

The Oicotype and the Cultural Stuff of Identity

Cultural and Disciplinary Borders

in *Ethnologia Scandinavica* (c.

1973–2017)

By John Ødemark

In the science of botany ecotype is a term used to denote a hereditary plant-variety adapted to a certain milieu (seashore, mountain-land, etc.) through natural selection amongst hereditarily dissimilar entities of the same species. When then in the field of traditions a widely spread tradition, such as a tale or a legend, forms special types through isolation inside and suitability for certain culture districts, the term ecotype can also be used in the science of ethnology and folklore.

C. von Sydow (1934). "Geography and Folk-Tale Oicotypes"

The critical focus of investigation from this point of view becomes the ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses.

F. Barth (1969). "Introduction", *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*.

Introduction: Cultural Hybridity and the Return of the Oicotype

In *Cultural Hybridity*, the cultural historian Peter Burke equates the Swedish folklorist C. W. von Sydow's concept of *oicotype* with the more fashionable concept of "hybridity" associated with Edward Said and Homi Bhabha (Burke 2009:51). Folklorists who follow the debate about cultural globalization, glocalization – and hybridity, Burke asserted, "must have a sense of *déjà vu*, since we are witnessing the return of the oicotype" (ibid.:52). Although "less known today", the notion of the *oicotype* is thus "equally illuminating [...] in the study of cultural change" (ibid.). According to Burke, the insight taken from von Sydow's article on "Geography and Folk-Tale Oicotypes" – published in *Béaloideas*, the Journal of the Folklore of Ireland Society, in the 1930s – is as relevant for the study of contemporary cultural transformations as

the approaches of Bhabha and Said (von Sydow 1934; 1948). Burke thus uses key terminology from Nordic folkloristics, and what he refers to as "Sydow's paradigm", to underscore how local "variants" come to differ from "international movements", and to pinpoint the importance of "the formation of new oicotypes, the crystallization of new forms, the reconfiguration of cultures, the 'creolization' of the word" (Burke 2009:51–52, 115).

Burke's analogy between oicotype and hybridity almost stubbornly assumes the continued value of old approaches and paradigms from Nordic folklore and ethnology to new cultural context (like globalization and its concomitant cultural hybridity). In this article, I will echo Burke's approach – and attitude. I will probe the archives of *Ethnologia Scandinavica* (hereinafter: ES) assuming the continued value and relevance of past intellectual paradigms. The task assigned to me is to examine the discipline of ethnology as this has been represented in ES. Evidently, I cannot here cover the recent intellectual history of ethnology in a comprehensive manner, nor the complete intellectual output presented in the journal. Hence, I will focus upon (i) how some salient contributors have investigated cultural borders, and (ii) the inter-disciplinary relations to adjacent disciplines like anthropology and history. My method will be a close reading of a few selected texts, and I will refrain from making global assertions about the journal – or ethnology in the period. "Sydow's paradigm" will serve as my frame story. In contrast to Burke, however, I have found a clear disciplinary rupture in the articles examined. My last article (from 2017) invokes J. Butler and M. Foucault,

but unlike Burke, does not cite von Sydow or any other older ethnologist or folklorists. Hence, my metahistory (cf. White 1973) of ethnology is more tragic than Burke's romance.

There is an empirical reason internal to the history of ES behind the choice of boundaries as my topic. Two intellectual ancestors of Nordic ethnology and folklore, the Norwegian ethnologist Knut Kolsrud (1916–1989) and the Finnish folklorist Lauri Honko (1932–2002), published on borders and boundaries in the 1973 edition of ES.¹ In addition, there is an external reason: The notion of what constitute Scandinavian and broader Nordic culture has changed in the period, with migration as a key factor behind this cultural change. In the 2000 issue of ES, Barbro Klein (1938–2018) has an article called “Foreigners, Foreignness, and the Swedish Folk Life Sphere”. Here she references the “*unprecedented immigration to Sweden during the last thirty or forty years*” (Klein 2000:5, my emphasis). Has this “unprecedented” historical event changed Swedish and Nordic ethnology and folklore – or more precisely the way in which these disciplines construct cultural borders?

