


STATE OF THE FIELD ESSAY

# Solitary Swedish Sinologists: Three Hundred and Fifty Years of Swedish China Studies

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## Abstract

This article gives an analytic survey of Sinology in the Swedish-speaking world from the mid-seventeenth century through the present and it draws on a wide range of primary and secondary sources from the same time period. It argues that while Swedish Sinology has been characterized by strong individuals who have made consequential contributions to the study of China, Swedish Sinology now faces important challenges of an institutional and linguistic nature.

Even a cursory glance at the intellectual history of Sweden shows that this medium-sized European country has punched way above its weight in many arenas, often symbolized by the prestigious Nobel Prizes, which have established a kind of meritocratic global nobility. So it is hardly surprising that Sweden can boast of a number of scholars who have made significant contributions to the study of China, such as Bernhard Karlgren, Johan-Gunnar Andersson, and Sven Hedin. Before we set out to explore the trajectory of Swedish Sinology (*sinologi*), it may be worthwhile to ask what is “Swedish” about Swedish Sinology in this age of globalization and blurring of national boundaries. Within the context of this essay, a Sinologist is simply someone who has contributed to the specialized study of China. For a Sinologist to be considered “Swedish,” he or she has to have been educated in Sweden or have produced some works on China in the Swedish language. Swedish Sinology has been the subject of several scholarly treatments, in both Swedish and English, since the late nineteenth

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century. A very early essay on Sweden–China relations and Swedish Sinology was written by none other than Sweden’s most celebrated author, August Strindberg (1849–1912), who once worked as an assistant librarian at the Royal Library, and who was responsible for cataloguing the library’s small collection of Chinese books. As we will see below, Strindberg’s essay also revived interest in Swedes in Russian captivity, who had played an important role in the exploration of both Chinese and Russian Inner Asia.<sup>1</sup> The late Göran Malmqvist (1924–2019) authored a magisterial biography of his predecessor Bernhard Karlgren (1889–1978) and an autobiographical account of his own years in China, both of which yield important insights into the heyday of Swedish Sinology in the mid-twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> In 1999, professor of Sinology Torbjörn Lodén published an exhaustive account on Swedish Sinology from the eighteenth century until the turn of the new millennium. His article, which was based on extensive readings in early Sinology, made a careful assessment of the careers of Karlgren and Malmqvist and is noteworthy for its meticulous documentation of Swedish dissertations on Sinology to 1999.<sup>3</sup> More recently, Perry Johansson has produced a critical account of a number of Swedish Sinologists, which is rich in empirical insights.<sup>4</sup> This essay will not duplicate these efforts, but will set out to identify larger trends in Swedish Sinology in the hope of stimulating more research in this field. Given recent trends in “New Qing History,” the scope of the inquiry also includes some Swedish scholars of Inner Asia. As Finland was part of Sweden for seven hundred years, until 1809, and as many Finnish writers still use Swedish as their native or adopted tongue, my account will include several writers of Finnish origin.

In many major European countries, academic interest in the Middle East, the Indian subcontinent, Southeast Asia, and East Asia came hand in hand with imperial expansion into these regions, a process that has been criticized in the works of postcolonial writers such as Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1979). However, Sweden never managed to maintain a formal colonial empire. Even though many Swedish Sinologists had close contacts with their colleagues on the European continent, especially France, it is difficult to fit Swedish Sinology neatly into Said’s critical framework.<sup>5</sup> By the time of the advent of professional Swedish Sinology at the turn of the twentieth century, Sweden was losing, or had already lost, all its imperial and colonial possessions in Europe and the Americas.<sup>6</sup> Sweden thus played only a limited role in European expansion

<sup>1</sup>August Strindberg, *Kulturhistoriska Studier* (1881), republished in *August Strindbergs Samlade Verk: Nationalupplaga*, vol. 7, (Stockholm: Norstedt, 2010), 9–184.

<sup>2</sup>Göran Malmqvist, *Bernhard Karlgren: Portrait of a Scholar* (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 2011); Göran Malmqvist, *Strövtåg i svurna världar* (Stockholm: Atlantis, 2005). For a critical treatment of the former work, cf. Lothar von Falkenhausen, review of Göran Malmqvist, *Bernhard Karlgren: Ett forskarporträtt*, *China Review International* 8.1 (2001), 15–33.

<sup>3</sup>Torbjörn Lodén, *Swedish China Studies on the Threshold of the 21st Century* (Stockholm: Center for Pacific Asia Studies, 1999); an earlier version of the essay was published in Joakim Enwall, ed. *Outstretched Leaves on His Bamboo Staff: Studies in Honour of Göran Malmqvist on His 70th Birthday* (Stockholm: Association of Oriental Studies, 1994), 5–25.

<sup>4</sup>Perry Johansson, *Saluting the Yellow Emperor: A Case of Swedish Sinography* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

<sup>5</sup>One attempt to develop Edward Said’s critique of orientalism to include Swedish Sinology is Johansson, *Saluting the Yellow Emperor*. The contribution of the book is however undermined by the author’s censorious treatment of his subject matter.

<sup>6</sup>In 1809–10, Sweden ceded Finland, the eastern half of the kingdom, to Russia and in the following years, Sweden’s territorial possessions in northern Germany were lost to Prussia. In 1878, Sweden’s only overseas colony, the former slave-trading island of St. Barthelémy, was sold to France. Norway, which

during the age of New Imperialism, but the country often enjoyed a coopted status as an imperial power. On the one hand, in 1844, the United Kingdom of Sweden and Norway concluded an “unequal treaty” with the Qing Empire; Sweden-Norway was a full participant in the Berlin Conference of 1884, which divided Africa between the major European powers; and while the Scandinavian kingdoms did not participate in the Eight Nation Alliance’s expedition to China in 1900–01, Sweden-Norway did receive a minuscule dividend from the Boxer Indemnity. On the other hand, none of these forays into imperialism led to any imperial expansion worth the name. Sweden-Norway’s first treaty with China was not even ratified by the Qing Empire, underlining the relative insignificance of Sweden’s economic and strategic interests in East Asia throughout the age of New Imperialism.<sup>7</sup> Because Sweden never developed a colonial civil service of its own, some enterprising Sinologists, such as Bernhard Karlgren, seriously considered careers in the service of the treaty powers.<sup>8</sup>

Beginning during the interwar years, though, the same deficiency was recognized as an asset. Many Swedish Sinologists were quick to use their distance from the colonial powers to secure research opportunities within China during the Republican period.<sup>9</sup> After the founding of the People’s Republic of China, both its government and the Swedish government often proclaimed that China enjoyed a “special relationship” with Sweden, a European power unburdened by any imperial legacies. Accordingly, Sweden was one of the first Western nations to enjoy full diplomatic relations with the People’s Republic.<sup>10</sup> This status enabled Swedish Sinologists, and other carefully chosen “friends of China,” to claim rare opportunities to visit and study in mainland China between 1950 and the 1980s.<sup>11</sup>

### Early Contacts with China

Even without an overseas colonial empire of their own, Swedes availed themselves of travel opportunities offered by other colonial empires, as those empires opened maritime routes to China in the early modern period. The perilous journeys of these Swedes initially followed Dutch maritime routes, usually including stopovers in St. Helena, the Cape Colony, Java, and sometimes Japan. The first Swedish visitor to China may very well have been Frederick Coyett (1615/1620–1687),<sup>12</sup> who is mostly known for having served as the last governor of Taiwan under Dutch rule, but the historical record is not conclusive. The first Swedish visitor to China to go on record as such was Nils Matsson Kiöping (1621–1680). He joined the Dutch East India Company as a seaman in 1647, and he spent nine years in Asia before returning to

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was forced into a dynastic union with Sweden in 1814, remained an internally sovereign state with its own legislature until the union was dissolved peacefully in 1905.

<sup>7</sup>Pär Cassel, “Traktaten som aldrig var och fördraget som nästan inte blev: De svensk-norsk-kinesiska förbindelserna, 1847–1909,” *Historisk tidskrift* 130.3 (2010), 437–66.

<sup>8</sup>Malmqvist, *Bernhard Karlgren: Portrait of a Scholar*, 60; Johansson, *Saluting the Yellow Emperor*, 12–14.

<sup>9</sup>Jacobs, *The Compensations of Plunder: How China Lost Its Treasures* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2020), 212–13.

<sup>10</sup>The CCP has carefully nurtured the idea that certain countries enjoy a “special relationship” with China. For the case of New Zealand, see Anne-Marie Brady, *Friend of China: The Myth of Rewi Alley* (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003).

<sup>11</sup>See for instance, Johansson’s chapters on Jan Myrdal in *Saluting the Yellow Emperor*, 185–220.

<sup>12</sup>I am grateful to Fredrik Fällman for suggesting this possibility. Coyett has also been credited with being the first Swede in Japan. Gunnar Müllern, *Förste svensken i Japan* (Stockholm: Saxon & Lindström, 1963).

Sweden, where he pursued a successful military career. In 1667, his recollections were published, together with the travelogue of Japan by Olof Eriksson Willman (1620–1672) and a translation of an anonymous Russian account of East Asia. These early travelogues gained a wide audience and were republished in several editions.<sup>13</sup> Kiöping wrote little about China proper, devoting only a brief section to Macau and Taiwan. The late seventeenth century also witnessed the first attempts to study China in the established seats of higher learning. The first Swedish academic study of China was published at Uppsala University in 1694, when Jonas Locnæus (1671–1754) submitted his doctoral dissertation, written in Latin, on the Great Wall of China. Only 24 pages long and based on secondary sources, it had no lasting influence over Swedish Sinology.<sup>14</sup>

Eighteenth-century geopolitical shifts propelled Swedes toward the East via a different route. Russian victory over Sweden in the Great Northern War (1700–1721) ended Sweden's status as a great European power. Paradoxically, the Swedish loss also catapulted several Swedish subjects into the land route to Inner Asia: The Russian Empire found good use for these prisoners, with their specialized knowledge in technologies such as cartography and metallurgy. The European conflict, and the resulting transfer of captives, were of sufficient consequence to be noted by the Qing diplomat Tulišen 圖麗琛 (1667–1741) in his famous Siberian travelogue from 1723.<sup>15</sup> Among the captives was a Pomeranian-Swedish officer, Philip Johan von Strahlenberg (1676–1747), who spent more than ten years in Russian captivity, and who returned only after the Treaty of Nystad (Uusikaupunki) had been concluded in 1721. He wrote two books on Siberian geography and became a recognized authority on Inner Asian affairs in his lifetime; his books were translated into several languages.<sup>16</sup> Another of these captives, Johan Gustaf Renat (1682–1744), had the unusual misfortune of being captured twice: first by the Russians, and then by the Dzungars. He passed on his skills to both these peoples before he was eventually released. He returned to Sweden in 1734 as a wealthy man, bringing two Dzungar maps of Inner Asia, which were deposited in the Uppsala University Library, where they were neglected for more than a century and a half.<sup>17</sup> As the Qing Empire obliterated the Dzungar state in 1759 and incorporated its territory into what is today the Xinjiang region, these maps are a rare sample of Mongol map making and one of few surviving remnants of the Dzungar state.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>13</sup>The latest edition is Nils Matsson Kiöping, *Reesa som genom Asia, Africa och många andra hedniska konungarikken, samt öjlar medh flijt är förrättat*, edited by Martin Rundkvist (Stockholm: Ruin, 2016).

<sup>14</sup>Strindberg, *Kulturhistoriska studier*, 11; Bo Bennich Björkman, "Kommentarer," in *August Strindbergs Samlade Verk: Nationalupplaga*, vol. 7, (Stockholm: Norstedt, 2010), 9–184.

<sup>15</sup>Tulišen, *Narrative of the Chinese Embassy to the Khan of the Tourgouth Tartars, in the Years 1712, 13, 14, & 15*, translated by Sir George Thomas Staunton (London: J. Murray, 1821), 139–41. For the original reference in Manchu and Chinese, cf. Tulišen 圖麗琛, *Manhan yiyu lu jiaozhu* 滿漢異域錄校注 (*Lakcha jecen de takûraha babe ejehe bithei*), edited by Zhuang Jifa 莊吉發 (Taipei: Wenshizhe chubanshe, 1983), 121–23. The episode was duly noted by Strindberg in *Kulturhistoriska studier*, 20.

