Anthropology in Spain and in Europe

Finland

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In Finland we deal with three different denominations for the university disciplines falling under the title of our conference, Anthropology in Europe. Originally and very generally spoken, folklorists dealt with mental folk culture in Finland, such as ways of narrating, of believing in spiritual experiences, and of habits and customs. Ethnology concerned Finnish material folk culture and life modes, whereas anthropology, i.e. cultural anthropology and social anthropology, concerned non-European cultures. In practice, and nowadays, when established structures are thoroughly changed, the borders between the three disciplines are not at all sharp. As a matter of fact, anthropology inspire both folkloristics and ethnology when it comes to theories and methods, ethnologists do not stick to material culture, and folklorists are not happy with narratives or folk belief, only. Today the three disciplines have many topics, methods and theories in common. Everyday life is a central topic for investigations in all the three disciplines.

The Finnish case of anthropology or ethnology is a matter of identity and therefore also a matter of contrasts. Language plays a great role in the formation of the discipline, as we shall see. Finland was part of Sweden until 1809, which meant that Swedish, after Latin, was the language of authorities, church and education. Nevertheless, the main language of the majority of the population was Finnish. After 1809 Finland became part of Russia, and thus there were three languages to deal with. In the beginning of the 19th century, national romantic ideas from Germany and Sweden were circulated through the only university in the Finnish part of the country, i.e. the Academy in Åbo (Turku) founded in 1640. As a consequence, more and more interest was shown towards the Finnish language and culture. In due course there was also a political process, which lasted all through the 19th century and underlined the importance of language as an identity marker. The Finnish language called much attention whereas Swedish was partly regarded as self-evident, partly not. Anyhow, at the end of the 19th century, many Swedish speaking Finns changed their language into Finnish. Certainly, there were also voices for a Russian identity, although they were never loud, compared to the opinions in favour of Finnish or Swedish. When today we analyse the study of folk culture
during this time we must not forget that both folkloristics and ethnology turned out to be bound to a specific language which contrasted to the other language or languages in the country and therefore contained a specific value.

In 1917 Finland became an independent country, and the building of the new state engaged people’s minds. From a Finland-Swedish point of view the first decades of this century were the years when several of our most important institutions for preserving the Swedish language were founded. Åbo Akademi University was re-founded in 1918. The diocese, the military brigade, several financial foundations, a political party, and a Language Law officially stating bilingualism may be given as examples, too. In the 1930s Finland was influenced by extreme right wing ideas, and consequently, there was some animosity between Finns and Finland-Swedes. The Second World War and the re-building of the country were certainly matters of effort for both parties. Today, the above mentioned institutions still exist, the Law still requires state authorities to be bilingual, both languages are taught at school and there are both Finnish and Swedish educational institutions from kindergarten to universities in the country. Both language groups lead a peaceful life together, although on the individual level there can be severe problems being a member of one of the groups (mainly the Finland-Swedish) and not receiving service in one’s own language. This is often the case in hospitals and at court. Right now, the Finnish society undergoes a change because of the general alterations in Europe, i.e., governmental institutions are given more autonomy. There are around 300.000 Swedish speaking Finns versus more than 4.5 million Finnish speakers. From the perspective of the size of the population it goes without saying that the Finnish prerequisites for financing non-governmental institutions is greater than the Finland-Swedish ones, which makes future quite distressing. This also goes for the university system.

Folkloristics seems to be the discipline that gave inspiration to the other two. Influenced by the national romanticism mentioned above, Elias Lönnrot (1802–84) in 1835 published the world famous epic of Kalevala as a result of his efforts to collect and demonstrate a genuine Finnish culture by the help of folklore. In 1831 he founded the Finnish Literature Society, the tasks of which still are “are the research and promotion of Finnish oral tradition, the Finnish language and literature” (http://www.finlit.fi/english/society/index.htm). In connection with this Society there is an immense archive for Finnish oral tradition, called Kansanrunousarkisto. Half a century later, in the 1880s, the Finland-Swedish situation had become difficult, it seemed that the Finnish folk culture was “exotisized” and more interest was given to it than to the Swedish one. In order to promote the folk culture of the latter group, a parallel to the Finnish Literature Society was founded.
in 1885. It was named the Society of Swedish Literature in Finland and it “preserves, develops and mediates the Swedish cultural heritage in Finland” (http://www.sls.fi/doc.php?category=1&language=eng). This organisation has an archive for oral tradition in Swedish collected in Finland, called Folkkultursarkivet. The first professorship for a folklorist, maybe in the entire world, was founded at the Imperial Alexander University in Helsinki in the end of the 1890s and given to Kaarle Krohn (1863–1933), whereas the Swedish parallel was established at the end of the 1920s at the re-founded Swedish university Åbo Akademi. It was given to Otto Andersson (1879–1969), an expert in folk music and folklore. The folklorists of this time made use of archive material or conducted field work both in Finland and in adjacent countries, for comparative methods were mostly used. Until the last decades of the 20th century the folklorists devoted themselves partly to Finnish mental folk culture – Finnish should be understood in a wide sense –, partly to Finland-Swedish folk culture, and this trend still remains, at least to some extent.