Firstly, I deal with the border between anthropology, history and ethnology by reading Gunnar Alsmark's review of an attempted anthropology of Norway. Next, I establish a further frame of reference, namely the devaluation of the “cultural stuff” in the anthropology of ethnicity and identity. Something similar to a paradigm shift took place in the anthropological study of cultural boundaries in 1969, with the publication of F. Barth's *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of*

Cultural Difference. In contrast to the traditional ethno-folkloric focus on “content”, cultural patterns and traits, the authors of *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* underscore the social organization of ethnic identity. Barth and his co-authors thus question the priority of the “cultural stuff” of tradition, which had been the key object of research in ethnology and folklore as these disciplines had developed from the nineteenth century with a focus on cultural traits and their dissemination. Then, I examine how two of the most salient Nordic ethnologists and folklorists, Knut Kolsrud and Lauri Honko, work out an approach to cultural boundaries in the 1973 edition of ES. Finally, I trace the theme of boundaries in later issues of ES, and with an emphasis on how new groups and multicultural contexts have been made into objects of ethnological investigation. Here the focus is on B. Klein's “Foreigners, Foreignness, and the Swedish Folk Life Sphere” (2000). This article also takes us back to my frame story, the oicotype and the question of whether “Sydow's paradigm” has survived in Nordic ethnology and folklore.

Passing the Ethnological Border Patrol – Ethnology and History against Anthropology

In 1984, the Norwegian anthropologist Arne Martin Klausen published an edited volume called *Den norske væremåten: Antropologisk søkelys på norsk kultur*. The Swedish ethnologist Gunnar Alsmark (1941–) reviewed the book for ES the following year under the title “Being Norwegian” (Alsmark 1985). *Den norske væremåten* was an early attempt by a Norwegian anthropologist to do what has been called “an-

thropology at home” (Klausen 1984; cf. Larsen 2003:194). As such, Klausen’s volume represented a crossing into a field until then mainly investigated by ethnologists and folklorists – ordinary or vernacular Norwegian culture. Alsmark’s review represents a response to this border crossing from one of the centres of Nordic ethnology, Lund.

The review section functions as a textual and disciplinary border zone where the relation to the theories and methods of neighbouring disciplines (like anthropology), and hence the identity of ethnology, is examined by reviewers serving as, we could say, a disciplinary border control (obviously sharing this function with the anonymous peer reviewers of articles). ES has regularly reviewed books from different disciplines, but mostly the reviews have been about books dealing with Nordic material. Thus, relevancy for the journal has been defined by a particular geo-cultural area. The principle behind the inclusion of work for review accordingly appears to be the identity of the subject matter, not the theory and method of cultural analysis more generally.

In the case of Alsmark’s review of *Den norske væremåten*, the ethnologist is generally critical of the transfer of an anthropological approach to the Nordic context (i.e. the favoured empirical domain of ethnology). Alsmark questions the cross-cultural approach, and its applicability to the Norwegian case, and he debunks the authors’ penchant for finding “exotic” anthropological categories (like seeing social democracy as a “totem”) in Norway (Alsmark 1985:158). The “translation problem” involved in applying anthropological categories is, Alsmark maintains, “quite larger

than what many scholars imagine” (ibid.). By calling out this translation problem, Alsmark apparently wanted to underscore the cultural difference of the Nordic countries – their cultural-historical singularity – and the cultural contexts where the analytical categories of anthropology had been devised. As we shall see below, Klein develops this assumption when she argues that knowledge of how others have been treated in the Swedish folk life sphere is necessary for understanding current attitudes to cultural diversity in contemporary Sweden.

One chapter passes Alsmark’s ethnological border control. The chapter in question is by Henrik Sinding-Larsen. Alsmark calls it “an exceedingly insightful analysis of folk music” (ibid.). In contrast to his anthropological colleagues, Sinding-Larsen does not represent what the ethnologist considers as an “ahistoricalness” that constitutes “a *serious weakness* in the [other] authors’ discussion of Norwegian behaviour” (ibid., my emphasis). Most interestingly, the antidote to such “ahistoricalness” is, Alsmark maintains, found in ethnology. Actually, the key assumption of the review is that “modern ethnological culture analysis” represents a more adequate approach than the anthropological.

The superiority of ethnology has to do with the historical dimension. Alsmark states this in the following way:

The good point, and a *distinctive* one relative to the majority of the remaining content of the volume [*Den norske væremåten*], is that Sinding-Larsen applies an *historical perspective* to his object of study. With something *resembling modern ethnological cultural analysis* he studies the cultural recharging of folk music from the days of Ole Bull in the mid-19th century to con-

temporary neo-traditionalists and their battles against American “gas-station culture” (ibid., my emphasis).

The historical approach is the hallmark of “modern ethnological culture analysis”. Alsmark further insists that:

Merely straightforwardly *describing different cultural patterns* seems a little sparse and unsatisfactory. It would have been far more interesting to ask from a *processual perspective* what it is that *gives rise to, changes and sustains a particular cultural pattern* (ibid., my emphasis).