<sup>16</sup>Philip Johan von Strahlenberg, *Vorbericht eines zum Druck fertigigten Werckes von der Grossen Tatarey und dem Königreiche Siberien, mit einem Anhang von Grosz-Rusland* (Stockholm, 1726); Philip Johan von Strahlenberg, *Das Nord- und Ostliche Theil von Europa und Asia, in so weit solches das gantze Ruszische Reich mit Siberien und der Grossen Tatarey in sich begreiffet* (Stockholm, 1730).

<sup>17</sup>Björkman, "Kommentarer," in *August Strindbergs Samlade Verk: Nationalupplaga*, vol. 7, 317–18. The maps are still stored in Uppsala University Library and were examined by the author on July 13, 2021.

<sup>18</sup>Peter C. Perdue, *China Marches West: The Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 306–7, 456–57.

The Swedish “Age of Liberty” (1719–1772) ushered in a dynamic era in the liberal arts, political thought, manufactures, trade, and the natural sciences. Like their contemporaries in the continental European enlightenment, many Swedish reformers were fascinated with China as an idealized model society of secular and rational government, and they frequently adduced China as a positive example that Sweden should emulate. A consequential Sinophile of the Swedish enlightenment was the diplomat and royal tutor, Count Carl Fredrik Scheffer (1715–1786).<sup>19</sup> In China, Scheffer saw the physiocratic ideal of an enlightened and paternalistic monarchy, which ruled according to the laws of nature and emphasized the centrality of agriculture to the economy. As Swedish envoy to Paris in 1743–1752, Scheffer befriended several French physiocrats, who introduced him to the ideal type of China as a physiocratic model for the rest of the world, as it had been introduced to them by writers such as Jean-Baptiste Du Halde (1674–1743). Following his return to Sweden, he kept up correspondence with many prominent physiocrats, such as Marquis de Mirabeau (1715–1789), and in his role as royal tutor to crown prince Gustav he made sure to impart to him the virtues of a physiocratic state.<sup>20</sup>

The visionary Finnish priest and politician, Anders Chydenius (1729–1803) is more known as a pioneer of both Swedish and Finnish liberalism than for his Sinophilia. Chydenius is most famous for having made a passionate case for free trade and open markets in his pamphlet *Den Nationelle Vinsten* (“The National Gain”), antedating Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* by eleven years,<sup>21</sup> and for his instrumental role in convincing the Four Estates of Parliament to pass the world’s first constitutionally protected freedom of the press act in 1766. In his political advocacy, Chydenius frequently drew on China as a positive example of the policies he wished to enact. For instance, as he was busy lobbying for increasing the scope of freedom of expression, he published a short pamphlet entitled *Berättelse om chinesiska skrif-friheten* (“An Account of the Chinese Freedom to Write”), which he claimed was a translation of a Danish original. The pamphlet gave a schematic treatment of Chinese history from its earliest times as an idealized empire that had been ruled by wise and liberal despots, who relied on the free expression of the Chinese people to improve their rule.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, when he argued for free trade, he pointed to China as an example of a country that had prospered for centuries because of its economic freedoms, and he enjoined his countrymen to follow its example: “Imagine if Sweden had been allowed to enjoy such freedom for the past

<sup>19</sup>Göran Nilzén, “Carl Fredrik Scheffer,” in *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon*, edited by Åsa Karlsson (Stockholm: Svenskt biografiskt lexikon, 2007–2011), vol. 33, 520–26. <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sbl/artikel/6374>.

<sup>20</sup>Osvald Sirén, “Kina och den kinesiska tanken i Sverige på 1700-talet,” *Lychnos: Lärdomshistoriska samfundets årsbok* (1948–1949), 1–84; see also Lodén, *Swedish China Studies*, 3–4.

<sup>21</sup>Anders Chydenius, “The National Gain” (1765), translated by Peter C. Hogg, in *Anticipating the Wealth of Nations: The Selected Works of Anders Chydenius (1729–1803)*, edited by Maren Jonasson and Pertti Hyttinen (London: Routledge, 2012), 142–65. The text can also be found at <https://chydenius.kootutteokset.fi/en/kirjoituksia/den-nationella-vinsten/>.

<sup>22</sup>“Berättelse om chinesiska skrif-friheten,” in *Anders Chydenius samlade skrifter* (Helsingfors, Stockholm: Svenska Litteratursällskapet i Finland, Bokförlaget Atlantis, 2013), vol. 2, 272–79. An English translation of the essay can be found at <https://chydenius.kootutteokset.fi/en/kirjoitukset/kinesiska-skrivfriheten/>. The editors of Chydenius’s collected works suggest that he was likely paraphrasing writings on China by the Danish economist Frederik Christopher Lütken (1698–1784), who in turn was relying on the writings of Jean-Baptiste Du Halde. See also, Lena Rydholm, “Bildn av Kina bidrog till tryckfrihet i 1700-talets Sverige,” *Nyheter från Uppsala universitet*, November 28, 2016.

400 years; it would then be, if not a China, at least a Holland, a Switzerland, an England, or the like.”<sup>23</sup>

In 1771, the crown prince acceded to the throne as King Gustav III, and the following year the king staged a coup d'état against the Four Estates and took measures to strengthen royal prerogatives. He was initially hailed as a culture hero, who would introduce Chinese-style physiocratic statecraft to Europe, but he soon disappointed many of his admirers. Anders Chydenius was also optimistic that the new king would usher in an age of enlightenment, but after a brief spell as advisor to the young aspiring autocrat, he retreated to his parish in Ostrobothnia, where he would continue his efforts towards social and economic reform.<sup>24</sup>

The most lasting monument to Swedish Sinophilia may well be the Chinese Pavilion on the grounds of Drottningholm Castle, and the luxury trade with China that it embodied. The pavilion was first built in 1753 as a gift to Queen Louisa Ulrika of Prussia (1720–1782), and it remains a popular tourist attraction and World Heritage Site. In 1731, the establishment of the Swedish East India Company opened regular communication between Gothenburg and Guangzhou.<sup>25</sup> Flowing until the last decades of that century, that regular traffic bequeathed to Swedish letters a rich genre of travel literature, authored by travelers from both Sweden proper and Finland. Among the most classical travelogues were those of Johan Brelin (1732–1782),<sup>26</sup> Carl Gustav Ekeberg (1716–1784), Israel Reinius (1727–1797),<sup>27</sup> and Jacob Wallenberg (1746–1778).<sup>28</sup> Among these, Ekeberg's and Wallenberg's travel accounts are especially notable, as they narrate two different perspectives on the same sea journey on the ship *Finland* in 1769–71, one of Sweden's most famous East Indiamen. The sea captain Ekeberg's account was a rather conventional travelogue, dedicated to the great patron of Swedish Sinophilia, Carl Fredrik Scheffer, and it focused on how to solve difficult navigational problems on the route to China.<sup>29</sup> The ship chaplain Wallenberg's travelogue has, on the other hand, secured its place in Swedish letters for its humorous style, often parodying the dry and pedantic prose of Carl Linnæus's disciples, and it has been republished several times and was recently published in English translation.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>23</sup>Chydenius, “The Source of Our Country's Weakness” (1765), in *Anticipating the Wealth of Nations*, 126. See also: <https://chydenius.kootuttekset.fi/en/kirjoitukset/kallan-til-rikets-wan-magt/>.

<sup>24</sup>Lars Magnusson, “Anders Chydenius's Life and Work: An Introduction,” in *Anticipating the Wealth of Nations*, 1–59.

<sup>25</sup>Tore Frängsmyr, *Ostindiska kompaniet: människorna, äventyret och den ekonomiska drömmen* (Höganäs: Bra böcker, 1976).

<sup>26</sup>Johan Brelin, *Beskrifning öfver en äfventyrlig resa til och ifrån Ost-Indien, Södra America, och en del af Europa, åren 1755, 56, Upsala, 1758* (Stockholm: Rediviva, 1973).

<sup>27</sup>Israel Reinius and Herman Johan Reinius, *Journal hällen på resan till Canton i China, Skrifter utgivna av svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland. Nr 273*, edited by Birgit Lunelund (Helsingfors: Mercators tryckeri, 1939).

<sup>28</sup>The description of these early accounts as “classical” owes to Birgit Lunelund's preface to Reinius and Reinius, *Journal hällen på resan till Canton i China*, viii.

<sup>29</sup>Carl Gustav Ekeberg, *Capitaine Carl Gustav Ekebergs Ostindiska resa, åren 1770 och 1771*, Stockholm, 1773 (Stockholm: Rediviva, 1970); Bengt Hildebrand and Kurt Molin, “Carl Gustav Ekeberg,” in *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon*, edited by Bengt Hildebrand (Stockholm: Albert Bonnier, 1949), vol. 12, 599–604, <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sbl/artikel/16799>.

<sup>30</sup>Jacob Wallenberg, *Min son på galejan, eller en ostindisk resa, innehållande allehanda bläckhornskram, samlade på skeppet Finland* (Stockholm, 1781). Jacob Wallenberg, *My Son on the Galley*, translated by Peter Graves (London: Norvik Press, 1994). Jacob Wallenberg's brother Marcus Wallenberg (1744–1799) was the grandfather of André Oscar Wallenberg (1816–1886), the founder of the Wallenberg sphere in Swedish



The pioneering botanist Carl Linnæus (1707–1778) never himself left European soil, but he nonetheless made an important contribution to the study of China by encouraging his “apostles” to travel and explore widely.<sup>31</sup> As Linnæus wrote many of his own works in Swedish, he set a new standard for how the Swedish language could be used as a medium for scientific prose, which laid an enduring foundation for the status of the Swedish language. Christopher Tärnström (1711–1746), the first of his students to attempt a passage to China, died on the island of Pulo Candor (Côn Sơn), off the coast of what is today southern Vietnam, before he could complete his mission. Olof Torén (1718–1753) was the first Linnæan disciple to complete the journey and safely return to Sweden, but he died before he was able to publish his recollections. More fortunate than his two predecessors, Pehr Osbeck (1723–1805) made extended sojourns in Spain, Java, and Guangzhou, and kept a detailed diary of his observations.<sup>32</sup> A monument of mid-eighteenth-century scientific prose, the travelogue that resulted was translated into several foreign languages, including English.<sup>33</sup> He regretted only that, as he rushed to leave Guangzhou, he lost a sample of the famed Chinese tea bush, collected on behalf of his teacher.<sup>34</sup> Anders Sparrman (1748–1820) was the last Linnæan apostle to travel to China.<sup>35</sup> However, this feat was overshadowed by his travels in Africa, and his association with James Cook (1728–1779) on one of his expeditions in Oceania. Sparrman’s memoirs were published in the 1770s and promptly appeared in many translations.<sup>36</sup>

None of these early travelers to China succeeded in learning the Chinese language, limiting most of their contributions to the realm of naturalistic observation. Their impressions of the Chinese culture and language were mediated through interpreters working for the Thirteen Hong and the foreign factories in Guangzhou. Arguably the first Swede to master the written Chinese language, Johan Erik Ringström (1746–1820), is often credited as Sweden’s “first Sinologist.”<sup>37</sup> As a student at Uppsala University, Ringström was offered an opportunity to study Chinese and Japanese in Paris, under famed French orientalist Joseph De Guignes (1721–1800). Ringström also spent years traveling in France, Italy, and Spain, though he never visited China. After returning to Sweden, he worked for the Swedish government; in his spare time, he penned manuscripts on Chinese lexicography, grammar, and history, mostly derivative

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finance and industry. Among his descendants are his son Gustaf Oscar Wallenberg (1863–1937), Sweden’s first envoy to China and Japan, and his grandson Raoul Wallenberg (1912–1947?), diplomat and humanitarian.

