Editor’s Preface:
100th Anniversary of the Discovery of the Yangshao Culture
by Johan Gunnar Andersson (1874–1960)

by Eva MYRDAL

Introduction
In 2021 it is one hundred years since Johan Gunnar Andersson and his Chinese colleagues excavated a Neolithic settlement site in Yangshao, Henan Province, and a Palaeolithic cave site in Zhoukoudian, Beijing Municipality. The fieldwork was planned in collaboration with Ding Wenjiang, Director of China’s National Geological Survey, and his successor Weng Wenhao and was financed by the Swedish China Committee and the Swedish state. This marks a beginning of archaeological fieldwork in China and was followed by a Chinese-Swedish agreement the 2nd of February 1925 regarding the subsequent management and publishing of the archaeological material.¹ The fieldwork became a start for both a scholarly communication over Eurasia in the field of Archaeology and the creation of a public institution for management and display of East Asian material culture in Sweden: The Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities (MFEA) in Stockholm.²

The material arrived in Stockholm in 1925 for registration and documentation, and the return shipments, according to the agreement, were sent in seven batches from 1927 to 1936. The material allotted to Sweden was nationalized in February 1926 by a decision in the Parliament, which also decided to create a museum for public display of the material. The MFEA was opened to the public in venues rented from the Stockholm School of Economics 1929 (the same year as the Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, BMFEA, was inaugurated). It was housed there until 1946 when it had to move to a temporary location at the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities (RSALA-HA). By a parliamentary decision in 1959, the collections were merged with the classical Asian art collections of the National Museum of Art (Nationalmuseum), and the MFEA

¹ For a background to the fieldwork in China see Magnus Fiskesjö, and CHEN Xingcan, China before China: Johan Gunnar Andersson, Ding Wenjiang, and the Discovery of China’s Prehistory (Stockholm: Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, 2004, English and Chinese), and Jan ROMGARD, this volume.
opened in a renovated historical building in 1963. With three other museums, it now forms part of the government agency The National Museums of World Culture (NMWC).

A hundred-year-history gives occasion to celebrate but also to look forward. This volume of the BMFEA is therefore dedicated to reflections on the Chinese-Swedish collaboration and its early results in the Chinese and Swedish contexts, respectively, as well as giving examples of subsequent developments of fieldwork in the area Andersson once worked, and in relation to research on the archaeological material managed in Stockholm.

Field archaeology is practiced all over China today and thus the few examples covered in this volume are not presented with the ambition of giving an overview of archaeology in China. Instead, the examples are presented with the hope of inspiring future collaborative research since the archaeological material managed in Stockholm opens for many questions now globally engaging the archaeological field: paleoclimate, human-induced environmental change, subsistence practices, social stratification, and the manifestation in the material culture and ecofacts of the sharing of ideas and practices.

Jan ROMGARD discusses Johan Gunnar Andersson’s fieldwork in China during the 1920’s within the global context of the geosciences of that time, CHEN Yantang discusses the early views on archaeological fieldwork in the Chinese context. Rowan K. FLAD et. al., GUO Zhiwei et. al. and Chenghao WEN discuss results of and perspectives on fieldwork dedicated to the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age that has been undertaken in recent years in the provinces of Gansu and Qinghai. Based on ethnographic field-research, Jada KO reflects over the concept of “indigenous stakeholders” in relation to an archaeological site on its way towards becoming a heritage site in an administrative sense (Qijiaping). Anke HEIN et. al. provide a history of research on the Neolithic and Bronze age pottery from the area, and Jennifer KEUTE et. al., and Ole STILBORG et. al. present results of new research on ceramic material managed by MFEA, while Limin HUAN critically reflects over the use of analyses of the chemical compositions of ceramic material for provenance studies of painted Neolithic ware.