Ethnographic description (as practised in *Den norske væremåten*), thus needs to be supplemented with a *historical analysis* of the processes behind the cultural pattern investigated: its origin, its continuity – or its alteration. The success of one anthropologist-contributor to *Den norske væremåten* in the review section of ES turns out to be explained by the fact that Sinding-Larsen lives up to criteria of excellence already defined by Alsmark as a characteristic of modern ethnology.

My aim, then, is to examine some salient contributions to ES on cultural borders. Learning from Alsmark, I will examine factors that “change and sustain” ethno-folkloric inquiry as a particular cultural and epistemological “pattern”, and hence differentiates it from other kinds of cultural inquiry (such as anthropology). To do this it is wise to keep what Alsmark sees as the constitutive relation between ethnology and history in mind, namely, what we could call the “epistemic unit” of ethnology implicit in the review:

1. Description of a cultural pattern

+

2. Historical account of the pattern in question.

To trace my (to be sure, very partial) history of the issue of boundaries in ES, however, I will need to further contrast ethnology and folklore with an external yardstick. This I will find in the work of Klausen’s Norwegian colleagues on ethnic identity.

The Cultural Stuff and the Social Organization of Identity

The authors of *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Difference* questioned the historical analysis Alsmark advocated. Barth’s approach to ethnicity and its social organization formed a part of a process of disciplinary boundary maintenance in Norwegian anthropology. What was referred to as cultural history had long been construed as “old-fashioned”, and even as the “enemy” of the exciting new social anthropology younger generations sought to establish in Norway after the Second World War (Klausen 1981; cf. Simonsen et al. 2009).²

In line with this, the authors of *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* wanted to shift attention from the “cultural stuff” – such as language, religion, customs and laws, tradition, material culture, cuisine, etc. – to the social organization of ethnic relationships (Barth 1969:11 ff; cf. Baumann 1999:58–59; Jenkins 2008). This approach also underscored the fluidity of ethnicity, which from now on appears more like a commodity than as destiny. In Barth, “common culture” is an effect of social organization, not the “cause” of group formation and group identity:

The *sharing of a common culture* is generally given central importance. In my view, much can

be gained by regarding this very important feature as *an implication or result*, rather than a primary and definitional characteristic of ethnic group organization (Barth 1969:11, my emphasis).

In *The Multicultural Riddle*, G. Baumann emphasizes this “liberation” of identity in, and through, the 1969 publication. After the focus had shifted from the “tribalist preoccupation with the ‘*cultural stuff*’ that ethnic groups may share” to the “social processes of boundary maintenance”, a new view of ethnic identity, presumably “non-tribalist”, became possible:

With the focus shifted in this way, Barth and his collaborators found the most impressive evidence, not only of ethnic boundaries being maintained *but also of individuals crossing these boundaries in systematic ways*. In Pakistan, a Pathan can become recognized as a Baluch; in Sudan a Fur can assume the ethnic identity of a Baggara [...] (Baumann 1999:59, my emphasis).

People thus have ample space to pass from one identity to another, and the cultural “stuff” that “tribalists” (and other essentialist) would see as *coextensive* with the social – so that the group would be inseparable from the cultural stuff it shared – are really more like floating signifiers that can be articulated with different forms of social organization. This approach, it has been argued, comes close to making the “cultural stuff” irrelevant:

In insisting that there is no simple equation between the seamless tapestry of cultural variation that is the human world and the discontinuities of ethnic differentiation, it prevents us from mistaking the *morphological enumeration of cultural traits* for the analysis of ethnicity. It also

reminds us that where or how any particular ethnic boundary is drawn is arbitrary, rather than self-evident or inevitable. However, this might also suggest that the “cultural stuff” out of which that differentiation is arbitrarily produced and reproduced is somehow irrelevant, which surely cannot be true. For example, a situation in which the As and the Bs are distinguished, inter alia, by languages that are mutually intelligible for most everyday purposes – as with Danish and Norwegian – would seem to differ greatly from one in which the languages involved are, as with English and Welsh, utterly different. Similarly, relations between groups of rival Christians are likely to be different – although not necessarily better – than between a Christian and Muslim group (Jenkins 2008:111, my emphasis).

The “sharing” of a “common culture” and “cultural stuff” along with “the morphological enumeration of cultural traits” had traditionally been the primary object of ethno-folkloric inquiry. Consequently, it is not surprising that the cultural stuff is not a dependent variable, but the main subject of both Kolsrud’s ethnology and Honko’s folkloristics – even four years after the publication of *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*.

