

The Uppåkra Project

Preconditions, Performance and Prospects

Lars Larsson

Abstract

Iron Age research in Scandinavia has focused on studies of the significance of certain places as centres in political, economic, and religious spheres of interest. Archaeological research in recent years has shown that the Iron Age, chiefly the latter part, was a dynamic period with major changes. Danish and Swedish projects have examined this dynamism, but the discussion of central components in the understanding of the dynamic transformations that characterized the first millennium AD in Scandinavia has only marginally touched on southern Sweden. Due to intensive development, a large number of rescue excavations have taken place in southern Sweden since the early 1970s.

In 1996 members of different institutes formed a group in order to initiate a research project concerning the Iron Age in the southernmost part of Sweden, including the province of Scania and the southern part of the province of Halland. The goal of the project, entitled “The Social Structure of Southern Sweden during the Iron Age”, was to study the development of society in a broad chronological perspective from 500 BC until 1000 AD. The main aim of the project was to analyse the hierarchy in the settlement structure. The overarching studies in the project concerned settlement and power structure in the Iron Age of southern Sweden and hence studies of local and regional variations. At the centre of the project was a continuous discussion of the concepts of central place and power. The landscape of power, in both its physical and its social shape, has not been sufficiently described and interpreted. The same applies to the properties that make a settlement unit into a centre.

The project comprised several undertakings, involving studies differing in scope and orientation in southernmost Sweden, and studies based on work on the settlement of Uppåkra in south-west Scania. In the project the Uppåkra site serves as a catalyst because of its special structure and find material. Iron Age settlement at Uppåkra was first documented in the 1930s, but the current project did not begin until 1996. Efforts such as archaeological excavations and metal detector surveys have constituted the basis for a significant number of research tasks of a highly varied nature. The study of the Uppåkra settlement site, however, would not have been complete without a deeper understanding of settlement in the vicinity of the site.

Research into this settlement phenomenon has resulted in a large number of articles, of which a considerable proportion have been and will be published in a special series named “Uppåkrastudier”.

The work of the research project is not finished. The article describes plans for future efforts in the field and at the desk.

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Introduction

In Iron Age research, greater priority is being given to in-depth analyses of societal conditions. There has been lively discussion of topics such as the concentration of political power, socio-economic relations, and Christianization. Research has focused on studies of the significance of certain places as centres in political, economic, and religious spheres of interest.

Archaeological research in recent years has shown that the Iron Age, chiefly the latter part, was a dynamic period with major changes. The Danish project “From Tribe to State” has demonstrated, among other things, how regional political groupings made themselves felt in the middle part of the Roman Iron Age and then become fully distinct in the Migration Period (Mortensen & Rasmussen 1988, 1991). From this period we should thus be able to speak of an incipient establishment of what would later, following continental European models, develop into large, coherent states. The magnate and his retinue were a clear expression of a new political constellation in which the initiative for changes was to a large extent transferred from the kindred to leading persons or families. This discussion has taken on a political dimension in works about hypothetical kingdoms in the Migration Period. Extensive sacrifices of war booty deposited in the Late Roman Iron Age and Migration Period (200–550 AD) suggest a specialized system of martial forces that presupposed organized leadership. In the Vendel Period and Viking Age we notice an increasingly strong influence from an emerging central power. A radical transformation of society is reflected in increased trade, the beginnings of urbanization, and a change of religion.

During the Vendel Period and Viking Age (550–1050 AD) we notice the steadily growing influence of a nascent central power structure. The concentration of power in fewer hands can also be suspected in the foundation of well-structured trading sites. This suggests that the initiative came from a society with a fixed organization. A radical transformation of society is expressed in increased trade, incipient urbanization, and a change of religion. Several well-organized building projects are implemented, for instance in the Danevirke (Andersen 1998), the earthworks marking the frontier in southern Jutland, in protective semicircular ramparts around the early towns, and in the circular forts (Ambrosiani & Clarke 1991), which are viewed as the final confirmation of an established central power in a united Denmark.

In central Sweden the interest has concentrated on the formation of central places and trading sites, in the investigation of the adjacent sites of Helgö (Lundström 1988) and Birka in Lake Mälaren (Ambrosiani & Clarke 1992, 1995). In the project “Svealand in the Vendel Period and Viking Age” (SIV), the cemeteries at Vendel and Valsgärde have been associated with nearby central places (Arrhenius & Eriksson 1997; Herschend 1997a, 1997b).

The social structure of southern Sweden during the Iron Age

In the research that has been done on both Denmark and central Sweden, the intermediate area, that is, southern Sweden, has not been credited with the role or attracted the interest that this area must have enjoyed by virtue of its location and its contacts. The discussion of central components in the under-

standing of the dynamic transformations that characterized the first millennium AD in Scandinavia has only marginally touched on southern Sweden. With its geographical position, southern Sweden played a major role as a melting pot for various cultural contacts, which differ in parts from those affecting Denmark and central Sweden. Especially in a long temporal perspective, knowledge about the composition and transformation of these contacts can shed light on new aspects of the structure of Scandinavian society.

The intensive research has focused on the Iron Age society of Denmark as well as central Sweden, but the southern part of Sweden has partly been neglected. Due to intensive development, a large number of rescue excavations have taken place in southern Sweden since the early 1970s. However, information about several of these efforts is insufficient because the results have not previously been compiled. The extensive work in Scania of the National Heritage Board, Archaeological Excavations Department (UV-Syd), Lund (Tesch 1992), is supplemented with the intensive rescue excavations in the Malmö area (Björhem & Säfvestad 1993), which can also be related to new excavations in southern Halland (Carlie 1992, 1999).

In 1996 members of different institutes formed a group in order to initiate a research project concerning the Iron Age in the southernmost part of Sweden, including the province of Scania and the southern part of the province of Halland. Representatives of the Institute of Archaeology, University of Lund, Malmö Museum, the National Heritage Board, Archaeological Excavations Department, Lund, and Halland Museum, Halmstad, were taking part in the project. The aim of the project, entitled "The Social Structure of Southern Sweden during the Iron Age", was

to study the development of society in a broad chronological perspective from 500 BC until 1000 AD. An important task of the project was also to make the information about the excavations of Iron Age sites in southern Sweden available for further analysis. Archaeology, medieval archaeology, human geography, osteology, palaeoecology, and ceramic analysis are disciplines represented in the project group.

The aim of the project

The main aim of the project was to analyse the hierarchy in the settlement structure. It was therefore intended to analyse the following problems in detail: What is meant by the concept of central place? When does regional power concentration start to encompass larger units than villages or kin groups? Is it groupings like these that are subsequently assembled in the beginnings of the Danish state? How was southern Sweden incorporated in the kingdom of Denmark? What were power structures like here before, during, and after the integration phase?

A significant contribution of the project was the compilation and analysis of the huge collection of material produced by rescue excavations in recent decades. In addition to the extensive work in Scania done by the Southern Excavations Department of the National Heritage Board, we have the results of the intensive rescue excavations in the Malmö area in the 1980s and 1990s. The picture of settlement in southernmost Sweden is supplemented by the findings of recent excavations in southern Halland. Information from the ongoing major rescue excavations in southern Sweden, occasioned by, for example, the Öresund Fixed Link and the changed course of the West Coast Railway Line, add to the knowledge gained from earlier large-scale investigations.