<sup>31</sup>Gunnar Eriksson, “Carl Linné (Von),” in *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon*, edited by Birgitta Lager-Kromnow, (Stockholm: Svenskt biografiskt lexikon, 1980–81), vol. 23, 700–15, <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sbl/artikel/10735>.

<sup>32</sup>Gunnar Eriksson, “Pehr Osbeck,” in *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon*, edited by Göran Nilzén (Stockholm: Svenskt biografiskt lexikon 1992), vol. 28–2, 365–68, <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sbl/artikel/7809>.

<sup>33</sup>Pehr Osbeck, *Dagbok öfwer en ostindisk resa åren 1750, 1751, 1752. Med anmärkningar uti naturkunskheten, främmande folkslags språk, seder, Hushållning, m. m.* (Stockholm: Tryckt hos L.L. Grefing, 1757; reprint, Stockholm: Rediviva, 1969).

<sup>34</sup>Osbeck, *Dagbok öfwer en ostindisk resa*, 265.

<sup>35</sup>Kenneth Nyberg, “Anders Sparrman,” in *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon*, edited by Åsa Karlsson (Stockholm: Svenskt biografiskt lexikon, 2007–2011), vol. 33, 3ff, <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sbl/artikel/20001>.

<sup>36</sup>For a popular treatment of Sparrman’s career, see Per Wästberg, *The Journey of Anders Sparrman*, translated by Tom Geddes (London: Granta, 2010).

<sup>37</sup>Strindberg, *Kulturhistoriska studier*, 17f.

in character. His sole Sinological publication was a dynastic history of China, published posthumously.<sup>38</sup>

Two Swedish Sinologists of the nineteenth century who did make lasting contributions to the study of China were tied to the fates of two Western colonies in China. Both published their major works in English. The first, the businessman Anders Ljungstedt (1759–1835), worked as a supercargo for the Swedish East India Company.<sup>39</sup> After the company was disbanded in 1813, he took up permanent residence in the Portuguese settlement of Macau, never to return to his native land or to his estranged wife. He was notable enough in his lifetime to sit for a portrait by English artist George Chinnery (1774–1852), who is legendary for his visual documentation of the transition from the Canton System of Trade to the Treaty Port Era. In 1820, Ljungstedt became the first consul-general of Sweden to China and he was later awarded the prestigious Royal Order of Vasa for his services to the Swedish Crown. Although Ljungstedt never mastered the Chinese language, he did gain sufficient facility in Portuguese primary sources to write a comprehensive history of the settlement in English, in which he disproved the official Portuguese claim that the Ming dynasty had ceded the territory to Portugal. As many of the documents to which Ljungstedt had access have since been lost, his work remains a valuable source on the early history of Macau, and is often reprinted.<sup>40</sup> After Ljungstedt died, his considerable wealth was bequeathed to a secondary school in his hometown of Linköping, which still bears his name. Local recognition within Macau had to wait until 1997, two years before the territory reverted to Chinese sovereignty, when his name was given to a street.

Another nineteenth-century Sinologist of note is the tragic missionary Theodor Hamberg (1819–1854), who abandoned a business career in Stockholm in 1844 to join the Basel Mission in Switzerland, in preparation for spreading the Christian gospel in China. Two years later, he arrived in the newly established colony of Hong Kong. There, he joined the efforts of the Protestant missionary Karl Gützlaff (1803–1851), a Prussian whose pioneering field efforts had made him both a trusted collaborator of the British Empire and a household name in Europe. Aghast at Gützlaff's practice of mass conversions, Hamberg eventually set out on his own path. Noticing that the local population tended to gather periodically in markets, he established his mission station in a market place near Sha Tau Kok 沙頭角, in what would be incorporated into the New Territories of the Crown Colony in 1898. Discovering that the local Hakka people spoke their own distinctive dialect, he promptly set out to learn Hakka to forge stronger bonds with the local community.<sup>41</sup>

While his missionary work was beset with difficulties and internal strife, Hamberg befriended Hong Ren'gan 洪仁玕 (1822–1864), an early convert to the cause of the Taiping Rebellion. Hong Ren'gan had been accidentally separated from the rebellion during its march north, and had sought refuge in Hong Kong, close to his native village in Hua County 花縣. On the basis of Hong's testimony, Hamberg published an account

<sup>38</sup>Johan Erik Ringström, *Chinesiska rikets kejsare-historia. Uti kort sammandrag, från världens begynnelse, till närvarande tid* (Stockholm, 1827).

<sup>39</sup>Nils William Olsson, "Anders Ljungstedt," in *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon*, edited by Birgitta Lager-Kromnow, (Stockholm: Svenskt biografiskt lexikon), 1982–84, vol. 24, 63–65, <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sbl/artikel/9624>.

<sup>40</sup>Anders Ljungstedt, *Historical Sketch of the Portuguese Settlements in China* (Boston: J. Munroe & Co., 1836).

<sup>41</sup>Herman Schlyter, *Theodor Hamberg: Den förste svenske Kinamissionären* (Lund: Gleerup, 1952).



of the origins of the Taiping rebellion, and the biography of its leader, Hong Xiuquan 洪秀全 (1814–1864), who was a distant cousin of Hong Ren'gan.<sup>42</sup> Given the dearth of information on the mysterious Christian rebellion, the book was an once-in-a-lifetime scoop, and given the massive destruction of historical records after the fall of the Taiping Rebellion in 1864, Hamberg's work is one of the few primary sources about Hong Xiuquan's life to survive. Hamberg himself died of poor health in 1854, joined shortly thereafter by his wife and children. His notes on the Hakka dialect were preserved and laid the groundwork for Donald MacIver's dictionary of the dialect, so Hamberg can be said to be a foundational figure in Hakka Studies.<sup>43</sup>

The aforementioned August Strindberg published the first chronicle of Swedish Sinology and Sweden–China relations, but his accomplishments did not end there. When he was working as an assistant librarian at the Royal Library in Stockholm in 1874–82, he assumed responsibility for a small collection of Chinese books, which had been left behind from Queen Louisa Ulrika's library.<sup>44</sup> Strindberg's tenure as assistant librarian coincided with the return of the Vega Expedition, which was led by Fenno-Swedish arctic explorer Adolf Erik Nordenskiöld (1832–1901) and had circumnavigated the Eurasian continent for the first time.<sup>45</sup> On top of its scientific achievements, the Vega Expedition also brought a sizeable collection of Chinese and Japanese books to Sweden, which Strindberg cut his teeth on.<sup>46</sup> He reportedly spent a year of intensive self-study in the Chinese language in order to be able to catalogue the collection, and to build for himself a stable career as a Sinologist. The precise extent of his proficiency in Chinese remains unknown, but Strindberg experts believe that he was at least able to read and translate basic Chinese texts with the aid of a dictionary.<sup>47</sup>

Strindberg's most significant contribution to the study of China in a wider sense was his rediscovery of Renat's maps of Inner Asia, which had been neglected for more than a century. Even though Strindberg never quite understood the precise relationship between the different versions of the maps that were stored in Linköping and Uppsala, his discovery was later published in Russia in 1881 and there earned him a silver medal. He also corresponded with many leading luminaries of French Sinology, such as Léon D'Hervey de Saint Denys (1822–1892), Léon de Rosny (1837–1914), and Henri Cordier (1849–1925). He induced D'Hervey to read a version of his paper on Sweden's relationship with China to the Académie d'Inscriptions et Belles Lettres in June 1879. Later that year, Strindberg was elected a member of La Société des Etudes Japonaises, Chinoises, Tartares et Indo-Chinois.<sup>48</sup>

After the publication of his satirical novel *The Red Room* (*Röda rummet*) had made him a national celebrity in 1879, Strindberg was able to find publishers for some of his

<sup>42</sup>Theodore Hamberg, *The Visions of Hung-Siu-Tshuen, and Origin of the Kwang-Si Insurrection* (Hongkong: The China Mail Office, 1854).

<sup>43</sup>D. MacIver, *A Hakka Index to the Chinese-English Dictionary of Herbert A. Giles, and to the Syllabic Dictionary of Chinese of S. Wells Williams* (Shanghai: American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1904).

<sup>44</sup>Lodén, *Swedish China Studies*, 5.

<sup>45</sup>Esko Häkli, "Nils Adolf Erik Nordenskiöld." in *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon*, edited by Göran Nilzén (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1990–91), vol. 27, 264–75, <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sbl/artikel/8231>.

<sup>46</sup>Uno Willers, *Från slottsflygeln till Humlegården: August Strindberg som biblioteksman* (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1962), 60–72; Bo Bennich-Björkman, *Strindberg och Nordenskiölds japanska bibliotek* (Stockholm: Kungliga biblioteket, 2007).

<sup>47</sup>Bo Bennich-Björkman, "Kommentarer," in *August Strindbergs Samlade Verk: Nationalupplaga*, vol. 7, 314–15.

<sup>48</sup>Bennich-Björkman, "Kommentarer," in *August Strindbergs Samlade Verk*, vol. 7, 333–79.

works on China and Sinology.<sup>49</sup> His enduring popularity on the literary scene diverted his interests from Sinology for three decades. Only in his twilight years did Strindberg resume his study of East Asia, provoked by world events, such as the Japanese victory against Russia in 1905, and by the emergence of younger rivals in Asian studies. Strindberg also engaged in speculative etymology and claimed that he could trace the roots of the Chinese language back to Hebrew, which he believed was the original language of all mankind.<sup>50</sup> In his last year, he worked frantically on a manuscript on the origins of the Chinese language and some other essays on East Asia, which he managed to publish just before his death in 1912. The reception of his forays into Asian studies ranged from polite detachment to dismissive hostility, and today Strindberg's Sinology is mostly of antiquarian interest.<sup>51</sup> Yet for all his stubborn dilettantism, he was a trail-blazer for others. He left behind a remarkable library, a testament to his knack for finding interesting books and sources. For instance, Strindberg seems to have got his hands on one of the first drafts of the Chinese transliteration system *Guoyin zimu* 國音字母 before it was adopted officially. Quite characteristically, he misinterpreted the scheme as being further proof that Chinese writing could be traced back to the alphabetic systems of the Mediterranean and he published a table to that effect in one of his works.<sup>52</sup>

### The Great Builders

Only at the turn of the twentieth century did the Swedish nation and language start to produce Sinologists, and other field experts, who bequeathed truly original and internationally influential contributions to the study and knowledge of China. In order of birth, the first of these giants was the geographer, topographer, explorer, and author Sven Hedin (1865–1952).<sup>53</sup> Hedin remains famous for his pioneering expeditions into Inner Asia, and is notorious for his political advocacy, which put him on the losing side of the two world wars. Witnessing the triumphant return of explorer Adolf Erik Nordenskiöld to Stockholm in 1880, the fifteen-year old Sven Hedin resolved to become an explorer himself, and only five years later he embarked on an adventurous expedition to Persia, Mesopotamia, and the Caucasus. In order to further his knowledge, Hedin enrolled at Berlin University as a student of the influential German geographer Ferdinand von Richthofen (1833–1905). Richthofen turned Hedin's attention to China and Inner Asia, regions then contested in the so-called "Great Game"—the geopolitical rivalry between the British and Russian Empires. Hedin's sojourn in Germany instilled in him an enduring love for Germany, as well as a pronounced hostility to Russian expansionism.

Between 1893 and 1908, Hedin undertook three pioneering expeditions through Inner Asia; he passed through Afghanistan, Russia, Tibet, Mongolia, and China proper. Despite technical limitations, Hedin's surveys produced remarkably accurate maps of previously uncharted territory. Along the way, he discovered a number of important historical sites, including the abandoned city of Loulan 樓蘭 and the "wandering

<sup>49</sup>Bennich-Björkman, "Kommentarer," in *August Strindbergs Samlade Verk*, vol. 7, 302ff.

<sup>50</sup>Strindberg, *Världs-språkets rötter* (1911), republished in *August Strindbergs Samlade Verk: Nationalupplaga* (Stockholm: Norstedt, 2008), vol. 70, 7–189.

