

# Archaeology on the Air

## Radio and Archaeology in Sweden 1925-1950

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This paper is an exposition of a rather unusual material in our discipline, the radio broadcasts on archaeology in the 1930s and 40s. They have been analysed using the criteria formulated by Carl-Axel Moberg for studying the mediation of our discipline; who, how, what, why and to whom. The results show that most speakers were well-educated men, and that four major themes can be distinguished in their programmes. Along with experts from many other disciplines, they joined in the huge modernization project of this period in Swedish history, in which the radio played an important part. Finally, it is argued that studies of the processes surrounding the mediation of archaeology are necessary for an understanding of the changing relationship between professionals and the public. Such studies might also benefit future analyses of the use of arguments based on conceptions of prehistory in public debate.

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### INTRODUCTION

It is often said that archaeological results have been ideologically and politically used to emphasise issues relating to the nation. In times of political change the use of history and archaeology in public rhetoric becomes more frequent and more obvious. Several different groups can then make widely different interpretations of the same historical or archaeological example (Bohman 1997). This phenomenon is not restricted in time; it occurs in the present as well (Gillberg & Karlsson 1996). The archaeologists themselves rarely take part in the public debate, and the relationship between their academic results, archaeological popularisation, and the arguments in such debates is not fully investigated. There are very few studies of the processes surrounding archaeological popularisation in Sweden, what its contents are or who popularises<sup>1</sup> (but see Petersson 1994 and 2003 for a thorough study on reconstructions; Welinder 1987 and 2003 chapter 18; Bohman 1997). Such studies also ought to be the foundation for discussions of present-day relationships between professionals and the interested general

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted, though, that the processes surrounding the creation and mediation of a Swedish cultural heritage in a broader sense is a growing field of study (see e.g., Aronsson & Hillström 2005).

public. What did the relationships look like earlier, what can we learn from them, and how would we like them to be in the future (Högberg & Holtorf [www.raa.se/publicerat/rapp2006\\_1.pdf](http://www.raa.se/publicerat/rapp2006_1.pdf))?

Most general studies of scientific popularisation focus on linguistics, text analyses or rhetoric (Eriksson & Svensson 1986; Olsson 1998; Thurén 2000). The general content and the underlying educational ideologies have been studied from a historical point of view (Kärmfelt 2000), while a disciplinary focus is less common. Within the history of archaeology focus is usually placed on ideas and theories in the research process, while the spreading of results to the general public has received less attention (with the exception of studies of museum exhibitions). In the project “Popular archaeology in Sweden 1900-1950” the popularisation done by archaeologists is studied.<sup>2</sup> This paper focuses on what was mediated from the scientific archaeology to the public in one medium only – the radio.

The period saw the development of this completely new medium, and several archaeologists in Sweden were quick to enter the world of broadcasting. This paper deals with the archival remains of their efforts, namely 26 radio broadcasts on tape and 55 manuscripts (there is a certain overlap, i.e., some broadcasts have been filed both as a tape and as a manuscript) kept in the archives of Sveriges Radio AB (Swedish Radio Ltd, from now on referred to as SR).

During the 50 years the project encompasses, the organisation of Swedish archaeology went through radical changes. At the turn of the century, lectures in archaeology were given in Stockholm and Lund. In 1897 Oscar Almgren became the first senior fellow in archaeology at Uppsala University, and by 1950 there were three chairs in archaeology at the universities of Lund, Uppsala and Stockholm to complement the large, specialised museums in Lund, Stockholm and Göteborg (for a general survey of the history of Swedish archaeology see Baudou 2004 and Welinder 2003; for archaeological educational history see Floderus & Gustawsson 1946:319). Amateur scholars were gradually marginalized in favour of university-trained generations (Gillberg 1999), and women entered the academic arena (Arwill-Nordbladh 1995, 2005a). In the 1930s, archaeology was still a rather new academic discipline where new theories, methods and practices were tried and its future course was debated (Baudou 2004). The National Heritage Board was reorganised and turned into a modern, functional civil service department (Pettersson 2001). The daily press turned new sites into sensations. The interpretations of them were associated in different ways with national romantic ideas that focused on Sweden as a nation and on the ancestry of its contemporary inhabitants.

It was also a period of great political change in Sweden. All citizens received the right to vote, and particularly the 1920s were an unsettled decade where all political parties strove to adjust and establish themselves with their new voters.

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<sup>2</sup> The project is financed by a grant from the Knut and Alice Wallenberg Foundation.

Economic problems and material needs were felt all across the country even though Sweden was officially neutral in both the First and the Second World War. In contemporary rhetoric, there was frequent mention of the Swedish cultural heritage, and themes, events or individuals in history were evoked by all groups. This changed gradually during the 1930s (Bohman 1997).

With this in mind, let us turn to 1925 and the beginning of AB Radiotjänst, as SR was initially called (Hallingberg 1999).

#### A NEW VOICE

Broadcasting came to Sweden early in the 1920s. It started with home-built receivers and local broadcasting by enthusiasts. In only a few years, AB Radiotjänst (RT) monopolised the market and started building a national programme, which lasted until 1955.<sup>3</sup> Being the only actor on the scene, their shows were what people all over the country listened to. As the technique was new, the contents of the broadcasts reflected real social events rather than creations specially adapted for radio. Microphones would be placed at live concerts or lectures. The shows contained music of different kinds, light entertainment as well as classical concerts, but also religious services, theatre, recitations and lectures on every topic imaginable.