The overarching studies in the project comprised settlement and power structure in the Iron Age of southern Sweden and thereby studies of local and regional variations. Subsidiary efforts considered societal forms and local identity in southern Halland, Scania, and Blekinge, and southern Sweden's patterns of contact in the thousand years covered by the Iron Age.

The idea behind the sub-projects is to use various types of data and methods to analyse southern Sweden's internal and external contacts during the Iron Age and their significance for economic and political development. Regional and chronological variations will be given special consideration.

Southern Sweden, particularly Scania, lies at the intersection of different political and economic forces which emerged in the Early Iron Age and became especially obvious in the latter part of the Iron Age. Among these contacts, those with the Slavonic area south of the Baltic Sea deserve particular mention. In addition, influences from Western Europe, present-day Denmark, central Sweden and the lands east of the Baltic have been of fluctuating importance.

To understand the development of southern Sweden in such a dynamic time as the Iron Age, it is necessary to expand our knowledge of settlement development. Excavations of recent decades and the results of the new survey of ancient monuments have provided a large source of knowledge that is still waiting to be drawn on.

Central places

The influences that reached Scandinavia during the Roman Iron Age included structures that must have been previously unknown phenomena. The Roman Empire with which

the Germans came into contact had a distinctly urban character. The town with its combination of permanent institutions in the form of judicial and bureaucratic representatives of the state apparatus, the clear mercantile element, and the marking of different religious outlooks, also steered by the state, was something new.

We may wonder about the transformation that is required for different phenomena around the Mediterranean to find a shape in which they could be accepted in Northern Europe. Imports from the Roman Empire, mainly during the Roman Iron Age, must have been objects that gave their owners special status without profoundly changing regional or local society. It was not until continental European Germans were directly confronted with colonial Roman society and more or less voluntarily tried to reconcile their traditional way of life with the one they encountered in Southern Europe that a true blend of cultures arose, with fundamental repercussions for daily life with its habits and customs and hence for attitudes and social relations. The influences from these new forms of society, with certain components previously unknown, and transformed by incorporation into traditional institutions, found it easier to gain acceptance even in areas far to the north of the *limes* (Hedeager 1997). The role of the town as a central place both for the ruling elite and also in mercantile and religious terms took on a more distinct form in the places of central character which began to appear at the end of the Roman Iron Age and in the Migration Period.

The core of the project was a continuous theoretical discussion of the concepts of central place and power. Both concepts have previously been used without much nuances. The landscape of power in both its physical and its social form had not been described or

interpreted with sufficient clarity. The same also applies to the characteristics that make a settlement unit into a centre. This concerns, on the one hand, the material expressions of power, such as large farms or control of highly skilled craftsmen, and on the other hand its practical function for steering flows of goods and the like (Helgesson 1998, 2002).

The definition of central places, and hence the interpretation of which functions should be related to these, is far from being unproblematic. What evidence is required of a site if it is to be called a central place? Is it possible to create a definition of the concept based on archaeological material? Are there indications that central places can change in function and significance? For the discussion of changes in society it is necessary to work with long temporal perspectives. This is lacking in research hitherto.

Central places are characterized by a degree of specialization. The specialization may concern functions associated with the base units, but also solitary physical places, or functions in society which do not need to be attached to a physical setting. What one chiefly thinks of here is a type of central place from which power and control proceeded (Callmer 1997). It is common to speak of an aristocracy.

Many phenomena can be perceived as being of central character. They may be cultic sites, votive sites, magnates' farms, assembly sites, market places, or craft places. In addition, the concept of central place is often associated with the accumulation of precious metals, but this was primarily conditioned by how and when precious metal was used, which varied considerably during the Iron Age. An important task of the project is to define the different parts of the overarching structure and give them valid names. Another task is to investigate whether the central functions can

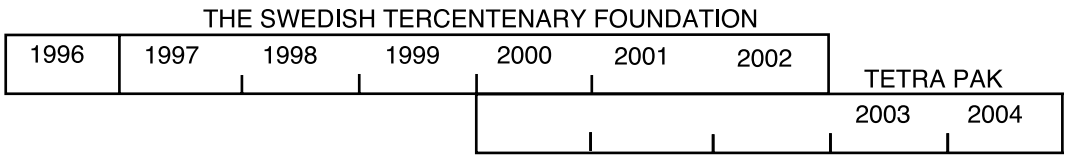
be linked to a special site, a small area, or if an entire area was central in itself.

Another important problem in the discussion of power formation and settlement in the Iron Age is that the empirical foundation is based on a small number of well-excavated areas. Mostly we only have limited knowledge of settlement in the area around the places that are supposed to have had a central character. The excavations in Jutland have played a dominant role for our knowledge of settlement in southern Scandinavia (Hvass 1988). As a result, the models of settlement that have been built up over more than two decades are far too generalized. New investigations in Scania and southern Halland show that the picture of settlement is complex. The relation between village-like structures and single farms is one such phenomenon that requires deeper analysis. In some places we find large farms, which suggests a concentration of power, whereas other indications of prosperity, such as accumulations of precious metal or graves with rich finds (Lund Hansen 1995), are found in some cases but absent in others. Earlier research on centre formations has been driven by attempts to identify and describe these places, while the discussion of their origin and function in relation to the surroundings – both social and physical – has to some extent been neglected. In addition, the varied composition of the excavation results makes it even more difficult to gain a good overall grasp.

The structure of the project

“The Social Structure of Southern Sweden during the Iron Age” was originally a project designed to run for four years, 1997–2000. Thanks to grants from the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation, it has been possible

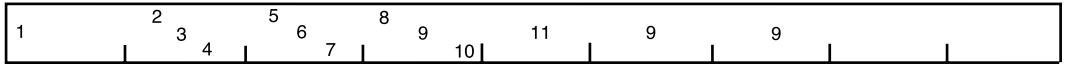
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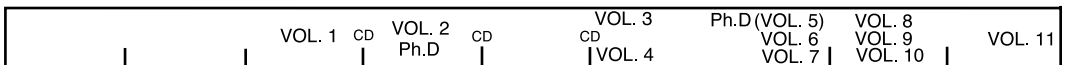


Fig. 1. The different activities within the project “The Social Structure of Southern Sweden during the Iron Age”. A: grants and sponsorship, B: metal detector surveys, C: excavations (the numbers refer to excavation areas in fig. 3) and D: publications (the figures relate to volumes in the series Uppåkrastudier, CD means supervised student publications).

to carry on the project on its original scale and also to add a fifth year, 2001 (Fig. 1).

