Fredrik Thomasson, *The life of J.D. Åkerblad: Egyptian decipherment and Orientalism in revolutionary times*, Brill's Studies in Intellectual History 213 (Leiden & Boston: Brill 2013). 455 s.

Learning any language one did not grow up with is an incitement to *ressentiment*. How can it be so difficult to learn something children – the dear little lambs – can pick up seemingly without effort? This partly explains the mingled fascination and envy people have felt through the ages for individuals who possess the ability to learn any language, however difficult, and learn it well. Johan David Åkerblad (1763–1819) was one of the great linguistic prodigies of his time, and of any time. He probably learned Latin and Ancient Greek as a school boy and first took up Middle-Eastern languages at Uppsala University where he studied from 1778 to 1782. Soon after graduating he was posted to Constantinople as an interpreter for the Swedish diplomatic service where he remained with some breaks through the second half of the 1780s and into the late 1790s. While there he learned Turkish so well that he could pass for a native. His Arabic and Persian were almost as good, and over the course of his life he appears to have mastered Hebrew, Aramaic, Samaritan, Modern Greek, Albanian, Kurdish, Tatar, Syriac and Ethiopic. He was also a fluent and capable correspondent in at least eight Western European languages. Åkerblad's greatest claim to fame, however, and one of the major themes of Thomasson's study, was his contribution to the deciphering of the Rosetta Stone, a milestone on the road to an understanding of ancient Egyptian languages and writing systems.

The late Edward Said believed that the men who deciphered the ancient Middle Eastern languages and scripts were driven by a desire to assert European intellectual authority against alleged Oriental backwardness and passivity. It is as if they were saying: Only we have the Godlike ability to work out your ancient antecedents; to create your past. And we need no help from you in doing so. As such, their intellectual quests, like their unseemly habit of carrying off other nations' antiquities to the museums of Western Europe, were both supported by and served to justify European imperial expansion.

Thomasson considers Said's theories valuable but also greatly overstated, and he sees Åkerblad as a case in point. Åkerblad is represented here as an ambivalent Orientalist, who was generally skeptical of imperialist ventures. The most dramatic example of this was when he turned down a request to be an interpreter for Napoleon Bonaparte's 1798–1799 invasion of Egypt, one of the iconic events in the Saidian critique of Orientalism. But while Åkerblad refused to accompany the French to Egypt he was, of course, an important player in Western European efforts to decipher the Rosetta Stone,

the most famous piece of war booty of the Egyptian campaign. Ambivalent or not, here his achievement seems fairly secure in the judgment of posterity. Essentially he brought to bear his superior knowledge of written and spoken Coptic on the Demotic text (the second of the three languages/writing systems represented on the Stone) and managed to work out what many of the signs must have sounded like – in short to come up with the beginnings of a Demotic alphabet. This in turn influenced Jean-François Champollion (1790–1832), the man who did finally decipher the Rosetta Stone, though primarily by focusing on the hieroglyphic section of the Stone.

The Rosetta Stone decipherment was often represented at the time and since as an act of purely European genius, yet Thomasson argues that it had more in common than has generally been acknowledged with the recovery of the ancient Sanskrit scripts or the cracking of the Mayan glyphs. That is to say that, like these later decipherments, it relied heavily on information gleaned from native speakers of related or successor languages. This approach gestures back to Åkerblad. For unlike most other scholars of the ancient Middle-Eastern languages he had travelled extensively in the Ottoman Empire, including Egypt and the Levant, knew and learned from indigenous intellectuals, and spoke most of the major modern languages of that extraordinarily polyglot empire. Thomasson argues accordingly that he is best understood as a mediating figure rather than as a representative of some would-be conquering Western European power. This is not an attempt to argue away the very real sins of the some of the Orientalists, but rather to say that not all of them were cut from the same cloth. Moreover the larger linguistic enterprise was more collaborative than it is sometimes given credit for being. This is an attractive and plausible alternative both to Said's pessimism and to the triumphalist stories of uniquely European achievement against which Said was reacting.

The Rosetta Stone was only one of the many projects with which Åkerblad occupied himself during the course of his life. He did early work on Phoenician inscriptions and was the first to realize that one of the Piraeus lions was inscribed with Scandinavian runes, though at the time some wanted to claim that the markings were Etruscan. He was the earliest person to publish on ancient curse tablets, which were magical invocations having to do with love, revenge, health, etc. usually written on lead in Greek or Latin (these are a rich area of social history research to this day). He was one of the first to realize that Greek sculpture and architecture were originally brightly painted, not left as bare, bone-white marble in the way they are usually exhibited today. And he did some pioneering archaeological work on the Roman Forum, where he sought to establish archaeology – at the time scarcely distinguishable from grave-robbing – on a more ratio-

nal and scientific footing. By almost any standards this is an impressive resumé.

