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Grahame Clark

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THE EARLIER STONE AGE SETTLEMENT
OF SCANDINAVIA

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THE EARLIER STONE AGE SETTLEMENT OF SCANDINAVIA

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PREFACE

The occasion for writing this book was an invitation from the Cambridge University Press to revise the text for reprinting *The Mesolithic Settlement of Northern Europe*. The proposal was a flattering one since that book had been published as long ago as 1936 and had never been reprinted, still less revised. Where frequent editions are called for it may often be possible to maintain the life of a standard work by injecting fresh information and eradicating or modifying conclusions shown to have been erroneous. Even so the time comes when old books can no longer absorb new information, for it is not only facts that change but the concepts that give them meaning. There is a generational tide in ideas and interests that frequently cuts across academic disciplines and renders stale what may once have been novel and exciting. When a book is thirty-eight years old, especially when it has received no intermediate editions, it is unlikely to be a useful vehicle for new information. I decided therefore instead to write a new book.

The time is past for another work introducing English readers to the bare sequence of Scandinavian Stone Age archaeology or even to the context of its various phases in the history of environmental change. The present work will be concerned with a specific theme, the manner in which Scandinavia was first colonised since the time when by far the greater part of it first became available for settlement. The reasons why I chose this region as a geographical frame of reference are stated further on in this Preface. In the meantime it needs to be stated which of the several definitions of Scandinavia is followed in this book. I shall use it to embrace the Fennoscandian shield, comprising Finland, much the greater part of Sweden and the whole of Norway, and south Scandinavia, in which I include Denmark and southernmost Sweden, much of which formed part of the Danish dominions down to 1658. I intend to concentrate on my chosen area because I am concerned

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above all with the process of settlement and with the means by which patterns of social life were maintained over long periods of time by exploiting the natural resources of specific territories in particular ways. At the same time, since the first people to colonise Scandinavia must have come from territories south and east of the Baltic basin, it is no less evident that some attention must be paid to the archaeology of the tract of territory extending from north Germany, Poland, the east Baltic states and northern Russia as far east as the Ural mountains. Again, despite the emphasis on continuity of settlement, on the tenacity with which people, once possessed of territory, tend to hold and exploit it, the fact remains that the social changes reflected in the archaeological data were to a significant degree affected or precipitated by contacts from without. In this connection one should not forget that Jutland and to begin with the rest of south Scandinavia formed a northward extension of the north European plain and that Finland and to a remoter degree northern Scandinavia as a whole was a western extension of the northern taiga reaching as far east as the Ural mountains; again, one should remember that the enclosed waters of the Baltic formed a common hunting and fishing ground and could easily have been crossed by primitive craft or, when frozen, on foot.

For a number of reasons, some practical, others reflecting the current state of research and publication, it has proved convenient to present this study of the Scandinavian Stone Age in two volumes. The present one covers the older Stone Age, that is the period from the Late-glacial to the end of the Atlantic period dealt with in 1936 from another point of view in *The Mesolithic Settlement of Northern Europe*. The second, now in preparation, is concerned on the one hand with the development of agriculture and peasant communities and on the other with the quite remarkable and sophisticated economies based on a variety of forms of catching and foraging in territories where these were the most economical methods of harvesting natural resources. Although directed to the same basic theme as the second, the first and present volume has been so constructed as to form an independent work with its own index and list of references.

My reasons for choosing Scandinavia as a theatre are in part the same as those which led me to this region first in my study of Mesolithic settlement and later for the several articles concerned with basic subsistence activities of prehistoric hunter-gatherers written in preparation for *Prehistoric Europe: the economic basis*. These include: (1) the

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wealth of evidence relating to prehistoric settlement in the area, a wealth accounted for in part by natural conditions which at least in south Scandinavia have favoured the survival of organic traces vital to a reconstruction of subsistence patterns and crucial also to an appreciation of the technical equipment available to the early inhabitants of the region, (2) the long tradition of systematic archaeological research and the relatively full knowledge of temporal and spatial patterns in the cultural material, (3) the magnitude of changes in the habitat and biosphere that have taken place during the period of human occupation and the clarity with which such changes have been charted, notably in respect of the progressive contraction of the Scandinavian ice-sheet, and in regard to land and sea levels, climate, vegetation and animal life, (4) the abundance and reliability of geochronological indices, the product of intensive application of radiocarbon analysis both directly to organic traces from archaeological occupation layers and indirectly to sequential changes in the biosphere and habitat established by Quaternary research and not least (5) the admirable school of Northern Ethnography and the rich documentation of the kind of activities responsible for much of the material of prehistoric archaeology, a documentation rendered possible by the relative tardiness of industrialisation and the fact that farming has normally been carried on there, sometimes down to modern times, in association with a variety of the catching and gathering activities.

