

# The Rod and Measuring Rope

Festschrift for Olof Pedersén

Edited by  
Mattias Karlsson



Harrassowitz



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Detail from the Ur-Namu Stele (city of Ur, c. 2100 BCE, stone, 97x72.5x15 cm). Exhibited in the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (B16676.14).

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# Do Not Study Assyrian! A Survey of Swedish Assyriological and Ancient Near Eastern Researchers ca. 1760–2000

Jakob Andersson

In Sweden, Near Eastern research into cuneiform cultures is mostly limited to the subject area of Assyriology, at present taught only at Uppsala University; there is as of yet no position for Near Eastern Archaeology. Only with the promotion of Olof Pedersén to Professor of Assyriology in the year 2000 has the discipline had the chance to be taught under stable terms. This brief and chronologically arranged overview of Swedish Assyriological and Near Eastern researchers, be they Cultural Historians, Exegetes, Linguists, Assyriologists or Near Eastern Archaeologists, is offered to the honoree with the hope that he will herein find some details of interest – maybe even a person or two about whose existence or nationality he was hitherto unaware.

It should be noted, that the biographical information available on the individuals herein mentioned is varied both in kind, and in quantity, and that no overarching narrative has been attempted.

## **Peter Forsskål (1731–1763)**

Swedish involvement in research into ancient Near Eastern cultures goes as far back as the Danish-sponsored Arabian expedition led by Carsten Niebuhr, whose painstaking work on Persian period inscriptions eventually led to the formation of the discipline of Assyriology.<sup>1</sup> In December 1765, Niebuhr correctly identified the site of Babylon and made measurements of its city walls.<sup>2</sup> Accompanying Niebuhr were two Swedes. One of them was Peter (sometimes Pehr or Petrus) Forsskål born in the Finnish provincial capital of Helsinki. Forsskål was a political philosopher, a student of Oriental languages and a natural scientist, a student of Linnæus. Forsskål had not made himself popular with the powers that be in Sweden; his doctoral thesis, written during his studies in Göttingen, focused on something as bold as civil liberties. Writing on the virtues of such, within the boundaries of moral, and with the good of the community kept in mind, Forsskål portrayed the threats against these liberties thus:

... the *greatest danger* is always posed by those who are the most powerful in the country by dint of their positions, estate, or wealth. Not only can they easily abuse the

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1 Messerschmidt 1903: 5–6; Hansen 1962: 314–324.

2 Hansen 1962: 330–331; Christian 1938–40: 40–41. Niebuhr made the mistake, though, as had others before and after him, of counting the ruins of Borsippa (Birs Nimrud) to the site he identified as Babylon.

power they hold, but also constantly increase their rights and strength, so that the other inhabitants must fear them more and more.<sup>3</sup>

These were bold words for his time, bearing in mind that Sweden was a monarchy and that every book to be published had to undergo censorship! After a few alterations and some alterations, Forsskål secured some kind of permission for a printed edition of his thesis. When it dawned on the Chancellors' College that Forsskål had pulled the wool over their eyes, they ordered the entire edition to be seized and destroyed. Even with the obliging assistance of Professor Linnæus, also serving as *Rector Magnificus* (Vice Chancellor) of the University of Uppsala, the authorities only ever managed to locate 79 copies out of the edition of 500. Forsskål no doubt in this way contributed to the Swedish Freedom of the Printing Press Act of 1766; effectuated 7 years after his thesis was published.<sup>4</sup> Forsskål succumbed to Malaria at the age of 31 in the village of Jerim, *en route* to Sana'a. He was buried hastily in a shallow grave which was violated shortly after the burial by locals who believed that the grave contained objects of considerable value, seeing since the deceased had been buried in a wooden coffin.<sup>5</sup> During the length of the expedition, and as long as he had the strength to do so, Forsskål primarily secured biological samples for sending back to Copenhagen, making substantial notes on the flora and fauna of the areas visited. But he also made extensive notes on the pre-Islamic history of the Arabian Peninsula, a comparison of the Cairo and Yemeni dialects, the religion of the Copts, among many other things. The fruits of Forsskål's labour, however, were bitter, in that much of his collected materials were either lost, irretrievably damaged in transit, or wilfully neglected on arrival in Copenhagen.<sup>6</sup> His diary from the years 1761–1763 was published in the middle of the last century; apart from the Swedish edition, it has so far only been translated into Finnish.<sup>7</sup>

The other Swedish member of the Danish expedition was Lars Berggreen (year of birth unknown, died 1763), a dragoon serving under a Swedish hussar colonel in Pommerania during the Seven Years' War. He lacked scientific education and mostly functioned as a servant of the group. Berggreen succumbed to malaria a month and a half after Forsskål on a ship headed for Bombay and was buried at sea.<sup>8</sup>

### Isidore Löwenstern (1810–1858)

A character of the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century sometimes accused of being Swedish,<sup>9</sup> Isidore Löwenstern, can be credited as one of the very first to tackle the third, Babylonian, column of the Bisitun inscription in central western Iran, copied by Rawlinson. The other two columns – containing the Old Persian and Elamite renderings of the conquests of Darius I – had already been surveyed and treated with some success. Löwenstern may be recognized as one of the first to suggest that the third column was written in a Semitic language.<sup>10</sup>

3 Forsskål 2009: 14, § 4.

4 von Vegesack 2009: 23–38 (Swedish version); 23–39 (English version).

5 Hansen 1962: 264.

6 Hansen 1962: 268–278.

7 Forsskål 1950, 2003.

8 Hansen 1962: 50, 294–295.

9 See, e.g., Howard 1907: 127–128.

10 Löwenstern used evidence from the Book of Genesis stating that Assur was the son of Sem, and thereby a sister language of Hebrew and Arabic, Löwenstern 1845: 13 and 30 note S; Rogers 1901: 180–181

Löwenstern was, however, not Swedish but Austrian,<sup>11</sup> although he was elected a foreign corresponding member of the The Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities from 1848 until his death ten years later.

### **Herman Almkvist (also Almqvist; 1839–1904)**

Herman Napoleon Almkvist a native of Stockholm began his studies at Uppsala in 1856.<sup>12</sup> He defended his doctoral thesis in Uppsala ten years later on the Medieval traveller and geographer Ibn Battuta's travels.<sup>13</sup> He had received his schooling in Oriental languages in Paris and Leipzig, and also managed to travel extensively in the Near East and northeast Africa.<sup>14</sup> Among his lasting contributions to Swedish Semito-Hamitic philology were his travels in southern Egypt and Sudan, which generated an interest in comparative dialectal studies, and which opened up for in-depth study of Ethiopic languages by subsequent Upsalensian scholars.<sup>15</sup> In 1880 he was called as Professor of Comparative Philology in Uppsala, and between 1892–1904 he served as Professor of Semitic Languages at the same university. In the later years of his life, he sat down to learn cuneiform writing, and he incorporated Assyriological materials in his classes on comparative Semitic grammar.<sup>16</sup> Almkvist retired in late April 1904, and died in Uppsala only five months later.<sup>17</sup>

### **Oscar Montelius (1843–1921)**

Swedish archaeologist and cultural historian Gustaf Oscar Augustin Montelius was born in Stockholm in September 1843, and spent the duration of his studies in Uppsala, beginning in 1861. He was, however, never an employee at the university there. In the beginning he focused on botany, chemistry and mathematics, but later turned to the humanities.<sup>18</sup> In 1869 he earned his PhD, in the subject of History, as there was no independent subject called Archaeology at the time.<sup>19</sup> While studying in Uppsala, he served as an assistant to the National Antiquarian at the Swedish History Museum (1863–1868). He later accepted the offer for a position as Professor and later on as National Antiquarian at said museum, where he worked between 1888–1913. His work on chronology, albeit from a Scandinavian perspective, drew upon newly published Near Eastern sources, and served to date finds from the Nordic countries. Montelius is otherwise well-known for devising the chronological scheme which divided the Nordic Bronze Age into six phases.<sup>20</sup> In 1877, Montelius was

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(faultily referred to as “Loewenstein”); Zetterstéen 1914: 33–34.

