

Who's Who?

The Invisible Cultural Landscape or Some Aspects of Source Criticism

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This paper deals with the importance of "the invisible cultural landscape", with examples from southwestern Sweden. The visible part, mainly ideological remains such as graves, tends to dominate the debate concerning efforts for protection. The functional remains, mainly settlements, have been located by surveying and test excavations. We need both categories for a better understanding of the past.

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Archaeological Heritage Management involves the protection of and the spreading of information on societies, their technology and customs, which no longer exist. The remains of these are mainly illustrated by different kinds of visible monuments but also include surface finds from settlement sites, or other kinds of human influence on the landscape evidenced and understandable through pollen diagrams, osteological analyses, etc. Thus, the traces of prehistoric man in the modern landscape reflect ideas as well as physical remains.

The main ambition with our work is preservation and documentation. The next step ought to be that of explanation: Why didn't the societies survive? What do the remains mean?

I am well aware of the difficulties in trying to work in this way. Above all, many areas in the world are today lacking both human and financial resources for even basic documentation, in spite of the fact that their monuments are threatened in different ways. Even the countries with established Archaeological Heritage Management meet with problems when trying to explain or make visible the results for non-archaeologists.

BACKGROUND

I will present some aspects of Archaeological Heritage Management from southwestern

Sweden in the area of Gothenburg, the largest town on the west coast. The Swedish landscape, compared with many other parts of Europe, is not greatly exploited and this may be a basis for European tourism in the future.

The main discussion connected to preservation and documentation in the area today concerns the effects caused by new highways and railroads along the coast and the construction of private homes and tourist services. Looking towards the future, the old cultural landscape and archaeological remains all over southern Sweden will be a common problem: the planned restriction in agriculture due to an over-production and imports and the reforestation of the open landscape over wide areas.

SOME ASPECTS OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE MANAGEMENT IN SWEDEN

In this paper there are four points of special interest in Archaeological Heritage Management in Sweden:

- 1) The Ancient Monument Law
- 2) The Ancient Monument Register
- 3) The Central and Regional Preservation Programs
- 4) The Practical Care of Ancient Monuments

1. The Ancient Monument Law established three centuries ago, was revised as late as

1989. It could be said that the law generated from an era of political power with the purpose of accentuating the country's glorious past through its ancient monuments. It could also be said that the protection of Sweden's heritage was, in the beginning, an activity carried out by the wealthy and educated in their spare time. Although now as well as earlier, the Law must be considered an aid in the protection of the physical remains from our earliest history left in the landscape with both exploitations, reforestation and air pollution as urgent problems.

The Law also includes regulations for excavations. In 1989 a paragraph was included concerning test excavations which means that every large scale exploitation must include archaeological work (surveying, test excavations) in order to, if possible, avoid costly excavations and the destruction of presently unknown archaeological remains. From now on there ought to be better protection than previously for the documentation of remains now unknown or not visible as, for example, settlement remains.

2. The Ancient Monument Register is the result of a 60-year-old Parliamentary decision in connection with the mapping of Sweden and the so-called Economic Maps. The Central Board of National Antiquities initiated archaeological surveys concentrating on visible monuments and observations of surface evidence of ancient monuments as stray finds in fields, on seashores, etc., in connection with the land survey work for this map.

3. The Preservation Programs are both of nationwide and regional significance and recommendations are made for the future protection of characteristic parts of the natural and cultural landscape of Sweden. The ancient monuments have thus been incorporated into an extensive collection of traces of man's influence on the landscape. These include settlements and different kinds of land use from many different periods in time and individual visible monuments or rock carvings are often used as educational examples of

man's past activities, although the ultimate ambition is to obtain an overall general picture of these remains.

4. The same may be said about the Practical Care of Ancient Monuments for the general public, that is, clearing them from vegetation, erecting informative signposts on sites, etc.