The project has had several aims. One has been to obtain a picture of the extensive excavations undertaken in southernmost Sweden since the compilations presented by Berta Stjernquist for the Early Iron Age (1955) and by Märta Strömberg for the Late Iron Age (1961). Most of the investigations conducted have been occasioned by the large-scale development that has affected Scania, chiefly the western part of the province, since the end of the 1960s. The National Heritage Board’s Archaeological Excavations Department in Lund has performed the majority of these digs, so this task in the project was assigned to Bengt Jacobsson, who is employed in the Lund office of the Board. His initial work resulted in a detailed compilation of investigations of antiquities from the Iron Age, chiefly in Scania and Blekinge, with a total of 242 sites (Jacobsson 2000). The compilation of the remaining investigations,

mainly those conducted under the auspices of Malmö Museum, is in progress (Tegnér 2002). The second part of Jacobsson’s research as part of the project concerns social conditions in a part of south-west Scania and is now presented here (Jacobsson, this volume).

The project also touched on the southern part of Halland, where large-scale infrastructure investments had led to the excavation of a great many settlement sites. Lennart Carlie of Halland County Museum in Halmstad has analysed these sites, the majority of which come from the Early Iron Age, along with other finds and remains from the same period. His analysis has resulted in a doctoral dissertation (Carlie 1999, this volume).

Berta Stjernquist has done intensive field-work and analyses of Iron Age settlement in Scania (1955, 1993). Within the project it has been possible to draw on her knowledge of this settlement and its material culture. Her analyses of special settlements, special artefact groups and of votive sites have also been

presented in publications produced as part of the project (Stjernquist 1998, 1999, 2001).

Birgitta Hårdh shares the leadership of the project with the author of this article. Her primary sphere of responsibility is the analyses of the material retrieved in the metal detector surveys. Several analyses have been performed by both domestic and international scholars (Hårdh 1999, 2001). Hårdh has also supervised a considerable number of students whose work has directly or indirectly concerned Uppåkra. Her own research has mainly dealt with the relationship between categories and complexes of finds in Uppåkra in regional and interregional perspective (Hårdh 1999a, 2001b, 2002, this volume).

In the project there was the potential to present a multifaceted picture of the Iron Age in Scania based on the large amount of new material accumulated since the 1960s. With the extensive material retrieved from sites of a central character in particular, it has been possible to arrive at a deeper insight into the relation between a central place and both the immediate surroundings and the region. This research has been pursued for a doctoral dissertation by Bertil Helgesson (2002).

An obvious consequence of the study of traces of activity at Uppåkra during the Iron Age is the follow-up work to obtain a glimpse of what the place was like in the Middle Ages. It is important to examine the relation between the existing villages of Stora and Lilla Uppåkra and the Iron Age settlement between the two in order to understand settlement structure in the immediate vicinity. In addition, it is of particular interest to examine how it affected or was affected by the establishment of the town of Lund during the Late Viking Age and Early Middle Ages, to become an important base in the Danish kingdom. Parallel to the establishment of the secular

structure, and as a consequence of it, the town was distinguished in religious terms by being chosen as the seat of a bishop. The study of this problem has been led by Mats Anglert (Anglert & Huttu 1999; Anglert & Jansson 2001). Other studies dealing with the Middle Ages in southernmost Sweden have also been conducted as part of the project (Thomasson 1998; Lihammer, this volume).

The oldest land survey maps and documents from most of the parishes in Scania are dated to the 18th century. It has nevertheless been shown that the material can be used for a retrogressive analysis of land use and settlement structure reflecting conditions as far back as the Middle Ages and even much earlier, in the Iron Age (Riddersporre 1995, this volume). That was an important reason for involving Mats Riddersporre in the project.

As stated above, a considerable amount of archaeological work has been done in connection with infrastructure development in the Malmö region. This has generated considerable knowledge of the structure and change of Iron Age settlement within a relatively limited area of what was probably the best arable land in southern Sweden (Björhem & Säfvestad 1993, Friman & Hector, this volume). A special undertaking within the framework has been to relate this knowledge of Iron Age settlement to the road that ran north-east towards Uppåkra (Björhem, this volume).

Uppåkra as a catalyst of research

In the project the Uppåkra site, situated approximately 5 km south of Lund, serves as a catalyst because of its special structure and find material (Fig. 2).

The site at Uppåkra was first recognized in 1934 in connection with house con-

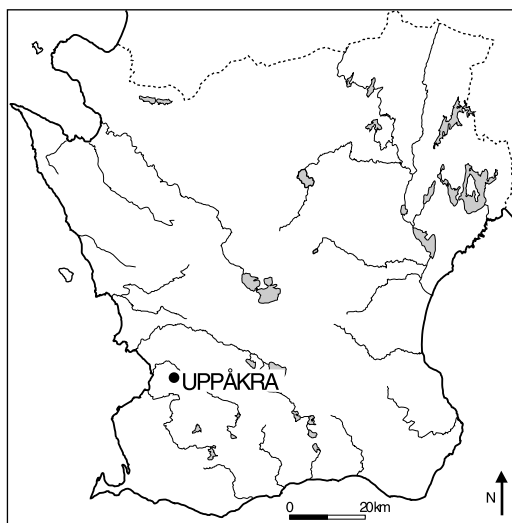


Fig. 2. The location of the Uppåkra site in southernmost Sweden.

struction. A minor excavation revealed occupation layers with a thickness of more than two metres, with elements of clay layers and soot horizons along with a large quantity of finds comprising pottery, bone, iron objects, and some bronze artefacts (Vifot 1936; Stjernquist 1996). The topmost occupation layer was datable to the transition between the Late Roman Iron Age and the Migration Period. Part of a wattle-and-daub house which had burnt down was investigated. Charred grains in large quantities and rich find material which also included fire-damaged bronze fibulae suggested that the house was destroyed by an accidental fire.

When the project was started, the remains from Uppåkra were felt to have significant potential as an important research object. As a result of the first efforts, the significance of the site for an understanding of the social structure of southern Sweden in the Iron Age was further accentuated. Because of the all-round nature of the work on Uppåkra, the project began to be called “the Uppåkra project” in everyday speech.

Archaeological investigations

By small rescue excavations in connection with development work in the form of road widening, house building, or digging for pipelines, and by field surveys, occupation remains dated from the entire Early Iron Age have been found within an area of approximately 1.1 x 0.6 km – the largest occupation site known so far in southern Sweden. Towards the north the site comprises the earlier row village, while the area to the south is delimited by a small stream with adjacent wetland (Fig. 4). The church is located on the highest point with a pronounced slope towards the north, in the lower part of which the present village is located. South of the church the ground slopes gently, with an increasing gradient in the area closest to the channel of a small stream. South-west of the church is a slight height with a noticeable slope towards the west. A natural terrace can be discerned on the slope south of this height.

In the course of the project, the extent and complexity of the Uppåkra site have proved much greater than was initially expected. From the important yet limited archaeological investigations that could be undertaken as part of the project, it was clear that the site had a complicated stratigraphy and highly varied find material. The potential of the site as an excavation object became increasingly clear, and it was simultaneously realized that the necessary fieldwork could not be done within the project budget. Thanks to sponsorship from the company Tetra Pak it was and will be possible to conduct archaeological investigations at Uppåkra in the period 2000–2004.