11 See von Wurzbach 1866: 447–449 for biographical notes on Löwenstern.

12 Zetterstéen 1918: 439.

13 Almqvist 1866. Almkvist was an avid debater in favor of spelling reforms aiming to adapt the orthography to better suit spoken Swedish (Zetterstéen 1924: 12), and hence, a few years after his doctoral defense he changed the spelling of his name to Almkvist.

14 Zetterstéen 1924: 11–22.

15 Kahle 2007: 53–55.

16 Zetterstéen 1924: 18–20; Kahle 2007: 53, 58; Malmberg 2007: 35–36. According to Malmberg (2007: 35), Almkvist was the first to introduce Assyriology as a permanent course, but there is no indication as to which year this would have been.

17 Zetterstéen 1918: 439.

18 Gräslund 1985–87: 679.

19 Gräslund 1985–87: 679.

20 T. Dahl 1949: 329–330. An example of the application of Montelius' methodology in Near Eastern research, with a critical evaluation, can be found in Hrouda and Karstens 1967, esp p 256 footnote 3.

elected member of The Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities. He declined an offer from Germany in 1907 to become the director of the Museum für Völkerkunde and instead retained his attachment to the Swedish History Museum which lasted his entire professional life.<sup>21</sup> In 1917, at the age of 74, he was elected member of the Swedish Academy, occupying chair eighteen. As one of the leading scholars of ancient history and cultures, he was in contact with many of the persons mentioned in this article.<sup>22</sup>

### **Esaias Tegnér the Younger (1843–1928)**

For most of the 1800's, Swedish research on the Orient revolved around the living languages of the region. But when texts began pouring out of the ground in the old cultural centers of Babylonia and Assyria they caught the interest of Esaias Henrik Vilhelm Tegnér the Younger, who in 1875 published a popularizing pamphlet on the discoveries in Mesopotamia, including a description of the Persian and Mesopotamian cuneiform writing systems, and a schematic overview of Neo-Assyrian history.<sup>23</sup> He was by that time a Reader (Swedish: Docent), having earned his doctoral degree at the age of twenty on a dissertation about nunation in Arabic.<sup>24</sup> Tegnér was called to the chair of Professor of Oriental Languages in Lund in 1879. The same year he was elected working member of The Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities, and in 1882, at the age of 39, he was elected member of the Swedish Academy, occupying chair number nine. Most of his later career revolved around Nordic languages. In 1884, Tegnér was appointed member of the Swedish Bible Commission, instated by king Gustaf III already in 1773 to produce a new Swedish edition of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament to replace the edition from 1703 commissioned by king Karl XII. In 1917, only 144 years after its instatement, the commission had fulfilled its duty. Writing in 1924, Professor of Semitic Languages in Uppsala K. V. Zetterstéen ascribed the success of the commission to Tegnér almost single-handedly.<sup>25</sup>

### **Count Carlo Landberg (1848–1924)**

One of the more remarkable personas within Swedish oriental studies, Count Carlo (Carl) Landberg, born in Gothenburg, studied for a semester in Uppsala before departing for Paris in 1871, to study oriental languages and archaeology. He received his doctorate in Leipzig in 1883, and became Count through an Italian marriage in the following year. Landberg was appointed Chamberlain to H.R.H. the King of Sweden Oscar II in 1893. He is most well-known for his work on modern Arabic dialects.<sup>26</sup> His preoccupation with the Arabic-speaking world was triggered by his Paris studies in neo-European Linguistics, Sanskrit, Turkish, Hebrew and Archaeology under renowned Professor Jules Oppert and Ernest Renan.<sup>27</sup> The former had remarked during a class held in the winter semester of 1871/72 that Landberg did not know a single word of Arabic. According to the biographical notes of this self-confident Swede, he had quickly replied “Et bien! Demain je partirai pour l’Arabie”. And according to

21 Gräslund 1985–87: 679, 683.

22 I am grateful to Rolf Jonsson at the Norrköping City Archives, for affording me with scans of letters sent by Montelius to Anton Valfrid Hacklin, discussing lectures to be held at meetings of different associations in Norrköping in the years 1907–1910.

23 Tegnér 1875.

24 Tegnér 1865.

25 Zetterstéen 1924: 32.

26 T. Dahl 1948: 451–452.

27 Dederling 1977–79a: 231.

his own statements, the very next day he boarded a ship bound for Beirut. This was, however, no doubt an exaggeration on his part, as he seems to have arrived there only in the autumn of 1872.<sup>28</sup> Landberg received several significant international honorary orders on account of his services in the academic sphere, among others the Ottoman orders of the Medjidie and the Osmaniye; as well as Persian Lion-and-sun-order (Nishan-i-Homayoun).<sup>29</sup> There is, to be sure, a lot more to be said of the eccentric but talented Count, but that is perhaps best left to others,<sup>30</sup> or to himself, if one acknowledges the fact that he was in the habit of publishing Festschriften in honour of himself.<sup>31</sup>

### August Strindberg (1849–1912)

The survey would not be complete without a brief account of the most staunch opponent the budding science of Assyriology has had in Sweden – if not in all of Europe. The renaissance man, author and alchemist August Strindberg in some of his books launched a series of attacks on leading scholars in Assyriology, and on the general import of the discipline. For instance, he urged young people never to take up studies in the discipline: “Läs icke Assyrisk!” (Do not study Assyrian!), as a heading in his *En ny blå bok* reads.<sup>32</sup> His dislike for Assyriology (and indeed for Assyriologists), can be said to be founded in the disappointment of never coming to terms with the fact that the writing system employed a mixture of logographic and phonetic signs; where many signs would serve both purposes, and often sporting many different reading values. It is also telling that Strindberg used literature which was already hopelessly outdated in his time; and that he compared popular scientific works with specialist literature in German, French and English, hoping to be able to find either some consistency therein, or some inconistencies to pounce upon and deride.<sup>33</sup> Had Strindberg only lived to follow the developments of Assyriology in the 1920’s and 1930’s, he may have turned out more lenient in his total dismissal of the discipline. Strindberg’s study where he wrote his searing critique of Assyriology was located on Karlavägen 40, on the opposite end of the Humlegården park from the apartment of a future compatriot and orientalist, Wilhelm Riedel; both living at a comfortable walking distance from the National Library of Sweden.

### Anton Hacklin (1861–1923)

The continuing discoveries made in the ruin mounds of Mesopotamia led to an intensification of studies in Near Eastern cultures in the decades before the turn of the twentieth century. Born in Nora, Västmanland in January 1861, Anton Valfrid Hacklin was a licentiate of Semitic languages (1885), PhD (1887), and BA of Theology (1890). In 1886, he was the first Swedish scholar ever to hold propedeutic lectures in Assyriology,<sup>34</sup> and his survey of the

28 See Zetterstéen 1924: 42; 1945: 8–9.

29 Anonymous 1915: 74.

30 E.g. Zetterstéen 1945.

31 Notably the Festschrift in his own honour, commemorating his 40th anniversary as orientalist, entitled: *Jeder tut was ihm passt, denn reden werden die Leute immer*, Leiden 1909. Beneath the photograph of the honoree/only author of the volume is a caption: “Ein alter Schwede”.

