



Swedish anthropology in the rear view mirror: Before 1960

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ABSTRACT: This article offers a critical overview of Swedish anthropology as it was prior to 1960, mostly under the label “general and comparative ethnography,” together with some comments on relevant parts of the surrounding academic landscape, and on popular writings about distant peoples and countries. Major scholars are identified, and certain more important publications are briefly discussed. There is a certain emphasis on the weakness of contacts within and between academic centers. Some particular challenges for further research are noted.

Keywords: academic departments, colonialism, geopolitics, discipline structures, field research, travel writing, museum collections

Introduction

At various times over the past 40 years or so, I have commented on Swedish anthropology as I have seen it up close.¹ In the meantime, there has been a growing interest among anthropologists in many countries in the history of anthropology, including earlier periods.² A large part of it has been a matter of sheer intellectual curiosity. At times, it has also led to debates and conflicts within the community.

However, I have not really come across any attempts to offer an overall view of the slightly more distant past of Swedish anthropology – this has apparently not been urgent anthropology. What I will try to offer here is at least a taste. I do not claim to have dug deep into primary sources: beyond what I consider my personal knowledge and what has accumulated on my own shelves, I have been satisfied with materials readily available through *Wikipedia* and other openings on the Internet. A more thorough early history of Swedish anthropology, I would consequently insist, is a scholarly task yet to be undertaken.

It is a task which would require a knowledge of Swedish. More scholarly texts may often have been in English, German or Spanish – it was recognised early on that the national language was not one in which one would successfully reach out to a wider international community. But there were also writings, which might by now qualify as “public anthropology”: in large part travel writings, which at times reveal more personal stances toward Otherness, and how to relate to existing public opinion at home. The translations below from Swedish are mine.

¹ See Hannerz (1982a, 1982b, 1984, 1985, 2018a, 2018b).

² The History of Anthropology Network (HOAN) of the European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA) has been particularly active in this.

Presumably here many of my readers will be Swedish, anthropologists or non-anthropologists. I would expect, however, that some will be from elsewhere. Therefore, I will mention some Swedish circumstances that will not be so familiar to them, although they are to Swedish readers.

Entering the Department of General and Comparative Ethnography at Stockholm University in 1961 and spending much time there as a participant observer thereafter, I had an early glimpse in the rear view mirror of what my peers and I were moving away from – types of scholarly knowledge and academic practice which did not appeal much to us, and which we may even have looked at with some disdain. Here however, starting out even earlier, somehow combining the rear view mirror with binoculars, we may remind ourselves of certain historical circumstances.

Back in the 18th century, Carl Linnaeus gave the species *Homo sapiens* its name, and he identified a number of varieties. He also sent a number of students on journeys to distant parts of the world. But there are hardly any direct connections between him, or them, and later Swedish anthropology. Someone may want to have a look at a Linnaean prehistory of Swedish anthropology, but I will not take that on here.

Secondly, there was never much of a Swedish overseas empire. In North America of the 17th century, there was a New Sweden in and around Delaware. The rather few settlers engaged in trading relationships with the locals, apparently to mutual satisfaction. This lasted between 1638 and 1655. Only a little later, for just over a decade, a Swedish trading company had one of the several European fortresses on the Gold Coast, in West Africa, before the Danes took it over. Then for a longer period, between 1784 and 1878, the Caribbean island of St. Barthelemy was a Swedish colony, before it was turned over to France. The capital is still named Gustavia, after King Gustav III. The West African and Caribbean enterprises surely involved slave trade and slavery. However, on the whole Sweden seems to have outsourced much on-site colonial work to others, and whatever else was on the minds of those few native Swedes spending time in these colonies, they definitely do not seem to have had practice of ethnography as a priority.³

As a result of the above, there may not seem to be much of a Swedish anthropology to decolonise. Yet globally Sweden was obviously part of the West as contrasting with the East, and of the North as contrasting with the South, even if it remained a rather minor and marginal part. And with the development of the discipline over time, one might find colonial attitudes absorbed by a Swedish scholar spending time in someone else's colony, or simply reading the work of British, French, Dutch, Belgian or American colleagues who would have had more of such baggage to carry. Here may be a task for some critical scrutiny.

On the whole, the Swedish situation seems to have been paralleled in neighbouring Scandinavian situations. True, Denmark has had somewhat more of a colonial history. Greenland, out there in the North Atlantic, continues to have some sort of linkage to Denmark, and studies of the Inuit ('Eskimos') have remained a Danish concern, variously organised, over the years. In the Caribbean, Denmark only turned over its Virgin Islands to the United States in 1917 – but there is no sign that this more durable colonial connection left any real traces in anthropological research. On the whole, one can hardly argue that any

³ A recent historical monograph on St. Barthelemy in its Swedish period shows that the Swedish residents on the island were largely civil servants, with the rest of the population as a rather typical Caribbean mixture (Thomasson 2022). By now, in the 21st century, St. Barthelemy is an expensive tourist site.

of this has made Danish anthropology much of something to be decolonised either.⁴

As far as the heartlands of Sweden are concerned, while there are and have been regional variations, the country has been seen largely as culturally homogeneous. The exceptions, in the past, were the Sami people in the far North, scattered Roma and Traveller groupings, and rather later Jewish immigrants in certain urban communities.

At this point we should also be aware of the division of labour between what emerged as scholarly disciplines. Early enough, Sweden had drawn the distinction between those two disciplines which have had separate existences in much of Central and Northern Europe, and which it is convenient to identify by their German names, *Volkskunde* and *Völkerkunde*. The former could be seen as a scholarly wing of cultural nationalism, focusing on possibly vanishing rural traditions, not just “folklore” (as it is sometimes translated into English) in a narrow sense but building styles and artifacts as well. The early Swedish name of the discipline tended to be *folklivsforskning*, “folk life research.” Apart from ordinary museums, storing and exhibiting collections, the discipline was marked in Sweden by the first open-air museums, “Skansen” in Stockholm and “Kulturen” in Lund.

As far as the minority populations were concerned, whatever limited research existed involving the Roma and Traveller populations, it tended to find its home in folk life research; any study of Jewish people likewise.⁵ The study of the Sami was perhaps rather more shared between the two disciplines, as the Sami were understood as more exotic. It would matter here that the focus was on the reindeer-herding Sami, more than on those Sami found in other livelihoods.