<sup>51</sup>Camilla Kretz and Bo Ralph, "Kommentarer," in *August Strindbergs Samlade Verk*, vol. 70, 283–92.

<sup>52</sup>Strindberg, *Språkvetenskapliga skrifter II*, in *August Strindbergs Samlade Verk*, vol. 70, 228.

<sup>53</sup>Erik Grill, "Sven A Hedin," in *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon*, edited by Erik Grill (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1969–1971), vol. 18, 471–77, <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sbl/artikel/12736>.

lake” of Lop Nor 羅布泊, both in Xinjiang. Hedin’s bravado, literary ability, linguistic prowess, and self-promotion elevated him to world stardom. In 1902, he became the last Swede to be ennobled, and in 1911 he was awarded a seat in the Swedish Academy. Hedin’s fame and status in the establishment also provoked jealousy. In 1910, August Strindberg published an article mocking Hedin as an “ignorant trainee in land surveying” (“en okunnig lantmäteri-auskultant”) who had merely piggy-backed on the more daring exploits of his Carolean predecessors.<sup>54</sup> In a swipe at Hedin’s fame for the rediscovery of Lop Nor, Strindberg republished Renat’s two maps in the national press, and he followed them up with a barrage of strident editorials. Though unfair to his scientific achievements, the “Strindberg Feud” (*Strindbergsfejden*) damaged Hedin’s public image<sup>55</sup> just as the emergence of political and cultural nationalism in China began to impede further expeditions to Chinese Central Asia.

In 1927, with permission from the government of the Republic of China, Sven Hedin managed to arrange a joint Sino-Swedish Expedition to Central Asia. This time, Sven Hedin was not a solitary explorer and adventurer, but the president of a “traveling university” (*vandrande universitet*), employing leading researchers from Sweden, Germany, and China. Intended as a demonstration of an equal academic exchange between Europeans and Chinese, the expedition was the product of extensive negotiations with the Chinese government. However, Hedin had other goals: His ambition to aid Germany after the First World War led him to assist one of its corporate sponsors, Deutsche Lufthansa, by identifying candidate landing strips along an air route planned to connect Berlin to Beijing. Sponsored by several learned institutions and governments, the expedition ended in 1935 under complete Chinese sponsorship. It brought back large quantities of primary source material to Sweden, including a miniature replica of a temple from Chengde 承德.<sup>56</sup> Material from the expedition would spawn a prolific output from Hedin and he published titles such as *Jehol: City of Emperors* (English translation, 1932); *The Flight of “Big Horse”: The Trail of War in Central Asia* (English translation, 1936); and *Chiang Kai-shek: The Marshall of China* (English translation, 1940). Held in the Ethnographic Museum in Stockholm, Hedin’s collections are still consulted by researchers from all over the world.

Hedin’s aristocratic worldview, militarist advocacy, and pro-German sympathies have severely damaged his reputation—perhaps more so within his native Sweden than outside it. Still, Hedin was an incongruous character, and his statements also betray complex, unresolved inner conflicts. Proud of his own distant Jewish heritage, Hedin did criticize, if mildly, Nazi persecutions of German Jews in the 1930s.<sup>57</sup> He also sharply criticized the Nanjing massacre as a stain on Japan’s martial glory.<sup>58</sup> Yet the overwhelming evidence of Nazi crimes against humanity failed to produce any change of heart on his behalf, and Hedin never repented his embrace of the Third Reich.

<sup>54</sup>Emphasis in original. Strindberg, “Upptäckar-Humbug” (1910), in *August Strindbergs Samlade Verk: Nationalupplaga* (Stockholm: Norstedts, 1988), vol. 68, 125–29.

<sup>55</sup>Björn Meidal, “Kommentarer,” in *August Strindbergs Samlade Verk*, vol. 68, 309.

<sup>56</sup>A stimulating account of the Sino-Swedish expedition, which relies on both Western-language and Chinese sources, can be found in Jacobs, *The Compensations of Plunder*, 204–27.

<sup>57</sup>Sven Hedin, *Germany and World Peace*, translated by Gerald Griffin (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1937), 274f.

<sup>58</sup>Sven Hedin, *Chiang Kai-Shek, Marshal of China*, translated by Bernard Norbelie (New York: The John Day company, 1940), 171f.

The Finnish officer and statesman Gustaf Mannerheim (1867–1951), whose native language was Swedish, deserves to be included in an account of Swedish Sinology for his contributions to our knowledge of Chinese Inner Asia. Having served with distinction in the military of Imperial Russia until the breakup of that empire in 1917, he forms a sort of Russian-aligned counterpart to the pro-German explorer Sven Hedin, with whom he shared an admiration of Adolf Erik Nordenskiöld, related to Mannerheim by marriage to his paternal aunt Anna Maria. Through his exemplary contributions as a cavalry officer in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05, Mannerheim established his reputation as an “area expert” on the Far East, and in 1906 the Russian government sent him on an undercover intelligence mission through Chinese Turkestan and China proper. In Xinjiang he shared company with the French Sinologist Paul Pelliot (1878–1945), who enjoyed Russian sponsorship, but the two strong personalities soon became rivals and they parted ways before either of them could reach China proper. Pelliot would move on to engage in fieldwork in Dunhuang 敦煌 and bring invaluable manuscripts in several languages with him to France.<sup>59</sup> Mannerheim took extensive notes on his journey, and he learned enough Chinese to make himself understood along the way, but the outbreak of World War I and Mannerheim’s reorientation from soldier to statesman overshadowed the achievements of his expedition.<sup>60</sup> A revised translation of his diary in English was published in 2008, while his original Swedish notes and diary were published two years later.<sup>61</sup>

Johan Gunnar Andersson (1874–1960)—also known as “Kina-Gunnar” (China Gunnar)—was a geologist and paleontologist who chanced upon the study of China, but ended up revolutionizing our knowledge of China’s earliest history in the process.<sup>62</sup> As Sweden is rich in mineral resources, and the country has a long tradition in related academic disciplines, geology was a shrewd choice of vocation for ambitious Swedish men at the turn of the last century. By the time Andersson was employed by the Chinese government in 1914 to lead China’s National Geological Survey, he could look back at a rewarding career in geology that included several prestigious appointments as well as participation in the Swedish Antarctic Expedition of 1901–03, which nearly cost him his life. In collaboration with the British-trained earth scientist V.K. Ting (Ding Wenjiang 丁文江, 1887–1936), Andersson educated a new generation of Chinese geologists and helped the Chinese government locate iron ore deposits in Northern China.

In the 1920s, Andersson was drawn into the debate over China’s ancient past that had started with the May Fourth Movement in 1919. As an experienced geologist, Andersson knew how to use the discovery of fossils to date geological layers, and he was able to formulate working hypotheses about the locations of archaeological sites from China’s remote past. In 1921, he and a team of Chinese archaeologists discovered

<sup>59</sup>Jacobs, *The Compensations of Plunder*, 13.

<sup>60</sup>J.E.O. Screen, *Mannerheim: The Years of Preparation* (London: C. Hurst, 1970).

<sup>61</sup>Carl Gustaf Emil Mannerheim, *Across Asia from West to East in 1906–1908*, translated by Edward Birse, new revised edition edited by Harry Halén (Helsinki: Otava, Finno-Ugrian Society, 2008); Gustaf Mannerheim, *Dagbok förd under min resa i Centralasien och Kina 1906–07–08*, edited by Harry Halén, 3 vols (Helsinki: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, Atlantis, 2010).

<sup>62</sup>Magnus Fiskesjö and Chen Xingcan 陳星燦, *China before China: Johan Gunnar Andersson, Ding Wenjiang, and the Discovery of China’s Prehistory* (Stockholm: Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, 2004); Jan Romgard, *Polarforskaren som strandade i Kina* (Stockholm: Fri Tanke Förlag, 2018); Jan Romgard, “From Geosciences to Prehistory: J.G. Andersson’s Researches in China 1914–1924,” *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities*, no. 82 (2021), 1–42.

several sites in Henan province, which belonged to an agricultural Neolithic culture that Andersson called “Yangshao Culture” 仰韶 after the excavation site.<sup>63</sup> Between 1921 and 1926, he led a series of archaeological expeditions in Northern China. These expeditions shed more light on China’s prehistoric past and helped to identify the site where his assistant, the Austrian-born paleontologist Otto Zdansky (1894–1988), discovered remnants of the prehistoric Peking Man in 1926.<sup>64</sup>

Like Sven Hedin, Andersson experienced the emergence of Chinese nationalism. Sensitive to nationalist resistance against the removal of cultural heritage from China, he arranged with the Chinese government to return a significant portion of the archaeological findings after analyzing them in his lab in Stockholm. While most of the material was returned to China in the 1930s, it was lost amidst the Japanese invasion and the Civil War. The collection that was preserved in Sweden is, therefore, unique; it would later become the core of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities.<sup>65</sup> In 1927, Andersson was awarded the Stanislas Julien Prize for his work in China. Andersson was a fluent and prolific writer and authored numerous works for both scientific and popular audiences, most notable is his best-selling book on China’s prehistory, *Den gula jordens barn* (1932), which was published in English in 1934 as *Children of the Yellow Earth*.

Born in Finland, Osvald Sirén (1879–1966) became a pioneer in Chinese art history and a prolific author on the topic. Originally trained as an art historian of the Italian renaissance and the incumbent of a prestigious professorship in art history at Stockholm University College, Sirén decided in 1915 to redirect his career towards East Asian art. He made his first forays into the history of Chinese art history while working at such major US institutions as the Freer Gallery of Art and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. In the early interwar years, he made extended journeys through China and Japan to acquire art, to document East Asian gardens and architecture, and to learn the Chinese language. These travels abroad eventually cost him his professorship in Stockholm, as he overstayed his leave of absence. Undeterred by this setback, he embarked on international speaking tours and continued to publish extensively on Chinese art, both in Swedish and in English. His most influential English publications based on his travels in China include titles such as *The Walls and Gates of Peking* (1924), *Chinese Sculpture from the Fifth to the Fourteenth Century* (1925), and *The Imperial Palaces of Peking* (1926). These efforts eventually earned him a position as a keeper of the East Asian collection at the National Museum of Fine Arts in Stockholm, which would later be merged with the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities. One of Sirén’s longstanding intellectual goals was to understand how the Chinese saw their own art. Even though he was never able to master the Chinese written language himself, he drew on a team of translators to publish *The Chinese on the Art of Painting: Translations and Comments* (1936).<sup>66</sup>

The final giant in this list of Swedish Sinologists is Bernhard Karlgren (1889–1978), who revolutionized the study of early Chinese phonology and made significant contributions to the historical study of early China. When Karlgren was attending secondary

<sup>63</sup>Fiskesjö and Chen, *China before China*, 48.

<sup>64</sup>Tore Frängsmyr, *Pekingmänniskan: En historia utan slut* (Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, 2006); Jan Ove R. Ebbestad and Jan Romgard, *Otto Zdansky: The Scientist Who Discovered Peking Man and Explored China’s Fossil Past* (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 2021).

<sup>65</sup>Eva Myrdal, *Kina före Kina* (Stockholm: Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, 2004), 21–29.

