

Hanna Rydh (1891-1964)

The Politics of Emancipation

In the life of Hanna Rydh many emancipatorical practices intersected. She was the first woman in Sweden to pass a doctoral degree in archaeology. The professional work was combined with a family life, raising three children. To this was added a broad social interest, and especially a dedication for the emancipation of women, growing to a commitment in the international women's movement.

In 1919, Hanna Rydh achieved her doctoral degree, with Oscar Montelius as a mentor. She broadened her studies with international perspectives, for example with a séjour in Paris where she was working for Henri Hubert.

Although Hanna Rydh never got a steady employment within a museum or university, she pursued various archaeological projects throughout her life.

Can a European archaeologist be so absorbed by his scientific interests, that he feels nothing but joy in meeting anacronistic poverty?

Should a Nordic feminist not be ashamed to enjoy the sun, in a country whose daughters both metaphorically and literally are placed in shadow?

*The Land of the Sun-God;
Description of Ancient and Modern
Egypt.* Stockholm 1927 (London 1929).

Through the prisme of Hanna Rydh it is possible to explore gendered dynamics between archaeology and human emancipation.

Since Hanna Rydh's school years, she was engaged in the emancipation of women, reaching the first goal in 1921 when Swedish women got the right to vote. She continued the strive as the president of Fredrika Bremer-förbundet, an influential lobbying group. At the end of the 1940's, Hanna Rydh was elected president of the International Alliance of Women.

During her life Hanna Rydh travelled a lot in South and North America, North Africa and the Middle East. In 1953 Hanna Rydh started an excavation project in Rajasthan, India. By doing this she supported the young nation in writing its own history.

It is symptomatic, that Hanna Rydh employed both men and women in the local excavation crew, and furthermore that she founded a village school for both boys and girls.