In this Preface one additional aspect will be briefly discussed – the management of the collection from Johan Gunnar Andersson’s work from a Swedish institutional perspective till today. To do so, a brief overview of the scholarly, institutional, and financial framework for non-Nordic archaeology in Sweden during the first half of the 20th century will be given – a research environment in which Andersson was an active participant. The contrast between the rudimentary infrastructure of the humanities at that time on the one hand and the much more developed institutional and scholarly resources in the natural sciences (discussed by Jan ROMGARD in this volume) on the other will become obvious. Archaeological research in Sweden still has a mainly national/North European focus (not surprisingly: Sweden is a population wise small country and without a legacy comparable to former European colonial powers which built research institutions focussed on Asia parallel to the colonial expansion) and this situation is a challenge when the MFEA seeks partners for cooperation to develop cultural historic knowledge about the archaeological collections. Methods for natural sciences analyses are well integrated in the Swedish study field though, which open avenues for developing projects together with Swedish and foreign research institutions in collaboration.
Comparative Perspectives, Interdisciplinary Collaboration, and Layman Engagement: The Early Years of Archaeological Practice

Archaeology developed as a specific discipline at Swedish universities during the last decade of the 19th and the early 20th century. During the first decades of the 20th century Archaeology (Nordic and comparative archaeology) as a specific academic discipline had developed in Uppsala and Lund and at the college of Stockholm, marking the start of professionalisation of the study field. Swedish antiquarian practice on an organised basis was much older, of course. The first official with overall responsibility for antiquarian matters (Riksantikvarie) was appointed by King Gustav II Adolf (Gustavus Adolphus) in 1630.

However, from the mid-18th century antiquarian and archaeological practice had an administrative framework in the form of RSALHA. It was established with statutes with royal assent, but as with other similar Academies, gifts and legacies came to constitute its financial foundation and it had the status of an independent and prestigious learned society. This non-governmental learned society was led by a public official: the Riksantikvarie was appointed Perpetual Secretary to the Academy ex officio. The Riksantikvarie was also the head of the collections of what later became the National Historical Museum (NHM). In 1826 the Academy became the highest public authority for ancient remains in Sweden and came to organise exploration work as well as archaeological excavations. So antiquarian practice, collection management, and field archaeology was institutionalized before the subject was represented at the universities.

If we focus on comparative perspectives within the archaeological study field the development towards professionalization in a Swedish context can be exemplified by the career of the archaeologist Oscar Montelius (1843–1921) and two of his disciples: Oscar Almgren (1869–1945) and Ture Johnsson Arne (1879–1965). Oscar Montelius was appointed to the NHM in 1863 as an assistant. He defended his doctoral thesis based on material culture within the discipline of History at Uppsala university in 1869. Between 1869 and 1885 Montelius travelled widely in Europe to study important archaeological collections and taking part in archaeological congresses and meetings. He became a fellow of the RSALHA in 1877. In 1880 he was appointed first assistant at the museum. In 1888 he obtained the honorary title of professor and lecturer at the NHM which was at that time housed on the ground floor of the Nationalmuseum. He was the Riksantikvarie between 1907 and 1913. He became a fellow of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences in 1895.

Between 1889 and 1893 Montelius gave lectures in “jämförande fornforskning” [com-
Comparative archaeology] at Stockholm college (not yet a university), discussing the three-period system and long-distance cultural contacts. Oscar Almgren attended these lectures and presented his doctoral thesis in 1897 discussing typology and prevalence of northern European fibulae during the first centuries CE, and Oscar Montelius acted as opponent. Based on this dissertation Almgren got the first ever lectureship in “Comparative archaeology” in Sweden – at Uppsala university in 1897. This year could thus be said to constitute the establishment of archaeology as a discipline at Swedish universities.

Oscar Montelius’ younger colleague at the NHM, Ture Johnsson Arne, is another example of an early career as archaeologist, carrying the Montelius’ comparative legacy (on which also Johan Gunnar Andersson’s fieldwork in China rested). He was appointed temporary Assistant (e.o. amanuens) at the RSALHA in 1902, working at the NHM. He was appointed permanent assistant antiquarian there from 1909 and became head of the Iron Age department. He held this position until his retirement in 1944, and, as will be discussed further below, he was active in both words and deeds to make room for and expand the comparative artefact collection at the NHM. He presented his doctoral thesis, “La Suède et l’Orient. Études archéologiques sur les relations de la Suède et l’Orient pendant l’âge des Vikings,” at Uppsala university in 1914. Oskar Almgren acted as opponent and examiner.

At the end of the 19th century, the field sciences made their breakthrough in Sweden. The results and field practices came to engage also educated groups outside the academy and we see Montelius and other pioneering archaeologists playing a part in this development. They also played a role in the development of various layman’s associations related to the study field of archaeology. Svenska Formminnesföreningen [The Swedish Antiquarian Society] was founded in 1869 and though the Society at that time stood in opposition to his employer, Oscar Montelius agreed to become its secretary in 1874, and its chairperson in 1908 continuing in this latter capacity until 1920. Oscar Almgren was a member of the board of Upplands forminnesförening [Uppland’s Ancient Monuments Association] from 1901 to 1941. In 1873 Oscar Montelius helped to found the Anthropological Society in Stockholm, from 1877 called the Swedish Society for Anthropology and Geography.