Adult education was a popular movement involving millions of people with different ideological agendas, and RT had a special clause regarding the promotion of adult education in their contract with the state. In 1931 a special department was formed at RT, the Lecture Department (Sw. *Föredragsavdelningen*), to plan and organise this part of the radio enterprise. Statistics from 1932 to 1948 show that RT broadcasted between 900 and 2000 lectures a year, sometimes as many as three a day. Their content should be characterised by scientific standards, like objectivity and impartiality (Nordberg 1998).

The new medium transformed the official spoken word in ways not foreseeable, but from the very beginning improvisations were banned. All lecturers were given careful instructions on how to speak with regard to both language and content. They were to use a normal conversational tone without any plural endings to the verbs, and if possible steer clear of too difficult and specialised professional terms (Nordberg 1998). The assistants at RT scrutinised all manuscripts and helped the lecturers avoid too elaborate phrases and emotional expressions. Some speakers managed to adapt their speaking voices well enough, while others stuck to the old ways (and were sometimes especially popular on account of it). On the whole, older generations were more linguistically conservative, but gradually younger talents adapted to the demands of the new medium (Nordberg 2003).

Unique for Sweden was the recruitment of lecturers. Science and culture should be popularised by the experts themselves, as this would give weight to the content

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<sup>3</sup> RT was owned by the press and the radio industry, but had a contract with the state which in detail prescribed strategies and content (Nordberg 1998; Hallingberg 1999).

and a high level of credibility. Academics from all Swedish universities and major cultural and scientific institutions became involved (Nordberg 1998 and 2003; Hallingberg 1999).

Some of the lectures were organised in thematic series and were intended to be part of study circles formed within different parts of the adult education movement. RT published a weekly magazine, *Röster i Radio*, with not only schedules for the programmes but also in-depth articles related to the lectures. The groups could also acquire special brochures for the series (Nordberg 1998, 2003; Hallingberg 1999), and in 1934, for example, more than 1500 groups did so (Höijer 1998).

### ARCHAEOLOGISTS ON THE AIR

RT aired at least 76 broadcasts categorised as archaeology during the period 1925-1950 (Nordberg 1988).<sup>4</sup> From the early 1930s either the tapes or the compulsory manuscripts written by the lecturers were filed, and the SR archives contain 26 such tapes and 55 manuscripts, with a slight overlap between them. Lost forever are the broadcasts made in the 1920s, like the series on the Stone Age in western Sweden by Johan Alin and Elof Lindälv or the early lectures of Hanna Rydh.<sup>5</sup>

The categorisation done at the SR archives has placed a variety of subjects under the heading of archaeology; this includes anything from excavations to travel accounts where ancient monuments are mentioned. In the analysis I have worked only with the broadcasts where archaeology is either the main content, or at least a substantial part of it.

The material has been analysed using criteria formulated by the archaeologist Carl-Axel Moberg, himself a regular speaker on the radio. He suggested that any studies dealing with popularisation or mediation of archaeological results should answer the questions of how, who, what, why and to whom (Moberg 1983). I have modified them slightly by incorporating aspects of popular culture studies, linguistics, and studies of popularisation within the history of science, but they still remain the main core of the analysis.

### WHO?

Not surprisingly, almost all the lecturers are men. There are only six female voices in three of the programmes, and there is one female teacher involved in a theatre play for children, to which I will return later. Only one of these women, Maj Holmberg, gave a short lecture (SRD *Då hade jag velat vara med!* 1948-08-20). The other five were interviewed on their work. Three were dealing with the finds and analyses after an excavation in Sweden, and two were members of an

<sup>4</sup> In comparison there were 1035 lectures in history and 352 in anthropology/ethnology during the same period (Nordberg 1998).

<sup>5</sup> I am indebted to Elisabeth Arwill-Nordbladh for bringing to my attention the references to these early broadcasts in the correspondence of Hanna Rydh.

excavation crew in Turkey sending “postcards by air” back home (SRP Vad jorden gömmer part 3, 1938-10-27; SRP Turkiet, Labranda 1949-06-26). At least three of them had academic titles, but the reporters presented them as “Miss” or “Mrs”. In a description of a scene before him (a room at the State Historical Museum in Stockholm) one reporter described the women working there as “girls in white coats”. This included fil. lic. Dagmar Selling. The male archaeologist Otto Frödin, on the other hand, consistently referred to them as co-workers (SRP Vad jorden gömmer part 3, 1938-10-27). There is no difference in the description of their work in comparison to the work of men. It was portrayed as very qualified tasks with the same requirements of skills as for men.

At least one female archaeologist did make her own radio shows, though. As mentioned earlier, Hanna Rydh, the first woman to receive a PhD in archaeology in Sweden in 1919, made several live broadcasts in the 1920s. During the ‘30s she gave talks on various topics regarding her travels in South America. Only one of them focused on prehistoric monuments, however, and unfortunately this manuscript has not been preserved in the SR archives. The result is that even though she certainly was as active as many men in radio popularisation, her efforts are not dealt with in the analysis that follows.

The overwhelming majority of the male speakers were academically trained in archaeology, with titles such as professor, doctor or licentiate. They had salaried positions at universities, museums or with the regional authorities (Sw. *landsantikvarie*), and they represent institutions or authorities all over Sweden. Some of them, like Axel Bagge, made only one appearance, while others, like Holger Arbman, Ivar Schnell, Arvid Enqvist and Carl-Axel Moberg, were frequent speakers. In between we find the odd teacher, clergyman and journalist/editor, most of them with academic titles to their names.