Barriers, Borders and Cultural Traits in Folklore and Ethnology

There is no editorial text that frames and motivates the focus upon boundaries in the 1973 issue of ES, although boundaries is clearly the theme. The issue opens with contributions from two doyens of Nordic ethnology and folklore on the theory of cultural boundaries, and is a rare example of predominantly theoretical work in the journal. The two papers are followed by an ethnological case study of boundaries in Tornedalen: “Tornedalen – a Divided Entity” by Harald Hafner and Asko Vilkkuna.

For both Honko and Kolsrud, visual representation and the mapping of the distribution of cultural traits (farming techniques and artefacts, folk beliefs and folk tales) in geographical space is crucial. As we shall see in more detail below, this penchant for mapping also testifies to the continuing importance of diffusionism, and the map as an epistemological tool (even as late as 1973). As I will show, an idea taken from Kolsrud will mediate between the tradition barrier and the cultural boundary.

In “Tradition Barriers and Adaptation of Tradition”, Honko explicitly references Barth’s research on boundaries (Honko 1973:33). Barth has, he writes, “sharply criticized the interpretation of the traditional boundaries of *cultural traits* – *material as well as spiritual* – as ethnically significant boundaries” (ibid., my emphasis). In line with what we have already established, Honko thus underscores the move from cultural stuff to the social organization of ethnicity and identity. Honko cites this position approvingly: “A conglomeration of cultural traits does not as such represent an ethnic group” (ibid.).

Despite this turn to Barth, the Finnish folklorist will remain faithful to the cultural stuff of traditions. Honko’s approach to cultural boundaries is actually secondary to his interest in “tradition barriers”, and these are actually hindrances for the assemblages of the cultural traits Honko calls traditions (ibid.). The concept of a barrier, Honko asserts,

is used to mean *all the selection thresholds* that can be met by any and all elements of a tradition or by material which later takes the form of an element of tradition (ibid.:31, my emphasis).

The perspective is here clearly upon the cultural stuff – in the guise of “an element of tradition”. Moreover, the “selection thresholds” are thresholds met by pieces of tradition, which may or may not pass the thresholds. A case in point is the diffusion of Wellerisms from the West to Finland “through the *medium* of the Finnish-Swedish population” (ibid.:31, my emphasis). It is plain here that the centre of attention is the genre of mock proverbs or anti-proverbs³ – not the individual or social carriers of the mock proverbs. On the contrary, these people only serve as the “medium” of transmission.

As a “medium” for transmission, the ethnically and linguistically defined transporters of Wellerisms are not without ethnic identities and cultural properties and traits; they speak and/or understand both Finnish and Swedish, for instance, and thus can serve as bilingual translators of the Wellerisms. Cast in the role as the “medium” the bilingual population is, however, not the true hero of Honko’s tale. Honko himself is completely clear about his research priorities:

Since we are *more interested in the preservation of tradition* than in *the social destinies of individuals or groups*, our interpretation of the life of traditions is constructed according to that premise (ibid.:38, my emphasis).

As observed, the “selection thresholds” are thresholds met by pieces of tradition, transported by the agent of diffusion called “tradition carrier” to new places – where the offering of a new tradition (or an “element” or “piece” of tradition) may be welcomed or refused at the border. This situation, Honko maintains, “should also be consid-

ered as the point of departure for *diffusion*; an offer of material exists, but the future fate of the material is a yet unknown” (ibid.:31, my emphasis).

The idea of the oicotype is a central element in a more detailed investigation of how newly arrived material, when the “offer of material” is accepted, is further “implanted” in the target culture. Honko seeks to establish what he calls a “tradition ecology”, the roots of which he finds in “Sydow’s paradigm”, and perhaps more surprisingly, in Gunnar Granberg’s research on the biological boundaries of the dissemination of beliefs and legends (ibid.:42). Honko asserts that von Sydow himself disregarded the “tradition-ecological” implications of the concept of the ecotype, and often used the term merely to denominate a “local redaction” of a tale. In contrast to this tradition-ecology without nature, Gunnar Granberg (1906–1983), “actually draws a number of tradition-ecological conclusions”, but “does not, as far as I know, use the term oicotype” (ibid.:42). A case in point cited by Honko is how Granberg relates the dissemination and transformation of the so-called *tibast* legend to the geo-ecological boundary known as the *limes norlandicus* (ibid.). On the south side of the boundary, the tale is about a forest spirit (*skogsrået*) who presents itself as an erotically enticing woman who tempts men, and is the subject of stories in “the masculine tar-boilers’ and charcoal-burners milieu”. On the northern side, however, the spirit presents itself as an erotically enticing man – while women herding cattle to the mountain pasture tell the tale here (ibid.). In short, here natural conditions and forms of production have an impact both on the narrated events and

characters that constitute the fictive world of the tale and on the gender identity of the teller of tales.