In Sweden, the *Völkerkunde* discipline, for a long time mostly known as “ethnography,” or more fully “general and comparative ethnography” (before it would eventually become either social anthropology or cultural anthropology), which I am mostly concerned with here, took longer to reach the two oldest universities – that in Uppsala, started in 1477 (although inactive in one rather lengthy early period) and that in Lund, started in 1666 (as part of the Swedification of the province of Scania, taken over from Denmark by war). Instead, it appeared first in the institutions of higher education in the two largest cities, Stockholm and Gothenburg. These, namely Stockholms Högskola and Göteborgs Högskola – “university college” may be an approximate translation for “högskola” – were started in 1878 and 1891 respectively as local initiatives, but were not granted the formal status of universities until the mid-20th century, when they were fully taken over by the state, and names changed to “Universities.” And for a long time, ethnography was not primarily based so much at these academic institutions as at local museum collections.⁶ Both Stockholm and Gothenburg had major harbours, where ships would arrive (in times when there was yet little if any air traffic). And so, what both single travellers and organised expeditions would

⁴ Ole Höiris (1986) offers a comprehensive critical study of the history of Danish anthropology between 1860 and 1960. For a historical-anthropological study of slave-master relationships in the Danish Virgin Islands, see Olwig (1985).

⁵ Two books may be mentioned here although they are not strictly speaking from our pre-1960s period. The folklorist Carl-Herman Tillhagen (1965), with a book on the Roma, was also the specialist on this minority (“Zigenare”) to whom the government would repeatedly appeal. The most notable study of a Jewish immigrant community that I can think of is that describing a poor, late-19th, early 20th century neighbourhood in Lund, with many Jewish newcomers (Ek 1982).

⁶ In Copenhagen, as in Oslo, the discipline of ethnography also remained more strongly linked to museums than to universities until the mid-20th century.

bring back as objects of natural history or as artifacts, would arrive and end up here.

Thus, between 1883 and 1885, the frigate *Vanadis* of the Swedish navy undertook a journey around the world, by way of Rio de Janeiro, Honolulu, Shanghai, Singapore, Calcutta and other places. On board was Hjalmar Stolpe, who had already established his reputation as an archaeologist, digging at Birka, a Bronze Age settlement on an island in Lake Mälaren, not very far from what would later become Stockholm. With *Vanadis*, he brought collections which would become the beginnings of an ethnographic museum in Stockholm (although at first based at the local museum of natural history). As the 20th century began, he was its curator, also titled professor. But he died soon after, in 1905.

Slightly earlier, another ship and another major figure, find their way into our picture. Born in 1865, Sven Hedin was a 15-year-old, watching the harbour traffic, standing on a hillside looking down as the ship *Vega*, under the command of Adolf Erik Nordenskiöld, returned to the Stockholm harbour, to be celebrated, after having been the first ship to come through the Northeast Passage, between Siberia and the Arctic. (*Vega Day* is still celebrated in April every year by the Swedish Society for Anthropology and Geography.⁷) That particular experience made the young Sven decide that his life would be one of travel – as it turned out, mostly in Central Asia.

In academic terms, Hedin was primarily a geographer, but above all an explorer. Indeed, that mobile life was already underway when Hedin spent some time in Germany studying geography – and as it appears, received his doctoral degree at age 27, with a dissertation of all of 28 pages, based on a day and a half of observations on Mount Donavand, in Iran. He was encouraged to continue with further academic study but he himself was more inclined to go on travelling. He did a lot of that, over the next 40 years or so, gaining much international attention with his reporting on the inlands of Asia.

Of all Hedin's writings, what I have on my own bookshelf is his 1936 book *Sidenvägen* ("The Silk Road"). It is a book of more than 400 pages. Toward the end there is a photograph of Hedin seated with Chiang Kai-shek and his wife, so evidently, he could move in the highest circles. Mostly the book covers an expedition by car through Central Asia. In our times, those who take an interest in the Chinese treatment of the Uighur people in the westerly province of Xinjiang may find Hedin's account of the expedition's risky passage to the capital Urumchi ("Urumtji") still thought-provoking.

Sven Hedin died in 1952: indeed, an explorer and prolific travel writer, but also a public intellectual. He was the last person in Sweden to be ennobled. In his more mature years, his public reputation in Sweden was affected by his political stances. In 1914, King Gustav V gave a speech in the Royal Palace courtyard to "Bondetåget" ("the Peasant March"), a demonstration by some 30,000 people, in large part farmers assembled from various parts of the country, in favour of the construction of a new warship, opposed by the elected government – this caused a cabinet crisis. Hedin had been the ghost writer for the king's speech. Later on, he showed himself to be favourably disposed toward the Nazi regime in Germany. One might sense that all this had to do with a negative view of what was then the Soviet Union, coupled with a long-term Swedish sense of a Russian threat, going back to wars in earlier centuries.

By 1961, as I came for course work in ethnography, the link to the Hedin heritage

⁷ The SSAG was founded in 1873 and has had a rather chequered history. Early in the 20th century, Gustaf Retzius was prominent in it. Since 1988, there is an anthropological symposium and a medallist every third year.

at the Ethnographic Museum was most directly represented by the elderly curator Gösta Montell, a few years away from retirement. Montell, born in the far north but schooled in Stockholm, had his doctorate from Gothenburg in the early 1930s; at around the same time, he also participated in one of Hedin's expeditions to China. Yet again, he later went on an archaeological expedition by a Gothenburg team to Mexico in the mid-1930s. At the museum, he was in charge of the Hedin Foundation, and the heterogeneous collections and publications connected with that. However, apparently a number of other administrative tasks had also been delegated to him.

On the Ethnographic Museum premises, one could also encounter Georg Söderbom, quite tall, not an academic but a camel driver and chauffeur on some of Hedin's 1930s expeditions. (He figures prominently in the book *Sidenvägen*.) Söderbom was born in China (Inner Mongolia) in 1904, the son of Swedish missionaries. Toward the end of World War II, he had participated on the side of the Allies fighting the Japanese in the Chinese-Burmese borderlands. Some years later he moved to Sweden and joined the museum staff, although he may have spent some time in the United States in the early 1950s.

For some time, one of the central exhibits at the Ethnographic Museum was a full-size reconstruction of Hedin's old home office, as it had been in an apartment building in a central town location, with a view of Lake Mälaren across the street. Perhaps one could imagine the exhibit as a sort of shrine?