## HOW?

In the beginning the technical aspects of broadcasting set the limits for what could be done. Recording was not possible in those early days, so all programmes were sent live. This meant that either a microphone was placed at an actual event, like an academic lecture, or a speaker was invited to a studio.

Technical innovations soon made it possible to record both events and speakers, and to move out of the studios. The beginning of the 1930s therefore saw new programme forms. The early interviews seem to have consisted of a radio reporter reading a question live, while the answer of the expert was pre-recorded and played from a record. Soon enough real dialogues or interviews came about, but they were always rehearsed and the speakers’ answers are to be found in manuscript form today (Nordberg 1998 and 2003; Hallingberg 1999).

This change, both in programme forms and linguistic adaptation, is reflected in the archaeological broadcasts. Generally, though, an informal tone seems to come naturally to most speakers in these programmes. Even so, a present-day listener will certainly be reminded of old movies.

About a third of the material consists of different forms of dialogues, interviews or other live events, while two thirds are more traditional lectures or informal talks in monologue form. Visits to excavations and guided tours of museum exhibitions became more frequent with the series “The microphone is curious” and “Microphone visits”. With titles like “What the earth conceals” and “Holiday in a burial mound” these shows took the listeners to the exhibition at the Museum of National Antiquities, or to a panorama of the excavations taking place in a certain region (SRD Guldfynd i svensk jord 1934-11-05; SRD and SRP Arkeologisk sommar 1947-08-31). Important finds like the bog body Bockstensmannen or exciting new Stone Age sites on the Swedish west coast also gave rise to such visits (SRD Mikrofonen är nyfiken. Bockstensfyndet – världens märkligaste dräktfynd 1936-09-08; SRD För 9000 år sedan 1935-08-30).

The school radio, which started in 1928 and specialised in developing broadcasts for educational purposes, did much to change the forms of the programmes (Lönström 1981). To help pupils understand the topic of the programme, children’s dialogues and interviews with experts were preferred over lectures. We find an example of the latter when the teacher and radio enthusiast Elof Lindälv took his class on a visit to the Gothenburg Museum. The pupils had been given small assignments to solve in the exhibition room, and the broadcast consists of a dialogue between the pupils, their teacher and the curator Nils Niklasson (fig. 1). They discussed the finds, the procedure at an excavation, and conditions of life during the Stone Age (SRD Hur vi fann stenåldersmannen 1934-09-17).

Most fictional forms were also intended to benefit children. There are two “hearplays” in the material: “The wolf clan comes to the village”, and “With Stone Age boys on a hunt”. By and large they follow the well-known literary paths of adventure books for boys during this period. Initial hostility or problems are solved by a clever boy hero (or two) with some dramatic highlights, ending in a final reconciliation and happiness for all. These two programmes were broadcast several times during the late 1930s and ‘40s with slight adaptations each time; perhaps the introduction was shorter or bits of dialogue were edited out (SRD Vargfolket kommer till boskapsbyn 1938-09-19, 1940-09-23, 1944-10-02, 1946-09-17; SRD Stenålderspojkar på jakt 1937-09-20, 1939-09-25, 1943-09-27).

Plays were also used with a more pedagogical purpose. One teacher let her pupils write a play based on what they had read and learnt about the Stone Age in their local museum, and then their play was sent on the radio with the pupils as actors. It did not pass any censorship of an archaeologist as the story contains mention of thralls and iron implements in a Stone Age setting, but the focus of the whole exercise was placed on the children’s creativity and not on the precise content (SRD Med forntidens barn till Bråvikens stränder 1948-09-08).

The language of the speakers seldom differs much from their scientific publications. They avoid specialised terms, of course, but otherwise they tend to stick to straightforward accounts. Only the occasional example is given to elucidate a point or explain something, as when one speaker pointed out that it is just as



*Fig. 1. Nils Niklasson (in a white coat) with Elof Lindälv and pupils from the Karl Johan school in the archaeological exhibition at Gothenburg Museum. Please note the manuscript and the microphone on the show-case! Photo: Gothenburg Museum.*

easy for an archaeologist to date an artefact with the typological method as it is for the listeners themselves to determine if a car is new or old by the model (SRD Guldfynd i svensk jord 1934-11-05).

#### WHAT?

Four major themes can be distinguished in the material. The first focuses on the scientific work of the archaeologist, that is, the scientific methods and argumentation. The second deals with the role of the public and focuses on the Law of Antiquities, what to do with stray finds, etc. The third deals with results, that is, the presentations of prehistory. The fourth consists of shows with a certain degree of fiction: “hearplays” or fictitious dialogues. There is of course a small scattering of wildly heterogeneous programmes that do not fit into these categories, like the BBC broadcast from Egypt, where the archaeologist Alfred Lucas of the Cairo Museum was interviewed and a symphony orchestra played the trumpets found in the grave of Tutankhamen (SRP Tutankhamuns trumpeter Ijuda efter 3000 års tystnad 1939-04-16), or travelling accounts that are mostly anthropological but have archaeological aspects, etc. There is also one literary review of archaeological books, to which I will return later.

In the early 1930s, the first and second themes dominate, while the third and fourth become predominant in the 1940s.

In the first theme, the scientific reasoning and methods of archaeology are explicitly spelled out. It was very common for the speaker or interviewed expert to explain how archaeologists can date things using the typological method of Montelius, or how the results of the national survey of monuments can be used to gain knowledge of the human colonisation of different parts of Sweden (mostly Stone or Iron Age). As we shall see, excavation methods and strategy is another common feature within this theme. Explicitly theoretical statements are scarce, as when Professor Arne Furumark talked of the wish to understand people of prehistory on their own terms, and the impossibility of doing so because researchers are a product of their own times (SRP *Då skulle jag velat vara med* 1948-02-22).