Thus the Law, the Register and the Preservation Programs including Practical Care of Ancient Monuments all serve to regulate the protection of Sweden's archaeological remains. Of course there are also risks involved in over planning and practical problems, and in the lack of time for reflection on archaeological problems. The question is then, whose prehistory is protected or told through the Archaeological Heritage Management?

FUNCTIONAL AND IDEOLOGICAL REMAINS

From a more theoretical point of view, ancient monuments can be divided into two main groups of *functional* and *ideological* remains (Selling 1979). To the former group belong settlement sites, field systems, trapping pits and places of production, i.e. activities connected to daily life, economy and survival. Examples of the monuments in the latter group are graves and sacred places, i.e. activities connected to religion and ceremonies.

Using this terminology, it is easy to point out the fact that ideological remains are dominating objects of our efforts of protection within the programs and practical care in southern Sweden, the ideas of an agricultural society between 3000 BC and 1000 AD.

The main body of information about the functional remains are instead preserved in documents from surveying activities or rescue excavation for two reasons. First, with the exploitation of an area at hand, many settlement remains are first discovered upon concentrated surveying in the field and test excavations. Secondly, the excavations often reveal a more complicated stratigraphy than expected with an older settlement underlying

younger graves, traces of field systems underlying houses on a settlement site, etc.

Because of the long time span involved, most of the archaeological messages have often been transformed by the effects of nature, man, or a combination of both (through cultivation, ideology, land elevation or vegetation), on the archaeological remains.

THE NEED FOR SOURCE CRITICISM – SOME EXAMPLES

The following examples are taken from investigations carried out between 1973 and 1988, during the time when preliminary investigations were still a practice, but not a law. This distinction plays no important role for the results here. Different surveying methods will not be discussed here, just starting points and results from investigations caused by land exploitation.

The first two examples are linked to the distribution of prehistoric graves per Eco-

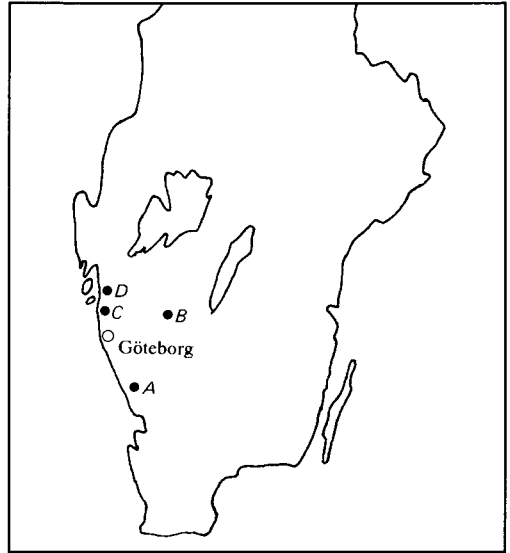


Fig. 1. Map of southern Sweden. A = Sannagård. B = Timmele. C = Balltorp. D = Dalarna.

nom ic Map sheet in southern Sweden, which is an important basis for research in settlement archaeology (Hyenstrand 1979).

