

**Bodil Petersson & Peter Skoglund (eds) 2007. *Arkeologi och identitet*. Acta Archaeologica Lundensia Series in 8° No. 53, Institutionen för arkeologi och antikens historia, Lund. 311 pp. ISBN 91-89578-20-1**

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*Arkeologi och identitet (Archaeology and Identity)* is an anthology based on a session at VIII Nordic TAG in Lund in 2005 edited by Bodil Petersson and Peter Skoglund. It is divided into three parts: 'Archaeology and identity in the present', 'Archaeology and identity in the past and the present' and 'Archaeology and identity in the past'. The publication contains 17 chapters, which are written in Swedish, Norwegian, Danish and English.

Archaeological studies of identities have broadly a twofold basis. On the one hand, identity is a fundamental aspect of humans and being human, and 'identification can be defined minimally as the ways in which individuals and collectives are distinguished in their social relations with other individuals and collectives. Identity is a matter of knowing who's who (without which we can't know what's what)' (Jenkins 2004:5). For archaeologists studying humans, identities will inevitably be part of the core studies of the discipline. On the other hand, nationalism has been deeply embedded in the very concept of archaeology, in its institutions and its development, and archaeology as a discipline has been institutionalized when it became politically powerful (Sørensen 1996). Thus, nationality and later ethnicity as identities have politically had a predominant role in interpretations of past identities because of the present use of these identities legitimizing the present and the future.

The background for the book is the current change in cultural heritage policy where the users or the public and not the objects are in the foreground, and national policies often state that archaeology is an instrumental tool in creating

today's national and historic identities. Obviously, people in the past have had their own identities and then the questions arise: how does one interpret the past, what is the role of archaeology in the present and how do the past and the present relate with regard to identity?

Following the structure of the book, starting with 'Archaeology and identity in the present' (and 'Identity in the past and the present'), Axel Mjærum (Chapter 1) argues that, since the aim of the Norwegian cultural heritage law is to enable the use of the past for contemporary identities such as nationalism and ethnicity, this is important and unproblematic unless 'prehistory is misinterpreted in order to serve political aims' (p. 20). Although his argument is that a plural archaeology will ensure a multiple past and present, this position is challenged and debated in the subsequent articles on empirical and theoretical grounds.

One problem is that identities are not neutral tags, but they are used juridically to legitimize 'historic rights' and access to natural resources. Wallerström (Chapter 4) and Ojala (Chapter 7) discuss ethnicities among the Kväner and Saami in northern Scandinavia. Ethnicity as a term is often used to designate minority groups and not majority groups (nationalities). As Wallerström emphasizes, ethnicity is important today, but it is possible to doubt that ethnicity was important during the first millennia compared to other identities such as age, descent, etc., because, although cultural patterns and differences are present in the material assemblages, these similarities and differences must have been perceived as important by both groups as defining their own and the others' identities (p. 65).

Bodil Petersson (Chapter 2) shows how Scania, which has been part of today's Denmark and Sweden, has enabled a regional identity transcending current national territories. From another approach, Helene Martinsson-Wallin (Chapter 5), analysing Rapa Nui (Easter Island), which was annexed by Chile in 1888, focuses on layers of conflicting identities, including an imposed national one, but also difficulties regarding how to reconstruct one's 'own' past. Although Easter Island is the most isolated island in the world, Nanouschka Myrberg (Chapter 6), using Gotland as an example, stresses that '[n]o man is an island'. Gotland has been seen as 'unique' with a strong

local identity, but it has also strong links with other areas. This emphasizes that identity is created *between* and *among* different people and groups, focusing on the different relations of actors as assigning identities.

Quoting the sociologist Gerd Baumann, Mats Roslund (p. 119) pinpoints the dilemma with identity, and in particular national or ethnic identities: 'Those who feel they have roots do not need to search for them, and many of those who "have" them want to get away from them.' People who have the legitimate authority by their superior status to produce external categories play a fundamental role in the practice of assigning ethnic identities (Jenkins 1998:53). Several agencies and groups today produce ethnic categories, including governments, and since the Roman Empire imperial and territorial policies have been rooted in historical and mythical claims to the past (see Sabatini, Chapter 9). Thus, among the agencies that actively produce and reproduce ethnic identities are political bodies but also archaeologists, which emphasizes that archaeologists are part of the exclusive group with the legitimate authority and status to ascribe external categories. This may lead to what Mads Roslund (Chapter 8) calls the 'good intentions' evil consequences' (p. 128). Through an analysis of Islamic case studies, he replaces the national agenda embedded in heritage claims with social diversity based on notions of common history. Peter Skoglund (Chapter 10) addresses the problem with scale and space in archaeology, and whether this is an empiricist problem or an ethical dilemma, because 'the size of investigation area structures what kind of knowledge we gain from the past' (p. 155).

