

Urgent Ethnological Tasks

IN THE INTRODUCTORY LECTURE at the first International Conference of European Ethnology at Hässelby Castle in September, 1965, I gave a survey of the present situation of our science and indicated some of the essential tasks which are of importance or are in any case arousing interest. This survey has now been printed in the first number of *Ethnologia Europaea*.

For folklife research in Sweden it is field-work that has constituted an important school for us: for here, confronted with the concrete realities, we have been able to learn from the possibilities thus opened and the limitations thus imposed. We who have devoted ourselves to field-work have therefore built upon these restrictions as decisive factors.

This implies that our research is, certainly, not specialized, but advances according to the guiding principles of "what is possible?" and "what is essential?" just now. This platform, founded or initiated by Scandinavian folklife research, is what we take our stand on, at the same time as we take into account related sciences and their results without trying to compete with them.

To concretize the projects, I here wish to present, I must build on my own experiences. In the investigations of villages, which I started in 1912, the *territory and its land-partition*, with the state of the buildings, the organization and the norms for cooperation, did, it is true, constitute the scientific basis. But at the same time the need for complementing this became increasingly evident.

For the village of Kila in Östergötland, with which I started, although the investigation could not be published until 1946¹, the program already had the following form:

1. The actual territory in its physical and demographic aspects and the historical ownership of properties.
2. Housing and buildings and home furnishing.
3. Social divisions and organization, with customs, usages and beliefs.
4. The trades and industries and everyday occupations among both peasants and agricultural labourers.
5. The changed situation of the village through the parcelling of the land, enacted by law.

It was an account of the state of affairs in the village during the modern stage (1880-1912), with a historical orientation concerning older conditions from particular points of view. In this way one got the grouping to emerge clearly, with the cooperation between the groups and certain decisive qualitative observations with regard to the character of different seasons and the ordinary working day. The first volume of Skultuna history was published in 1921 and referred to the whole parish, but it was only in 1935, when the second part was

1. Sigurd Erixon, *Kila. En östgötsk skogsby. En byundersökning 1912-13*. Stockholm-Lund, 1946.

published, that it was possible to try the above-mentioned program with respect to the rural population outside the brass industry².

The first time I refined and developed the analysis of a community with a view to the distribution in time of industries and trades was 1930, in the account I then gave of the mining village of Bråfors in Norberg parish in *Svenska Kulturbilder*³. Here was a village of another kind, above all engaged in the production of pig-iron in combination with agriculture, a combination which in central parts of Sweden goes back at least to the 14th century. This mining village abandoned mining in 1902 and now lives upon agriculture and forestry, but up to that time life in this community (which was part of a foundry team with representatives also from other villages) was regularly divided among a number of tasks which succeeded one another in accordance with a calendar rotation. The mining, with its different phases, pit mining, ore transport, charcoal burning, the home-transport of coal and wood, and of limestone, roasting of the ore, its crushing, the smelting of the ore in the foundry at the time of the spring floods and sometimes also in the autumn, the transport of the finished pig-iron at first on land and then by boat to Stockholm followed in a rhythmic tempo the greater part of the year (of course in combination with organization, the keeping of accounts, and workers' feasts at given times); but it was also combined with agriculture with its various phases, cattle-rearing, marketing, handicrafts and private life. Thanks to the fact that miners who had experienced this situation still survived and could describe it, the presentation was in the first place an account of a period at the end of the 19th century, though here, orientations referring to older conditions were given. So far only a part of the investigation has been published; the essential documentation and the development of the family groups' activities in the miners' team *remain*, but their publication is planned for the relatively near future. In this way, in sequel, I carried out more or less systematically a series of analyses of rural communities, of which the most important is *Sveden*, published in 1934⁴, while a number are just now being prepared, e.g. one on the working community in Skultuna and one which I hope to be able to carry out in the next few years, viz. that concerning Norberg parish with light thrown on mining villages, mills, and peasant villages and finally on Klövsjö church-village in Jämtland, where agriculture plays a subordinate rôle side by side with the system of mountain dairy farms, forestry and journeys to market. All of these refer to the stage immediately preceding the modern era, but they devote a depth-investigation also historically to certain essential elements. An appendix is devoted to handicrafts and the 'sloyd' activities, with due attention paid to their qualities.

