Society and culture, two faces of the same ethnic coin?

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This article is a result of a series of discussions under the heading of ethnic identity and society. Since we have all quite different subjects in our theses, we realized that we had very different problems and possibilities while using and discussing ethnic identity, society, culture and nationality.

Our discussions have widened our understanding of the difficulties in using these terms as a generally and understandable vocabulary or method of research. To study ethnicity in a Palaeolithic context is simply much more difficult – if not impossible – than for example during the Scandinavian Viking Age. We do not propose any obvious ways to deal with this, but still find some consensus that if ethnicity is to be studied, it should be done as an issue of its own, without being mixed or constituted as a part of any concepts of culture, archaeological or otherwise.

KEY-WORDS: society, culture, ethnic, group identification

INTRODUCTION

During the autumn of 1992 and the spring of 1993 five of the Ph.D. students at the Institute of Archaeology, University of Lund, after a series of discussions at seminars and at home, formed a “miniseminar” under the heading of ethnic identity and society. Since we all have quite different subjects in our theses, we soon realized that we had very different problems and possibilities while using and discussing ethnic identity, society, culture and also nationality. The articles here presented are some of the contributions to these discussions during the last two years. Most of the time Bożena Werbart has been present at these occasions as our occasional mentor and we are very grateful that she has given her time to discuss these items with us – as well as inviting us to her home where we have enjoyed her good cooking! The result has been five articles discussing the concept of culture, society and ethnicity from so different angles as early man during the Palaeolithic
era to clothing during the Late Iron Age. It is evident that we perceive our possibilities to discuss these items quite differently. Schematically one could state that the prospect of such discussions increases as one comes closer to our own period of time – however it is also quite clear that the difficulties also increases while we bring in more value-laden concepts to the analysis of a specific time period.

THE OUTSIDERS – CULTURAL TRAITS OF EARLY MAN.
A SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE
Bo Knarrström

Looking at social anthropology in a long time perspective, it is evident that progress has been made in the way that people are perceived in material from primitive societies. Instead of focusing on how simple the tools are or how poor the living quarters might appear, the modern social anthropologist ventures into the often very intricate socio-cultural dimensions of life. In the last century, studies have to a large extent been focused on kinship structures (Keesing 1975), the world of myths (Lévi-Strauss 1969) and social theory in general (Badcock 1975). The complexity of relationships, social organization and symbols have, rather than a crude set of tools, become measurements for a society level on the imaginative evolutionary ladder.

Archaeology has in many levels benefited from the results of field studies in social anthropology. The models of social structures and subsistence patterns put forth especially by the middle range archaeologists, are to a large extent based on material from studies of contemporary societies.

To the archaeologist, the visible traits of a Stone Age people are mostly reduced to stone tools, pits and the occasional posthole. Analogies have, correctly, become an integrated and important part of the interpretative models of older prehistoric societies. These models are often necessary to show hypothetically that the complexity of a society is not equivalent to the technological level visible. However, from all this cultural enlightenment spreading across the archaeological research covering modern man Homo sapiens sapiens, the major part of earth’s prehistoric populations has been left behind.

As discussed above, anthropology has since long gone past the time where intelligence and complexity was comparable to technology. This is a result that has so far only slightly affected Palaeolithic archaeology.

A process of dehumanization has affected the people who apparently did not reach the magic specialized blade production level. Low cranial capacity, lacking finds of larynx bones, the lack of proper burials and few cognitive finds, has placed pre-sapiens sapiens humans on the bottom step of the ladder. Crude tools, without
the variations shown by modern man in Europe from 30,000 years BP and later, to some clearly indicates less complexity both in social structures as well as in mental capacities. This is also suggested by the fact that these people disappeared, apparently exterminated, or at least manoeuvred out, by a superior race.

Perhaps this is a somewhat simplified picture, but is it not recognizable to most archaeologists? In order to counter this picture, I would like to point out some factors that could moderate the idea of early man being less human or ill adapted, thus resulting in them being extinguished for one or the other reason.

Firstly, I would like to argue that we are lucky to find any traces of Lower and Middle Palaeolithic people at all. The enormous time span allows us to discover only "find localities", which in Europe generally means artefacts secondarily deposited in fluvial or disturbed layers of some sort. The lack of cognitive traits in the material is most certainly a product of the few locales with preserved organic material.

Cognitive perception is rarely connected to stone technology even if: "it would be strange if human (erectus) ingenuity employed in skillfully splitting somewhat intractable rock into useful tools was not employed in a hundred other ways that have left no archaeological trace" (Wymer 1982).

