

Theoretical Debate and Archaeological Periodicals – Incomparable?

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In the following article the authors will discuss the relationship between what Bjørn Myhre proposes as the current state of theory within Scandinavian archaeology and compare his interpretation with the issues presented in some of the Scandinavian archaeological periodicals. The discussion is based on project work carried out by students at the Dept. of Archaeology, Göteborg University. The authors of this article analyse the results of this project to see if “the post-modern period” is reflected in articles published during the period 1980-1994.

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It has, in recent years, been practice to reflect upon the theoretical changes that have taken place within the world of science. In 1991 Bjørn Myhre appeared as interpreter of the historical developments within Scandinavian archaeology in a contribution to Ian Hodder's *Archaeological Theory in Europe - The last three decades* (1991:161 - 186). The theoretical trends that have had an impact within Scandinavian archaeology ought to be reflected in some way and our article is a contribution to the search for the theoretical trends that Bjørn Myhre believes have influenced the Scandinavian discourse. Prior to discussing these trends it is important to

establish what Myhre believes the term “theory” to contain. In his opinion theory is “...a) a general conception of humanity and society that can be found in all the human disciplines; and b) a more specific view that guides the archaeologist's choice of data and special methods.” (Myhre 1991:173).

“We are living in a post-modern period...” (Myhre 1991:161) and according to Myhre the period dominated by discussions between traditionalists and New archaeologists has apparently come to an end. In order to prove his point Myhre presents his view of the changes in theoretical approaches influencing Scandinavian archaeology since 1940.

The data used in this article is the result of work carried out by students at Göteborg University (D-kurs) under the supervision of Dr. Lise Bender Jørgensen and Professor Kristian Kristiansen. The analysis of the periodicals and the problems discussed would not have been possible without the assistance of the whole group. Our thanks to; Madeleine Adner, Anna-Carin Andersson, Carina Bramstäng, Ingrid Cederlöf, Katinka Ridde Coffey, Hans Erik Dahlgren, Agneta Gustavsson, Peter Mattson Höglund, Håkan Jonsson, Jens Kjærsgaard, Johan Lindroth, Erik Malmström, Betty-Ann Munkenberg, Arvo Pajusi, Kristina Persson, Bengt Svahn, Tone Sommervold, Anna Thal & Per Wranning.

In Myhre's opinion 1960 was a turning point with the arrival of hypo-deductive reasoning to question the then established inductive approach. Another factor at this time was that Scandinavian archaeologists began to be seriously influenced by the approaches developing in North America and England. Preference for Anglo-american archaeology did not however incorporate any fundamental philosophical changes. Deductive reasoning and the import of ideas from other disciplines were still based on positivist philosophy and its search for objective guidelines.

Needless to say the changes in Scandinavian archaeology during the 60's and 70's, did not go unchallenged. From the beginning of the 1960's Arne B. Johansen seriously debated the issue of positivism and in his opinion archaeology could never become an objective science (Johansen 1982:212-225, Myhre 1991:172-173). His ideas received very little attention at that time, perhaps Johansen's timing was ahead of his time. There again he may just be another example of what is typical regarding archaeology's approach to new perspectives.

The questioning of objectivity was not to be. Instead, approaches such as structuralism and Marxism were the theoretical food-stuff of Scandinavian archaeology during the 1970's. This could partly be explained by the fact that these approaches also strived towards positivist goals in that objective methods like hypo-deductivism, allowed for the finding of universal laws. It was through these universal laws that archaeologists would find prehistoric truths. During the 1980's Marxism and structuralism did however leave the system-theoretical methods behind and developed into perspectives that came closer to the ideas of Arne B. Johansen. With no objective guidelines archaeology changed its epistemological direction and in the words of Myhre "...It was no longer a question of the actual knowledge, but what kind of knowledge we want, and

what kind of problems we want to find a solution to..." (Myhre 1991:173). Perhaps this change of direction contributed to the establishment of feminist theory within the archaeological discourse.

In his interpretation of the changes in Scandinavian theoretical trends Bjørn Myhre also discusses what he calls "future directions" (ibid.175). The introduction to his article leads us to assume that these "future directions" already exist today. Myhre postulates that we are heading towards an emancipation from positivist objectivism and getting closer to a more subjective awareness. This theoretical approach is sometimes termed "post-processuell" and perspectives such as structuralism, marxism, feminism, hermeneutic philosophy and contextualism tend to be associated with this term (ibid.176).