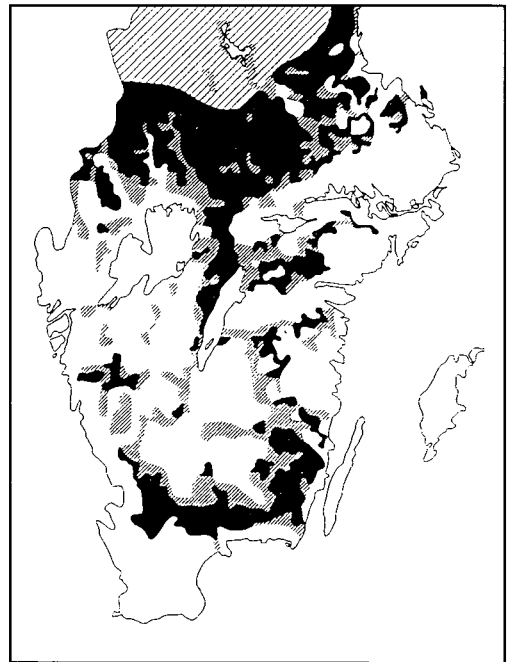
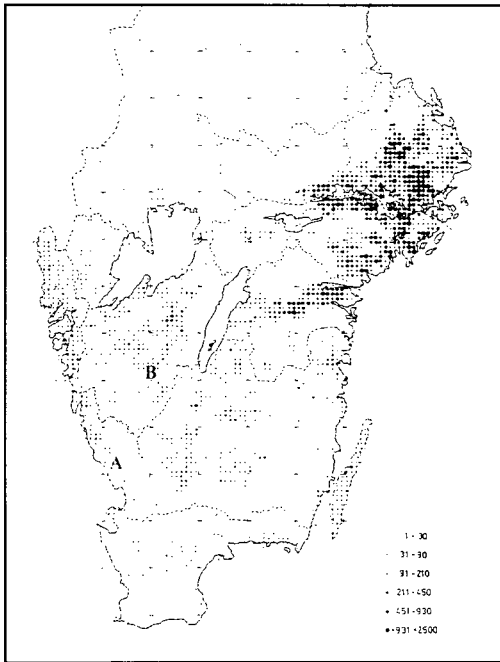
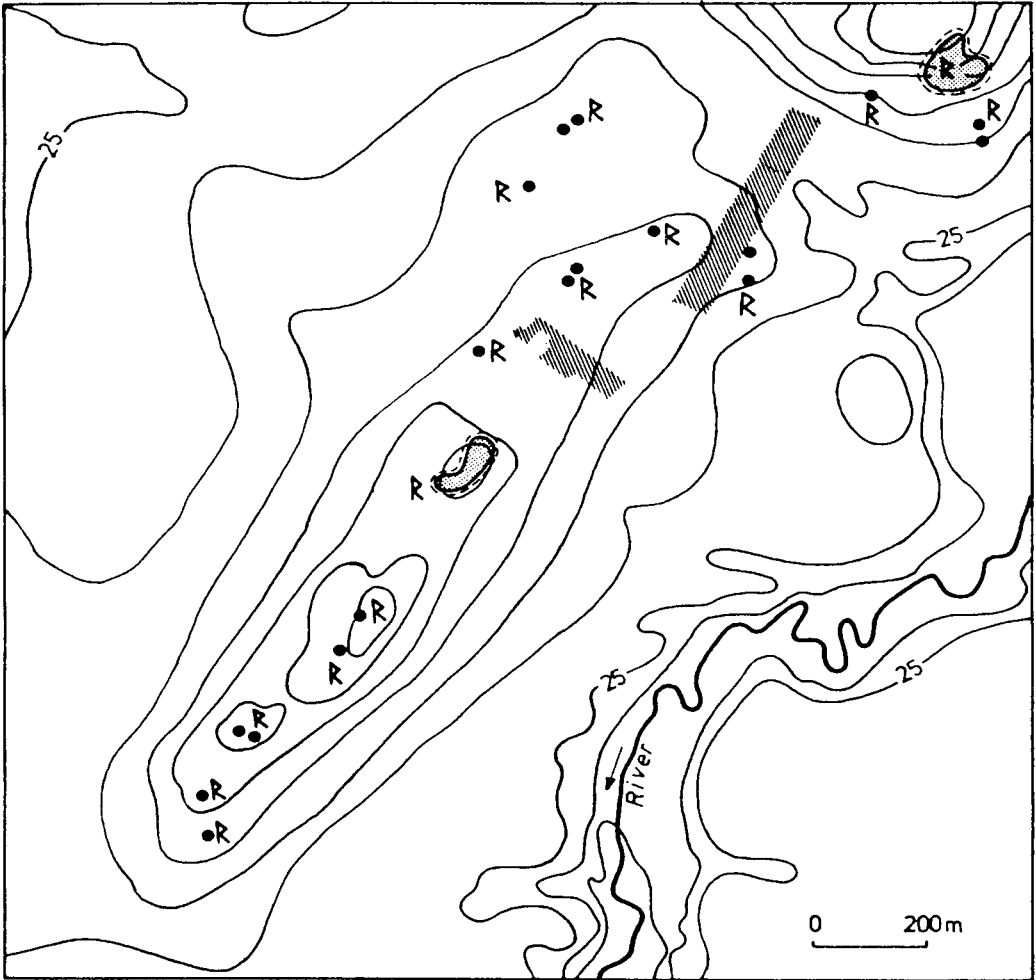


