



# Memorialization and Heritagization: Investigating the Site of the Last Execution by Hanging in Finland

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**Abstract** This article focuses on the processes of memorialization and heritagization through a case study from Oulu, Finland, where a cast-iron rail encircling a pine tree constitutes a memorial marking the site of the country's last official execution by hanging in 1916. The memorial and its immediate surroundings are examined here through historical documents and maps, tree-ring data, interviews, and the results of small-scale archaeological excavations. The evidence indicates various modes of interaction—crosses carved on the memorial tree, a magical cache, finds pertaining mainly to the consumption of intoxicating substances—exposing a lesser-known and more intimate side of the site biography than is evident from written records. Finally, both individual and national practices of remembering and forgetting related to the memorial highlight the way memorialization transformed the death of an ordinary man into a nationalistic symbol to be used and exploited in various quarters during the past century.

**Extracto** Este artículo se centra en los procesos de conmemoración y herencia a través de un estudio de caso de Oulu, Finlandia, donde un riel de hierro fundido que rodea un pino constituye un monumento que marca el lugar de la última ejecución oficial en la horca en 1916. Se examinan el monumento y sus alrededores inmediatos a través de documentos y mapas históricos,

datos de anillos de árbol, entrevistas y los resultados de excavaciones arqueológicas a pequeña escala. La evidencia indica varios modos de interacción: cruces talladas en el árbol conmemorativo, un escondite mágico, hallazgos relacionados principalmente con el consumo de sustancias intoxicantes, revelando un lado menos conocido y más íntimo de la biografía del sitio que el que se desprende de los registros escritos. Finalmente, las prácticas individuales y nacionales de recordar y olvidar relacionadas con el memorial resaltan la manera en que la memorialización transformó la muerte de un hombre común en un símbolo nacionalista para ser utilizado y explotado en varios sectores durante el siglo pasado.

**Résumé** Le présent article met l'accent sur les processus de commémoration et patrimonialisation dans le contexte d'une étude de cas provenant d'Oulu en Finlande, où un rail en fer forgé encerclant un pin constitue un monument marquant le site de la dernière exécution formelle par pendaison du pays en 1916. Le monument et ses environs immédiats sont ici étudiés à l'aide de documents et cartes historiques, de données sur le cercle et l'arbre, d'entrevues et de résultats d'excavations archéologiques à petite échelle. Les preuves démontrent la présence de plusieurs modes d'interaction—croix sculptées dans l'arbre commémoratif, cachette magique, objets utilisés principalement pour consommer des substances enivrantes—exposant un côté moins connu et plus intime de la biographie du site par rapport à celle provenant d'archives écrites. Enfin, les pratiques

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individuelles et nationales de souvenir et d'oubli associées au monument font la lumière sur la façon dont la commémoration a transformé le décès d'un homme ordinaire en symbole nationaliste à utiliser et exploiter à diverses fins au cours du siècle passé.

**Keywords** memorial · execution site · memorialization · heritagization · nationalism · Finland

To forget the dead would be akin to killing them a second time.

—Elie Wiesel (1928–2016)<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

Memorials constitute a special category of material culture designed to aid memory and to fight against forgetting, but, when colored by a national agenda, they can also cement shared cultural meanings about the past (Connerton 1989; Ashton and Hamilton 2008). The common phrase “History is written by the victors” acknowledges the setting up of memorials and the process of memorialization, whereas places of shame are normally considered as something to be forgotten rather than remembered (Logan and Reeves 2009). Incorrect memories may exist both on an individual level and on a collective level, as a part of nation-building, and neither memories nor memorials must all be pleasant. Lynn Meskell (2002:558) has used the term “negative heritage” for “a conflictual site that becomes the repository of negative memory in the collective imaginary,” and historical remembering can be important even when the events in question are shameful and politically incorrect (Macdonald 2006; Burström and Gelderblom 2011). Places of painful memory and places that are related to things some people would like to forget can be important for working through the painful parts of the past on both the individual and the societal level (Dolff-Bonekämper 2002). Places of pain can also be used as tools for achieving social justice (Logan and Reeves 2009).

Memorialization is a social action: monuments can act as places of mourning and as foci of political protest simultaneously. Like modern grassroots memorials

erected spontaneously at places of sudden death, official memorials not only convey the memory of the deceased, but also imply a message asking why this thing happened and, thereby, address a social issue (Santino 2006; Margry and Sánchez-Carretero 2007, 2011). An excellent recent example of such a grassroots memorial, consisting of flowers, candles, and cardboard placards, was recently created at the Station Square in Helsinki, Finland. In September 2016, a neo-Nazi demonstrator attacked a male passerby, Jimi Karttunen, who died a week later, possibly due to his injuries. Spontaneously, the site became an important symbol that the pro-refugee/anti-rightwing movement actively utilized for some time to express unity against values that many today see as inappropriate. Following the reasoning of Peter J. Margry and Cristina Sánchez-Carretero (Margry and Sánchez-Carretero 2011:3), the performative side of monuments is “not limited to the memorial itself or its memorial space, but includes the agency of individual objects or texts and the behavior of the people involved.” Thus, the temporary memorial at the site of violence was a representation of social memory wanting to commemorate and mourn what happened. In present-day societies, remembering is becoming increasingly visual, and Connerton (2006) has used the term “prosthetic memory” to describe the various visual ways, such as photographs, films, docudramas, and Internet sites, used to present and remember traumas.