32 Strindberg 1999: 764. Similar attacks are also found in books translated to English, e.g. Strindberg 1913: 232–233.

33 See, to this end, the sober comments by Pedersén in the Appendix section of Strindberg 1999: 1090–1092; Larsen 1989: 121–122; 1990.

34 Zetterstéen 1924: 37–38.

etymology and usage of the Hebrew preposition ל contained a brief overview of comparable Akkadian particles and prepositions.<sup>35</sup> As Hacklin continued to pursue his interests within Theology rather than Assyriology, he moved to Norrköping to fill a position as lecturer and later on as Principal of Norrköping's secondary school.<sup>36</sup> But he stayed in contact with Swedish scholars, as is illustrated by his correspondence with Oscar Montelius, now housed in the Norrköping city archives.

### **Olof Toffteen (1863–1929)**

Born in Hägsarve (Hexarfve) on the island of Gotland in June 1863, Olof (sometimes Olaf) Alfred Toffteen enrolled at Uppsala University in 1885 to study Theology before leaving for the U.S. in 1888. He joined the Protestant Episcopal Church and was ordained priest in 1893. He practiced his calling in Woodhull, IL, and Minneapolis, MN, where he founded six parishes. From there he went on to Chicago, where – apart from his priestly duties – he also pursued studies in Semitic languages at the University of Chicago. In 1905, he received his doctorate, and between 1906 and 1910 he was chair of Semitic languages at the Western Theological Seminary in the same city.<sup>37</sup> When Robert Francis Harper was on leave in 1906 – perhaps in connection with the death of his older brother, William Rainey Harper in January of the same year – Toffteen took over his teaching duties in Assyriology.<sup>38</sup> Toffteen's Assyriological output mostly focused on Near Eastern geographical and chronological issues.<sup>39</sup>

### **Sven Hedin (1865–1952)**

Sven Anders Hedin, Dr. *h.c. mult.*, native of Stockholm, world-renowned explorer, geographer and writer, wrote several books based on his extensive travels in partly uncharted territories of Central Asia; both scientific works and books were directed toward a young readership. Several of his books were written in English or German, or were translated into languages other than Swedish. He was ennobled in 1902 by H.R.H. the King of Sweden Oscar II, as the last person in Swedish history to receive this honour, and was furthermore elected member of many learned societies, among others the Swedish Academy, which he entered in 1913, at the age of 48, occupying chair number 6. He was a firm opponent of pre-revolutionary Russia, and later often spoke out in support of German National Socialist politics. Because of this, he was invited to speak at the grand opening of the XI Olympic Games in Berlin 1936.<sup>40</sup> In his book *Bagdad, Babylon, Ninive*,<sup>41</sup> Hedin describes in his usual, upbeat narrative style visits paid to modern and ancient cities and towns in Iraq. Besides those mentioned in the title of the book, he also made a brief stint to Assur, repeatedly referring to passages in the Hebrew Bible and the classical writers. During his tour of Babylon in mid-

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<sup>35</sup> Hacklin 1886.

<sup>36</sup> S. G. Dahl 1898: 105.

<sup>37</sup> Olson 1917: 572; T. Dahl 1955: 1. His doctoral thesis, however, was not published until three years later (Toffteen 1908).

<sup>38</sup> Olson 1917: 572. This leave of absence might help to explain the deterioration in the relationship between Edgar James Banks, the excavator of Adab-Bismayah, and Professor Harper, who left at least one of Banks' letters unanswered. See Wilson 2012: 24–25.

<sup>39</sup> E.g. Toffteen 1907; 1908.

<sup>40</sup> T. Dahl 1946: 360–363.

<sup>41</sup> Stockholm 1917. German and English translation with the same title (both Leipzig 1917 and 1918, respectively).

May 1916, Hedin was guided by none other than Robert Koldewey himself, who had stayed behind in Babylon even after the outbreak of the Great War to care for the excavation site.<sup>42</sup> Hedin was clearly awestruck by the erudite Koldewey and frequently refers to the latter's theories and thoughts. A number of objects of Near Eastern extraction, including a cuneiform inscription and potsherds said to have come from Samarra and Eridu, were donated by Hedin to the comparative collections of the Swedish History Museum in Stockholm.<sup>43</sup>

### **Knut Tallqvist (1865–1949)**

A person who deserves mention is one whose works served a Swedish-reading audience: Finnish scholar Knut Leonard Tallqvist. Apart from Tallqvist's works in Finnish, German and English, one notes a translation into Swedish of the Gilgamesh epic (1945; reissued 1962 and 1977; audiobook 2007); and a book on Babylonian hymns and prayers, *Babyloniska hymner och böner* (posthumously edited by Jussi Aro, 1953).

### **Karl Vilhelm Zetterstéen (1866–1953)**

Almkvist's successor to the chair of Semitic Languages in Uppsala, Karl Vilhelm Zetterstéen. An exceptionally gifted Arabist, Zetterstéen did not ascribe much importance to the cuneiform documentation; but he did manage to produce a sober synthesis of the history of cuneiform decipherment and research up until around 1914 which is well worth the read even today.<sup>44</sup> Zetterstéen was elected working member of The Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities in 1933. As has been shown above, Zetterstéen was instrumental in furthering the career of Carl Axel Moberg and for ruining the career of David Wilhelm Myhrman.

### **David Myhrman (1866–1940)**

David Wilhelm Myhrman began his studies at a biblical seminar in Stockholm, after which he went to the United States and Chicago for studies in the Hebrew language and Old Testament exegesis, which ended in a BA in 1896. From Chicago, he went on to Cambridge, where, it seems, he first came into contact with Assyriology. His stay there ended with an MA in 1897. After a period of ill health, Myhrman went to Leipzig in 1899 where he studied under professors Zimmern and Franz Heinrich Weissbach, and he received his doctorate in 1902 on a work concerning the demoness Lamaštu (Labartu).<sup>45</sup> Myhrman seemed to be heading for a brilliant assyriological career, but this was cut short due in part to altercations with Professor Zetterstéen. Their falling out became a most public affair, where one of the leading Swedish newspapers sided with Myhrman, much to the annoyance of Zetterstéen.

42 Hedin 1917: 437–535. Koldewey finally left the site 10 months later, on 7 March 1917 (Pedersén 2005: 3).

43 Arne 1936, 106.

44 Zetterstéen 1914: 20–52.

45 Myhrman 1902. In an encyclopedic article (Myhrman 1904: 266), Myhrman argued that the discipline of Assyriology should in fact more correctly be called 'Babylonology'. He motivated this, saying that the discipline "occupies itself with the archaeology, languages, literature, art history and religion of ancient Babylonia and Assyria. More correct would be to call it babylonology, as the culture in question is Babylonian" [author's translation].