In Palaeolithic Europe, Homo erectus managed to occupy many different environments and exist in fluctuating climates (Gamble 1986). It has also been shown that Homo erectus were living in Europe under very harsh, glacial conditions (Roebroeks et al 1992). It is common knowledge in anthropological science that extreme environments require a maximum of cooperation within the group. The demands for interactive communication, social bonds and advanced technology for clothing and shelters are unquestionable. Complex structures such as huts dating back to Lower and Middle Palaeolithic times have been found in Africa as well as in Europe. The latter sites also include the use of fire inside the hut walls (Gowlett 1984). The standardized appearance of the hand axe, the same shape from Africa to Denmark, also implies that an inheritative cultural tradition with its roots going back almost two million years, was formed and kept by the Homo erectus lineage. Hunting is another factor which stresses cooperation and communication in a group. Signs of highly advanced hunting activities have been found both in Africa and Europe (Leakey 1981).

At school I was taught not to pay attention to the colour, shape and size of people. When studying social anthropology I was taught that no obvious connection existed between poor material culture and the complexity of social structure and mental capabilities. The pre-sapiens sapiens people can be shown to have all the capabilities of a modern man, with the exceptions of physical attributes such as a smaller brain, a flat nose and high eyebrows. They should therefore be treated with the same respect that any prehistoric or contemporary people receive today.
GROUP IDENTIFICATION AT THE TRANSITION FROM THE LATE PALAEOLITHIC TO THE EARLY MESOLITHIC
Magnus Andersson

Ethnicity is nowadays a concept of burning interest, but one very difficult to define. Ethnicity is connected with another subject of discussion: the concept of culture. People often think in categories. The world is ordered through the division into categories. The understanding of the world finds its expression through divisions of opposite pairs, for example we – them. It’s probably universal to divide mankind in this way. Ethnicity means culturally delimited groups of people. The members share the same culture and identify themselves as belonging to this group. To be a member of a group call for a combination of qualities which one gets through education within a delimited cultural community. The most common thing is that one is born into the community. There are also examples of people moving into a new community and there they are “acculturated” (Lange and Westin 1981).

Is it possible to see ethnicity in the archaeological material? The problem is that the archaeological remains are of a very strong material nature and therefore do not reveal the mental sphere of the prehistoric society in a direct way. Thus the archaeologists have remained at a material view of cultures, while anthropologists and ethnologists for a long time have been talking about other aspects of a culture than the material one. We cannot from the archaeological information immediately understand the ideas of the prehistoric world. However, we may think of this material data as something that reflects or indicates the non-material aspect of culture, i.e. ideology.

Within the research into the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic world the material view is predominant. The Late Palaeolithic and Early Mesolithic settlements of Northwest Europe are normally arranged in five separate cultures with characteristic artifacts of flint: Hamburg, Federmesser, Bromme, Ahrensburg and Maglemose Cultures (Fischer 1991). The classifications are mostly based on typologies of arrowheads. However, it is doubtful if changes in typologies should define cultures. We need more basis before we can began to study the ideas of the prehistoric world.

My intention is to try to study how strong the identification with the group (band) was during the Late Palaeolithic and Early Mesolithic world in northwest Europe. To do this I have to consider as many elements as possible. It is in the nature of things that a study of prehistoric change of cultures need a holistic approach. It is also clear, that we can’t reach this holistic approach without an elaborated documentation of all the parts. In a model on the socioeconomic changes we can describe the organization of society as constructed of an indefinite
number of elements whose mutual cooperation leads to changes. In a society of hunter-gatherers we have to discuss some specific elements in relation to the socioeconomic changes. For example ecology, strategies of maintenance, systems of settlement, demography, art, technology and the social organization (Gamble 1986). When we are looking at a society of hunter-gatherers in this way, and when specific elements are isolated for study, we have to make clear which elements are dependent on each other and which ones are independent. Do for example climatic fluctuations have an impact on the social organization?

Several things in the material from the Late Palaeolithic in Northwest Europe indicate that Late Palaeolithic society was an open society. During most of this period an arctic climate was prevailing with tundra vegetation. The traditional picture maintains that the society of the Late Palaeolithic was dependent on the big migrating herds of animals, above all herds of reindeers. This means probably that people needed to move over large areas to be at the right place at the right moment. The hunters were probably continuously aggregated for collective hunting of the big herds of reindeers. Because of this there was a need for cooperation between different societies. It has sometimes been maintained that there did not exist any clearly defined territories in the Late Palaeolithic. The population might have been organized in a band of such a diffuse nature that individuals or whole families had the possibility to move over vast distances, and sometimes even from one different band society to another. This kind of situation is known from recent hunter-gatherers, for example arctic Eskimos and subarctic Indians.

