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The Swedish Archaeological Society

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The Swedish Archaeological Society

The Swedish Archaeological Society was founded in 1947 and the area of interest comprises all aspects of archaeology, both native and foreign. The Society is the only common body for professional Swedish archaeologist, independent of their posts at different departments and institutions. In 1947 it counted about 60 members and today more than 500 scholars belong to the Society. The Society can therefore act as spokesman for Swedish archaeological opinion on matters of national and international importance.

From 1951 to 1978 the Swedish Archaeological Society presented six volumes of *Swedish Archaeological Bibliography*, reviewing archaeological research published during the period 1939-1975. However, after the appearance in 1974 of *Nordic Archaeological Abstracts* (published annually), the need for these brief reviews diminished. Instead, the Society published two volumes of *Swedish Archaeology*, each containing somewhat more exhaustive comments on research published in a five-year period (1976-80 and 1981-85). This tradition was continued in *Current Swedish Archaeology, Vol. 3, 1995* where a retrospective analysis of the period 1986-1990 was presented.

This journal, *Current Swedish Archaeology*, was started in 1993, and is an important part of the work that the Society is engaged in. The Society also organizes seminars and excursions. Formal matters are dealt with at the annual general meeting. Every second year the Society also holds a thematic meeting for Swedish archaeologists.

Editors' Preface

As the title, *Regions in Archaeology – Past Experiences or Methodological Tools*, indicates, the theme for this year's volume is regions. Certainly, there is no lack of discussions and publications on regions in archaeology, and some will wonder why we chose this subject for the volume. However, we believe that the concept of region is so common in archaeology at the same time as the study of regions is undergoing considerable changes, that it is time for another exposition.

In our invitation to volume 10, we pointed out the fact that a great deal of the archaeological work has been applied to the study of regions. In the earlier research, an attempt was made to identify different "cultures", which were thought to correspond to typical artefacts or ancient monuments. This division into cultures, associated with people living in a particular area, was later questioned, and instead the discussion has dealt with the question of the signification of the material culture. The focus has been on the material culture as an expression of a group's or individual's social and political ambitions within a society. At the same time as there is a concentration on internal development in a region, there has been a move in the opposite direction – toward a study of world or global cultures.

The debate has also concerned how the concept of region should be defined: is it a question of topography and geography, or is it the distribution of ancient monuments and artefacts that should be the basis for the division into regions? Can we assume that the regions we identify today had relevance for the people in the past, or are they classifications seen from outside, created in order to facilitate our own analysis and interpretation?

The discussion is not only of interest for the interpretations of the past, but also a question of the regional policy of today. One ambition is to create a stronger link between the educational and the cultural-heritage institutions within the regions. This is, of course, a desirable development in many ways, but there is also a danger if the universities focus only on their own region. The universities have different directions and research strategies, and it would be a disadvantage for the research if an area were not studied from different theoretical perspectives. Consequently, at the same time as the co-operation increases within the region, there is a need to discuss how to arrange a dialogue with other regions.

Thus, we think it is time to discuss the question of regions again. No doubt we believed that we would find variation in the debate, and when we now look at the contributions to this year's volume of CSA it is obvious how differently the concept is used. The articles vary greatly, notwithstanding that they deal with the concept of regions. Consequently, this contribution to the question of regions will hardly be the last.

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