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The Swedish Archaeological Society

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The Swedish Archaeological Society was founded in 1947 and the area of interest comprises all aspects of archaeology, both native and foreign. The Society is the only common body for professional Swedish archaeologists, independent of their posts at different departments and institutions. In 1947 it counted about 60 members and today more than 500 scholars belong to the Society. The Society can therefore act as spokesman for Swedish archaeological opinion on matters of national and international importance.

From 1951 to 1978 the Swedish Archaeological Society presented six volumes of *Swedish Archaeological Bibliography*, reviewing archaeological research published during the period 1939-1975. However, after the appearance in 1974 of *Nordic Archaeological Abstracts* (published annually), the need for these brief reviews diminished. Instead, the Society published two volumes of *Swedish Archaeology*, each containing somewhat more exhaustive comments on research published in a five-year period (1976-80 and 1981-85). This tradition was continued in *Current Swedish Archaeology, Vol. 3, 1995* where a retrospective analysis of the period 1986-1990 was presented.

This journal, *Current Swedish Archaeology*, was started in 1993, and is an important part of the work that the Society is engaged in. The Society also organizes seminars and excursions. Formal matters are dealt with at the annual general meeting. Every second year the Society also holds a thematic meeting for Swedish archaeologists.

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# Sweden, Scandinavia and the World

## Looking In and Looking Out

Kerstin Cassel & Björn Varenius

As you may have noticed, this year's volume of *Current Swedish Archaeology* is somewhat different from earlier editions. We thought that the change of editors provided a good opportunity to alter a few things. The previous editorial team, Mats Burström and Anders Carlsson, has created an excellent archaeological forum, and we hope that our work will maintain their high standard.

Although both of us have followed the development of CSA since the beginning, we started our mission by ransacking the collected issues 1993-1998 in order to get a clearer picture of what the journal stands for. We came to the conclusion that CSA had quite a few foreign contributors and not much debate on non-Swedish subjects (although there are exceptions, e.g. Mediterranean archaeology and some SAREC-projects). Perhaps CSA is not very widely known abroad, or perhaps it has been regarded as a rather internal Swedish affair?

The main difference in our editing principles is that the majority of the papers are now written on a specific theme, even if there is room for "non-thematic" articles as well. Our thoughts when we took over as editors centred on the fact that CSA is written in English, but despite this it seems difficult to reach an international audience. Therefore, we chose a subject that hopefully will strengthen one of the original intentions of CSA – to invite readers and writers outside Sweden to the Swedish archaeological debate.

The title of this volume therefore alludes to the focal point in the 2001 year's edition: with what can Sweden contribute to a "global" archaeology? We believe that many Swedish archaeologists want to join the international debate; some already have, but most have not. However, it is not always easy to be heard in that debate, and it may be hard to find a suitable forum. It is our hope that CSA can be a window to the outside world – through which we can look out and the world can look in.

To find out the aims of CSA, we have to go back to the very first issue in 1993. In the Editors' Preface that year we can read the following statement: *CSA has the ambition to create a forum for discussion, that hopefully will include all aspects of Swedish Archaeology, the word 'Swedish' being understood in the broadest sense. 'Swedish' can be read as archaeology performed in Sweden, or as archaeology performed by Swedish archaeologists all over the world, or as archaeology performed by non-Swedes but of interest to Swedish archaeology. This later category includes all general debate or archaeological interpretation* (original italics underlined).

As we can see, there have never been any limitations for writers outside Sweden to join in and publish their works in CSA, at least not as far as debate and interpretation are concerned. That statement may well be repeated again. However, one must admit

that the name “Current *Swedish* Archaeology” may have a certain ring of provincialism that contrasts with titles like “World Archaeology”, etc. On the other hand, choosing English and not Swedish as the language for the journal also means that potential readers to some extent are expected to be found outside Sweden (or Scandinavia).

That there is some truth in this last assumption may be established from the list of subscribers, but it is just as true that a large majority of the readers are Swedes or Scandinavians. It seems a bit ironic that CSA is produced *by* Swedes *for* Swedes and mainly deals with Swedish archaeological matters and materials, yet great efforts are made to make ourselves readable to a non-Swedish-speaking public. This is a fine ambition, of course, but are we getting through, or would there be just as many (or more) readers and writers if we wrote in Swedish instead?

When taking over the editorial responsibility, we discussed what is *Swedish* about Swedish archaeology today. Is there really a “Swedish archaeology”, or a “Scandinavian archaeology” for that matter, something that distinguishes itself from all “other” archaeologies? Certainly there are traditions in the field. Thanks to Oscar Montelius and a few others, Sweden was once in the archaeological forefront, but that was 100 years ago. Where are we now, and where do we want to go? Are we mainly an Anglo-American echo, quick to pick up and make use of the latest trends and theories, or are we tied to the heritage from the Vienna school, a never-ending search for more data in order to render our intellectual brickwall a sense of stability?

However, we do not think that Swedish archaeology is not up to the mark. If anything, it seems like a “matter of course” that Anglo-American archaeology attracts a general and international interest, whereas the archaeology of Sweden (and other small countries) remains a rather internal affair. If this is true as far as research is concerned, let it be said that it has nothing to do with a poor or ill-documented archaeological record. On the contrary, Swedish archaeology is well supported by data, a fact that is often used by “outside” archaeologists.

In trying to reach an international audience, one problem is of course the language. CSA is published in English, but this requires additional work and most of us will never be able to express ourselves in the same, fluent way as people born in English-speaking countries. This has been discussed to by Sven-Eric Liedman, a professor of the History of Ideas, who considers the inequality among different countries to be an increasing problem because of the domination of the English language. In the archaeological discipline, Ian Hodder, for example, points to the advantages of the global networks on the Internet and how they can contribute to a “democratisation” of the interpretations of the past. But apart from the obvious fact that not everyone has access to a computer, Hodder seems to forget that language is also a factor that gives additional advantage to the people who “possess” it.