2. Sigurd Erixon, *Skultuna bruks historia*. Del 1, Stockholm, 1921; Del 2, Stockholm, 1935.

3. Sigurd Erixon, En bergsmansby. *Svenska kulturbilder* (Stockholm), ser. 1, band 2 (1930), pp. 3-4, 29-66.

4. Sigurd Erixon, *Sveden. En bergsmansgård i Stora Kopparbergslagen*. Stockholm, 1934.

OTHER SWEDISH ETHNOLOGISTS have only rarely occupied themselves with problems of this kind. An exception is John Granlund, who in 1938 wrote about work and rhythm in an Öland village⁵ with this program. In the same year a group from the staff of the Nordic Museum devoted a monumental monograph to the village of Gruddbo on Sollerön⁶, and Granlund carried on afterwards with "Greksåsar's miners in foundry teams and mining teams" in the year 1945; where he specially gave an account of the men's activities in the mines⁷. In the year 1957 he then took up the combination of fishing and agriculture, which has set its stamp on Runnö village in Kalmarsund⁸.

What in this connection has been in question is the social structure in the proper sense of this term, with on the one hand emphasis on the group-division and the activities of the groups, and on the other hand the combination of different trades and occupations and the ability, through their distribution over the year, to master them, with light thrown upon the capacity developed in this way. The social anthropologists, especially in England, have in great numbers analysed the village communities in different parts of the world. However, there is no summary of this work, to show how it may be important for European ethnologists. We must here only follow our own traditions.

A Community analysis of this kind naturally implies a description of life itself, with both biological and social and cultural elements, but with the main stress on the balance between different activities and on the rôles of the groups.

In the year 1938 I presented to the International Anthropological Congress in Copenhagen and afterwards published in *Folkliv* 1938⁹ a study of the course of workaday life with its vicissitudes and different activities among the individuals during one year. This was a quantitative analysis which occasioned the sending out of detailed questionnaires and interviews with the requirement that the time-quantities should be stated in hours and minutes, but with attention paid also to given reactions and other special interests pursued. The result of this was year-types for peasants in the years of manhood, which changed according to different work-seasons in different districts and milieus. From eight to twelve seasons could be observed, characterized by the circumstance that the working days were in the main uniform. These seasons have not been taken from the calendar system, nor yet from the remains of older, traditionally formed, natural divisions of the year, though they have of course been influenced thereby, and also

5. John Granlund, *Arbete och rytm i en Ölandsby*. Svenska kulturbilder. Ny följd (Stockholm), del 11 och 12 (1938), pp. 289-328.

6. *Gruddbo på Sollerön. En byundersökning*. Stockholm, 1938.

7. John Granlund, *Greksåsars bergsmän i hyttelag och gruvlag*. Meddelanden från föreningen Örebro läns museum (Örebro), band 14 (1945), pp. 143-199.

8. John Granlund, *Runnö i Kalmarsund*. *Stranda. Stranda härads hembygdsförenings årsskrift* (Stockholm), 31-32 (1957-1958).

9. Sigurd Erixon, *Regional European Ethnology. II. Functional analysis - Time studies* *Folk-Liv* (Stockholm), vol. 2 (1938), pp. 263-294.

'attracted' to the church festivals. They keep wholly to the agrarian work and other activities and occupations which can be objectively observed among the peasants, and here they group themselves in connected series of unvarying days, unbroken except for the regulated rest and holidays. These seasons differ not only in the time-quantities allotted for the jobs performed at varying tempos throughout the year, they differ at least as much in the space required for the special activities characterizing each season as a separate unit.

However, since the change of season or time-rhythm plays such a decisive rôle, the time-quantities should where possible, if they are to characterize this rhythm properly, be specified not only for every season, but also for the year in its entirety. The calculations may be based upon the way in which the different hours of the 24-hour cycle are used. The main interest of this time-study has been the conduct of life considered as a whole, and it is rarely — and then only under the most favourable circumstances — concerned with specific jobs fixable by exact time-taking referring to the details and afterwards by the simple addition of a number. Theoretically speaking, of course, the whole sequence might be based on the careful keeping of a diary, and I did, accordingly, distribute a number of these among several of my best informants. But one cannot rest content with single accounts of this nature and with combinations of figures; they must be repeated for different years, and by different persons in different milieus.