The transition into Early Mesolithic and Preboreal time gradually gave rise to another condition. A rapid change in vegetation can be identified at the transition between Younger Dryas and Preboreal. The replacement of the tundra by the forest vegetation changed the available biomass. The large herds of reindeer, bison and horse disappeared. This produced a change in the hunting strategy to suit the emergence of a new environment. During this time solitary or smaller herd animals such as elk, aurochs and red deer were prominent among food animals. Collective hunting of large herd animals were replaced by smaller hunting groups concentrating on forest animals. Gathering of vegetables became more important. Thus the need for cooperation between different societies decreased. These facts lead to smaller territories, and the sense of affinity for the local band became stronger. The transition to the Mesolithic would thus be characterized by shorter aggregation phases, having only social purposes. The population units would be smaller.

The feeling concerning "we – them" was probably stronger among the population in the Mesolithic than among the Late Palaeolithic. The conclusion is that it would have been easier for the Late Palaeolithic man to move from one band society to another, and to be "acculturated".
THE SEARCH FOR A SOCIETY AND A CULTURE: AN IMPOSSIBLE TASK CONCERNING THE MESOLITHIC PERIOD?
Ingrid Bergenstråhle

The interpretation and definition of society is of great importance. I define society as: the sum of all the individuals taking part and their beliefs of the context in which they take part as well as inherited beliefs from previous generations. It is also the sum of all their contacts with other individuals living in other societies. A society is constantly formed and conformed due to the actions and decisions taken by the individuals as well as actions and decisions the group chooses to take, however this consists of individuals.

A society does not exist autonomously in time and space, instead it operates in a larger space often termed culture by us archaeologists. Neolithic ceramic producing societies often obtained their name due to the form or ornament of the ware. Examples are the TRB Culture, the Combed Ware Culture, and the Pitted Ware Culture in Sweden. The Mesolithic societies have instead been named after a type locality. The Maglemose, the Kongemose and the Ertebølle Culture are all well-known examples from southern Scandinavia. Further north in eastern middle Sweden are the Hensbacka Culture, the Sandarna Culture and the Lihult Culture used as terms for existent societies.

These cultural terms oddly enough not only defines the typology but also the chronological dating. The implications of this are far reaching. The use of a cultural concept leads to the view of homogenous societies inhabiting regions with a mutual cultural and hence ethnic background. The use of terms such as the Mesolithic and Neolithic cultural groups ought to be avoided, instead for the chronological placement I suggest the following terminology to be used consequently; the Early, Middle and Late Mesolithic and the Early, Middle and Late Neolithic. If it is desired to denote the regional character of the find material, one ought to discuss find material of for example the Ertebølle type instead of belonging to the Ertebølle cultural group.

The material remains that we are studying had a context which we are trying to find. This context is the society, in which the material had a practical and symbolic function.

Through ethnoarchaeological studies, Ian Hodder drew two conclusions; the first concerns the active part played by symbols in social and economic relations between ethnic, age, sex, status, and family groupings (Hodder 1982:185). The second conclusion is that; each material trait is produced in relation to a set of symbolic schemes, and in relation to general principles of symbolic meaning which are built up into particular arrangements as part of social strategies (Hodder 1982:186). Tilley states: “material culture is a framing and communicative medium involved in social practice. It can be used for transforming, storing, or
preserving social information. It also forms a symbolic medium for social practice, acting dialectically in relation to that practice. It can be regarded as a kind of text, a silent form of writing and discourse: quite literally, a channel of reified and objectified expression” (Shanks and Tilley 1989:189). This comparison with a text invokes the question whether the symbolic meaning implanted in material remains in the prehistory was meant to be read as a text is.

The material culture could contain coded information, i.e. limited accessibility within or between social systems. In a recent article Stig Sörenssen arrives at the conclusion that gender is now recognized as a necessary part of theory of social relations, and the negotiation of gender relations is seen as one of the dynamics reproducing and maintaining social systems (Stig Sörenssen 1992:33). They are deeply ingrained in the particular forms societies take and provide an essential structure of meaning. As a social construct it has to be continuously confirmed and constructed by society (Conkey and Spector 1984:1; Moore 1986, 1988) and for individuals it has to be obtained and maintained (Stig Sörenssen 1992:33).