One other early Swedish China expert should perhaps be mentioned here more parenthetically. Johan Gunnar Andersson, primarily a geologist while at work in China in the earlier decades of the 20th century, also pursued an interest in archaeology – both involved digging. The latter resulted in a major collection brought to Sweden, and the creation of a Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities there.⁸ Andersson became the director of that museum. I have seen no sign that he had much to do with the discipline of ethnography in Stockholm. But a book of his, *Under brinnande krig* (“In the fire of war”), from 1938, in an intriguing combination of materials and styles, shows the geologist/archaeologist turning foreign correspondent and even war correspondent, as a rather disorganised China is under attack of that increasingly powerful eastern neighbour, Japan. Reporting on a two-year journey through China, Andersson gets closer to the centre of action here than Sven Hedin did in *Sidenvägen* a few years earlier.

Another parenthesis, although a longer one: about Rudolf Kjellén. Born in 1864 – and thus a year older than Sven Hedin – Kjellén was a political conservative (to the point of serving a term in the Swedish parliament), but a scholarly radical. He wanted to liberate his emergent discipline political science, from the dominance of law, and turn it into an empirical discipline.

Moreover, to do so, he placed it in the middle of a field of other disciplines or near-disciplines, such as geography and economics. One entirely new concept of his, “geopolitik,” geopolitics, became globally successful – he published it first in 1899, in *Ymer*, a publication of the Swedish Society for Anthropology and Geography still published as a yearbook now.⁹ Another of Kjellén's neologisms was *folkhemmet*, “the people's home,” which took a more leftward path. Kjellén was a scholarly cosmopolitan, well-travelled and well-read.

⁸ I have commented on Johan Gunnar Andersson as a China expert in another context (Hannerz 2021).

⁹ *Ymer* has its name from pre-Christian Nordic mythology, in which “Ymer” was a giant; to make a long story short, after his assassination, the world was created from his body.

In his major work, *Staten som Lifsförm* (“The state as a form of life,” 1916), he commented on recent world history: on relationships between China, Japan, and Korea, on tensions between Latin America and the United States, and on the difficulty faced by Ukraine in making its culture the basis of a state. It was a time, too, of upheavals in the world. The Ottoman, Russian, Habsburg, and Prussian empires were on their way out. And to Kjellén’s dismay, Norway had fairly recently left its union with Sweden.

Kjellén coined a term of “ethnopolitics,” too, and it had a place in his own writings, although it did not become as successful as geopolitics. And when it came to ethnographic or anthropological sources of inspiration, he apparently did not find them in his local academic environment so much as in the German-speaking world – particularly in the *Kulturkreislehre* of anthropologist-geographer Friedrich Ratzel, professor at Leipzig (also the inventor of the term *Lebensraum*). This was a period when scholarly center-periphery relationships mostly had Germany at the center and Sweden at the periphery, but Kjellén was notably a case of the periphery speaking successfully back. A number of his Swedish-language writings were translated into German (while apparently nothing reached into English).¹⁰

Uppsala University was Kjellén’s alma mater, but he spent a large part of his career at Gothenburg, lower ranking in academic prestige yet allowing him to establish himself as a public intellectual, before finally making it back to Uppsala and the professorial chair there. He died in 1922, at the age of 58. A more recent commentator has suggested that he was “perhaps the most influential Scandinavian political scientist ever” (Tunander 2001: 451).¹¹ Even now, after more than a century, one may find *Staten som Lifsförm* intriguing reading, not only as an interpretation of its times but also as an experiment in interdisciplinary outreach. One may also sense that some of the new key concepts of those times were fairly ambiguous and flexible; they could be stretched in different scholarly and political directions.

So, what happened to those ethnographic collections in Stockholm after Hjalmar Stolpe’s death? Here it seems useful first to take note of the activities and influence of Gustaf Retzius.¹²

His father Anders Retzius had already taken an interest in physical anthropology, inventing a method of measuring skulls. Gustaf Retzius continued with this interest, under rather special personal circumstances. He was the main owner of stock in the Stockholm newspaper *Aftonbladet*, founded by his father-in-law Lars Johan Hierta, and he actually edited it for a few years. But his main interest was in anatomy and anthropology. The Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, an internationally famous medical institution, made him a professor of anatomy in 1889, but he resigned after only a year. Independently wealthy enough, he continued as a freelance scholar. He travelled widely, with his wife: in Cairo he met Henry Morton Stanley, and at the World’s Fair in Chicago he met Franz Boas, who worked there. He also went to British Columbia and did some shopping for Northwest Coast Indian ethnographic artifacts, to be turned over to the museum collections in Stockholm.

¹⁰ One of Kjellén’s German readers was Karl Haushofer, an army general but also a geographer, who reputedly gave private tutorials to Adolf Hitler while the latter was in jail after a failed Munich putsch. Ratzel’s notion of *Lebensraum* seems to have come to renewed use here.

¹¹ The most recent overview of Kjellén’s work is an edited volume by Björk and Lundén (2021).

¹² There is a recent, entertaining, over 500-page biography of Gustaf Retzius by Nils Uddenberg (2019). The incident involving Nordenskiöld and Hartman discussed below gets a little more than half a page. Olof Ljungström, historian of ideas, has written a monograph on late 19th century Swedish anthropology centering on Hjalmar Stolpe and Gustaf Retzius (Ljungström 2003).

Back in Stockholm, he continued his endeavours in physical anthropology. In the theorising that had developed, people with long skulls had superior minds to those with broad skulls. By the early 20th century he embraced the theory and ideology of racial inequality, which was spreading in Europe, finding the Nordic race “a natural aristocracy.” Through the Swedish Society for Anthropology and Geography which he led at the time, he also organised measurings of the skulls of 45,000 military recruits.

After Hjalmar Stolpe’s death, there were two candidates succeeding him at the Stockholm ethnographic collections. One was Erland Nordenskiöld, son of Adolf Erik Nordenskiöld, of Vega fame – but Gustaf Retzius, very influential in local academic circles (a member of the Swedish Academy, for one thing) supported the competitor, Carl Hartman. The vote in the Academy of Sciences, still in charge of the collections, turned out even, 22 to 22. And then by way of lottery, Hartman won.

There was considerable grumbling that the winner was someone without much formal academic merit. But Hartman, born in 1862, was an interesting person in other ways. His grandfather and his father had both been skilled botanists, although teaching in provincial schools. Carl left secondary school without graduating, trained as a professional gardener, and got a stipend which took him to the United States, where after some time he could join an expedition to Mexico, led by a Norwegian scholar. Although he was supposed to be the expedition botanist, he became more involved in its archaeology, learnt Spanish quickly and put together a word list from one of the local Indian peoples. He enjoyed Mexico, but after half a year as foreman at a silver mine he left for Chicago to work at the anthropological exhibit at the World’s Fair, in 1893 – he, too, met Franz Boas.