It was only a few years ago that Bjørn Myhre wrote the article on the changes within Scandinavian archaeology and we thought it might be interesting to see if the theoretical approaches (as proposed by Myhre) are reflected in Scandinavian periodicals. Based on his interpretation of the term "theory", it should, in our opinion be possible to detect the theoretical approaches that have influenced Scandinavian archaeologists. So what do the periodicals contain?

AN ANALYSIS OF SCANDINAVIAN ARCHAEOLOGY 1980-1994

On a course at the Department of Archaeology in Göteborg we were involved in analysing a number of Scandinavian periodicals. The aim of this task was to try to detect trends and changes, in particular theory related, from the period 1980 - 1994.

In order to keep the material to a workable level we restricted the study to the following Scandinavian periodicals; *Arkeologi i Norr, Tor, Fornvännan, Populär Arkeologi, KUML, Skalk, Viking, Spor, Meddelanden från Lunds Historiska Museum, Journal of Danish Archaeology, Aarbøger for Nordisk Oldkyndighed & Historie, Norwegian*

Archaeological Review och *Acta Archaeologica* (Further information in the appendix).

Where possible we availed ourselves of the abstract section finder in NAA to statistically analyse the chronological periods as well as the topics discussed in the articles published. We also decided to study the periodicals from a gender perspective or at least we attempted to do so.

ENGENDERING PERIODICALS

Our conclusion is that Scandinavian archaeology has a problem! The female authors represent less than a third of the published articles (fig. 1). This must be considered an appalling state of affairs. The information that came to our attention whilst working with the material raised many questions and we can't help wondering why there are so few articles published by women? Is this a problem? Yes, it is, not only from a perspective of equality but also from a scientific point of view.

One of the more recent additions to the archaeological discourse is the topic of gender. Gender issues have been getting more and more attention, at the universities at least, but we have not seen this reflected in the periodicals we have analysed. The only exception is *Norwegian Archaeological Review* which devoted a complete volume to gender issues in 1992. Macho-archaeology is no longer acceptable, women have a great deal to contribute to the world of archaeology and the archaeological discourse can only benefit from their participation. Needless to say the research work of female archaeologists is not just restricted to issues of gender, so what is it that prevents female authors from being published?

There seems to be some kind of connection between the sex of the editor(s) and the percentage of articles written by women. Female authors are fewer in number in the periodicals with male editors than in the periodicals with female editors. *Arkeologi i*

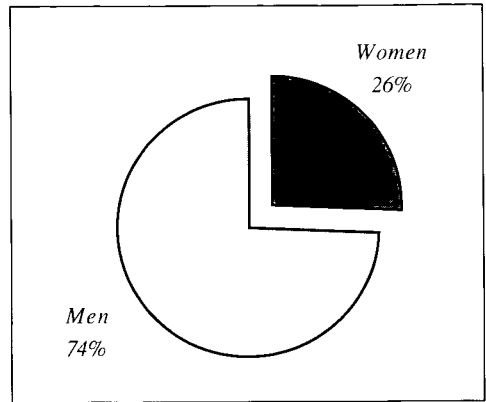


Fig. 1. The representation of female and male authors.

Norr with Evert Baudou as editor, is a good example of this (figure 2). This periodical is definitely the worst regarding female representation but is by no means alone. Another example is the *Journal of Danish Archaeology*, where the majority of editors have been men (fig. 2). There is a definite improvement in periodicals such as *MLUHM*, *Spor* and *Tor* where both female and male editors occur. In these periodicals articles written by women are greater in number. If it is the editors' responsibility to recruit authors, then they must be part of the problem. Is there some kind of aversion to recruiting female authors? All problems can't be laid at the door of the editors but they could contribute to improving the situation by accepting articles written by women to a greater extent. An increase in representation by female authors must surely entail the introduction of new perspectives into the discipline. Or perhaps archaeology would like to remain a science for men, about men?