Considering hunter-gatherers settlement systems and interassemblage variability, Binford discusses determinants for differential degrees of residential versus logistical mobility. These variabilities are not viewed as opposing principles but as organizational alternatives which may be employed in varying mixes in different settings, and provides the basis for the extensive variability which may yield very confusing archeological patterning (Binford 1983:355). The use of logistical strategies creates special-purpose sites, such as field camps, stations, and caches. Evaluating these aspects in a long-term land-use strategies of hunter-gatherers in different environmental contexts, he expects an increase in the redundancy of the geographic placement of special-purpose sites and a greater buildup of archaeological debris in restricted sections of the habitat as a function of increasing logistical dependence (Binford 1983:356). The discussion mainly deals with short-term strategies extending over a yearly cycle and environmental factors condition the variability in mobility and land-use strategies – Binford admits that he has not seriously considered the possibility that hunters and gatherers would ever remain sedentary as a security-seeking strategy unless forced to do so (Binford 1983:356).

The study of prehistoric cultures is coloured by the view we have of the cultural paradigm, Binford contrasts the cultural paradigm of the new and the old world as it emanated through the debate with Bordes. In the New World, culture was seen to represent a cohesion of demonstrated cultural traits, considered to exist at a level of organization transcending the level represented by the social, ethnic, racial, or linguistic identity of the participants (Binford 1983:398) and the Old World culture was represented as a unit of cohesion by the repetitive pattern of similar relative frequencies occurring among assemblages from different places (Binford 1983:401). The paradigm of the Old World has often associated culture
and cultural traits with ethnicity, but it could be a dangerous and misleading assumption since anthropological fieldwork has shown that different ethnic groups display similar cultural traits (Binford 1983; Hodder 1990).

Data derived from studies such as Binford’s field work with the Nunamiut, are most important since it altered our view of how to interpret the Middle Palaeolithic. Instead of viewing different assemblages as due to different cultures, different purposes at a site within a society could be confirmed. This study has had effects on the interpretation of the Mesolithic settlements as well, today we describe settlements as base camps, seasonal camps and special purpose sites.

In order to avoid misunderstandings implicated by our terminology we ought to rethink some of our archaeological vocabulary. What meaning do the words have, how much is said straight out and how much is hidden? What concepts do we build in automatically with words such as culture and ethnicity?

To me it implies a homogeneous society, but did humans during prehistoric times even think in those terms themselves? Is it possible for me today to discuss ethnicity amongst the Mesolithic society? The find material from southern Scandinavia show similar traits, but also differences. But even so, do the tools we use today really tell from where I come? Is a boy with African parents who lives in Sweden, who talks Swedish fluently and wears Swedish clothing, an ethnic Swede? No one but himself can be the judge of that, and the same goes for all of the former Swedish citizens who emigrated to America during the last century; did they ever stop being Swedish or did they become American? To which cultural group do they belong perhaps even to both! Again none but themselves can decide. The point I am making is that we ought to be very careful and I think that there is very little chance to discuss ethnicity and culture as prehistoric humans perceived it.

IT IS GRIM UP NORTH: ROMANS AND BARBARIANS
Mikael Dahlgren

When discussing the Roman world and its frontier regions, the weaknesses of the concepts of culture and archaeological culture is very often fully exposed. On the other hand, it also illustrates how difficult it is find a suitable level which differs a general usage of the concept from a terminology which for example takes regional variations and chronological or typological aspects in consideration.

Provincial Roman archaeology usually describes various cultural groups, but almost in every case, Rome and the Roman culture are used as a base of chronological and typological comparison. It is utilized through looking at something as Roman, provincial Roman or non-Roman. The issues here are: what is Roman “culture” and what is not? What is the non-Roman supposed to be labelled as? Are
we talking about political, social or material groupings or groupings based on pure traditions – perhaps even “archaeological cultures” as a independent method? The general usage (but not necessarily the term) is inevitable and Rome as a source of cultural influence must at all times be taken into account if one is working with contexts which are exposed to such an influence. The need to divide a find material which is clearly Roman and another material which on the contrary lacks some or all of those characteristics, must be considered. This might be performed by giving the non-Roman material for example labels as Celtic, Germanic or simply Barbarian. The problem arises when the non-Roman finds are to be characterized and typologized – in other words given a cultural label – in a environment which was put under Roman cultural pressure, even in a minor way. The material might show distinctive or typical characteristics, but the question remains: is it a testimony about a clearly non-Roman society or does it still form a part of a society which was under Roman influence but where the material culture might express something else?

