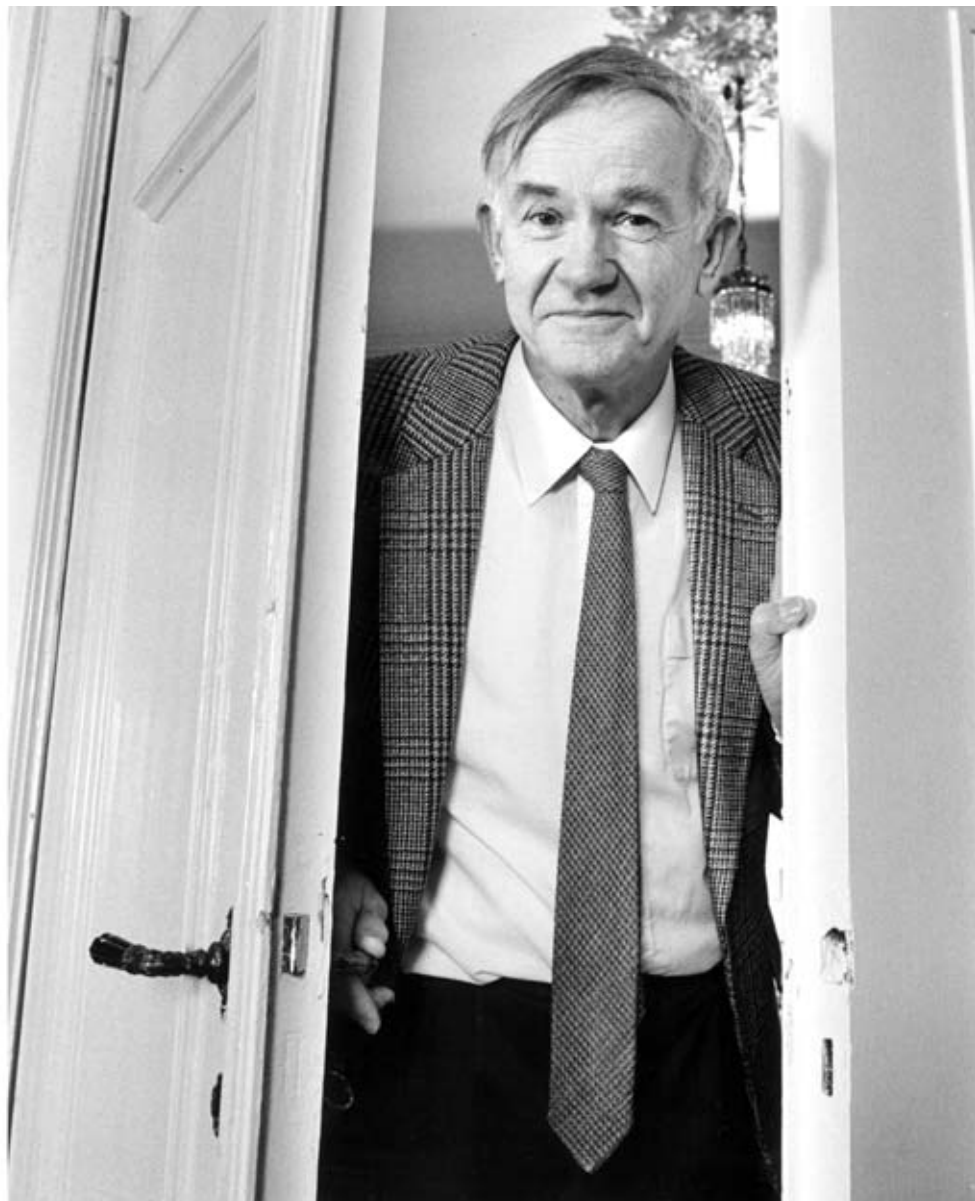


FAREWELL TO OUR GREAT AND DEAR FRIEND PAUL ÅSTRÖM¹

By Manfred Bietak



The scientific community dealing with Bronze Age Cyprus, the Aegean and the Levant has lost a great scholar. The group of researchers working on the special research programme SCIEM 2000 has lost a dear friend and supporter of this project. We can no longer ask him questions nor seek his advice any more. Paul Åström passed

away after short illness on the 4th of October 2008. He leaves his wife: the archaeologist Elisabeth, née Mossberg, with whom he worked together at *Paul Åströms förlag*, and three sons.