Ethnology became an academic discipline in the beginning of the 20th century. At that time, to some extent the chairs were connected with Finno-Ugric ethnography. In 1921, at Helsinki University U.T. Sirelius (1872–1929) was made the first professor for ethnology, more precisely Finno-Ugric ethnography. At the same time a chair for Nordic cultural history and ethnology (folklivsforskning) was founded at Åbo Akademi. The first holder was Gabriel Nikander (1884–1959). Still, like in folkloristics, it was regarded important to be able to prove a Finnish or Finland-Swedish culture in order to form an identity of one’s own. In this discipline mainly objects from the rural society were at focus. Ethnologists investigated archive material from the museums and their collections. Field expeditions were undertaken partly to other Finnic regions outside our own country, mostly in Russia. However, when the borders closed, the main objectives for research were found on the Finnish mainland, proper. In ethnology, too, comparative methods prevailed and theories connected to comparison, classification and cartography were preferred.

In comparison to both folkloristics and ethnology, the chair of social and cultural anthropology was established late in Finland. The first professor for social anthropology was Arne Runeberg (1912–1979). His chair was founded in 1970 and situated at the Faculty of Arts. The first professor for cultural anthropology since 1985 was Matti Sarmela (1937–), but his chair was placed with the Faculty of Social Sciences. In 2004 the two disciplines united as social and cultural anthropology. In practice for a long time, the relationship between ethnology and anthropology was close.
However, research on anthropological topics from the perspectives of anthropological theories and with anthropological methods descends from the middle of the 19th century. Inspired by Lönnrot in the 1840s, Matthias Alexander Castrén (1813–52) conducted several expeditions to Russia and Siberia. He was mainly interested in the Finnish language. He was a docent in Finnish and Old Norse languages at the university in Helsinki. Consequently, Finno-Ugric languages also in the rest of Russia (Finland was part of Russia then) was important to him. He described life out there and is one of our first ethnographers – or anthropologists.

For a long time anthropological topics were hidden under disciplines such as philosophy or sociology. A good example is Edvard Westermarck (1862–1939) who was connected to the university in Helsinki, to Åbo Akademi University as its first Rector, and to London School of Economics. His works on marriage and morals were much appreciated internationally. He did not continue the prevailing fascination for Finno-Ugric studies, but he conducted his most famous field work in Morocco. He, too, was a comparatist, but he also made use of his skills as a practical philosopher when he regarded the outcome of his field work and found that ethical matters are highly relative depending on the surrounding cultural prerequisites. He initiated an anthropological trend in which the anthropology of political systems and diplomacy were central issues.

Today folkloristics is taught at the universities in Helsinki, Joensuu, Jyväskylä, and Turku in Finnish and at Åbo Akademi University in Swedish. Ethnology is given at the universities of Helsinki, Jyväskylä, and Turku in Finnish and at Åbo Akademi University in Swedish. Anthropology is found at the universities in Helsinki and in Oulu. All the departments are situated at the Faculties of Arts, except for anthropology at Helsinki University, where it is put in the Faculty of Social Sciences. Generally the departments are small when it comes to teaching staff. Mostly there is only one chair, except for the departments at Helsinki University, where there are two chairs in anthropology and folkloristics, respectively. In Jyväskylä there are two chairs for ethnology but one of them is defined so that its orientation is in folklore studies. This means that the profiles of the departments are dependent on the interests of the acting professors. In Finland we do not yet have institutionalised profiles for the universities, they are painfully under production, and will perhaps also influence the profiles of the chairs. Quite clearly, however, the languages Finnish and Swedish still constitute a line along which distinction is made. Consequently, the chairs at the Finnish universities promote research among the Finnish population, and the professors at Åbo Akademi University prefer scholarly work among Swedish-speaking Finns. This, however, is not a rule, but it seems to be a well established principle, for in fact, we have hardly seen any
comparative studies about Finnish and Swedish inhabitants within Finland. Cultural and social anthropologists still tend to find their subjects in remote countries, but northern Arctic culture is of interest, too. Anthropology, ethnology and folkloristics unite in their efforts around modern western popular everyday culture and in their desire to understand and perceive their subject of research, human ways of living. Consequently, very often their theories and methods are hermeneutic. Identity is probably still a central research perspective, but instead of using identity markers such as folklore and folk culture in general for the categorisation of people, nation building or other political purposes we study the process of how identity is constructed through narratives, behaviour or cultural systems. To a great extent national identity matters were replaced by issues on personal identity.

The Bologna system of university education was applied in 2006. It was rather strictly centralised in two modules, 3 + 2 years for a candidate and magister grade, respectively. Now a doctoral module of another four years is planned. Each university department is allowed to fill the modules along their specific needs and wishes, but given the fact that students are supposed to move easily from one department to another the variations cannot be too great. Open University courses are arranged which might be of help for those who want to move from one department to another.

