

STUDIA ORIENTALIA
EDIDIT SOCIETAS ORIENTALIS FENNICA
XXIII:3

G. A. WALLIN AND THE ROYAL
GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY

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HELSINKI 1958

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British interest in exploration in the nineteenth century was strong and it was focused on the Royal Geographical Society. At this time, the Middle East was a territory of increasing significance and there was a ready appreciation of any wanderers from its interior wasteland. Moreover, enough had recently been written about the Levant to stir popular imagination. Lady Hester Stanhope's Lebanon sojourn was a romance in itself : Alexander Kinglake's *Eothen* was widely known and the scientific contributions of Emil Burckhardt were already revered. It was therefore not surprising that, on his arrival from the Near East, Georg August Wallin should have been readily received by the Royal Geographical Society and that from 1850 almost until his death he should be in intermittent communication with it. Wallin was the first Finn to lecture to the Society (April 22, 1850), the first to have his manuscripts published in the *Journal* (Vol. XX, p. 293—344; Vol. XXIV, p. 115—207; Vol. XXV, p. 260—90) and the first to be honoured by its Council with a royal prize (May 27, 1850). It is an interesting if incidental comment on the distribution of British geographical interest down to the middle of the nineteenth century that Finland should first make its mark through the Arab world and find a place in the index of the *Journal* through Wallin. It is a reflection upon the status ascribed to Wallin that the Earl of Ellesmere's address to the Society in 1854 (p. lxxxv) should observe »His native country, Finland, is one which comes little into contact with the other members of the European family;

but such men as Wallin . . . can elevate any country above the rank of a mere appendage of an empire».

The Royal Geographical Society possesses a rich but somewhat neglected archive, not the least part of which is a collection of letters extending back through five generations. The re-cataloguing of the Society's correspondence has brought to light a number of letters from Georg August Wallin, written during the last two years of his life and addressed to the Secretary, Dr. Norton Shaw. The letters are written in Swedish, a language familiar to Dr. Shaw (Vol. XXI, p. lxxiii). It is evident, however, from a letter written to Frederick Ayrton in 1851 (K. Tallqvist, p. 321—3), that Wallin wrote excellent English. From his letter to Dr. Shaw of January 13, 1851, we know that he submitted the draft of his first Arabian journey in English: he was also sometime the teacher of English in the University as well as Professor of Arabic. The tightly packed pages of his correspondence to the Society reflect the mounting frustration and disappointment which accompanied Wallin's unsuccessful negotiations for financial aid to carry him on a fourth expedition to Arabia. They may be most satisfactorily read into the context of the penultimate chapters of K. Tallqvist's *Bref och Dagboksanteckningar af G. A. Wallin* (Helsingfors, 1905).

The correspondence opens in January, 1851, with a keen anticipation of the six year journey which was taking shape in the young professor's mind — »I am longing more than ever to exchange the heavy climate of my native country and the fatiguing life which I am obliged to lead (teaching as a professor of Arabic alphabet to my young students) the goal of my existence is to be able to return to the east and principally to the Arabian desert». This object might be achieved in two different ways. First, continued Wallin, »I might return as a European traveller to examine scientifically the *terra incognita* of the Arabs and submit the results of my investigations to the academic circles of the western world and principally to the scientific societies of London». Alternately, he »might travel for (his) own pleasure and satisfaction, to seek a refuge in the wilds of the desert from the oppressive atmosphere of Europe, to find

peace and quiet from the vanities, deceits and conventional stiffness of the western peoples and thus live as a free Bedouin and at last die among the free sons of the desert». After this romantic alternative the letter parallels closely in content but in different expression that sent to the Imperial Geographical Society of Russia (April 24, 1851, K. Tallqvist, p. 323—29). Advancing years called for new standards and to return to the desert as a scientist imposed a financial burden. »I could no longer be content to measure the unknown distances on the sandy plains by the uneven steps of the camel . . . (now) I must indicate astronomically every place of consequence in the interior of the country and . . . identify all the rich geography of a land which is now an unknown quantity». The objects of his journey follow in succession. He would assess the facts »of the vast sterile plains and sand deserts which the European as well as the Oriental geographer puts on our maps with so much confident aplomb». His second objective was ethnographical, for he wished to record for posterity the Bedouin law which must »continue to exist among these patriarchal people» and which »in interest and originality would not be superseded by the old Gallic law or even those of our own Gothic ancestors». Wallin also wanted to collect »their exciting poetic literature — so rich and inexhaustible». A third objective was the historical — »to delineate the different tribes and to rack down their warlike expeditions from the past when they migrated in large numbers from the deserts and populated the surrounding fertile and more cultivated lands». Wallin approached with an almost Toynbean appreciation the challenges to and responses of the desert peoples and hoped that he might even find in the present, legacies of their movements in the past. There were »the almost imperceptible movements of our own day» to be investigated, movements »to Abyssinia, Negroland, Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia and the boundaries of the Persian Empire . . . (indeed) in Bokhara and Samarkand, Arabian colonies have been found which have still preserved the pure language of their prophet». Thus, Wallin concluded his thesis, »this poor but always naive and humane people, seem selected by nature to refresh from time to time the blood in the veins of uncultured or

