

DATA PAPER

Memorialisation in Norrtälje, Mariehamn and Pargas: 1881-1939

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The data, the result of an archaeological survey of more than 300 memorials dating from 1881 – 1939 in cemeteries in Norrtälje, Sweden; Mariehamn, Åland and Pargas, Finland, was collected for an MA dissertation: 'The Åland Islands Question' – A New Perspective? A comparative study of three burial grounds on Åland, in Finland and in Sweden. The dissertation explored the potential for carrying out archaeological studies of memorialisation in a Nordic context, concentrating on the twin themes of identity and nationalism with particular reference to the League of Nations 1921 Agreement on the Autonomy of Åland. The dataset, deposited with the Swedish National Data Service, comprises a database with the details of each memorial, a photograph of each memorial and of the cemeteries, and a note on methodology. Reuse potential includes the incorporation of the data into wider studies of memorialisation, utilisation for gender studies, studies of nationalism, design history and genealogy.

Keywords: 19th century, 20th century, burial ground, commemoration, grave, graveyard, memorialisation, tomb

Funding Statement: N/A

Context

The Åland Islands Question': a New Perspective? A comparative study of three burial grounds on Åland, in Finland and in Sweden, was an MA dissertation submitted by Lara Band for the degree of Master of Arts, Historical Archaeology; School of Archaeology and Ancient History; University of Leicester 2011.

Within the later historical period the Åland Islands have been part of Sweden, part of the Russian empire and, since 1921, and autonomous region of Finland. Ålandic identity has been, and still is, much debated: it has been explored from geo-political and ethnographic perspectives and via history, oral history and art but has never been discussed through the material culture of the historical period.

Archaeologically based studies of memorialisation have been used to address themes common to the rest of historical archaeology such as personal and group identity, social status and social relationships and so this was seen as an appropriate, and accessible, methodology by which to explore ideas of Ålandic identity.

Debates on Ålandic identity usually centre on the islands' position, physically and metaphorically, between Sweden and Finland. For this reason burial grounds in Mariehamn, Åland; Norrtälje, Sweden and Pargas, mainland Finland were chosen for the study. These are the main towns in their regions, all are Swedish speaking and all have strong seafaring connections. Their geographical proximity means it is likely that they had contact in the

past; by the 1960s there were regular ferry connections in both directions from Mariehamn. The period 1881-1939 was chosen to provide a suitable time frame around the League of Nations 1921 agreement on the autonomy of Åland.

Archaeological studies of memorialisation have rarely if ever been carried out in a Nordic context so, by way of the above, the dissertation also aimed to explore the potential for Nordic archaeologies of memorialisation, and through this, contribute to the archaeology of memorialisation as a whole.

Spatial Coverage

Mariehamns begravningsplats (Mariehamn's cemetery), Mariehamn, The Åland Islands, Finland

- Northern boundary: 60.110215 19.940335 +/- 5m
- Southern boundary: 60.108245 19.940640 +/- 5m
- Eastern boundary: 60.109700 19.941310 +/- 5m
- Western boundary: 60.109300 19.938475 +/- 5m

Pargas kyrkogård (Pargas churchyard), Pargas, Väståboland, Finland

- Northern boundary: 60.303480 22.305665 +/- 5m
- Southern boundary: 60.300780 22.305785 +/- 5m
- Eastern boundary: 60.301805 22.307480 +/- 5m
- Western boundary: 60.301145 22.303530 +/- 5m

Norrtälje kyrkogård (Norrtälje churchyard), Norrtälje, Stockholms län (Stockholm county), Sweden

- Northern boundary: 59.753435 18.689225 +/- 5m
- Southern boundary: 59.751035 18.689520 +/- 5m
- Eastern boundary: 59.752150 18.691755 +/- 5m
- Western boundary: 59.752585 18.687615 +/- 5m

Temporal Coverage

AD1881-AD1939

Methods

Steps

For Mariehamn and Pargas all memorials with commemorations dating from between 1881 to 1939 were recorded, though memorials with dates in this range but also with later commemorations were excluded (see Sampling strategy, below). For Norrtälje a 25% sample was recorded (see Sampling strategy, below).

For each memorial details of location, situation, size, shape, materials and inscriptions were recorded on the gravestone recording form of the Council for Scottish Archaeology [1] and a digital photograph was taken.

To date the memorials an attempt was made to identify the primary inscription by assessing qualitative details including the shape of letters, their depth and spacing [2]. If no difference in these could be found the latest date on the memorial was used, with an awareness that the memorial may not have been erected in that year.

In Norrtälje many of the memorials were not inscribed with a date. These, almost without exception, carry only one name or surname, being family graves. The parish burial register was referred to and burial date of the named individual was taken as the date for the memorial. Andréasson's chronology of grave stone types and styles in Sweden was also referred to with respect to dating memorials in Norrtälje [3].

Digital photographs were taken of each memorial. These were later arranged into decades and any memorial that appeared stylistically to be wrongly placed was reassessed, though this occurred infrequently.

Sampling Strategy Procedure

For Mariehamn and Pargas all memorials with inscriptions from 1881-1939 were recorded. Memorials which also had dates outside this period were excluded to keep the data within a manageable size for the time frame; this was also a way of excluding later memorials with back-commemorations some of which were obviously later but some much harder to define.

In Norrtälje the details of all those buried in grave plot frequently do not appear on the memorials so the cemetery staff provided a list (from the parish's own digitised version of parish burial register) of the names of people buried between 1884-1939 and their grave plot number. There were 435 grave plots listed for the date range, distributed over 14 of the cemetery's burial areas, so a 25% sample from each area was decided on (the burial areas represent the expansion of the cemetery so are roughly, though not exclusively, chronological in date). Potential memorials for recording were marked on a plan of the

cemetery, provided by cemetery staff, and then an assessment was made, discarding memorials with an inscription later than 1939 (as for Mariehamn and Pargas) or memorials with no date and names that did not match the list. Some plots were not on the list but had memorials inscribed with dates inside the date range and so were chosen as potential memorials for recording. A random 25% sample was then recorded, e.g., every other or every third memorial.

