

Abstract

Hernek, Robert. 2005: *Nytt ljus på Sandarnakulturen. Om en boplats från äldre stenåldern i Bohuslän. (New light on the Sandarna Culture. A Mesolithic dwelling-site from the province of Bohuslän)*. Gothenburg. In Swedish with an English summary. 386 pp., 110 figs.

In 1997 the author headed an excavation of a Mesolithic settlement site at Timmerås in the province of Bohuslän, western Sweden. The site proved to contain features of an extent with few parallels in southern Scandinavia. Most striking among them was a well-preserved hut, where the floor had been dug down below the ground level. The dwelling is dated to ca 8200 BP, which puts it in a late phase of the Middle Mesolithic (the Late Sandarna culture). The overriding purpose of this dissertation has been to present, interpret and understand the role that the settlement may have played. The finds are also interesting, adding new information to the chronology of Western Sweden.

The identification of the dwelling was important, because it is a highly composite archaeological object that can supply important information about technology, economy, settlement pattern and social conditions. The basic structure of the dwelling is presumed to have comprised four standing posts arranged in a square. A 1:10 scale model of the dwelling can be seen at the Gothenburg City Museum and an almost full-scale reconstruction has been made for an impending television production. This showed among other things that the structure was virtually self-supporting.

In the centre of the dwelling were at least two fireplaces on different levels in the cultural layer. It is likely that the strata represent traces of several habitations, i.e. that the cultural layer contains several floors on top of each other. The floor is presumed to have been a combination of bark, twigs, branches and perhaps seaweed. The overall picture shows that the place was probably used for a few seasons during the coldest months of the year. Most probably six to nine persons, who represent one household or an extended nuclear family, inhabited the site.

There were also phenomena which can presumably be linked to the realm of ideas and beliefs. In the last habitation phase at the site, there were indications that the structure had been deliberately burned down. Two broken grinding stones found in the fireplace, as well as the presence of several smooth rounded stones could be connected to the abandonment. Grinding stones can be regarded as metaphoric tools of transformation. To deepen the discussion on that subject, a number of artefacts of special symbolic significance have been highlighted, one of them a previously unknown decorated object, a stone-hatchet from northern Bohuslän, showing that the shaman had an important function in the community. The main content of the incisions is connected with transformation processes, states of trance and spiritual journeys. Following the interpretations on this particular hatchet, other motifs from the Mesolithic could also be given new interpretations.

Keywords: Archaeology, Bohuslän, Huts, Houses, Dwellings, Chronology, Mesolithic, Sandarna culture, Ceremonial axes, Mesolithic art, help-spirit

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