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The Elgin Marbles syndrome

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sunden säkerligen en förenande vattenled i stället för en skiljelinje. Den lotteriartade undersökningen av fornbebyggelsen utgår från gravfält vilkas varaktighet inte blivit bestämd: vilka kommer efter varandra?? Framför allt: Tolftsystemet är synbarligen en företeelse enbart för Uppland (*Kulturhistoriskt Lexikon f. Medeltid; Bebyggelsehist. Tidskr.* 4/1982 s. 5) och Södermanland? Vi har inga antydningar om att tolft-räkning skulle ha förekommit på Åland. Men tolft-tanken, den leder Hyenstrand till att konstruera ett par onaturliga nya gränsdragningar. Eventuellt har i Uppland kyrkorna spelat en större roll för en där senare områdesindelning? Hypotesen att socknar och tolfter därstädes skulle vara grund för distriktsindelning är ju också omstridd. Även här torde nog Hyenstrand vara inne på fel spår. Häradskyrkor, tolftkyrkor, halvtolfter förefaller på Åland helt främmande.

#### *Sockenbildningen*

De svaga konturer som avtecknar sig synes mig antyda att kristendomen, efter en rätt lång missioneringstid, antagits genom ett allmänt beslut (landstinget?) omkring år 1000. Därefter har kyrkor uppförts genom åtgärder av 'landets' ledande grupper på centralgårdar, Saltvik (curia), Finström (regalt) och Jomala (uråldrig långhusform, spår av stormannaläktare, kastalgrund, vissa spår av en betydande centralgård). Vidare har kyrkor synbarligen anlagts på vissa ledande stormannagårdar: Sundby-Lappböle, Hammarland, Eckerö, Lemland, troligen Geta. I anslutning till alla dessa kyrkor ligger betydande vikingatida gravfält, vilket visar en omedelbar övergång storgård-kyrkplats. Och till dessa kyrkor har sedan anslutits lämpliga omliggande områden; sålunda bildas

des socknarna. Saltvik-Västanfjärden hade bekväm vattenväg till kyrkan, Hammarland samlades kring sin kyrka, Jomala församling följde nu det stora sundet mot Lemland och skogsstråken mot Hammarland oberoende av Gottby marklags gräns, Sund sammanfördes kring kyrkan genom den centrala rodd-leden, Eckerö blev nu avgränsat genom Marsund. Föglö socken blev en nydanad enhet. Och Lumparlands kapell anslöts söderut, vilket gav en något bekvämare kyrkväg än till den avlägsna Sunds kyrka, och kapellgränsen blev i de förändrade förhållandena Lumparsund. Vid denna samling kring de nya kyrkorna var smärre överskridanden av gränser för tredingar och marklag inget väsentligt hinder.

Det man har skäl att räkna med på Åland i fråga om grundenheter och äldre planering och indelning är *marklag* och *nötslag* (= hamnor), *icke tolfter* och 'halvtolftskyrkor'. De förstnämnda storheterna utgör fasta grundenheter med betydligt äldre bakgrund än kyrkorna. Ett underbart detaljerat och enhetligt, konkret system har vi härvid i de välbevarade Gottby och Sunda marklag (vardera med 3 nötslag à 8 fullgärder) i Jomala (Bertell a. a. s. 66) och i den briljanta serien av sju helt regelbundna nötslag (8 fullgärder och 10 rökar överlag) i Lemland-Lumparland (a. a. s. 88). Systemet med nötslag (hamnor) per fornbebyggd treding blir 15+15+11-12 (a. a. s. 116); därmed tangerar vi det magiska talet summa 42!

Huvudsaken är dock: *Räkna även med Åland*, det är riktigt; här har vi gammal skandinavisk mark!

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### *The Elgin Marbles Syndrome*

Since a few years we frequently hear claims for the return of archaeological or historical material from their present repository to their

"country of origin", claims which, quite often, have political overtones. After the most well-known of these claims, that on which the pre-

sent Greek "minister of culture", the actress Melina Mercouri, has built part of her political career, the phenomenon has been named the "Elgin Marbles Syndrome". This claim has fired many a journalist's imagination but it has not met with great understanding among archaeologists or historians. What are its merits, if any?

At first glance, the syndrome appears to be a self-induced guilt complex. Is such a complex, whether self-induced or not, really justified?

Since the beginning of time, monuments and objets d'art, technical hardware and software, myths, sagas and religions have been moved out of their original contexts to be adopted and adapted by foreigners. Thus, thousands of years ago, king Naram-sin's victory stele was taken to Susa by some unknown Elamite conqueror, only to be moved to Paris in recent times by an archaeologist trying to trace the course of events in antiquity.

In Egypt, the original names were erased from the statues of many a pharaoh, to be replaced by those of later rulers. Many a work of art can now be seen in museums far from the countries where they were once created — most of them honestly bought and paid for, some of them received as gifts and some simply stolen.

The Elgin Marbles were bought from their actual owner at the time, the Turkish government, and paid in cash. From a legal point of view the fact that Greece, later, won her independence is quite irrelevant.