There is no special funding for students who wish to conduct research within anthropology, ethnology or folklore. However, two financially important societies should be mentioned: the Finnish Literature Society (Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura) and the Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland) are scholarly organizations the aim of which, among other things, is to preserve folk culture and support research on this topic. However, money must be found in competition with researchers from the fields of other disciplines. This makes the competition difficult and the quality of accepted projects very high. It is hard for people to find work, which makes them eager to try for a research scholarship hoping that a higher education would give a better result on the labour market. This, however, is not the case. In Finland we have hardly any research institutes on the field of humanistics research. Research is conducted at the universities and since the positions there are filled with people from the 1940s or 1950s, it takes quite some time before a change of generations can be realised. Our industries seldom employ people with this kind of education.

Activities beside education and regular research should also be mentioned. Since 1910 the international scholarly network Folklore Fellows in Helsinki published the series *Folklore Fellows’*
Communications. It is mainly folkloristic and comes out even today by the support from the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters. Issue 293 was published in 2007. Regularly, the Folklore Fellows also offer summer courses in folkloristics. The practical work in connection with the courses is shared between the different university departments of folklore. Studia Fennica divided into Studia Fennica Folkloristica and Studia Fennica Ethnologica are publications from the Finnish Literature Society who is one of the most important publishers of ethnological and folklore scholarship in Finland. The Swedish counterpart is The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland. Both societies are extremely vivid supporters of research on folk culture. Certainly, there has been some debate concerning the language in which the publications should come out. Of course, English is most important if one wishes to have readers abroad. On the other hand, Finns think that there is a moral obligation to publish in vernacular, too, partly because the interviewees should be able to read what the scholars have found in discussions with and fieldwork amongst then. Partly the vernacular languages are also regarded so important that there is a wish to keep them on such a level that scholarly work can be published in them also in the future.

There are also ethnological organisations. Institutet för folklivsforskning (the Institute for Folk Life Research) at Åbo Akademi University publishes Budkavlen, and Ethnos, Suomen kansatieteilijöiden yhdistys – Finlands etnologförening (the Association of Finnish Ethnologists) stands behind Ethnologia Fennica. Another association is Föreningen Brage (the Brage Association) from 1906 which nowadays publishes Laboratorium för folk och kultur. Kalevalaseura, Kalevala Society, concentrates its activities on topics in connection with the epic of Kalevala and makes them public in a yearbook. At the folklore department of the Finnish university in Turku there is an institute for Kalevala research, Kalevalainstituutti, and the Nordic Institute of Folklore had its head quarters in Turku for many years until, in the end of the 1990s, it changed into a network, Nordic Network of Folklore, lead partly at the university in Bergen, Norway, partly at the folklore department at Åbo Akademi University.

Moreover there is an anthropological association in Finland called Suomen antropologinen seura – Antropoligiska sällskapet i Finland with the journal Suomen antropologi, and the Westermarck-Society publishes a quarterly called Sosologia.

Worth mentioning are also some related disciplines that have quite much in common with the three ones described above, and they are ethnomusicology (Helsinki, Tampere, and, to some extent Åbo
Akademi University) and comparative religion (Helsinki, Turku and Åbo Akademi University), but they are not central for the topic of this conference.

The problems and apprehensions that I have with the Finnish situation concern the size of the disciplines and prevailing ideas of economic profit. I mentioned that the disciplines mostly are very small. Should we concentrate all resources to one university in order to create a critical mass big enough for international competition? Then we are at the risk of giving up quite a lot of specialised knowledge on regional topics. We have to regard the plusses and minuses of having one big entity with perhaps two, or even three, professors or several small entities with one professor each. However, one thing is granted, and that is that university mathematics does not allow for 5-6 professors of folkloristics in 5 universities to remain 5-6 professors in one single university. Especially for the academic study in Swedish in Finland such a development would be disastrous. If we want to continue academic research in our fields in Swedish on our own culture, the Swedish chairs must remain. By the way, Finnish research on the fields of our conference is already internationally accepted and estimated. There might not be much to gain from bigger units.

Another problem is the opportunities to find work for those students who leave university. A folklorist or ethnologist must be willing to work outside the frame of her or his education. The need for pure folklorists or ethnologists is limited. Therefore it is important to encourage the young people to educate themselves into a “real” profession. For instance, many of my students are librarians and they have got a special education as such. Many of the ethnologists work at museums and have an addition education in museum matters or museology. Most important, however, is to make the young persons self confident so that they are aware not only of the knowledge within their specific topic but also of all other skills that they have required during their years at the university. Therefore, our courses must train them into reflexivity, and we, as teachers, have to foster them into the kind of people needed in society.

The good thing is that there is a lot of research done, for due to the difficulties in finding a working place many students remain in the university as post graduates. The bad thing is generally that a doctor in folkloristics or ethnology is no more wanted in society than a person with a master’s degree, especially not in times of decreasing resources for humanistic research.

Anyhow, I believe in the value of understanding oneself and the Other that our disciplines offer today. Therefore I generally recommend my students to enter deeply into the fascinating world of
folkloristics, ethnology or cultural and social anthropology and, thereafter, apply their knowledge and experiences to other skills. At least they shall find that society needs a lot of improvement in many aspects, and that human relations and reciprocal understanding are complicated and that life with a cultural perspective is rich.