

RESEARCH PAPER

# The Collaborative Dimension of Johan Gunnar Andersson's Search for a Western Origin of China

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The Swedish geologist Johan Gunnar Andersson, well known for discovering the first Stone Age culture in China, was for a long time criticized for trying to establish a 'Western origin' for his Yangshao finds. Not much has been written on how he went about to prove this theory and no composite account exists on what role other, mainly Swedish, scholars played in his project. This article aims to address this lacuna, outlining how geographer Sven Hedin, collector Orvar Karlbeck, as well as archaeologists Olov Janse and Ture J. Arne came to be engaged in the search for a Neolithic 'Eurasian Highway'. Relying on Swedish archives the article will also shed light on the lead up to the Yangshao discovery and the aura of secrecy Andersson shrouded his later activities in China in.

## Introduction

For many in China, Johan Gunnar Andersson's belief that the Yangshao Stone Age culture emanated from outside China's borders was disturbing. Although Andersson eventually let his hypothesis rest in lack of evidence, he then became associated with imperialists who wanted to colonize China and who used science to prove the inferiority of non-Western cultures (Chen 2004).<sup>1</sup> The Chinese at the time had all the reasons to suspect the worst. Not only had European scholars plundered and smuggled Chinese antiquities, they had also spun narratives about the backwardness of the non-Western world (Trigger 1989). After the realization that vast areas of the Eurasian continent were covered by Indo-European languages, the rise of civilizations like that of India or Iran came to be explained with theories on conquering Aryans. In the late 19th century, some philologist even argued that the Chinese language had originated from ancient Babylon (Girardot 2002: 382–393).

In the post-Mao of the 1980s, Johan Gunnar Andersson was rehabilitated and honored for having introduced modern archaeology to China. In connection with this, archaeologist Yan Wenming reminded his fellow scholars in 1985 that 'Many people have criticized this theory of "Western" origin but very rarely have anyone analyzed its emergence or its transformations' (Fiskesjö and Chen 2004: 117). Since then a few texts on Johan Gunnar Andersson appeared but no real attempt has been made to sort out how a number of Swedish scholars in different ways contributed to Andersson's project (Chen 1997; Fiskesjö and Chen 2004; Johansson 2012). This article aims to redress the lack of description of Johan Gunnar

Andersson's search for the Western origin of China and how other Swedish scholars responded to his theory by metamorphosing it into quite fanciful narratives on cultural contacts across Eurasia.

## Andersson Uncovers a Chinese Pre-History

Late 19th century saw a challenge to an otherwise optimistic enlightenment narrative. Under the threatening shadow of a growing industrial proletariat and in the struggle for colonies, a new philosophy of history emerged where the notion of different civilizations or cultures defied the theory of evolutionary universalism. Racial ideas brought a hierarchical view of the world and historical studies together with archaeology became important, as both were used to prove the age and origins of a people. Concurrently the archaeological perspective changed from the universalistic doctrine of the progress of humanity to skepticism about cultural innovations having been invented numerous times at different places. From now on, development and change were instead thought to be the result of migrations. The theory of diffusionism replaced that of evolutionism and a search began for an *Urheimat* from where all advanced civilizations once had sprung.<sup>2</sup> Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Central Asia were some of the more popular candidates for this title but many scholars wanted to find the source of civilizations within Europe (Trigger 1989: 186–187).

Just as Nordic nations were at the frontline of this new discipline, it was the Swedish scholar Oscar Montelius who put archaeology on the track of diffusionism. From the geographical spread and the chronology of European artifacts, Montelius argued that progress was a result of migrations and that the European civilization had its origin in the Near East. Because of this view Montelius became the most prominent figure of the diffusionist explanation of Europe's cultural development labeled *ex oriente lux* (Trigger 1989: 160). His ideas were met with

harsh criticism, especially from German archaeologists who insisted that Aryan invaders lay behind the early South-Eastern cultures on the European land mass.