Another good reason for returning to Scandinavia is that knowledge of any region and of the institutions and personalities concerned with its archaeology, history, ethnography and Quaternary environment is of its nature cumulative. It seemed better to cultivate and intensify my understanding of Scandinavia as a region and as a field of archaeological research, than to start up in a new field even if one could have been found as suitable as this for the purpose in hand.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My knowledge of the Scandinavian terrain as it exists today as well as of the key archaeological sites and of the museums in which the small finds are stored and to some extent displayed extends over more than forty years. My first experiences were confined to the collections of Copenhagen, Lund and Stockholm and to the countryside of Scania, but in 1936 our honeymoon took us further afield to the rock-engravings

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of Jämtland, the Trøndelag and east Norway and the collections at Trondheim, Oslo and Bergen. Before the war interrupted travel we managed to explore Schleswig-Holstein and acquire some understanding, with the help of Albrecht Rust, Gustav Schwantes and Karl Kersten of the Late-glacial and early Post-glacial archaeology of this key region, to visit sites and more particularly Iron Age settlements in northern Jutland in the stimulating company of Gudmund Hatt and to take in Fünen, Langeland and Zealand. In 1947 the opportunity came to see something of the more northerly parts of Scandinavia when the Trustees of the Leverhulme Foundation made possible the extended travel that proved so valuable as a stimulus to the production of *Pre-historic Europe*. My round journey began with a memorable expedition from Bergen to Hespriholm and Bømlo off the west coast in the company of J. Bøe, Johannes Brøndsted and Knut Fægri and thence by sea up to the west coast of Norway stopping off at various points on the route to Tromsø and its rich collections from the far north. I then traversed Swedish Lappland and rounded the head of the Gulf of Bothnia before heading south through Finland to Helsingfors where I was introduced by C. A. Nordman to the rich archaeological collections, and by T. I. Itkonen to the no less rich and indeed unique ethnographic data. Crossing to Stockholm the experience of viewing the phenomenon of human adaptation to a common (even though rapidly changing) environment was carried further when I was able to complement study in the State Historical Museum by an introduction under the tutelage of Gösta Berg to the riches of the Nordiska Museum. An exciting archaeological experience was a flying visit to Gotland where I was able among other things to visit Mårten Stenberger's excavations at Vallhager. A family vacation in 1955 gave the opportunity to traverse the mixed-forest zone between Göteborg and Stockholm, to cross the southern part of the coniferous zone of Dalarna and to experience the southernmost outlier in Sweden of the *fjäll*-reindeer-Lapp zone in the neighbourhood of Grövelsjön. The journey was rounded off by passing through the Hamardal to Oslo and down the Bohuslän coast, taking in the rock-engravings of Tanum. Other visits that stand out in memory include attendance at the 1954 Radio-Carbon Conference at Copenhagen and at the Lund meeting of the Permanent Council of the International Conference of Pre- and Protohistoric Sciences, each of which presented opportunities of fruitful contacts with colleagues as well as for museum study.

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The decision to write the present book called for additional travel and contact with colleagues and material. In 1971 we decided to fill gaps in our knowledge of southern Norway and northernmost Jutland. Entering Norway by way of Christiansand we passed through the archaeologically rich area of Jæren stopping at Stavanger Museum and visiting the classic cave site of Viste excavated first by Haakon Shetelig and later by H. E. Lund, whose wife most kindly accompanied us to the site. At Bergen we were made welcome in the library of the Archaeological Institute of the University, thanks to the good offices of Professor Anders Hagen, and we owe much to Dr Egil Bakke who went to the greatest trouble to show us the terrain of the west Norwegian 'dwelling-place culture', as well as the locations of individual sites, including those investigated by himself, as well as such 'classic' ones at Ruskeneset and Skipshelleren. Our stay in Bergen was further enriched by discussions with Professor Fægri. On the way to Oslo we spent a few days with Aarne Johansen's Hardangervidda Project at Halne where we had a renewed opportunity of experiencing a reindeer habitat and had the chance of discussing the problem of the earliest settlement by man in this region. From Oslo we crossed the Skagerrak to Frederikshavn, a route followed in each direction during the Stone Age, in order to explore Vendsyssel and Thy, including the Late-glacial cliffs of Nørre Lyngby, the Litorina shore-lines of the Limfjord as well as field monuments and museums. Before returning home, by way of Esjberg, we traversed the landscape of Therkel Mathiassen's so-called 'Gudenaa culture' to Aarhus where we stayed briefly at the University Institute of Prehistoric Archaeology at Møsgaard, a visit made memorable by the new museum as well as by fruitful conversations with Paul Kjærøum and Søren Andersen.

