

# CURRENT SWEDISH ARCHAEOLOGY

Vol. 13. 2005

Eds:  
Kerstin Cassel & Anders Gustafsson

The Swedish Archaeological Society



# Contents

Editors' Preface .....	5
* * *	
Anna Arnberg: Fields, Funerals and Furnaces. On the Use of Fire during the Pre-Roman Iron Age on the Island of Gotland .....	7
Tore Artelius & Mats Lindqvist: Bones of the Earth – Imitation as Meaning in Viking Age Burial Ritual .....	25
Randi Barndon: Sparks of Life. The Concept of Fire in Iron Working.....	39
Henrik Boman: White Light – White Heat. The use of Fire as a Light and Heat Source in an Atrium House in Roman Pompeii .....	59
Anders Kaliff: The Vedic Agni and Scandinavian Fire Rituals – A Possible Connection .....	77
Nanouschka Myrberg: Burning Down the House – Mythological Chaos and World Order on Gotlandic Picture Stones .....	99
* * *	
Evert Baudou: Kossinna Meets the Nordic Archaeologists.....	121
Aleks Pluskowski: The Tyranny of the Gingerbread House: Contextualising the Fear of Wolves in Medieval Northern Europe through Material Culture, Ecology and Folklore .....	141
Claes-Henric Siven: When Was Westerhus Churchyard in Use? .....	161
* * *	
About the Authors .....	184
Key Map .....	186

# 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 5<sup>th</sup> 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

In the thirteenth volume of *Current Swedish Archaeology – Quest for Fire* – we continue our theme of the four basic elements of antique and medieval natural philosophy, and the turn has now come to fire. Fire provides heat and light, and in a larger sense the hearth is often seen as a value-laden symbol of the home. However, fire also represents a danger, as evidenced by burned-down houses and towns.

Fire has the power to transform earth and stone to metal; it can transform glass from a solid to a liquid, and create steam of water. It has also been perceived as a re-creator that, among other things, helps to free the soul from the body during cremation.

Thus fire is essential for everyday tasks, but also for handicrafts and rituals. In the remains of fire, in the form of hearths and soot layers, we find material for absolute dating.

On the cover, as a symbol for fire, we have chosen the picture of a hearth inscribed on the large Sigurd runestone from the early eleventh century AD in Jäder parish, Södermanland. The pictorial scene illustrates a key event in the myth of Sigurd Fafnesbane – when he burns himself on a roasted dragon's heart, puts a finger in his mouth, and tastes a drop of dragon's blood. This gives him the ability to understand the language of birds.

In the first article Anna Arnberg treats several aspects of fire, not least how it fills a vital function in the re-creation of matter: by being subjected to the flames, human beings, objects and the landscape were created and/or transformed. The setting is Gotland, and the time period is the pre-Roman Iron Age. Tore Artelius & Mats Lindqvist's article discusses how the Viking Age burial custom at a site in Västergötland seems to derive from the urnfield burial-grounds of the late pre-Roman Iron Age. Among other things, the depositing of flakes of fire-cracked stone is regarded as evidence of this.

Randi Barndon discusses fire as a concept, with an emphasis on traditional iron working and its links to bodily based experiences played out as material metaphors as well as mental conceptions. Preliminary comparisons are made between Greek, Norse and African myths and legends about smiths and their role as 'masters of fire'. Henrik Boman's article treats the use of fire as light and heat sources in an atrium house in Roman Pompeii. By setting the distribution of installations for fire – such as the kitchens, ovens and baths in insula V 1 – in relation to the areas supplied with natural light and those where oil lamps and braziers were needed, an alternative suggestion emerges for the appearance of a Roman atrium house.

Anders Kaliff proposes in his article that several general patterns within the Vedic traditions could be of interest as inspiration for interpretations in the Scandinavian context. The hypothesis put forth is that the Late Bronze Age society

in Scandinavia had fire rituals resembling, and probably related to, the Vedic tradition. The Gotlandic picture stone monuments of the oldest type form the basis for Nanouschka Myrberg's discussion about mythological chaos and world order. The stone monuments constitute a material manifestation of a concept that basically deals with world order and balance, from the single picture to the monument as a whole. This concept is also detectable in myths and sagas, and crucial moments in the myths are often accentuated by fire.

As before, we also include articles unrelated to the main theme. Evert Baudou's archaeohistorical contribution treats Montelius's, Aspelin's and Kossinna's ethno-historical research and the development up to 1951. With a departure point in archaeological, artistic and literary sources, Aleks Pluskowski's article maintains that alternative understandings of human relations with animals must be rooted in specific ecological and social contexts. The example is taken from the popular perception of the 'fairytale wolf'. Finally, Claes-Henric Siven conducts an analysis of the time of use for the Swedish medieval churchyard of Westerhus, an analysis based on 30 calibrated radiocarbon dates of some of the skeletons from the site.

In the last volume, we ended our preface by wondering how the gender distribution would look in the volume with the theme of fire. We now have the results. Of the ten authors who contributed articles, seven are by men and three are by women; and if one considers the articles that specifically relate to the theme, four are by men and three are by women. The next volume, in 2006, will conclude the thematic series and deal with the last of the four elements – air.

*Kerstin Cassel & Anders Gustafsson*