Back in Sweden, he took a job as gardener at the Bergianska Garden at the outskirts of Stockholm, also an Academy of Science undertaking. But he had a falling-out with the director, who had made him work too hard in the summer season. (He wrote a harsh newspaper article about this.) Soon after he got a stipend to travel in Central America and having successfully reported on this enterprise at an Americanist conference in New York he was invited to join the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He travelled to Central America on its behalf as well; and then he came back to Stockholm, taking over the ethnographic collections after the Retzius intervention.

In that position, Hartman continued to travel, including once around the world. However, he was most active at home too. During his sojourns in America, he had learned about the value of publicity, so he made himself very visible in Stockholm life, and in the Stockholm press. For one thing, one of his pet ideas was to build a new museum next to Skansen, the outdoor museum. His ethnographic museum was to be surrounded by a park, with exotic huts and animals. Buffaloes would be imported, as would be llamas and kangaroos. Unfortunately, this all came to nothing.

Perhaps Hartman was more of a showman and trickster than a scholar in a conventional sense. Then in 1923 he was diagnosed as mentally ill. That went with drinking too much. He was requested to go on administrative leave, and that lasted until his retirement. He never really had a home of his own in Stockholm, but lived in various hotels and pensions, and in his final years at a hospital.

After Hartman came Gerhard Lindblom, who was apparently at the museum off and on during the Hartman period, taking over and by 1929 becoming the director, with

which would go a titular professorship at Stockholms Högskola.¹³ Lindblom would become a major figure in the history of the ethnographic discipline in Stockholm. But it seems reasonable to distinguish between early and late Lindblom, even if there is not a sharp divide. The early Lindblom is above all remembered for his doctoral dissertation – although he earned his doctorate in Uppsala in 1916, the main edition of *The Akamba in British East Africa* was published in 1920. It drew on a year and a half of field work among the Akamba people in Kenya, in 1911-1912, when Lindblom was in his early twenties. There was still a German East Africa to the south, to change hands and become Tanganyika with the coming world war. In an obituary published about a half-century later, the leading anthropologist-Africanist Daryll Forde (1969: 39: 346) would say that this monograph “set new standards in both thorough description and careful analysis in East African ethnography... Lindblom anticipated many of the procedures later advocated in anthropological field research, learning the language and placing great stress on systematic participant observation.” (Forde, one might add, was also a representative of colonial anthropology at its zenith.)

Indeed, in its 607 pages, *The Akamba in British East Africa* offers a remarkably comprehensive and detailed description of an African society in a time when it was not yet so influenced by colonialism. It describes Akamba material culture, with rich drawn illustrations and some comparative commentary on corresponding artifacts elsewhere in the world. It also covers the clan system and totemism; warfare; spirit worship; medicine men; beermaking; forms of dancing and courtship; the gender division of labour; and a wide range of other topics.

As Forde later noted, the comments on principles of field research are also sophisticated. While it could be tempting to learn only Swahili, the lingua franca of East Africa, it was much better to learn the Akamba language, and Lindblom obviously did so very conscientiously: “linguistic and ethnological studies ought to proceed side by side.” If possible, one should acquire one’s knowledge about all kinds of conduct through personal observation, but when this was not possible, one should not rely on interviews with some single informant but ask several of them the same questions.

Of course, the acknowledgments in the introduction of the book are very interesting in themselves. They include Carl Hartman, who provided the opportunity to undertake the journey to East Africa, and Charles Dundas, a former District Commissioner in the Akamba area who had also undertaken field studies there. But Lindblom (1920: 6) also identifies the “principal natives who have been of assistance to me in my work.” Some of them are elders, referred to more briefly. Three seem more remarkable:¹⁴

In the first place comes my servant and language teacher *Kioko wa Malata* of the Machakos district. He showed great interest in the work, and I trained him systematically, until he understood exactly what I wanted. He is one of the most intelligent natives I ever met and had served as an *askari* (soldier) in the English police troops, during which time he had learnt

¹³ A recent Swedish overview of global “Black history” refers to a 1929 tour of the Cirkus Carl Hagenbeck from the famous Hamburg zoo, which brought elephants, trained tigers, and a Somali dancing troupe to Stockholm. These Somali visitors also brought several objects from their home country which they presented to Gerhard Lindblom, Ethnographic Museum director (Levin 2022: 310).

¹⁴ The names of the three informants in these quotes are my approximations, as I do not have access to the special orthography used by Lindblom.

to associate with Europeans and to grasp their way of thinking.

Vindia...an ordinary medicine-man from the district of Kibwesi. I pitched my tent near his village, and we were together every day. He conceived a great liking for me, and would gladly have accompanied me as a servant, if his occupation and reputation as a medicine-man would not have suffered thereby. Among other things, he initiated me into the secret ceremonies of the third circumcision, the so-called 'men's circumcision.' The revelation of the abominable customs connected with these rites is punished by death, if the offence is discovered.

Muli, a disreputable and half degenerate individual living near the mission station of Ikutha. His rapacity betrayed him into showing me, among other things, the place where a valuable *kipitu* (see p. 166) was kept.

Beyond the dissertation, Gerhard Lindblom would also write for a more general audience, in Swedish. His book *I vildmark och negerbyar* (1921), "In wilderness and Negro villages," may have an appealing title, although it is not all that much about either. It reports on a somewhat later Swedish expedition to the Elgon mountain area in north-western Kenya, making zoological, botanical, and ethnographic collections, and studying. The book is dedicated to J. P. Johansson, an evidently affluent farm owner in southern Sweden who was also his father-in-law. Johansson had paid for Lindblom's journey, with his new wife – this also served as their wedding trip.

The book reports on the Elgon expedition, but in large part it is devoted to a more general commentary on early 20th century Kenya. In Lindblom's view, the natives should be grateful for *Pax Britannica*: it saved them from local violent conflicts as well as the Indian Ocean slave trade. The colonisers also told them how to work. He is mostly friendly in what he says about the natives, although the perspective is clearly that of European colonial superiority. There is most noticeably a contempt for the many newcomers from India who have established themselves in economic niches between the natives and the European settlers, and who do not always show the appropriate respect for Europeans. Altogether, the close-up ethnography of colonial life may be what is by now most interesting in the book. Hunting – lions, giraffes, whatever – is already a major interest for Kenya's European settlers and visitors. The time has already passed when the resident, white-skinned population of whatever origin somehow formed a homogeneous entity with internal solidarity. It is beginning to split into an upper class and an underclass. In Nairobi there will probably soon be a white proletariat. Toward the end Lindblom also offers what he describes as some modest advice to potential Swedish settlers.