Perhaps practical things were easier to discuss. In several broadcasts the excavator explained in detail how the work was done, with what tools and by whom. For example he described how he got a lot of help from locals in some cases and from students or public relief workers in others (SRD and SRP *Kungshögens hemlighet* 1936-07-28), and how difficult it could be to get any labourers at all at times, for example during the harvest season (SRD and SRP *Vad jorden gömmer part 1*, 1938-09-29). The reporter often mentioned the tools of the trade, and there is no question that fieldwork in general had male connotations: "One amanuensis and four students felt happy in the sunshine; provided with spades, measuring-tape, knives, smoking pipes and everything else associated with the field archaeologist" (Sven-Olof Olsson in SRP and SRD *Semester i gravhög* 1948-07-04).

Brushes and wheelbarrows are discussed along with paraffin and plaster-of-Paris bandages (for field conservation of pottery or the removal of entire graves for excavation in the museum). The reporter often placed himself in the position of the general (layman) public: "Do you really mean to tell me that these little brown, dirty bits can tell you anything at all?" (ibid), and the expert then went on to talk about the pottery or skull fragments or whatever it was.

It is in these microphone excursions outside the studio that one characteristic of the radio medium becomes obvious. Apart from the reporter trying to verbally create images of the scene before him, you can hear the usual excavation sounds in the background: shovels hitting the ground, the scraping of trowels, squeaky wheelbarrows, the quiet murmur of voices. These "soundscapes" probably did as much as the verbal content to place fieldwork as a characteristic of the discipline in the minds of the listeners (SRP *Medeltidsglimtar från Varberg* 1937-11-14).

In this context the characteristics of the archaeologist are repeatedly emphasised; he (of course) is a meticulous, careful and detached scientist with expert knowledge, who can see what the layman cannot. Interestingly enough, the bit about being detached is somewhat nuanced by some archaeologists. Quite a few give examples of emotional aspects of the work. John-Elof Forssander, professor at the Lund department, spoke with quiet understatement of his feelings when



excavating a particular find, but without actually telling the listeners what those feelings were (SRP and SRD Semester i gravhög 1948-07-04). Several speakers talk of their usual indifference in front of an opened grave, but more than one said there were occasional exceptions. For Bengt Thordeman, the excavation of the mass graves from the Battle of Visby in 1361 “touched even this professional man” (SRP Krigargravarna vid Korsbetningen 1940-07-21).

The archaeologist will do anything for his science, and sometimes the speakers present historical examples of this. The assistant professor Holger Arbman chose to cite from the letters of Hjalmar Stolpe, who was the excavator of the boat graves in Vendel: “Food is scarce and what you get is half rotten, the water is bad and there is total isolation, see there what Vendel has to offer. I have never been to a more wretched locality, but I have never made better finds” (SRD Gravlagd i båt 1944-02-27, my transl.). Stolpe is further described as a man of action, well prepared to physically defend the site from night-time robbers. Such an adventurous picture is nuanced by Bengt Thordeman, who later became the state antiquarian. He described his work at the Visby excavation mentioned above as boring, uncomfortable, cold and requiring immense patience and meticulousness. It was certainly nothing for the layman. Only the dedicated scientist would put himself through such misery to reach such splendid results (SRD Vad jorden gömmer 1942-10-05).

Archaeology was a relatively new subject at universities, and the first university-educated generations were only beginning to assert themselves. Perhaps this was the reason that some speakers answered their own rhetorical question as to why archaeology is necessary, or perhaps it was intended to lay the audience’s potential doubts to rest. Most answers are nationalistic and thereby political, while some focus on existential issues. J. G. Andersson was of the opinion that by collecting and sorting the material evidence of the deeds of prehistoric people, we can penetrate our own essence in a more profound way (SRD De första människorna 1944-06-26). Thordeman stated that it is quite possible to live happily all one’s life without any knowledge of ancient monuments or prehistory, but that some force within us drives us to find out about things that are of no immediate use. What we learn beyond what we can use is what gives us culture, and culture is certainly of use to us. The culture we acquire makes us more judicious, more tolerant and freer human beings (SRD Vad jorden gömmer 1942-10-05). Moberg’s answer was that we need to understand how the society we live in is constituted, and this would be impossible without knowing about the historical processes of human societies in general. Man would not be able to get a better life or even to uphold the present society. This is so important that it is worth spending public funds on, without the politicians getting any immediate use out of it. He then went on to describe the Soviet archaeology based on Marx and Engels, and the contemporary political use of archaeology in Germany and Europe. He hoped that the Swedish citizen could form his own political opinion and that the Swedish soldier could perform his duties without needing encouragement from prehistoric

graves, pottery urns and prehistoric borders (SRD Fornforskning och politik 1944-05-26). For Curman, it was absolutely necessary to broaden and deepen the knowledge of prehistory, as a very concrete knowledge of the Swedish heritage was important for understanding its role in the building of the nation (SRD Svenska folkminnen och svensk natur 1942-06-01).