Another misdemeanour that came to our attention was how women tended to be excluded from partaking in the debates being held in some of the periodicals. *Norwegian Archaeological Review* is a good example of this. Here it is practice to comment on the articles published. The 1982 volume contained

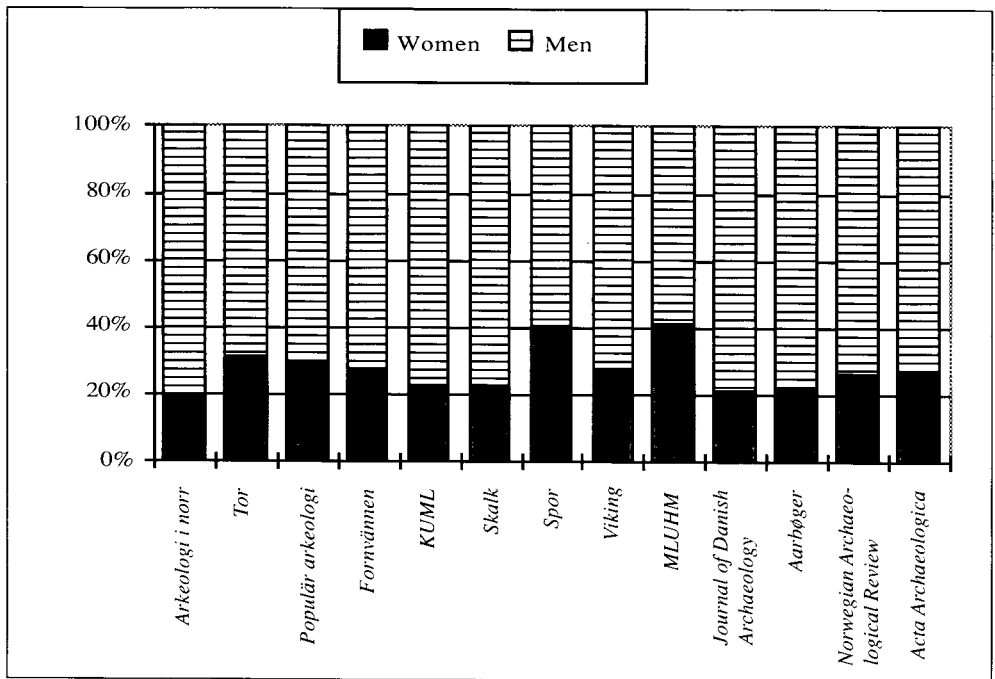


Fig. 2. Representation of female and male authors in the periodicals studied.

a total of 7 articles, 5 written by women, but none of these were commented upon! Were these articles so perfect that they did not call for any further comments? Or is this the way in which the archaeological patriarchy shows women that they are not welcome? An engendering of periodicals ought to be without question. What we have presented here is just a small part of the problem, the biggest part has to be finding solutions.

CHRONOLOGICAL TRENDS

Agne Furingsten presented in 1983 a quantitative analysis of the Scandinavian archaeological periodicals. He discussed, among other things, the chronological trends in Scandinavian archaeology during the period 1974-1980. His study was also based on the abstract section finder in NAA. According to Furingsten a large number of articles dealt with the Iron Age and in particular the Vik-

ing Age. The study also showed that the number of articles dealing with the Stone Age were in decline. The worst affected chronological period was however the Bronze Age, which didn't get that much attention at all (1983:112).

In the study carried out by the students in Göteborg it was decided to analyse the chronological periods based on the following four categories; Stone Age, Bronze Age, Iron Age and Other. The category of "Other" contains periods such as the Middle Ages, historical times and also articles of a more general character. As seen in figure 3 which reflects the proportional relationship between the prehistoric periods, Iron Age is the most dominating category. One third of the articles deal with the Stone Age period and only 12 percent caters for the Bronze Age. Figure 4 shows the chronological representation for each of the periodicals studied.

Not much appears to have changed since Furingsten carried out his study in 1983. The Iron Age is still the most represented period in the periodicals and the Bronze Age is still the period with the lowest representation. Why is it that the Iron Age is so dominant a subject? Is this really an indication of the interest in the period or is it that archaeologists specialising in Bronze Age and Stone Age studies have more difficulty getting published or perhaps they are just less motivated? Are the editors of all the discussed periodicals Iron Age fanatics?