The next year there was *Negerhistorier vid lägerelden* (1922), "Negro stories at the campfire." These are mostly Akamba tales, but there is also some quite attractive description of the contexts of their collection, and of the storytellers' oratorical skills. The richness of performances, Lindblom points out, is lost when the tales are written down. In his preface he also notes that a scholar may often be saddened that he belongs to a nation without colonies of its own, thus without any real interest or understanding of his kind of work.

Soon after his East African field studies, Lindblom started working with the ethnographic museum collections in Stockholm. Here, we may discern, starts the shift

toward the late Lindblom, oriented mostly toward material culture and culture history, and an organiser and networker in varied areas.

For one thing, he launched the first issue of the museum's journal *Ethnos* in January 1936.¹⁵ This, according to the first editorial note, was intended to have six 16-page issues annually. As it turned out, for much of its existence as a museum publication, four supposedly quarterly issues were combined into one, so in reality it became more of a yearbook. The first issue carried a one-page welcoming note by Sven Hedin (with a photographic portrait). One could note that Lindblom's obituary for Carl Hartman in *Ethnos* in 1941 was quite brief.

Lindblom also kept a variety of international contacts going. He was one of the founding members of the International African Institute (London-based, an important scholarly organisation, started by Lord Frederick Lugard after he returned to the mother country from Nigeria, a country he had basically created as a colony, and of which he was the first governor – the Institute also published the journal *Africa*). When E. E. Evans-Pritchard (1953) reviewed an ethnography dissertation from Stockholm in *Africa*, it could seem he went a little out of his way to note that it appeared in “a series one associates with the respected name of Lindblom.” Lindblom was also involved early with what was the Viking Fund before it changed name to the Wenner-Gren Foundation, in New York; in that connection, he took part in planning the foundation's new international journal, *Current Anthropology*.

Before that, in 1946, he had reported on a couple of pages in *Man*, at the time one of the two journals of the Royal Anthropological Institute in Britain, on the situation of ethnology and anthropology in Sweden during the world war that was just over. On the whole, as Sweden had stayed out of it, things had been fairly normal. Some male students had been called up for military service; Lindblom himself had also done some of that. Mostly he described changes in the museums and their collections, some publications, and then he also noted the succession that had taken place in Gothenburg: “Dr. Izikowitz emphasizes the social side of anthropology, which has not always received in Sweden the attention it deserves.”

After Gerhard Lindblom died in 1969, his successors published a commemorative issue of *Ethnos*, the journal he had started – a rather uneven set of remembrances but suggesting that he had taken considerable interest in teaching as well.

At this point, however, I want to introduce one little-known, quite original source. Stockholms Höskola became a full state institution, as Stockholm University, in 1960. Veterans who wanted to commemorate the earlier history of the institution had their own connection with an associated foundation, and in 2005, it published the book *Minnen* (“Memories”), without any identified main editor, but drawing on reminiscences by elderly participants (mostly professors) from the earlier period, generally the 1930s onwards (Stockholms universitet 2005).¹⁶ This involves oral history, the flow of loosely conducted interviews, not systematic but possibly with a bias toward what was odd and striking, therefore still remembered. Unlike much academic history writing, this is a backstage view.

Overall, I get a sense of a slow-moving chaos, intellectually and organisationally.

¹⁵ *Ethnos* is still in existence, although now turned over to an international publishing house, and as an international journal without any obvious Swedish or Scandinavian connection in content.

¹⁶ I was given my copy as part of the event when I was promoted to “Jubilee Doctor” in 2019, 50 years after I was awarded my PhD. I am not sure the book has ever been available in the market.

The border areas between fields of knowledge and theory could hardly be deemed “interdisciplinary,” insofar as the fields themselves were not characterised by much discipline. Careers could move between these fields in considerable part as a matter of chance, personal connections and passing opportunities. This is what I discern from what is said about fields like sociology, practical philosophy, sociology, economic history, and comparative religion. As the first professorship in the emergent discipline of sociology is to be filled, it goes to Gunnar Boalt, from “Practical Philosophy” – Boalt comments briskly in his reminiscences that what was “practical” about it he does not know, but in any case, it was not philosophy. I will return to Boalt below. Perhaps situations were more orderly in disciplines directly linked to professional careers beyond the academic world.

From a couple of contributions to *Minnen*, one gets a sense that Gerhard Lindblom’s engagements with students could be idiosyncratic. The first is by Bertil Hedenstierna, later to become a geography lecturer at Stockholm University. He noted that since there was as yet no real museum, Lindblom would gather his students in those storage rooms, quite centrally located in town, which held enormous collections from the Vanadis expedition and other outings:

There Lindblom went about, picking things out of the boxes and saying: “I don’t know what is in this box.” It could be blow pipes from South America or some head skulls from New Guinea, clothing from the Orient. When he had given his lecture of an hour or he said: “I have to go now, but you can stay.” So the girls draped themselves in those clothes, and the rude boys practiced shooting with the bows in that room. Once a boy walked past and an arrow flew just next to his head. So somebody said, “That one is from South America, perhaps there is curare on it.” So next time we asked Lindblom if curare is dangerous, and he said, “Curare is not wasted even if it is dry. If it enters there may be poisoning.” But he gave us solace pointing out that it was mostly intended for small animals, so it would be OK. (Stockholms universitet 2005: 86-87)

The other comment is by Åke Hultkrantz, later to become professor of comparative religion:

Gerhard Lindblom was at the Ethnographic Museum but linked to Stockholms Högskola, so he sat in at faculty meetings. He had the rank of professor but was not a university professor. He was a very nice, likeable man. I remember once when we were to have a seminar and came to the museum, and he says: “Sorry, I don’t have time. I have to feed Emil, otherwise he will starve. You can help me.” And so we go outside and pick grass leaves in a big bag, and when the seminar was over and we had picked enough he went home. (Stockholms universitet 2005: 139)

It is not clear who Emil was – a vegan member of the Lindblom household perhaps? More likely a household pet, perhaps a rabbit. Anyway, Hultkrantz goes on:

Lindblom was an Africanist. He wrote one of the better early monographs about an African people, the Wakamba. But then he had so awfully much to do with different persons. While he sits there and talks to me the phone rings, and it is Prince Wilhelm. And he was out there on a great many dinners, and he was loved as a dinner eater. He had an enormous sociable

talent. A very funny person. I had him at a dinner, in the 1960s. We were at the table which we had extended, and when there was no more food and he offered his thanks he fell on his knees in front of the hostess and kissed her hand and offered a brilliant tirade. He was a very remarkable man. At other dinners he could stand up and dance on the table. (Stockholms universitet 2005: 139-140)

Prince Wilhelm was the younger brother of King Gustav VI Adolf.