The second theme focuses on the role of the public. A large part of it consists of programmes informing listeners of the Law of Antiquities. The Law stated that ancient monuments were protected, and that all prehistoric artefacts made of precious metals belonged to the state, even if they were found on private property. The state would compensate the finder with the metal's market value plus one eighth for the scientific value. If the finds were very special, the state antiquarian had the right to decide on an extra finder's fee beyond this. These broadcasts often combine archaeological methods, like systematic surveying and documentation of monuments (SRP Med svenska hackor och spadar i grekisk mark 1937-11-04), with anecdotes of farmers or schoolboys receiving small fortunes for turning in unique finds (SRD Dolda skatters hemligheter 1942-09-21). One speaker even went as far as promising to buy dinner for anyone who reported a new and interesting rune stone to him! (SRD and SRP Semester i gravhög 1948-07-04). The Second World War brought about a special broadcast on the Law with particular reference to what could be found in peat bogs. The increase in peat digging made the archaeologists fear that precious finds would be destroyed or go unreported (SRD Nyheter från förhistorisk tid 1945-08-04).

The relationship to the public was not straightforward. On the one hand the public were considered untrained laymen who could not see what the expert could, thereby missing important information or causing even worse trouble. The Glozel-fraud that had occurred only a decade earlier was, for example, blamed on two amateurs, a doctor and a boy (SRD Polisförhör med fornfynd 1934-01-04). Such frauds would hardly have passed a trained and competent archaeologist (SRD Falska fornfynd till forskarens förargelse 1934-08-28). On the other hand, the work of laymen was sometimes praised. Interested citizens were carefully encouraged to report observations or stray finds to the proper authorities and at the same time warned off from excavations of their own. In certain cases amateur archaeologists could be praised for their life-long dedication to the cultural heritage of their particular region (SRD Lekmannen och fornminnena 1934-06-20; SRD Bygd och kultur i nordsvensk fornhistoria 1934-07-12). As we have seen, the archaeologist needed to keep the public on his side, or his science's side, if nothing else to receive manual labourers for the excavations.

Several broadcasts describe the monuments of a particular region so as to enable inhabitants to recognise them and help care for them. For the Stockholm area a special programme was made informing the listeners of what monuments could be found along the tourist paths, with descriptions of monuments as well as nice places to have a picnic (SRD Fornminnen vid turiststigarna runt Stockholm 1936-07-30). This seems to be the only example of such a detailed description in

the material presented here, which is surprising considering how popular such excursions were (see e.g., Gillberg 2001; Arwill-Nordbladh 2005b). They combined several “ideal” aspects of contemporary modern life, from healthy exercise and fresh air to appreciation of nature and culture.

Another aspect of this theme concerns the experts and their relationship to public understanding of ancient monuments and the oral tradition surrounding them. There is no question of a complete repudiation of local traditions. At least one broadcast turned the truth-question into an exercise in source criticism, where local traditions were compared with the results of archaeological excavations by experts (SRD Folketro och fornminnen 1934-12-16).

The third theme deals explicitly with prehistory, and the most common periods are the Stone and Iron Ages, although the Bronze and Middle Ages get their fair share of attention. The Stone Age programmes focused on the first inhabitants of Scandinavia or of particular regions in Sweden, and on the possibility of an interglacial colonisation. Some of the Iron Age research had quite another angle, and worked closely with historical sources, especially the Old Norse sagas (SRD Storbönderna i Valsgårde 1934-06-06; SRD Vad Uppsala högar gömde 1936-09-21; SRD and SRP Upplands högar 1942-02-19). These were largely considered as true in their content, and the task of the archaeologists was to find material evidence for certain aspects of these sources.

Some speakers describe the Stone Age as more primitive and hard than the present time, while others beg us not to underestimate the skill of these first inhabitants, especially concerning materials that are not preserved, like skin, wood and bone. Some used their own times as a mirror to describe the Stone Age people as happy, as they did not have to worry about unemployment, overcrowding or noisy traffic (SRD Sveriges första människor 1944-01-09).

Women were consistently described as housewives. Sometimes they were considered primitive, especially when it came to cleanliness and hygiene (e.g., SRD Södermanland i närbild 1941-12-12), but otherwise it was implied that they were motivated by the same things that the modern housewife was supposed to be. They could make the most of the things they gathered or hunted during the Stone Age, and they were suitably dressed during the Iron and Viking Ages. As an example of the latter, the men of Birka were supposed to be rich, fond of splendour and dressed in “gypsy finery and frills”, while their wives were dressed simpler in “more standardised clothes” (SRP Vad jorden gömmer 1939-12-13). A progressive view of technological change can be seen in the constant use of the word “development” and in phrases like “this was a time before the women had discovered the use of pottery” (SRD Sveriges första människor 1944-01-09), but when they did, they decorated their pots so they would look “nice” (SRD Södermanland i närbild 1941-12-12). The hunter-gatherer woman of Barum was described as an active and hunting member of her people, but in her grave she sat “in patient wait for her excavator” which emphasises her passiveness to at least one male – the archaeologist (SRD Sveriges första människor 1944-01-09).

Another interesting aspect of this theme is the use of the word “forefathers” or “ancestors”. It was obviously not a term with a predefined content, as many of the speakers felt the need to provide their own definition. These definitions vary along a scale between two extremes. On the one hand, some archaeologists define the term very literally, that is, those buried in the mounds are our blood ancestors. This is a more common definition among Iron Age researchers than among those dealing with the Stone Age. There is no total agreement, however, as we find other Iron Age researchers somewhere in the middle with definitions implying that the relationship is not based on blood or true ancestry, but instead on living in the same area and farming the same land. At the other end of the scale we find a single voice, that of Carl-Axel Moberg, who asked the crucial question straight out: “Were they really our forefathers?” (SRD Var de verkliga våra förfäder? 1948-06-14). The whole manuscript is devoted to discussing how presumptions of ancestry can be highly political statements. He went as far as questioning the relevance of the question at all, by wondering where the line should be drawn even if blood ancestry could in some way be proven. Who would have the right to a certain piece of land – those who have lived there the longest in prehistory or those occupying the same area in the present? The state antiquarian Sigurd Curman emphasised the unique position of the Swedish people in a European context. They could truly tell the world that their ancient monuments contain their ancestors. Such security and confidence were the privilege of the Scandinavian people, and they have the archaeologists to thank for it. Without their patient and meticulous research through many years such statements would have no scientific base (SRD Svenska folkminnen och svensk natur 1942-06-01). It was certainly implied that no other European country could say the same. This statement was made in 1942, when a new and stronger Law of Antiquities was passed.