The period Bronze Age is proportioned at merely 12% but what is it that makes the Bronze Age less interesting? Could there be an explanation in that it is easier for us to identify ourselves with people of the Iron Age rather than with people from the Bronze Age? One possible explanation, Furingsten argues, might be related to the frequency of the archaeological material, i.e. more artefacts, more articles (ibid.113). Most of the periodicals endeavour to present archaeological research and to some extent encourage debate. Perhaps it is now time to start debating the issue of Iron Age dominance.

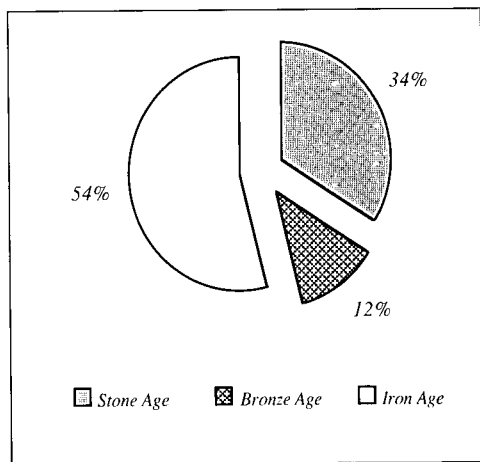


Fig. 3. The representation of the prehistoric periods.

WHAT'S BEING WRITTEN?

As mentioned earlier NAA has been the starting point for much of the work carried out in our study and once again it has been put to the test. This time we have availed ourselves of its guidelines for analysing the topics dealt with in the periodicals. Even here an imbalance was to be found (fig. 5). The dominating categories are A, B and F. Category A covers subjects such as the history of archaeology, general, bibliographies, conservation of monuments etc. Category B includes, amongst others, theory, methods, terminology, documentation and chronology. Category F contains artefact studies, art, styles and dress. Almost 50% of the articles published during the period 1980-1994 in the periodicals under scrutiny are to be found in these categories. F leads with 21%, A and B share 2nd place at 13% a piece and the category that came bottom of the pile is K (urban settlement), which only managed 2%.

As we mentioned at the beginning our main objective was to detect the theoretical trends that dominated during the period 1980-1994. We found however when taking a closer look at the articles designated to category B that most of them were in fact method related. It's quite amazing that method related topics dominate to the extent that they do. Theoretical topics are conspicuous by their absence. What are archaeology's future prospects? How do the findings of our analysis compare to Myhre's reflection that we are now part of the post-modern period?

THE POST-MODERN DEBATE

What does the term post-modern refer to? It is impossible here to mention all aspects of this complex discussion. As Julian Thomas quite rightly points out the term ... "post-modern can refer to rather different phenomena within different discourses" (Thomas 1993:7). The word itself implies that we currently live in a period that has come into existence by way of a previous present where the