The first volume of the series “Uppåkrastudier” (Uppåkra studies) gave an account of the situation until autumn 1997 (Larsson 1999). Six small excavations had been undertaken in the initial phase of the project (Fig. 1

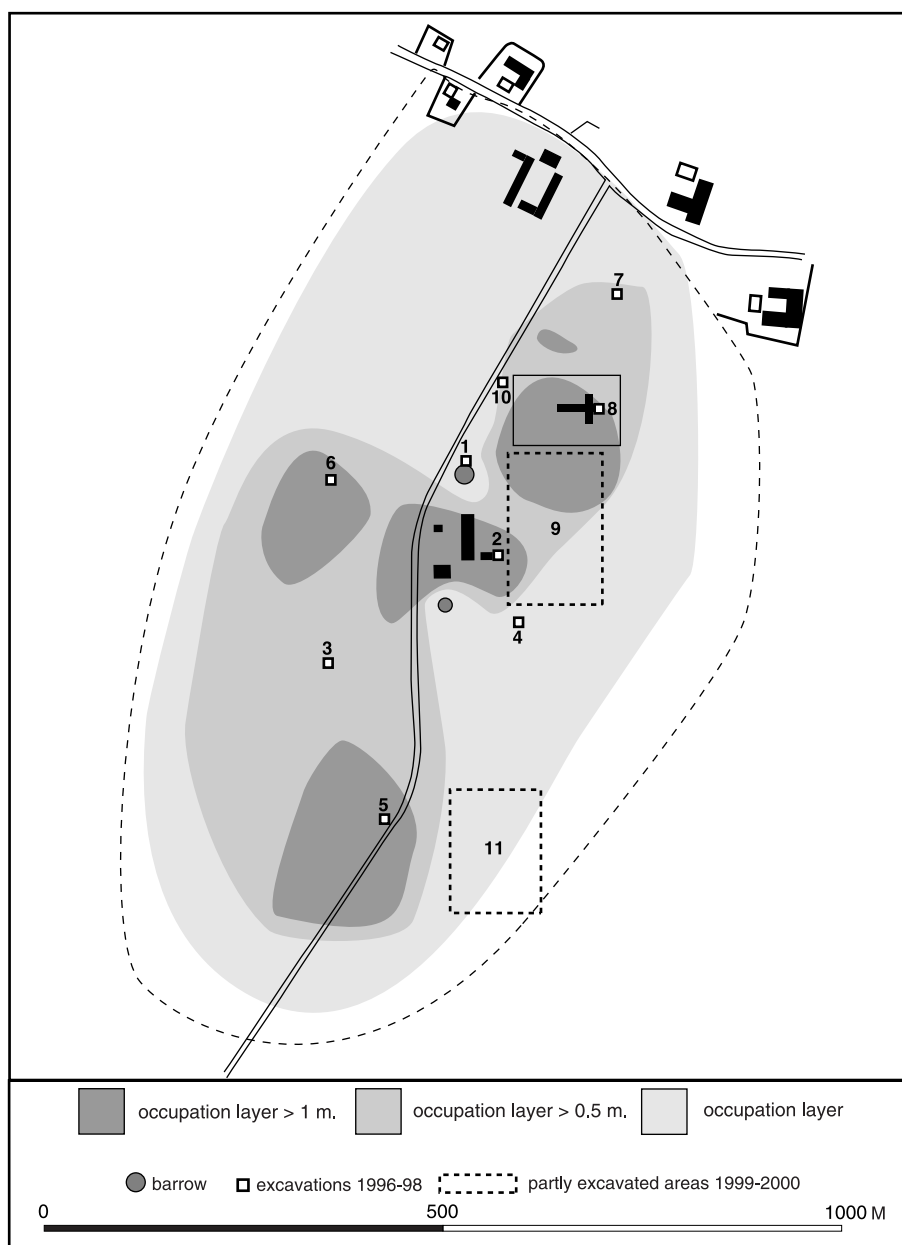


Fig. 3. Excavation areas within the Uppåkra site during the period 1997–2000.

and 3). By the end of 2001 a few other areas scattered over the roughly 40 hectare site were excavated (Larsson 2001b, 2001c, Lindell 2001). The intention here was to obtain a glimpse of the size and structure of the settlement site, the composition of features, and the date.

During 1999, excavations on a larger scale began with the stripping of topsoil by machine within long, regularly positioned test trenches (Fig. 3). The aim of this strategy was to acquire a better knowledge of the stratigraphy and the composition, structure and degree of pre-

servation of the features in specially selected areas. During the first year the excavations were in an area south of the church, while an area in the south-west of the site was excavated in 2000 (Fig. 3) (Lindell & Lenntorp 2000). Since 2000 the excavations have also been done according to the single-context method, with the use of extensive digital documentation.

In both cases the efforts were concentrated in areas with extensive amounts of finds from metal detecting and moreover with several finds of obvious status markers such as artefacts of precious metals showing skilled craftsmanship, as well as finds made of special material, such as fragments of glass beakers (Stjernquist 1999). In both areas there were rich remains of houses and other traces of activities. However, the variation as regards both the types and the chronological spread of structures seems to be much greater in the northern than the southern area. The southern excavation area slopes with an increasing gradient down towards a stream. Erosion seems to have been heavier here than in the flatter northern area. The northern area had structures from the Late Iron Age, whereas late structures occur more sporadically in the southern area. This difference between the two excavation areas meant that the major excavation with machine stripping of the topsoil in large continuous areas was concentrated on the area that had been subject to trial excavation in 1999. Here the finds in the topsoil were to be decisive for the selection of areas to strip.

Searching for cemeteries and graves

Although the archaeological excavations were primarily geared to settlement remains, high priority was also attached to tracing burials belonging to the Uppåkra settlement. At least one grave and some indications of burials had

previously been found on the Uppåkra site (Stjernquist 1995; Larsson 1998). Within an area of 500 metres east of the site, digging to lay pipes uncovered five graves belonging to the Late Roman Iron Age/Early Migration Period (Stjernquist 1995). These graves were distributed in two areas about 100 metres apart and could thus be expected to be parts of a larger cemetery. A number of test trenches were therefore dug right beside the previous area where the pipes had been laid and also in a fairly large area further west of this, closer to the Uppåkra settlement site (Fig. 4). A number of features were discovered and a few of these subsequently investigated. None of them showed any remains of burial, but there were hearth pits with varying amounts of fire-cracked stone. The cemetery or cemeteries which must have existed in the large and long-lived settlement of Uppåkra should therefore be sought elsewhere.

The difficulty of finding cemeteries immediately beside sites of central character is an almost symptomatic feature in south-west Scandinavia. In cases where some form of relationship has been suggested between central place and cemetery, as for example between Gudme and Møllegårdsmarken, the distance is about one kilometre (Michaelsen 1994: Fig. 4). No large cemetery or graves with finds marking high social status have been found within three kilometres of Uppåkra (Larsson 1998).