It is very clear that the Second World War, or the threat of it, affected some of the content of these broadcasts and the rhetoric used by the speakers. In several cases prehistory stands as a mirror for contemporary humanity to look into, to better understand themselves and their situation. Thordeman described the Battle of Visby in 1361 as a *blitzkrieg*, where the pacified inhabitants were totally surprised. They were, however, willing to sacrifice themselves, and Thordeman hoped that “the medieval men of Visby may stand as a good example and a warning” (SRP Krigargravarna vid Korsbetningen 1940-07-21). The curator of the Archaeological Museum in Gothenburg, Nils Niklasson, discussed change in society in a long-term perspective. Thousands of years would include long periods of peace and stability, which would be broken by short, intense periods of worry and upheaval. Migrations and hostilities would be superseded by a mixing of people and a new stability, until the whole circle started over again (SRD Vad jorden gömmer 1938-10-12). Niklasson had spent the years of the First World War and the 1920s in Germany, so he had been through such an upheaval before (Gillberg 2001).

Even though the general tone tended to be patriotic, at least one archaeologist gave voice to a long-term perspective to speak for mankind as a whole. When Andersson made his broadcast on the history of humankind in 1944, he ended up by discussing cranium shapes as an indication of brain volume. He deplored that there was no such convenient, material indicator for that excellent human characteristic called “humanity”. Perhaps cannibalism was one sign of its absence, but he compared that to his own contemporary times when flourishing cities were laid waste and the best parts of the young generation were sacrificed on the altar of war gods. Thereby he placed the humanity of the present in comparison to our notion of the primitiveness of cannibalism and questioned the straightforward “evolution” of all things human (SRD *De första människorna* 1944-06-26).

The broadcasts cover the prehistory of the rest of the world as well. Professor Torgny Säve-Söderbergh delivered three lectures on Egypt in a small series in 1947, treating the reign of Akhenaton in two of them and ancient Egyptian medicine in the third (SRD *Faraon Echnaton* 1947-10-08; SRD *En revolution på pyramidernas tid* 1947-12-22; SRD *Läkare och läkekonst i det gamla Egypten* 1947-09-21). A Swedish expedition to Egypt was presented by Hjalmar Larsén, and he focused on excavation and interpretation of finds (SRD *Svenska spadar i egyptisk jord* 1942-07-28). The history of mankind was treated by J. G. Andersson with special emphasis on finds from China (SRD *Människans historia på en halvtimme* 1948-05-06). Excavation news from the Middle East was presented along with a lecture on the Mohenjo-Daro culture by the clergyman Hans Woxblom, who had visited Indian archaeologists on their dig (SRD *Mohenjo-Daro och Induscivilisationen* 1946-08-20).

The fourth theme, containing programmes with an element of fiction, comes almost exclusively from the broadcasting for schools, and the content is adapted for children. Their educational intentions are unvaried, however. Artefacts and certain acts are described in detail, like the flint arrowheads and a hunt the boys make. The concept of different clans or people sharing the land or living like neighbours was based on modern research where the appropriate term would have been “cultures”. In this kind of popularisation, the cultures were often turned into people, so that the wolf clan were hunter-gatherers living close to the sea while the village was inhabited by farmers (e.g., SRD *Vargfolket kommer till boskapsbyn* 1938-09-19; SRD *Med stenålderspojkar på jakt* 1939-09-25).

## WHY?

This question is difficult to answer on the basis of the material alone, but there are glimpses here and there. Archaeologists had a need of the public in ways that not many other academic groups did. These early generations of professional archaeologists found it important to popularise their results to the public. In part this was probably due to a certain dependence on the public’s goodwill. In the 1930s and ‘40s the educational level of Swedish citizens was not what it is today. Many had only a few years of schooling, and large parts of the population lived

in the countryside. They did not have access to even the most elementary knowledge of health care issues, childrearing, new farming practices, etc. (Nordberg 2003). Without any particular interest in prehistory, people could not be expected to understand what sort of things might turn up during ploughing, and certainly not be expected to tell anyone else. Archaeologists were afraid that monuments might be destroyed by ignorant or, worse still, hostile farmers who might not report finds of artefacts to the authorities. As a new profession, they also relied on popularisation to enhance their status, both at universities and in society in general.

On a more general level the question can be answered using research on media, radio and educational history. From the very beginning, RT had a strategy to promote adult education within the enterprise, and this was written into the contract with the state. Adult education (*Sw. folkbildning*) was a huge movement involving millions of people. The political left wanted to educate citizens who could use their political power responsibly and choose between political alternatives by thinking for themselves. The more conservative and religious parts of the establishment saw education as a good thing, too, but perhaps for different reasons. It would reduce the abuse of alcohol with all its consequences, and it would make it possible for each individual to strive for “higher” intellectual or spiritual values. RT was influenced by the British idea of “University Extension”, that is, to make scientific reasoning and results available to the whole population. Unique for Sweden, however, was the emphasis on the academic lecturer. The person responsible for scientific results should be the one talking about them on the radio, as this would give the highest credibility to what was said. Even when reporters gradually became part of the programmes, the experts held a firm position for decades. As we have seen, quite a few archaeologists made contributions, irrespective of which educational ideology they preferred or what political opinions they had.

