

Classical Blues

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The development of a consciousness of history, in particular hinged on material forms, and of archaeology as such is discussed with particular reference to the traditions of prehistoric and classical archaeology in Scandinavia. The conservative attitudes of traditions are deplored, and globalization seen as the novel challenge.

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EARLY ARCHAEOLOGY

Archaeology in Scandinavia, in particular Denmark and Sweden, has unusually deep roots (Randsborg 1992b; 1994). A historical consciousness is perhaps as old as the Neolithic, if not older, and academic archaeological-historical questions were raised by the close of the Viking Age, at least (Randsborg 1999a) (table 1). Digging in ancient monuments was taking place by the same period, if not earlier. Conscious disturbances or “plunderings” – indeed, attempts at altering the course of history – were carried out from the close of the Neolithic on (Randsborg 1998a). Proper excavations date to at least the Late Middle Ages, with collections, in some form, also predating the Renaissance (cf. Randsborg 1994). Scientific museums, huge topographical data-bases and scientific literature emerges around 1600, in particular with Danish Ole Worm. Later developments comprise, e.g., the investigations of the mounds at Uppsala, Uppland (cf. Klindt-Jensen 1975, 29f.) and of the Kiffvig/Kivik grave in Skåne/Scania (Randsborg 1993), even the Jelling monuments in Jylland/Jutland (Krogh 1993).

A Scandinavian interest in the history and archaeology of the Mediterranean and the Near East may already be present in the picture programme of the Kivik grave of 1300 BC, if not earlier (Randsborg 1993), and in the Gundestrup cauldron of c. 100 BC (Kaul 1995), but is certified for the Roman Imperial Age, and later. The Mediterranean perspective was secured by the adoption of Christianity, links with the Pope and Byzantium, and even the Crusades. Archaeologically, this is demonstrated, e.g., by the collection of Roman gemmae among the Scandinavian clergy, even during the “post-Roman” Gothic movement (Randsborg 1994). In the Renaissance, members of the Danish elite travelled even to Egypt and Ethiopia and brought collections home. The Danish expedition by Carsten Niebuhr (to the Near East) coincides with the heydays of interest in the Civilizations of the Mediterranean (Randsborg 1992b). The

latter, architectonically expressed in the Neo-Classicism of the period of the murdered Swedish King Gustaf III, had its rationale in the search for alternatives to the absolute monarchy, the republic, even the demography.

ACADEMIC ARCHAEOLOGIES

In the late 18th century a clear cultural distinction between Nordic and Mediterranean Antiquity was still not made. This changed in the 19th century when Nordic archaeology, always part of the local sentiment (even the Danish-Swedish political rivalry of old), was embraced by the search for Nation, in particular in Denmark (Randsborg 2000). Nevertheless, Danish archaeologists always stressed the cultural dependence of ancient Scandinavia on Europe, even the Near East, in its development. In the late 19th century Swedish Oscar Montelius spearheaded not only Nordic archaeological chronology, but even the European one, all the way to the Mediterranean (Italy). A further Scandinavian engagement in Europe would then have been possible, but was hampered by the increasingly local involvement in excavation and building of museums: important institutions in the new semi-modern states. Only in the Mediterranean things were different, partly out of tradition, partly as a result the backwardness of the region. Thus, German H. Schliemann excavated at ancient Troy in Turkey, and later in Greece, A. Evans on, still, Turkish Crete, etc. Scandinavians followed suit. The Danes became heavily engaged in Greece and Syria, the Swedes, e.g., on Cyprus. Eventually, Scandinavian so-called institutes (schools) were founded at Rome, Athens, Istanbul/Constantinople, even Damascus. At home, Prehistoric (or general) archaeology, focusing on the North, found a place at the universities, supported after World War II by the newly established Medieval archaeology, a position which Classical Archaeology had long won, in fact everywhere in Europe, although usually integrated into institutes of Classical philology, Ancient history, Art, Philosophy, etc. Egyptology and Assyriology, along with Classical Archaeology and even Prehistoric archaeology, helped Near Eastern Archaeology to emerge, in particular in Denmark.