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13 Hanna Rydh, Oscar Montelius, 82–86.
In 1921, the same year as Ture J Arne was elected fellow of the RSAHLA, he helped to found Svenska Orientsällskapet [the Swedish Oriental Society]. The then Crown Prince Gustaf Adolf acted as its first chairperson and Arne as its secretary.16 Thus, from the late 19th to the first decades of the 20th century archaeology was established as a discipline at the universities and it also engaged the educated elite outside of government agencies and universities. Evert Baudou has discussed this development within the social and political context of the time, in which the new bourgeoisie was an exponent of a mentality striving for intellectual liberation and independent education.17

The professionalisation within the field of archaeology came with its establishment as a subject at the universities and in Sweden the early decisive years gave the subject a specific inclination: from the start there was collaboration between the geosciences and the first professional archaeologists; the development within the geosciences gave knowledge of the Ice Age and thus a *terminus post quem* for human life and culture in the north-western Eurasian periphery as well as an understanding of that Scandinavia was peopled by human beings who had developed technology and traditions elsewhere, making room for an interest in comparative perspectives for the interpretation of material culture, and further Stone Age archaeology and settlement archaeology came in focus with a multidisciplinary approach.18

Yet another perspective could be highlighted. Though it did not become dominating during the discipline’s subsequent development it was there as an undercurrent – much depending on the very nature of much of the archaeological material in Sweden: representing human practice without the written word. In the early phase of his career Montelius assigned a specific role to archaeological research as a way to establish knowledge of past societies outside the traditional realms of the academic discipline of History. Evert Baudou calls our attention to a declaration made by Montelius already in the 1870’s:

“It is true, that no list of monarchs, no names of heroes meet us from these earliest times. But is not the knowledge of the life of the people and the progress of cultivation more valuable than the names on fabulous heroes? And should not be donated more faith in the contemporary, unchallengeable testimonies, to which only archaeology now listens,


17 Evert Baudou, “Arkeologins socialisering och de första föreläsningarna vid Stockholms högskola [The socialisation of archaeology and the first academic lectures at the University of Stockholm],” 31. CHEN Yantang, this volume, discusses the first establishment of archaeology as a scientific discipline in China, which forms an interesting starting point for a comparative perspective on the development.

than to the poetic stories that for centuries have been preserved only in the memory of the poets.  

Montelius’ contribution to the establishment of a chronology of the Nordic Bronze Age is well known. His comparative method required a broad geographical focus which is also present in his synthesis *Orienten och Europa: Ett bidrag till kännedomen om den orientaliska kulturens inverkan på Europa intill midten af det sista årtusendet före Kristi födelse* published in 1894–1896. The work was later published in German and partly translated into Chinese 1937.

Montelius used the typological method to build sequences for a relative dating of material. In an effort to arrive at absolute datings of find sequences from Scandinavia, Montelius also used comparison with material from the Eastern Mediterranean area. This approach opened the way to studies of human history in areas outside Scandinavia as is formulated in a memorandum written by Montelius in May 1920 in support of Johan Gunnar Andersson’s archaeological work in China; a memorandum already observed by Magnus Fiskesjö and CHEN Xingcan and discussed in their book *China before China* in 2004.

“...but everyone realises of what outstanding importance it would have for the knowledge of the history of human culture if the same development as that seen in the rest of the world had indeed taken place within such a large and important area as that of the Chinese realm, within which, after all, close to one third of the entire earth’s population lives.

19 Translated by the present writer. “Det är sant, att ingen konungalängd, inga bragdrika namn möta oss från dessa första tider. Men är ej kännedomen om folkets liv och odlingens framsteg mer värde än namnen på sagolika hjältar? Och bör man ej skänka mer tro åt de samtida, ojäfvaktiga vittnesbörd, till hvilka alla fornforskningen nu lyssnar, än till de poetiska berättelser som under århundraden bevarats endast i skaldernas minne?” Quoted from Oscar Montelius, *Om livet i Sverige under hednati den*, Stockholm (1873) in Evert Baudou, “Arkeologins socialisering och de första föreläsningarna vid Stockholms högskola [The socialisation of archaeology and the first academic lectures at the University of Stockholm],” 34.