The experiments made to date have shown that it is quite possible to proceed on these lines, so that other things being equal specified time-quantities can be obtained which enable one to represent each particular type of activity and work in its entirety as a time-percentage, both for each separate season and for the whole year. This paves the way to a characterization of a person of a certain age by the time-percentages taken by the activities he pursues. For this commune in southern Östergötland which I dealt with in detail in my article in *Folkliv* 1938 the time-quantities had been centred on the following activities, handicrafts and 'sloyd' being sorted according to their material.

1. Wood-craft. Iron-craft. Various crafts. Hunting and fishing.
2. Agricultural work. Forestry. Cattle-rearing. Business journeys and transport. Organization of the work. Walking to and from work. Communal obligations, etc.
3. Meals. Mental work. Daily amusements at home or away from home. Occasional amusements at home or away from home. Edification at home. Actual-rest.
4. Night's rest.

The method is statistical in basis, but in point of fact it can also serve as a sort of pattern or model, the real interest residing in the quality and the balance between the parts. It is therefore not necessary, except in favourable cases, to calculate the whole year in figures. One gets typical cases to emerge and must reckon with them. It is a matter of a qualitative determination of the working year in a systematic form and the variables have here a certain latitude as long

as they do not change the balance. If we refer to these as rôle-models they indicate the normal pattern of the normal representatives. This is what may then be used for purposes of comparison to discover what abortive cases and opposing forces exist. We can here, naturally, only work with compromises. A prerequisite is that the individual in question has either himself manipulated the tools indicated or else proxies and organizations emerge. The actual evaluation of the activities and the capacity requires a certain gradation, which may be indicated with some figures. Also the women must be studied in this case, as well as servants and employees.

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE INDIVIDUAL should not appear so often as a particular person, but act in combination with his family and his employees. One consequence of this is that special family investigations which show variables and forms of cooperation supplement the preceding study. As a matter of fact, these individual and family investigations supplement in a useful way the family analyses that have been previously subjected to critical examination.

In the afore-mentioned article in *Folkliv* I have also drawn attention to the necessity of stating the distances and the approximate time required for the performance of the activities and commissions of different kinds and of specifying this particularly. A comparison between a peasant who works within a limited area and another, e.g. a North Swedish individual who has a tremendous area to traverse and is on journeys during a greater part of his time, shows the necessity for this¹⁰. Sundays and festivals are not included in the cross-section here in question, as they are formed in another way and determined by other interests. The selection of representatives for these investigations is of course an important link in the work, and it calls for preliminary study and a knowledge of the milieu. In favourable circumstances and with the collaboration of initiated persons in the neighbourhood one may also to a certain extent be able to reconstruct such diagrammatic cross-sections at two or three different time-levels, applying to predecessors in the same situation and on the same farm. Through comparisons one may follow the increase of occupational specialization over a period of about 60 years, i.e. two generations¹¹.

10. I can refer to my study concerning the Laplanders, « Analysis of the Individual through Time and Function Studies », in : Harald Hvarfner (editor), *Hunting and Fishing. Nordic Symposium on Life in a Traditional Hunting and Fishing Milieu in Prehistoric Times and up to the Present Day*. Luleå, 1965. pp. 189-206.

11. The year after my article was printed in *Folk-Liv* 1938, P. A. Sorokin and Clarence Q. Berger published *Time-Budgets of Human Behavior* (Cambridge, 1939), an extensive examination of how modern man living in town used his time. These authors did not know my study. However it is of smaller interest in connection with this, partly because they use a certain number of persons (100) during a certain time (4 weeks), partly because they do not distinguish between the seasons of the year, and finally because they do not analyse these activities in an ethnological way. It is a sociological, statistical examination in our time without any historical perspectives. Further on they consider a great number of activity-categories which have no importance for us.

This type of investigation, with the main stress on a definite phase which can be controlled by questioning living persons and by existing data, with the reconstruction of one or another older phase within living memory and tradition and with the help of preserved documents and concrete evidences, may be used also for other aspects of the life and culture one is studying. I have started such an investigation regarding the state of affairs in selected homes and the changes these have undergone between three periods.