Early Classical archaeology, in Scandinavia as elsewhere, was heavily art- and text-influenced. By contrast, the local or Nordic archaeology was spearheading the development of investigation into the pre-historical periods of early Europe. Provincial Roman archaeology, holding a middle position based on some crucial later centuries of European (and other) history, was still in its infancy, and Medieval archeology, as mentioned, not yet developed *per se*. Little common ground was found for the early academic archaeologies in Scandinavia: “nationists” (rather than nationalists) being on the one side, elite “culturalists” on the other. Some attempts at bridging were however made, mainly based on initiatives in Denmark, a country with a truly great National Museum housing

*Table 1. Attitudes towards the historic past in Southern Scandinavia/Denmark, Stone Age to the Renaissance (cf. Randsborg 1989; 1994; 1999a). The dates are approximate. • = New type of lasting burial or other monument. ⊗ = Imitation of earlier type of monument. ‡ = Re-use (for burial) of lasting monument (cessation of re-use important); this phenomenon even entails preservation. Italics = Documented first step in consciousness about the past by creating something new (modernization). * = Evidence from other sources.*

	Monuments	Material evidence	Historical abilities
-10,000 BC Mesolithic	None		Space/time intelligence ↑↓
4000 BC Early Neolithic	• Megaliths	<i>Monument</i>	
3000/2500 BC Later Neolithic	• Mounds • Cists ‡ (Megaliths, cists)	<i>New monument</i> (New monument) <i>Re-use/burial</i>	<i>Preservation</i> ↓
1500 BC Early Bronze Age	• Large Mounds	(New monument) <i>Grave plundering</i>	(<i>Oral history</i>) ↓
1000 BC Late Bronze Age	‡ (Large mounds)	Re-use/burial	
500 BC Pre-Roman Iron Age	None		
0 AD Roman Iron Age	None ⊗ A few mounds • Boundary walls	<i>Writing</i> <i>Grave plundering</i> New monument	(<i>Recording</i>) ↓ (<i>Oral history</i>) ↓ <i>Imitation</i> ↓ <i>Political space</i> ↓
500 AD Migration Period	None, ⊗ A few mounds		* <i>Oral history</i> ↑↓ <i>Imitation</i> ↓
Viking Age	Basically none, ‡ (Some mounds) ⊗ New mounds •/⊗ Ship settings • Runestones Border walls	Re-use/burial <i>Grave plundering</i> (New monument) New monument (New monument)	* <i>Cultural comparison</i> ↑↓ <i>Imitation, big scale</i> ↓ <i>Ownership, land</i> ↑↓ <i>Political region</i> ↓
1000 AD Middle Ages	• Churches, etc.	New monument	* <i>Written history</i> ↓ * <i>Excavation</i> ↓
1500 AD Renaissance	• Castles, etc.	New monument	* <i>Collection</i> ↓ * <i>Cultural analogy</i> ↓ * <i>Preservation</i> ↓ * <i>Topography</i> ↓

World culture along with the local one. These projects include the seminal “De forhistoriske Tider i Europa” (Prehistoric Times in Europe) (Friis Johansen 1927) – though sadly working its ways around the Classical civilizations – and the founding of the periodical *Acta Archaeologica*, in 1930: both were pan-Scandinavian affairs, one way or the other.

ACADEMIC MOODS

Strangely, post-World War II developments in archaeological research and science hardly altered the academic relations between and among the archaeologies in Scandinavia, as they were outlined above, even though two or more generations have now elapsed. In fact, this pattern is perpetuated everywhere in (Western) Europe. In spite of thousands of new excavations, enormous amounts of new small finds, new technical methods of analysis (common to all archaeologies), certainly much new understanding, including historical integration, theoretical discourses, etc., and – not least – an exponential growth in the sheer number of archaeologists, institutions, funding, etc., etc., things remain much the same. Classical archaeologists stay within their important reserve and seem largely immune to archaeological theory, anthropological approaches, and even to historical integration (with archaeology playing a leading rôle). Prehistoric archaeologists, audaciously exploring their own reserve, refrain from using their accomplishments on historical periods. And, Medieval archaeologists, of the major novel branch of the subject, seem largely content with their newly found very rich data, not least from the cities of Europe, and a rôle as the “material servant” to the regional histories of the Continent.