22 Magnus Fiskesjö, and Chen Xingcan, *China before China*, 32; CHEN Xingcan, and Magnus Fiskesjö, “Oscar Montelius and Chinese Archaeology.” See also Jan ROMGARD, this volume.
Or more correctly, how wonderful it would be, if China in this respect was not like other countries."

Montelius’ interest in the cultural history of areas outside Europe is also demonstrated in contributions to the yearly publication of the Swedish Society for Anthropology and Geography, *Ymer*, and in his correspondence with Swedes doing archaeological fieldwork in South America in the early 20th century.

In the writings of Ture J Arne during the first half of the 20th century we find contributions regarding specific Asian material opening up for the broader aim of increasing the knowledge of human cultural history based on fieldwork he had undertaken in the area that is now southern Turkey, northern Syria, and north-eastern Iran, and research undertaken for his doctoral theses. The expedition to Shah Tepé in Iran was initiated by Arne with a view to investigating the possibility of a connection between China’s north-west and Central Asia and Southeast Europe. This initiative came about in response to Johan Gunnar Andersson’s and his Chinese field-team’s discoveries of painted Neolithic ceramic in China. Arne and Andersson had observed that this painted pottery from China “displayed astonishing similarity” to material from Neolithic cultures in Southeast Europe and Central Asia. The aim of the journey according to Arne was “to investigate what connection there might be between those cultures…”

Ture J. Arne travelled to what was then Soviet Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan) in 1929. He obtained approval for a joint Swedish-Soviet archaeological expedition among regionally based researchers, but not from the central authorities in Moscow and Leningrad, and so he turned his attention towards Iran. The RSALHA asked permission from the Iranian government.

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23 D. 1926:138. P.M. Oscar Montelius. Translation from the Swedish original by the present writer: "Men var och en inser av vilken oerhörd betydelse det för kännedomen om den mänskliga kulturens historia vore, att samma utveckling som i övriga världen verkligen ägt rum även inom ett så stort och viktigt område, som det kinesiska väldet inom vilket ju nära 1/3 av hela jordens befolkning bor. Eller rättare, huru underbart det skulle vara, om Kina icke i detta avseende vore likt de andra länderna."


26 Andersson’s view, as well as Arne’s, was based on interpretation of specific, ceramic, archaeological finds. See, for example, Johan Gunnar Andersson, *An Early Chinese Culture* (Peking: Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce, the Geological Survey of China), 24; plate XIII.


28 Ture J. Arne, *Excavations at Shah Tepé, Iran*, 1. This was made possible by a law permitting foreigners to excavate which was instituted in 1930 by the Reza Shah, see for example Carl Nylander, "Swedish Contributions to the Archaeology of Iran,” *Fornvännen* 102:3 (2007): 168; 168–182. For an overview of the early development of archaeology in Iran see for example Mohammad Taghi Imanpour, “Political archaeology and the
archaeological excavation and Arne organised the archaeological expedition to Shah Tepé in northeast Iran in 1932–33.

The excavation of Shah Tepé however, uncovered a 4,000–5,000-year-old settlement, to be interpreted, if from a diffusionist perspective, in a regional context and lacking the wider comparative potential. So, the question remained unsolved. In Arne’s words, "If one has access to only a few isolated sherds of such pottery from Yang Shao in Honan, China, and from Dimini in Thessaly, one can well imagine a close mutual relationship and contemporaneity. The relationship perhaps exists, though it is remote, and it is still difficult to throw much light on the genealogy."  

If we turn to the Swedish scene, we will find that it wasn’t the aim to increase the knowledge of human cultural history in a global sense that gained a firm footing related to non-Swedish material from the point of view of the research community. Two main considerations become visible instead: to enhance the development of archaeology in Sweden and Swedish archaeologists’ career opportunities. When, in 1925, Arne pleads the necessity of building up “comparative collections” of archaeological material, as had already been done in the field of natural history, the aim was to create a systematic comparative collection in the NHM from abroad to be used for a better understanding of the prehistoric collections from Sweden:

“Every archaeologist and ethnographer, however, knows that we cannot understand the development history of our people without extensive comparison material. Nor have we in prehistoric times led an isolated life for ourselves, even if we live out in the periphery.”

