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The Swedish Archaeological Society

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The Swedish Archaeological Society

In 1947 some well-known archaeologists proposed the formation of a Swedish archaeological society because Sweden lacked a scientific organisation in the archaeological field, in contrast to the situation in other comparable countries. An archaeological society could bridge the gaps between the research branches. Only archaeologists well known for very important scientific results would be members of the proposed society. The society was named the Swedish Archaeological Society. A statutory meeting took place 5th May 1947 in the National Museum of History. Professor Bernhard Karlgren was elected the first Chairman of the Society.

The Society is the common body for all professional Swedish archaeologists, regardless of speciality. According to the revised statutes the purpose of the Society is to further Swedish archaeological research and to support archaeological research by granting scholarships. The Society shall especially take care of the vocational interest of the archaeologists. This task shall be carried out by taking part in the public debate, by influencing the public opinion and by being a body to which proposed measures are submitted for consideration.

Of additional importance is that the Society shall follow and inform about the development within primarily Swedish archaeology. In the beginning of the Society qualified scientific lectures were arranged. Annual meetings were combined with excursions to well-known ancient monuments. Currently the Society arranges discussions and seminars on different archaeological topics of interest to archaeologists. Every second year the Society holds a thematic meeting for Swedish archaeologists.

Support from various funds enabled the Society to issue an archaeological bibliography, *Swedish Archaeological Bibliography*, which comprises 1939-1948, 1949-1952, 1953-1957, 1960-1965, 1966-1970, 1970-1975. It was followed by *Swedish Archaeology*, issued 1976-1980 and 1981-1985. In 2001 the Society issued *Swedish Archaeological Bibliography 1882-1938*. In 1981 *Gjallarhornet* began to be issued – the newsletter of the Society and in 1993 the annual journal *Current Swedish Archaeology*. The journal has since then contained articles mirroring the current archaeological research and theoretical trends. The journal is an important part of the Society's work.

Over the years various funds have been created through, among other things, donations. *The Rosa Tengborg scholarship fund* - later *Rosa and Valter Tengborg's scholarship fund* - has its origin in a donation in 1976. In 2002 the Society decided to create a *Swedish Archaeological Society's memorial fund* to be administered by the Society based on the money remaining in other existing funds.

Editors' Preface

This year's volume of *Current Swedish Archaeology – Going Underground* – has earth as its theme. Earth is one of the four basic elements of antique and medieval natural philosophy. Through its weight it composed the centre of the universe, surrounded by water, air and fire. Earth can be defined as loose deposits of the Earth's crust, that is, particles of organic and minerogenic origin. But over time the element of earth has also acquired various symbolic meanings; it has been linked to Hades, the god of the underworld, as well as to different supernatural beings in Scandinavian folklore. The element of earth also includes rock – the rock on which carvings were made and at the top of which were built cairns and forts of stone.

For the general public, digging in the earth is often what first comes to mind when archaeology and archaeologists are mentioned. Perhaps one can say that earth is archaeology's main material? The fill from post-holes and pits, and from more diffuse features, forms a rather important part of the archaeologist's work in the field. Different types of earth- and mineral-samples are routinely taken today during archaeological excavations.

Earth is also the subject of the first article, in which Terje Gansum maintains that earth is not just a material used to build, for instance, mounds; it also comprises an archaeological source-material in its own right. He therefore emphasises the need for a cultural humanistic perspective on earth, and a possible need to shift our focus from artefacts to earth.

Anders Gustafsson & Håkan Karlsson discuss, in their article, the authenticity, management and presentation of the rock-carvings in Tanum. The starting-point is more or less ethnographic, since the authors study the archaeologists themselves and their behavior. Johan Ling also treats the rock-carvings in Bohuslän. He links them to waterways, and he argues that many of the carvings ultimately reflect seasonal maritime interactions during the Bronze Age.

Nina Karlsson discusses how archaeological methods, in this case soil-chemical analyses, can increase our understanding of societies that also have historical sources. The basis of her discussion is the historical Forest Saami culture in northern Sweden. Also Leif Häggström, Joanna Baran, Alf Ericsson & Andrew Murray discuss methods of analysis in their article on the dating and interpretation of a field wall. One of the starting-points in the attempts to date the agrarian sediments is optically stimulated luminescence (OSL).

A field of study that has earlier attracted little attention is the practice of archaeological excavation in Sweden during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In his article, Ola W. Jensen argues that excavation, as a method, was gradually established in the late seventeenth and the eighteenth century and that the development of the method was due to a number of interacting factors.

Anders Kaliff & Terje Oestigaard's article is a comparative study of prehistoric burial remains in Scandinavia and present-day burial practice in Nepal. They

maintain that the disembodiment is a cosmogonic act whereby the corpse is an intrinsic part of the agricultural and hydrological cycle.

The basis of Johan Normark's study of the influence of architecture on people is Maya causeways, sakb'ihob, in Mexico. He focuses on the relationship between these causeways and agriculture and water management.

In this volume there are also two articles not connected to the main theme: Hans Bolin investigates the degree to which sex and gender roles can be studied on the basis of Iron Age graves. One conclusion is that the articulation of sex and gender roles was a rare phenomenon in mortuary contexts.

Joakim Thomasson applies the term "gentrification" to a study of the late medieval and early modern town of Malmö. He maintains that the term can also be used when discussing non-capitalistic societies, even though other factors must be sought in order to explain changes in the social topography of the town.

In conclusion, we can point to an interesting fact. In the last volume of *Current Swedish Archaeology*, which had the theme of water, one man and seven women contributed articles. In the present volume the situation is completely reversed: Of the 15 authors, 13 are men! Whether this reflects, on a deeper level, a link between the basic elements and gender is not the question we ponder, however. The theme of the next volume is fire – how will the distribution look then?

Kerstin Cassel & Anders Gustafsson