<sup>66</sup>Minna Törmä, *Enchanted by Lohans: Osvald Sirén’s Journey into Chinese Art* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2013).

school in his native Jönköping, he showed a strong aptitude for the study of languages, and he received training in recording local idioms using the Swedish Dialect Alphabet (*landsmålsalfabetet*). At age 15, he wrote his first scientific publication, a study of a dialect in his native Småland region and in 1909 Karlgren completed a degree in Nordic, Greek, and Slavic languages at Uppsala University. There he was inspired by his mentor, the comparative linguist and Slavist Johan August Lundell (1851–1940),<sup>67</sup> to embark on the study of the Chinese language, which had yet to be explored through modern linguistic methods. He soon won a grant to study Chinese on location, and he spent 1910–1912 in China. There he rapidly achieved fluency in Mandarin and collected phonetic information about dozens of Chinese dialects, using the Swedish Dialect Alphabet that he had mastered in his student years. The outbreak of the republican revolution in 1911 found Karlgren in the provincial capital of Taiyuan, whence he reported on the bloody clashes in the city to the Swedish press.<sup>68</sup>

Fleeing the revolutionary chaos, Karlgren returned to Europe in 1912. After studying under Paul Pelliot and Édouard Chavannes (1865–1918) at the Sorbonne, he submitted his dissertation, under the title *Études sur la phonologie chinoise*, at Uppsala University in 1915. Karlgren married the methods of Chinese historical linguistics and evidentiary research with modern historical linguistics, enabling him to suggest a reconstruction of Ancient Chinese, as it appeared in the rhyming dictionary *Qieyun* 切韻 of 601. This pioneering reconstruction made Karlgren an instant celebrity in international Sinology and earned him the prestigious Stanislas Julien Prize of 1916.<sup>69</sup> Karlgren's fame secured him a position as professor of East Asian culture and languages at Gothenburg University in 1918, the first position in Sinology in Sweden,<sup>70</sup> and he also served as the president of the university (1931–36). Karlgren later moved on to provide reconstructions of Old Chinese—the Chinese language of around 1200 BCE. Combining historical linguistics and philology, Karlgren used his reconstructions to shed new light on the morphological structure of Old Chinese and to explain disputed passages in the Chinese canon. He also wrote popular works on the Chinese language, such as *Sound and Symbol in Chinese* (1923), and titles on Chinese affairs more generally. In 1939, Karlgren was appointed director of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities in Stockholm. He went on revising his linguistic reconstructions through the late 1950s and summarized his methods and reconstructions in *Compendium of Phonetics in Ancient and Archaic Chinese* (1954) and *Grammata Serica Recensa* (1957), which have been reprinted several times.

In 1945, a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation enabled Karlgren to train students in Sinology. Three of his students obtained their doctorates under Karlgren: Hans Bielenstein, Sven Broman, and Getty Kallgren. Many of his other students continued to make important contributions to the study of China, both in Sweden and overseas: Seung-Bog Cho 趙承福, Søren Egerod, Bo Gyllenswärd, Thomas G. Hart, Cecilia Lindqvist, Olof Lidin, Göran Malmqvist, Sten Stenkvist, Jan Wirgin, and many others.<sup>71</sup> Karlgren continued to publish articles on ancient Chinese letters until

<sup>67</sup>Claes Witting, "Johan A Lundell," in *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon*, edited by Birgitta Lager-Kromnow (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1990–91), 261–64, <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sbl/artikel/9807>.

<sup>68</sup>Malmqvist, *Bernhard Karlgren: Portrait of a Scholar*, 62–69.

<sup>69</sup>Malmqvist, *Bernhard Karlgren: Portrait of a Scholar*, 110.

<sup>70</sup>Malmqvist, *Bernhard Karlgren: Portrait of a Scholar*, 116.

<sup>71</sup>For a more complete list of his students and their achievements, see Lodén, *Swedish China Studies on the Threshold of the 21st Century*, 11–12.



his death; one of his last works was a translation of *Daodejing* 道德經, one of early China's most haunting texts. Karlgren's reconstructions of Middle and Old Chinese, as they are now called, were soon revised by a new generation of linguists.<sup>72</sup> Yet he remains a foundational figure of modern Chinese historical linguistics, and his works are still consulted and cited.

The crowning achievement of the early founders of Swedish Sinology was the establishment of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities (MFEA) in 1926, which was created to give a permanent home to Johan Gunnar Andersson's archaeological collections. A key role in securing government backing for the museum was played by Crown Prince Gustaf Adolf (1882–1973), who had visited China during his world tour in 1926–27, and who had participated in several archaeological excavations. As early as 1920, the Crown Prince had assumed leadership over the Swedish China Committee (Kinakommittén), founded to support Andersson's work and to provide support for China-related research. After his accession as King Gustaf VI Adolf in 1950, he would continue to serve as a royal patron of the museum. In 1929, Andersson founded the *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities*. The museum gradually became a center of research, into which this first generation of Sinologists could pour their energies, and in 1939, Bernhard Karlgren became the director of MFEA. He gave the museum a new direction, and he used the bulletin to publish many of his research findings. In 1965, Gustaf VI Adolf secured permanent premises on the island of Skeppsholmen in central Stockholm, where the museum is still located today.<sup>73</sup>

Any consideration of Swedish Sinology before 1945 must also acknowledge the work of Swedish missionaries in China, who have left behind a rich body of publications and historical material that are still consulted by scholars. Between 1847 and 1951 no less than 700 Swedish missionaries worked in China, which is the highest proportion in relation to its population among all Western nations.<sup>74</sup> While the missionary efforts of Theodor Hamberg did not bear fruit in his lifetime, the Swedish missionary enterprise in China was rededicated through the effort of a number of missionaries at the end of the nineteenth century. The Mission Covenant Church of Sweden (Svenska missionskyrkan) operated in China from 1890 through 1951. One pioneering missionary was Erik Folke (1862–1939), who founded the Swedish Mission in China (Svenska missionen i Kina) in 1887 and stayed in the country for several decades.<sup>75</sup> Today he is best known for publishing the first Swedish translations of *Daodejing* and *Zhuangzi* 莊子.<sup>76</sup> Other Swedish missionaries made daring attempts to set up missionary stations in the periphery of the old Qing Empire, such as Inner Mongolia and Xinjiang. Gustaf Raquette (1871–1945) published pioneering works on the Chaghatay language, and Folke Boberg (1896–1987) compiled a Mongolian–

<sup>72</sup>Together with Laurent Sagart, my colleague William H. Baxter has published a reconstruction of old Chinese that is becoming a new standard in the field. Baxter and Sagart, *Old Chinese: A New Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

<sup>73</sup>Eva Myrdal, Mette Siggstedt, and Karl Zetterström, *Kungens gåva: Gustaf VI Adolfs gåva till svenska folket*, translated by Robert Dunlap (Stockholm: Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, 2013).

<sup>74</sup>Fredrik Fällman, "Öst- och Centralasien," in *Svensk mission och kyrkorna som växt fram*, edited by Klas Lundström, Kajsa Ahlstrand, Jan-Åke Alvarsson, and Göran Janzon (Skellefteå: Artos & Norma Bokförlag, 2021), 460.

<sup>75</sup>Herman Schlyter, "Erik Folke," in *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon*, edited by Erik Grill (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1964–66), vol. 16, 257–59, <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sbl/artikel/14297>.

<sup>76</sup>Erik Folke, *Den äkta urkunden* (Stockholm: Birkagården, 1924), and *Laotse och Tao Te Ching* (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1927).

English dictionary.<sup>77</sup> After Raquette returned to Sweden in the 1920s, he joined Lund University as a lecturer in Turkic languages; his famous student Gunnar Jarring (1907–2002) would later make a career both as a diplomat and as a linguist in Turkic languages.<sup>78</sup> Perhaps most importantly, the Swedish presence in Xinjiang left behind rich collections of archival materials in Stockholm and Lund, which are still consulted by historians.<sup>79</sup>

### Modernizers

When the Communists emerged victorious in the Chinese Civil War in 1949, Sweden promptly recognized the new régime, and the following year Sweden became the first Euro-American country to establish full diplomatic relations with China. This was less an expression of sympathy to the cause of the new régime than a result of Swedish diplomatic pragmatism, which tended to recognize de facto régimes. In a departure from established diplomatic practice, the Communists were initially unsure whether they wanted to “recognize” Sweden’s recognition, but they settled on paving the way for full diplomatic relations.<sup>80</sup> In May 1950, Beijing eventually appointed Long March veteran Geng Biao 耿飚 (1909–2000) as its permanent ambassador to Stockholm, with accreditations in Denmark and Finland.<sup>81</sup> Geng’s political stature gives an indication of how seriously the new Chinese government took its relations with Sweden. Swedish diplomats often made skillful use of Sweden’s long-standing relations with China in order to open doors. For instance, when Lennart Petri (1914–1996) took up his post as ambassador in Beijing in the early 1960s, he acquired a facsimile photocopy of Nils Matsson Kiöping’s travelogue and donated it to historian and vice mayor of Beijing, Wu Han 吳晗 (1909–1969).<sup>82</sup> In 1971–72, Beijing allowed the Swedish government to build its own embassy building in Beijing on land to which the Swedish government held title, a privilege shared with relatively few countries.<sup>83</sup> In an anticipation of its later role in North Korea, Sweden’s diplomatic representation in Beijing during the first decades of the Cold War provided the West with a window into the country. In international bodies, the Swedish government typically abstained from votes that condemned the PRC’s human rights records in such areas as Tibet.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>77</sup>Gustaf Raquette, *Eastern Turki Grammar: Practical and Theoretical with Vocabulary* (Stockholm, 1912); Folke Boberg, *Mongolian–English Dictionary*, 3 vols. (Stockholm: Förlaget Filadelfia, 1954–1955).

<sup>78</sup>Gunnar Jarring, *Return to Kashgar: Central Asian Memoirs in the Present*, translated by Eva Claeson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1986).

<sup>79</sup>James A. Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); Rian Thum, *The Sacred Routes of Uyghur History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014); Eric Schluessel, *Land of Strangers: The Civilizing Project in Qing Central Asia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020).

<sup>80</sup>Magdalena Bexell, “Det svenska erkännandet av Folkrepubliken Kina 1950: En lagom blandning av idealitet och verklighetssinne?” in *Diplomatiska erkännanden: Sverige, Danmark och Folkrepubliken Kina år 1950* (Lund: Centrum för öst- och sydöstasiastudier, Lunds Universitet, 2000), 3–35.

<sup>81</sup>“Keng Piao,” *Biographic Dictionary of Chinese Communism, 1921–1965*, edited by Donald W. Klein and Anne B. Clark (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), vol. 2, 438–40.

<sup>82</sup>Lennart Petri, *Sverige i stora världen: Minnen och reflexioner från 40 års diplomatjänst* (Stockholm: Atlantis, 1996), 354–55.

<sup>83</sup>“Peking, Kina. Ambassadanläggning,” Statens fastighetsverk, [www.sfv.se/fastigheter/sok/utrikes/asien/peking-kina-ambassadanlaggning](http://www.sfv.se/fastigheter/sok/utrikes/asien/peking-kina-ambassadanlaggning).

<sup>84</sup>Katrin Goldstein-Kyaga, *Tibet och den svenska tystnaden: Tibets politiska status och Sveriges ståndpunkt* (Stockholm: Amaryllis, 2008).

The operation of an embassy in Beijing also enabled Swedish Sinologists to serve as cultural attachés. Many Swedish Sinologists were thus able to enjoy long-term residences in China, among them Göran Malmqvist, Cecilia and Sven Lindqvist, Sten Stenqvist, Torbjörn Lodén, Magnus Fiskesjö, Nils-Olof Ericsson, and Joakim Enwall. Swedish Sinology suffered nothing like the Cold War ruptures and the anti-communist purges that engulfed Anglophone Sinology from the 1950s onward.<sup>85</sup> Swedish Sinologists rapidly adopted mainland innovations such as *Hanyu pinyin* 漢語拼音 and simplified characters, though by the same token, they did not develop strong institutional ties to Taiwan until the 1990s.