Paul, who was a gentle and affable person, was a dominant scholar of Aegean and Cypriot history for more than half a century. He was born on

¹ The writer of this obituary is indebted to Elisabeth Åström and Peter Fischer for corrections and addenda.

the 15th of January 1929 at Sundsvall in northern Sweden. He started his long association with the University of Lund with a dissertation which featured a comprehensive presentation of the Middle Cypriot Bronze Age based on the evaluation of pottery. With this first major study he won a prize for best dissertation at the university in 1958. Due to its serious merit and practical worth, it became one of the most important standard publications on Bronze Age in the Eastern Mediterranean. Because of its pivotal location, Cypriot pottery was widely prevalent in Egyptian, Near Eastern and Aegean contexts. In the Late Bronze Age, its range of influence spanned out into the Western Mediterranean. This gave Paul's early opus an importance far beyond the Cypriot antiquities community, going into reprint 20 years after the first edition.

Paul Åström had been a lecturer since 1957. This was soon followed by an Associate Chair at the Institute for Ancient Cultures and Civilisations at the University of Lund where he was also director of the Antiquities Museum.

Back in the late Forties, Paul Åström took part in renowned excavations at Bornholm, Gotland and, in 1950, at Labranda in Turkey until the opportunity came round for him to direct his own fieldwork – which added to his international reputation by doubling as an excavator. The most important of his digs included Kalopsidha and Ayios Iakovos on Cyprus (1959), Dendrá and Midea in Greece (intermittently between 1960 and 1997), at San Giovenale in Italy (1967–1969) and, since 1971 until shortly before his death, he had been working on the highly significant Middle-to-Late Cypriot harbour town of Hala Sultan Tekke which turned up abundant material showing far-reaching connections with the entire Aegean, Anatolia, the Levant and Egypt. Archaeometry was also one of Paul Åström's main interests, leaving him busy on prospecting and material studies.

Between 1958 and 1963, Paul Åström was Director of the Swedish Institute of Archaeology in Athens – a position which went hand-in-hand with the diplomatic post of Cultural Attaché at the Swedish Embassy at Athens. He also accepted visiting professorships at the Columbia University and at the Universities of Missouri, Copenhagen, Bergen and Edinburgh.

From 1967 till 1969 he was the Director of the Swedish Institute in Rome, ending up with the Professorship of Ancient Cultures and Civilisa-

tions at the University of Gothenburg. He held this chair with great commitment and enthusiasm until he retired with emeritus status in 1993. He had a series of excellent students who became scholars in the field in their own right. In those years he also held distinguished academic offices where his experience and expertise were in demand. He became a member of the Board (1970–1992) and Vice-President (1974–1992) of the Swedish Institute in Rome and Member (1970–1993) and Secretary (1970–1981) of the Swedish Institute in Athens. In those appointments, he did outstanding service and promoted the institutions he had once directed, helping younger colleagues on their way to distinction.

Also, at his own university, Paul Åström was entrusted with highly responsible offices. Between 1974–1979, he was Chairman of the Association of Professors and of the Humanities Association. Between 1977–1980 he was part of the Board of Gothenburg University and, between 1979–1983, he served on the Board of the Association of University Teachers. Between 1975–1980 Paul Åström was Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and, 1972–1977, he was the representative of his Swedish Majesty on the National Council for Research in Humanities.