Over the course of a few years, the Myhrman Affair (*Myhrmanska saken*),<sup>46</sup> was fought, very much in public, in pamphlets, newspaper articles, and by means of personal correspondence; Myhrman had to fend off callous accusations of incompetence in the field of Arabic studies from his superior, Zetterstéen. The latter received ammunition as Myhrman's American patron Hermann Vollrath Hilprecht in tandem with Hugo Radau (1873–1954) claimed that Myhrman was both incompetent and academically dishonest. In their formal accusations, they suggested – among other things – that he had committed burglary at the University Museum in Philadelphia to avail himself of unpublished materials; and that Myhrman had not himself been responsible for the copies published in his 1911 volume of *Babylonian Hymns and Prayers*. Furthermore, not only had Myhrman accepted suggestions on readings and interpretations allegedly made to him by Radau without crediting the latter, he had also had the audacity to disregard some such suggestions!<sup>47</sup>

In a pamphlet Myhrman retorted the accusations,<sup>48</sup> and in it he supplied transcriptions of documents, signed by Hilprecht himself, by members of faculty and staff in Philadelphia, as well as many other internationally renowned scholars. The documents disproved many of the charges brought forward by Hilprecht and Radau, and which were then repeated by Zetterstéen. The many letters and telegrams paint a picture of a person of unassailable integrity, and of a scholar who was taken aback by the hostility with which the conflict between Hilprecht and the rest of Philadelphia's oriental scholars, save Radau, raged. Even though Myhrman had testified in defence of Hilprecht at the hearing of the university tribunal, he had no problem getting Hilprecht's opponents to vouch for his character, and confirm that Myhrman had not perpetrated any unlawful or immoral acts while visiting Philadelphia. Other parts of the accusations are harder to prove either correct or false.

Zetterstéen fired a salvo back at Myhrman and came up trumps.<sup>49</sup> Myhrman's academic credibility was all but over and done with.

Both Myhrman and Radau had testified in support of Hilprecht at the University of Pennsylvania tribunal in connection with the so-called Hilprecht-Peters Controversy.<sup>50</sup> Both had staked their reputations saying that the judgment of Hilprecht carried such weight that neither they, nor the academic world at large should have any reason to doubt it.<sup>51</sup> Both Myhrman and Radau came to leave the field shortly after Hilprecht had lost his footing in

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46 See Eskhult 2013 for an excellent analysis of the Myhrman Affair, in Swedish, with an English abstract.

47 The falling out between Myhrman and Radau appears to have been swift, as the last indication of an amicability of sorts is represented by an offprint, signed "With the best wishes Hugo Radau", dated April 20 1910 and then sent to Myhrman. The offprint is at present housed in the library of the present writer.

48 Myhrman 1912.

49 Zetterstéen 1912.

50 Hilprecht 1908.

51 For Radau's statement, dated April 22 1905, see Hilprecht 1908: 152–159; and in even less uncertain terms, *The New York Times*' issue of April 23, p. 6. For Myhrman's statement, see Hilprecht 1908: 167–168.



Philadelphia; in 1914 Myhrman went on pursuing a career as a clergyman in the Church of Sweden;<sup>52</sup> in 1915 Radau took up practice as a solicitor.<sup>53</sup>

### **Wilhelm Riedel (1871–1961)**

Another little-known scholar who has done some work within the field of Assyriology was Johann Wilhelm Riedel, born in Schwartau, outside of Lübeck.<sup>54</sup> He originally came from a background in Theology with a specialization in christian manuscripts. He did not publish much of his research into cuneiform languages and cultures,<sup>55</sup> which must have begun some time around 1910; because in 1913 and 1914, he was a frequent visitor to the British Museum, copying some 160 tablets, predominantly dating to the Old Babylonian period, and taking notes on several more.<sup>56</sup> None of these were ever published, however. During the Great War, Riedel served as an army reserve and shortly after the war, he moved with his family to Stockholm. He became extraordinary lecturer in Latin at an upper secondary school in nearby Eskilstuna in 1919, and became a Swedish citizen in 1921.<sup>57</sup> Riedel shared an apartment on Karlavägen 20 in Stockholm with his daughter Margaret Riedel, who was involved in the early Swedish theosophic movement and who was trained in Waldorf pedagogy. Much of Wilhelm Riedel's notes are kept in shorthand. His notes, drafts and copies, all diligently dated, along with notebooks from the 1920's and 1930's with comments on and treatments of text publications from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century were donated to Uppsala University by his daughter and are now archived at the Department of Linguistics and Philology.<sup>58</sup>

### **Pontus Leander (1872–1935)**

Born in Holsljunga, Pontus Adalbert Leander, like Myhrman, pursued his assyriological studies between late 1897 and early 1903 in Leipzig under the freshly appointed Professor Heinrich Zimmern; and in Marburg under Professor Peter Jensen.<sup>59</sup> Leander wrote and successfully defended his doctoral dissertation on Sumerian loanwords in Akkadian at Uppsala University in 1903,<sup>60</sup> becoming a Reader in Assyriology in the same year. He was the first ever Swedish scholar of oriental languages to have specialized in Assyriology.<sup>61</sup>

52 Pedersén 1993–97.

53 Borger 2006–08.

54 *Nyheter från föreningen Eskilstunapojkarna* 1962/1, 3.

55 Riedel 1913, the publication of six Ur III texts from Puzriš-Dagān, forms the most eye-catching exception. During the Babel-Bibel-Streit at the beginning of the 20th century, Riedel filled a position in Greifswald. He appears to have penned a response of some sort to Delitzsch's first published lecture [not seen by present author], which at least merited inclusion in the English-language translations Delitzsch 1903a: 92; 1903b: 119.

56 Most tablets belong to the series BM 81500–, 81600– and 82000–. Documents from other periods include a Sargonic tablet (BM 80174) featured in a volume with copies by Theophilus G. Pinches published by Sollberger (1963 no. 48). Riedel's copy contained no improvements to that of Pinches.

57 *Nyheter från föreningen Eskilstunapojkarna* 1962/1, 3.

58 According to a memorial article on the 20th anniversary of Riedel's passing, he is said to have been preoccupied with Sanskrit during his stay at the British Museum. This, however, has left no trace in his copious notebooks, *Nyheter från föreningen Eskilstunapojkarna* 1981/2, 4.

59 Dederling 1977–79b: 410; Leander 1903: 4.

60 Leander 1903. Leander followed up on his thesis with an article on composite loanwords from Sumerian into Akkadian (Leander 1904–05); and he had previously also written a popularized account on the history of research into the oldest cultural layers of Babylonia and Sumer (Leander 1901).

61 Zetterstéen 1924: 37; Dederling 1977–79b: 410.

Leander would, however, be more remembered for his work on Hebrew grammar, and in 1910 he was appointed Reader in “Assyrian” and Hebrew in Lund. From 1917 until his death, he served as professor in Semitic Languages at the University of Gothenburg, then Gothenburg University College.<sup>62</sup>

### **Carl Axel Moberg (1872–1955)**

Carl Axel Moberg, born in Norrköping in June 1872 was a specialist in Arabic and Syriac, trained and active in Lund. Moberg was a former student of K. V. Zetterstéen during the time the latter filled the chair of Oriental Languages in Lund, while Tegnér was on leave for work with the Bible Commission. In 1908 Tegnér resigned his position permanently, and the offer to replace him first went to Moberg. But Zetterstéen wanted to give Myhrman a chance also, so the academic output of both scholars was examined by Zetterstéen, who arrived at the conclusion that Myhrman’s chosen field of study was less important than Moberg’s.<sup>63</sup> This decision was to become part of the underlying tensions between Zetterstéen and Myhrman culminating in the Myhrman Affair.