A main gap in my experience of Sweden was that apart from Dalarna and Jämtland I had very little knowledge of the huge territory of Norrland comprising nearly two-thirds of the country and only a cursory experience of the territories immediately adjacent to Lake Mälär. The opportunity to remedy this as well as to indulge in a long period of reading and museum study came in 1972 when I held a Visiting Professorship at Uppsala University under a scheme sponsored by the Trustees of the Leverhulme Foundation and administered by the British Academy. I am immensely grateful to both these institutions for making this possible as well as to Uppsala University. More particularly I am indebted to the Institute for Nordic and Comparative

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Archaeology whose seminar and splendid library are housed appropriately in the Gustavianum, a former palace of the Archbishops, later the headquarters of the Royal University and now the headquarters of three departments concerned with the culture of antiquity. I would like to acknowledge the help given me in the course of discussion and in many practical ways especially by Professor Bertil Almgren, Director of the Institute, by Docent Ulf Hagberg, Dr Hans Christiansson and Lic. Bo Gräslund. I also benefited greatly from discussions with Professor Sten Florin and Professor Lars König-Königsson the present director of the University's Institute of Quaternary Research as well as from the use of the Institute's excellent library. Residence at Uppsala also made it practicable to examine at leisure the landscape on either side of Lake Mälär, more particularly in north Södermanland and Uppland. A day's excursion led by Ingvar Jansson of the Uppsala Seminar round the Stone Age sites first explored by Ekholm half a century ago in western Uppland stands out with particular clarity and it was a special privilege to be taken by Bertil Almgren on another occasion round some of the recently discovered Bronze Age rock-engravings of the region.

Uppsala was also exceptionally well placed in relation to Stockholm, where the staff of the State Historical Museum and in particular Dr Evert Baudou and Dr Louise Cederschiöld showed great forbearance. The Gustavianum also proved a fine centre from which to make expeditions to Finland and Norrland. I am particularly grateful to Dr Torsten Edgren, Coordinator of Archaeological Research for Finland, who most kindly took us to see Suomusjärvi and Comb Ware sites between Turku and Helsingfors and gave most valuable assistance with the literature, as well as in gaining access to material in the National Museum. Although on vacation at the time, Professor Meinander went out of his way to welcome us and allow us the use of the library of his Institute.

In respect of Norrland we began by revisiting Dalarna as guests of Dr and Mrs Gösta Berg than whom there could have been no better guides to the traditional background of the peasant culture of the region; but our main objectives lay further north in the territories affected by modern hydro-electric schemes designed to harness the great rivers flowing down from the Caledonian *ffjäll* country through the coniferous forest zone and the coastal tract to the Gulf of Bothnia. Preliminary reports of a generalised nature and exhibits in the State Historical Museum had made it clear that rescue and survey operations

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in advance of flooding had opened a new dimension in the prehistory of Sweden. We are extremely grateful to Dr Evert Baudou, head of the prehistoric section of the State Historical Museum, who has charge of the scientific publications of the discoveries made by N.T.B. (Norrlands Tidlig Bebyggelse or Norrlands Early Settlement) Project, for showing us something of Ångermanland and its early archaeology. In his company we gained a vivid impression of the magnitude of geographic change resulting from isostatic recovery of land during the period of human settlement, in a territory with a maximum vertical displacement of over 280 m. The rapidity of land recovery was vividly illustrated by the Bronze Age cairns distributed along the coast at successive levels between 30 and 50 m above modern sea-level. Moving upstream we had the opportunity to examine the rock-engravings among the rapids of the Ångerman river, a concentration first scientifically surveyed and recorded by Gustav Hallström, who had received us while on our honeymoon in Stockholm and in the years before the First World War had accompanied our old teacher Miles Burkitt to this same site. The abundance of traces of settlement along the rivers and lakes of the interior testified to the wide-ranging activities of Stone Age man in the north, and the heights above sea-level of the oldest ones again bore witness to the scale and rapidity of geographical change. We next moved further north into Västerbotten, the territory of the Norrlands Arkeologie Project led by Dr Hans Christiansson and centred locally on the museums at Umeå and Skellefteå. We were unfortunately deprived by circumstances of Dr Christiansson's company, but we are most grateful to him for many enlightening talks and for ensuring that we were well looked after, as well as to Mr and Mrs Neil Broadbent of the Uppsala Seminar, Dr Eric Westerlund of Skellefteå Museum and Lenart Sundqvist of Bjurselet for demonstrating sites and discussing their problems on the ground.