A more private reason for becoming a radio lecturer was, perhaps, the money. It cannot be said to have been a generously salaried activity, but at least it was paid work and for some it had commercial value to boot. Some academics made money touring the country with lectures or lecture series. There were special offices coordinating this activity, and they made pamphlets offering a wide range of lectures on almost every subject. Study circles, clubs or special interest associations could then book single lectures or series through the offices (Olsson 1998; Poppius 1991; Kärnfelt 2000). For academics, the radio could be the best advertisement around, *and* one would be paid for appearing!

#### TO WHOM?

When RT was founded in 1925 there were 39800 licence holders, by 1937 a million, and two years later 1.3 million. This constituted 65% of the households, and Sweden had the highest number of licence holders per 1000 inhabitants in Europe (Höijer 1998). By 1948 they were two million, which equals 88% of the

households (Hallingberg 1999; Höijer 1998). In theory, it soon became possible for the whole population to listen to the radio. Geographical location, income level, sex, age, profession, political opinion or personal interest did not matter, or rather, did not *have* to matter.

But who did listen, and to what? A generalised picture (based on statistics and in-depth interviews) reveals that during the first three decades this new medium appealed primarily to men. They were the most frequent listeners and enjoyed the technical aspects, like taking the radio apart and putting it together again, while women seem to have been generally less interested. Men preferred the news, the weather forecasts and sports, while women chose radio theatre, religious services and music (Höijer 1998). As we have seen, there were lectures intended for a general audience as well as for special groups like school children or housewives. For the most part it was a question of educating citizens in three basic areas: health, hygiene and housing (Nordberg 1998).

When listeners have been interviewed on their memories of radio programmes only a few mention any lectures, and none with an archaeological content (Höijer 1998).

School children differ from listeners in general on two points; they were compelled to listen in school, where knowledge of the history of one's region and country was on the curriculum, and they were more active in the radio programmes than other groups. Usually, the relationship between speaker and audience was formal, distanced and asymmetrical (Nordberg 2003), but the gap is not as wide in the school radio broadcasts as in other lectures. Children were encouraged to be active. In broadcasts on the particular monuments of a region or on the Law of Antiquities, speakers sometimes asked children to write to RT and recount their own experiences or pose their own questions. This was a conscious pedagogical method that the school radio used for all subjects (see e.g., Forsslund 2002). There are more children's voices than female voices in this material, for example, and the children are more active than the adults. They tell their own stories, move around in the landscape and, most importantly, ask questions (SRD Södermanland i närbild 1941-12-12; SRD Med forntidens barn vid bråvikens stränder 1948-09-08; SRD Hur vi fann stenåldersmannen 1934-09-17). Even though these questions were rehearsed beforehand, they do bear witness to attempts to see things from the perspective of school children.

## RADIO POPULARISATION IN CONTEXT

Placed in relation to how other disciplines performed on the radio, the results of this study confirm the general picture. This period in the history of the radio has been characterised as patriarchal and focused on education, recreation and edification of the people. The eradication of superstition was also put on the agenda. The popular archaeology broadcasts fit right into this picture. The message that archaeology is a science with scientific methods was put across rather

heavily. Popularisation of other disciplines, like astronomy and medicine, looked much the same during the 1930s and '40s (Nordberg 2003).

When it comes to the way the research was presented, there are small differences between scientific archaeology and the popular version of it, perhaps because it would be the same person doing both. In the radio lectures or dialogues, the archaeologists are more explicit than in ordinary academic circumstances. The school radio in particular required a certain simplification, less abstraction and very clearly stated logical chains of arguments. This makes these broadcasts a valuable source material for an historian of archaeology, as they contain comments on aspects not usually mentioned, like metaphysical objectives, excavation strategies, tools and work force. The speakers sometimes hinted at their personal experiences, inviting the audience to share the more philosophical or existential side of archaeology.

When this epoch is treated within the history of archaeology, three themes are usually mentioned: the first inhabitants, the Iron Age research trying to connect archaeological material to historical sources, and, finally, the question of the Finnish ancestry and when the Swedes came to Finland (Baudou 2004). The first two themes are present in this material, while the third is not. Another difference is the emphasis on heritage management in the radio shows, which in my opinion is a direct result of the intended audience. The modernisation of society with intensified cultivation and large infra-structural projects threatened the ancient monuments. Even though the National Heritage Board was reorganised, a new Law of Antiquities was passed and a national survey of monuments was started, the interest and goodwill of the general public was absolutely necessary for the care and preservation of monuments. They were to be the focus in a creation of national unity, and archaeological speakers focused on material heritage as a common denominator for everyone, cutting across social and economic barriers. Archaeology became part of the new national enterprise, the *folkhem*, where the value of the material cultural heritage was something that many groups could embrace (Baudou 2004; Welinder 2003; Bohman 1997; Arwill-Nordbladh 2005; Petersson 2005).