One must also be aware that there is at least one grave, and probably several, at Uppåkra (Stjernquist 1996)(Fig. 3). There may be other graves, showing that parts of the site could undergo considerable changes in function, from settlement area to cemetery. A combination of settlement site remains and graves within the same ancient site, even if there is a certain distance in time between the

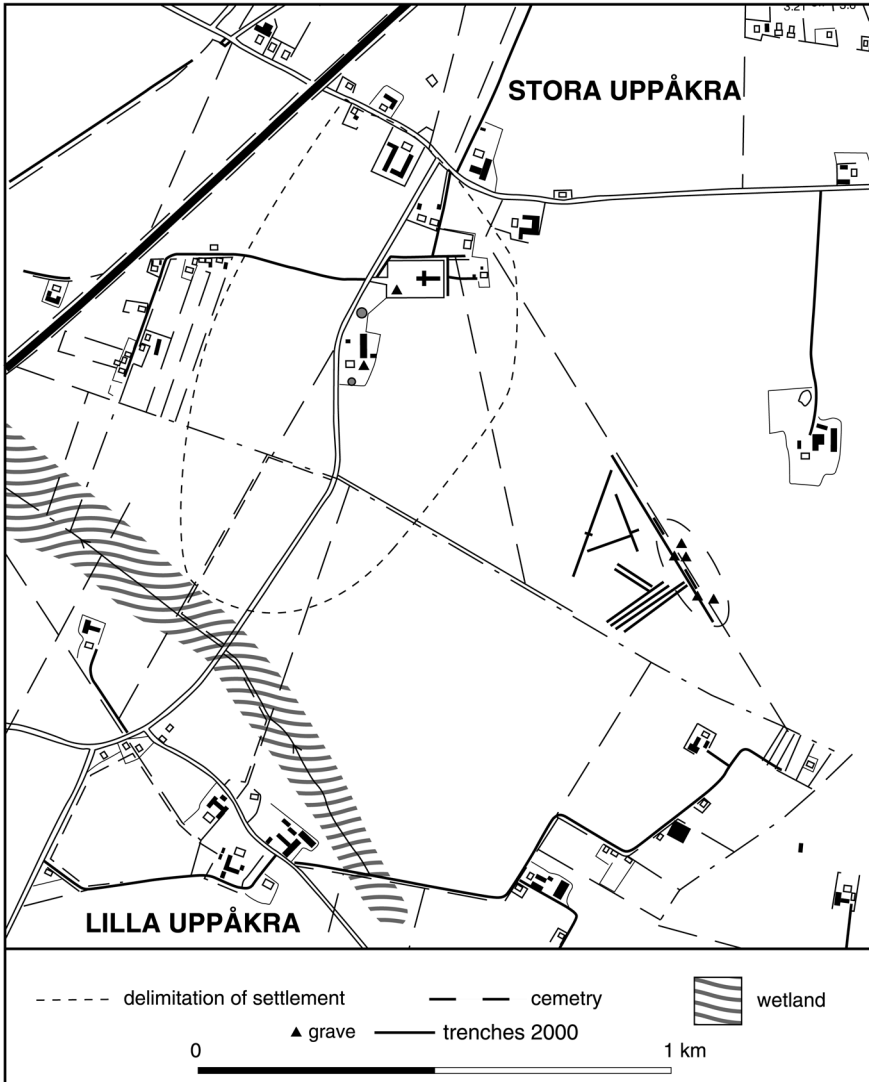


Fig. 4. Test trenches in search of graves belonging to the settlement at Uppåkra.

two phenomena, is found in the neighbourhood at Hjärrup (1998) and at Önsvala (Fig. 5) (Larsson 1982). The situation is probably the same at Källby, north of the river Höje å (Fig. 5), where there is a considerable amount of burial but where settlement remains have also been found. The extent of these is uncertain, as is the dating. In continued excavations at Uppåkra, special attention must be paid to the possibility that single graves or cemeteries may occur within former habitation areas.

Drainage in the chancel of the church and its immediate vicinity has given an excellent opportunity to study the stratigraphy in an area which is otherwise difficult or virtually impossible to investigate. Inhumation burials occurred before the building of the Romanesque stone church. ¹⁴C dating of a skeleton damaged by the construction of the foundation walls of the Romanesque church indicate a date in the Viking Age (Anglert & Jansson 2001). This may suggest that there was a cemetery in

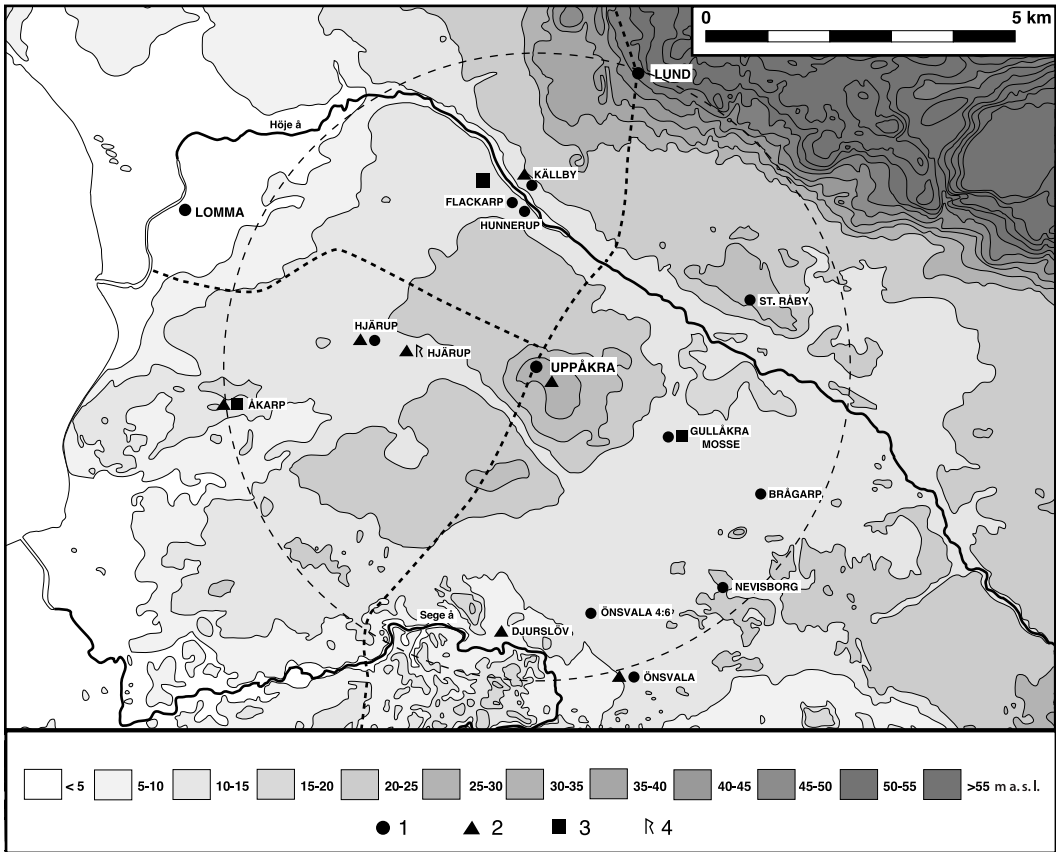


Fig. 5. Sites in the neighbourhood of the site Uppåkra. Legend: 1: settlement, 2: grave or cemetery, 3: hoard find, 4: runic stone.

the area during that period. Other finds in the churchyard hint that people were buried there as early as the Iron Age (Stjernquist 1995).