Fig. 2. Distribution of prehistoric graves per Economic Map sheet (left) and areas without prehistoric graves (right). (From Hyenstrand 1979). A = Sannagård. B = Timmele (left).

Example A: Sannagård - the affects of modern cultivation



- R● Barrows, stone-settings from the Bronze Age and Early Iron Age**
- R● Cemeteries from the Iron Age**
- ▨ Unregistered settlement remains and Late Iron Age graves**

Fig. 3. Example A: Sannagård – the affects of modern cultivation.



Fig. 4. Settlement remains in a cultivated area, discovered by surveying and test excavations.

1. In connection with special surveying prior to exploitation, additional small cemeteries and barrows with approx. 40 graves were registered on a low mountain ridge, close to a river and surrounded by cultivated land. The river is a tributary of the river Ätran, one of the five large rivers running from the inner parts of southern Sweden to the sea, and one of the mainstreams, so to say, for both ideas and people.

2. Test excavations prior to exploitation for roads and pipelines for gas revealed a large settlement on the northern part of the hill. By removal of the topsoil in wide strips, post-holes, hearths, and cooking pits, etc. were uncovered, all belonging to the settlement remains from 1200 BC to 600 AD, i.e. the Bronze Age and Early Iron Age.

3. The excavations continued one year later, this time in an area near to a couple of Bronze Age barrows and two upright stones. Additional settlement remains were discovered and more stress was placed on stratigraphical ob-

servations. The two upright stones were the only visible remains of a cemetery containing at least 150 graves from the Late Iron Age, also overlying a Battle Axe grave from the Middle Neolithic.

Summary: The visible remains of this large settlement area were originally only a few large monuments which had not been removed by cultivation. Preliminary investigations and test excavations in the cultivated land complicated the picture of prehistoric land use. The question is, then, what does the distribution of visible prehistoric graves tell us about prehistoric man?

Example B: Timmele – the affects of ideology

1. As in the above example of the Sannagård monuments, three stone settings were originally registered on a mountain ridge, close to the big river Ätran. The graves were situated about 50 meters apart.

