

Education in Folk Culture at Copenhagen University

IN DENMARK, ETHNOLOGY AND FOLKLORE have been looked on as two different subjects — although closely connected — during the last five decades. In 1959 an ordinary chair was erected in Material Folk-Culture, especially with respect to the northern countries and from 1960 it has been connected with a university institute of European Folk-Life Research. That is to say that in praxis to some degree the subject is taught as European Ethnology.

Instruction takes place partly in the National Museum and partly in the Institute which until now has been situated in the buildings of the 3rd department of the National Museum in Brede — a suburb of Copenhagen. From March 1968 the University has rented a separate house for the Institute close to the museum. But the lectures and seminars will still be given mostly in the lecture rooms as well as the exhibition rooms and the study rooms of the National Museum.

Until now there is only one professor in this subject, but another chair is under deliberation, and from October 1st last year a lecturer in City Culture was appointed. Besides this a great many of the staff of the National Museum have been connected with education. Last autumn six instructors lectured or had seminars on the following subjects: Danish epigraphy, the folk-culture of western Norway and the Faroe Islands, development of Danish costumes, a course in the measuring of ancient city buildings, the development of ornaments based on the Danish collections in the National Museum, and lectures on the preparation and storing of food through the 17th to 19th century especially in Denmark. This education is intended only for students who prepare themselves for masters' degrees. For those who wish to study folk-culture as a subsidiary subject, e.g. to history, a special course is arranged, and in an eighth course the students are taught to characterize different subjects kept in cultural museums in the period 1500-1900. The professor will lecture on European Agriculture from the Middle-Ages up to our time and give theoretical and methodological lectures and instructions.

Moreover the head of the National Museum's 3rd dept., Holger Rasmussen, regularly gives lectures on museum history and instruction in practical museology, and the head of the Open Air Museum, Peter Michelsen, will every second year give lectures and practical advice on Open Air Museums especially in Europe.

All students are obliged to attend special courses on historical methods and the criticism of historical sources. In this subject they share instruction with students of history. And even if they are not requested to pass the final examination, they are obliged to solve written questions from time to time during this course.

I am convinced that this critical training is of fundamental value for the students' attitude towards their own subject, not only in respect of written sources but especially in analyses of material sources in museums. Such material can be of heterogenous origin and may have been restored and supplemented at different times. Also the critically trained mind may be a help for students when reading text books of auxiliary branches. Such books may in some cases have been based upon material of different origin and collected without true criticism. It is important to teach our students of ethnology that conclusions will be just as unsafe as the material upon which they build, even if they happen to be well written by using the finest scientific terms and the material has been logically treated.

The students of material folk culture in Copenhagen have also to attend a course in dialect-reading, and lectures on folklore, ethnography and archaeology. And they must learn the principles of archaeological field-work in practice. Also they have to learn the practice of ethnological field-work. It is customary for them to take part in the activities of the National Museum's Ethnological Research Centre (NEU) for some time, and some of them have made imitative experiments in The Historical and Archaeological Experiment Centre at Lejre.

Since long ago the peasants' culture has been the central interest of Northern Ethnology. However, in the last two decades urban culture has turned out to be a rich field for studies. This is also true in Denmark. Last year 24 of the students of material folk culture wrote a book under the direction of Poul Strømstad (from October 1967 Lecturer in Urban folk

culture at the University of Copenhagen). The subject was a quarter in the city of Copenhagen. It was based on research on 25 houses which had been built after the great fire in the early 18th century. Therefore the title of the book is *Ildebrands-huse* (Houses after the Fire). The students made plans of the rooms and inventories, interviewed the inhabitants, photographed all the exteriors and interiors — even in kitchens and on staircases — and studied all relevant written sources in order to state what had been altered during the last 250 years. This year another group has penetrated another quarter of the ancient part of the city, and other students are occupied in the provincial towns of Roskilde and Køge.

The students of the Philosophical Faculty at Copenhagen University may divide themselves into two main directions of study: Cand. mag. or Mag. art. The first intend to be teachers in Gymnasiums, the latter are especially trained in a scientific direction in one subject. But recently a third group has been introduced which can combine a subject from the first study — e.g. history — with one which is not taught in Gymnasiums — e.g. material folk culture — and they get the title Cand. art. Normally the study will take 6-7 years in all. If a person should wish to qualify himself for a professorship in a subject, he later on prepares a thesis which must be printed and defended for the Dr. Phil. degrees. And it is not expected that he will discuss his subject with his former professors beforehand. There are about 20,000 students at the University, about 40 % being registered under the philosophical faculty (Ethnography is under the faculty of sciences and mathematics). About 90 are studying material folk culture, c. 60 for the Mag. art. degree and c. 30 for the Cand. art. degree.

