

Möten med Värmland- om kontakter under järnåldern
Meeting with Värmland – "contacts" during the Iron Age

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Abstract

This thesis deals with the Swedish concept of "contacts" (kontakter). My purpose in framing a broader definition of the concept is that I want to be able to discuss relations between people on different levels of Iron Age communities. In my discussion on contacts in Iron Age society different concepts are used such as gender, individuals/actors, family/household, and communication. I have been working with a gender perspective because I believe that the differences between the actors involved and their backgrounds (age, social status, sex, cultural identity and gender identity) were essential in forming the rules of contacts. In the analysis I have primarily used artefacts as expressions of contacts but I have also used written sources and other types of archaeological remains. In the analysis I compare the area known as Värmland with surrounding areas in Norway and Sweden. I describe similarities in nature, in research and in archaeological remains. I also define some areas of contact; areas that were changing over time in both their content of the contacts and in their geographical span. The roles of the household and the farm in the contacts are discussed. All the members in the household were involved in the foundation for the contact (such as in creating material to be traded), but specific actors performed the actual meeting. This meeting was ruled by the social regulations in the community. In my analysis I see the household and the farm as the foundation for the contacts but the material from burials are seen as the result of a mixture of different contacts. I also discuss the creation of what I have called "areas of contact", and especially the emergence of the province of Värmland. I take as my starting point written sources from the Middle Ages and analyse the picture they give of the province of Värmland. I suggest that the emergence of the construction of the province of Värmland may be dated to the Vendel – and Viking Age periods, and that the River Klarälven was an unifying aspect between the traditional late Iron Age communities in the south and the forest farmers in the north. Actual meetings lead to material and immaterial expressions. Contact is the abstract, overlying concept while the meeting is the actual, unique situation and the concrete concept. In the communicative arena concrete expressions and results from the contacts were mixed with symbolic expressions. The contact areas may have been seen to embody different values, which may have been associated to whole geographic areas or to some parts of it. These values may have been taken over by new generations and connected to new or old contact areas. The contact areas existing during the Iron Age were important for the later creation of the province of Värmland during the Middle Ages and in historic times.