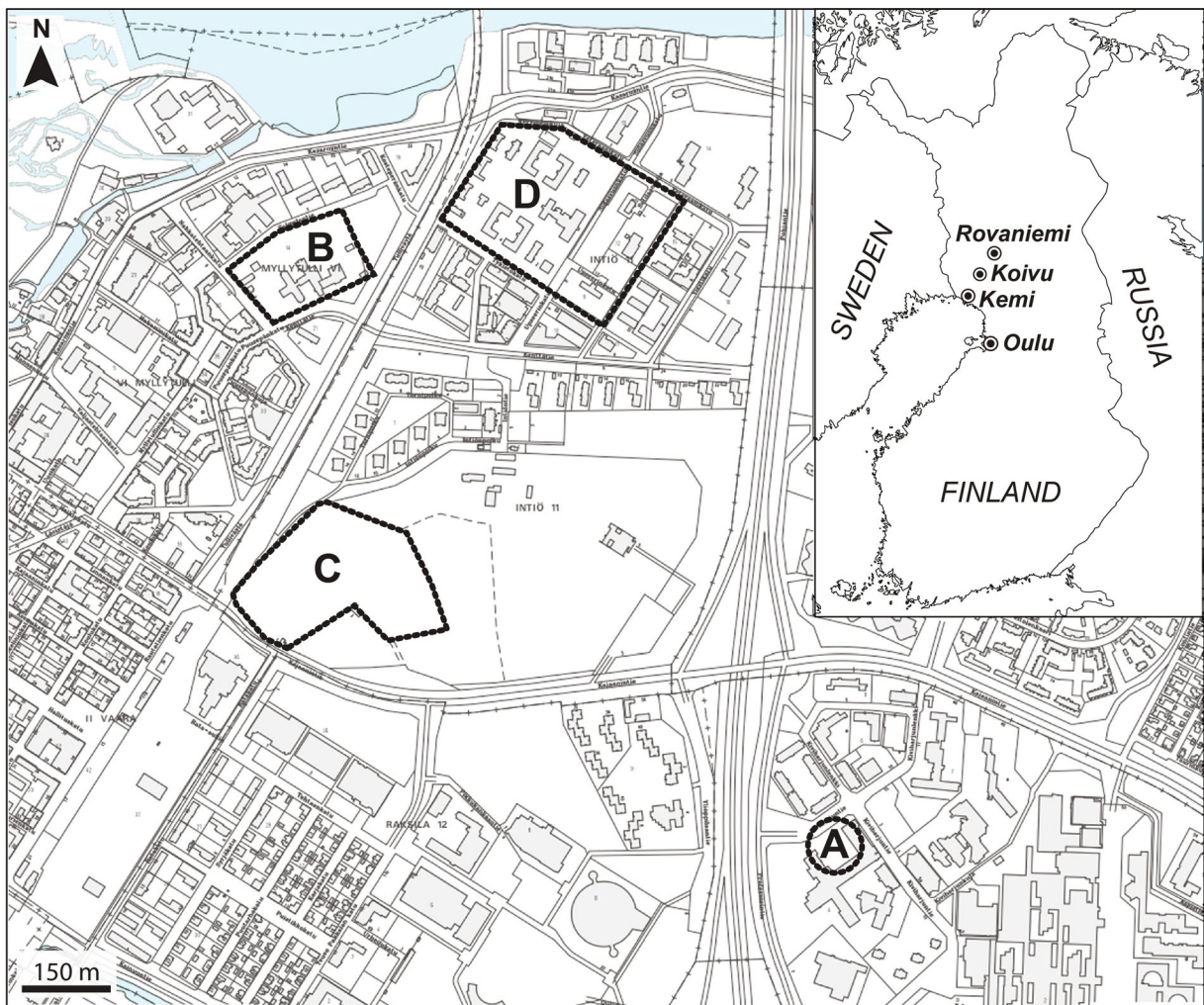
Apart from this social or public remembrance, memorials also serve in the remembering process of individuals. Researchers have emphasized the importance of place for remembering both family and individual life events (Karjalainen 2006; Korjonen-Kuusipuro and Kuusisto-Arponen 2012). Individual memories may still diverge significantly from official or accepted accounts of national history writing (Macdonald 2006; Seitsonen and Koskinen-Koivisto 2018). Different kinds of memorials enable individuals, and on a higher level also communities or even nations, to perform rituals, which are among the most important ways to produce and maintain memories of the past in present-day societies; e.g., Connerton (1989), Van Dyke and Alcock (2003), and Meskell (2004:64–66). Sometimes social and individual memories intertwine. Places associated with dark memories, such as memorials for the deceased, may serve reflection over existential questions, and, on the national level, a memory may turn into a universal reminder of the contradictory history of humankind (Koskinen-Koivisto 2016). Time has the power to

<sup>1</sup> Preface to the new translation of *Night* (Wiesel 2006).

transform negative heritage into romantic monuments (Meskell 2002:571).

In this article, we utilize a memorial erected at the site of the last official execution by hanging, located at Kontinkangas near the town of Oulu in northern Finland (Fig. 1), and the memorialization of this unfortunate event as a case study to provide depth to the arguments presented above. The memorial, inaugurated in 1935, consists of a pine tree surrounded by a round red-granite base topped by a wrought-iron rail painted black. A copper sheath bearing a commemorative inscription covers the top of the handrail (Fig. 2). It commemorates an event that took place almost 20 years before its

inauguration, on 3 October 1916, when a Finnish man named Taavetti Lukkarinen (Fig. 3) was executed at the site after he had been found guilty of high treason under czarist Russian martial law. We examine the event of the hanging itself, as well as the subsequent process of remembrance, by connecting the results of a small-scale archaeological excavation carried out within and around the memorial in August 2014 to information drawn from archival sources, historical weather observations, tree-ring data, interviews, photos, and maps. With such data, the memorial now occupying the site of the execution is shown to have gained different meanings during the years of its existence, thus giving us an opportunity to study



**Fig. 1** Map of the places in northern Finland and in the city of Oulu mentioned in the text: (A) The hanging-tree memorial of Taavetti Lukkarinen, (B) the county prison, (C) the main cemetery,

and (D) the garrison. (Base map courtesy of the City of Oulu; modifications by Janne Ikäheimo, 2016.)





**Fig. 2** The hanging-tree memorial of Taavetti Lukkarinen. (Photo by Janne Ikäheimo, 2015.)

how historical events are related to memories, memorialization, and also, ultimately, heritagization. First, however, it is necessary to give an outline of the events leading to the execution on the (inter)national, regional, and personal scales.

### The Road to the Hanging Site

International politics forms the background for the story culminating in the execution of Taavetti Lukkarinen on 3 October 1916. The Russian czar had ruled the Grand Duchy of Finland—the predecessor of the modern sovereign state—as grand duke since 1809. Although Finland was an autonomous part of the Russian Empire, it was undergoing the Second Wave of Russification (1908–1917), a governmental policy ultimately aiming at the abolishment of its administrative and cultural autonomy. These intentions met widespread resistance that took both active forms, such as petitions and strikes, as well as passive forms, like Romantic nationalism in arts. Of the utmost importance in this context was draft resistance, which began after the Finnish army had been abolished with an imperial statute in 1901 (Tervonen 2005:64,67) and which escalated into a draft strike in

1902–1904. As a result, compulsory military service was abolished and replaced with “soldier millions,” an annual extra tax imposed on the grand duchy. The implications were twofold: the military forces garrisoned in Finland consisted exclusively of Russian troops, and no Finnish military units officially participated in World War I.

However, it is a well-known fact that Finns fought on both sides of the battlefield in World War I. The Russian army had officers from the Finnish nobility (Harjula 2013), and about 700 men volunteered to defend the Russian Empire (Hoppu 2006). However, over twice as many young Finnish men, mainly university students and men from the upper-middle class, enlisted in the *Jääkäriliike* (Jaeger Movement). Assisted by the so-called Jaeger Recruiters and with the help of local inhabitants, these men clandestinely crossed Finland's western border into Sweden and continued their journey to Germany, where they received elite light-infantry training to form the Royal Prussian 27th Jaeger Battalion. In 1916, this battalion fought on the northern flank of Germany's eastern front, and later on it constituted a force that contributed significantly to the outcome of the



**Fig. 3** Taavetti Lukkarinen photographed at the Oulu County Prison yard in 1916. (Photo from the personal archive of Mr. Markus Korhonen.)

Finnish Civil War (27 January–15 May 1918). Thus, in 1916, the eradication of the Jaeger Movement through the elimination of its recruiters and active supporters among the Finns was a key issue for the representatives of the Russian government stationed in northern Finland.