In Stockholm, for almost three decades, Lindblom was also the chairman of the local Travellers' Club, a gathering of members of the bourgeoisie and aristocracy with cosmopolitan leanings.

One might speculate that if Gerhard Lindblom, especially in his early version, had been in service at Stockholm University in the early 1960s, with his broad interests, wide connections and social skills, he might have responded more satisfactorily to the incoming generation of students, with their focus on living societies and field work, than the elderly museum archaeologists that they encountered.¹⁷

Yet it is a complicating factor that at some point, apparently in 1962, "Nordiska Rådet för Antropologisk Forskning" (The Nordic Council for Anthropological Research) also appeared, in principle an organisation of professors in ethnography, ethnology, comparative religion, and archaeology, thus more like an American conception of the discipline, perhaps with some connection to the Wenner-Gren Foundation. It seemed to be an assemblage of elderly professors (including Gerhard Lindblom, professor emeritus), working mostly behind the scenes, and perhaps functioning as an obstacle to the changes which the younger generation desired. The organisation disappeared a decade or so later, seemingly leaving little trace. Perhaps someone concerned with the Scandinavian history of the discipline can find its documents in a closet somewhere.

Anyway, there seem to have been only a few doctoral degrees in ethnography awarded during Lindblom's professorship, and only one of them led on to a greater impact on the discipline in Sweden. Sture Lagercrantz, who received his doctorate in 1938, was appointed to a teaching position in ethnography at Uppsala University after a few years – the first at that university – and was eventually promoted to a professorship. But Lagercrantz, with a reputation as an Africanist, never did any field research, and apparently never visited Africa. (His dissertation title was *Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte der afrikanischen Jagdfallen*, "contributions to the cultural history of African hunting traps.") His early doctoral students in Uppsala also mostly wrote dissertations based on desk work rather than field research.

In a period when the museum in Stockholm had no Africanist on its staff, Lagercrantz would drive down from Uppsala to Stockholm once a week for a lecture to the students there. The audience was usually small. I remember being alone there on one occasion – the format of the lecture was not affected.

It was said that Lagercrantz, later on, may have been in his university office but made himself unavailable on that day when the monthly copy of the Donald Duck comic magazine (*Kalle Anka & Co*) appeared. The departmental caretaker, the *vaktmästare*, named in the university catalogue was actually Lagercrantz' dog.

¹⁷ I can only remember one personal encounter with Lindblom, at the meeting of Nordic Ethnographers in Stockholm in 1965. In my own brief presentation on applied anthropology, in Swedish, I had still used the loan word "teamwork," and Lindblom pointed out to me afterwards that the Swedish word was *lagarbete*.

Now over to Gothenburg. After having been sidestepped for that museum position in Stockholm, Erland Nordenskiöld moved to the nation's second city as he was appointed to manage the local museum collections, and became the founding father of the discipline of ethnography there.¹⁸ As the son of Adolf Erik Nordenskiöld, he was a “friherre,” minor nobility; his mother came from leading Finland-Swedish aristocracy. His wife Olga, on the other hand, was a carpenter's daughter. Perhaps at some point when he and Rudolf Kjellén were both Gothenburg residents, the two of them met? Anyway, his political leanings seem on the whole to have been more liberal than Kjellén's.

Erland Nordenskiöld did not get to have a very long life (he died in 1932, aged 54), but he had an enduring influence. In his early twenties, in 1899, he had been on his first journey to South America, and after he moved to Gothenburg this was followed by several expeditions to the South American highlands, into the late 1920s. These resulted in major archaeological and artifact collections for the museum, and brought pupils on his South American voyages who, mostly as archaeologists, could populate museum staffs in both Gothenburg and Stockholm well into the 1960s. Overall, apart from the practical and organisational museum work, his endeavour may be summarised as an encyclopaedic overview of South American cultural history, with an emphasis on distributions and diffusion processes, based on archaeological findings, early historical sources and close, comparative study of museum collections. At times his publications show a considerable interest in individuals he came to know in the field, but this does not seem to have been a research topic that he passed on to his students to any significant degree.

On my shelf I find one book, *Forsknings och Äventyr i Sydamerika 1913- 1914* (“Researches and adventures in South America 1913-1914”, 1915), of 597 pages, richly illustrated. It deals largely with a journey to Bolivia, ending as the world war breaks out in another continent. The journey involved some hardships. Olga had a serious malaria attack. One young Swedish field assistant is briefly separated from them at one point – but is then found murdered. The book is not exactly an easy read. You can follow the passage through a country marked by diversity, between immigrant groups and indigenes in different degrees of contact with these immigrants, between cities and countryside, interspersed with descriptions of collectibles to be brought home. But as the Nordenskiölds seem to be continuously on the move, they do not seem to have more than rather superficial contacts with any particular local scene. There is nothing like Gerhard Lindblom's extended, intensive engagement with the Akamba.

At home in Gothenburg, Nordenskiöld worked hard, cultivated various local contacts (including major businesspeople who could help support his field trips), was in touch with scholars in other countries as well, published a great deal over the years in Swedish, German, English, French, and Spanish, but for some time still did not feel that he was getting the recognition he deserved. Gradually, however, that changed. Apparently as a bit of a surprise, Göteborgs Högskola awarded him a PhD, without any specific thesis ever being examined in the usual academic format. While he gathered students around him, these seem mostly to have functioned as assistants in his own research. As he had a very uneven temper, his

¹⁸ Christer Lindberg's (1996) biography of Erland Nordenskiöld is a major exception to the general scarcity of writings on the history of Swedish anthropology. Slightly earlier, there was a generous memorial volume on Nordenskiöld and his times, activities and milieu, edited by Alvarsson et al. (1992). I draw on both here, even as I do not share the overall view of anthropology evident in them.

relationships with them were also in a state of constant flux. Further away in neighbouring countries, he maintained a steady friendly relationship with Kai Birket-Smith in Denmark, while his contact with Rafael Karsten, a Finland- Swedish student of Edvard Westermarck's but also a South Americanist, had its ups and downs. His contacts extended in continental Europe and in the Americas. He was in touch with Franz Boas and Alfred Kroeber and spent a term in Berkeley in 1926. (He was a little uncertain here about lecturing in English – would Berkeley students understand German, or French, or Spanish?)