The issue of patriotism/nationalism and the political opinion of the archaeologists of the period has been a major question within the history of archaeology (Werbart 1999; Baudou 2000, 2004). In the radio shows, practically everyone used phrases like "our people", "our country", "ancestors" or "forefathers" and they obviously gave these concepts a range of ideological meanings. As a listener, one was told of research results ranging from claims of blood ancestry to no connection at all, and one was asked whether it mattered anyway. If anything, the anti-war or anti-Nazi opinions broadcasted are more prominent than any supporting voices. In hindsight it is perhaps easy to read too much into statements made before the war broke out, but in a review of new archaeological literature the famous publicist Ivar Harrie openly declared a political and ideological need of scientific archaeology. After stating that people always write the stories they



want to believe about the past until science presents them with overwhelming evidence that cannot be disregarded, he turned to contemporary politics:

“As you know, there is a new fairy tale of the Nordic prehistory under construction – a new Norse myth is being developed, this time by a people who are not themselves Norse. But the new fairy tale shows tendencies to spread here as well. That is why it is very important right now to arm oneself with the firm and secure knowledge that is to be had of our Norse ancestors. Tonight I will mention a couple of new books where such knowledge is to be found” (SRD Litteraturkrönika 1935-09-19).

The spectrum of possible arguments to use politically or ideologically was therefore rather wide, but most speakers would probably have agreed that science stood above all such matters.

For one particular political and ideological movement, however, these broadcasts did not supply any arguments at all. There is not much here to suggest any other role for women, whether in the present or in the past, than that of housewife. It is interesting to note, though, that any mention of hygiene and housing is made in connection to housewives (e.g., SRD Södermanland i närbild 1941-12-12).

Since the relationship between the public and the professional archaeologist is a burning issue within our discipline today, I find it interesting to note that it seems to have been ambiguous since the very beginning of professionalization. On the one hand, the archaeologists on the radio formed a small part of the overall lecture supply but they still worked as an instrument of state power or state ideology. They provided the research results on which the rhetoric of national material heritage could be based, and they took an active part in the educational aspect as well. On the other hand they needed the support and legitimisation of the public, not to mention their cooperation in reporting finds to the authorities and providing the work force on excavations.

This study has tried to answer the question of what went out from the scientific archaeology to the public over the radio, but what parts of this, if any, were used in the public debate remains to be seen.

*English revised by Laura Wrang.*

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- Semester i gravhög. 1948-07-04. Vi hälsar på hos arkeologer. Reportage av Sven-Olof Olsson, 2 s. Arkivnr G11 M1A:10. (Holiday in a burial mound. We visit archaeologists).
- Då hade jag velat vara med! 1948-08-20. Bl. a. Moberg om Fyn för 1600 år sedan, Gunnar Beskow om Europa efter landisens bortsmältning och Maj Holmberg om en egyptisk stormans begravning), 4 + 3 + 5 s. Arkivnr RK M I:666. (I would have wanted to be there!)
- Med forntidens barn vid bråvikens stränder. 1948-09-08. Med Inga Ringqvist, 14 s. Arkivnr SKOLR M I:84. (With the children of prehistory on the shores of Bråviken).

### *Sveriges Radios Programarkiv (SRP)*

- Arkeologisk sommar. 1947-08-31. Med fornforskare från Ageröd till Kultsjön. L-B+ 7.925. (Archaeological summer).
- Då skulle jag velat vara med! 1948-02-22. Docent Arne Furumark skulle velat vara med på Kreta för 3.500 år sedan (om den minoiska kulturen). 2. Prof. J. G. Andersson skulle velat vara med i yttersta Östern för 3.700 år sedan (om arkeologiska fynd). L-B+ 8.557. (I would have wanted to be there!).
- Krigargravarna vid Korsbetningen. 1940-07-21. Ett program om Valdemar Atterdags tåg till Gotland. Föredrag av fil. dr. Bengt Thordeman. L-B 4.218.
- Kungshögens hemlighet. 1936-07-22. Från en gravöppning i Hälsingland. L-B 1.552. (The secret of the King's mound).
- Med svenska hackor och spadar i grekisk mark. 1937-11-04. I Asine. Föredrag av prof. Axel W Persson. L-B. 2.198:1.
- Medeltidsglimtar från Varberg. 1937-11-14. L-B + 2.193. (Glimpses of the Middle Ages in Varberg).
- Upplands högar. 1942-02-19. Vad ögat ser och forskningen tror om ett landskaps äldsta historia. Med bl a Birger Nerman. L-B 551. (The mounds of Uppsala).
- Semester i gravhög. 1948-07-04. Vi hälsar på hos arkeologer. L-B 8.989. (Holiday in a burial mound).
- Turkiet: Labranda. 1949-06-26. K. A. Arvidsson besöker prof Axel W Persson o. Hans medhjälpare vid utgrävningarna i Labranda. L-B 11.736.
- Tutankhamons trumpeter ljuda efter 3000-årig tystnad. (Överföring från Kairo gm Egyptian State Broadcasting o. BBC). 1939-04-16. L-B 3.359 (The trumpets of Tutankhamun sound again after a 3000-year long silence).
- Vad jorden gömmer. 1939-03-09. Bronsålderns bönder. Ciceron Holger Arbman. L-B 3.311. (What the earth conceals. The farmers of the Bronze Age).
- Vad jorden gömmer. 1939-12-13. Birka – vår första handelsstad. L-B+ 3.796. (What the earth conceals. Birka – our first commercial town).
- Vad jorden gömmer. Arkeologisk serie. 1. Hur forntiden kommer i dagen, L-B 2. 845, 1938-09-29. 2. När isen släppte, L-B 2. 900, 1938-10-12. 3. Bondekultur, L-B 2.965, 1938-10-27. 4. Stenåldersliv o. Stenåldersdöd, L-B 3.020, 1938-11-25. (What the earth conceals).