This was the context in which the destiny of a man named Taavetti Lukkarinen, possibly a former Jaeger Recruiter himself, intertwined with global politics. He had received a payment to assist in the escape of three German prisoners of war from the labor camp of the Murmansk Railroad, which was under construction between St. Petersburg and the town of Murmansk by the White Sea. The escape attempt failed on 26 December 1915, as Lukkarinen had concealed the soldiers under the covers of his sleigh, which was loaded on the freight car of a train running from Rovaniemi to Kemi in Finnish Lapland. When the train conductors tried to move the heavy sleigh and discovered the fugitives, Lukkarinen himself was having coffee at the intermediate Koivu train stop. He managed to flee from the scene of the crime and immediately crossed the Swedish border. Lukkarinen was free, but he missed his wife and two children, and made a cunning attempt to return to Finland the following summer. Even though he had counterfeit identity documents and a handgun, the police found him and he was arrested without resistance on 6 June 1916 near the city of Oulu.

After Lukkarinen was found guilty of high treason, the secret court of the Russian Sixth Army imposed a death sentence on him. While the extreme punishment was dictated by czarist Russian martial law and was therefore legal for the crime he had committed (Lackman 2012:217–219), it was truly exceptional in the context of early 20th-century Finland. The previous execution in Finland had taken place in 1825 in peacetime conditions. Thereafter, due to a decision made by Czar Nicholas I after his succession to the Russian throne in the very same year, even the worst convicted criminals had been exiled to Siberia.

Prior to the execution, Lukkarinen spent four months in the Oulu County Prison (Fig. 3). On 3 October, just after midnight, he was escorted from the prison by some 40 Russian gendarmes in addition to 2 Finnish mounted policemen and a prison chaplain named Arvi Järventausta, whose presence Lukkarinen is said to have requested; see, e.g., Pohjalainen (1917:8–9), Pentzin (1943:77–78), and Vainio (1968:44–52). The victim was taken by horse-drawn cart to Kontinkangas, where the

execution—the last official execution by hanging in Finland—took place. Lukkarinen's body was immediately buried by the hanging tree, which was considered an extremely rude act at the time (Pohjalainen 1917:11). The residents of Oulu soon developed a custom of visiting the site—presumably to pay their respects to the deceased—and Lukkarinen's corpse was exhumed and reburied in the Oulu Main Cemetery in the summer of 1917, after the February Revolution in Russia.

The choice of the Kontinkangas area as the location for the hanging was not accidental. In 1916 this area was a vast pine grove at a good distance from the town of Oulu, approximately 1.5 km southeast of the county prison in which Lukkarinen had been incarcerated since his capture in June 1916. According to Wegelius (1924:51–53), Kontinkangas was supposedly suggested as the hanging site by the local police chief, Aaro Lindqvist, while Colonel Katarskij, the commandant of the Russian troops stationed in Oulu, had insisted that the execution should take place within the prison walls. The latter procedure was the standard practice dictated by Russian law (Wegelius 1924:51), see also Vainio (1968:47), but the warden, a Finn named Werner Ossian Juvelius, had vetoed this plan. The reason Police Chief Lindqvist chose Kontinkangas from among several possible locations around the town of Oulu has not received any attention to date. In our opinion, the decision was influenced by at least three factors.

Firstly, the site was conveniently located for transporting the convict in a horsedrawn wagon. From the nearby main road that led east from Oulu toward the town of Kajaani, the convoy soon turned right and followed a smaller road for a few hundred meters. Then the convoy dismounted from its horses and descended into a small strip of woods between the road and the fields surrounding Kontinkangas in the south. A 1909 map, based on a land survey executed by P. W. Auren in 1876–1878 (Fig. 4), is perhaps the best source of information on the topography of Kontinkangas during the time of execution. The site of the execution appears to have been quite isolated at the time of the hanging: a small pine grove located just south of a road departing from the Oulu-Kajaani road behind vast fields and ca. 300 m northwest of the closest farmstead. Moreover, access from the western edge of the site facing the adjacent fields had been limited with a round-pole fence, which most likely offered psychological rather than practical protection.

Secondly, while the law required every Finnish town to maintain an execution site for prisoners sentenced to death (Kilpijärvi 2014), the location chosen by the police





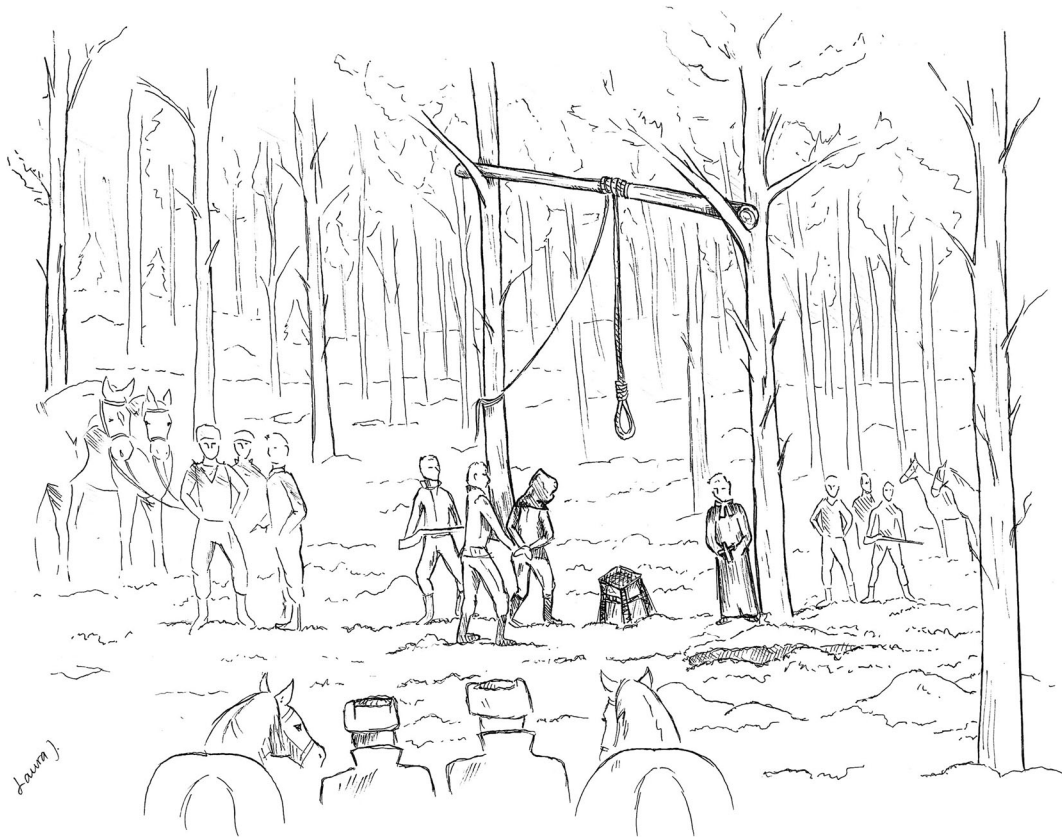
**Fig. 4** An excerpt from the map, measured and drawn by P. W. Auren in 1876–1878, depicting the Kontinkangas area (Kansallisarkisto 1909).

chief was in all likelihood a disguised protest against the hanging. If the hanging had taken place at the official execution site, it would have seemed as if the Finnish authorities had legitimized Lukkarinen's death sentence. Thirdly, and most importantly, there are strong grounds for assuming that the Russian troops had been using the Kontinkangas area for military training. The Finnish troops used the area for the same purpose later in the 1910s (Korpi 2005), and the presence of the Finnish Army actually continued in this area through various field drills all the way into the 1970s. Moreover, a map depicting the town in the late 19th or early 20th century (Kansallisarkisto [1886–1917]), drawn by the Russian officers of the Fourth Sharpshooter Battalion stationed in Oulu, has been preserved at the National Archives of Finland. Only a small number of places have been marked on the map by hand, but the fields located next to the hanging site on the west are among them. In our opinion, this shows that the area was significant to the Russian military administration, and, for this reason, the presence of Russian troops at Kontinkangas would not have been considered peculiar by the residents of Oulu.