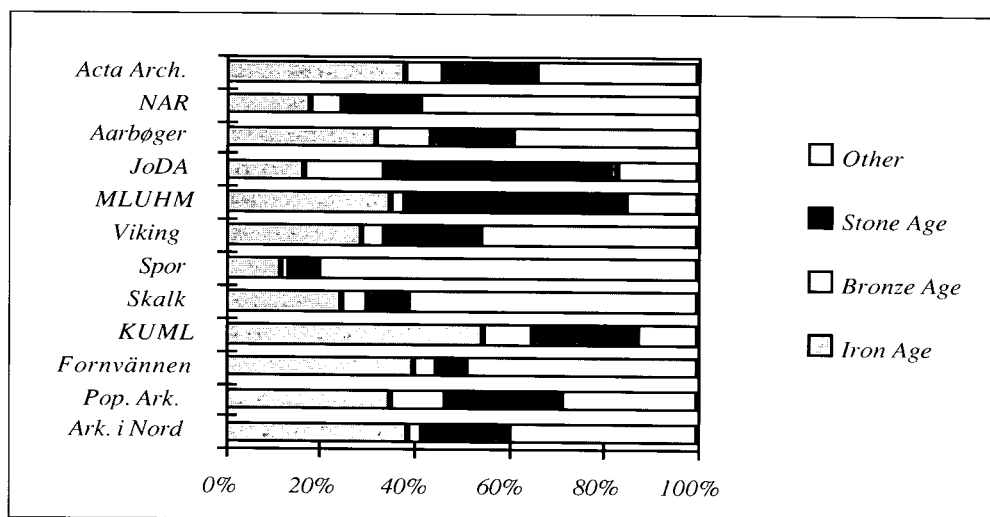


Fig. 4. Chronological distribution in the periodicals studied

word modern also existed. The question is, how can a contemporary period be post-modern when the word modern by definition is a term that can't be fixed or tied down in time or space. The word post-modern indicates an evolutionary way of thinking in that we classify time by way of a linear time axel. Is this a result of the fact that we, as individuals existing in a contemporary society, need to anchor ourselves to a specific time where prefixes like "pre" and "post" give us perspective and meaning to our existence. This need to place ourselves in a time context of linear nature includes the terms past, present and future. The term post-modern, in contrast to the word post-modern, strives to break the mould of evolutionary linear thinking and implement a train of thought that is of a more pluralistic nature where terms such as circular reasoning and hermeneutic perceived understanding are of importance.

According to Bjørn Myrhe post-modern archaeology allows for a pluralistic attitude and is also characterised by anti-positivist as well as multi-paradigmatic awareness. The question is if it is possible to detect such

qualities in Scandinavian periodicals? During the analysis undertaken, anti-positivism seemed to be conspicuous by its absence. Of those articles we studied in more detail the vast majority have favoured the unravelling/uncovering of prehistoric truth. As regards to debate articles which question the positivist philosophy and the search for objective guidelines we must report a decisive lack in numbers. Most of the studied periodicals state that they aim to be forums for debate as well as for archaeological research (see appendix). If that be the case such goals ought to include the promoting of pluralistic and multi-paradigmatic attitudes. Such an approach would surely encourage communication between archaeologists and perhaps even between archaeologists and the archaeological public.

In the few articles where it has been possible to detect theoretical allegiance, the pursuit of any communicative dialogue is missing. Instead the theoretical approaches appear side by side without ever trying to find common ground on which to meet, and are thereby deprived of the giving and taking of ideas and thoughts. Post-modern arch-

aeology is not without problems, but the understanding of scientific terminology and the advocacy of it are not one and the same. The meaning conveyed in terms such as anti-positivism and multi-paradigm doesn't appear to work in practice. Pluralism seems to be more on par with monologues than dialogues. The authors of the articles perhaps suffer from delusions of self interest in the production of their work. From our point of view the term pluralism ought to give rise to opportunities of increased communication regardless of theoretical stance, and the exchange of opinions ought to be regarded as something positive, leading to reflection over the current situation of the archaeological discourse. Bjørn Myhre's statement that "...Scandinavian archaeology is on the way towards freeing itself from positivist philosophy and heading towards a more subjective attitude..." (Myhre 1991:175-176) clearly isn't reflected in the periodicals discussed in this article. The only possible exception here

is *Norwegian Archaeological Review*, which does appear to have had some success in becoming a forum for debate, but this periodical has, after all, had Bjørn Myhre as one of its editors.

A NEW CLASSIFICATIONS SYSTEM, PLEASE

The search for theoretical debate in the archaeological periodicals is no easy task and we decided to use NAA's classification system as our hunting ground. As Agne Furingsten points out in his article "Nordisk arkeologi - traditionell eller nytänkande?" this particular classification system is not without its faults (1983:108).

A quick look at the system and you're lead to believe that all articles relating to theoretical debate are to be found in category B. As mentioned earlier this category includes; theory, methodology, terminology, documentation and chronology. Articles that are specifically theory related are therefore