Although neither of them were trained as Sinologists, the collaboration between the journalist, author, and poet Alf Henrikson (1905–1995) and the Chinese exile intellectual Hwang Tsu-yü 黃祖瑜 (1912–2005) deserves mention for their efforts in introducing Chinese literature and history to a broader Swedish audience, a partnership that is reminiscent of similar collaborations during the early years of Sinology, such as the one between James Legge (1815–1897) and Wang Tao 王韜 (1828–1897).<sup>86</sup> Henrikson was already an established writer when he befriended Hwang, who had been studying mathematics in London for two years and was stuck in Sweden when World War II broke out in 1939. During the war years, Henrikson started to interview Hwang in English on Chinese history, philosophy, and literature, making extensive notes that eventually grew into book-length manuscripts. In 1945, their collaboration produced *Kineser: Kinesiska dikter* (*Chinese People: Chinese Poems*), an anthology of ancient Chinese poetry rendered into the sparkling Swedish that was the trademark of Alf Henrikson. As Hwang's exile in Sweden became permanent and he grew increasingly proficient in Swedish, he was able to examine Henrikson's translations. In the following years, they published a series of anthologies from Chinese philosophy and literature, including translations of Confucius and Mencius. In 1967, their collaboration was crowned by the publication of an erudite and entertaining volume on Chinese history, the product of more than twenty-five years of research.<sup>87</sup>

After Karlgren's retirement from Stockholm University in 1965, he was succeeded by Göran Malmqvist (1924–2019). Once an aspiring classicist, Malmqvist begun to study Chinese under Karlgren in 1946. In 1948 he went to China to study the dialects of Sichuan, using Karlgren's methodologies.<sup>88</sup> Not unlike his teacher's experience almost four decades earlier, Malmqvist was forced to leave China shortly after the establishment of the communist government in 1949, but he was able to return as a cultural attaché to the Swedish embassy in Beijing in 1956–58. His major contributions to Swedish Sinology were in the realm of translations and in his introductions to Chinese culture. In contrast to Karlgren, whose scholarly output was almost exclusively devoted to China's remote past, Malmqvist pioneered the study of modern and contemporary China and his teaching emphasized proficiency in standard spoken Chinese.

<sup>85</sup>Richard Louis Walker, "China Studies in McCarthy's Shadow: A Personal Memoir," *The National Interest*, no. 53 (Fall 1998), 98–101.

<sup>86</sup>Norman J. Girardot, *The Victorian Translation of China: James Legge's Oriental Pilgrimage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

<sup>87</sup>Alf Henrikson and Hwang Tsu-yü, *Kinesisk historia* (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1967).

<sup>88</sup>Göran Malmqvist, *Studies in Western Mandarin Phonology* (Stockholm: Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, 1962); Malmqvist, *Strövtåg i svunna världar*.

A conscientious and imaginative translator, Malmqvist thought a great deal about the problems of translations between two such different languages as Swedish and Chinese. For instance, when he rendered a selection of Tang poetry into Swedish in the 1960s, he was upfront about the challenges of doing justice to the original and provided the reader with a layered translation, which enabled the reader to appreciate the lapidary nature of the original poem.<sup>89</sup> In his monumental translations of *The Water Margin* (*Shuihu zhuan* 水滸傳) and *The Journey to the West* (*Xiyou ji* 西遊記) into Swedish, Malmqvist created a faithful rendering of the original that was enhanced by his innovative use of slang, dialect, and archaic vocabulary, which made it possible for him to create different vernacular styles that matched the different characters.<sup>90</sup> Malmqvist was also a tireless promoter of modern Chinese literature and he was highly sensitive to current trends. Although Malmqvist was critical of the cultural policies of the Chinese communists,<sup>91</sup> he published translated anthologies of popular peasants' poetry and of Mao Zedong's 毛澤東 poetry in the early 1970s.<sup>92</sup> By showing that these works resonated with longstanding themes in Chinese literature and often adhered to ancient metres, he was able to provide his audience with a crash course in ancient Chinese literature. When the cultural climate in China changed in the 1980s, Malmqvist pioneered the introduction of modern and contemporary Chinese poetry and literature, by publishing translations of authors such as Ai Qing 艾青, Wen Yiduo 聞一多, Bei Dao 北島, Gu Cheng 顧城, Gao Xingjian 高興建, and Mo Yan 莫言. In 1985, Malmqvist was rewarded for his translation work by being elected to the Swedish Academy, which is responsible for developing the Swedish language, and for awarding the yearly Nobel Prize in Literature.

Another Sinologist who played a key role in modernizing Sinology in Sweden and popularizing the field in general was the author Cecilia Lindqvist (1932–2021). In the late 1950s, she and her then husband Sven Lindqvist (1932–2019) studied classical Chinese under Bernhard Karlgren at Stockholm University. When Sven Lindqvist was appointed cultural attaché at the Embassy of Sweden in Beijing, the two enjoyed a rare opportunity to study the Chinese language on location in 1961–62. While taking classes in Chinese, Cecilia Lindqvist also received instruction as the only foreign student at the China Conservatory of Music in the ancient Chinese zither (*guqin* 古琴), under Wang Di 王迪 (1926–2005). The couple's stay in China coincided with the famine crisis under the Great Leap Forward. Without any means by which to comprehend the scale of the disaster, Cecilia Lindqvist's health deteriorated, and she was treated for malnutrition at the old Rockefeller Hospital in Beijing. After returning to Sweden, the couple produced a well-received book on their experiences in China, *Kina inifrån: en preliminär rapport* (1963), which was published in English translation as *China in Crisis* (1965). They would continue to publish several more books together both on China and their other travels. While Sven Lindqvist's attention turned towards other subjects, Cecilia Lindqvist consolidated her position as a leading author on Chinese studies.

<sup>89</sup>Göran Malmqvist, *Det förtätade ögonblicket: T'ang-lyrik* (Stockholm: Forum, 1965).

<sup>90</sup>The former appeared in five volumes as *Berättelser från träskmarkerna* (Stockholm: Forum, 1976–84) and the latter were published as *Färden till västern* (Höganäs: Bra böcker, 1995–99).

<sup>91</sup>For a humorous account of how students confronted Malmqvist in the 1970s, see Göran Sommardal, "Ta ett fast grepp om professorn," in *Vägar till Kina: Göran Malmqvist 60 år*, edited by Bert Edström, et al. (Stockholm: Föreningen för orientalistiska studier, 1984), 7–11.

<sup>92</sup>Göran Malmqvist, *Den dånande trumman: Modern kinesisk poesi* (Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand, 1971); Mao Zedong, *Den långa marschen: Mao Zedongs 38 dikter*, translated by Göran Malmqvist (Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand, 1973).

In 1970, Cecilia Lindqvist, whose day-job was a secondary school teacher, was asked whether she would be willing to teach a group of students Chinese. In 1971, she became the first public school teacher in Sweden to give classes in the language, and she continued to teach Chinese for more than two decades. She created her own teaching materials in order to explain the origins of Chinese characters, combining her own visual material with the work of Bernhard Karlgren and objects from the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities.<sup>93</sup> Over the years, her notes grew into a book manuscript. In 1989, she published *Tecknens rike: en berättelse om kineserna och deras skrivtecken* (translated into English and published in 1991 as *China: Empire of the Written Symbol*). The book established Lindqvist's reputation as a Sinologist, and the Swedish government awarded her with a personal professorship in Sinology. Lindqvist has also published a well-received book about the Chinese zither (2006) and a memoir (2015) concerning her first stay in Beijing. These have been translated into Chinese, but not yet into English.<sup>94</sup>

### Political Pilgrimages

With the Sino-Soviet split of the late 1950s, many left-wing Swedish intellectuals turned their attention towards the People's Republic of China for inspiration. In their eyes, the PRC had redeemed Marxism-Leninism from the horrors of the "actually existing socialism" in Eastern Europe. The intense fascination with the Chinese socialist experiment under Mao Zedong, and its promises of an ideal society, bears strong parallels to the Sinophilia of Enlightenment Physiocrats and other reformers in the eighteenth century. Unlike their eighteenth-century counterparts, who had to rely on imperfect translations and unreliable travel accounts, at least some twentieth-century Swedish Sinophiles could travel directly to China, their political pilgrimages facilitated by Sweden's relatively favored status among Western nations.

In the era of political pilgrimages, which lasted until the death of Mao Zedong in 1976, two organizations stand out as particularly important: the Swedish-Chinese Friendship Association and the Maoist Party KFML (Communist League of Marxist-Leninists). At the initiative of several Swedish intellectuals, the Swedish-Chinese Association was founded in 1952. While the Association was officially non-political, and while it was not able to monopolize non-governmental Swedish contacts with China, it did act as a link to the Embassy of China in Sweden, and as a kind of watchdog over Swedish discourse on things Chinese. When the Swedish press departed too far from the official PRC line, the association would lodge protests and write letters to editors. The association also helped to provide the Xinhua News Agency with translators of Swedish, which meant that *China Pictorial* issued a Swedish edition from 1960 through 1992: *Bildtidningen Kina*. The association benefited from its close ties with the embassy and could partially finance its operations though the sales of books and other products from China. As travel to China was tightly restricted, the association also

<sup>93</sup>The author of this article had the privilege to study Chinese under Cecilia Lindqvist for three years at Södra Latins gymnasium. For more on her teaching, see Cecilia Lindqvist, "Sveriges första undervisning i kinesiska som skolämne," in *Kinesiskan flyttar in—nytt skolspråk i Sverige*, edited by Hanna Sahlberg Wu (Uppsala universitet, 2015), 23–41.

<sup>94</sup>Cecilia Lindqvist, *Qin: En berättelse om det kinesiska instrumentet Qin och dess betydelse i den bildade klassens liv* (Stockholm: Bonnier, 2006); Cecilia Lindqvist, *En annan värld: minnen från Kina 1961–62* (Stockholm: Bonnier, 2015).

functioned as a travel agency, representing about half of Swedish trips to China during the Mao era.<sup>95</sup>

US intervention in the Vietnam War (1965–1975) and the early stages of the Cultural Revolution (1966–71) marked a period of rapid growth and expansion for the organization and the Swedish–Chinese Association became an integral part of the New Left. It maintained close relations with the KFML, a pro-China faction of the Communist Party of Sweden, which had split in 1967 and was initially led by former Member of Parliament Nils Holmberg (1902–1981) and economic historian Bo Gustafsson (1931–2000). The two organizations shared many members and developed a kind of division of labor. KFML became a center of radical media. It founded the publishing house Oktoberförlaget, which not only sold radical literature and semi-official Swedish translations of Mao's works, produced by Nils Holmberg and his wife Marika, but also had a dynamic music branch that gave opportunities to many aspiring musicians. Many prominent journalists and authors, such as novelist Henning Mankell (1948–2015) and investigative journalist Jan Guillou, got their first training in the larger sphere of Maoist media, which may be one of the more enduring legacies of Swedish Maoism outside of Chinese studies proper. The wave of interest in China peaked in the mid-1970s. Following US President Richard M. Nixon's visit to China 1972, the association had to distance itself from the radical left in Sweden and adopt a more neutral diplomatic posture. Geopolitical realignments in Southeast Asia and the Chinese invasion of Vietnam dealt severe blows to the prestige of the pro-Chinese left in Sweden, which fizzled out almost completely when Deng Xiaoping embarked on economic reform in the late 1970s and early 1980s.<sup>96</sup>

A key figure in the “Chinese moment” of the Swedish Left was the author Jan Myrdal (1927–2020), who served as the president of the Swedish–Chinese Association from 1968 through the early 1970s.<sup>97</sup> Jan Myrdal was the estranged son of Gunnar (1898–1987) and Alva Myrdal (1902–1986),<sup>98</sup> prominent social scientists, Nobel laureates, and a power couple of Swedish Social Democracy. Jan Myrdal opted to forgo a traditional university education to forge his own path as a novelist, journalist, and non-fiction writer, travelling extensively in Europe, Asia, and Latin America. Initially sympathetic to the USSR and an active member of the communist party youth league, Myrdal soon grew skeptical of the Soviet experiment and Soviet influence in the Third World. After lobbying the Chinese embassy in Stockholm, he was able to secure a travel visa to China, and permission to visit the people's commune of Liu Lin 柳林, not far from the old Yan'an base area of fame from the Second Sino-Japanese War. The book that resulted from his travel, *Rapport från kinesisk by* (translated into English and published in 1965 as *Report from a Chinese Village*), was hailed as an authentic masterpiece on contemporary China. Translated into several languages, it made Myrdal a world-renowned expert on Mao's China, who could rival more knowledgeable left-wing writers, such as William H. Hinton (1919–2004). The book also pioneered a new genre

<sup>95</sup>Anne Hedén, *Röd stjärna över Sverige: Folkrepubliken Kina som resurs i den svenska vänsterradikaliseringen under 1960- och 1970-talen* (Lund: Sekel, 2008); Ingrid Wällgren, *Mao i Sverige: Den svenska maoismen 1963–1986* (Stockholm: Dialogos, 2017).