Another factor minimizing attention and decreasing the immediate impact of the hanging was its timing: it took place after midnight, possibly around 1 a.m. Although the Russians had intended for the execution to serve as a warning example to potential traitors, the scheduling of such an event after midnight was their standard procedure, see, e.g., Wirén (1917:254–257). This minimized the risk of attracting a large crowd that might have become restless or even attempted to prevent the execution. At the same time, the secrecy culminating in the nocturnal death of Lukkarinen was expected to spread fear among the people of northern Finland (Vainio 1968:52; Satokangas 1997:393). This objective was met immediately, as quite a few townspeople were aware of the horrifying events by the next morning (Lackman 2012:129).

### The Execution

Literary sources provide enough information to reconstruct the actual hanging (Fig. 5) and the subsequent



**Fig. 5** An artistic reconstruction of Taavetti Lukkarinen's execution. (Drawing by Laura Juntunen, 2014.)

burial. The first question concerns the infrastructure of the execution: Was there a permanent gallows or was a construction of more temporary nature used? In spite of some references to the use of a single upright pole and a horizontal beam (Toivonen 2008:6), it seems more likely that the construction used consisted of a horizontal crossbeam supported at both ends by a strong branch of a young pine, especially in the light of the tree-ring data analysis, which will be discussed later. The victim was reportedly forced to stand on a chair or footstool, which was then kicked out from under him. This also speaks for the use of a temporary construction. The use of the strong branch of a lone tree, a stereotype etched into people's minds by emotive Clint Eastwood Westerns, is simply out of the question.

Another immediate observation related to the use of a chair or footstool is that the execution was carried out as a short-drop hanging (Haughton 1866:7–8), in which the victim dies due to suffocation instead of a broken spinal column. For the occasion, Lukkarinen's eyes and body had been covered with "*polsterivaaru*," an empty mattress casing that had been brought with him from the

county prison. Both eyewitnesses reporting the execution—prison chaplain Järventaus and an anonymous Finnish mounted policeman—stated that Lukkarinen was hanged for 20–30 min. before his lifeless body was released from the noose (Wegelius 1924:58; Manninen 1939:95).

The conditions in which the execution took place can be estimated from meteorological observations gathered from the towns of Vaasa, Jyväskylä, Kajaani, and Sodankylä (Keränen 1924:25,31,37,43), all located at a distance of ca. 180–350 km from the town—direct observations from Oulu are not available. First, the temperature on the night between 2 and 3 October 1916 was about  $-5^{\circ}\text{C}$ . This means that the ground was slippery, as suggested by the story describing the warden Juvelius's reaction to the execution (Karvonen 1985:38). Secondly, the sky was overcast and a slight wind (ca. 2–3 m/sec.) blew from the north northwest. This information contrasts the dramatic detail passed to us by a secondhand informant, according to whom Lukkarinen's lifeless body would have swung back and forth in a substantially strong wind (Toivonen

2008:6). Also, the monthly data regarding the weather observations gathered in Oulu (Keränen 1924:62–63) confirm that this detail has been greatly exaggerated, as strong winds were not recorded on any day during October 1916. On the other hand, the available meteorological data suggest that ground frost, normally inhibiting the digging of burials in the Oulu region during winter months, would not yet have formed.

After the hanging, Lukkarinen's body was either dragged or carried to the grave, which is renowned for being exceptionally deep, and thrown into it "like a dead dog" (Pohjalainen 1917:11), still covered in the mattress casing (Wegelius 1924:58; Manninen 1939:95). When the body was exhumed for reburial the following year, it was found in a "completely unaltered state in cold clay" (Wegelius 1924:59). The depth of the grave can be estimated using the preceding information. The topsoil around the memorial is composed of extremely tightly packed sandy till containing abundant fist-sized rocks, but, as is characteristic for the Oulu region, it is underlain by a layer of sulfide clay formed during the last marine stage of the post-glacial land uplift. Based on this information, the regional 1:20,000 soil map can be used to approximate with some confidence that the depth of the grave was at least 1 m, although in all likelihood it was much deeper.

Another relevant question is whether the grave that ended up being only temporary was dug for the execution, or if it belonged to the area's existing "infrastructure." The first option would imply that the Russians were concerned about possible clandestine exhumation right from the outset, and the grave was dug deep to prevent this. However, as indicated by the map (Kansallisarkisto [1886–1917]) mentioned above, Russian troops used the area of Kontinkangas for military training. As the soil is so compact that any manual digging at the site is particularly difficult, even with modern means, a second option—that a defensive dug-out was recycled or slightly modified for burial purposes—is a more likely explanation. Approximately 35 pits and trenches of varying sizes and shapes can still be detected in the small pine grove, which has been left untouched among the buildings of the Oulu University of Applied Sciences to preserve the memorial (Fig. 6). Judging by their overgrown appearance, they might be old enough to be contemporary with the execution. However, the question of which of these features, if any, served as the temporary grave of Taavetti Lukkarinen a century ago is impossible to answer

without extensive fieldwork, whereas the answer itself is somewhat irrelevant in terms of the larger picture.