already degenerate nations. On the one hand, the poverty of their soil . . . protects them from the downfall and degeneration which is always the destiny of people who live in wealth and luxury. On the other hand, want sends them from their homes to seek comfort for themselves and to invigorate others». And there was a final object which was at the same time philological. Wallin had an urge to confirm the hypothesis that the Arabs derived from two different stocks — the Germanic and the Syriac — and that it was in the middle of the Arabian peninsula that they met and partly amalgamated. Language was the key to their origins.

These ends must be sought by practical means. »For my own comfort, I do not want much», Wallin continued, »for if luxury and comfort were to my taste I should certainly not be longing to return to the desert». But a man of science must avail himself of more than native means. »If he can travel as a dervish or as a Bedouin he requires nothing, but he must then be content to remain stationery in a village or camp to await the arrival of a caravan with which he must sometimes go to the west instead of the east». On this excursion, Wallin wished to take care of all »the instruments, books and manuscripts» which he intended to carry. He required »a guide for unknown roads . . . bribes to prevail upon troublesome followers to allow me to rest at such places where it would be my interest to remain». All this required money and a hundred years ago learned societies were not much more in a position to finance extended exploration than they are today. Indeed, as Wallin rather bitterly commented, it is difficult to be offered little more than »the yearly salary of a London servant». With so little, he continued, »I should go with two empty hands into the desert and return in the same manner». This, he averred, would not do; no matter at »what sacrifice I remain here under our cold sky».

His project, eloquently expressed, obviously appealed to the Royal Geographical Society; but, although with the cooperation of the East India Society it mustered £ 200, it was clear that it could not support Wallin on its own. The joint support of his exploration by the Imperial Geographical Society of St. Petersburg was a pos-

sible alternative and, from a letter to Dr. Shaw of May 9, 1851, it is evident that Sir Roderick Murchison had already taken steps to support Wallin's approaches in that direction. When the Archduke Constantine visited Helsinki in 1851, Wallin furthered his plan by obtaining an audience. The visit was reported in a letter to Dr. Shaw, dated June 10/11. Though the archduke received him sympathetically and indeed suggested that he went under the auspices of the two societies, Wallin reported that the same sympathy could not be expected from the aristocracy, most of whom belonged to the Society. However, he continued hopefully with his geological and astronomical preparations, bought new dictionaries, contacted Arab scholars in Paris, Leipzig and Halle, and read as widely as possible. »One important thing for success,» he warned Dr. Shaw, »is not to make too much fuss and bother about the plans; for if it is known that I am proceeding under such august auspices as those of England and Russia, it is quite conceivable that I shall already in Cairo with Abbas Pasha have the honour to drink my last cup of coffee».

It is evident from a letter of August 6, 1851 that Wallin did not believe that the Russian Geographical Society was convinced of the value of his project. It had already proposed an alternate Russian journey and it was undeniable that »within Russia itself there was a greater terra incognita than anywhere else». Moreover, Wallin was tired of Russian prevarication which he believed to be »nothing else than unnecessary ostentation and jealousy of the English Society» Again, he continued, if the results of his work were published in Russian, he was more than aware that the world would have little access to them. He also sought British patronage on other and more practical grounds, for »whose protection should I have in Baghdad, Maskat and Aden, where Russia had no consuls or agents — or in Gidda and Mokha, where my journey will probably lead me?» Already, he had benefitted from British friendship in the near East and in May of 1851 was sending greetings to Major Rawlinson. Recalling earlier experiences, he was also realist enough to ask, ». . . if misfortune should beset me in the desert . . . and I should be robbed of

everything, of my instruments, and observations made on the journey and tell this to the Russian Society, will they believe me? In Russia everyone is held to be mendacious and deceitful while decency and honour are not believed in».

Side by side with the preparation of plans went the completion of the manuscripts which Wallin submitted to the Royal Geographical Society. In the autumn of 1851, Wallin wrote to Frederick Ayrton (K. Tallqvist, 321—23) to thank him for correcting the paper (with its map of Arabia) which he had presented to the Society in 1850; though the reprints had not yet reached him. On September 9, 1851, he acknowledged the receipt of twenty copies from Dr. Shaw; but he appeared to be somewhat unhappy about the substantially new form which the paper had taken in Ayrton's hands. It had been given »a new gloss» and learning which the author has not anticipated. It had not, in fact, been his intention to produce an academic dissertation — and, if it had been, he would have produced a substantially different set of footnotes. Indeed, »its learned air strikes me so much so that I know full well that Ayrton knows nothing about oriental literature», he commented on the appendices (p. 339—44). Naturally, there were spelling errors, faults in orthography and misunderstandings about the vegetational vocabulary. In brief, the appearance of the paper was not what Wallin expected — and he did not hesitate to say so!