Åkerblad presents unusual challenges to the researcher though. Many of his personal papers were burned after his death. The correspondence known to have survived is scattered across the archives and private collections of at least nine countries, and is in at least as many languages. Thomasson, clearly an unusually accomplished linguist himself, has done a remarkable job of tracking these materials down, translating them, and fashioning them into an interesting and well-written narrative. The book is also notable for its beautifully reproduced plates and figures, which greatly enhance the reader's sense of the man's accomplishments as well as of the places where he lived and worked (a number of them are sketches by Åkerblad himself). However, Åkerblad's story remains, in some ways, incomplete. Precisely because Åkerblad apparently could and often did pass for a Turk one yearns for more insight into what he really experienced. For the truth is that Åkerblad's travel journals and other notes are unusually terse, almost, at times, cryptic; he did not go in for the colorful descriptions of exotic lands and people favored by many European travelers, and he generally avoided them in his correspondence as well. Either he chose to be extremely private about his interactions with the non-Western peoples he met, or they were too rich and complex to shoehorn into the superficial, repetitive and often objectifying conventions of the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century travel narrative.

And yet, it is clear that the Ottomans found Åkerblad's extraordinary linguistic gifts as captivating as Western Europeans did. It is reasonable to suppose, therefore, that the young Åkerblad had friendships, social connections and, presumably, learned correspondences with non-Western interlocutors across the Ottoman Empire, just as he later did in Western Europe, though conducted, of course, in a wholly different set of languages. It was the kind of man he was. Unfortunately very little evidence of this has turned up. During one of his sojourns in Constantinople there is a passing reference to Åkerblad visiting a Sufi tekke or lodge (some of these functioned much like learned academies in Western Europe). And there is a touching portrait Åkerblad made while living in Rome of his teacher of Ethiopic languages, which he inscribed, in Amharic, to "My teacher and my beloved priest, servant of the holy spirit, Giyorgis..." But the archives of the former Ottoman lands are ill-suited to researching connections of this kind for the late eighteenth century, even if one had all the languages Åkerblad did, and it would be churlish to expect Thomasson to have done more than he already has. Biography-writing, like history-writing more generally, can only ever be partial. But the fact that the details of this whole part of Åkerblad's life are

probably lost without a trace means that there will likely always be a gap in our understanding of this brilliant yet elusive man.

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Alexander Maurits, *Den vackra och erkända patriarchalismen: Den lundensiska högkyrklighetens präst- och mansideal* (Lund: Lunds universitet 2011 [har även utkommit i reviderad utgåva på Universus Academic Press 2013]). 266 s.

Den svenska högkyrkligheten anser sig numera vara en marginaliserad grupp inom Svenska kyrkan. Trots det är riktningen dock varken död eller avsomnad. Snarare förekommer ett aktivt arbete för att den åter ska bli en inflytelserik kraft att räkna med i svenskt kyrkoliv.

Tongångarna känns igen från kyrkans tidigare historia. Under 1800-talet hade den lundensiska högkyrkligheten stort inflytande på svenskt kyrkoliv, men i samband med att kyrkans självklara samhällsposition ifrågasattes av såväl arbetarrörelsen som de frikyrkliga väckelserörelserna begränsades också dess inflytande. Några av högkyrklighetens främsta företrädare, lundateologerna Anton Niklas Sundberg (1818–1900), Ebbe Gustaf Bring (1814–1884) och Wilhelm Flensburg (1819–1897) bedrev därför en diger aktivitet för att högkyrkligheten skulle fortsätta att vara en tongivande maktfaktor, både i samhället och inom kyrkan. Sundberg, Bring och Flensburg var inte bara präster och teologer, de var också under olika perioder biskopar samt redaktörer för högkyrklighetens viktiga organ *Swensk Kyrkotidning*. Således hade de tillgång till viktiga och inflytelserika arenor, på vilka de aktivt kunde arbeta för sitt syfte.

Högkyrkligheten och dess betydelse för svensk kyrkohistoria har varit föremål för tidigare studier. I avhandlingen *Den vackra och erkända patriarchalismen* tar kyrkohistorikern Alexander Maurits dock ett fräscht grepp på temat genom att anlägga ett makt- och genusteoretiskt perspektiv med syftet att synliggöra mönster och strukturer som förekom då högkyrklighetens främsta företrädare skulle manifestera sitt budskap. Avsikten med studien är enligt Maurits ”att utifrån lundateologernas tal och skrifter ge en bild av prästmannaidealet och det kristna mansidealet i Sverige under senare delen av 1800-talet samt att belysa sambandet mellan teologi och genusideologi”. Han gör det genom att studera vilken typ av kristen manlighet som Sundberg, Bring och Flensburg förespråkade och hur detta påverkades av den lutherska hushållsideologin. Studien inrymmer även kvinnornas uppgift