These problems aside, we want to bring to the fore the question of whether there is a notable Swedish contribution to the global archaeology. What do we do, how do we do it, what do others think of what we do, and what can we do to make others more aware of what is being done? We have asked a number of archaeologists, who from various standpoints have insight into Scandinavian archaeology, to give their opinion.

CSA volume 9 addresses this theme, which is also the title of the present introduction: *Sweden, Scandinavia and the World – Looking In and Looking Out*. Methodologically, this was done by asking a number of questions, such as: how do Swedish archaeology and archaeologists function abroad, what is it like to come to Sweden to work with archaeology, and what do foreign archaeologists think of Swedish archaeology? We also asked whether classic (Mediterranean) archaeology, which has an international position from the start, has encountered other problems, and in what ways prehistoric (North European) archaeology and classic (Mediterranean) archaeology can learn from each other.

A number of colleagues in various positions and places, engaged in these and related problems, gave us their views and shared with us their experiences. Of course, many others could have been involved in the project, but there is a limited amount of space in each issue of the journal, and we tried hard to reach a group of writers not previously encountered in CSA. Unfortunately but quite naturally, not every invitation to write a paper met with success. For some reason, it was most difficult to get perspectives on Swedish archaeology from an outside viewpoint. We have asked ourselves whether it is, perhaps, too delicate a subject or too difficult to comprehend. However, as editors we cannot help thinking that this could be linked to exactly the same problem that we started with: Swedish archaeology is regarded as an internal affair, not attractive enough or not important enough for foreign researchers to care about. In any case, this issue remains for the future.

One of the things we wanted to elucidate, is what it is like to come from Scandinavia and do archaeology in other countries and/or cultures. What problems do we encounter, are there specific ethical questions when we go abroad, and why should we work in other countries at all? Charlotte Damm discusses some of the reasons behind the increased participation of Scandinavian archaeologists in projects in other countries. She recognises the potential for archaeology to “go abroad”, but argues that we have to take the practical, ethical and political challenges seriously if we, together with the people we meet in our projects, are to achieve something of value.

Anna Källén is working in Laos, and she discusses the encounter between Swedish and Laotian archaeologists, as well as meetings with non-archaeologists who apparently comprehend the past in a different way. She speaks for a “creolised” archaeology, which is enriched by the meetings between different traditions and people with different experiences.

What happens when you leave your well-known Swedish routines to join one of the most high-profile archaeological teams in the world? That was what we asked Åsa Berggren, who reflects upon the similarities and differences between Cultural Resource Management archaeology in Sweden and a research project in Çatalhöyük in Turkey, led by Ian Hodder. We follow Åsa Berggren on a work day in Çatalhöyük and a work day in Malmö, and the key issue is the possibility of reflexivity in these different contexts. Are there more or less conscious (and hierarchical) ways to incorporate reflexivity in archaeological practice?

One of the aims of CSA has been to mirror both prehistoric (North European) and

classical (Mediterranean) archaeology. The relationship between the disciplines is discussed in two papers. Johannes Siapkas considers some problems in classical archaeology, for example the lack of theoretical discussions, and he argues that the discipline needs to be redefined and changed. Siapkas brings the questions to the edge, and certainly not without a polemic sharpness. In “Classical Blues” Klavs Randsborg also discusses conservative attitudes in both prehistoric and classical archaeology. The challenge that archaeology faces is globalisation, Randsborg argues.

Noel Broadbent presents his vision of a Swedish archaeology that is undergoing a post-national reformation. He points out that Sweden can contribute to a wider theoretical and methodological discussion, for example by incorporating both Western and non-Western forms of knowledge in its argumentation. He also brings up the matter of museum collections, gathered among indigenous peoples living in national states (like the Sámi in Sweden). This touches upon an important issue in both the Swedish and international debate, namely that of the cultural heritage – its maintenance, use and meaning.

From time to time we are reminded that the cultural heritage is not just a historical memory and not just a national interest. The world looks in. We are made aware of its potential to create action in the present. In early March 2001, international media reported on a much criticised decision of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan to systematically destroy statues and shrines. It was said that they could lead to the worship of idols. This event was certainly not the first example of such tragic behaviour, and most likely not the last either. The Presidency of the European Union expressed its “dismay and shock”. Others have also commented on the matter.

In Sweden, much of the present discussion on the cultural heritage centres on the official aims of the Swedish heritage politics, expressed as a striving for *preservation* as well as for *use*. Traditionally, the official institutions for managing the cultural heritage have been strongly focused on the former. What is valuable – and thus worth preserving – has been identified by the antiquarians, the staff of professional heritage managers. Although this is convenient in some ways, it may also cause friction and problems if the antiquarian values differ from the opinion of the general public. These kind of issues are addressed by Mats Burström at the Swedish National Heritage Board. He argues that it is necessary to discuss how the past can enrich the society of today. To achieve this, a new antiquarian attitude towards the public is required.

But to summarise these different papers in a few sentences does not seem to be a good idea. All the contributions stand for themselves. And we must not forget that the “non-thematic” articles by Karin Altenberg, Anna Hed Jakobsson, Inga-Maria Mulk & Tim Bayliss-Smith, and Stig Welinder also have something important to say about Swedish Archaeology 2001, in that they reflect what is on the agenda. What we believe – and hope – will matter in the long run, is the attempt to investigate whether there is such a thing as a “Current Swedish Archaeology”. And if there is, what forms it may take. We are well aware that these questions are not fully answered by devoting a single volume of CSA to the problem, but still, we may have gained a little more knowledge afterwards.