In his article 1936 Arne also showed an interest in the discipline of archaeology as such, with its own professional networks, hierarchies, and professional career opportunities:

“But it is, leaving aside our own country, primarily outside Europe that we can still make big contributions to archaeology and help to make our museums centres of international research.”

The Crown prince, later King Gustaf VI Adolf, could be seen as the “prime mover” when it comes to legitimising and funding archaeological research in Asia, North Africa.
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and the Mediterranean as will be discussed below, but in order to understand why these efforts were undertaken at all one has also to observe the academic environment in which researchers and students were working.

In 1932 the fourth volume of the BMFEA was dedicated to “His Royal Highness the Crown Prince Gustaf Adolf”. The dedication reads:

“To His Royal Highness the Crown Prince Gustaf Adolf of Sweden we wish to present our respectful and sincere thanks in grateful recognition of the inspiring example he has set us all by his modest and careful scholarship and by his earnest devotion to the study of the ancient art of the Far East.”

Reading the 91 signatures one notes the names of internationally well-known scholars and connoisseurs mainly from the Western world but also of the Swedish archaeologists and art historians who at that time had worked with Asian material in the field or in Swedish museum collections, e.g., Ture Johnsson Arne, Johan Gunnar Andersson, Olov Janse, Bernhard Karlgren, Nils Palmgren, Hanna Rydh, Osvald Sirén, and Margit Bylin (Bylin-Althin by marriage), together with the then prominent Swedish collectors and patrons of archaeological fieldwork in Asia. Among the latter we find Hanna Rydh’s brother, C. L. Rydh.

In this volume of BMFEA the antique scholar Einar Gjerstad (1897–1988) contributes to the article “Crown Prince Gustaf Adolf as a Promoter of Archaeological Research.” A quotation from the text helps illustrate the institutional framework in Sweden in the 1930’s:

“Sweden does not as yet possess a joint institute for Nordic and foreign archaeological research, which might be able to collect the different archaeological interests around the fundamentally common goal, but fortunately we have in our Crown Prince a personality who has been willing, and able, to fulfil the task that would be incumbent upon such an institute. Through his all-round and manifold interest in archaeological research as such, no matter whether it be carried on in Sweden or abroad, His Royal Highness, in accordance with the principle that ‘Union is strength’, has been eager to arouse the feeling of brotherhood and unity between archaeologists, which, particularly in a small country like ours, is of the utmost importance if great scientific results are to be achieved.”

Johan Gunnar Anderssson’s motivation for starting the periodical BMFEA in 1929 when the Museum opened to the public explicitly addressed the need to create a research environment. In the first issue he states:

“In order to get these treasures of early Chinese art scientifically studied and described, the Museum had to call upon the cooperation of learned colleagues such as Umehara, Arne, Olov Janse, and others. In this way there has developed a small group of scholars who recognize our Museum as a centre for the study of Far Eastern Archaeology. Within this narrow circle of friends and collaborators there has been repeatedly expressed the need of a scientific organ for publishing such monographs on early Chinese bronzes

33 Ibid, v–viii
34 Ibid, vii.
and other articles emanating from this institute as could not be accommodated in the Palaeontologia Sinica. In order to meet this need, there came into being the Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, the first volume of which is herewith presented to the scientific reader.37

And further on in the volume he widens the circle of learned colleagues:

“When facing such an immense complex of problems I felt severely the inadequacy of my own capacity, but fortunately I was able to avail myself of the able collaboration of such distinguished colleagues as Dr. T. J. Arne, Dr. O. Janse, Dr. H. Rydl and Professor Bogajevsky of Leningrad.”38

Interest in research into the material culture from areas to the East and South-East of Sweden (outside the Mediterranean region and apart from studies related to the Viking Age contacts in the area of present-day Russia and Ukraine) did not gain a firm footing in the Swedish research community. After WWII the comparative perspective also went out of vogue, as shown for example in an inventory of articles mentioning these eastern areas in the journal for Swedish antiquarian research, Fornvännen, from its inauguration 1906 up to the 21st century.39

During the first half of the 20th century Sweden had no scholarly, institutional basis for pursuing archaeology in non-European countries outside the Mediterranean area. Yet, a handful of archaeologists having their base in Sweden did undertake archaeological fieldwork in for example Asia. The projects were funded from Sweden, and the agreements regarding selection of sites and managements of finds were entered into by governmental bodies of the country in question and a Swedish counterpart, and through mutual agreements parts of the excavated material came into the custody of the Swedish state.