But within this diffusionist scheme, civilizations other than Europe were not yet accounted for. For example, how was ancient China – whose language did not belong to the Indo-European language family – to be explained? In the beginning of the 1920s, no solid proof of a Stone Age culture on Chinese soil existed. Few Neolithic artifacts had been identified at the time, as they were believed to be from 'barbarian' minorities (Andersson 1934: 163; Chang 1986: 4, 5). Montelius was of a different opinion. As he envisioned it, China's splendid past was the very reason no one expected Stone Age material to be found there. The situation had been similar in Egypt, Greece, and Italy, where scholars first had not bothered to look for the precedents of these grand civilizations. Appealing to national sentiments Montelius wrote a document in support for his compatriot Andersson, who was now working for the China Geographical Survey as a geologist, saying that this was a glorious opportunity for the small Swedish nation to make an important scientific discovery (correspondence May 1920, Archives of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm).<sup>3</sup>

Although not knowing much about historical research, Andersson had been planning for archaeological excavations before being in contact with Montelius. At the end of March 1920 he wrote to the China-based railway engineer Orvar Karlbeck, asking him to lead the explorations in Anhui, sending along a 'plan for archaeological excavations in China' (correspondence 15 April 1920, Archives of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm). Karlbeck replies to Andersson about various bronze objects he himself had collected and also mentions clay urns of an unknown age.

Ancient Chinese stoneware has much in common with the early Egyptian. I possess urns of such a strange shape that they are almost identical with pieces that have been found on Cyprus. Still others remind me of Assyrian and Crete items. Maybe there exists no relation between them, but it could turn out that excavation unearthed artifacts that proved a direct relationship. One has after all recently suggested a close relationship between ancient Chinese writing and the Sumerian and the Egyptian. (Correspondence 15 April 1920, Archives of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm)

Although generally discarded by the scientific community, there was still interest and belief in theories connecting Mesopotamia with the Far East, not least among Chinese scholars (Fan 2008). The archaeological plans Andersson wished to include Karlbeck in concerned metal wares; he himself wanted to focus on the Stone Age. Replying to a letter from Karlbeck dated May 15, Andersson refers to an Anhui project providing comparative material to his own 'stone culture stations' (correspondence 4 June 1920,

Archives of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm).<sup>4</sup> For this task Andersson hopes to enlist Osvald Sirén, a Swedish professor in art history who, as Karlbeck had reported, was planning a trip to China for archaeological excavations (Johansson 2012; Törmä 2013).

Sirén and Karlbeck to excavate in Anhui, Andersson had equipped a number of his Chinese geologist assistants with prehistoric specimens to ask villagers about. One late autumn day in 1920 one of Andersson's assistants, Liu Chang-shan, returned from a trip in Henan with six hundred stone-made tools: all from around the small village of Yangshao. But Andersson remained skeptical to Montelius conviction that China also had its origins in a 'primitive' Stone Age and waited months before travelling down to Yangshao. Upon arrival he discovered pieces of clay vessels of fine reddish earthenware, far too elegant, he thought, to be from the Stone Age: 'It seemed inconceivable that ceramic containers such as these would appear together with tools of stone,' he later commented (Andersson 1933: 395). Andersson was not a trained archaeologist and dismissed the Yangshao discovery, returning instead to his search for remains of rare Paleolithic animals.

Andersson, however, sent some sherds to the Swedish Crown Prince Gustaf Adolf who then presented these to his friend, Robert Lockhart Hobson, at the British Museum. Hobson after himself consulting a number of British archaeologists came to the conclusion that Andersson's specimen belonged to the same type of design found in Babylonia, the Eastern borders of Persia, Southern Russian Anau and Turkmenistan (Andersson 1922: 38). Arguing that this 'Neolithic civilization' probably originated in Babylonia and had spread out over the Near East and Russia, Hobson wrote to Andersson, explaining that it 'is likely to have found its way across Asia via Chinese Turkestan into China' (Andersson 1922: 38).

### The Lost Highway of Eurasia

Because of Hobson's report, Andersson came to believe that Great Migrations brought from the West the newly discovered Yangshao culture and that the culture bearers must have crossed the Yellow River at the height of the present Gansu, provincial capital of Lanzhou. There, in the area, which later became the entrance to the Silk Route, Andersson hoped to find the missing link between Yangshao and other cultures excavated in Eastern Europe.<sup>5</sup> In 1923, he began archaeological explorations in these Northwestern parts of China then spent a few years excavating and collecting, until 1925 when he returned home to Stockholm.