Honko turns to Knut Kolsrud to shed light on the “offer” of new cultural stuff – across a barrier, i.e. the situation that constitutes the point of departure for *diffusion*; an offer of material exists, but the future fate of the material is as yet unknown” (cf. above). Even more intriguing, the Norwegian ethnologist is called upon to supplement Barth’s notion of cultural boundaries (which, as we know, Honko distinguishes from “tradition barriers”). Most importantly for Honko is Kolsrud’s concern with what he refers to as the “evaluative” aspect of cultural boundaries. Honko here cites an earlier paper by Kolsrud on “Diffusjon og grense” (“Diffusion and boundary”) (Kolsrud 1960). A case in point of such evaluative processing of boundaries is the identification with a form of life and agricultural practices that farmers refuse to abandon “even if purely economic calculations indicate that they should” (Honko 1973:33). Hence, the most important trait for the determination of boundaries is not the artefact or the practice in itself, Honko asserts (citing Kolsrud), but “the *boundary of valuation*” that is operative *when offers are accepted or refused*. “Kolsrud’s model of boundary structure deserves the attention of folklorists”, Honko concludes, as he also immediately adds that the cartographic approach deserves further attention in folklore. Let us also note that Kolsrud’s model potentially fuses the “cultural stuff” as translatable tradition material with the social organization of reception along a moral dimension of identification and commitment (“I/we cling to this practice even if it

goes against economic reasoning”). Moreover, as Honko also did, Kolsrud relates the issue of the cultural boundary to nature – through a quotation, and an intertextual attachment to the words of disciplinary ancestors.

In the first part of his ES article “On Cultural Boundaries as an Ethnological Problem”, Kolsrud cites the Swedish ethnologist Sigurd Erixon (1888–1968). Erixon, Kolsrud maintains, “wrote that cultural boundaries must be compromises between nature and history” (Kolsrud 1973:5). Kolsrud calls upon the textual authority of the previous generation of ethnologists to assert the agency of nature on cultural borders. “Boundary”, Kolsrud adds (in his own voice), “means a *termination* of something, in our case of a *distribution* of popular, cultural phenomena in geographical space” (ibid., my emphasis). In Kolsrud’s definition, then, “boundary” marks an *end* – a terminus – of a particular thing, a “something” defined as both “popular” and “cultural”. Hence, the boundary makes itself felt by an end, and by the *absence* of certain “popular, cultural phenomena” – on a map.

Kolsrud traces the movement of things; in this particular case, the example is the ard plough, from geographical spaces where the ard is present to places where it is absent, i.e. to its terminus as a cultural trait. To be sure, this directionality in the mapping of boundaries – moving from presence to absence – is the visual form of representation of a particular ethnological paradigm or style of reasoning, namely diffusionism. The kind of empirical and methodological mapping Kolsrud practices – and argues for – is furthermore dependent upon ethnological collection practices, which were created

to collect different kind of cultural stuff that can be formally defined and distributed in space through the kind of “morphological enumeration of cultural traits” that Barthian analysis opposed (cf. above). It is actually quite impossible to think Kolsrud and Honko’s notion of boundaries without the map of cultural traits as the epistemological instrument, and tradition archives and a system of collecting information from “the folk” as the means for producing and storing the data.

Kolsrud’s mapping of cultural boundaries, however, is not merely an index of empirically real relations, the presence and absence of cultural traits distributed in real geo-cultural space. In addition, it has a clear and explicit methodological – and even what we could call a constructivist dimension. In the ethnologist’s own wording:

The thesis is that the boundaries of distribution *must be designed* so that they provide either a *new insight* or the possibility of addressing *new questions* to the material (ibid.:6, my emphasis).

In so far as the “boundaries of distribution must be designed” in a particular way, it is evident that the normative injunction contained in Kolsrud’s “thesis” is directed to ethnologists, and refers to methodological issues. The boundaries in question here are explicitly seen as an inherent product of the ethnological research process, which sustains and furthers the research process in the sense that it can create new questions to the (same) material. The mapping of cultural boundaries, then, is both a form of presenting the data – and an ethnological heuristics for creating new insight into the distribution of morphologically and functionally cultural traits.

Kolsrud's focus on the terminus of a thing, the place where things stop being present on a map, apparently differs radically from Barth's focus upon individual agency and how people (not cultural traits but they ards or wellerisms) cross boundaries. The ability of "a Pathan [to] become recognized as a Baluch; [...] a Fur [to] assume the ethnic identity of a Baggara [...]" is also the ability to *move between the cultural stuff and morphological traits thought to characterize Pathans and Fur* (Baumann 1999:59, cf. full quotation above). Such individual passages would not be registered in the kind of mapping approach Kolsrud presents. This is so because the "cultural traits" essentially remain the same – and are used and reused in identity management in manners not predicable by the distribution of the cultural stuff in space. Nevertheless, there is also an underlying sameness in both these approaches to boundaries, since both actually assume the intersubjective description of cultural patterns from a seemingly objective, external vantage point.