The students for master's degrees have to write a paper after the first two years in order to prove who is capable of scientific work, and who is more fitted for the lower course, or eventually who should not study at all. After about six or seven years' studies candidates for the master's degree pass the final written and oral examinations. Before they finish, they have also to write a rather extensive paper on a special subject, different for all. I think the titles of the first 10 of these papers may give an idea of the character of the education which is given at the University of Copenhagen. And at the same time I shall mention what appointments the authors of these theses now hold:

1. Folk embroideries in the Hedebo district in East Zealand. Hanne Frøsig, now keeper at the National Museum's 3rd dept. (textiles and costumes).
2. Derision-Dolls used in connection with harvesting in Denmark. Svend Nielsen, now head of the Danish Agricultural Museum at Lyngby.
3. Tradition-Dominants in Danish Folk-Arts shown on the basis of carvings and paintings of Mangle-Boards. Hanne Poulsen, now university stipendiat at the Institute of European Folk-Life Research.
4. The development and distribution of binding or sewing of thatched roofs in Denmark with respect to northern Germany and Skåne. Alan Hjorth Rasmussen, now head of the Danish Museum of Fishery in Esbjerg.
5. The spoked wheel through the ages based on studies in wheel-wrights' shop. Torben Witt, now keeper of the provincial museum at Køge, Zealand.
6. The Bognes-experiment. A report on an imitative experiment concerning prehistoric farm-buildings, their construction and what might be concluded from a hurnt-down site practically and theoretically. Hans Ole Hansen, now director of the historical and archaeological experimental centre in Lejre, Denmark.
7. Books of testimonial as a source illustrating the maidservant's conditions in Denmark c. 1600-1920. Lilli Friis. She has no fixed post, but is working partly in the National Museum's education departement, partly as an instructor at the university and partly as television adviser.
8. The art and tradition of the garment used by chimney-sweepers in Denmark. Ulia Thyrring, now keeper of the provincial museum at Herning, Jutland.

9. A report on half-timbered farm houses in north-west Zealand, their origin in the late Middle-Ages and their connection with scarved timber constructions in the cities both in Skåne and in Germany (based on c. 1000 field observations). Grith Lerche, now assistant at the Royal Danish Academy's Commission for Research on Agricultural Implements and Field Structures and The International Secretariat for Research on the History of Agricultural Implements.

10. Doors and doorways in Copenhagen houses from the Baroque to the Classicistic period. Finn Grandt-Nielsen, now keeper at the provincial museum at Odense, Funen.

From this practical information I think one may get an impression of the way in which students are educated at the Copenhagen University and the aims we have for their future work in museums and other institutions.

However, it must be stressed that of the nearly 60 current students for the master's degree, not all can hope to become museum-keepers. Therefore we try to give them a wide cultural background so that they can be used in the free cultural education which has such brilliant traditions in Denmark ever since the time of Grundtvig and the foundation of the first Folk High Schools about 1850. One of my colleagues, the former professor in Århus, Troels Fink, recently mentioned to me that there will be a great demand for people who combine a thorough scientific education with wide cultural aspects and interests. And I suggested this already in the late 50's when the National Museum bought the old factory in Brede, now the seat of its 3rd department. We try to give the students a highly differentiated education and to call upon their self-activity. They may be used not only in museums and university institutes but also as instructors in the education of designers, schools of interior architecture, Folk High Schools, Senior Schools, Seminaries for School Teachers, Extra Mural Education and so on — not to forget television education and the radio.

In the future when people's working hours will be very much shortened, the importance and demands of cultural education will grow very much. In Denmark there are already chairs in sociology and cultural sociology; therefore we need not educate our students at the Institute of European Folk-Life Research too much in the sociological direction. The competition between different schools of sociologists is great enough, but to teach people the art of making observations on material objects may be of great importance in the future because of the predominance of audiovisual means in education. People need to have something in their hands and to learn self-activity by experiments on a cultural basis.

In Lejre we have founded an experimental centre which has acquired a wide educational reputation besides its scientific aims. I am convinced that a rich field of research as well as of educational activity is ahead of our students — if we educate them especially in the development of material culture.

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