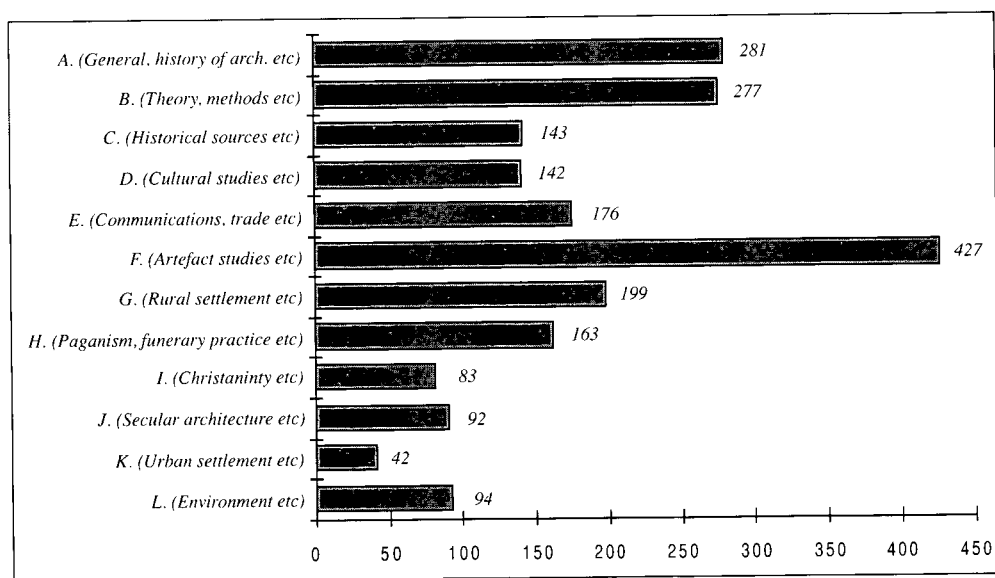


Fig. 5. Subject profile. This diagram shows the number of articles covering subjects under the categories A - L found in NAA's subject index. We would like to point out that the articles of *Populär Arkeologi* are not included in this analysis.

not that easily detected and our analysis found methodology related articles to be the most frequent. Category B is in our opinion misleading. As Agne Furingsten quite rightly states "...all work is based on theoretical grounds, whether conscious or not..." (ibid. 108) but despite this being the case it is extremely difficult to get an overall picture of the theoretical approaches that pervade in specific periods. Perhaps it is time to demand the reorganisation of NAA's classification system and insist on a category that is specifically designed to cater for the theoretical point of departure in all articles. This would require from the authors a theoretical awareness and assist the reader in placing the interpretations in their rightful context. If the classification system highlighted the theoretical foundations it would surely help pave the way for an improved theoretical debate.

THEORETICAL DEBATE AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL PERIODICALS - INCOMPARABLE?

Bjørn Myhre's statement that archaeology is now part of the post-modern period including an emancipation from positivist philosophy isn't reflected to any great extent in the periodicals discussed in this article. So why is it that theoretical debate and archaeological periodicals appear to be so incomparable? Over and above the problems mentioned with regards to NAA's classifications system it could be worth reflecting over one of the points Kristian Kristiansen made in his article "Danish Archaeology in the 1980's" (1984:205 - 213).

According to Kristiansen there are some difficulties pertaining to both the publication of and the publication in archaeological periodicals. When calls for changes arise within a discipline, whether theory related or otherwise, it is of utmost importance that

publishers be prepared to restructure their publishing policies in accordance with demand. Publication structures have to be receptive to contemporary voices (ibid.209). If periodicals are not prepared to be flexible when confronted with new perspectives they will inevitably stagnate as mediators and consequently may lose their readers to other publications that are prepared to listen to those voices demanding a restructuring of publishing policies. An example of such a periodical might prove to be *Current Swedish Archaeology*. Is it possible that this recent addition to Scandinavian archaeology is the result of inadequate receptiveness to contemporary demands amongst the more established periodicals? Or perhaps *Current Swedish Archaeology* came into being as a consequence of the arrival of post-modernism into the archaeological discourse? If this is to be the case, and only time will tell, does this then imply that other periodicals will have to consider changing their publication structures in order to ensure continued existence?

Keeping up with incoming theoretical approaches is no easy task. Even more difficult perhaps when faced with constructed terms like post-modernism, which as discussed is not as approachable as one would wish. But despite the complexity and diversity associated with the term post-modernism it is thought to be the period we are now living in. Our analysis suggests however that we are living in a period not dissimilar to that which Furingsten described in 1983. If archaeology has as its goal to remain an active member of the scientific club it is time that archaeologists worked towards creating a meeting point where debate (in the positive meaning of the word) could thrive. One of debates' most important media could be the archaeological periodicals. Together they would be incomparable.

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APPENDIX

Presentation of the periodicals studied 1980-1994.

Arkeologi i Norr is a periodical that started in 1988 and since that time has had Evert Baudou as its editor. The aim of the publication is to deal with archaeological issues connected with northern Scandinavia. (Analysis by Tony Axelsson & Lars Backman).