Funding of Archaeological Research in Asia in the Pre-WWII-period

Having noted the undifferentiated institutional set-up of archaeological research during the end of the 19th and early 20th century, and the many non-governmental scholarly- and lay societies with a broad geographical focus that were active, we can reflect on the social framework within which fundraising for the archaeological expeditions to Asia took place.40

In 1907 Ture J. Arne conducted a fieldtrip to “Asia Minor and Syria”. According to his article in Fornvännen the following year, it was funded by the Swedish Society for Anthropology and Geography, the RSALHA, other (unnamed) institutions and (unnamed)
individuals. Arne’s fieldwork in Central Asia was funded by a private donator (G. Wennersten) through the Swedish Oriental Society, of which Crown Prince Gustaf Adolf was chairperson. The excavation of Shah Tépé was financed with the help of Dr Sven Hedin through the latter’s Swedish-American patron Mr. A. Appleton. Funds were also given by the Swedish Oriental Society, the Swedish government (covering freight charges) and firms such as the Orient Line, Nordiska Kompaniet, and P.U. Bergström. The results were later published within the framework of Sven Hedin’s “Sino-Swedish Expedition” in 1945. According to Arne, the then Crown prince Gustaf Adolf also supported the project financially.

The Crown Prince was praised as the uniting force for non-Nordic archaeology in Sweden in the 1930’s as we saw above, and from the 1920’s we see him leading the various fundraising committees within this field. In 1921, after the death of Admiral Louis Palander of Vega, Crown Prince Gustaf Adolf became the chairperson of the Swedish-China Research Committee. He helped to form the Asine Committee (Greece) and was elected its first chairperson, and he agreed to chair the newly founded Cyprus Committee in spring 1927. These committees were fundraising and legitimising nodes for archaeological fieldwork conducted by Swedish archaeologists in the areas concerned. The Egypt committee was founded in 1927, with the Crown Prince as its chairperson, and for the purpose of promoting and supporting the Egyptological Museum in Stockholm, including fieldwork that could enlarge the museum’s collections.

As mentioned above Johan Gunnar Andersson’s archaeological fieldwork in China 1921–1924 and the subsequent management of the excavated material had been financed by the privately funded Swedish China Research Committee and the Swedish state.

The concluding paragraph of the memorandum by Oscar Montelius mentioned above helps put the financing of research in Asia during the early first half of the 20th century into its contemporary social context:

“Few words are needed to convince us here in Sweden of what great importance it would have for our small people if Swedish scientists were to be recognized for spreading light over the oldest history of the ancient cultural country of China, and if their work were to have been made possible by powerful support from other open-minded Swedish men.”

The paragraph points to the social context within which an interest in non-Nordic material culture existed at that time: certainly, among some intellectuals and academics,
but from an economic point of view most importantly among members of the wealthy bourgeoisie, and the royal family. In this group one finds people with a genuine interest in cultural history and archaeology (such as the then Crown Prince Gustaf Adolf), but also those to whom collecting expensive and rare objects or funding field research that would, in the prestigious learned societies, be termed important, was also of interest as a means of enhancing their social prestige.

We thus see that the fieldwork conducted by Swedish archaeologists in Asia during the first decades of the 20th century was set up almost informally, not by research institutions, but by leading personalities in the Swedish academic world under the patronage of a member of the royal family who had scholarly and connoisseur interests, and with funding mainly in the form of private donations from the wealthy bourgeoisie. The fieldwork itself, however, was conducted as scientific undertakings according to the standard of the time. In terms of fundraising, we see a similarity with what happened in the field of the geosciences as is shown by Jan ROMGARD in this volume in relation to Johan Gunnar Andersson’s work. But the scholarly infrastructure and expertise that existed in relation to these disciplines were not at hand when it came to archaeology in East Asia, which at that time was, globally speaking, pioneering work.

Management of Collections and Institutional Framework: A Shift of Perspective

During the decade from 1926 to 1936 a series of important decisions were taken by the Swedish parliament in terms of building museum institutions focusing on material culture emanating from outside of Sweden. The background to these decisions can be followed in two “Swedish Government Official Reports” (SGOF) presented to the Government in 1936 and 1951, respectively. In both cases the starting point is the archaeological collections from abroad that had entered into the custody of the Swedish state, and that had to find a proper management. The Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities was the first to be established in 1926. The responsibility of the part of the archaeological material from China that had been allotted to Sweden was transferred from the Swedish China Research Committee to the Swedish state under the administrative umbrella of RSALHA with the promise that the collections should be scientifically studied and that a museum should be established. The King thereafter appointed Johan Gunnar Andersson professor in East Asian archaeology and as director for the collections and the museum from the first of July 1926. It should be noted that this professorship was not linked to any department at the university specialized in East Asian material culture.