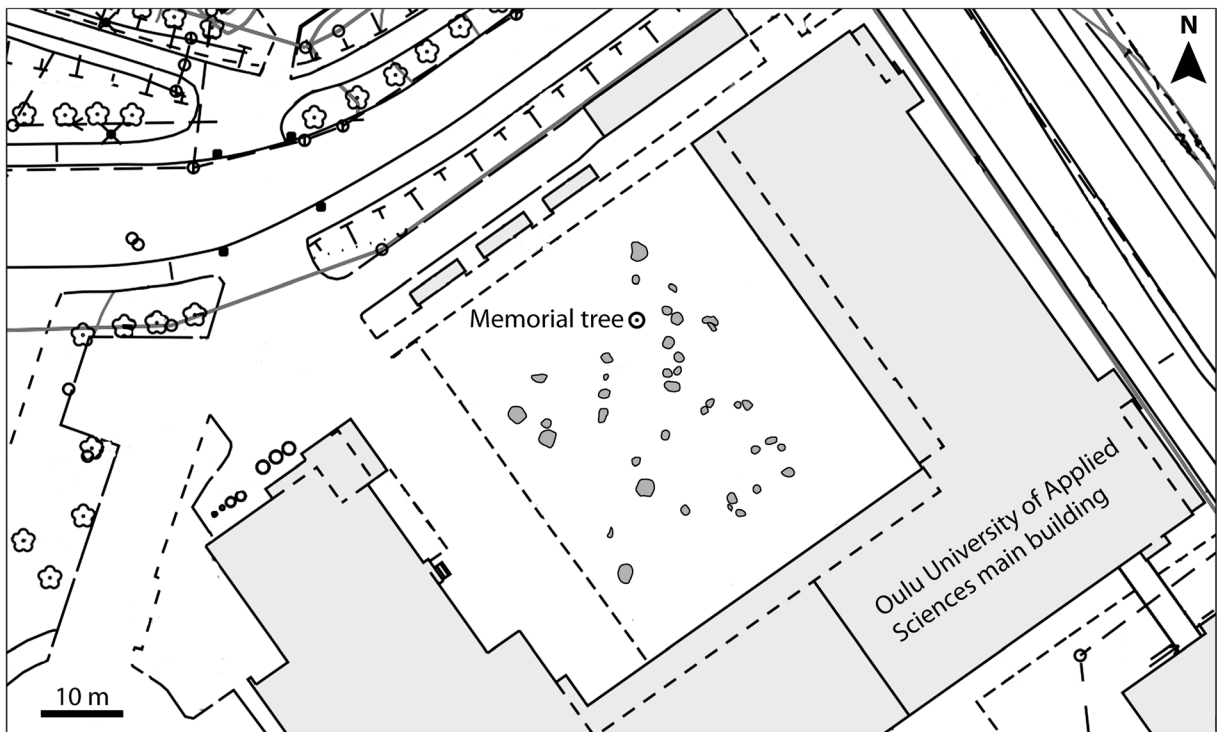
## The Trees

Although the body of Taavetti Lukkarinen was exhumed in 1917 and reburied in the Oulu Main Cemetery, the memory of the tragic event was still attached to site of the execution. For this reason, the presumed hanging tree forming the epicenter of the memorial deserves a closer look. People visiting the site have frequently doubted the authenticity of the tree because it does not look like it is over a hundred years old (Brenner 2014). However, the circumference of the pine was measured as 172 cm, and its diameter is therefore approximately 55 cm. While the substantially well-developed lower trunk zone covered by shield bark is an indication of considerable age (Hyvärinen et al. 1992), a tree-ring data analysis was deemed necessary to settle for good the question regarding the age of the tree. Three samples were cored from the memorial tree (Fig. 7, left), while two reference samples were taken from another pine located some 20 m south of the hanging-tree memorial.

The analyses of these samples carried out by Titta Kallio-Seppä for this specific project showed both pines to be  $\geq 140$  years old and indicated that the diameter of the memorial tree had been 26 cm at the time of the execution. These results correspond well to the description of the hanging arrangements transmitted by Eero N. Manninen (1939), who writes that "two young and slim pines had been growing next to one another. High above, the branches of these trees supported a horizontal beam, from which hung a rope with an ugly noose at the end [translation ours]." The tree-ring data also indicate that the initial growth of both trees had been steady and without overshadowing vegetation. Therefore, the hanging probably took place in a young and fairly dense pine forest that later on transformed into today's grove with sparse tree growth.

The memorial tree also bears marks of human intervention of significant age, as altogether 14 crosses have been carved into the bark (Fig. 7 right). These crosses are difficult to spot if one is not aware of their presence, and, in fact, the excavation team worked at the site for two days before noticing them. The median size of these crosses is  $10 \times 5$  cm, and the height at which they are carved varies between 88 and 208 cm. The existence of





**Fig. 6** The location of Taavetti Lukkarinen’s hanging-tree memorial with the pits and trenches detected in the inner yard of the Oulu University of Applied Sciences. (Map by Janne Ikäheimo and Tiina Äikäs, 2015.)

these crosses did not come as a total surprise, however. According to Manninen (1939:96), soon after the execution the residents of Oulu developed a custom of visiting the site on Sundays and even other days. During these visits, they started carving crosses not only on both

trees used for the hanging, but also on adjacent trees. The interpretation of these crosses, however, is not as straightforward as one would at first imagine.

First, the presumed eyewitness account by a mounted Finnish policeman passed on to us by Manninen (1939:89–96) explicitly states that the two trees used for the hanging were cut down by Russian officials who were worried about this newly developed custom. It further states that the memorial was erected later, around another tree located 20 m west of the actual hanging site. This would imply that the authentic hanging site was destroyed in 2012 during the construction of the main building for the Oulu University of Applied Sciences, which is located some 20 m east of the memorial (Fig. 2). Secondly, there is no other tree in close proximity to the memorial that could have functioned as a support for the other end of a crossbeam. Finally, not only do the two old pines located between the memorial tree and the main building of the Oulu University of Applied Sciences lack evidence of carved crosses, but no such crosses are found on any of the other trees preserved in the pine grove either. One potential explanation for the limited spatial distribution of the crosses is that they were carved on the memorial tree only after it was turned into a memorial in 1935 to enhance the authenticity of the site.



**Fig. 7** Modern and historical impacts on the “hanging tree”: The extraction of a dendrochronological sample (left) and an example of a cross carved into the bark (right). (Photos by Janne Ikäheimo, 2014.)

On the other hand, the crosses might well date to the late 1910s, but, in this case, the relevance of Manninen's testimony must be drastically downplayed. This would not be unthinkable, because the firsthand account of prison chaplain Arvi Järventaus has also turned out to be less accurate than it would initially seem. Järventaus had actively opposed Russian dominion in Finland since his upper-secondary school days in Oulu, and later on volunteered to serve as a field chaplain in the troops of the Finnish Whites during the Finnish Civil War in 1918 (Oinas 2008:68–9,76,175). Thus, he was not, by any means, a neutral observer of the hanging.

### Archaeological Excavations and Finds

The area excavated in August 2014 comprised the soil within the granite base of the memorial and a 1 m wide strip stretching out from its edge. In addition, a few test pits of about 50 × 50 cm in size were opened with a shovel and considerable effort elsewhere in the pine grove. The soil in the area was particularly difficult to excavate, as it is composed of extremely tightly packed glacial till that is so hard that the tree roots have been forced to grow along the ground surface. As a result, the area was excavated to a depth of only a few centimeters, but, due to the compactness of the soil, this was enough to recover anthropogenic materials. For this reason, the use of subsurface reconnaissance methods, such as ground-penetrating radar, were deemed unnecessary.

The total number of finds was 416, and their total weight was 708.8 g (Table 1) (Fig. 8). All the finds were from the main excavation area, while the test pits did not yield anything at all. The few datable artifacts pertain to the late 20th and early 21st century, indicating the memorial as the focus of past activities. However, as the majority of the material evidence recovered is mundane in character, it may reflect accidental wanderings in the area rather than determinate interactions with the memorial. In other words, while the memorial has acted as a sort of magnet attracting human activity in the area of Kontinkangas to one place, the ambiguous nature of many finds leaves room for multiple interpretations.