After Erland Nordenskiöld, the top ethnographer at the Gothenburg museum for a period was Walter Kaudern.¹⁹ Here was a scholar of broad interests. Kaudern did field research first on Madagascar and later (twice) on Sulawesi. The former, of course, was a French colony at the time, the latter Dutch. On Madagascar Kaudern was primarily a zoologist and got his doctorate in Stockholm 1910 on this research. But on Sulawesi he was primarily an ethnographer. Succeeding Nordenskiöld, he moved over from a directorship of the geological department of the Gothenburg museum – so to start with he was apparently a bit of an outsider, who had not been a member of Nordenskiöld's closest circle. And now his ethnographer colleagues would also get to hear about his geological theories.

When Kaudern died at age 61, the main position in Gothenburg was taken over by Karl Gustav Izikowitz. After a doctoral dissertation on South American musical instruments, he turned to field studies: briefly in Mexico, then in highland Southeast Asia. Soon enough, Izikowitz became inclined toward social anthropology (as Lindblom had noted in his overview in *Man*), and was in touch with British, American, and French anthropology. Evidently a sociable person, he cultivated contacts in the local academic community, and for students and younger scholars elsewhere as well, he became with time greatly respected as an elder with an understanding of their kinds of interests.

In 1944, he published a popular book: *Över dimmornas berg* ("Over the mountains of the fogs"). The back cover says that through lecture tours and radio talks the author had become well-known all over the country. Richly illustrated, the book describes his journeys through what was French Indochina but focuses on his field work among the Lamet people in Laos in 1936-38. This is on the outskirts of the Empire; the colonial presence is not conspicuous.

Izikowitz appears as an egalitarian in the field, with little social or physical distance to his helpers and other locals, attempting to see beyond diversity to shared humanity. The Lamet are engaged in swidden cultivation on the hillside, although some of the young men are also going away to work as agricultural labourers in areas where the cash economy has become stronger. The account of field research is lively, rich on physical and sensual experience. Izikowitz makes the point that it is not just a matter of collecting artifacts for the museum at home but investigating a way of life and thought. For one thing, Izikowitz describes in some detail the complications of language learning. There is simply nobody who knows both French and Lamet. He learns a dialect of Laotian which many Lamet know, as Laotian is a lingua franca in a wide region – but then getting from there to the Lamet language is not easy, since the Lamet cannot comprehend practices of translation and dictation. Yet he works away on that. (One could compare his struggle here with Lindblom's comments on learning Akamba.)

¹⁹ An obituary by Henry Wassén (1941), another Gothenburg ethnographer, offers an overview of Kaudern's interests and activities.

For all his systematic effort, he acknowledges that much ethnographic knowledge comes about by chance. His imagination can also take him even further, as in describing a possible conversation between deer and buffaloes about the strange white man who had shown up in their habitat.

By the time the book appears, of course, World War II is on, and what had been French Indochina is occupied by the Japanese. Yet he guesses that his old field area was still remote enough not to be all that affected by the war.

Why bother, then, with investigating a lot of exotic cultures? Izikowitz raises the question in a brief preface, and notes that one answer is that we should get to know human thought and social life in all its variations. One cannot experiment in social research as one can in the natural sciences, but by studying humanity as a whole one can gain a perspective toward our own social and cultural life. In a way ethnography thus becomes the laboratory of the social sciences. When the world is increasingly marked by conflicts and war, there is a need for social study. And through new modes of communication, and especially the enormous development of air traffic, the interest in the exotic peoples will undoubtedly grow.

This was a rather optimistic view of the future of his discipline, aimed at a wider readership. But then in 1959, the *American Anthropologist* published an article on “Anthropology in Sweden,” under the general rubric of “Trends in anthropology.” It was co-authored by three scholars, as it had three parts: one on general ethnology by Izikowitz, and other parts on prehistoric research (i.e., archaeology) and comparative ethnology (which in this case covered folk life research in Sweden) (Izikowitz, Moberg, and Eskeröd 1959).²⁰ Elsewhere I have cited this article to show Izikowitz’ at that point rather pessimistic, more backstage view of the local circumstances of his discipline:

Ethnology can hardly be of practical use in Sweden outside the museums and, as a result, relatively few students dare venture into it. The sum total of scientific posts at the museums is no more than seven. Thus, a professional ethnologist has few possibilities for making a living. (1959: 669)

The situation did indeed begin to change during the decade that followed. He also pointed out in his overview that the emphasis tended to be in material culture, and that in Stockholm and Uppsala there was “a tendency toward a diffusionist attitude” but that “the various centers for ethnological study have very little contact with each other.”

On a more positive note, he mentioned that in the year before, Danish and Norwegian ethnologists had been invited to a meeting in Gothenburg – and if there could be more meetings like that, he hoped that “we can gradually create something new and more independent as a contribution to the international development of ethnology” (1959: 670).

The meeting was evidently the first in a series of what for some time were called “Nordic Ethnographer Meetings,” coming together every other year or so around Scandinavia, on a rotating basis. (The last major effort of this kind was in Reykjavik in 1990 – after that there would be national associations on the one hand, and the biennial meetings of the European

²⁰ One could note that Albert Eskeröd, the author of the part of this article on folk life research, ends by expressing a hope for “more use of the theoretical and methodological results which have been obtained within the vast field of international cultural and social anthropology” (1959: 676).

Association of Social Anthropologists, EASA, on the other.)²¹

In the late 1960s, faced with the choice between remaining a museum director and becoming a full-time professor of ethnography at Gothenburg University, Izikowitz chose the latter. While he attracted students in Gothenburg, not many of them went on to earn a doctorate during his period in office. In his later years he did not write so much.²² On the other hand, we could note that in a way, retroactively, his presence led to an entry of anthropology into Swedish literature. In a semi-autobiographical novel published in 2017, Agneta Pleijel, well-known Swedish author, portrays student life as it was in Gothenburg in her youth, in the 1960s. Among masks and claypots in the Ethnographic Museum, she has an enjoyable oral exam with the jovial professor Izikowitz, who asks if she intends to continue with ethnography. She replies that she would like to, although first she has to finish a term paper in literary history.²³ Well, there will evidently never be any more academic engagement with the discipline – but then in 2000, there will be the novel *Lord Nevermore* (in Swedish, despite the title). The central figure is Bronislaw, an anthropologist of Polish origin. It is a book about him and his complicated relationship with his best friend and with women, over decades, moving between Zakopane, Colombo, Melbourne, Port Moresby, places in Melanesia with strange natives, London, New Haven... There is a letter of introduction from Edward Westermarck, and a student in London named Jomo Kenyatta. Pleijel has obviously read up on Malinowskian life history, while mixing it with her own imagination.