When the time came to return home we visited the strangely neglected site of Alvastra close to the north-east shore of Lake Vättern, just as on the way out we had gained a useful impression of the megalithic passage-graves concentrated on the Falbygden. A brief visit to the Archaeological Museum at Göteborg gave us some impression of the difficulty of the research being carried out there on the Stone Age settlement of west Sweden due in part to a peculiarly complex history of change in the levels of land and sea.

While still conscious of some omissions of particular interest in respect

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of their archaeology – notably Finnmark and the islands of Bornholm and Öland – we have been fortunate to gain some first hand impression of most of the varied landscapes of Scandinavia as well as to visit many of their outstanding prehistoric sites and archaeological museums. In the course of this we have met with uniform helpfulness and cooperation. A word of particular gratitude is due to museum staffs. As I well know, directly from personal experience and vicariously from the complaints of research students, it is not everywhere that one finds museums staffed by men and women well qualified by training and willing to make their collections and their knowledge freely available to those who wish to use them. The excellence of the photographic work done in Scandinavian museums is also a subject for grateful comment.

In writing a book of this kind an author owes more than he can realise to the work of others and to their willingness to communicate. I have benefited from countless conversations and bibliographical clues, many of which are only tacitly recognised. Where scholars have published their discoveries and their ideas acknowledgement has been made in the usual way by citing their works, many of which are listed at the end of this book. No attempt has been made to prepare even a restricted bibliography, nor has every work consulted been listed. My aim has been to make it possible for readers to check information by reference to detailed papers or monographs, as far as possible ones likely to be available in a good archaeological library. Where I have been able to cite relatively accessible works provided with full references I have often felt justified in omitting references to local or ephemeral publications.

Where so many differing views have been expressed on particular topics, it is hardly possible for an author to agree with all his authorities. On the other hand I have avoided the kind of polemical writing occasionally suitable in the periodicals. When I cite an article or monograph this only means that I have consulted it, not necessarily that I concur with an author's conclusions. In writing this book I have of necessity gone beyond what can be demonstrated with precision. What I have aimed to do – and that is all any author is surely entitled to do in discussing a subject about which so little is known – is to present hypotheses in the light of explicit theory and in terms of systematically acquired data. One of the main results of such a study is to bring out even more clearly the deficiencies in our data, the need not merely for more research, but for research devoted to specific questions and supported with adequate means.

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Amid the banalities of the consumer society and the business of science in ministering to physical needs, the chances of attracting sufficient resources to the study of men as human beings might appear small. Yet there are encouraging signs, not least among professional scientists, of an increasing recognition of the value and relevance of the humanities and of the need to give much greater financial support for studying the history of the beings for whose welfare all other activities including the pursuit of the natural sciences are supposedly carried on. It has given me immense encouragement to be associated, if only symbolically, and in an honorary capacity, with some of the leading academic institutions in Scandinavia dedicated to the advance of knowledge in this sphere, notably the Royal Society of Denmark (Hist. Phil. Class), the Society of Northern Antiquaries of Copenhagen, the Jutland Archaeological Society, the Royal Scientific Society of Uppsala (Hist. Phil. Class), the Gustav Adolf Academy, Stockholm, and the Finnish Archaeological Society.

Last but far from least it is a pleasure to acknowledge the huge advantages I have enjoyed in my home environment. No familiarity can lessen the stimulus to long sustained scholarly endeavour bestowed by association with my College, Peterhouse, or again with the British Academy and in particular with its Archaeology Section. Again, I have been fortunate to work in the Faculty of Archaeology and Anthropology at Cambridge, the only one in Europe to enjoy the advantage so widely shared in the New World of combining in an intimate and organic way the study of technologically simple societies in both living and fossil forms. As one engaged since 1946 in studying the economic aspects of prehistory, I have found it logical to approach Scandinavian prehistory in the way I have done in this book, but I would like to acknowledge the stimulus received particularly in respect of territory from association with Eric Higgs and his colleagues working for the British Academy's Major Research Project on the Early History of Agriculture. In conclusion, let me add that I owe more than I can say to the help and forbearance of my wife, my companion on nearly all my travels and one who has helped by drawing specimens, criticising my text and generally putting up with the trials of having a perennial author in the house. Above all she has learned to accept that the launching of one book serves only to clear my study for another.

Peterhouse, Cambridge

GRAHAME CLARK

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