<sup>96</sup>Hedén, *Röd stjärna över Sverige*; Wällgren, *Mao i Sverige*.

<sup>97</sup>Johansson, *Saluting the Yellow Emperor*.

<sup>98</sup>Bo Gustafsson, “K Gunnar Myrdal,” in *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon*, edited by Göran Nilzén (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1987–1989), 144–160 at 144, <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sbl/artikel/8623>; Per Thullberg, “Alva Myrdal,” in *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon*, edited by Göran Nilzén (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1987–89), 161–78, <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sbl/artikel/8622>.



of non-fiction literature, the “report book,” which forms a twentieth-century counterpart to the eighteenth-century travelogue literature of the East India travelers. The report book purported to give the readers a down-to-earth and authoritative account of Chinese realities, and several prominent Swedish intellectuals, such as writer and publicist Olof Lagergrantz (1911–2002) and journalist Tore Zetterholm (1915–2001), would follow in the footsteps of Myrdal and publish influential accounts of their travels in China.<sup>99</sup>

Myrdal never learned Chinese and did not claim to be a Sinologist, but his numerous works on China inspired many young Swedes to study Chinese and to delve deeper into Sinology. As China opened for more casual travel in the early 1970s, many Swedish writers of “report books” grew increasingly disillusioned with Mao’s China and recanted their earlier political stances. As early as 1977, Myrdal’s propagandistic portrayals of Mao’s China were subjected to hostile scrutiny. Myrdal was criticized for having completely relied on government-appointed translators and minders for his interviews. For his part, Myrdal not only refused to disown Maoism, but even grew more sharply partisan. When the Chinese-allied Khmer Rouge guerrilla group seized power in Cambodia in 1975, Myrdal accepted an invitation to be an official guest of Pol Pot, and he remained an unrepentant apologist for the regime after it had fallen. The following decade, Myrdal once again made himself infamous by supporting the Chinese government in suppressing the student movement of 1989. The combination of prolific authorship on Chinese affairs with contentious political advocacy renders Jan Myrdal a sort of left-wing counterpart to Sven Hedin, and similarly complicates his legacy.<sup>100</sup>

One person who combines the role of the political pilgrim with the role of the scholar-journalist is Göran Leijonhufvud. Initially attracted to the study of China because of its radical experiments in the late 1960s, he was stationed in Beijing in 1971 as one of the few fully accredited journalists in China, reporting for both the prestigious Swedish daily *Dagens Nyheter* and Finland’s main Swedish-language newspaper, *Hufvudstadsbladet*. As the only Swedish journalist on location in China, Leijonhufvud often found himself on the receiving end of media criticism from Jan Myrdal and the Swedish–Chinese Association in the 1970s, but he would outlast the Maoist movements in Sweden and could look back at forty-five years of China reporting when he retired in the early 2000s.<sup>101</sup> As he had a rare opportunity to observe many of the late Mao-era political campaigns first hand, Leijonhufvud was able to collect enough material for a doctoral dissertation on “big character posters” (*dazibao* 大字報), which he defended in 1989.<sup>102</sup>

Any discussion of political pilgrimages also requires mention of the role of the official Lutheran Church of Sweden. Troubled by the role of the Church as a bastion of conservatism and its participation in compromised mission enterprises, many young members of the Church of Sweden looked towards the Third World to redeem the church from God’s Judgment and to find models for a more progressive and authentic Christian faith.<sup>103</sup> Along with Latin American liberation theology, the People’s Republic

<sup>99</sup>Hedén, *Röd stjärna över Sverige*, 68–71; Johansson, *Saluting the Yellow Emperor*, 185–98.

<sup>100</sup>Johansson, *Saluting the Yellow Emperor*, 209–11.

<sup>101</sup>Göran Leijonhufvud, *Pionjär och veteran: 50 år med Kina* (Stockholm: Bonnier, 2014).

<sup>102</sup>Göran Leijonhufvud, *Going against the Tide: On Dissent and Big Character Posters in China* (Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 1989).

<sup>103</sup>The idea that God had passed judgment over the mainstream Christian church for its alleged complicity in imperialism is a central theme in Jonas Jonson, *Kina, kyrkan och kristen tro* (Stockholm: Gummesson, 1975), 88–90.

of China also emerged as a hallowed utopia of authentic egalitarianism. The assembly of the World Council of Churches in Uppsala in July 1968 became a break-through for the radicalization of the Church of Sweden. This new generation of radical Christians can be exemplified in the career of the theologian Jonas Jonson, who would later rise to become the bishop of the Diocese of Strängnäs. In 1972, he defended his dissertation on how the Lutheran mission in China coped with the Chinese revolution,<sup>104</sup> and later in the 1970s, he emerged as a China expert within the Swedish state church, authoring several books on the country. Jonson went very far in his embrace of the Maoist model of socialist construction. In one work, he argued that the Chinese revolution was part of “God’s intervention in history”<sup>105</sup> and he also made remarks to the effect that the People’s Republic represented a genuine implementation of the egalitarian promises of Christianity.<sup>106</sup>

The era of political pilgrimages has left behind a complex legacy. The combative liberal politician and writer Pehr Ahlmark (1939–2018) was one the first to write a book-length criticism of the Swedish left for having turned a blind eye on the atrocities committed under the Mao era, linking this to a general Swedish timidity towards totalitarian dictatorships.<sup>107</sup> Here, he followed in the footsteps of his mentor Herbert Tingsten (1896–1973), renowned newspaperman and political scientist, who had castigated the Swedish left in the early days of the Cold War for being too beholden to the Soviet Bloc. Other treatments of Swedish Sinophilia have pointed at more complex motives. Lars Åke Augustsson and Stig Hansén, both former Maoists, have argued that Swedish Maoism was driven more by domestic politics than by an admiration of totalitarianism, and that most Maoists went on to more productive roles in society after their flirtation with utopia.<sup>108</sup> In his criticism of Swedish Sinology, Perry Johansson has also pointed to important continuities between the orientalist impulses of Swedish Sinologists and the Sinophilia of the 1968 generation, which was exemplified in their view of ethnic minorities in China, such as Muslims and Tibetans.<sup>109</sup>

Perhaps the most enduring legacy of this wave of Sinophilia was in the realm of translations. Many young people drawn to Chinese studies during the Cultural Revolution went on to translate Chinese fiction into Swedish, first beginning with radical writers such as Ba Jin 巴金, Mao Dun 茅盾, and Lu Xun 鲁迅, and then moving on to less politically inflected literature. When a new generation of Swedish Sinologists came of age during the Reform Period, they could already access quite a lot of Chinese literature in high-quality translations, produced by names like Pär Bergman, Nils-Olof Ericsson, Britta Kinnemark, Lennart Lundberg, Göran Sommardahl, and many more. The existing treasure store of direct translations from Chinese to Swedish means that good translation standards have had time to develop and stabilize, which is unusual for a small language area like Swedish.

<sup>104</sup>Jonas Jonson, *Lutheran Missions in a Time of Revolution: The China Experience 1944–1951* (Uppsala: Tvåväga, 1972).

<sup>105</sup>Jonson, *Kina, kyrkan och kristen tro*, 108.

<sup>106</sup>Johan Sundeen, *68-kyrkan: Svensk kristen vänsters möten med marxismen 1965–1989* (Stockholm: Bladh by Bladh, 2017), 194.

<sup>107</sup>Pehr Ahlmark, *Det öppna såret: om massmord och medlöperi* (Stockholm: Timbro, 1999).

<sup>108</sup>Lars Åke Augustsson and Stig Hansén, *Maoisterna: En historia berättad av några som var med* (Stockholm: Ordfront, 1997).

<sup>109</sup>Johansson, *Saluting the Yellow Emperor*, 221–29.

## Globalization

With the end of the Cold War in Europe and the breakthrough of the third wave of globalization, Swedish Sinology underwent its own set of transformations. As China had once again lost its allure as a social utopia, Swedish Sinologists started to focus on topics such as intellectual history, human rights, modern literature, popular culture, and political history. At the same time, the boundaries between Swedish Sinology and international Sinology have blurred further, as more Swedes sought educational opportunities abroad and many international Sinologists were hired at higher seats of learning in Sweden. Consequently, it is difficult to do justice to the diversity and complexity of Sinology in Sweden, and the following account will only be able to cover the broad outlines of contemporary China studies.<sup>110</sup> While the Swedish–Chinese Association changed its name to the Swedish–Chinese Friendship Association in the 1970s, and then back to its original name the Swedish–Chinese Association, in reaction to the brutal clampdown on the student movement in Beijing 1989, the association is still very active under its newest name FokusKina and its eponymous publication often carries articles written by leading Swedish Sinologists.

Malmqvist's successor as the chair in Chinese studies at Stockholm University, Torbjörn Lodén, wrote his dissertation on proletarian literature in Republican China and focused most of his research and graduate training on intellectual history, with a particular focus on the Qing dynasty thinker Dai Zhen 戴震 (1724–1777).<sup>111</sup> In the 1990s, he hosted a number of conferences and events, in which such prominent Chinese intellectuals as Dai Qing 戴晴, Liu Binyan 劉賓雁, Yan Jiaqi 嚴家其, Liu Zaifu 劉再復, and Wang Hui 汪暉 made appearances.<sup>112</sup> Following the retirement of Lodén in 2014, the department of Asian, Middle Eastern, and Turkish Studies at Stockholm University has three professors dedicated to the Chinese language and cultures: Marja Kaikkonen, Irmy Schweiger, and Monika Gänßbauer. Educated in her native Finland, China, and Sweden, Kaikkonen has focused her research on popular culture and is notable for her erudite monograph on Chinese comic cross-talk, *xiangsheng* 相聲.<sup>113</sup> Schweiger received most of her undergraduate and graduate training at the University of Heidelberg in Germany and has directed her research towards contemporary Sinophone literature and culture.<sup>114</sup> The most recent addition to the faculty, Gänßbauer, was educated at Bochum, and works on literature and religion.<sup>115</sup>

In 1989, Swedish Sinology expanded to a new seat of learning, as Lars Ragvald was appointed to the newly created chair in Chinese studies at Lund University. With a rare

<sup>110</sup>For a more complete survey of Swedish dissertations on Sinology up to the end of the millennia, see Lodén, *Swedish China Studies on the Threshold of the 21st Century*.

<sup>111</sup>Torbjörn Lodén, *Debatten om proletär litteratur i Kina 1928–1929* (Stockholm: Gotab, 1980); Torbjörn Lodén, “Dai Zhen’s Evidential Commentary on the Meaning of the Words of Mencius. An Annotated Translation of the *Meng Zi Ziyi Shuzheng*,” *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities*, no. 60 (1988): 165–313.

<sup>112</sup>The author of this essay benefited tremendously from these exchanges and relied on the mentorship of Wang Hui and Göran Malmqvist for his annotated translation of Zhang Taiyan’s *Zhonghua minguo jie*, published in *The Stockholm journal of East Asian studies* (1997).

<sup>113</sup>Marja Kaikkonen, *Laughable Propaganda: Modern Xiangsheng as Didactic Entertainment* (Stockholm: University, 1990).

<sup>114</sup>Irmy Schweiger, *Halber Himmel ganzer Herd: Die Wiederbelebung der Weiblichkeit; eine Analyse des Diskurses über Frauenliteratur im post-maoistischen China* (Heidelberg: Wunderhorn, 2001).