From an archaeological perspective one may address this from two angles. First, which identities existed in the past, which did not, and which exist only today? National identities *per se* are recent constructions since nation-states came into being only after the French Revolution. Ethnicity may or may not have existed in the past, and, if, yes, it did, how does it relate to the present? This relates to the second approach, following Jenkins, 'identity can *only* be understood as process, as "being" or "becoming". One's identity – one's identities, indeed, for who we are is always singular *and* plural – is never a final or settled matter' (Jenkins 2004:5). With regard to ethnicity, a 'Swedish' or a 'Norwegian' a thousand years ago is not the same as today, and the 'good intentions'

evil consequences' of not stressing this fact is that the past may become exclusive rather than inclusive because then some are not Swedish, Norwegian, Saami, etc. Herein lies one dilemma; another is the exclusiveness of one identity which has priority and superiority over others.

A major problem with most studies of identities in the past, and this book is no exception, is that the analyses focus mainly on one identity whereas identities are always relational and contextual, and we have always several identities (see Werbart, Chapter 17); most readers of this review will probably have one shared identity – we are archaeologists – but, in order to attend conferences worldwide, one needs a passport and a national identity. Different ages, classes, gender and so on are also evident at the very same conferences. Being an archaeologist, Catrin Sandberg (Chapter 3) has another, but refreshing approach to archaeology and identity, namely how archaeologists are perceived in popular culture and the association with characters such as Indiana Jones and Lara Croft. This emphasizes a theoretical perspective, namely that identity is not only a case of internal categories, but is also imposed externally, and, although everyone in this case knows that the Indiana Jones identity is not true, both archaeologist and popular culture may benefit from this image. Thus, archaeology and identity work at many levels where ethnicity is one identity, but in many cases not the most important or interesting one.

One intriguing aspect of this book, whether it is intentional or not from the editors' structuring of the chapters (apart from Werbart's Chapter 17 which could preferably have been in the part 'Archaeology and identity in the past and the present'), is that, in the last part of this book on 'Archaeology and identity in the past', ethnicity is not the topic. This may be for several reasons. First, ethnicity as an identity has more to do with the present than the past; second, the material record shows a wide range of cultural patterns and possible identities; and, third, the more promising theoretical approaches possible to apply and to develop in archaeology go behind and beyond ethnicity.

Elisabeth Arnwill-Nordbladh (Chapter 11) emphasizes archaeologies of memories, embodied memory and memory-keeping practices in relation to material culture. Gunnel Ekroth (Chapter 12) analyses the distribution of meat among people and gods in ancient Greek sacrificial rituals defining identities between people and between people

and gods. Cecilia Gustavsen (Chapter 13) argues that in the Late Mesolithic period gift exchange systems had a crucial role in gender dynamics in the transition to sedentism. Ingrid Gustin (Chapter 14) transcends ethnic groups by analysing intra-group interaction creating identities from local to supra-regional levels. Mimmi Tegnér (Chapter 15) directs attention to the reuse of ancient monuments and how people in the past identified themselves with – and used – their past. From other material, Jeanette Varberg (Chapter 16) uses sacrificial and grave contexts to identify religious identities, such as the cult leader, as well as regional and supra-regional identities created by marriage alliances. Common to several of these contributions is the emphasis on religion and gender, often in a combination.

To conclude, *Archaeology and Identity* is an informative book on the various approaches to studies of identity in particular Scandinavian archaeology, and, since the majority of the articles are written in Scandinavian languages, the implications of this book will mainly be restricted to this (supra)-region. A theorizing introduction or conclusion by the editors is missing since the various perspectives include different and at times contradictory approaches – as is the case with identities. Despite and because of this, studies of identities will be a core area within archaeology because of the discipline's humanistic foundation, and I think all contributors agree that, even if one does not agree on certain interpretations of, for instance, ethnicity and the way different ethnic groups in the present use archaeology, it is of the utmost importance for archaeologist to partake in and set parts of the premises for these debates. Archaeology is not restricted to archaeologists and, without the active debate of these issues not only academically but also in the public, all parties lose and the potential misuse of the past increases.

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**Mats Burström: *Samtidsarkeologi. Introduktion till ett forskningsfält. Studentlitteratur, Lund, 2007. 118 pp. ISBN 978-91-44-00430-3***

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Today we see an increased interest in the archaeology of the recent past.<sup>1</sup> This has been an established part of archaeology in the US and UK for decades; however, in Scandinavia this is something fairly new and sometimes considered unfamiliar and odd. Is this really archaeology? What are they up to, those people who seem to collect bottle caps and call themselves archaeologists? Mats Burström's book is very welcome as it is the first Swedish-language introduction to the subject. The book therefore fills an important gap in the literature about Swedish archaeology and is a good presentation of archaeology of the recent past. In just over 100 pages the reader is presented with a number of examples of archaeological sites of the recent past and convincing arguments about how the archaeological method can be used to study the subject.

The book is divided into four chapters. In the first chapter the author presents archaeology of the recent past as a field of research. Here Burström presents the main concepts of SA (*samtidsarkeologi*), with a chronological starting point at AD 1850, and makes an argument for why we need an archaeological approach for a time period this recent. This

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