Still, the only object possibly reflecting the presence of military forces in the area and its use for combat training is a partially preserved gun-cleaning rod. Objects documenting less-organized aspects of human life, on the other hand, were more than plentiful. The assemblage is dominated by artifacts related to the

**Table 1** Objects recovered during the archaeological excavations of 2014

Find	<i>N</i>	Weight (g)
Beer-bottle cap	5	11.9
Bicycle-valve stem ring	1	1.2
Bone	2	85.3
Bottle glass (brown)	87	103.1
Bottle glass (clear)	132	217.0
Bottle glass (green)	92	135.0
Cigarette butt	12	1.2
Cigarette-lighter spark wheel	1	1.7
Glass (thin, transparent)	39	8.3
Glass syringe	1	0.2
Gun cleaning rod	1	12.7
Metal cap	1	0.9
Metal wire	1	0.9
Nails	2	12.4
Paper	2	0.3
Plastic	7	1.4
Plastic advertisement sticker	1	0.1
Pottery	9	7.9
Screw	1	1.3
Shoe heel pad	1	63.0
Tamper-evident band piece	4	0.5
Tin-can fragment	14	42.5
TOTAL	416	708.8

consumption of various alcoholic beverages and tobacco: machine-made bottle glass represents ca. 75% of the assemblage, while beer-bottle caps and cigarette butts are among the other quantitatively significant artifact groups. These artifacts may reflect the emotional attraction of the so-called hanging tree, which has—judging by the beer-bottle caps ranging from thoroughly rusted examples to ones from the mid-2000s—continued to draw people to the site for intoxicated reflection related to life and death. A somewhat surprising find belonging to this group is a fragment of a small glass syringe, which could either directly indicate the use of intravenous drugs at the site or represent the background scatter resulting from the operations of the School of Health and Social Care, which has been located nearby since the early 1960s.

The assemblage also contains hints of the means of transportation used to reach the memorial. In addition to a bicycle-valve stem ring and a screw, two



**Fig. 8** A selection of objects found within or around the hanging-tree memorial of Taavetti Lukkarinen: (A) The broken proximal end of a calf tibia with two shards of clear glass and an iron wire found in its marrow channel, (B) Marmon rubber shoe sole, (C)

shard of a glass syringe (scale 2:1), (D) bicycle parts, (E) two fragments of a compact-cassette case, and (F) two beer-bottle caps. Scale 1:1 (except C). (Photos by Emilia Jääskeläinen, 2015.)

fragments of red plastic belonging to two different bicycle rear reflectors were identified. Two crossmending pieces of relatively rigid clear plastic with a small perforation were quite easily identifiable as the fragments of a compact-cassette case. While this casual item might have fallen out of the pocket of a random visitor, it may also indicate an attempt to enhance the hanging-site experience with music

provided by a battery-operated portable cassette player. Judging by the availability and popularity of this equipment in Finland, this particular trip to the hanging site most likely took place in the 1970s. On the other hand, the assemblage also contains artifacts emphasizing its inherent randomness, such as the plastic advertising sticker for a local engineering works that had been rolled up and discarded at the site.

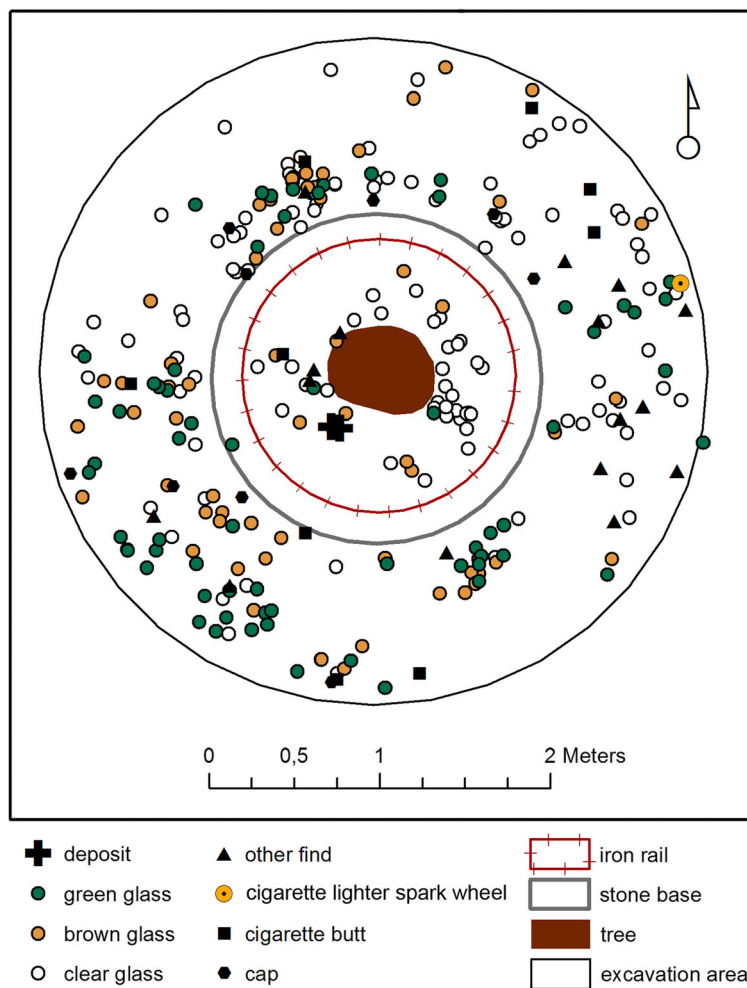


Regarding the spatial distribution of the artifacts, the majority of the bottle glass and tobacco-related items were found on the western side of the tree. The paths leaving the main road led from that direction toward the memorial, thus indicating the side from which the tree was customarily approached (Fig. 9). Otherwise, the items recovered outside the memorial are somewhat randomly distributed. The number of artifacts found within the granite base of the memorial was significantly lower than from the outside, but some of these finds were highly surprising in nature. A layer of bitumen roofing felt (Fig. 10) was encountered just a few centimeters underneath the topsoil formed of decayed organic debris and a thin layer of fine sand used to level the monument surface. This layer probably belonged to the original design of the memorial and had been laid down to prevent weeds from growing at its base. A handful of clear bottle-glass shards were found above this layer,

while the tightly packed sandy till with sparsely occurring rocks, which was used to fill the space between the granite base and the tree, was nearly devoid of artifacts, with one significant exception.

The deliberately fractured proximal end of a calf tibia with an iron wire and two shards of clear glass inserted into its marrow channel was found in the southwestern octant of the memorial, together with a rubber shoe-heel pad with six iron boot nails. The premeditated nature of the deposit is indicated by two details. The bone was found in an upright position, as if it had been deliberately stuck into the mineral soil, while the roofing-felt layer at the find spot was not only particularly well preserved, but also intact. The factory-made black-rubber shoe sole with the maker's mark: MARMON stamped on the bottom provides a rough date for the deposit. These soles were advertised in Finnish media between 1933 and 1948, which dates the deposition to

**Fig. 9** Distribution map of the different artifact groups. (Map by Tiina Äikäs, 2017.)





**Fig. 10** A close-up of the iron rail surrounding the hanging-tree memorial, which now lacks several decorative crosses, although they were originally tightly welded to the rail. Also, note the exposed layer of bitumen roofing felt at the foot of the memorial. (Photo by Janne Ikäheimo, 2014.)

be at least roughly simultaneous, if not coeval, with the construction of the memorial.