The concept of culture includes visible as well as more or less invisible elements, or put it like this: the social grouping consists of both material and mental elements. The visible/material elements constitutes the platform for the archaeological analysis through the finds. Here the main task is to decide, date, demarcate and compare aspects of the material remains. The material is then used when trying to find various answers about the particular prehistoric society and how it was organized. In order to define, delimit and compare it with other find groupings, it might well be necessary and suitable to make use of the concept of culture and this approach will not become awkward until the invisible/mental elements are to be considered. Attempting to reconstruct for example social or political conditions are already highly uncertain by using the material finds and it gets even more uncertain when dealing for example with ethnic or religious issues. This means that the concept of archaeological culture perhaps should be used as a mere material analysis of the finds and it is consequently argued that the concept might be a useful temporary method in order to divide, compare and define groups of finds – but it must be limited to that only. In discussing terminology, but with some implications to the whole question, the designation “archaeological culture” ought be regarded as somewhat obsolete and misleading. A better one is not suggested here, but designations like group, type or complex might perhaps fit better in specific contexts. On the other hand, the concept of culture as a whole, is for the most part of lesser importance to us and must not lead into a belief that a prehistoric society, as seen today through its material and symbolic remains, at the same time also show us the remains of a homogeneous organization with mutual mental values.

In provincial Roman studies, the term archaeological culture is not very often applied. Probably because of the higher level of knowledge (compared to most earlier periods) regarding political, social and economic conditions, the analyses of
societies of the period take many of the invisible elements into consideration. The known diversity of political, social and ethnic conditions in the Roman world suggest an array of possible explanations to be tested on the archaeological material. To use a general concept of archaeological culture is here very clearly inappropriate. Once again, what is really Roman and what is not? The obvious Roman might very well for example be Germanic or the other way round. The understanding of the economic and social-historical development of a specific isolated society can not be comprehended and a meaning interpretation of archaeological sources can not be made if the single social-historical or ethnic units are not defined. Without regard to external, ideological inputs, the social development will be inexplicable (Martens 1994: 45–6). As can be seen, ethnicity is closely connected with the concept of culture; both deal with discussions about categories and demarcations. But, even if one accepts studies in ethnicity as a useful method, the two basic ways of treating it as a historical category must be observed: by objective or subjective definitions (Harrison 1991: 22–3). The concept of ethnicity is a relative and also a flexible one, like most of the other aspects that constitute the concept of culture. Decoding the various mental aspects can be regarded as a productive method – or not – by the individual archaeologist, but it must be adopted as a defined method of its own and without any generalizing attempts to subdivide it as part of an “archaeological culture”. This could for example include an analysis of how Roman real politics and economy in the frontier areas of the empire worked and how this affected local organizations. To discuss ethnicity as prehistoric individuals actually perceived it is exceedingly difficult and sometimes impossible, but through looking at Rome as a basic source of ideas and conceptions, this might on the other hand give us some hints about how local and regional cultural systems were constructed. As a conclusion, if we want a method which gives us possibility to define and divide the material and ideological remains of a prehistoric society without applying deceptive labels to it, the concept of archaeological culture ought to be avoided. The term might be hard to get rid of, but this will hopefully only last until better defined and accepted ways of explaining our methods of research are gaining ground. However, for the majority of studies made today, they already exist.

ARCHAEOLOGY, CULTURE AND CLOTHING
Eva Andersson

Clothing has always been of basic of importance as protection against cold weather, humidity, heat etc. However, dress has not only a protective function. As we know from ethnological material, it can also reflect social, economical, ethnical,
religious and other conditions. The northern discussion of prehistoric dress tradition is marked by an idea of a common Scandinavian folk costume. In the 19th century the traditional folk costume was considered to be very old, at the same time evidence of an advanced culture. On this point the discussion today has not changed.

There is only a small number of complete examples of prehistoric dress preserved, mainly dating from the Bronze Age and older Iron Age. They are all from Denmark, but have come to be regarded as typical for dress tradition in the whole of Scandinavia. There is, however no reason to postulate that all Scandinavians were dressed according to a general fashion in prehistoric times. On the contrary, as sufficiently proven by well known examples in the history of costume, one has to take into account regional differences. The main problem is to find a way of identifying social and cultural differences in dress on the basis of archaeological material.

When textile experts reconstruct ancient costume this is usually based on evidence from dress fittings, textile fragments and contemporary representations. Comparisons can also be made with similar material from other parts of the world. This is a difficult process which requires great expertise. On the whole, textile research has been strongly focused on analysis of small textile fragments, brooches and dress reconstructions, but can investigations of dress also answer more comprehensive questions about social culture and ethnic identity?