Metal detector analyses

The majority of metal finds have been uncovered by metal detector surveys. These have yielded more than 10,000 find units – the largest number in southern Sweden. This material has been crucial in painting a detailed picture of the function of the site and the length of time it was in use. Thanks to this rich and varied material, it is clear that Uppåkra was used throughout the first millennium AD.

In 1996–97 the metal detector surveys

were conducted recurrently at weekends by amateur archaeologists from Bornholm. Since then our colleagues from Bornholm have returned at least once a year, usually in the spring when the majority of the fields are accessible for detector surveys. In addition, detector surveying by our own staff has been intensified. This has led to a slightly changed picture of the detector distribution (Paulsson 1999). For certain concentrations it has been found that finds in the vicinity have increased, which means that tendencies to concentration have disappeared in some areas but been further increased in others.

The database of detector finds that has been built up makes it simple to work with

the material, for example, to distinguish different forms of artefact and also to visualize their distribution. Renewed analyses, chiefly of the results of the earliest detector surveys, have led to the identification of more artefact forms and new types of artefacts. The distribution of different artefact forms may provide a basis for identifying, for instance, different farm units (Helgesson & Stjernquist 2001).

The relevance of the metal detector finds for the remains of features under the topsoil has also been tested, showing a good relationship between, for example, finds of casting in the form of split brooches, sullage pieces, and the like, and the traces of casting that have been documented (Hårdh 2001b).

Special analyses

Since the start of the project, the historical geographer Mats Riddersporre has played an important role with his retrospective analyses of the earliest land survey maps from the 18th century, which give a glimpse of conditions that may have applied in the Late Iron Age and Early Middle Ages (Riddersporre 1995). An analysis of land survey documents for the villages of Stora Uppåkra and Lilla Uppåkra shows that field-names and the grading of soil fertility shed very interesting light on a period contemporary with the settlement (Riddersporre 1996). The field-names indicate the earlier settlement between the two still existing villages, and fields named for their black soil correspond well to the extent of the occupation layer on the Uppåkra site. These analytical methods have also been applied to conditions concerning special Iron Age settlements and general structures in the settlement during the Late Iron Age and Early Middle Ages (Riddersporre, this volume).

The rich metal detector finds and the finds produced by archaeological excavations have

given opportunities to perform a significant number of analyses of different types of artefacts and categories of material. Some experts were attached to the project right from the planning stage. One of them is Ole Stilborg, who has conducted several analyses of pottery (Stilborg 1998, 2001, this volume; Räf & Stilborg 1999). Stilborg has also supervised students performing analyses of pottery from Uppåkra.

Mats Regnell's speciality is macrofossils. Since the investigations at Uppåkra in the 1930s resulted in the largest find of charred macrofossils hitherto found in Scania, there should be great potential to obtain more material during the planned excavations. Regnell has analysed macrofossils and also assisted in the interpretation of complex stratigraphies (Regnell 2001, this volume).

A significant amount of bone and antler was known from the 1930s excavation. A large quantity of bone has also been found by the excavations as part of the ongoing project. This has been analysed by Lena Nilsson and Annica Cardell (Nilsson 2001, this volume; Cardell 2001).

As the project has developed, various analyses and special investigations have become necessary. To acquire some idea of the situation as regards structures, a total of four surveys with various kinds of geophysical measurement apparatus have been carried out (Dahlin 2001; Grassi 2001, Lorra *et al.* 2001; Mercer & Schmidt 2001). In some cases they have covered a significant part of the settlement site. Unfortunately, it has been found that there are serious difficulties in relating anomalies distinguished by the geophysical surveys to the results of the archaeological investigations. One reason for this may be the complex stratigraphies and relationships between structures found on the site.

The extensive material from the detector

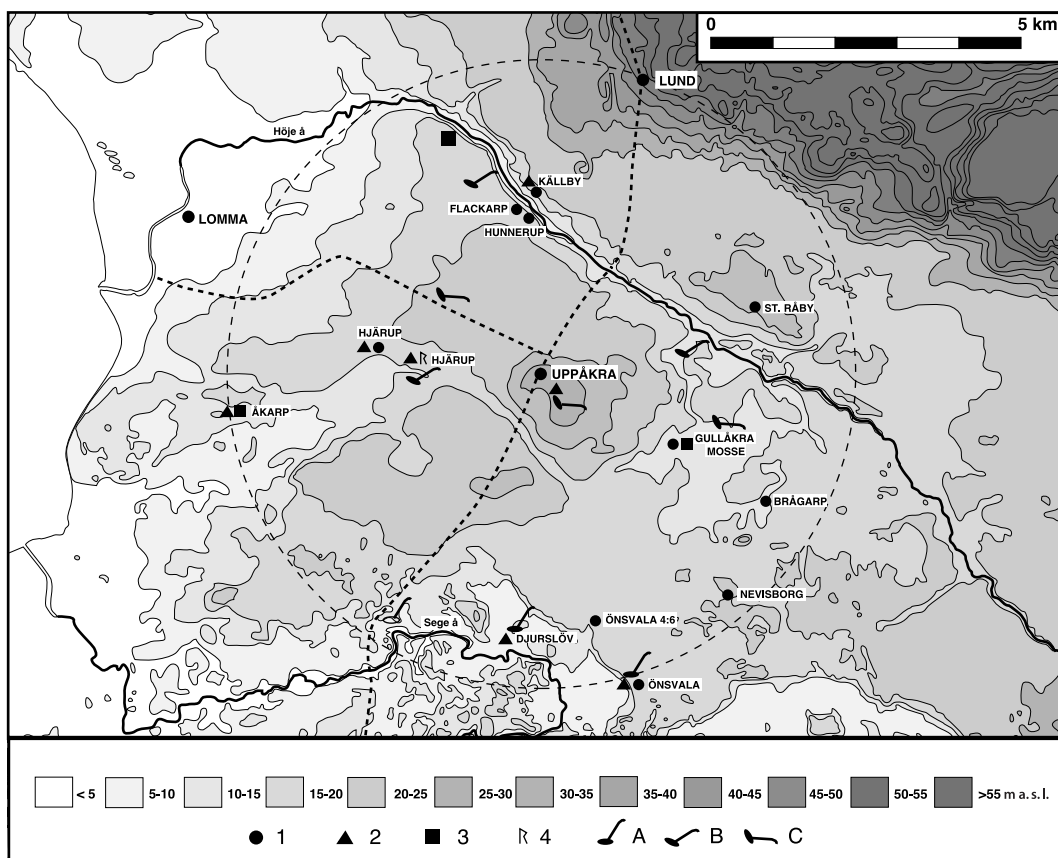


Fig. 6. The results of surveys with metal detector on sites in the neighbourhood of Uppåkra. A: plenty of finds, B: some finds and C: no finds.

surveys consists not only of whole objects. Finds occur which show various stages of fragmentation and new manufacture, as well as traces of metal craft in the form of rods, sullage pieces and droplets of melted metal. These finds are an excellent basis for a study of metal craft; this has been undertaken by the Geoarchaeological Laboratory in Uppsala (Kresten *et al.* 2001).