The interpretation of the deposit, which has received an in-depth treatment in a separate contribution (Ikäheimo et al. 2016), is related to the presumed nature of hanging sites as powerful places well suited for attempts to manipulate the “real world” (Coolen 2013:764–766,774). Thus, the deposit may be a material manifestation of folk magic, possibly aiming to “tame” the deceased. An anomalous death—an execution by hanging most certainly qualifies as such—was believed to leave a soul that was anxious and dissatisfied (Davies 2007:4–5), and also prone to haunt living members of society. When the body of Taavetti Lukkarinen was exhumed and reburied in the Oulu Cemetery, his restless soul was probably thought to linger in the place of death, resulting in some reported sightings of his ghost (Silvander 2005:5). From this perspective, not only the deposit, but also the crosses carved in the pine and welded to the iron rail, have an evident parallel in the “*karsikko*” tradition of old Finnish folk beliefs (Pentikäinen 1990; Vilkuna 1992). They were attempts to bind the soul of the deceased within the memorial (Ikäheimo et al. 2016); see also Davies (2007:71).

Signs of another type of interaction with the site were detected in the black-painted iron rail surrounding the memorial (Fig. 10). The rail had originally been decorated with 24 cast-iron crosses welded into place to form a checkered pattern within the three-tiered structure divided into square openings with 16 iron poles. Based

on the photographs portraying the memorial in different decades, seven of the crosses that are missing today were removed from the structure after the mid-1970s. Six of them belonged to the upper tier of the rail, from which they were probably the easiest to kick off without running the risk of hurting oneself. The motive for such action(s) may have ranged from straightforward vandalism to the desire to take a souvenir from the site. In addition, these crosses may have been thought to possess magical or otherworldly qualities through the association with the execution of Taavetti Lukkarinen and his haunting spirit.

### Memorialization and Heritagization

Soon after Lukkarinen’s body had been exhumed and reburied in the Oulu Main Cemetery, the history of the newly independent state took a dramatic turn, as domestic tensions between leftwing and rightwing coalitions escalated into the Finnish Civil War, which was fought between the Finnish Reds and the Finnish Whites from January to May 1918. While the Whites emerged victorious from the clash, the nation was long divided into winners and losers; even today, after a century, the wounds caused by this unfortunate series of events are only partially healed. Instead of focusing on building national unity, the Finnish Whites sought to legitimize their version of the causes of the war and write history from their perspective. An important part of this pursuit was the construction of memorials for the heroes of the “Liberation War,” which was the name coined by the winners of the conflict.

As the story of Taavetti Lukkarinen was not relevant to the outcome of the Finnish Civil War, but rather symbolized the long and complicated relations between Finns and Russians, it was unsuitable for the propaganda purposes of the Finnish Whites before the 1930s. By then, the Soviet Union had dealt fully with the aftermath of two Russian revolutions and World War I, and sought to restore its position as a global power. In the course of the 1930s it became apparent that its main rival was Germany, ruled autocratically by Adolf Hitler since 1933. Reacting to this potential threat, the Soviet Union took measures to improve its own defenses and urged Finland to do the same. Ultimately, in 1939, in order to improve the defenses of St. Petersburg,

the Soviet Union wanted to annex strategic areas in southeast Finland through mutually agreed exchanges of land. Nevertheless, the Finnish government had already chosen its side and was establishing closer diplomatic ties with the Third Reich. In this context, the portrayal of the Russians as the past enemy and also a potential future enemy became increasingly important.

While the previously described visits to the site immediately after the execution represent a spontaneous and informal response, the inauguration of the hanging-tree memorial in October 1935 by the Union of Finnish Civil War Veterans can be seen as an official and mediated reaction to the event—it was by no means a random act. The Pohjois-Pohjanmaan Maakuntaliitto (Council of Northern Ostrobothnia) had erected several memorials during the 1930s in order to bring forward the great history of the region. One important aspect of this campaign was the effort to enshrine battles fought for the freedom of the nation (Kylli 2009:81–82). Although the party responsible for the construction of the hanging-tree memorial was the Union of Finnish Civil War Veterans and not the Council of Northern Ostrobothnia, this construction can be seen as a part of the same ethos. Thus, we agree with Paul Ashton and Paula Hamilton (Ashton and Hamilton 2008:3) that memorials are a “means of uniting or bringing a community together; as a focus for commemoration; for the purpose of sacralising—or creating sacred spaces; as an aide to remembering an event or person; and more recently to make a political statement or to claim political ground.”

Making political statements and claiming political ground through memorialization and monuments has been common in Finland (Roselius 2013). The most widespread and best-documented types of memorials are the ones located in cemeteries and related to World War II—a war that even in today’s Finland has mainly positive connotations of independence, national unity, and national identity. Outside the cemetery context, the majority of monuments commemorate famous battle sites, certain military detachments, or civil casualties suffered during the war (Raivo 2000:153). Memorials are therefore places where acts of remembrance, honor, sacrifice, sorrow, loss, and patriotism intertwine (Stephens 2013). From this point of view, the memorial of Taavetti Lukkarinen, where relationships between memory, nation building, death, and remembrance interlock, is a special type of war memorial, although its straightforward function is to point out the place of

death for the remembrance of a person. This is spelled out clearly in the memorial inscription on the copper sheath covering the handrail:

On 6 October 1916,<sup>2</sup> activist Taavetti Lukkarinen was hanged on this tree and buried in a pit beneath it by the authorities of the Russian tyranny. From this place, his lifeless body was taken to the hallowed soils of the Oulu Cemetery in 1917. May the terrifying memory of this event be passed to future generations and evoke dread towards foreign terror, and may it raise courage and strength in the nation to live and die for the independence and freedom of the fatherland [translation ours].

Thus, the memorial ties the fate of Taavetti Lukkarinen to Finnish memory culture, social remembering in the public sphere connected to World War II (Winter and Sivan 2000). In this ethos, it was important to construct a collective and national memory emphasizing national unity by presenting the Finns in constant conflict with the Soviet Union. This ethos also lies behind the tradition of commemorating and remembering fallen soldiers in the cemeteries of their hometowns by allocating them graves in a *sankarihautausmaa* (hero cemetery), a monumentalized area isolated from the rest of the cemetery (Raivo 2000:151–156).

The construction of the memorial was therefore very much an act of building nationalistic pride. The memories of Lukkarinen have been shaped by the political need to create a hero for the new nation, and the myth of Lukkarinen as a hero has been used to enforce nationalistic ideals; compare Van der Auwera (2012:54). The hanging-tree memorial became a place for public remembrances and performances tied to nation building, and the problematic or unheroic parts of his life story were expelled from the narrative; compare Brewer (2006). Due to this rhetoric, his memory has also been exploited by rightwing extremists to oppose any form of multiculturalism; see Kivimäki (2012). The representatives of the Suomen Vastarintaliike (Finnish National Front)—the national chapter of the neo-Nazi Nordic Resistance Movement, which was banned in Finland

<sup>2</sup> The inauguration of the memorial was most likely meant to coincide with the anniversary of the execution, but then the ceremony would have taken place on an ordinary weekday, Thursday, 3 October 1935. For this reason, the event was rescheduled to the following Sunday and this probably explains why the inscription contains a wrong date for the hanging.



by the District Court of Pirkanmaa in November 2017 for "being an organization threatening the democratic rule of law"—visited his grave in September 2014. The report of the visit on the organization's Website portrays Lukkarinen as an activist of the Jaeger Movement, one of the first true patriots to rise up against foreign oppressors, while later research has shown that he was more of an opportunist seeking to profit from twists and turns reflecting international politics on the regional scale (Lackman 2012:127).