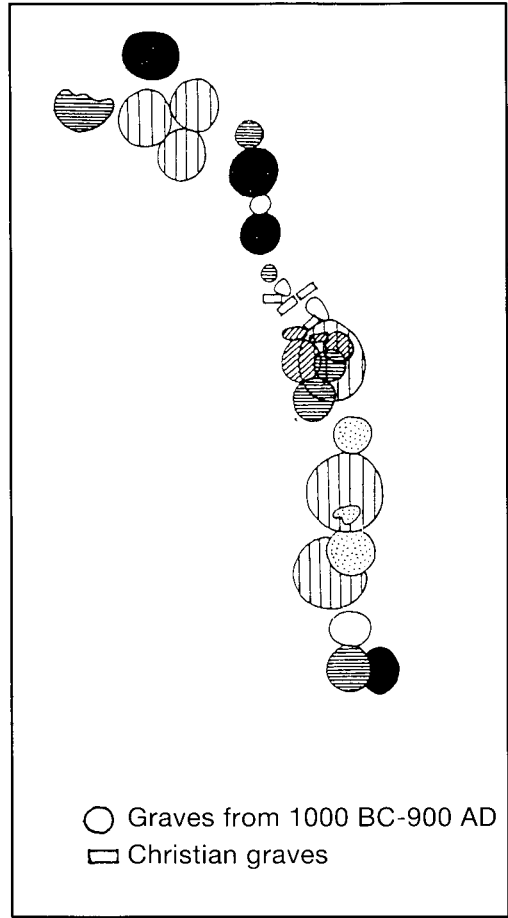
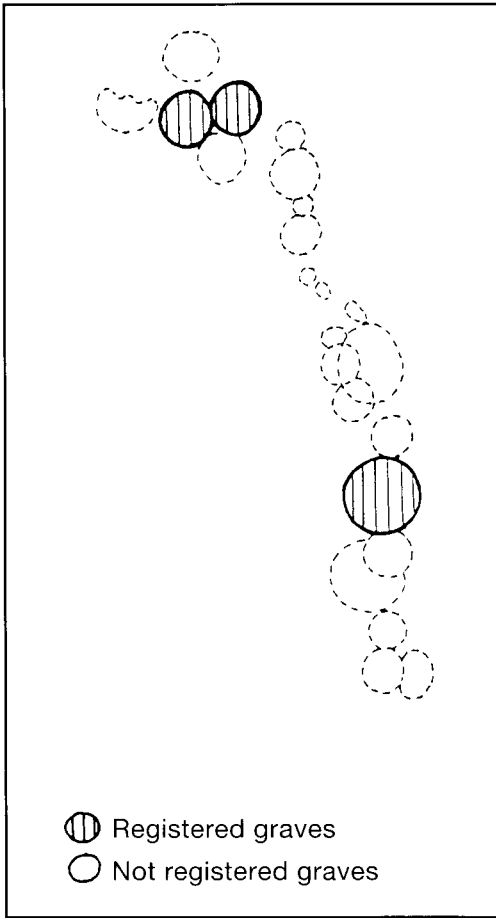


Fig. 5. Example B: Timmele – the affects of ideology.

2. After the removal of vegetation from the area, the picture was modified. The three originally visible stone settings were only a small part of a cemetery consisting of 32 graves.

3. The cemetery had been used for a period of 3000 years or six different phases, as at Sannagård, from the Middle Neolithic to the Late Iron Age. The three registered graves dated to phase five. The last phase six was represented by a few graves of Christian character, with square pits evident after the wooden coffins for the bodies. Thus, early Christian graves were placed in a heathen cemetery without respect for the older graves.

Summary: The Timmele cemetery is important in the discussion on religious changes in general and the process of Christianization in southwestern Sweden in particular, and also on the problem of to what extent "mental" traces leave physical remains in the landscape.

We turn once again to the map showing the distribution of prehistoric graves in southern Sweden. Many of the graves registered in southeastern Sweden date from the Late Iron Age "heathen" cemeteries. There are fewer Late Iron Age graves in southwestern Sweden, an area where many of the earliest Christian churches were built. It may be asked



Fig. 6. The Timmele cemetery: early Christian graves were buried in a heathen cemetery.

whether or not there are fewer visible graves here because of an earlier Christianization prescribing a grave custom without visible monuments and personal grave goods? Or, is the question a simpler one, that the graves have been damaged by secondary affects as seen in example A? Or, does the distribution of graves reflect the real population size during the Late Iron Age in Sweden?

Example C: Balltorp – the affects of land elevation

1. Balltorp is situated in a wide valley, once a bay of the sea. A few visible graves are registered located along a mountain ridge in the south, mostly Stone Age cists and Iron Age graves. In the cultivated land in the valley floor, stray finds of struck flint from prehistoric settlements has been found, usually registered as (R) which denotes a protected an-