The obelisks now in London and Paris were given by the Egyptian government of the day. The fact that the pharaoh once commissioning them intended them to stand forever where they were once raised carries no legal weight today nor does the fact that the "Silver Bible", now in Sweden, was taken by force of arms from Prague, a third of a millenium ago. Many such objects have survived only because they were removed from their original surroundings. No other book has survived from the Gothic library in Italy where the Silver Bible was once written, long before it was taken to Prague. Had the Elgin Marbles been left on the Parthenon they would have shared the fate of the reliefs on Trajan's column, in Rome. They would have decayed beyond recognition. Would that Trajan's

column had been removed from Rome in time! Now its reliefs are so badly weathered that they can be studied in detail only on a cast, made more than one generation ago.

Most of the African art now in European and American museums and collections would have perished without a trace, had these pieces not been brought out of Africa in time. What happened to China's national heritage (and to her historians and archaeologists) during the "cultural revolution" makes the mind boggle.

We have seen archaeology, history and linguistics prostituted for political reasons, in Nazi Germany, in Soviet Russia and, though to a lesser extent, at one time or another in most other countries. But no nation, and no individual, has a monopoly on history and on research. Such sources as exist belong to, and must be made available to, everybody, now as well as in the future. Each "nation", each ethnic group and each individual has a right, often denied, of access to all historical material. Should, for instance, the Americans of European, African or Asiatic provenience be deprived of access to their old-world cultural heritage? Should we, in Sweden, be cut off from our cultural roots, in Athens and in Rome, in Hamburg—Bremen and in York?

We all agree that artefacts, as such, are not the only source of knowledge in archaeology — the find assembly is of infinitely greater importance. Should all archaeological and historical material now preserved in museums and collections outside their country of origin be returned to the latter? This is what the Elgin Marbles Syndrome is all about. If so, what about the silver vessels from Sutton Hoo? To which country in the Middle East should they be returned? Should the great guns at Gripsholm, the Boar and the Sow, captured from the Russians in two different battles in 1581, be returned to Russia? Should Naram-Sin's stele be returned from Paris and, if so, should it be returned to Irak, where it was first raised, or to Iran, where it was taken by the Elamites? Should the Scythian gold objects in the Eremitage be returned to Siberia — and, if so, to what ethnic group? There are no Scyths left today. Should the Anglo-Saxon, German and Moslem coins found in Sweden be returned to England, Germany and

Afganistan? What about the Gandhara Buddha and the Irish crozier found, together, in a 7th century house on Helgö? Should the flint axes found at Byske be returned to Scania and, if so, to the museum at Limhamn or to that in Malmö?

Sensu latu, "imported" objects are invaluable in their proper context but valueless when isolated. The very fact that a great deal of material from various parts of the world is now housed in European or American museums and collections is, in itself, part of the general historical source material, invaluable to anybody studying the history of the 19th and the 20th centuries or, for that matter, that of earlier times. Thus, the very fact that the Silver Bible, Wulfila's translation of the Bible into Gothic, is now in Sweden, has not only preserved it from destruction but it is also of paramount interest to anybody studying the history of the Thirty Years' War. *Why* did a victorious general pick an ancient manuscript, in an incomprehensible language, for his share of the spoils, a manuscript which was, at the time, considered almost worthless?

Returning materials to their country of origin can also involve risks of their being destroyed or damaged as well as making it probable that they will no longer be available for study. The fate of the Swedish share of the material collected by the Sino-Swedish Expedition to Central Asia is a case in point. In spite of an agreement expressly stating that this was the property of Sweden it was, "for political reasons", returned to China — just before the Cultural Revolution, just in time for it to be destroyed, thus robbing present and future sinologists of invaluable materials.

In 1830, when conferring the honorary doctorate on the Danish philosopher and poet Adam Oehlenschläger, Esaias Tegnér, professor, poet and bishop, said that

"civilization transcends all frontiers,  
only barbarism was ever nationalistic".

He might have added that unchecked nation-

alism is, almost invariably, barbaric. Tegnér was a visionary and an optimist: he used the verb in the past tense when referring to barbarism and in the present when referring to civilization. Unfortunately barbarism keeps raising its ugly head and our guilt-complex is, often enough, not self-induced but forced upon our uncritical mind by unscrupulous politicians, for their own ends.

It is our duty to fight superstition and narrow-minded chauvinism where ever we meet them. The emerging nations have no more a "moral right" to anything than have the "developed" nations, whether to archaeological material or to industrial hardware and software. Such should be entrusted to such as can make use of them. No one would dream of requesting an emerging nation to return all technical equipment and know-how acquired from abroad, often as gifts, even though, many a time, the recipient is unable or unwilling to put them to practical use. The total amount of investments, all over the world, being limited, those incompetent nations or, in most cases, their politicians, who do not properly utilize the resources put at their disposal deprive the more competent ones of resources which the latter could put to better use, to the greater benefit of mankind. No man is an island, neither in time nor space. Today, as always, everybody, everywhere, shares the heritage of ancient culture. Thus, the Londoner and the Carioca have as large a part of their cultural and emotional background in ancient Greece as has any modern Greek, the average citizen of Nairobi, New York and New Delhi has some of his intellectual roots in medieval Bologna, Paris and Oxford.

No government, no myopic dishonest politician, has any "moral" right to finds and objects legally acquired by any museum.

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