Although it was a part of the official agenda, the remembering of a person named Taavetti Lukkarinen was hardly more than an excuse to promulgate a broader spectrum of views. As the story behind the man became more important than the man behind the story, in private it has had a multitude of meanings, including the remembrance of unfortunate circumstances over a century ago. An insight into this aspect was provided by the experiences and memories of the residents of Oulu, who were invited by means of an article published in the local newspaper to visit the ongoing excavations and share their stories related to the site. Due to the overwhelming public response resulting in a rich dataset regarding personal experiences and interactions with the tree memorial, these results are discussed in a separate contribution (Ikäheimo and Äikäs 2017). From the new types of institutionalized uses discovered through these interviews, it suffices to point out here that the memorial also served nationalistic purposes after World War II. The new recruits from the local garrisons were taken to the execution site to hear the story of Lukkarinen (Ikäheimo and Äikäs 2017) as a cautionary tale of what might happen again if Finland were to be occupied by foreign powers.

Katherine Verdery (1999:26) has emphasized the importance of "dead bodies" in the construction of nationalism, which for her is "a part of kinship, spirits, ancestor worship, and the circulation of cultural treasures." The politics of corpses is thus about relating the living to the dead and rewriting history. When Verdery's concept is applied, the story of Taavetti Lukkarinen is essentially the political life of a dead body starting from the execution and the subsequent reburial in the Oulu Main Cemetery. The ghost of the painful past has been taken under control while seemingly paying respect to the man's memory both at the cemetery and at the hanging-tree memorial. As corpses do not speak for themselves, they are easy to turn into symbols: it is possible to "put words into their mouths," and, while

their materiality implies a single meaning, they may actually signify different things to different people (Verdery 1999:29,108). A memorial, on the other hand, can transmute the memory of a dead person into political and social meanings intertwining the past and the future (Koselleck 2002, 2004). During the past century, first the hanging tree and then the hanging-tree memorial have been used for the purposes of nation building, and they have stood for both heroism and rightwing patriotism.

In this article, we have followed the site biography of the hanging tree and the tree memorial, which, interestingly, are not the same thing. Although many locals are aware that the memorial pine is very unlikely to be the actual hanging tree, this kind of authenticity is not required for the site to remain important, as at least some of the meanings and properties that the original hanging tree had have been transferred to the memorial, which has become heritage itself. Ana Milošević (2017:54) describes heritagization as

a process by which sites, structures and memorabilia from spontaneous memorials are appropriated as heritage and seen as vehicles for the creation of historical authenticity. ... As such, the "heritagization" process does not originate in the past, rather it is geared towards the future while being rooted in a historicized present.

The heritagization of the memorial tree started when people began to carve crosses into its bark or when the memorial was constructed around it, whichever happened first. Thereafter, the memorial has been maintained and visited by various people for various purposes to the point that it is thought to be a protected site, while, in fact, it is not. This illusion has contributed to its preservation within an area that has undergone heavy urban development during the past decades.

The site biography of the hanging-tree memorial highlights how memories can be transferred from one place to another and gain new meanings in the process. Today, the memorial stands on the premises of the Oulu University of Applied Sciences, which has plans to install a platform and lighting system around the memorial to make it—and the main entrance of the school—more accessible. Archaeological investigations conducted at the site may have also contributed to its heritagization. Since the memorial—even without the authentic hanging tree—is today an important place for stories and memories, the authors are about to make a formal proposition to

Finland's National Board of Antiquities to include it in the national registry of archaeological sites. Contrary to authorized heritage discourse, we do not view age as a prerequisite for authenticity (Smith 2006; Holtorf 2013; Ikäheimo and Äikäs 2017); compare International Council on Monuments and Sites (1996).

The hanging-tree memorial also resonates with the ideas of Michael Welch (2016:665), who characterizes heritage as “notoriously multivalent since it is not only a path for seeing and feeling but also a way of remembering and forgetting. ... Heritage is a double-edged sword that has the power to unite as well as to divide.” Although the key motives for visiting dark-heritage sites, such as the hanging-tree memorial of Taavetti Lukkarinen, are usually education, remembrance, and strengthening national identity (Dimitrovski et al. 2017), this site is a place where changing meanings, remembering and forgetting, as well as commemorative and other uses create a dynamic landscape of ideology; compare Stephens (2013).

## Conclusions

In the preceding pages we have discussed the memorialization of the death of Taavetti Lukkarinen and the related heritagization of the hanging-tree memorial. In the process of memorialization, his story has been brought up especially in times when it profited the national agenda: he has been depicted as a martyr who fought the Russian oppressors, a patriot, and a rightwing activist. The hanging-tree memorial has acted as a material reminder of his legend and as a place where his story has been retold and even reinvented. In addition, we have shown that the site biography of the hanging-tree memorial is not tied to the actual place of the hanging. The memorial has gained its authenticity from its use and from the stories related to it. Although many visitors remain skeptical about the authenticity of the tree, the memorial remains a symbol of the hanging.

We have, it is hoped, also succeeded in demonstrating that by examining the execution site and the events related to it by combining archaeological data with other types of sources, new knowledge has been gained regarding the last moments of Taavetti Lukkarinen. The decision to carry out the execution at Kontinkangas was most likely based on the earlier presence of Russian troops in the area, in addition to the site's location well outside the Oulu town grid plan. Also, the presence of utilizable infrastructure in

the form of manholes and trenches dug during Russian military training probably contributed to the decision. Nevertheless, the execution was carried out in a highly improvised manner, as it was meant to be an event that would set an example and thus permanently eliminate the need for similar punishments in northern Finland. Due to successive developments—two revolutions in Russia paving the way for the independence of Finland in December 1917—it is unknown how deep the impact would have been, but the execution certainly left a scar in the memory of the local community.

The details of the execution had been debated in Oulu for decades (Lackman 2012:286n380) prior to the archaeological excavations. The fuel for these discussions was the emotional firsthand account of prison chaplain Järventaus, which was repeated in books, newspapers, and magazines whenever the case of Lukkarinen demanded renewed attention. Through this discussion, Lukkarinen was gradually turned into a martyr, a hero, or a Christ-like figure, whose guiltiness was quite systematically belittled by the local community. The remembrance of Taavetti Lukkarinen demonstrates how the life and death of an “ordinary man” can be turned into a symbol for political and national agendas. At the same time, it highlights the importance of memorials in memory culture: the hanging-tree memorial is visited even by those who are not familiar with the story behind it. While the meanings assigned to the original hanging tree have been transferred to the present hanging-tree memorial, it has also gained additional meanings during the heritagization process, for example, meanings related to nationalism and urban legends.

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