140, Fig. 9).

The parallel conversion of the same notion of the person has been effected within post-processual archaeology. John Chapman (1996; 2000a.28–29) postulates that fractality relates to ‘the entity’ with integrally implied relationships, a person that aspires to be individual and corporate at once. The ‘fractal or dividual self’ is thus a person who is at the same time individual and collective, connected to other people through the extension of artefacts. The postulate is based on a sequence of premises which Chapman anchored to Strathern’s (1987; 1988), Wagner’s (1991) and Weiner’s (1992) notions that: (i) ‘persons in gift societies become an artefact of the way in which relationships are handled through the possession and manipulation of things conceptualised as wealth or exchange’; (ii) ‘in these societies, a gift exchange is related to personal domination, and there inalienability and enchainment are important’; (iii) ‘in some societies, inalienability denotes the absence of property relationship, so they do not have alienable things at their disposal, and they can only dispose of items by enchainment themselves in relations with others’; (iv) ‘enchainment is a condition of all relations based on gift, and is thus the means by which persons are multiply constituted’; (v) ‘inalienable things are the representations of how social identities are reconstituted through time’ (Chapman 2000a.28–32). Along with these premises, he puts forward the idea of the blurred human-object boundary by claiming that all things with a cultural value are invested with life (see Wagner 1991). That is, they partake of the self and also create it. Valuable items thus take on part of the qualities of their makers, just as the makers embody qualities of skill and resourcefulness in the production process. He actualises Daniel Miller’s (1985) sug-

gestion that artefacts are characterised as simultaneously a form of natural materials whose nature we experience through practice and the form through which we continually experience the particular nature of our cultural order (e.g., the social relations defining individuals and groups). He proposes that the correlation between the use and deposition of either complete or deliberately fragmented artefacts and the enchainment social relationships between persons. While the fragmentation transmits enchainment or fractal ‘connotations of past makers and owners’, the fragments of valued objects show the ‘extension of persons’ relationships through the inalienability of their valued objects and the transmission of fragments to different individuals in different contexts’ (Chapman 2000a.39).

In this reading, pottery is suggested as a medium that is ‘reliable and effective’ for holding persons and groups together ‘through the objectification of common traditions often reinforced by symbolic decoration’, and for providing ‘a mechanism for symbolism of fission and rupture’. Thus complete pots may represent group solidarity, integration and successful constitution, whereas fragmented pots represent rupture, cleavage and friction that leads to dissolution. In Early Neolithic societies, where household and/or local lineage institutions were weakly developed, the only way to maintain social reproduction lay in repetitive social practices, including pot smashing. Thus *“the decision to keep pots whole through daily use is a metaphor for maintenance of social relations through continual renegotiation. Just as the associations of its various uses bring and added value to a vessel, so the enchainment of fractal person to a ramifying group of kin brings*

such people fame and reputation. Conversely, the rupture of those social relations characterising a less sedentary community would have elicited the response of the fragmentation of much valued pottery. But the even more striking collapse of social relations in a seemingly more stable sedentary community's may well have led to the large-scale fragmentation of one of the that community's important symbolic resources-pottery" (Chapman 2000a.43).

Along with the (fragmented) vessel that mediates persons' relationships between the living members of society, the human bones are a metaphor for maintaining relations between the living, the deceased and the ancestors. The practice of bone removal to selected domestic or mortuary contexts redefines the social relations between the living and those dead who become ancestors by keeping alive the essence of the dead through the materiality of their bones (Chapman 2000a.144; 2000b; Chapman, Gaydarska 2007.53–70).

Chapman's model of personhood thus proposes that the person is a totality of his or her relationships. The fragmentation of objects and bodies, and the extraction of parts from wholes and the re-articulation of fragments in new units is the major mode of social relations through which people and things are constituted. People are not so much individuals as 'dividuals'. Who they are and what they do relate to their transactions with each other, with material culture and with the dead. His thesis pertains first to Balkan Neolithic and Chalcolithic contexts. He argues that many incomplete artefacts, such as pots and figurines, are the result of deliberate breakage, dispersal and deposition. They were used in social exchanges linking persons (dividuals), places and things and, marking relational personhood. He postulated later that fragmentation and enchainment are always linked social practices. Enchainment in this context is believed to comprise the best, and sometimes the only, explanation for deliberate fragmentation (Chapman, Gaydarska 2007.203; Chapman 2008.188).³