Because of his eminent services to archaeological research, Paul Åström was awarded honorary doctorates from the Universities of Vienna (1994), of Athens (1995) and Joannina (2001). He became *Honorary Member of the Swedish-Cypriot Society* (1977) and was elected its President in 1983. He was also an honorary member of *Etaireia Kypriakon Spoudon* in Lefkosia, of the *Archaeological Society in Athens*, the *Swedish-Greek Association in Gothenburg* and the *Ancient Fingerprint Society in Stockholm*. He also was elected a Member of the *German Archaeological Institute* (1965), of the *Austrian Archaeological Institute* (1991) and the *Nathan Söderblom Society in Uppsala* (1992).

Swedish King Gustav-Adolf VI instated Paul Åström as a *Knight of the Royal Order of the Polar Star* (1973) and the Republic of Cyprus made him *Grand Commander of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Cyprus* (2005).

Paul Åström was elected to following academies: in 1973 to the *Royal Society of Arts and Sciences in Gothenburg* (the oldest Academy in Sweden), *The Royal Society of Letters in Lund*, 1975 the *Royal Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities in Stockholm* and 1998 into the *Academie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*. In 2008, a committee put him for-

ward for election as Honorary Member of the *Austrian Academy of Sciences*. It is unfortunate that he did not live to see this happen.

The scholarly works of Paul Åström are highly impressive. He produced no less than 687 publications,² including 18 monographs and more than 20 monographs as co-author. With these often leading contributions he carved himself out a lasting and prominent place in the Exploration of the Pre- and Protohistory of the Mediterranean. Over and above that, he produced as an editor of the series *Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology* an enormous output of 135 monographs on the archaeology of Cyprus, the Aegean and the Levant. Linked to this series was a Pocketbook Series he created with the eponymous title under which 175 volumes appeared. Many young scholars should be grateful for Paul Åström's efforts in publishing their dissertations. He also launched the series *Archaeology and Natural Science* and *Documenta Mundi*, besides 21 volumes with translations of classical writers. Paul Åström also wrote two books on the famous Austrian poet Rainer Maria Rilke who lived for a time in Gothenburg. He also published the *Journal of Prehistoric Religion* with 21 volumes. All of those publications are testimony to their editor's wide-ranging interests. As a springboard for all of those publications, he also founded the famous *Paul Åströms förlag* which is now being carried on thanks to the efforts of his family.

Paul Åström is closely linked by scholarly cooperation with the Austrian Academy of Sciences and University of Vienna, especially as part of the special research programme *The Synchronisation of Civilisations in the Eastern Mediterranean in the Second Millennium BC* (SCIEM 2000). He committed himself to this programme from its outset. We can

even say that, with his Symposium *High, Middle and Low? International Colloquium on Absolute Chronology* held at the University of Gothenburg 20th-22nd August 1987, he was the initiator of our joint endeavour in finding common ground for a chronology of the Ancient World in the Middle and Late Bronze Age. A second Symposium with the same title followed at Schloss Haindorf in Lower Austria in 1990, paving the way for the Special Research Programme which started in 1999 and will be ending in 2011. Paul Åström's enormous depths of knowledge and advice were indispensable for this project. A token of his closeness to our research is his Festschrift jubilee publication which was edited by Peter Fischer and published at the Austrian Archaeological Institute.³

The loss and bereavement which the international scientific community has suffered as a result of Paul Åström's demise is immense. His wisdom and experience cannot guide us and show us the way any more on tangible, specific issues, although his spirit of research and intuitive talent in creating common projects will continue to be part of our lives. By his fostering of students and young scholars as well as by his committed teaching and research, he has not finished his life's work. It still goes on. His past achievements and advice will also go on bearing academic offshoots into the future. His kind and helpful nature will continue to live in our memory.

Farewell, dear friend!

Manfred Bietak

² Bibliographies in *Opuscula Atheniensi* 20 *Paul Åström dedicata* (1994) and in PETER M. FISCHER (ed.), *Contributions to the Archaeology and History of the Bronze Age and Iron Ages*

in the Eastern Mediterranean. Studies in Honour of Paul Åström (2001).

³ See note 1.