Among Moberg’s many publications one finds a well-researched pamphlet about the tower of Babel, written for the occasion of the doctoral promotion proceedings at Lund University in 1918,<sup>64</sup> the year when Efraim Briem (see below) was promoted doctor. He later returned to the subject with an article in English published in the *Festschrift* for Zetterstéen, taking into account literature from the years after the First World War.<sup>65</sup> Moberg was elected working member of The Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities in 1934.<sup>66</sup>

Moberg is not to be confused with the Swedish archaeologist Carl-Axel Moberg (1915–1987), whose introduction to the archaeological sciences is widely known and has been translated into several languages.

### **Martin P:n Nilsson (1874–1967)**

Nils Martin Persson Nilsson, PhD, Dr. *h.c. mult.*, was born in Stoby to a family of farmers, being the first ever in his family to devote himself to academic studies.<sup>67</sup> Nilsson was a classical philologist, trained and active in Lund. He was enormously productive and his works spanned everything from classical philology, via classical archaeology and the history of religion. His acquaintance with the Near East comes to the fore in works like *Die Übernahme und Entwicklung des Alphabets durch die Griechen* (1918), *Orientens forntid* (1926); and *De arkeologiska upptäckterna i den klassiska södern och den forna orienten* (1933).<sup>68</sup> He was elected working member of the The Royal Swedish Academy of Letters,

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62 T. Dahl 1948: 500.

63 Vitestam 1985–87: 574–575; Eskhult 2013: 20–21.

64 Moberg 1918.

65 Moberg 1931.

66 Vitestam 1985–87: 574.

67 Gierow 1987–89: 743.

68 T. Dahl 1949: 448–449.

History and Antiquities in 1920, and held seven honorary doctorates from foreign universities.<sup>69</sup>

### **Carl Lager (1878–1949)**

Carl Herman Lager, whose work within Assyriology is known only from a volume posthumously edited by Daniel C. Snell,<sup>70</sup> came to the U.S. in 1905 to study at the University of Chicago. He was ordained Baptist pastor in 1909 and then spent some time at the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem.<sup>71</sup> It was during this time that he bought a number of tablets which were bequeathed to the Yale Babylonian Collection upon his death. It appears he worked on the texts, copying and recopying them, in the 1910's, and in 1947.<sup>72</sup> He taught at Brandon College, originally a Baptist institution, in Manitoba, Canada as Professor of Old Testament studies, Hebrew, Swedish and German up until 1932,<sup>73</sup> when he withdrew from teaching to dedicate his time to the Swedish Baptist Church in New Bedford, Massachusetts where he ended his days.<sup>74</sup> In the 1940 U.S. Census, Lager happened to live on a street named after a compatriot, Jenny Lind Street in New Bedford. Lind was of course the world-renowned Swedish singer (originally named Johanna Maria) nicknamed "the Swedish Nightingale", who made a widely acknowledged tour of the U.S. in the early 1850s at the invitation of the infamous P.T. Barnum.<sup>75</sup>

### **Nils Nilsson (1880–1908)**

A third student – like Leander and Myhrman – who devoted himself to Assyriology in late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Uppsala was Nils Nilsson, who enrolled at Uppsala University at the age of 18. His Uppsala mentors were Almkvist and Zetterstéen, but like Leander, Nilsson also went to Leipzig to study under H. Zimmern. Nilsson's studies in Semitic languages and cultures provided a stepping stone toward the history of religion; and his 1906 licentiate thesis revolved around the goddess Ištar. Sadly, Nilsson succumbed to illness in November 1908, and none of his many plans reached fruition. Posthumously, a part of his thesis, translated from Swedish into French, was published in the series edited by Professor of Slavic Languages J.-A. Lundell, with a foreword written by the illustrious theologian, Dr. *h. c. mult.*, Church of Sweden Archbishop of Uppsala, visiting Professor of Religious studies in Leipzig, Nobel Peace Prize laureate (etc., etc.), Nathan Söderblom.<sup>76</sup>

### **Tor Andræ (1885–1947)**

Tor Julius Efraim Andræ, was a scholar of the history of religion with a primary focus on Islamology. He had a background within Semitic Languages and the History of Literature. Beginning in 1929, Andræ served as a Professor of "Theological Prenotions and Theological Encyclopedia", which was later divided into the three disciplines of the History of Religion, the Philosophy of Religion and the Psychology of Religion. During 1934, he held a series of

69 Gierow 1987–89: 743.

70 Snell and Lager 1991. Previously, W.W. Hallo had begun working with compiling these texts, with the assistance of Baruch A. Levine, but had had to abandon the project (Hallo 1999: xvii).

71 Brown and Donovan 1912: 263.

72 See the detailed biography and information on the tablets in Snell and Lager 1991: 1–2.

73 *Brandon College Sickle* vol. 2, 1928–1929: 9; vol. 5, 1932: 21.

74 Snell and Lager 1991: 1.

75 T. Dahl 1948: 600–602.

76 Nilsson 1910. A review can be found in Nielsen 1913.

lectures on Mesopotamian religion at Uppsala University, but they never materialized into a printed work.<sup>77</sup> At the age of 47, Andræ was elected member of the Swedish Academy in 1932, occupying chair number sixteen, and he was subsequently elected a working member of The Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities in 1935. At the time of his passing, Andræ was the bishop of the Diocese of his native Linköping.

### **H. S. Nyberg (1889–1974)**

A character of the utmost importance for a Swedish stream of Near Eastern research was Professor of Semitic Languages at Uppsala, Henrik Samuel Nyberg. He was born in December 1889 in Söderbärke and came to spend most of his life in Uppsala. Already before the age of ten, he had studied Sven Hedin's stories of the latter's travels through Khorasan and Turkestan, and so his familiarity with the Orient was an age-old affair.<sup>78</sup> Nyberg was crucial for the formation of the sometimes-called Uppsala School of textual and cultural interpretation of Near Eastern materials where the text-critical assertions, to the effect that long-lived oral traditions preceded the writing down of texts across the oriental cultures.<sup>79</sup> This latter point was viewed by the adherents to the Uppsala School as a critical issue which would allow for common traditions surrounding the concept of sacred kingship to be able to crop up in different places during different periods. During his professional career, Nyberg was the examiner of 999 students in the Semitic and Persian languages and religions, and among them are found many renowned later Scandinavian professors in Semitic languages, the History of Religion, and Iranian Languages.<sup>80</sup> Nyberg was elected a working member of The Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities in 1935, and he was elected member of the Swedish Academy in 1948, at the age of 59, occupying chair number three.

### **Efraim Briem (1890–1946)**

Efraim Briem, born in Helsingborg, was a student and scholar within the field of the History of Religion, active exclusively in Lund, where he first enrolled in 1909.<sup>81</sup> One of his teachers was Professor Carl Axel Moberg. He furthermore studied "Assyrian" under Professor Pontus Leander. His PhD thesis, defended the next year, centred on Mesopotamian mother goddesses.<sup>82</sup> Briem's thesis was divided in two main sections. In the first, he provided a textual survey of *Ninhursag* (*Ninharsag*), *Nanše* (*Ninā*), *Bau*, *Inana* (*Innanna*), and what he termed "vegetation goddesses (*vegetationsgudinnor*)."<sup>83</sup> The second part was made up by a survey of the different local aspects of the goddess *Ištar*, namely *Ištar* of Akkade, Babylon, Aššur, Nineve, Arbela and Uruk, along with a survey of *Ištar* in poetic texts. The work is representative of the level of research at the time, and does not come across as a piece of research any less informed than works produced in continental Europe at the time. Had it been written in English, Briem would no doubt have been far more well-known than is now the case. He continued to produce works focusing on ancient Near Eastern religion and more

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77 One of the main points of his series of lectures appears to have been the flexibility of gender regarding

the conception of high-gods, so according to Widengren 1945: 93–94 with footnote 104, p. 94.