50 Betänkande med utredning och förslag angående sammanförande och organisation av i Stockholm befintliga arkeologiska samlingar från Medelhavslanderna och främre Orienten avgivet av 1935 års museisakkunniga, (Stockholm: Statens Offentliga Utredningar, Ecklesiastikdepartementet, 1936); Betänkande med utredning och förslag angående sammanförande och organisation av i Stockholm befintliga arkeologiska samlingar från medelhavslanderna, främre orienten och Ostasien avgivet av Sigurd Curman (Stockholm: Statens Offentliga Utredningar, 1951). The SGOF represents official reports of committees appointed and convened by the Swedish government for the analysis of issues in anticipation of government propositions to the parliament.

51 Betänkande med utredning... avgivet av Sigurd Curman, 48.

52 Betänkande med utredning... avgivet av 1935 års museisakkunniga, 17–19.
The founding collection of the MFEA in 1926 was the Neolithic material excavated and bought by Johan Gunnar Andersson during his archaeological fieldwork in China between 1921 and 1924, but additional material from East Asia in the comparative collections of the NHM was transferred to the new institution. This may be seen as a qualitative shift of perspective. In the museum specialised in East Asian material, the archaeological material from China was managed and displayed “on its own merits”, and not as a comment on material from what is now Sweden. This shift of perspective was again emphasised when, in 1959, the decision was taken by the Parliament to give the MFEA a new building with more spacious galleries. It was decided that the East- and South Asian collections at the Nationalmuseum were to be transferred to the MFEA, thus creating a venue for comparative perspectives with a new and wider focus: Asia.

These brief remarks regarding exhibition rooms for non-European material culture can be borne in mind when the museum career of the Johan Gunnar Andersson collection from China is discussed below.

Research on the Archaeological Material from China after 1926

Up until the inauguration of the MFEA by the Parliament in 1926, the archaeological collections from Asia were managed, as discussed above, mainly by the NHM in the Nationalmuseum, and motivated mainly in relation to their potential for comparative studies, to better understand the material found in present-day Sweden.

With the new institution, the need to have a relevant and specialised academic environment, knowledgeable in non-Swedish material, increased. During Johan Gunnar Andersson’s directorship an effort was made to create an archaeological research base for Asian archaeology through the MFEA. That effort was manifested, for example, in the founding of the BMFEA as we saw above.

The Director taking over after Andersson 1939–59 was the internationally renowned sinologist Bernhard Karlgren (1889–1978). He had been doing research in China 1910–12 in the field of historical linguistics. His subsequent focus of research was the ancient Chinese language as manifest in the earliest inscriptions, and as a museum director he did not follow up the archaeological and settlement-site-related work of J. G. Andersson. The broadened collection bases of the MFEA after 1963, which required competence within the field of the history of East Asian art, was followed up by the subsequent museum directors 1959–81 Bo Gyllensvärd (1916–2004) and 1981–98 Jan Wirgin (1932–2020) and over the years several curators with a background in sinology and/or art history were recruited for longer or shorter periods. The sheer amount and diversity of the merged collections from China – spanning the time horizon from c. 4000 BCE to the early 20th century – would have required a far larger specialized staff of course, to ensure as great a focus on Pre- and Protohistoric archaeology as on the important collections from historical times. So, whereas an impressive amount of the founding collection has been on display from