The procedure must of course be applied with a sufficient number of persons selected, for example, by the method of random sampling.

It would be interesting to be able to deal also with the economic factor in the same way, but this is scarcely possible as regards the older groups of individuals that have kept no accounts until our own days and sometimes not even then. Here one must build upon statistical models that have been constructed outside of ethnology.

On the other hand we must, for the time being, at least, abstract from the system of classification and the work-measurement that has recently begun to be applied in certain economic and social sciences and in industry.

THE SELECTION OF COMMUNITIES AND OF FAMILY GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS must of course be made after thorough preliminary investigations. Before the present epoch the communities were more or less clearly delimited. The areas of distribution for the artefacts of culture and other factors connected therewith, on the other hand, are of no interest in this connection. They must first be marked on maps and analysed in a special way.

It is not the intention here to try to investigate and give an account of as many cases as possible of communities, groups, year-cycles and so forth in order then to make statistics of them from different points of view. Instead, the selected cases must be used as study-objects to disclose different nexuses and cultural elements and serve as models for comparison. We have objectively stopped at observations and descriptive fixations of these communities, groups and rôles during a certain epoch and in a certain milieu. One can of course combine the investigations and let family groups and individuals illustrate the selected community in a certain situation in time. In the same way one can concentrate on older and younger stages, each closed in itself but intended to illustrate the mutability. A continuation of such observations within a community region is very productive if restricted to a certain period in the sequel. It is also productive to carry on the same kind of research in different tracts and countries and then make comparisons. Towns and densely populated areas are hard to survey and the analyses should here be limited to blocks of towns or parts of districts, occupational groups or other units.

In choosing a term for these analysed communities, groups and individuals I have decided, after some hesitation, on the word exponents, as they illustrate representative cases and type complexes with a certain validity and a certain balance which can only eventually imply guiding or determining factors, but are not immutable, automatically operating machines. The terms pattern or mechanical or statistical model are not applicable here. In the life which they illustrate and which nevertheless does not comprise the biological constants, one finds cultural elements in the whole of their extent and wealth.

I accept in the main A.L. Kroeber's definition of the rôle of culture¹², and that the cultural phenomena constitute the very top level of the sciences, below which level comes the society and lower still the mind or psyche, while the body represents the lowest level. However, I wish here to exchange for the term culture the term social life or human life or folklife, and reserve culture for the peculiar human alternative, which people have themselves created and which must also be studied by itself. Whether this concept of culture represents a top-phenomenon or a specialty of some other kind is another question. It is at all events the task of ethnology to watch over the nature, rôles and connections of the cultural elements and to take up an attitude to the question of their uniformity, the complexes in which they are included and their internal connections and basic character. Here, undeniably, the term "culturology" would be very suitable for this study, which does, certainly, demand independence, but at the same time always contact with the group research and sociological considerations and with the analyses of individuals. This will thus be something quite other than the culturology which has rather one-sidedly been proposed by Leslie A. White¹³. Cultures lack deterministic elements. Whereas individuals demand a certain physical minimum and a certain social well-being, their cultural pretensions may sometimes be changed into other forms which cannot be measured. The poor man may in this way nevertheless be rich.

The field is here open, accordingly, for studies and observations¹⁴.

The personal destinies occupy another position; they are perspectivistic accounts in the vertical direction, but through selection and comparisons they can be refined to general patterns and, moreover, individual accounts. They illustrate certain aspects of the changes and at the same time give real pictures from the reality which ethnology needs to a certain extent in order not to lose contact with human beings¹⁵.

For the rest, this study gives points of reference and points of departure for conclusions about the different manifestations of culture that it is not necessary here to define more closely.

12. A. L. Kroeber, *The Nature of Culture*. Chicago, 1952; especially p. 118 and ff. : « The Concept of Culture in Science ».

13. A. Leslie White, *The Science of Culture*. New York, 1949.

14. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Anthropologie structurale*. Paris, 1958.

15. Sigurd Erixon, *Folk-Life Research in Our Time*. From a Swedish point of view. *Gwerin* (Denbigh), vol. 3 (1962), pp. 275-291.