78 Toll 1990–91: 643.

79 See, e.g. Nyberg 1935: 6–12, especially pages 7–9.

80 Toll 1990–91: 648.

81 Norlind and Olsson 1939: 45.

82 Briem 1918: iv.

general introductions to the field of religious thought,<sup>83</sup> but as opposed to other works in his bibliography, none of these was ever translated into another language.

### **Gustaf Lorentz Munthe (1896–1962)**

Gustaf Lorentz Munthe was an Art Historian and the Curator of the Röhsska museet in Gothenburg between the years 1924–1946. In the late 1920s, Munthe undertook a journey through Turkey, Syria and Mesopotamia, ending in Jerusalem. His travels were then published in printed form in 1928.<sup>84</sup> Munthe was guided around the area of Baghdad by the Scottish-born director of the Iraqi Department of Antiquities Richard S. Cooke. The latter held the position only briefly between 1927–1928, succeeding the illustrious Gertrude Bell. Far less illustrious than Bell or Koldewey – more infamous than famous – Cooke was implicated in a smuggling ring, involving an American archaeologist working at the Harvard University excavation of Nuzi.<sup>85</sup> The section on Munthe's visit to Babylon is consequently much less of an elaborate affair, as compared to Hedin's book.<sup>86</sup> In 1931, under Munthe's time as curator of the Röhsska museet – and thanks to two generous private donations from Elin Jansson and Gustaf Werner – the museum was able to acquire two reliefs from Babylon from the Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin, one from the Ishtar Gate section of the Street of Procession depicting a dragon, the other from the throne room of Nebuchadnezzar II depicting a lion, tail turned upwards.<sup>87</sup>

### **Hans Henning von der Osten (1899–1960)**

German-born Hans Henning von der Osten was a Near Eastern Archaeologist of great repute who came to spend about ten years teaching at the Uppsala University. His late teens were spent as a lieutenant on the German western front, where he was severely hurt. His future preoccupation with the cultures of the Near East had begun already in the trenches, where he had acquainted himself with Delitzsch's work on Akkadian grammar. While on leave from the army, he began his university studies at the Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität in Berlin, following courses in Archaeology, Ancient History and Assyriology.<sup>88</sup> In the early 1920's, von der Osten moved to the United States, where he continued his studies; first in New York, later in Chicago, where he received his Ph. D. in 1928.<sup>89</sup>

The early career of von der Osten was spent working in Anatolia for the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, which resulted in a swarm of publications. During his many years in the young Turkish state, von der Osten made many valuable acquaintances in the top echelons of Turkish society, including Kemal Atatürk himself. And when the Oriental Institute decided to stop funding his excavations in Turkey, von der Osten accepted a teaching position at Ankara Üniversitesi, where he taught from 1936 to 1939,<sup>90</sup> when he was charged

83 T. Dahl 1942: 463–464. Other works focusing on Near Eastern religion include *Kultur och religion i Babylonien och Assyrien*, Stockholm 1926; and *Babyloniska myter och sagor: Med kulturhistorisk inledning*, Stockholm 1927.

84 Munthe 1928.

85 Rothfield 2009: 11.

86 Munthe 1928: 140–154.

87 <http://emp-web-35.zetcom.ch/>; <http://rohsska.se/>.

88 Bittel 1962: 105.

89 Bittel 1962: 105; Gorny 2003–05: 149.

90 Goode states that von der Osten was handed the position without having any formal academic

with espionage and jailed.<sup>91</sup> Upon his release in 1950, he worked on a private collection of stamp and cylinder seals, with a few sealed objects, amulets and pearls located in Istanbul.<sup>92</sup> In 1951, von der Osten accepted a position offered to him by Uppsala University, at the initiative of Professor Axel Persson,<sup>93</sup> who passed away that same year.

Having immersed himself in the study of Iran and the Persian culture, the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut gave von der Osten the task of surveying the important Sassanid era site of Takht-e Soleyman, Old Persian Shiz, in northwestern Iran; a task set to pave the way for a joint German-Swedish expedition. The results of the survey carried out in 1958–1959 were encouraging, and the DAI decided upon appointing von der Osten as head of their Abteilung in Teheran. In 1959, Uppsala University awarded von der Osten with an honorary doctorate. On the night before the departure for a second season of excavations at the site, on June 30, von der Osten died from a heart attack in his home in Uppsala.<sup>94</sup> He was survived by his wife Hedwig, who remained in Uppsala.<sup>95</sup>

### **Herman Wohlstein (1903–1985)**

Herman Wohlstein, was born in Malmö, Sweden, and took up the position of orthodox rabbi, following in the footsteps of his father Josef Wohlstein. He authored a number of articles in English, German and Esperanto, and a monograph, pretty much all centered on matters concerning the history of religion in the ancient Near East, and especially the Sumero-Akkadian god of the sky An/Anum.<sup>96</sup> The monograph suffered in part from a poorly informed choice of publishing house, as it turned out that diacritics and letters like *ä* and *ö* were consistently left unmarked; making the work a difficult read, to say the least.<sup>97</sup> Other works include articles on Near Eastern magical traditions,<sup>98</sup> and contributions in Swedish to the journal distributed by the association Erevna, initiated by the Lund Professor of Old Testament Exegesis Hugo Odeberg (1898–1973). The latter has otherwise been accused of

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credentials (2007: 50), but von der Osten's academic track record can hardly be disregarded in this connection.

91 See, e.g. details noted in the correspondence of F. R. Kraus, edited in Schmidt 2014. In a letter dated Dec 25 1939, Kraus informed B. Landsberger, about rumours linking von der Osten to the German government (Schmidt 2014: 456); and in a letter dated 25 Jan 1942 Landsberger informs Kraus that von der Osten “hat mich in sein idyllisches Gefängnis nahe den bahçeli evler eingeladen” (Schmidt 2014: 784).

92 von der Osten 1957.

93 Boehmer 1999: 613.

94 Bittel 1962: 107–108.

95 The name of von der Osten's wife is actually never mentioned in the literature, but Hedwig, as she was called, was von der Osten's third spouse, see Boehmer 1999: 612. Hedwig passed away on 5 October 1988 and is buried alongside her husband in the Old Cemetery at Uppsala. Her name is given as Hete on the headstone.

96 E.g. Wohlstein 1961, 1963, 1969, 1971, 1976. It is not clear when he defended his doctoral thesis, but it must have been in or prior to 1963, as he is referred to as Wohlstein, Hermann, Dr. Malmö/Schweden in Wohlstein 1963: 850.

97 Furthermore, as Arnaud (1978: 80) remarked in his review of the book, Wohlstein had relied too heavily on dated materials and treatments, disregarding newer findings, and even more recent, basic literature.