In just ten years, Andersson, besides unearthing the Yangshao culture, had also been involved in the sensational discovery of the hominoid labeled 'the Peking Man', and had become Professor of East Asian Archaeology directing a new museum in Sweden. But Andersson was not satisfied. He believed he was on the verge of a truly momentous discovery and thus continued to pursue the hypothesis of cultural connections caused by migrations from Europe or Western Asia into China.

Andersson based this hypothesis on parallels seen in the style of pottery techniques found in places like Tripoli on the Volga, Macedonia, Mesopotamia, Persia, Ainu in Russian Turkestan, Gansu, and Inner Mongolia. Since he could not detect any stylistic similarities between his Yangshao Stone Age urns and bronze wares from the Chinese Zhou dynasty, he identified Yangshao as being Western. Although when writing about the flow of culture coming from 'the West' (*Västerlandet*), he sometimes also referred to Egypt or Mesopotamia, seemingly adhering to Montelius' theory of *ex oriente lux*.

### Sven Hedin's Spade-Less Archaeology

Johan Gunnar Andersson could engage in archaeology and collect artifacts and samples as long as he remained a geologist working for the Chinese government. But in 1925, after the excavations in Yangshao and graves in the Western provinces of China, where he also purchased a great amount of looted grave goods, Andersson brought back to Sweden a large collection, which allowed him to set up a new museum (Fiskesjö and Chen 2004; Johansson 2012). This new situation made his relations with China more difficult. 'Because I now represent a Swedish museum I will in some sense always be a source of worry for them', as Andersson explained (correspondence with Sven Hedin 9 May 1927, National Archives of Sweden, Stockholm).

Unable to continue his archaeological activities himself, Andersson secretly recruited the famous Swedish explorer Sven Hedin to excavate and bring to Sweden more historical finds from China (correspondence 30 Dec. 1925, National Archives of Sweden, Stockholm). Prodding Hedin to stay interested in the Tibetan regions since he could discover supporting evidences for Eurasian 'missing links' there, Andersson expressed great expectations:

I am fully convinced that what we have seen is just a beginning of a major disclosure (*stor upprullning*) of finds like yours, Stein's and Pelliot's, of a Central Asiatic culture with connections towards both the East and the West, only with the difference that what I have found in Gansu relates to cultures three thousand years older (correspondence 12 March 1925, National Archives of Sweden, Stockholm).

Hedin was world famous and highly respected so Andersson asked him for help to make public the earlier Gansu discoveries, bragging that 'certainly for the first time in history [it] shows the exceptionally intimate cultural affiliation between the Westernmost Orient and East Asia at the end of the Stone Age' (correspondence 9 June 1925, National Archives of Sweden, Stockholm). Andersson told Hedin that the finds suggest a homogenous culture stretching from Sicily, Greece, Egypt, Russia and the Near East all the way to China. To find the link with the West, Andersson explained, the next expedition had to be located in Northern Gansu – where Andersson had previously found a treasure trove of decorated Stone Age urns

similar to the Yangshao ones – but also in 'Turkestan' (correspondence 9 June 1925, National Archives of Sweden, Stockholm).

Ding Wenjiang and Weng Wenhao of the Geological Survey of China agreed to Andersson taking part and conducting archaeology in the Hedin-lead expedition. The local government, with the warlord Zhang Zuolin had also given the go-ahead for the expedition (Hedin and Bergman 1943a: 7, 84). However, in spring 1927 Chiang Kai-shek's military campaign to unify China had already reached Shanghai and nationalist sentiments were prominent also in Beijing, from where the Swedes planned to set out. Although Andersson had influential friends supporting him, he was worried that the plans for archaeology would become publicly known among the Chinese. In February, he therefore conveyed to Hedin: 'That you plan a meteorological station in the Gansu area can be said openly but I must kindly ask you that our great expectations on archaeology there must remain *entre nous* for the time being' (correspondence February 1927, National Archives of Sweden, Stockholm). However, by early April, news about Hedin's expedition had leaked to the public and virulent protests broke out led by Chiang Kai-shek's followers in the old capital (Hedin and Bergman 1943a: 8). Students and intellectuals staged demonstrations, published critical newspaper articles and threatened to destroy the equipment of the expedition.