In central and north-western Europe, the link between fragmentation and enchainment was recognised in settlement and in burial Neolithic contexts (Jones 2005.216). It has been suggested, however, that the connections between people, places and

things are composed in quite different ways in different regions. In each of these cases, we have to be careful about applying a unitary anthropological model of relational personhood, and we need to examine different ways of relating in different historical contexts. Although there is no doubt that in many prehistoric contexts, the deliberate fragmentation of bodies and objects plays an important role in understanding identity (see Brück 2006; Nilsson Stutz 2003; Fowler 2008), the notion of the related processes of fragmentation and enchainment has not become broadly accepted in archaeology.

Criticism relates to the manner in which the fragmentation perspective is employed to generalise about a single type of action (fragmentation) leading via a single form of practice (enchainment) to a single mode of relational (dividual) personhood, while not allowing for the possibility of other readings (Last 2007; Brittain, Harris 2010.590). Chris Fowler (2004; 2008; 2010a; 2010b) instead proposes that multiple forms of both dividual and individual modes of personhood have been constituted through different historical and material contexts. He suggests that people in the past negotiated both individuality and dividuality in different ways within two extremes, of Western individuality and eastern relational personhoods, but all societies provide frameworks for people to negotiate features of both. Inalienability, dividuality and fractal personhood are thus merely parallel ways of describing the same phenomenon on a very broad level, but there is also a range of different strategies and logics of personhood that fall within the bounds of these terms (see below). He suggests "*a range of heuristics including a broad tension between relational, dividual and fractal personhood associated with inalienable relations at one end of a spectrum, and fixed, individual personhood with representational metaphors and alienable relations at the other*" (Fowler 2004.86).

A simpler approach to tracing and interpreting past personhoods can be found in the discussions that have run parallel in American anthropology. Porter Poole (1994.842) thus suggests that personhood embedded in processes of socialisation and enculturation, "*endows the culturally recognized individual as a social being with those powers or capacities upon which agency depends, makes possible and constrains his or her proper actions, casts him or*

³ The practices are hypothesised recently to be expected in 'all hominin societies' from the very first stone tool making (Knappett 2006; Gamble 2007.144; Chapman, Gaydarska 2009).

her as possessed of understanding and judgement ... Although the capacities of personhood may be anchored to the powers and limitations of the human body, they consist fundamentally of the cognitive, emotional, motivational, evaluative and behavioural abilities that are entailed in becoming an actor in community life. Thus, the person is essentially a social being with a certain moral status, is a legitimate bearer of rights and obligations, and is endowed with those characteristics of agency that make possible social action". The discussion actualised the Maussian triad of individual/self/person as "biologistic, psychologistic, and sociologistic modes" of conceptualising human beings, and differentiates the individual as a member of human kind, the self as a locus of experience, and the person as an agent in society. To be a person, Grace Harris (1989:602–605) postulates "it means to have a certain standing (not 'status') in a social order, as agent-in-society. Consequently, it is not sufficient to a discussion of personhood to talk about people as centers of experience, selves. To be a person means to be a 'somebody' who authors conduct construed as action ... To focus on human persons as agents-in-society directs attention to systems of social relationships whose participants, performing actions and responding to each other's actions, live in a moral order". Personhood has a temporal dimension, and "moving through the moral career, the human being may or may not become fully a person. Even if he or she does become a person, personhood may be partly or fully rescinded later. His or her agentive capacities are bestowed or removed, confirmed or disconfirmed, declared or denied".

Lewis Binford (1971) was the first to introduce the anthropological concept of 'social persona' into archaeology, suggesting that mortuary customs and beliefs were determined in part by representations of the social identities of the individual, and in part by the extent to which other members of the social group recognised responsibilities to the deceased. It is not only that as the number of social roles an individual held during life increased, so too would the number of symbolic representations of those roles, and that they would be adequately mirrored in the treatment of the body, in grave architecture and in grave goods, but also that the variation in the structure of mortuary data reflects the degree of social structural complexity characterising the society itself. The presence of single rich burials has indeed encouraged many archaeologists to construct linear hierarchical models with individuals, chiefs, village