98 E.g. Wohlstein 1944. A collection of various essays and book reviews in Swedish covering a broad range of subject matters, published between the years 1929–1945, are conveniently assembled in Wohlstein 1945.

entertaining anti-semitic ideas.<sup>99</sup> Wohlstein contributed, for instance, translations into Swedish of pieces written by the Dutch scholar F.M.Th. de Liagre Böhl.<sup>100</sup>

### **Ivan Engnell (1906–1964)**

The previously mentioned Uppsala School took form at the faculty of Theology in the end of the 1940's. It consisted of a group of Uppsala historians of religion and language scholars who met and debated central issues in the Hebrew Bible in order to produce a well-founded basis for exegesis. The topics of cult and sacred kingship were central points. The Professor of Old Testament Exegesis, Ivan Engnell was a central figure. Born in Linköping, enrolled at Uppsala in 1928 and receiving a doctorate in Theology in 1943,<sup>101</sup> Engnell's thesis on Near Eastern kingship (1943) helped fuel discussions and debates amongst the participants at the recurrent seminars. Some of the participants are well-known for their individual contributions to the Scandinavian branch of the traditio-historical school, as the Uppsala School has come to be called.<sup>102</sup>

### **Alfred Haldar (1907–1986)**

Alfred Ossian Haldar was born in Kristianstad, in the southern part of Sweden. He studied Theology at the universities in Lund and Uppsala, and was ordained priest in the Church of Sweden in 1936.<sup>103</sup> He later chose to withdraw in order to pursue studies in Semitic languages. He defended his doctoral thesis on the subject of *Associations of Cult Prophets among the Ancient Semites* in Uppsala in 1945. This was followed by an exegetical work on the book of Nahum, incorporating many observations on the biblical text taken from Ugaritic, Akkadian and Sumerian literary sources.<sup>104</sup> Further work included his investigation of *The Notion of the Desert in Sumero-Accadian and West-Semitic Religions*, and a translation into Swedish of *Enuma elish*.<sup>105</sup> In 1952, Haldar managed to secure rights for an excavation in Syria. The target was the site of Tall aš-Šāliḥīya on the eastern rim of the Damascus valley. The excavation team, apart from Haldar himself, consisted of Hans Henning von der Osten, accompanied by his wife Hedwig, and Else Nordahl (1925–2011), later Nordic Archaeologist.<sup>106</sup> The dig was commenced on 3 January 1953. Both Haldar and Nordahl were, however, taken seriously ill, and had to spend the whole term of the six-week excavation season in hospital,<sup>107</sup> with von der Osten and his wife doing the grunt of the work. The short excavation led to the founding of the short-lived Swedish Syria-Committee, with the task of securing funds for further research in Syria.<sup>108</sup> But no such funding ever materialized, and no further excavation work was carried out in Tall aš-Šāliḥīya or elsewhere

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<sup>99</sup> Åkerlund 2008: 559–561.

<sup>100</sup> Wohlstein 1953a and 1953b.

<sup>101</sup> Dintler and Lindqvist 1953: 141.

<sup>102</sup> Good introductions to the scholarly climate of Uppsala and of the era in which the Uppsala School gradually took form, are given by Merrill and Spencer 1984; and Soggin 1989: 101–107.

<sup>103</sup> Harnesk 1964: 308.

<sup>104</sup> Haldar 1947.

<sup>105</sup> Haldar 1950 and 1952, respectively. More on Haldar's publications and his collection of cuneiform tablets can be found in Andersson 2008.

<sup>106</sup> Nilsson, Oscarsson, Eklund, Kuhlberg, Källman, Tesch and Claesson 2012: 73.

<sup>107</sup> Nyberg 1956: v–vi.

<sup>108</sup> Nyberg 1956: vi.

in Syria by a Swedish expedition. Haldar continued to publish, mostly in the form of articles, until the early 1970s.

### **Geo Widengren (1907–1996)**

Geo Widengren, born in Stockholm, began his higher studies at the University College of Stockholm in 1926, and enrolled at Uppsala University in 1931, where he defended his doctoral thesis on Akkadian and Hebrew psalms of lamentation in 1936.<sup>109</sup> In between his studies, he served as an underofficer in the Swedish army, and during the Second World War he briefly served as a lieutenant in the Finnish army as part of the Swedish Volunteer Corps during the Winter War between Finland and the Soviet Union. His commission lasted between February and early April 1940.<sup>110</sup> Immediately after this, he was appointed Professor of the History and Psychology of Religion. Between 1950–1960, he was vice-president of the International Association for the History of Religion, and between 1960–1970 he was the president of the same organization.<sup>111</sup> Most of his later career he spent researching Indo-Iranian cultures. In 1960, Widengren served as the second faculty opponent at the doctoral defense of Assyriologist Åke Sjöberg, putting special focus on the theological implications of Sjöberg's thesis about the Moon-God Nanna-Suen. Widengren was elected a working member of The Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities in 1971.

### **Helmer Ringgren (1917–2012)**

K.V. Helmer Ringgren, born in Åla on the island of Gotland, enrolled at Uppsala University in August 1936 and became doctor of Theology in 1947 at Uppsala University. He was active in Uppsala as Reader in the History of Religion between 1947–1959, also spending time in Åbo, Finland, and at the Garrett Biblical Institute in Evanston. Between the years 1964–1983, he served as Professor of Old Testament Exegesis at Uppsala,<sup>112</sup> where he would remain and live out his days. Much of his work focused on Biblical and Islamic studies, but he also authored a couple of introductory books on ancient Near Eastern religions,<sup>113</sup> and edited the first volume of the series *Historia Religionum*.<sup>114</sup>

### **Gösta Ahlström (1918–1992)**

Gösta Werner Ahlström, Professor of Old Testament studies at the Divinity School and Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations Department of the University of Chicago. Ahlström's primary concern was ancient Israel/Palestine, but his survey of Palestinian history, published posthumously, was far more than what the title stated. In essence, it represents a 900+ page synthesis of the pre- and early historical cultures in the Eastern Mediterranean and Near Eastern area, seen from both a textual and archaeological point of view.<sup>115</sup> In his eulogy for Ahlström, Åke Sjöberg reminisced about how they both were members of the student's choir in Uppsala, and that the time when they became friends for real were during the Old

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109 Widengren 1936; Dintler and Lindqvist 1953: 598–599.

110 Dintler and Grönberg 1975: 653–654.

111 Maier 2007: 353.

112 Dintler and Grönberg 1975; Uddling and Paabo 1992: 923.

113 Ringgren 1967 (English translation 1973; German translation 1979); Ringgren 1987.

114 Ringgren 1969.

115 Ahlström 1993.



Testament seminars headed by Ivan Engnell. During a period in the late 50s to early 60s, Sjöberg was Ahlström's teacher during a seminar in Assyriology.<sup>116</sup>

### **Frithiof Rundgren (1921–2006)**

Gustaf Frithiof Rundgren was born in Stockholm on Christmas Day 1921. He began his academic career as a student of the classical languages, first Latin, which he could study at Stockholm University College, but in order to study Greek, he had to enroll at Uppsala University.<sup>117</sup> In the early 1940s, he attended seminars led by H. S. Nyberg, who soon suggested that "I think Rundgren should come over to me", meaning that he should come and pursue his linguistic interests under Nyberg, which he, of course, did.<sup>118</sup> And so he went through a considerable and wide curriculum, encompassing not only the most significant Semitic languages, but also Iranian languages, which were all treasured by his competent mentor. In 1955 he defended his thesis on *s/š-* and *n-t-*demonstratives in Semitic,<sup>119</sup> and among his early production one finds a few works focusing on Akkadian linguistic issues ranging from lexicography to morphology and syntax.<sup>120</sup> In 1964 he succeeded H. S. Nyberg as Professor of Semitic Languages, and for more than 20 years, he was the sole editor of the Uppsala journal *Orientalia Suecana*, besides his many administrative and honorary commitments. He was elected a working member of The Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities in 1966.<sup>121</sup> Rundgren retired in 1987, but upheld a steady stream of academic output, as varied as his academic background and interests.<sup>122</sup> Among his many students one may note one Olof Pedersén, who has remarked that Rundgren took an interest in, and was quite supportive of, his own academic work.