The Chinese protesters expressed the fear of archaeological excavations and foreigners taking antiquities out of their country. But Andersson, thanks to his good reputation and connections, handled the inflamed situation arranging a renewed expedition permit and cooperation from the Chinese (Xu 2000: the introduction). However, this came at a price as the new agreement for the Hedin-Andersson expedition had ruled that all things collected were to remain in China and archaeological excavations were not to be allowed.<sup>6</sup> This is unproblematic for Hedin who is chiefly interested in geography. Andersson who now is informed he will not come along as the archaeologist of the expedition, understood he had been used by his compatriot. Although furious, he still tried to make the best of the situation:

If you, who keep an excellent archaeological staff at hand, could conduct a great and important work we will be the first to celebrate you even if we do not even get a tiny slice of the finds. This might be the last time in our generation white men get to dig in the thousands of burial grounds and ancient settlements of Central Asia. Times are bad and one should not be unnecessary obstinate and stiff when everything has been done to save something for Sweden (Correspondence 17 April 1927, National Archives of Sweden, Stockholm).

When the Swedish archaeologist Folke Bergman arrived in Beijing for the Hedin expedition, Andersson stood with Hedin at the train station to welcome his replacement and was cooperative to the utmost. Bergman recounts that

Andersson 'saw to my excavation equipment and did all he could to make me familiar with the new milieu' (Hedin and Bergman 1945: 4). Andersson, however, grumbled in private about Bergman, believing his compatriot was making matters worse by running around in Beijing inquiring at museums and other institutions. Andersson was worried that the planned archaeology and expatriation of excavated artifacts would be revealed; especially the fact that he himself laid behind it. Johan Gunnar Andersson was also not pleased by the fact that no additions would be made to his museum collections in Stockholm. In hindsight Andersson wrote that:

From the viewpoint of the East Asian Collections it would maybe have been smarter not to give Sven's expedition such a strong archaeological profile, but instead to bide ones time until nationalistic sentiments had faded and we could have won more favorable conditions regarding collections to take to Sweden (Correspondence 18 May 1928, National Archives of Sweden, Stockholm).

The result of Hedin's expedition was, despite some invaluable bamboo writings from the Han dynasty, not at all what Andersson had hoped for.<sup>7</sup> Not only had no additions to the Stockholm museum been made but proof for the missing link of any 'Eurasian highway' had not been discovered. One reason for that failure might have been that in order to obstruct archaeological excavations, the expedition was only allowed to bring along one spade (Hedin and Bergman 1944: 115–116).

### Ture J. Arne – Vikings and Iran

The pull of Andersson's theory of a missing link along a hypothetical European Chinese highway was, however, strong enough to attract other established Swedish archaeologists. Ture J. Arne, initially interested in Iron Age's great migrations, wrote his PhD thesis on Swedish Vikings in the East and conducted excavations in Russia on Swedish Viking settlements.<sup>8</sup> According to Arne, Andersson and the theory of East-West connections were 'zealously discussed within the committee of the Swedish Oriental Society' which he was a member of (Arne 1945: 1). Andersson already after making his Yangshao discovery, asked the more experienced archaeologist Arne to send recent archaeology books to Beijing as such material were not available in the Chinese metropolis. Arne also wrote a report on the painted pottery Andersson had excavated and extensively purchased. In the *Painted Stone Age Pottery from the Province of Honan, China* from 1925, Arne leans towards the conclusion it is plausible that the Chinese civilization had a Western origin: this is partly because the finds in Gansu were richer than the more Eastward Henan finds (Arne 1925: 34).

Under Andersson's influence, Arne focused his interest in Swedish Vikings in the East and started looking for excavation sites to explore the 'Highway of Eurasia' hypothesis. With assistance from the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities, he set out to find the Eurasian connection of Andersson's pottery (Arne 1945: 1).

Soviet Central Asia and Turkestan were his first choice but the Russians did not let him conduct archaeological excavations. They disapproved of Arne's insistence to export eventual finds out of the Soviet Union and rejected the applications for all three different sites he had requested (Jansson 2006: 306). As a consequence, Arne turned to Iran, a country where new laws on antiquities accepted foreign excavations and also allowed foreigners like Arne to export half of any archaeological finds discovered.

Joined by a hundred or so diggers, Arne in 1932 started a series of excavations at the ruin mount of Shah Tépeé outside Asterabad in North-Eastern Iran (Arne 1945: 306). Sven Hedin had arranged financial support through a wealthy Swedish-American. Therefore, Arne's expedition officially became part of Hedin's on-going Swedish-Chinese expedition in Central Asia (Arne 1945: 2).