heads, located at particular levels in the social hierarchy. Such a perspective increases the emphasis on the powerful elite and individual identity and the autonomy of male heads of lineage or chiefs controlling resources valued for their properties (Renfrew 1973). It is perhaps most obvious in Renfrew's (1974) interpretation of Neolithic and Bronze Age societies as group-oriented and individualising chiefdoms, respectively. By the end of the 1970s, the interpretative model that begins with an egalitarian period among clan members in the earlier Neolithic, followed by hierarchically organised lineages in the later Neolithic, replaced by influential elite groups of autonomous powerful Early Bronze Age male individuals who control the centralised exchange of prestigious goods, was broadly accepted. Many authors have argued that differences between burials in the quantity and character of the grave goods indicate that social position was based on the ability to acquire and display prestige goods (e.g., Shennan 1982; Bradley 1984; Thorpe, Richards 1984; Kristiansen 1998). It has been suggested that the beginning of the Bronze Age correlates with the emergence of an ideology of competitive individualism across Europe. Individuals in these contexts were conceptualised as a bounded, stable and independent entities existing prior to and above the social relations into which they enter. Applying these perceptions of self and personhood, identified as modern Western and associated with an ideology of radical individualism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries projected onto the past, was strongly criticised (Brück 2001; 2006; 2009).

Heterogeneity of past identities

The concept of personhood has been intensively discussed in prehistoric archaeology in the last decade. Since the notion of 'social persona' appeared, the debate on the relationship between (in)dividuals and the societies of which they form part has had huge implications for the study of identities in prehistory. The numerous works that have been produced on the topic reveal two opposite concepts of individual person and personhood. The traditional perception emphasises that individual person(hood) is a bounded, stable and independent entity, constant from birth, equal to others and unique. In post-processual archaeology, it represents an inherently fragmented, fluid and relational entity. The person is 'multiply-authored' by social interactions with others before birth and throughout their lives (Brück 2005; 2006; Fowler 2005; 2010a; 2010b; LiPuma 2001). However, in discussions on the relationship between the

body and the person, in some cases the individual focuses on the body, and the person is seen as a material entity signified by the boundary of the body, distinct from other individuals (*Meskel 1996; Hodder 1999.138–146*). In others, the person is seen to be composed of relational transactions between and with other persons and communities and thus constituted through rationality. In Fowler's (2004.4) definition, a person is "any entity, human or otherwise, which may be conceptualized and treated as a person. A person is frequently composed through the temporary association of different aspects. These aspects may include features like mind, spirit or soul as well as a physical body, and denote the entity as having a form of agency. Exactly who or what may or may not be a person is contextually variable". Personhood, therefore, "refers to the condition or state of being a person, as it is understood in any specific context. Persons are constituted, de-constituted, maintained and altered in social practices through life and after death. This process can be described as the ongoing attainment of personhood. Personhood is frequently understood as a condition that involves constant change, and key transformations to the person occur throughout life and death. People may pass from one state or stage of personhood to another. Personhood is attained and maintained through relationships not only with other human beings but with things, places, animals and the spiritual features of the cosmos. Some of these may also emerge as persons through this engagement. People's own social interpretations of personhood and of the social practices through which personhood is realized shape their interactions in a reflexive way, but personhood remains a mutually constituted condition".

Who or what may or may not be(come) a temporary person is thus contextually variable, and what each person is depends to a large extent on interactions with other human beings and other beings and things. Personhood is not a cumulative set of fixed, distinguishing individual traits. It is a specific marker for the condition of identity as conceptualised by a given community. The condition is understood and formulated through different modes of personhood: individuality and indivisibility, dividuality, partibility and fractality, and permeability. We mentioned above that individuality refers to the common concept of personal uniqueness that all persons have, but it does not mean that individuals have an indivisible nature. Indivisibility refers to a state of being indivisible, a unitary person. Dividuality relates

to a state where the person, the dividual, in this perception is composite and multi-authored. Persons engaged in social relationships with other beings and things owe parts of themselves to others. The person is thus composed of traits or features such as mind, soul, and body that may have different origins or authorships. Partibility, fractality and permeability are synonyms of the dividual person and personhood.