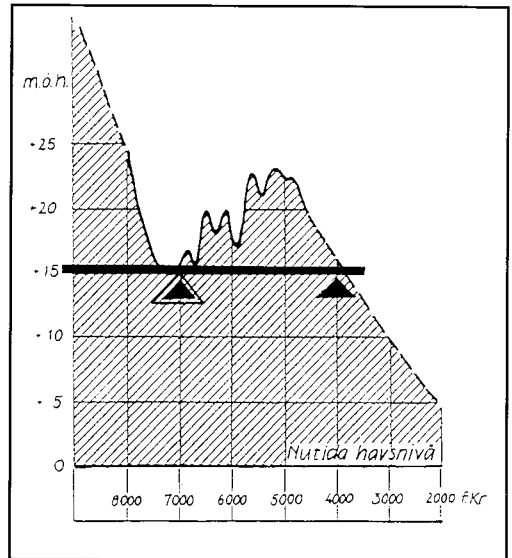


Fig. 7. Example C: Balltorp - the affects of land or sea elevation created good conditions for sea shore settlement (+15 meters) on the slopes of the Balltorp valley 7000 and 4000 BC.

cient monument site without clearly discernable boundaries.

Because of land rise resulting in changes in sea elevation, the shorelines of Sweden's west coast have fluctuated during the Stone Age. While the shoreline transgressed in one area, it regressed in another. The results of geological investigations show that there were conditions for seashore settlement on the slopes of the Balltorp Valley at 7000 BC and 4000 BC.

2. As might have been expected, test excavations revealed a complicated stratigraphy. Flooded cultural layers include struck and burnt flint, hazelnuts and pieces of wood, which are traces of settlements with preserved organic material.

3. The results of the excavations revealed a large settlement area with traces of hunters and gatherers starting from 7200 BC. Many animal bones were preserved. Microwear analysis of the microliths show damage through shooting, thus being left in the bodies of animals that had been killed.

Summary: The registered monuments and finds just reflect the agricultural economy in the Balltorp Valley. Because of shoreline fluctuations, traces of the oldest hunting economy are today flooded in the middle part of the west coast as, for example, at Balltorp. For the same reasons, they are "hidden" on the floor of the sea in the south and situated high up in the mountains towards the northern part of the coast.

Example D: Dalarna – the affects of vegetation

1. Dalarna was the name of a narrow valley surrounded by mountains. Today it is a part of the highway along the coast. A prehistoric hillfort was located in the northern part with a barrow in the middle. This gave the idea of a fortified settlement with the power of its leading family being manifested in the large grave, situated as a lock for the whole valley.

2. Test excavations revealed a somewhat dif-

ferent picture, although the principle contents were still the same. At four locations in the valley, today covered with vegetation, there were cultural layers with charcoal and flint, and in one case, also a hearth and burnt animal bones. The locations were down the hillfort, on two sides of the barrow and close to a high rock. These were interpreted as settlement remains or traces of ritual activities or ceremonies.