The new anthropology of identity, we could say, still rest on ideas of ethnic groups produced by diffusionism. In *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, there is an unquestioned access to patterns and "cultural stuff" typically taken to characterize the Pathan, the Baggara and the Fur. If not, the description of the ethnic passage would be impossible – and meaningless. A person cannot pass from being an X to become a Y if there is no discernible traits characterizing X and Y, and if informants, the Pathan, Baggara and the Fur and others, did not actually believe (erroneously, according to Barth et al.) that there is cultural stuff that distinguishes different ethnic groups, often in a very radi-

cal way.

Cultural Diversity and Path Dependency – the Folk Culture Sphere

Barth's approach underscored the fluidity of cultural identity, and the possibilities of passing from one identity to another, using the cultural "stuff" as a resource or commodity. As noted, in "Foreigners, Foreignness, and the Swedish Folk Life Sphere", Barbro Klein speaks about the "unprecedented immigration to Sweden during the last thirty or forty years" – and relates this to how the cultural stuff organizing both institution and common sense about cultural identity restricts both passages between identities and integration (Klein 2000:5). Has the "unprecedented" historical process changed how ethnology as a "cultural pattern" construct cultural borders?

The 2017 issue of ES has an article entitled "Respecting *Swedish* Muslims" (Gunnarsson 2017, my emphasis). To be sure, this could be seen as an indication of how migration has changed the ethnological field of inquiry and perhaps even its disciplinary "pattern" (to stick to Alsmark's vocabulary). On the one hand, we observe that the field of investigation here remains restricted to Sweden – and the tension between national and religious identity – as the subtitle further underscores: "Claims of Truth Concerning National and Religious Belonging *in Sweden*" (ibid., my emphasis). A similar continuity and identity in terms of the geo-cultural research area (in Scandinavia, but mostly defined nationally and restricted to one nation) can be found in all other contributions on cultural encounters and boundaries in the journal; it is usually

about “them” coming “here”, as in Magnus Öhlander’s “Problematic Patienthood: Immigrants in Swedish Health Care” (2004).

On the other hand, however, there is clearly a discontinuity in intellectual traditions between “Respecting *Swedish Muslims*” and the ethnological tradition. The web of quotations we encountered above, and which makes up a disciplinary tradition as an intertextual conversation (as when Honko cited Kolsrud against Barth and deliberated between von Sydow and Granberg) is simply not a productive present here. However, I also noted that Burke cited “Sydow’s paradigm” in *Cultural Hybridity* to highlight how local “variants” come to differ from “international movements”, and “the formation of new oicotypes, the crystallization of new forms, the reconfiguration of cultures, the ‘creolization of the world’” (Burke 2009:51, 115). Burke thus – still, in 2009 – made “Sydow’s paradigm” a part of a cultural-historical web of intertexts – where Swedish folklorists from the past are as relevant in the context of globality and cultural hybridity as Bhabha and Said. In contrast to both Burke and Honko, there is little or no intellectual continuity between these last-mentioned articles from ES and the textual archive of ethnology. Gunnarsson, for instance, constructs his research object by citing J. Butler and M. Foucault, and defines his task as that of examining the regimes of truth in the discourse on Islam in Sweden. Hence, Foucault has both defined the object of investigation and the manner of proceeding. If, then, a discipline is defined as an intertextual web of quotations weaving the present and the past together the disciplinary thread here seems to be broken.

With an attitude similar to Burke, Klein cautions against breaks with the intellectual tradition of ethnology and folklore, even when addressing the “unprecedented”. Her claim is that “to understand the contemporary relationship between the folk cultural sphere and cultural diversity one needs *historical reflection*” (ibid.:6, my emphasis). In line with Alsmark, she is concerned with the historical processes that constitute a cultural pattern, namely the accommodation of migrant culture in the “old” sphere of “folk culture”. Klein sketches a kind of path dependency where older forms of national boundary maintenance and management of the cultural stuff attributed to the people affect current possibilities for recognizing cultural diversity. Hence, without using the term oicotype, she is concerned with the manner in which particular Swedish institutions and cultural understanding will contribute to the “crystallization of new forms” and “the reconfiguration of cultures” in Sweden. The implication seems to be that to understand this, one needs to account for national histories – and not stick to general claims about the West (or Europe), “otherness” and “orientalism”.