Metal detector surveying in the vicinity of Uppåkra

One aspect of importance in the analysis of Uppåkra as a central place concerns the re-

lationship of the settlement to nearby settlements. Uppåkra seems to differ from most other settlements of central place character by having just one large continuous habitation area. At central places like Gudme and Sorte Muld these seem to consist of separate habitation areas (Fig. 7). Part of the explanation may lie in the different topographical conditions. Uppåkra is located in a relatively flat area whereas the Danish sites are in a much more undulating landscape where a continuous habitation area would not have been possible, since more or less distinct wetlands confined settlements to high locations. This situation is not wholly unknown at Uppåkra. A significant area in the eastern part of the

site contains a limited number of traces of settlement, yet this does not mean that the habitation area was divided.

In order not to miss any remains of settlement within the immediate vicinity of the Uppåkra site, the metal detector surveys have been extended to cover areas close to the remains at Uppåkra and also areas within about five kilometres of Uppåkra. The choice of places is primarily based on clear concentrations of phosphate both around today's villages and in relation to known find spots and antiquities such as graves and hoards. The results obtained hitherto show a varying intensity of finds (Fig. 6). At Önsvala, for example, several metal objects were found, suggesting settlement mainly in the Vendel Period. In other areas, such as Lilla Uppåkra, there are few finds, if any. This gives us relatively good insight into the changing settlement situation in the Iron Age.

Uppåkra in relation to other centres and to Lund

If the Uppåkra site is put in a geographical and chronological context, certain interesting features are found. As regards the chronological context, Uppåkra seems to be on a par with the major sites in Denmark.

Unlike the other places, settlement was located on a gently undulating site where it was possible to have a continuous habitation area. According to the detector survey there are no satellite settlements, as at, say, Gudme and Sorte Muld (Fig. 7) within the nearest kilometre. Uppåkra covers roughly the same area as these two Danish sites including their satellite settlements. Since the distribution of the settlement during its period of occupation is uncertain, we have to be cautious about

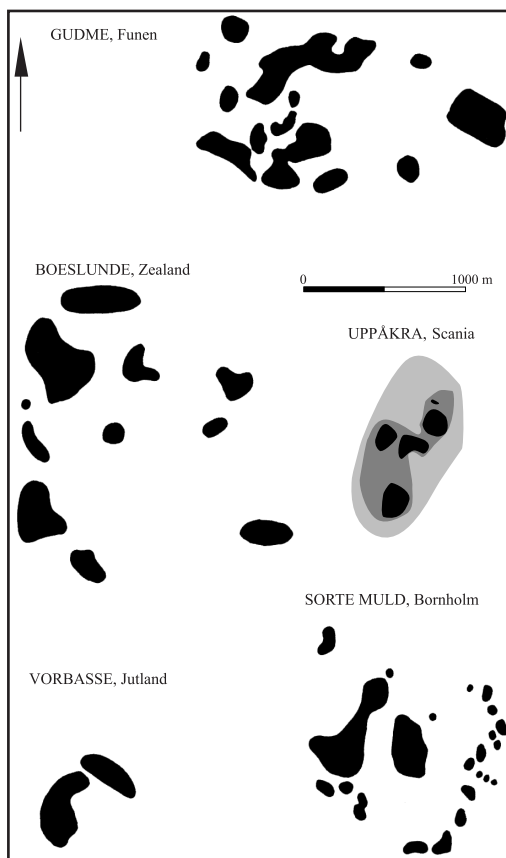


Fig. 7. The structures of some central places in southern Scandinavia. From Jørgensen 1994: Fig. 11 with additions.

calculating the size of the settlement in any particular period. There are clear indications that much of the site was occupied around 100 AD, and there are finds within the whole known settlement site since the Late Roman Iron Age or Early Migration Period. The traces of settlement and finds documented within significant areas, showing craft work on a considerable scale, along with mercantile elements and objects and structures indicating the presence of political leadership, suggests that Uppåkra, at least during the Late Iron Age, may have had an urban or proto-urban form.

There is no sure evidence that the whole of the 40 hectare area of the Uppåkra site was

settled in one and the same period. However, the distribution of objects dated to the Late Iron Age throughout the whole known occupation layer suggests that much of the site was occupied.

It would be valuable if it were possible to compare Uppåkra with the town of Lund, its probable successor. There is considerable uncertainty about the extent of early medieval Lund (Holmberg 1977; Andrén 1985); the extent of the occupation layers at Uppåkra has therefore been projected on to the area covered by late medieval Lund (Andrén 1980) (Fig. 8). The projection places the Storehög mound, which may have been an important focal point at Uppåkra, directly over another focal structure, the cathedral in Lund. This shows that the difference between the extent of Lund and that of Uppåkra is not large. It is interesting that the two areas have a striking similarity in form and orientation.

Prospects for the future

As mentioned above, the Uppåkra project, as a result of sponsorship from Tetra Pak, will be able to continue at least until 2004, chiefly in the form of excavations. During 2001 digging began in an area south of the church in Stora Uppåkra, with promising results (Larsson 2001a, Lenntorp & Lindell 2002). This means that future efforts during at least one excavation season will be concentrated on this area (Larsson 2002). In the final two years (2003–2004) it is planned to reduce the archaeological efforts.

The sponsorship funds will finance not only excavation but also continued analysis and work on the interpretation of the central place. In addition, it is planned to analyse the structure, continuity, and change of the central place, but the cost of this will not be

covered by the sponsorship. Some of these planned tasks, such as studying the relation between Uppåkra and nearby Lund, and the possible existence of a harbour at Lomma on the west coast of Scania, about 7 kilometres to the west, have already been discussed (Larsson 1998, 2001). Other planned efforts of partly disparate nature are described below.

The role of iron at the central place

In the metal detector surveys the search has concentrated on alloys such as bronze and precious metals. The signals from the metal detectors indicate that there are considerable amounts of iron. Thanks to an amateur archaeologist who has walked the fields for about fifteen years, the project has obtained a varied collection of iron objects, comprising parts of horse bits and tools used for woodworking and both blacksmithing and fine metalwork. Detecting for iron has been undertaken once, giving very good results. The survey covered the area in which several spearheads and lanceheads from the Late Roman Iron Age and Early Migration Period had been found, both on the surface and by excavation. Their location and distribution, as well as their degree of demolition, suggests that they were part of votive deposits (Hårdh 1999). To obtain a better picture of the scope of the craft carried on for the ordinary needs of the site, and for the production of status objects and items for sale, it is important to acquire a large quantity of iron, which will hopefully reflect different activities on the site.