This is all understandable. Subjects and sub-subjects everywhere tend to develop their own retotics and understanding. In a post-modern Western world, the individual interest and the artful are in focus, while grand narratives (like Marxism) are a thing of the past. This is a major problem for archaeology, whose main academic rôle has been, and still is, I think, the maintenance of the perspective of deep time, wide space, and intimate contexts: the *longues durées* of human culture. Archaeology cannot do without illocution of some form.

The post-modern condition adds up to a rather conservative, however refined, even entertaining, demonstration of data, points and arguments. Museum collections must be maintained, exhibitions created, and popular books written. On the academic side, in the days of regimentalized mass-education, teaching tends to follow established patterns and theses are produced within defined limits of query and, usually, as “normal science” set-pieces, although some are clearly better than that. One reason is the usually weak link between teaching and the “real world” (which ought to be integrated into the training through smaller and larger projects). For some time (in the 1980s and 1990s), the latter circumstances mainly characterized Sweden with its very short archaeological teaching programmes but today also Denmark displays such maladies, although to a lesser extent. On the administrative front, saving the cultural heritage and the knowledge thereof from being next to totally destroyed by deep-ploughing, mining of raw-materials, landscaping, and building (in particular in agricultural core areas like

Denmark) is a serious enough concern.

Re-making “De forhistoriske Tider i Europa”, integrating European archaeology into a common historical frame-work (contrary to the archaeological research-traditions as outlined above), stressing the rôle of the material dimension (cf. Randsborg 1992a), working on international archaeological academic co-operation in and out of Scandinavia and Europe, etc. seem largely unfashionable affairs (with the reader’s permission, cf., e.g., Hodges & Whitehouse 1983; Randsborg 1980; 1991; 1999b; Sherratt 1997 (reprinted)). At most, we can pursue Scandinavian (and other Western), still compartmentalized archaeological interests in the newly opened Eastern Europe, or elsewhere, if we acquire proper funding.

GLOBALIZATION

This is all rather sad in a number of ways, not least because it hurts our feelings and sense of personality, both as professional individuals and groups perpetuating the traditions outlined in the research histories of the archaeologies. The first reason for distress is that it is currently particularly difficult to see how Scandinavian archaeology and archaeologies will and can develop; secondly, because a measure of unification seems beyond reach, even in those institutions (like the major museums and universities) where the sub-subjects are sharing physical and social territories. The national card can hardly be played any longer, whether as an appeal to sentiment or as a serious academic paradigm (interesting European deviations at the moment are Ireland and the Baltic republics). The only exception is administrative archaeology, where the state, with other official bodies, is still the maker of regulations and main provider of funding. But private means are playing a larger and larger rôle, not least in countries with a “culture resource management” demand on private land-owners wishing to develop their property. Some private foundations, e.g., the Danish Carlsberg Foundation, are powerful enough to shape archaeology (but hardly do it). Other funding may differ and eventually create completely new circumstances for archaeological activities, in much the same way as has the rise of IT, even the Internet. The rôle of EU funding is, so far, modest, but this may change.

The conclusion is that the Scandinavian, like most other Western archaeologies must take to the road of capitalist internationalism, or Globalization, to thrive. They will, at least in the short term, remain divided rather than integrated, thus postponing the idea (if ever feasible) of a unification in theory, method, approaches to history, as well as in practice. The latter is a particular irony in the age of international integration. Nevertheless, with the Scandinavian practitioners of archaeology – by training as well as vocation – largely unable to perceive a larger academic Scandinavian, European, or World perspective, the dominant structure remains the funding, indeed the international, state and local politics, public as well as private: thus, Globalization. Along this road new challenges will no doubt lie in wait, from previously unfashionable archaeological themes, over material data applicable to archaeological scrutiny, to archaeological and other collaboration beyond the region, nation, and even the Continent (cf. Randsborg 1998b).

Possibly, the stronger Swedish administrative structures are better prepared for this development, including the National Heritage Board and the Swedish Institute. The Danes might surprise, however, by being flexible and quick at responding to new demands with their general permissiveness (with qualifications) towards individual initiative. For all Scandinavian nations, the university and educational sector, once the leading edge, might be the least prepared for what is in stock, divided as it is into archaeological and related sub-subjects, fixed programmes, and discrete projects.

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