Although Arne found some black and red pottery, nothing sensational had come out of this excavation. After a meticulous description of the excavation site and the finds he dwells on a number of 'dolichocephalic' skulls he has found. They are of the long and narrow type believed to belong only to the Nordic races and maybe he can connect them to Andersson's hypothesis. In order to establish the historical origin of this population, Himmler's archaeologists and also more serious European scholars were looking for 'dolichocephalic' skulls all over the world. During the China expedition, Hedin had also brought along a Swedish phrenologist who measured the skulls of the people they encountered. At the time it was believed that discovering long skulls would explain Aryan expansion in ancient history. Although Arne remained skeptical about German reports on 'Nordic skulls' in Iran, he nevertheless discussed cranium shapes and racial heritage quite extensively in his research (Arne 1945: 6, 323–330). At the end of the report, Arne added an appendix, 'Chronology and Race' where the conclusion about the skulls and other excavated material was fully in line with *Volkwanderung* theories of the time. Imagining attackers taking over territory around where he had excavated, Arne thus concluded his report of Sha Tépeé in a rather speculative manner.

Who were the invaders? . . . One might well suppose them being nomads coming from the north, who advanced over the cultivated and well-settled step region, taking the inhabitants with them. They may have been Turks . . . It is also conceivable that a nomadizing "Indo-European" or "proto-Mediterranean" people penetrated the region and destroyed the civilization, of his folks settled there – one thinks of an analogy with the series Cimmerians-Scythians-Sarmatians. (Arne 1945: 330).<sup>9</sup>

The Russian historian Michail Rostovtzeff had already suggested a connection between Chinese and Scythian bronzes with Iran ones. From the late 1920s Andersson is less focused on his painted pottery, turning instead to the study and purchase of bronze objects with animal motives, now focusing on the Scythian culture. For this research he was assisted by Orvar Karlbeck, an engineer building the Tianjin to Nanjing railway.

### Orvar Karlbeck and the Ordos Bronzes

The Stone Age migrations Andersson had been investigating had, he believed, a precedent with animals moving between East and West in paleontological times. Introducing a third time period and a new collection of evidence for his highway theory, namely Scythian bronzes, Andersson turns his focus from Stone Age to Bronze Age.

Andersson had brought to Stockholm a large collection of bronzes from China. Most had been bought in Beijing, believed to originate from Ordos, located at the great bend of the Yellow River. The books sent to him by Arne included Rostovtzeff and Minns on the Scythians, a cattle-herding nomadic people living in East European steppes around 700 to 200 BC. The bronzes Andersson consulted presumably belonged to locations along his imagined Eurasian highway and he connects them to the animal motifs and artistic style employed by the Scythians. Those from the Euxine Black Sea area carried traces of Greek influences, while those from Suiyuan in Ordos instead resembled Chinese artifacts (Andersson 1929b).<sup>10</sup>

Andersson's grand idea on East-West contacts had originally been on migrations between China and the Near East. At a later stage, his focus shifted to a nomad culture migrating within these geographic areas, mediating cultural contacts; sharing a common culture, not changing or progressing but in contact with the advanced civilizations on the fringes, like Greece and China.

In the 1930s the topic of the Ordos is approached in a series of articles in the *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities*; while in 1933, the museum organized an exhibition of its Scythia-Ordos collection, holding seminars with internationally leading scholars in the field.<sup>11</sup> The foundation for this collection had been provided by the same Orvar Karlbeck that in 1920, before the Yangshao discovery, had helped Andersson to plan archaeological expeditions and presented him the idea of a Western origin of China. From 1928, Karlbeck was secretly employed by the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities as an antique collector in China. After a first voyage, the 'Karlbeck Syndicate' was set up to channel money into this project, which will result in several trips to China purchasing antiques. Karlbeck, by collecting ancient bronzes, grew into an appreciated expert on the dating of these particular artifacts.<sup>12</sup>