Tor started in 1945. Since 1980 the following people have been the editors: 1980-82 Bertil Almgren, 1983-89 Else Nordahl, 1990-91 Helena Knutsson and Bo Gräslund, 1993 Kjel Knutsson, Helena Knutsson and Bo Gräslund. The periodical has as its main objective to promote scientific debate and to circulate information relating to the research work carried out at the department. It is primarily a forum for students and lecturers from the Uppsala University. (Fiona Campbell & Jonna Hansson).

Populär Arkeologi was published for the first time in 1983 and its first editor was Anders Ljungberg. In 1989 Ulla Hagberg took over. The periodical is essentially aimed at providing a non-academic public access to the archaeological world. Articles cover a wide variety of topics from all corners of the world. Presentation of the topics covered is of a journalistic nature. (Anna-Karin Andersson & Anna Thal).

Fornvännen is one of the oldest Scandinavian periodicals and started out in 1906. Between the years 1983 and 1993 Jan Peder Lamm and Göran Tegnér have been on the editorial staff. Torgny Säve-Söderberg being the chief editor 1980-85 and Bo Gräslund has been in charge since then. The periodical aims to be a forum for scientific research not only relating to archaeology but also

in areas such as osteology and history. (Jens Kjærsgaard & Arvo Pajusi).

KUML began its life in 1951. P. Kjaerum was its editor during the period 1980-1993 and then H. J. Madsen and B. M. Rasmussen took over. In the first issue it was announced that the aims of the periodical were to make archaeological finds and the work carried out in the excavations from the area of Jutland known to the public and archaeologists outside of Denmark. (Betty-Ann Munkenberg & Per Wranning).

Skalk started in 1957 with Harald Andersen as the editor. He is still running things today with help from his editorial staff. *Skalk* is a periodical primarily designed to accommodate the non-academic public with information relating to archaeological and historical issues. (Fiona Campbell & Ingrid Cederlöf).

Viking established itself in 1936 and aims at supporting the work being done in the world of Norwegian archaeology. 1980-81 Sverre Mars-trander and Arne Skøldsvold were the editors and since 1982 the responsibilities have been on the shoulders of Arne Skøldsvold, Egil Mikkelsen, Øystein Johansen and Petter B. Molaug. (Johan Lindroth, Bengt Svahn, Katinka Ridde Coffey & Tone Sommervold).

Spor is a periodical that began in 1986, and the initial editor was Kari Binns Støren. In 1991 Aud Beverfjord took charge. The aim of this publication is to give the public access to Norwegian archaeology. (Johan Lindroth, Bengt Svahn, Katinka Ridde Coffey & Tone Sommervold).

MLUHM was issued for the first time in 1930, the goal being to publish articles related to the work being carried out at the department in Lund.

During the period 1980-84 the editor was Berta Stjernquist. The position was then taken over by Lars Larsson. (Johan Lindroth, Bengt Svahn, Katinka Ridde Coffey & Tone Sommervold).

Journal of Danish Archaeology has been on the market since 1982. The aim is to spread information on Danish archaeology into international circles. Kristian Kristiansen and P. O. Nielsen have been the editors from the beginning and in 1991 Mette Iversen joined them. (Madeleine Adner & Hans-Erik Dahlgren).

Aarbøger for Nordisk Oldkyndighed & Historie had Ebbe Lomborg as its editor from 1980-82 and Ulla Lund Hansen from 1983-1991. Issued annually this periodical is aimed at publishing scientific reports on finds and excavations. (Erik Malmström & Kristina Persson).

Norwegian Archaeological Review started in 1968 and has as its goal to present articles of

interest to archaeological research in Scandinavia. It is a forum for discussions related to problems in the archaeological discourse and both Norwegian and foreign researches are encouraged to take part. Bjørn Myhre has been the editor during the periods 1980-83 and 1985-91. Olav Svenne Johansen was in charge from 1983-85 and since 1991 the chief editor has been Ericka Engelstad. (Carina Bramstång & Peter Matsson Höglund).

Acta Archaeologica was first published in 1930 and is oriented to publishing more indepth articles which present important discoveries, grand scale studies of complex issues, multi-disciplinary projects with archaeological connections and analysis that pertain to the mediation of Scandinavian archaeology on an international basis. The editor from 1980-83 was C. J. Becker and since 1983 it has been Klavs Randsborg. (Agneta Gustavsson & Håkan Jonsson).