The ferrying to and fro of papers was too insecure to leave in the hands of postal authorities, of whom Wallin declared he was not particularly trusting. Thus, we find Herr Borgström, who was going to the Great Exhibitions of 1851, entrusted with manuscripts for delivery — and, from the skerries where he was fishing and sailing, Wallin wrote to Shaw to enquire of their safe receipt (August 6, 1851). A century ago, an exchange of letters between England and Finland took a month. Professor Nordmann, a natural historian, was entrusted with the delivery of an Arabic book by Sheikh Muhammad 'Ayad which was to be shown to Arabic booksellers in London; but somehow this was also delayed in delivery (June 10, 1851). Maps of Arabia, for which he thanked a Mr. Walker, arrived by way of the Russian

consulate. Money transmissions took place through Messrs. Rew, Prescott and Co., who were agents for Consul Borgström. A class comrade, Brukspatron Tigerstedt, would be buying Georgian books for him in London. And letters of introduction were also presented. Dr. Laurell, Professor of Theology, was introduced to the Royal Geographical Society — knowing »their unwonted kindness towards northern peoples in general».

The Wallin letters to the Royal Geographical Society conclude with a commentary on the misunderstandings which arose with the Russian Society. Writing from Viipuri on January 18, 1852, on his way back from St. Petersburg, Wallin gave a final review of his plan and the breakdown of negotiations. The long letter has a succinct footnote in English, probably written by Dr. Shaw, which summarises its content. The note runs as follows — »(1) in his first letter to Imperial Russian Geographical Society had omitted to ask for £ 400 *p.a.* (2) the Imperial Geographical Society had overlooked the insertion of the words *p.a.* in the second letter (3) the Imperial Geographical Society had written in their own letter 1500 roubles instead of 500 roubles. *All mistakes*». In association with the Wallin letters, the Royal Geographical Society has three communications from the Imperial Geographical Society of Russia. The first consists of extracts from documents pointing out that Wallin had never asked for £ 400 annually; the second is an extract from the daybook of the Council for September 14, 1851; the third is a copy of a letter addressed by Wallin to St. Petersburg on December 27, 1851.

These half a dozen London letters enlarge upon the known story rather than contributing significantly new material; but they are a measure of the understanding which Wallin developed with the Royal Geographical Society in contrast to the misunderstanding which arose with the Imperial Geographical Society of St. Petersburg. Had there been no misunderstandings and had Wallin proceeded successfully on his journey, difficulties would probably have arisen, for the Crimean War was soon to disturb Anglo-Russian relations. To the British, Georg August Wallin must remain of interest because the rare spirit of communion which he established with

Arab peoples was recaptured later by one of peculiar interest to them — Lawrence of Arabia. The two men took to the desert under differing circumstances and Lawrence played a game of intrigue of the kind which Dr. Shaw feared would ensnare Wallin (cf. a letter, November 17, 1851). Clearly, however, the discords of both characters found a curious harmony in the desert and its way of life. The tangible academic contribution of Wallin is slight and it is indicative of the appreciation of the Royal Geographical Society that Dr. Shaw seized upon a long narrative for posthumous publication describing a journey from Cairo to Jerusalem (XXV, p. 260—90).

It is, however, in that intangible and mortal thing — his personality — that so much of Wallin's attraction lies. Captain W. H. Smyth, in his address to the Society in 1850 recalled »the emphatic words of Major Rawlinson», Baghdad consul who had met Wallin on the banks of the Tigris. Rawlinson described him as »having so completely mastered the idiom, enunciation and minutest peculiarities of the language of the Arabs as to be truly a Bedouin». »Looking to the qualifications of travellers for Arabian discovery,» commented Rawlinson, »there are two names and two names only which stand out in very bright relief: Burkhardt and Wallin. I see many points of resemblance between them, the same iron constitution, the same versatility, the same indomitable energy, the same imperturbable temper» (XX, p. xxxix). Wallin — unconventional, independent, even ascetic, »Bedouin-proud» (as H. G. Porthan wrote of Lapp nomads) — was the sort of person who would take up the challenge to answer the riddle of the sphinx. It is small wonder that Abdu-el-Wâli, numbered among those of his generation about whom a romantic legend arose, should find that his »fame is still green» a century after his early death.