Partibility refers to the reconfiguration of the dividual person in a way that one part or element can be subtracted and given to another person or entity, to whom or which it is owed. Being a multiply constituted person composed of diverse relations makes him, her or it a partible entity, an agent that can dispose of parts or act as a separate part. Melanesian societies are often cited as prime examples: women move in marriage as parts of clans, but men circulate objectified parts of themselves among themselves. The latter refers to the person and personhood as permeated by flows of substances, e.g., qualities that influence the internal composition of the person. Hindu societies in south India are conceived as permeable persons.

Fractality and the fractal person encapsulate the personhood of partibility and multiple composition that are repeated on different scales, from particular persons to larger social groups, clans and lineages, extending from living to non-living beings. Through fractal logic, groups of people may appear as one person constituted through the same relations as single members of the community. In communities where personhood is stressed as a feature of the community and where a clan is a person (a family might be another), not all persons in the community are necessarily human, but other social agents such as 'ghosts, spirits, houses, axes, animals, standing stones' (for details see *Fowler 2004.14–30*).

Personhood thus objectifies how identities shift continuously throughout life and how they are mediated either through small interactions between a few people or large community events, through cooking, eating and commensality, through death and decomposition, and through mortuary exchanges and ancestral ceremonies. All these dynamics are embedded in systems of totemism, animism and naturalism. In a relational world, personhood can be attained and understood only through transactions between people, and between people and things, substances, buildings, animals and other entities. In some social practices, the statuses of humans and animals are inter-

connected through transformations in personhood. In others, the decomposition of bodies and redistribution of body parts and bones are vital to the circulation of energy among all living things. We may hypothesise the life and after-life of a person as an ongoing process in which different personhoods are sought, negotiated and attained. Personhood is not, therefore, a cumulative set of fixed, distinguishing personality traits. LiPuma (2001:131) and Fowler (2005:123) agree that in all cultures both individual and dividual aspects of personhood co-exist. Each person negotiates a tension between these aspects, especially in constructing his or her own comparative discourses, such as justifications or explanations for action. In all societies, personhood emerges from a constant process of reconciliation of one with the other, and it is a misunderstanding to assume either that the social emerges out of individual action or that the individual ever completely disappears by virtue of indigenous forms of relational totalisation.

Recent discussions in archaeology have focused on the hypothesised trajectory of the Early Neolithic dividual to Early Bronze Age individual personhood. It is broadly accepted that during the Early Bronze Age the treatment of the body changed as collective burials were replaced by single inhumations and cremations in well-defined graves in Atlantic Europe. Mortuary practices were different from the previous Neolithic, and it has been suggested that this defines a new relationship between the living and the dead, along with a perception of the body as a distinct entity (Thomas 1991; Jones 2002). The burials of impressive and symbolically significant prestigious goods such as toiletry articles, weapons and drinking equipment (common to individual graves) with male bodies evoke the aesthetics of maleness that relate to the role of the male warrior. It is associated with particular lifestyles in which warfare, body ornamentation, hunting, horses and the consumption of alcohol on the one hand, and control of the centralised exchange of prestigious goods and hereditary positions of power on the other, which it has been suggested are expressions of self-identity in the Early Bronze Age (Treherne 1995). The warrior's individual personhood remains broadly recognised as an archetype of both powerful elites and individual chiefs' identity (for a critical discussion, see Brück 2004; Fowler 2005).

The moral codex of rules and standards that relates to the notion of the warrior's personhood at the onset of the Mycenaean period was introduced into the discussion recently (Voutsaki 2010). When indivi-

duals as described by Homer in the Iliad and Odysseus first engage in a practice, they have no choice but to agree to accept external standards for the evaluation of their acts and to agree to follow the rules set out for practice. The main purpose of human agency in heroic societies, where the warrior is the paradigm of human excellence, is to realise the goods internal to practices such as fighting, hunting or feasting. The entire group thus 'celebrates a victorious battle', 'benefits from a successful hunting expedition' or 'enjoys a generous feast' to increase the prestige of the kin and social group, and to ensure the fidelity and reliability of fighting companions and allies. A moral agent is necessarily a social agent in so far as his perception must match that of the group. Morality and social structure in heroic society are thus conflated (MacIntyre 2007). Moral standards are always bound up with society as a whole and differ between societies according to each society's respective structure. Each individual has a fixed role resulting from their position in the social network, primarily through their particular ties to an elite community, and each individual has the specific obligations and privileges attached to that position. The warrior's personhood was thus individual and dividual, and as we mentioned above, the identity of the group and the person can have parallel compositions and can move between parallel conditions of personhood.