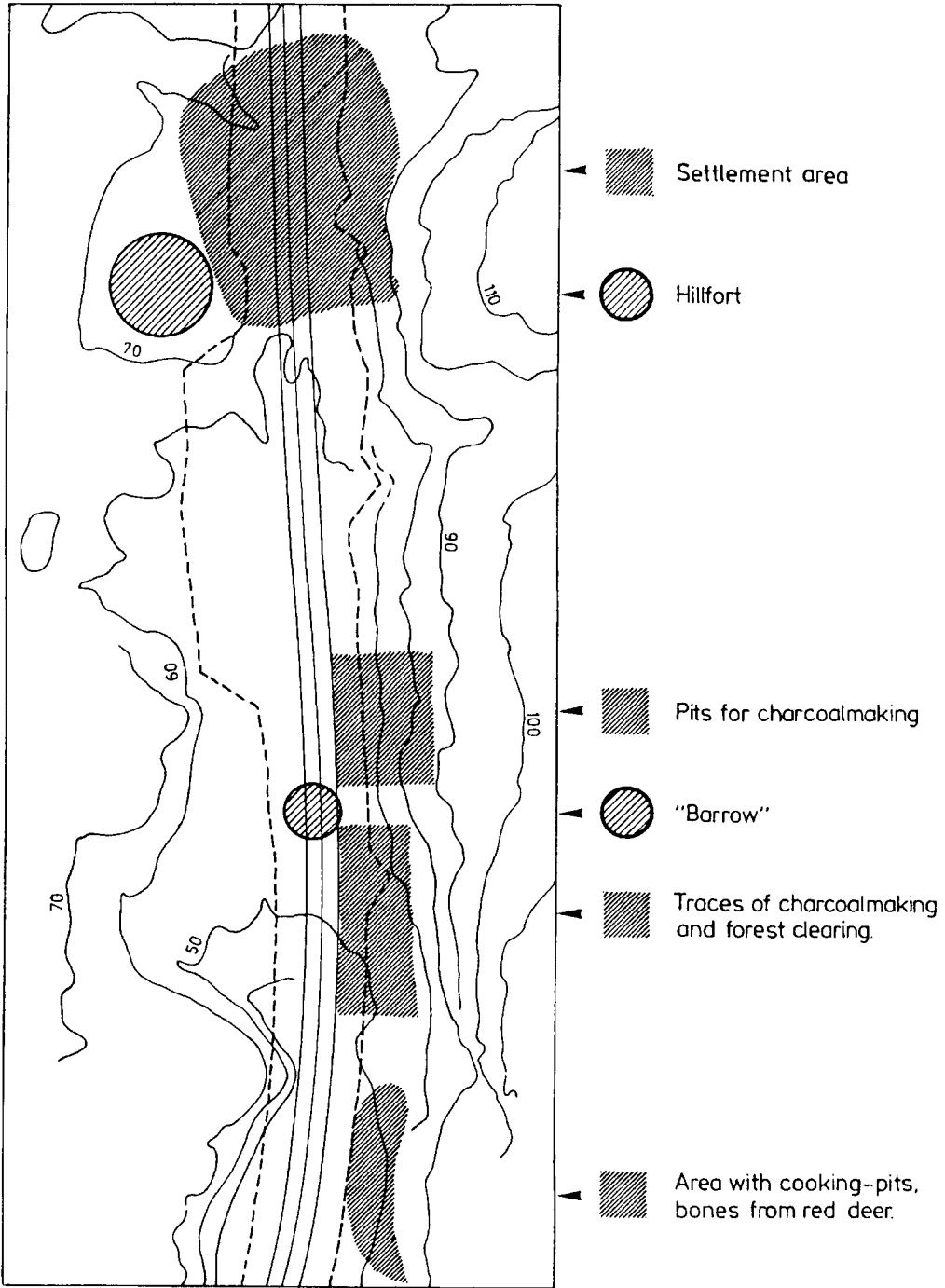
3. The results of the excavation transformed the picture totally. The cultural layer down the hillfort were the traces of at least four settlements, where only the youngest one was contemporary with the hillfort from 300–400 AD.

The barrow proved not to be a grave but a geological formation which had been treated as a grave. Four or five clay vessels of an Early Iron Age type had been placed or thrown down at the foot of the formation some hundred years prior to the building of the hillfort.

The cultural layers on both sides of the "barrow" were not settlement remains. To the north, excavations were located exactly in the middle of pits for making charcoal from two different periods, 1200 and 1600 AD. And to the south, traces of both charcoaling and forest clearance from 1600 AD onwards were evidenced.

The fourth cultural layer covered an area with cooking pits located close to the rock. Many of the bones found here were from red deer, not a food commonly used. Whether or not this was a place for the preparation of food or for ceremonial activities is a matter of discussion.

Summary: The valley had not been under the ownership of a single family during prehistoric times. The land use here had covered a long span of time where traces of settlement, production and ceremonial activities were found. Today, this land use is represented by the prehistoric hillfort, still preserved in the terrain near the highway, and the rest documented through the results of the archaeological excavations.





 Not registered  Registered

Fig. 8. Example D: Dalarna - the affects of vegetation.

CONCLUSION

The visible parts of the cultural landscape are just a small part of our history. Whether or not the visible monuments are the most important information in enabling us to better understand our past or for the future development of

the modern society of today is a question that can be discussed.

This is a problem of both a scientific and a pedagogical nature.

English revised by Phyllis Anderson.

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