The relation between “cultural diversity” and what Klein calls “the folk cultural sphere” is of vital importance in such a project; it has to do with the manner in which Swedish (and wider Nordic) culture can recognize and accommodate migrant culture, how institutions devoted to national and nationalized cultural stuff can relate to “foreign” cultural stuff:

in the year 2000, the paradoxical idea that the folk arts are specific to nations or cultures, still remains more or less taken for granted within the folk life sphere (ibid.:8).

The broader issue of diffusion is left out (“The vast topic of cultural diffusion cannot be further pursued here” [ibid.]). Instead, Klein concentrates on the relation between the Swedish folk life sphere and migrant cultures, and what she claims to be the paradoxical fact that ethnocentrism “still” governs the “folk life sphere”. With the terms “folk life sphere” and “folk cultural sphere” Klein refers to

such intellectually close relatives as the folklife museums and the folklife archives, the academic fields of folkloristics and folk life research, and the movements dedicated to traditional crafts (*hemslöjd*), local history, folk dance and folk music (ibid.:5).

The sphere thus encompasses a range of diverse activities such as “to study, preserve, celebrate, present, promote, redesign or sell aspects of vernacular, expressive life forms” (ibid.). We also observe that this sphere is defined with reference to an empirical domain associated with folk culture. In a footnote it is added that the idea of “sphere” is also indebted to J. Habermas’s notion of “public sphere” or “*Öffentlichkeit*” – “a domain of social life” where opinion is formed and contested, and where “exclusionary practices” can be challenged (Klein ibid.: note 2).

Klein claims that ways of inclusion and exclusion have a history, and that this local history must be examined to tackle the current situation and the “unprecedented migration”. Therefore, exclusionary gestures such as the Swedish Handicrafts pioneer Lilli Zickerman’s location of Sami crafts “outside the boundaries” of Swedish craft should be tackled (Zickerman cited in Klein

2000:13). This is because old principles of inclusion and exclusion serve as a kind of historical palimpsest underneath present acts of exclusion and exclusion.

The “folk cultural sphere” also constitutes a boundary in the cultural sciences. Scholars in ethnology and folklore are associated with other actors in the sphere, such as museum people, and even vendors of folk art. The “folk cultural sphere” apparently constitutes a kind of “natural”, empirical domain, with a range of objects pertaining to it (let’s say, folk tales and folk costume), but also widely diverse forms of action (such as selling folk art and writing a dissertation about vernacular arts).

In Klein, then, the objects pertaining to the sphere can be nationalized and commodified, but they are not “entities” wholly constructed by discourse. Decisive for the relation to cultural diversity in the new context of immigration, is that this disciplinary boundary – serving (as in Kolsrud) as a *limit of distribution*, but here of academic engagement – separates ethnology and folklore from adjacent disciplines like anthropology and other social sciences not concerned with the “folk cultural sphere”. “[M]any ethnologists have worked to *strengthen their ties* to the social sciences and *deconstruct their links* to the folklife sphere” (ibid.:5), Klein maintains. Her contention is that this rearticulation is worrying both for the social relevancy of ethnology and folklore, *and* for the further recognition of cultural diversity in Sweden. Referring back to Alsmark’s attempt at disciplinary boundary maintenance, we could say that his attempt failed; anthropology and other social sciences have apparently swamped ethnology.

Klein's version of the "cultural stuff" bears a resemblance to Kolsrud's (material artefacts morphologically defined, like the ard) and Honko (verbal traditions morphologically defined, like Wellerisms). Klein, however, also includes a rudimentary institutional history of the "folk cultural sphere" and the institutions of this sphere, such as folk museums. Knowledge of this sphere and its institutions now emerges as vital for the understanding of new ethnic groups and new kinds of cultural diversity.

Klein is mainly concerned with the equivalents to works of art in the folk cultural sphere. One example she uses is the stonemasons from Turkey who built the Syrian orthodox Saint Afram Cathedral in Södertälje. The masons ended up using a new stone (light concrete) to be able to carve ornaments in the traditional way, using traditional technology and tools (ibid.:15). This example and Klein's argument more generally presupposes something similar to "Sydow's paradigm" and the notion of the oicotype. The idea of the national as a historically formed "target culture", which inevitably affect the attempts to understand and exhibit new cultural diversity, adds sociological depth to the concept of the oicotype.

Klein, however, also denies the founding fathers of the "folk cultural sphere" a basic insight into the cross-cultural nature of this sphere. She references the "exclusions and tacit assumptions" that conditioned "the Swedish folk cultural sphere in their relationship to foreigners and foreignness" (ibid.:6). The reason "Sydow's paradigm" appealed to Burke – in the context of cultural hybridity – was that it already was expressive of the insight that the movement

of cultural stuff between groups was the norm, not the exception. Hence, the ethno-folkloric archive may contain more openness to cultural diversity than Klein acknowledges (cf. Ødemark 2014).