One example is the Viking female dress. Agnes Geijer published in 1938 in *Birka III*, a detailed analysis of around 220 textile fragments from the Birka excavations. These were 5% of the the total 4800 textile fragments which had been found in the excavation and of 1100 graves there were only about 130 of the female inhumation burials which contained textile fragments (Hägg 1983:204). Geijer also made a reconstruction of the Birka female dress, based above all on textile fragments and oval brooches, but stressed that the reconstruction was a proposal only for the Birka textiles.

In 1947 Charlotte Blindheim published “Dress and ornaments” in *Viking XI*. She established that the reconstruction Agnes Geijer had made had parallels in Norway, Sweden and Denmark “...that the plainer dress with shoulderstraps and oval brooches which one can feel tempted to call the traditional folk dress” (Blindheim 1947:113). Burials without oval brooches were probably either poor or very rich (Blindheim 1947:111). Since then several scholars have, when they discussed dress and tradition, used Geijer’s reconstruction as the common Viking dress in Scandinavia (Munksgaard 1974, Jahnkuhn 1976).

The textiles were re-examined by Inga Hägg in 1974 and 1980. She too stressed that the reconstruction of the Birka dress “…cannot uncritically be taken as representative for a common Viking Age dress tradition” (Hägg 1974:4). But the dress has been accepted as the universal female dress in Viking Age Scandinavia in
spite of the fact that both Geijer and Hågg clearly stated that their reconstruction is only relevant for Birka.

But even if this dress was representative for Birka and Scandinavia does it also prove that all women wearing this costume had the same cultural background?

In 1980 Ann-Sofie Gräslund published *Birka IV, The burial customs*. "As the graves almost invariably contain oval brooches, the woman can be identified as Scandinavian (or possible women who had adopted Scandinavian dress)" (Gräslund 1980: 80) But at the same time Inga Hågg made a new analysis of the unpublished textile fragments from Birka. These showed a greater variation in the fabrics and influences from the southeast than earlier had been discussed (Hågg 1983: 312) Several of the Birka dresses have so many foreign details that one can not discuss the culture or ethnic affinities of the wearers (Hågg 1983: 210)

There are also female graves without oval brooches in Birka. What kind of dress were these women wearing? The lack of artefacts, such as brooches, in the graves is of course connected to problems. In Birka many of the graves were cremation burials (366 of total 1100 investigated burials – Hågg 1983: 204) where the oval brooches could have been difficult to identify. The graves may also reflect different traditions in terms of burial dress or different social positions.

Also in other Scandinavian Viking Age cemeteries there are graves (cremation and inhumation) without oval brooches. For example, in two of the largest Viking Age grave fields in west Scania there is no evidence of oval brooches. On the other hand there are some archaeological finds of oval brooches in adjacent settlements. Did these people belong to another ethnic group or did they just have another burial custom?

Today one knows that there were different dress traditions in the Viking Age, something that is evident from for example Hågg’s investigation of the textiles from Haithabu (Hågg 1985 and 1991). But in spite of this knowledge the general view of the female dress is still one-sided. Acknowledging the complexity in dress tradition, we must also include burials without oval brooches and other dress fittings in the discussion. If we want to discuss dress tradition and cultural identity we must ask several other questions and include a wider range of burials in our analyses. It is only then that we can discuss differences within the archaeological material, and what these might mean.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Our discussions have widened our understanding of the difficulties in using terms like culture, society and ethnicity as a generally accepted and understandable vocabulary or method of research. They have also revealed that our possibilities to discuss these items are quite different, mainly because of the conditions and
sources that our various fields of research present to us. To study ethnicity in a Palaeolithic context is simply much more difficult – if not impossible – than for example during the Scandinavian Viking Age. We do not propose any obvious ways to deal with this, but still find some consensus in that if ethnicity is to be studied, it should be done as a issue of its own, without being mixed up with or constituted as a part of any concepts of culture, archaeological or otherwise.

A coin has an obverse and a reverse; we think that the ethnic coin in this discussion is adorned by the face of society on one side and that of culture on the other. The denomination of the coin is not stated and it should better stay that way. By giving it a denomination like “archaeological culture”, its worth will be limited to one “market” only or even impossible to exchange. Let its worth be floating and adapted to whatever the individual archaeologist would like to give it, at any given moment of time, provided that it is made of a precious metal.

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