Abstract

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Title: Individ och kollektiv i föröresk järnålder

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"The Individual and the Collective in Pre Roman Iron Age" is the title of this doctoral dissertation and the overall purpose of this dissertation is to study Pre Roman society in West Sweden from the perspective of the actions of the individual and the collective. Both of these societal entities express themselves differently, and this is deliberate in order to explain changes in society, both short and long term. Post processual methodology, in addition to the empirical data, is the point of departure for this dissertation because from this perspective context creates the conditions necessary for explanation. Furthermore there is a theoretical discussion of the term "agency" which shows it is possible to argue that the actions of both the individual and the collective have been important for events and changes in society, both short and long term. Additionally, a model has been created based on a discussion of the terms and their meaning in relation to the individual and the collective.

West Sweden is the point of departure for a "case-study" with the counties of Bohuslän, Dalsland, Halland and Västergötland making up this geographical region. Several thousand archaeological survey reports have been analysed and the vast majority of the Pre Roman remains documented in these reports are settlement sites and burials. There are two groups of settlement sites; one consisting of large long-houses and the other, at best, consists of simple house constructions. One other recurring feature is the so called "activity site" where no evidence of settlement can be discerned but where relatively advanced types of labour activities appear to have been carried out. Both the activity sites and the so called "houseless" sites can to some extent be interpreted as components of an extensive farming community and can also be understood as craft sites.

The majority of burial graves are cremation burials; simple structures buried in unmarked ground located at what are known as "cremation pit" burial sites. These are a typical expression of the collective's almost democratic presence in society. The same applies to the similarities in construction and care for graves regardless of sex or age. More unusual types of graves include inhumations and burials containing weapons. Nevertheless signs of individualism are present in the material from this period and region, and are quite evident at the burial sites. This is particularly discernable at the large burial sites which often reveal traces of individual identity in the collective. Important individuals can be detected in graves containing wealthy grave goods as well as in the distinctive handicraft and votive finds. Evidence can also be found in the extremely visible burial monuments where individuals are easily separated from the masses. Generally speaking the material suggests that there is a gradual reduction of the individual's influence whilst the actions of the collective progressively dominate the Pre Roman Iron Age.

Key words: individual, collective, Pre Roman Iron Age, West Sweden, settlement sites, activity sites, burial sites, identity, continuity, actions.