Burke also observes that the notions of "oicotype" and "hybridity" have both been adapted from the natural to the human sciences. Regarding the first, he adds that

"Oicotype" or "ecotype" was originally coined by botanists to refer to a variety of plant adapted to a certain milieu by natural selection. Von Sydow borrowed the term in order to analyse changes in folktales, which he viewed as adapted to their cultural milieu (Burke 2009:51).

Burke does not delve further into the cross-disciplinary implications of this move from the natural sciences to the humanities; what, for instance, would be the cultural equivalent to "natural selection" (cf. "coined by botanists to refer to a variety of plant adapted to a certain milieu by natural selection")? Like von Sydow (as he is portrayed by Honko), Burke seems satisfied to use the concept to point to changes in an artefact or cultural trait when this is "implanted" in a new cultural context. In the age of the so-called Anthropocene, when the challenges coming from climate change necessitate thinking and writing across the divide between natural and human history, the oicotype could be an even more intriguing interdisciplinary resource from the ethno-folkloric archive.

John Ødemark
Professor
Postboks 1010 Blindern
NO-0315 Oslo
email: john.odemark@ikos.uio.no

Notes

- 1 The year H. White published *Metahistory* and C. Geertz *The Interpretation of Cultures*.
- 2 It has had a remarkable success; the book was for a long time on the list of the hundred most cited works in the social sciences (Lenka et al. 2018).
- 3 E.g. “Everyone to his own taste,” as the old lady said when she kissed the cow.”

References

- Alsmark, Gunnar 1985: Being Norwegian [Review of the book *Den norske væremåten: Antropologisk søkelys på norsk kultur*, by A. M. Klausen]. *Ethnologia Scandinavica* 15:156–158.
- Baumann, Gerd 1999: *The Multicultural Riddle: Rethinking National, Ethnic, and Religious Identities*. New York: Routledge.
- Barth, Fredrik 1969: Introduction. In *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, ed. Fredrik Barth, 9–38. Bergen and Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Burke, Peter 2009: *Cultural Hybridity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Gunnarsson, David 2017: Respecting Swedish Muslims: Claims of Truth Concerning National and Religious Belonging in Sweden. *Ethnologia Scandinavica* 47:115–136.
- Honko, Lauri 1973: Tradition Barriers and Adaptation of Tradition. *Ethnologia Scandinavica* 3:30–49.
- Jenkins, Richard P. 2008: *Rethinking Ethnicity*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Klausen, Arne Martin 1981: *Antropologiens historie*. Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag.
- Klausen, Arne Martin 1984: *Den norske væremåten: Antropologisk søkelys på norsk kultur*. Oslo: J. W. Cappelens Forlag.
- Klein, Barbro 2000: Foreigners, Foreignness, and the Swedish Folk Life Sphere. *Ethnologia Scandinavica* 30:5–23.
- Kolsrud, Knut 1960: *Kultur og diffusion*. Oslo.
- Kolsrud, Knut 1973: On Cultural Boundaries as an Ethnological Problem. *Ethnologia Scandinavica* 3:5–30.
- Larsen, Tord 2009: *Den globale samtalen: Om dialogens muligheter*. Oslo: Scandinavian Academic Press.
- Lenka, J. Budilova & Marek Jakoubek 2018: Fredrik Barth og studiet av etnisitet. *Norsk antropologisk tidsskrift* 29 (3–4):102–123.
- Ødemark, John 2014. Jørgen Moe og folkeeventyrets krysskulturelle fundament. in “*En vild endevending av al virkelighet*” – *Norsk Folkeminnesamling i hundre år*, ed. Line Esborg & Dirk Johannsen, 69–82. Oslo: Novus Forlag.
- Öhlander, Magnus 2004: “Problematic Patienthood: “Immigrants” in Swedish Health Care. *Ethnologia Scandinavica* 34:89–107.
- Simonsen, Jan Ketil & Rune Flikke 2009: Motstandskamp og fag: Et intervju med Axel Sommerfelt. *Norsk antropologisk tidsskrift* 20 (4):263–276.
- Sydow, Carl Wilhelm von 1934: Geography and Folk-Tale Ecotypes. *Béaloideas* 4 (3):344–355.
- Sydow, Carl-Otto von & Laurits Bødker 1948: *Selected Papers on Folklore*. Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger.
- White, Hayden 1973: *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-century Europe*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.