We suggest a similar reading of shamanic identity in a much earlier Mesolithic hunter-gatherer context in northern Europe. Four shaft graves at Oleneostrovskii Mogilnik contained shaman burials that are significantly different from the other burials in terms of grave architecture, treatment of the body and grave goods (O'Shea, Zvelebil 1984; Larson 2004; Zvelebil 2008). In contrast to the other 173 graves facing east, these four are shaft graves oriented to the west. They include two males, one female, and one juvenile in a vertical (reclining) position. In the most elaborate shaft burial (No. 100), of a middle-aged man, more than 500 artefacts were placed carefully over and around his body, particularly around the head and shoulders, the pelvic region, and below the knees. This arrangement suggests that some of the pendants were attached to what were perhaps a garment and possibly a headdress. The man was equipped with a quiver that held arrows and a large bone dagger with flint inserts. Beaver mandibles were placed on the body suggesting a shaman's attribute, since beaver mandibles form part of shamans' attire among some Siberian groups. The body was buried in a deep, almost vertical pit. The pit was

covered in ochre, and the body was walled in with large stones. It has been suggested that the deceased was partially exposed for viewing (Stoliar 2001) (Fig. 2).

Exceptional individual burials attributed to shamans have been found in several hunter-gatherer cemeteries in northern Europe (Janislawice in Poland, Duonkalnis in Lithuania, Vedbæk-Bogebakken, Zvejnieki, Skateholm, Hartikka and Pispa in southern Finland, and Tuzozero in northern Russia). They all include interments that are significantly different from standard practice. All the burials are embedded in egalitarian frameworks, but demonstrate the individual status of the deceased and social rank and differentiation to some degree based on achieved, perhaps even inherited, status and wealth (Zvelebil 2008). Shamanic agency, on the other hand, relates them to totemic cosmology and animistic practices that dictate relations between humans, ancestors and animals. It can be seen in a continuous flow of substances, human (ancestral) bones and animal body parts between persons (Ingold 1986; 2000a; 2000b; Strassburg 2000; Nilsson Stutz 2003). We may assume that a dividual shaman's personhood was attained and maintained

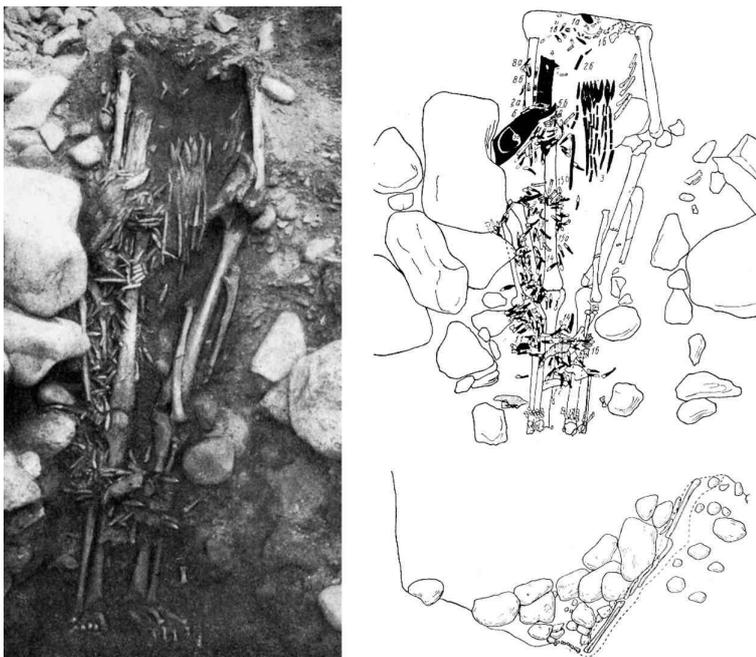


Fig. 2. Oleneostrovskii Mogilnik burial No. 100 (from Gurina 1956. Figs. 13, 50). The body was buried in a vertical (reclining) position in an almost vertical pit. The pit was covered in ochre, and the body was walled in with large stones.

through relationships not only with animals, places and spiritual features, but with lineages or clans to the same extent. Both Mesolithic shamans and Bronze Age warriors are persons to be taken as constituted of multiple forms of both dividual and individual modes of personhood, and as participants in a wide range of social relationships and groups.

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