### **Åke Sjöberg (1924–2014)**

Åke Waldemar Sjöberg,<sup>123</sup> Prof. Dr., Dr. *h.c.* in Theology at Uppsala 1994, has a track record too great to be summarized in a few lines, and references to his generosity with regards to granting publication rights of Nippur tablets kept in Philadelphia, as well as his and his wife Gunnil's hospitality, strewn over books and articles testify to his scholarly integrity and his warm personality.

Sjöberg's road to the Near East began during the early 1930's in his native Sala, when he received tutoring in Greek by a curate in the town church. He graduated from Fjellstedtska skolan in Uppsala in 1946, with grades in Latin, Greek and Biblical Hebrew. Later the same year he enrolled at Uppsala University to study Semitic languages under Prof. H.S. Nyberg, among others. Sjöberg received his BA in 1953, and went on to study under Adam Falkenstein in Heidelberg during seven semesters between 1953 and 1959. Sjöberg was

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<sup>116</sup> Sjöberg 1995.

<sup>117</sup> Ö. Dahl 2007: 31.

<sup>118</sup> Eskhult and Isaksson 2006: 5; Ö. Dahl 2007: 31.

<sup>119</sup> Rundgren 1955a.

<sup>120</sup> E.g. Rundgren 1955b, 1959a, 1959b, 1963. In other titles also, Akkadian figures prominently in studies of etymologies and cultural historical issues, or for comparisons.

<sup>121</sup> Ö. Dahl 2007: 32.

<sup>122</sup> Eskhult and Isaksson 2006: 5; Ö. Dahl 2007: 31–32. Bibliographies of Rundgren are collected in Riad 1984–86: 513–524; and Isaksson and Riad 1996–97: 217–220.

<sup>123</sup> Consistently referred to by himself and others as *Waldemar*, his passport actually stated *Valdemar*. An excellent photo of Sjöberg is found in his first Festschrift, Behrens, Loding and Roth 1989: 592.

awarded his Licentiate (MA) degree in 1955.<sup>124</sup> Classes in Heidelberg were held six days a week, with Saturdays reserved for Near Eastern archaeological studies.<sup>125</sup> In 1960, Sjöberg defended his doctoral thesis, for which he received a three-year Readership. Sjöberg soon went to the United States; first to the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago in 1963,<sup>126</sup> and then on to Philadelphia in 1966, where, two years later, he succeeded Samuel Noah Kramer as Clark Research Professor in Assyriology.<sup>127</sup> He officially retired in 1996, though he did not cease working on his Akkadian files until a few months before his passing. Åke and his wife Gunnil were permanent residents in the States for some 40 years before returning to Sweden. Two *Festschrift* volumes were published in Sjöberg's honour,<sup>128</sup> and these contain detailed bibliographies of his scholarly output spanning a remarkable seven decades.<sup>129</sup>

### **Carl Nylander (b. 1932)**

Carl Nylander is an archaeologist with a predominant interest in the early historical Mediterranean and in the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium cultures of Iran. He defended his doctoral thesis in 1970 on the Greek influences on Achaemenid architecture.<sup>130</sup> Nylander's production also includes investigations into the area of intersection between these regions, as is demonstrated by his preoccupation with the bronze head of a potential Sargonic period ruler found at Nineveh (IM 11331).<sup>131</sup> According to Nylander himself, his career choice had been influenced to no small degree when spending time at the German-Swedish excavations at Takht-i-Suleiman in northwestern Iran, under the auspices of Hans Henning von der Osten and Rudolf Naumann. His words in fond remembrance of von der Osten in the foreword to his popular and highly personal book *The Deep Well* summarizes his lasting impressions of von der Osten as follows:

In our often bloodless and pedantical world of learning, this German aristocrat was a strange bird, always surrounded by an aura of adventure, both of the spirit and the senses. The image of a bird seems to suit him and his destiny; even in his worn Turkish sheepskin jacket, with his dishevelled hair and his burning eyes, he recalled the impassive nobility of a hunting falcon. Again in his relationship to the practical world and its problems, he could on occasion resemble Baudelaire's albatross, whose great wings hinder it from moving easily on the ground, or the condors of poetry which rise high above the earth but are forced down by the winds of hunger to live on the charity of the Inca people. Those who have not only had the experience of being lifted by him over Asia and over history, but also of being with him in everyday situations, cannot forget this intensely vital person. We carry, like an abiding gift from the years with

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124 Dintler and Grönberg 1975: 538.

125 Åke Sjöberg (personal communication).

126 Dintler and Grönberg 1975: 538.

127 Eichler 2006: 100.

128 Behrens, Loding and Roth 1989; Sassmannshausen 2013.

129 An obituary is Andersson 2015; a lengthier one is set to be published in an upcoming issue of the journal *Orientalia Suecana*, Andersson forthc.

130 Nylander 1970a.

131 Nylander 1980a, 1980b.

him, the echo of his irrepressible enthusiasm and of his vision of the past, his multifarious humanism, his warmth and his consideration.<sup>132</sup>

Nylander is a working member of The Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities since 1979.

### **Jöran Friberg (b. 1934)**

A name that is inseparable from Near Eastern research, but with a background within the natural sciences is Jöran Friberg, Professor of Mathematics (History of Science and Technology) at Chalmers University of Technology, Gothenburg. Friberg began as a mathematician in the traditional sense, writing and defending his doctoral thesis in 1963.<sup>133</sup> His first contact with pre-classical mathematics came during a visiting assistant professorship at the University of Minnesota in the academic year 1965–1966. For his MA, Friberg had had to learn Russian which came in handy when he began studying A. A. Vajman's writing on Babylonian mathematics. Friberg has published several monographs and a number of articles on matters concerning Mesopotamian mathematics, and was one of the driving forces behind the deciphering of the proto-cuneiform and proto-Elamite systems of numerals and metrological notations.<sup>134</sup>

### **Tryggve Mettinger (b. 1940)**

Nils Daniel Tryggve Mettinger has time and again preoccupied himself with questions of text interpretation, and admits to having been influenced by some researchers within the Uppsala school, but he deliberately chose another path of exegesis.<sup>135</sup> His work includes important investigations of the descensus motif central to certain Near Eastern mythologies.<sup>136</sup> He is a working member of The Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities since the year 2000.

### **Cecilia Grave (b. 1945)**

Ingrid Cecilia Henschen Grave is an Orientalist active mainly in the 1970s and early -80s. She had her training at Lund University, and her field of interest was mainly in the Eastern Mediterranean languages and cultures, with a special focus on the Amarna period letters from Tyre. This interest resulted in a few articles published in international scholarly journals.<sup>137</sup> She began writing a doctoral thesis on the subject, but there is no evidence suggesting that it was ever submitted.<sup>138</sup> Grave is the daughter of acclaimed poet Elsa Grave.

Which brings us up to the pleasant conclusion, and the honoree Olof Elias Pedersén, born in 1946, promoted professor in 2000, and to whom this brief overview of his peers and predecessors is warmly dedicated.

<sup>132</sup> Nylander 1970b: 9–10.

<sup>133</sup> Friberg 1963.

<sup>134</sup> Englund 2004: 23 footnote 1; 30–33.

<sup>135</sup> Mettinger 2004: 18, 23, 25.

<sup>136</sup> Mettinger 2001 and 2005.

<sup>137</sup> Grave 1980a, 1980b, 1982.

<sup>138</sup> Siddall 2010, 31 note 5.