Early 1929 Andersson wrote to Karlbeck and directs him up to the Suiyuan area to look for more Ordos bronzes there. Karlbeck answered in April that he was 'ready for the trip that has come upon me because of Professor Andersson's letter' but had to wait for some information from Sven Hedin (correspondence April 1929, Archives of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm). The area was hit hard by famine and Karlbeck witnessed how dogs feasted on human corpses and saw signs of cannibalism (Karlbeck 1955). Karlbeck did not find many bronzes himself. However, missionary Joel Eriksson had told him that because of the famine the Mongols were eager to sell their family treasures. Shortly after, Karlbeck reported home to Andersson saying he had also spoken with missionary Gustav Nyström about having Swedish missionaries assisting him in the search for bronzes. Later on the

same trip Karlbeck met yet another renowned missionary with Swedish background, 'Count' Frans Larsson, and purchased his collection of Ordos bronzes (correspondence 5 April 1929, Archives of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm).<sup>13</sup> Eventually, Karlbeck's secret mission for the Stockholm Museum came to an end as Chinese regulations and controls on the exportation of antiquities got stricter.

Despite the setback with the Hedin expedition, the meager results of Arne's excavations and the more rigorous Chinese restrictions regarding antiquities, new possibilities opened up for Andersson to pursue his theory. The renowned Fu Sinian, head of the division for Languages and History at Academia Sinica gave Andersson a last chance to find the missing Eurasian link in China.

### Olov Janse in Vietnam

In 1937 Andersson thus set out on what he described as a pleasant trip exploring the Sino-Tibetan Sikang province. Although he managed to expose a fraudulent archaeologist, he found nothing to support his own hypothesis. When news arrived of Japan's attack on Shanghai, the Chinese members of the expedition left. Andersson's adventure in China eventually came to an end. When in September he managed to get out from a China in flames, he laconically commented: 'further fieldwork in China was not to be considered' (Andersson 1938: 154).

Once again shut out from archaeology in China, Andersson first pondered accepting an invitation to Japan, but realized that this would not go down well with his Chinese friends (Andersson 1938: 154). Andersson instead contacted the director of the Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient in Hanoi, the major French center for Asian studies. Its director Georges Coedes, who was in charge of the protection of antiquities all over the Indochinese colony, gladly welcomed his Swedish colleague for a research visit.

As he had read the Swedish archaeologist Olov Janse's texts on Chinese-Vietnamese cultural interactions it was not by random choice that Andersson picked Vietnam (Källén and Hegardt 2014). Inspecting in 1929 the collection of South East Asian artifacts in the Paris Saint-Germain museum where Janse worked, Andersson had recognized similarities between these pieces and the bronzes Karlbeck had collected in China. He suggested to Janse to write an article about this connection for the *Bulletin of the Museum for East Asian Antiquities* (Janse 1959: 18).

Olov Janse, who had started his career in Nordic archaeology at Uppsala University, was invited to come to study the Stockholm East Asian collections and write more articles for the *Bulletin of the Museum for East Asian Antiquities*. Simultaneously Janse ran into difficulties with his job in Paris. He had figured out that a French amateur archaeologist's claim that France was the cradle of Western civilization was a hoax. The Paris museum was run by the celebrated Salomon Reinach who in 1893 had published *Le Mirage Oriental*, an attack on Montelius' thesis of the Near Eastern origin of European civilization.<sup>14</sup> Reinach really wanted to believe in the fabricated evidence for France as the cradle of Western civilization.

Therefore, Janse began considering leaving the museum (Janse 1959: 25–29). When the French banker David David-Weill asked him whether he wanted to catalogue his magnificent private collection of Chinese antiques, Janse agreed immediately.

Once the catalogue was finished, Janse contacted the prominent orientalist René Grousset to suggest excavations in French Indochina. He told Grousset he wanted to sort out the facts of early Chinese colonization of Vietnam, a research topic he had already considered with Andersson. Most of the excavation dealt with Chinese Han dynasty tombs (Janse 1947). However, Janse's project proposal also considered investigating 'what role Indochina played as a connecting link between China and the West' (Janse 1959: 31). Just around the time of Janse's project, the Austrian scholar Robert von Heine-Geldern had written on the newly discovered Dong Son culture of North Vietnam. These discoveries were so splendid that Heine-Geldern first came to the conclusion they must have originated from outside Indochina, probably from a Chinese invasion. Later Heine-Geldern believed that the culture of Dong Son arrived with Tocharians, and that these migrated from the Indo-European *Urheimat* by the Black Sea, moving across Central Asia, down through today's Yunnan province of China.<sup>15</sup>

When Janse, as a young researcher had first arrived in Paris, he took part in seminars on Celtic and German archaeology organized by the religions' historian, Henri Hubert. He later explained how decisive they came to be for his own research (Janse 1959: 15). This influence is clear from the way he saw traces of Hellenistic and Near Eastern mystery religions in the Vietnamese material he excavated.