<sup>115</sup>Monika Gänßbauer, *Popular Belief in Contemporary China: A Discourse Analysis*, translated by Alexander Reynolds (Bochum: Projektverlag, 2015).

competence in both Chinese and Russian, Ragvald wrote his dissertation on Yao Wen Yuan's 姚文元 role as cultural critic in the Cultural Revolution. As professor in Chinese studies, Ragvald set out to create the first comprehensive dictionary of Chinese to Swedish, which finally appeared in 2012.<sup>116</sup> Michael Schoenhals has established a reputation as a leading scholar of the Cultural Revolution, pioneering the "garbology school" of research into the Cultural Revolution. Most of his output has been published in English and includes titles such as *Doing Things with Words in Chinese Politics* (1992) and *Mao's Last Revolution* (2006), the latter co-authored with Harvard political scientist Roderick MacFarquhar. Another scholar active at Lund University, Marina Svensson has done extensive research on the history of human rights in China and has published one monograph on the subject as well as edited an anthology with Stephen C. Angle.<sup>117</sup>

Uppsala University and the University of Gothenburg also have a presence in Chinese studies. Uppsala has two professors dedicated to Chinese studies, Joakim Enwall and Lena Rydholm, and the university has been training doctoral students since 2016. Enwall is an expert in Chinese minority languages and wrote his dissertation on the Miao written language,<sup>118</sup> while Rydholm is specializing in Chinese poetry.<sup>119</sup> The first university to host a chair in East Asian languages in Sweden, the University of Gothenburg, has long been overshadowed by Stockholm and Lund, but in recent years the Department of Languages and Cultures has added three associate professors in Chinese studies: Fredrik Fällman, Martin Svensson Ekström, and Elena Pollacchi. They specialize in the study of Christianity in China,<sup>120</sup> ancient literature,<sup>121</sup> and film studies respectively,<sup>122</sup> and the program is set to recruit its first Ph.D. student in the fall of 2022. Outside of the major seats of learning, Chinese is taught at five other universities at different levels, and about two dozen high schools in Sweden offer classes in beginner's Chinese.<sup>123</sup>

While Göran Malmqvist continued to translate and to introduce modern Chinese literature until his death, Anna Gustafsson Chen has gradually emerged as the most productive introducer of Chinese literature into Swedish. She has moved away from canonical works of Chinese fiction and has specialized in introducing contemporary literature by authors such as Chen Ran 陳染, Han Shaogong 韓少功, Ma Jian 馬建, Mo Yan, Su Tong 蘇童, Yan Lianke 閻連科, Yu Hua 余華 and many others. Between 2005 and 2010, Pär Bergman completed a Swedish translation of Cao Xueqin's 曹雪芹 *The*

<sup>116</sup>Lars Ragvald, *Yao Wen Yuan as a Literary Critic and Theorist: The Emergence of Chinese Zhdanovism* (Stockholm: Stockholms universitet, 1978); Lars Ragvald, Wai-Ling Ragvald, and Susanna Björverud, *Norstedts kinesisk-svenska ordbok* (Stockholm: Norstedt, 2012).

<sup>117</sup>Stephen C. Angle and Marina Svensson, eds. *The Chinese Human Rights Reader: Documents and Commentary, 1900–2000* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2001); Marina Svensson, *Debating Human Rights in China: A Conceptual and Political History* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002).

<sup>118</sup>Joakim Enwall, *A Myth Become Reality: History and Development of the Miao Written Language*, 2 vols. (Stockholm: Stockholms Universitet, 1994).

<sup>119</sup>Lena Rydholm, *In Search of the Generic Identity of Ci Poetry*, 2 vols. (Stockholm: Stockholms universitet, 1998).

<sup>120</sup>Fredrik Fällman, *Salvation and Modernity: Intellectuals and Faith in Contemporary China* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2008).

<sup>121</sup>Martin Svensson, *Hermeneutica/Hermetica Serica: A Study of the Shijing and the Mao School of Confucian Hermeneutics* (Stockholm: Stockholm University, 1996).

<sup>122</sup>Elena Pollacchi, *Wang Bing's Filmmaking of the China Dream Narratives, Witnesses and Marginal Spaces* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2021).

<sup>123</sup>Hanna Sahlberg Wu, "Kinesiska som modernt skolspråk i svensk skola, *Kinesiskan flyttar in: Nytt skolspråk i Sverige* (Uppsala: Uppsala universitet, 2015), 11–21.

*Dream of Red Mansions* (*Honglou meng* 紅樓夢),<sup>124</sup> which means that the *Romance of the Three Kingdom* (*San'guo yanyi* 三國演義) is now the only one of the “Four Classic Novels” that has yet to be translated into Swedish.

### Concluding Remarks

As can be seen from the above, Sweden has produced a surprising number of Sinologists and China experts over several generations, many of whom have been able to make meaningful contributions to our knowledge of China on a global scale. One persistent pattern in Swedish Sinology is that the field has been dominated by strong and sometimes solitary individualists, who have broken ground in new fields. With the notable exception of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, they have rarely been able to create enduring institutions. Bernhard Karlgren was successful in securing private money and royal support for many of his endeavors, such as his professorship at the University of Gothenburg and his training of graduate students. Enjoying a similar mix of support from both private and public institutions, the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities functioned as a research center for a couple of decades, but Swedish Sinology was soon absorbed into the university sector, which is completely dependent on government funding and policies. Dependence on the government has meant that there are very few strong institutions outside of the government that can work as a counterweight when the whims of politicians lead to policies going astray.

In the wake of Sweden's accession to the European Union in the 1990s, the Swedish government decided to prioritize research in European affairs, which meant that public funding for Sinological research largely dried up. Similarly, the emergence of multiculturalism as a stated policy goal of the Swedish government has generated little specific and informed interest in the collections represented by the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities (MFEA). Instead, politicians have stripped the museum of most of its staff and attempted to remake the museum as part of a poorly defined “Museum of World Cultures” in an almost Orientalist mode. The first step was taken in 1998, when the Swedish Minister of Culture Marita Ulvskog endorsed plans to merge the collections the MFEA with the collections of the Mediterranean Museum and the Ethnographic Museum, and then to move them from Stockholm to a Museum of World Cultures in Gothenburg.<sup>125</sup> The proposal led to public protest and the three museums in Stockholm were allowed to keep their separate identities, while their administration was merged under the umbrella of the Museum of World Cultures. The next step was taken in 2005, when the leadership of the Museum of World Cultures decided not to staff the post of director of the MFEA, which had been vacated as a result of Magnus Fiskesjö's resignation the same year. In 2016, Minister of Culture Alice Bah-Kuhnke and Director of the Museum of World Cultures Ann Follin once more broached the idea of creating a single Museum of World Cultures.<sup>126</sup> These plans led to a lively public debate about MFEA and cultural heritage in general, in

<sup>124</sup>The translations were published by Atlantis (Stockholm) in five volumes as *Guldåldern: Drömmar om röda gemak* (2005), *Silveråldern: Drömmar om röda gemak* (2007), *Kopparåldern: Drömmar om röda gemak* (2009), *Järnåldern: Drömmar om röda gemak* (2010), and *Stenåldern: Drömmar om röda gemak* (2010).

<sup>125</sup>Organisationskommittén för ett världskulturmuseum, *Statens museer för världskultur: Slutbetänkande*. Statens Offentliga Utredningar, Vol. 125 (Stockholm: Fritzes offentliga publikationer, 1998).

<sup>126</sup>Statskontoret, *Myndighetsanalys av Statens museer för världskultur* (Stockholm: Statskontoret, 2015).

which the contributions of the author and former China correspondent Ola Wong played a prominent role.<sup>127</sup> The plans of a merger were temporarily shelved after a parliamentary committee had voiced its support to preserving the individual identities of the museum. At the time of writing, in 2022, Ann Follin has revived the plans of a merger, this time in reference to a report that pointed out deficiencies in the museum buildings.<sup>128</sup> It is difficult to understand why politicians and bureaucrats have spent so much energy over more than two decades trying to extinguish a museum that has produced so much research and generated so much good-will towards Sweden in its relationship with China.

Even though Sweden has traditionally enjoyed good relations with the People's Republic of China, the Chinese government has become an increasingly difficult partner in the promotion of Sinology. In 2005, Stockholm University was selected to host the first Confucius Institute in Europe, and the initiative spread to a few other institutions in Sweden. The institutional structure of the Confucius Institutes, which relies on funding from the Chinese Ministry of Culture, proved to be difficult to navigate in an environment that respects academic freedom. Following an intense debate spanning several years, the Confucius Institute in Stockholm was closed in 2015.

Another problem for Swedish–Chinese relations in general and Sinology in particular was presented when Gui Congyou 桂從友 assumed the post of ambassador at the Embassy of China in Stockholm in 2017. For reasons that are not entirely clear, Gui pioneered a more aggressive, “wolf warrior” posture in his relations with the Swedish government. He did not hesitate to single out journalists and academics whom he regarded as not sufficiently friendly towards China.<sup>129</sup> In December 2021, Cui Aimin 崔愛民 succeeded him to the post as ambassador and it remains to be seen whether Gui's ambassadorship is just an isolated episode in Sweden–China relations, or whether it would portend the beginning of a new era. There are signs that the Swedish government is slowly waking up to the challenges of a more powerful and prosperous China. In 2021, political scientist Björn Jerdén—one of the academics singled out by ambassador Gui—was appointed the inaugural director of the Swedish National China Centre (NKK), which will focus its research on strategic questions in Sweden's relations with China.<sup>130</sup> At about the same time, professor emeritus Torbjörn Lodén was put in charge of the Stockholm China Center, which will be concerned with questions of public policy.<sup>131</sup> As these projects are yet in their infancy, it is not clear whether they will provide sufficient institutional momentum for Swedish Sinology.

<sup>127</sup>The column that started the debate was Ola Wong, “Regeringen förvandlar museer till propagandacentraler,” *Svenska dagbladet*, September 8, 2016, [www.svd.se/regeringen-forvandlar-museer-till-propagandacentraler](http://www.svd.se/regeringen-forvandlar-museer-till-propagandacentraler).

<sup>128</sup>Ola Wong, “Dags att släppa världskulturstenen?” *Kvartal*, September 4, 2021, <https://kvartal.se/artiklar/fortfarande-en-dalig-ide-att-sla-samman-museer/>.

<sup>129</sup>Adam Taylor, “China's Ambassador to Sweden Calls Journalists Critical of Beijing Lightweight Boxers Facing a Heavyweight,” *The Washington Post (Online)*, 21 January 2021, [www.washingtonpost.com/world/2020/01/21/chinas-ambassador-sweden-calls-journalists-critical-beijing-lightweight-boxers-facing-heavy-weight/](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2020/01/21/chinas-ambassador-sweden-calls-journalists-critical-beijing-lightweight-boxers-facing-heavy-weight/).

<sup>130</sup>Johan Fresk and Christina Nygren, “Nationellt kunskapscentrum om Kina,” *FokusKina*, no. 1 (2021), 20–21.

<sup>131</sup>Johan Fresk and Christina Nygren, “Det är av stor betydelse att använda kinesiskspråkiga källor,” *Fokus Kina*, no. 1 (2021), 22–23.



One of the many challenges to Swedish Sinology is the dominance of the English language and the way it affects research and thinking about China.<sup>132</sup> The fact that so many leading Swedish authorities on China bothered to write in a minor European language means that Swedish readers have been able to read about China in their native language, which has democratized access to Sinology. Popular journals such as *FokusKina*, and the more scholarly publication *Orientaliska studier*, centered at Stockholm University, have continued to disseminate knowledge about China in the Swedish language, but it remains an open question whether Swedish Sinologists will continue to write in Swedish or switch completely to English. Such a switch may impair public access to Sinology at a time when more and more Swedes get into direct touch with China. The rich and distinct history of Swedish Sinology deserves to be maintained, and in its own tongue.

**Competing interests.** While I do know some of the people mentioned in the article and have studied under others, I do not have any competing interests as far as I am aware.

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<sup>132</sup>Pär Cassel, “Kinesiskan utmanar det svenska språket,” in *Kinesiskan flyttar in—Nytt skolspråk i Sverige*, edited by Hanna Sahlberg Wu (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 2015), 163–67.