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1929 till today with brief interludes for transfer in 1946 and 1959, and the collaboration with Chinese museums and cultural heritage authorities has continued all through the years, for example with important temporary exhibitions featuring archaeological finds from China that have been shown at the MFEA, the tens of thousands of ceramic sherds and small finds from Andersson’s collection laid dormant in the storage from the 1950’s until 2000, when Magnus Fiskesjö was appointed director of MFEA. He initiated a digital registration of the objects as well as cooperation with Chinese Pre- and Protohistoric archaeologists. In the early 2000’s he worked with CHEN Xingcan from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Archaeology, preparing the new, permanent exhibition ‘China before China’ (opened 2004) and working with archival material to shed light on Andersson’s work in China and the history of the collection in Sweden. In 2003 Magnus Fiskesjö organised the symposium “New Perspectives in Eurasian Archaeology – the Johan Gunnar Andersson Commemorative Symposium on the Making of China in the Context of Prehistoric East-West Eurasian Contacts,” at MFEA. Papers submitted to the symposium were published in *BMFEA* vol 75. A re-connection between Swedish and Chinese archaeologists was also initiated by Fiskesjö in the early 2000’s – members of the Swedish Archaeological Society made a study tour to among other sites Yangshao and Zhoukoudian in October 2004. These renewed contacts enabled representatives from MFEA to attend conferences in Mianchi (2011), Lintao (2014), and Guanghe (2015) and to present papers on the history of the museum and management of the collections from an institutional point of view. Small-scale collaborative projects between government agencies such as the Swedish National Heritage Board and Uppsala University and Chinese archaeological research institutions have been set up as well, though not involving the collections at MFEA.

In order to ensure a long-term engagement with the collections (and hence up to date exhibitions) institutional collaborations have to be built in the field of documentation and digitization of the finds as well as research. Some initial steps have been taken. A physical reorganisation of the stored material according to site was started in 2015 and completed in 2016, and the Collections department of the NMWC conducted a pilot project for large-scale digitization of ceramic sherds and small finds in 2018. In both cases the work was done with assistance of MA students (from the Osteoarchaeological Research Laboratory at Stockholm university, and the Department of Archaeology and Ancient History, Uppsala University respectively) doing their internship at the MFEA. This basic work made it possible for external researchers from Oxford and Stockholm University to carry out

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55 Among the most important could be mentioned: Arkeologiska fynd från Folkrepubliken Kina [Archaeological Finds from the Peoples’ Republic of China] 1974; Kejsarens armé [the Emperor’s Army] 1984; and during Sanne Houby-Nielsen’s time as Director of MFEA and later Director General of NMWC the temporary exhibitions Kinas terrakottaarmé [China’s terracotta Army] 2010; Krigardrottningen och Kinas bronsålder [Warrior Queen and the Bronze Age of China] 2013, and Staden vid Sidenvägen [Cosmopolitan Metropolis Along the Silk Road: Luoyang During Tang Dynasty China] 2015 were shown. Within the framework of the cooperation between China and Sweden, thirteen objects from the Johan Gunnar Andersson collection were also lent to the exhibition ‘China and Sweden: Treasured Memories’ at the Palace Museum in Beijing in 2005.


57 Magnus Fiskesjö, and Chen Xingcan, China before China. Fiskesjö left his position at the MFEA in 2004.

the pilot studies reported by Jennifer KEUTE et.al., and Ola STILBORG and Anke HEIN in this volume.

With a one-hundred-year perspective we can thus conclude that the legacy of Johan Gunnar Andersson’s fieldwork in China enabled communication to continue between China and Sweden in relation to the study field of archaeology. Andersson’s vision of a research centre for East Asian archaeology in Stockholm hasn’t materialised but as the collection has been preserved by conservators in the various storage facilities through the years it is possible to re-connect also regarding documentation, digitization, and research related to the material. A possibility to reach out through the on-line database would be of special importance as it would allow for unlimited cross-border communication between researchers. For a museum, which constitutes a public space, it is very important that the collections are presented based on current knowledge, and hence cross-border communication and collaboration are necessary. As the present focus (autumn 2021) of the Swedish Ministry of Culture and of the Director General of the NMWC, Ann Follin, is on precisely collection management, digitization, and on-line availability we have every hope that the coming century will open for cross-border knowledge building on the material from Johan Gunnar Andersson’s fieldwork in collaboration with researchers. This may happen if we acknowledge that registration is not the same as research, that the political (ministry) and administrative (authority management) level can create the conditions for research on an archaeological material (good collection management, digitization, etc.) but that the knowledge of the people who (ordered) / manufactured / used the objects, and the society in which they lived, is built in creative (preferably interdisciplinary, cross-border) research environments – and further that museums as public spaces (exhibitions) and open platforms for conversation (lectures, panel discussions, exhibition activities) provide an opportunity for the public (those who pay us) to take part in the results and to reflect on them independently. Which can enrich the public conversation with thoughts about us humans.

Finally, an editorial remark should be added in relation to the articles in this volume. Each author has decided regarding the order of hers/his ‘surname – given name’. In order to clarify what is what, the surname of all authors is given in capital letters.

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