In Janse's first papers in *The Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities*, he had written about swords and other artifacts from China, making public his amazing discovery that the Chinese swords resembled those from the Celtic so-called Halstatt culture. Janse thus connected these European finds with the idea of Scythia-Chinese connections writing that:

It is still impossible to say exactly by what means the various elements of the Hallstatt culture have penetrated into northern China, but we have reason to believe they were transported to the West by the Scythians (Janse 1930a: 182).

With the idea of a Eurasian connection spreading even to Vietnam set in mind, Janse first travelled to Dong Son and met the archaeologist Emile Pajot, who had published about the graves excavated there. When Janse himself excavated there, he came upon artifacts he considered proof for Heine-Geldern's theory about Pontic Migrations (Janse 1959: 118).<sup>16</sup> Still in his much later text *Ljusmannens gåta*, Janse speculated about historical influences from the West. To start with, Janse pondered over burial constructions. The graves had an extra wall before them.<sup>17</sup> Janse saw this as an allusion to Hermes the Greek guardian of entrances (Janse 1959: 124). Ruminating on how 'Alexander the Great's triumphal trains of victories to

the North Western parts of India might signify the single most fateful turning point in the long history of man' Janse referred to this Macedonian warrior king as part of the historical origin of Dong Son (Janse 1959: 154). Janse continued by stating how the Greeks abandoned their Gods for oriental mystery cults and how this mixed culture first spread within the Bactrian kingdom, then along the Indus valley. According to Janse, when Bactria was conquered by either Scythes or Tocharian – according to the Greek geographer Strabo, in the second half of the 2nd century BC – the Bactrians fled to different parts of India and continued to disseminate the Hellenistic culture. The Greek heritage would then have reached Indochina via the maritime routes with the Indians, and from the North, as a detour of the Silk Road (Janse 1959: 155). Janse is also ready to accept an even earlier invasion of the blonde and blue-eyed Tocharians, as he describes them (Janse 1959: 153). The Tocharians may even have 'transferred elements of the classical Western civilization to China' (Janse 1959: 22).

### The road ends with Bernhard Karlgren

Just when Hitler invades Poland to create more *Lebensraum* for the Aryan race, Heine-Geldern, influenced by Janse's writings on Halstatt, China, and Vietnam, published an article arguing the Dong Son culture was the result of Cimmerians sweeping down over China and Vietnam sometime before 700 B.C. (Heine-Geldern 1939). In a number of articles from the early 1940s the Swedish sinologist Bernhard Karlgren – who in 1939 replaced Andersson as the director of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities – intervened in this discussion on the origins of Dong son (Malmqvist 1995). In 'The Date of the Early Dong Son Culture' Karlgren meticulously broke down Heine-Geldern's argument, reaching the conclusion that: 'The supposed Halstattian-Transylvanian-Caucasian influences at the birth of both Huai and the early Dong-son cultures are based on statements and conclusions that turn out point by point, to be erroneous and untenable' (Karlgren 1942: 24).

### Discussion

Most, but not all of Heine-Geldern's ideas are nowadays considered seriously deficient. Andersson's theories on East European roots of the Yangshao culture are also discredited, as are Bernhard Karlgren's on Dong Son's Chinese origin. Dong Son was in reality just as 'Vietnamese' and local as Andersson's Yangshao. The Vietnamese, furthermore, forcefully rejected China's attempts at cultural hegemony, instead claiming Dong Son was a local advanced culture that China never conquered (Trigger 1989: 215).

We now know that the locations Andersson excavated consisted of many different cultures connected by a similar economy (and by its magnificent urns). When the so-called Longshan culture was discovered in Eastern China in the 1930s it was believed to be a parallel culture to that of Andersson's Yangshao; of indigenous origin and not stemming from the West. Andersson himself already by the early 1940s gave up on his theory of a Western origin,

lacking any real proof and sensing it hinged on Eurocentric conceptions. In the mid-1940s, with the Chinese archaeologist Xia Nai's discovery that one important sequence in Andersson's chronological series of finds was wrongly dated, the theory of a Western origin of China was finally refuted. Following the communist takeover Andersson was regarded by the Chinese as just another one of those imperialist scholars trying to discredit the greatness of the Chinese civilization. However, in later decades a renewed interest, also among Chinese scholars, has been directed towards foreign influences and what is now sometimes called the Trans-Eurasian Exchange (Sherrat 2006).