Thanks to work by staff at the Geoarchaeological Laboratory in Uppsala, we now have good insight into craft work with alloys and precious metals (Kresten *et al.*, 2001). By special grant it will be possible to study, for example, the development of the ironworking



Fig. 8. Projection of the Uppåkra site on the area covered by late Medieval Lund. From S. Larsson 2000: Fig. 81 with additions.

craft over a thousand years. There should be remains of stages in the process from ore to finished products, traces of work done on the site, the scope of which may have varied from time to time. Moreover, it would be significant to be able to compare similarities and differences in craft skill between goldsmiths and blacksmiths.

Systematic ocular surface survey

At Uppåkra there has been too little ocular surface survey in search of glass and other material not registered by detector. A not insignificant amount of, for example, glass has been noticed as the detector users have walked the fields (Stjernquist 1999), but it

would be desirable to do more deliberate searches. The problem is today's systematic crop rotation. The fields are sown shortly after being harvested, which means that only a limited part of the settlement site can be investigated at the most favourable time of the year, in the early spring when the exposed ground surface has been washed clean by the winter's rain and melting snow. In addition, special conditions are necessary if the material is to be noticed. A significant proportion of the glass was found one morning during a detector weekend when the remaining dew made glass unusually easy to observe.

In the last few decades, mechanized deep ploughing has caused considerable damage to layers near the surface. Traces of house structures can thus be detected in ploughed-up clay, both burnt and unburnt.

Analysis of the build-up of occupation layers at Uppåkra

As the archaeological investigations have shown, there are extensive accumulations of occupation layers dated to the Early Iron Age. One may speculate about the different factors steering this process. In the oldest phase of settlement, until the 5th century, it may have been a deliberate act, allowing layers to build up, at times to a total depth of two metres, giving a distinct rise that may in itself have been a marker of continuity and tradition. In certain parts of the site, for example, beside the Storehög mound located at the highest point, there must have been a clear difference in level – roughly two metres between the original ground level and the accumulated occupation layers – in the early part of the Migration Period. Here the difference in level changes within a distance of a few dozen metres.

Waste from previous generations may also have been deliberately mixed with more recent remains as a result of deliberate digging, thus linking past and present, blending the ownership of different generations. These speculations about the deliberate use of waste have been put forward concerning the build-up of layers at tell settlements in south-east Europe (Chapman 2000).

It may also be a result of unconscious acts affecting the handling of waste which later became an active factor in marking the significance of the place. When an aristocratic setting with one or more distinguishable units was established, the deliberate removal of waste may have been one way to mark its importance (Larsson 2001c). The waste was taken away to emphasize the large estate and its immediate surroundings, to be simultaneously used to fertilize the fields.

Intact house floors

Even though the interest of the excavations was primarily focused on aristocratic settings, there are other things that may be just as interesting to consider. For instance, test digs in 2000 in the south-east of the site (Fig. 4) revealed several house remains dated to the Roman Iron Age. Some were marked by well-preserved floor levels. There are few if any such floors in other parts of southern Sweden and eastern Denmark. Investigating a house with intact floors and analysing different trace substances could give us a basis for studying the structure and function – still uncertain despite the investigation of a large number of houses – of an ordinary dwelling house in the Early Iron Age. What was the relation between the dwelling section, the byre, and the barn? To enable a study of this, the excavation was limited to a small area of the floor. In addi-

tion, samples were taken for analysis of phosphates and any other substances, in order to determine how useful these methods are.

Medieval settlement

The metal detector surveys have given us a good idea of the extent of the medieval settlement that followed the Iron Age settlement at Uppåkra. With the exception of the coins (Silvegren 1999), the medieval artefacts are found within the extent of the village of Stora Uppåkra as known from the land survey maps (Anglert & Huttu 1999). The excavations beside the church and in the apse revealed extensive prehistoric layers and traces of the Romanesque church which was demolished in the mid-19th century (Anglert & Jansson 2001). The dating of skeletons from graves disturbed by the digging to build the foundation walls of the Romanesque church suggest that there was a Viking Age churchyard on the site (Anglert & Jansson 2001), probably combined with a wooden church.

Excavations on a limited scale in spring 2001, in a field north of the church corresponding to a farmyard known from the 18th century, uncovered well-preserved floor layers and other house structures which can be dated to the High and Early Middle Ages. It may be hoped that these observations will be developed in future into a study of the process leading from a prehistoric central place to a medieval row village of a more ordinary form.

Publication

The first publication from the project appeared in 1998, comprising papers presented to a seminar held in order to obtain viewpoints from other scholars with competence of a kind that could enrich the project's design

and problem formulation (Larsson & Hårdh 1998). This was the start of a series of publications in the series "Uppåkrastudier" (Fig. 1).

Uppåkrastudier 2 appeared in 1999, concentrating on a number of analyses of detector finds as well as glass and pottery (Hårdh 1999). Uppåkrastudier 3 contains further analyses of material from Uppåkra, along with more studies of topics considered in a broader geographical perspective based on the results from Uppåkra (Hårdh 2001). The clear link between teaching and research that is one ambition of the Uppåkra project has allowed a group of students each year in their third and fourth term of undergraduate study (CD level) to devote themselves to specific tasks concerned with central questions based on the Uppåkra project. Several of these studies have been published in volumes in the series. Uppåkrastudier 4 has a more heterogeneous content but is chiefly geared to scientific analyses (Larsson 2001d).

Volume 5 was the dissertation by Bertil Helgesson. Volume 6 includes the papers presented to the 52nd Sachsensymposium, which was held in Lund in 2001 on the theme of "Central Places in the Migration and Merovingian Periods". In the near future it is planned to publish more volumes in the series. One of them will concentrate on research concerning the Middle Ages which is relevant to the project. Others will have studies chiefly related to different groups of finds in the extensive material yielded by the metal detector surveys. The excavation results and the evaluation of the findings will be assembled in a special volume.

The doctoral dissertation about Iron Age settlement in southern Halland, mentioned above (Carlie 1999), has also been published as part of the project. Yet another dissertation,

this time about the Scanian Iron Age in general, using insights from the finds at Uppåkra, has been published (Helgesson 2002).

Works directly linked to the Uppåkra project have been published by other institutions. This is the case with the compilation of the remains from the Iron Age investigated by UV-Syd (Jacobsson 2000) and published by the National Heritage Board. Malmö Kulturmiljö, the institution that has conducted most of the other excavations in south-western Scania, plans to publish a similar compilation including all remaining excavations (Tegnér 2002).

In addition to this, the investigations and results of the Uppåkra project have frequently been presented in the media. The work of the project has also resulted in a considerable number of articles, both specialized and popular (Larsson & Hårdh 1998a, 1998b; Hårdh 2000; Larsson 2001b) and a booklet serving as an exhibition catalogue (*Uppåkra – rikedomar ur jorden* 1998), for exhibitions on varying scales mounted by the Lund University Historical Museum.

Altogether, the result of these efforts is that the ancient site of Uppåkra, from having been known only to a small group of professional archaeologists, is now a familiar phenomenon among the general public.

The list of articles and publications at the end of this volume provides the full perspective of the efforts conducted within the project.

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