Quality Control

The unique identifying number for each memorial, i.e., the grave plot number, usually on a marker within the grave plot itself, was checked against annotated plan of the cemetery held by the parish. The inscription and description for each memorial was double checked at the end of each day of recording. When the database was finished, random checks were made comparing the original paper record with the database to ensure there were no errors.

Constraints

The re-use of grave plots, often with replacement of the memorial, is common practice in Nordic countries which makes it difficult to establish how far existing memorials represent the contemporary population. A comparison with the parish death register for Mariehamn suggests that for 1906 – 1939, the number of people recorded in this survey represents only ca. 15% who died in the same period. Likewise, in Finland pauper burials were in public graves marked with a wooden cross, these are now missing from the material record and it was only from 1933 that church law even required pauper burials to be registered [personal communication: Ben Johansson, rector/project leader for Pargas församling, November 2010].

The list of burials provided by Norrtälje cemetery staff (see Sampling strategy, above) showed few burials in the early decades though there are memorials to people who were not on the list. It is possible that the burial records are not complete, that those commemorated were buried elsewhere or that there was no body to bury. There is a steep rise in numbers of memorials from the 1920s and, especially for the earlier decades, there were graves (i.e. grave sized plots, often with an obvious depression) with a name on the list in the register, but with no memorial. This may suggest a rise in commemoration. Plots were bought in perpetuity by a family [personal communication: Jenny Nording, cemetery manager, Norrtälje Kyrkogård, November 2010] and the number of later looking 'family grave' memorials (those which bear one person's name or a surname and the words 'familjegrav') with a surname that matched the burial register, but not a first name or initials, suggests earlier memorials are often replaced.

Omitting memorials which also carried inscriptions for those who had died earlier than 1881 (Pargas only) or later than 1939 may have had some effect on the data. Given the 60 year date range of the study, trends relating to expectations for re-use of the memorial or grave plot, for the future, at the time that the memorial and inscription was chosen, may well show up within the data (e.g., the choice of a larger memorial, or double grave plot).

Likewise, while certain types of memorials and inscriptions may have survived due to re-use post 1939, it was considered that re-use would be reflecting the situation and attitudes of those re-using the memorial and as such may not have significance for why a particular memorial or inscription was chosen in the first place.

It should also be considered, however that other factors may influence the survival of particular memorials, such as whether the person commemorated was well known, or considered important, locally or even nationally.

Though Norrtälje, Mariehamn and Pargas are similar in the respects discussed above, in other ways they are quite different: by the 19th century Norrtälje was a fairly industrialised town while Pargas was predominantly rural/seafaring, though both had existed as local centres since at least the 15th century. Mariehamn, by contrast, was only established in 1861, was the first town on the Åland Islands and had a seafaring/administrative focus. Pargas churchyard was in the grounds of a church and had been in use since at least the 1600s [personal communication: Ben Johansson, rector/project leader for Pargas församling, November 2010], Mariehamn's cemetery and Norrtälje churchyard are both municipal cemeteries established in the late 19th century.

In general, it is difficult to say how representative the memorials are of the contemporary population, though the data does allow for conclusions to be drawn as to general trends. A wider study, geographically or chronologically, would help reveal or discount trends that appear within the data.

Dataset Description

Object Name

Memorialisation in Norrtälje, Mariehamn and Pargas: 1881-1939

Data Type

The data collection comprises an database with details of sizes, shapes and inscription details for 304 memorials and the commemoration details for 440 people. It also comprises photographs of each memorial and photographic overviews of the cemeteries.

Format Names and Versions

CSV, Excel, JPEG, PDF and DOC.

Creation Dates

01/02/2010 – 31/10/2010 (Field)

01/11/2010-30/11/2010 (database compilation)

Dataset Creators

N/A

Language

Dataset: English with inscription data from memorials in Swedish and Finnish. The description of the data at the repository (The Swedish National Data Service) is presented in Swedish and in English.

License

CC-BY

Repository Location

<http://doi.org/10.5878/000001>

Publication Date

26/07/2013

Reuse Potential

Studies of memorials have successfully explored questions of cultural and social identity in other parts of Europe and the Anglophone world but memorials have rarely, if ever, been approached from an archaeological perspective in a Nordic context. This data could therefore be incorporated into wider studies of memorialisation, and used in comparative studies.

It would likewise be useful for anyone researching into identity or history in the regions and periods covered especially in two respects: historiography usually considers a long standing affinity between Åland and Sweden as a fundamental part of 'Ålandic identity' though the data suggests that social relationships and practice might, in fact, have been more similar between Åland and Finland. There is also potential for the data to contribute to discussions on the attempted Russification of Finland, with respect to how those commemorated were identified by their relationship to land. Likewise the data suggests society in Norrtälje was strongly patriarchal, much more so than in Mariehamn or Pargas, which would be interesting for gender studies.

The data may have potential re-use in a number of oblique ways: as memorials are generally closely datable stylistic features, and the dataset also includes a full set of photographs, the data could be a useful reference source for architectural and design historians. The data could also be useful for genealogists or family historians.

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- Ben Johansson, rector / project leader for Pargas församling (Pargas Parish).

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3. **CSA [Council for Scottish Archaeology].** 2010. Fieldwork: How to record gravestones and graveyards. <http://www.scottishgraveyards.org.uk/recording2.shtml> [Accessed 1.10.2010]

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