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### Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> This is what Xia Nai, the leading Chinese archaeologist during Mao Zedong, accused Andersson of (Xia 1955).
- <sup>2</sup> Great migrations were believed to have either brought culture and innovation to conquered people or exterminating and supplanting these people along with their ways of life (See Trigger 1989: 184–225 for more).
- <sup>3</sup> This memorandum of Montelius is dated May 1920 and it would only be a few months before Andersson makes his great discovery.
- <sup>4</sup> For a long time Andersson's inquiries into pre-historical finds in China led nowhere and he wrote: 'We started to side with the idea so common among Chinese intellectuals that China differed from other countries and had no Stone Age, that the ancient Chinese from time immemorial had been familiar with and worked with metal, and in general had been an erudite and noble people' (Andersson 1933: 394).
- <sup>5</sup> This is where the Silk Road in ancient times exited China, passing through the Jade Gate to the deserts and oasis kingdoms of Central Asia.
- <sup>6</sup> Andersson complained to Hedin's sister Alma that Sweden will now only get 'useless things where the labels had already come off' (Alma Hedin in a letter to Sven Hedin 28 May 1927, National Archives of Sweden, Stockholm).
- <sup>7</sup> Although officially no archaeological work was allowed, the Chinese let not only Bergman but also Andersson's three former archaeological assistants Zhuang, Bai, and Jin take part in the expedition (Hedin and Bergman 1943b: 48). Together they conducted excavations around Edsen-gol, finding 17,000 items from the Stone Age, some well-preserved mummies and around 10,000 bamboo staffs from the Han dynasty (Johansson 2012: 74).
- <sup>8</sup> Arne had in 1911 started working for the Swedish orientalist collector Fredrik Martin. His thesis was published in 1914 in Uppsala as *La Suède et l'orient: études*

*archéologiques sur les relations de la Suède et de l'orient pendant l'âge des Vikings*. Arne's continued interest in Vikings in the East had him, similar as with Andersson, be criticized for Euro-centrism. Moscow did not approve of Arne's claims of historical 'Swedish colonies' in Russia (Jansson 2006: 138).

- <sup>9</sup> In the conclusive words of his report of the excavations Arne comes up with another analogy, namely overpopulation, resembling the one that had possibly taken place on the Swedish island of Gotland, sending waves of ferocious 'Goths' over Europe.
- <sup>10</sup> Andersson comments on the historical context of these bronzes and the similarities he sees between China and Europe, saying that 'Auch hier kommen die Steppennomaden in direkten Kontakt mit einer höheren Kultur, der Chinesische' (Andersson 1929b: 150).
- <sup>11</sup> Initially, when returning from China in 1925 Andersson had no interest at all in Osvald Siren's collection of Scythian objects (Törmä 2013: 97).
- <sup>12</sup> Some of them probably brought to daylight by the railway construction Karlbeck himself was engaged in. See Johansson 2012 or Jurgens 2010 for more on Orvar Karlbeck.
- <sup>13</sup> Larsson had been presented the title by the Qing authorities for his service in Chinese-Mongol relations.
- <sup>14</sup> Although Reinach's book did not manage to discredit Montelius, it became popular with German and other European archaeologist who wanted Arian conquerors from the North to have formed the early societies of Greece (Trigger 1989: 195).
- <sup>15</sup> Victor Goloubew, who presented the Siberian connection to Karlbeck, also came to some conclusions with the Pajot material. When in 1936 Emile Gaspardone published a tough critique of Goloubew and French archaeology in Vietnam, he argued that these people were so engulfed in their admirations of great civilizations like India and China, that they were unable to see the proofs of an indigenous tradition even when they had it in front of their own eyes (Manguin and Ojha 2008).
- <sup>16</sup> Just as Andersson in China, Olov Janse, applying stratigraphic methods, became the first to carry out systematic excavations in Indochina.
- <sup>17</sup> Of the sort that in China is found in restaurants and other buildings to stop evil spirits.

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