What did we read as beginning students in Stockholm in 1961? I do not have the full reading list today, and I do not know how long it had already been what it was. In any case, Kai Birket-Smiths *Kulturens vägar* (“The Paths of Culture”), in translation from the Danish, in two volumes, was the central textbook for students: a comprehensive cultural-diffusionist overview. Birket-Smith was an important Eskimologist, but also very much a museum man. For the history of the discipline, Robert Lowie’s *The History of Ethnological Theory* (1937) was assigned. A Franz Boas pupil, and mostly stationed at the University of California, Berkeley, Lowie was of Austrian background, so his book was strong on old German and Austrian connections as well – for one thing, one would learn of Pater Wilhelm Schmidt’s *Kulturkreislehre*. There was also Ruth Benedict’s *Patterns of Culture*, in a Swedish translation from 1949.

However, if one found Lowie’s book somewhat heavy going and wanted to avoid having to read foreign languages whenever possible, one might be tipped off that Ragnar Numelin’s *Fältforskare och kammarlärde* (1947 – “Field researchers and chamber scholars”) could be an alternative. Locating a copy in some used bookstore, one would get a comprehensive view of international anthropology all the way from ancestors such as Thomas Hobbes and

²¹ The Reykjavik conference was documented in a volume edited by Gísli Pálsson (1994), who had been the convenor.

²² Izikowitz’ most notable later publication was probably his contribution to Fredrik Barth’s famous edited volume *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (1969), based on field studies in Laos in 1936-38 and 1963-64. There is a late interview with him by his student Karl Eric Knutsson (1975), see note 23, in an *Ethnos* issue serving as a *Festschrift*.

²³ Pleijel also devotes a page of friendly comment to the presence of a younger teacher, Karl Eric Knutsson, later (in the early 1970s) to become the first professor of social anthropology at Stockholm University, with an important although brief influence there before moving on to a UNICEF career in Asia. Pleijel’s meeting with Knutsson leads on to her reading Malinowski.

Auguste Comte, but also find that at the end there would be chapters on the Scandinavian anthropologies, including some 20 pages on what there was of Swedish anthropology. It took a broad view including folk life research, sociology, and comparative religion, noting that the younger scholar Gunnar Myrdal had studied Swedish railway station communities (no mention here of his better-known *An American Dilemma*), gave more attention to Erland Nordenskiöld, Gerhard Lindblom, and Karl Gustav Izikowitz, and mentioned the three holders of positions at the Ethnographic Museum in Stockholm by 1960 as archaeologists and Nordenskiöld students. The book was published in Helsinki, by a Finno-Swedish publishing house. It was dedicated to Kai Birket-Smith and had a foreword of a couple of pages by Gerhard Lindblom.

Numelin could be seen as an interesting person in his own right. He belonged to that Finland-Swedish upper bourgeoisie mostly based in Helsinki and was one of Edward Westermarck's students. Westermarck himself, one of Europe's leading anthropologists in the early 20th century, divided his time between the London School of Economics (where Bronislaw Malinowski was one of his students), extensive field work in Morocco (where he owned a house) and professorships at the University of Helsinki, and somewhat later, the new Åbo Akademi, a Swedish-language university in the town known in Finnish as Turku. Several of Westermarck's likewise Finland-Swedish students went on to become internationally well-known scholars with pioneering field studies: Gunnar Landtman (in New Guinea), Rafael Karsten (in South America) and Hilma Granqvist (in Palestine). Around the time when World War I broke out, a number of them had been in a youth movement agitating for the independence of Finland from the Russian Empire, to which their country had belonged for a little more than a century.

For his part, after gaining his doctorate, Numelin went into the Finnish diplomatic corps. The preface of *Fältforskare och kammarlärde* says that reading ethnological writings could offer some relaxation in the dark evenings in Finland during the war years – for parts of World War II his country was at war with the Soviet Union. By the end of his 35-year career, he was his country's ambassador in Vienna and Prague. But at the same time, he maintained scholarly interests, and wrote books on a variety of topics. One of them, published in Sweden (but printed in Finland) in 1941, was *Den gröna grenen* ("The green bough"), with a subtitle reading "a study in the prehistory of diplomacy." Here he could draw extensively on his ethnographic knowledge, assembled during a stay in 1938 at the Royal Library in Copenhagen. He had planned to write a larger, more scientific work on the topic in English – but then the work had come to an end in a garden in Brussels in August 1939.

It does not appear that apart from Numelin's *Fältforskare och kammarlärde*, and Erland Nordenskiöld's ambivalent relationship to Rafael Karsten, what became known as "the Westermarck School" had much direct contact with Swedish ethnographers.

One might discern a Swedish parallel to Numelin's career in that of Gunnar Jarring, for a long time one of Sweden's most distinguished diplomats. The son of a south Swedish farmer, Jarring (he had invented a new family name for himself) went to Lund University, and ended up – rather daringly, without obvious job prospects – studying Turkish languages. In the late 1920s, this took him on to field studies of East Turkish dialects in what was by then westernmost China – and so we are back in the Uighur area, where Sven Hedin also spent some time. (Jarring was in some touch with the 40 years older Hedin, but mostly seems to have held a certain critical distance.) While Jarring focused on language, he did a

certain amount of ethnological and folkloristic research as well. With his academic home in Lund, however, it does not appear that Swedish ethnography, based elsewhere, was really part of his scholarly milieu. And then in the 1930s, he shifted to diplomacy. At a point when that career (which had taken him through Washington, New York, and Moscow) was largely over, he had an official invitation to return to China, for a visit to his old field site. This resulted in a remarkable book, for a general audience, named *Åter till Kashgar* (1979), combining reminiscences from his field experiences a half-century earlier with vivid reporting from his new journey, through Urumchi and Kashgar, his old research site.²⁴ It was a time when the Uighur were apparently at relative peace with the government of the People's Republic. Gunnar Jarring died in 2002, aged 94.²⁵

Around 1960, the student association in the ethnography department at Stockholm University changed name from Föreningen för utomeuropeisk kulturforskning ("the Society for non-European cultural research") to Antropologföreningen, and its new mimeographed bulletin became *Antropolognytt*, "Anthropologist news."²⁶ (In the period of the older and more complicated name, the members had also humorously referred to it as "Morianerna," an ancient term for dark-skinned people.) But it would take another decade before the term "anthropology" became the official term identifying the department and the discipline. Before the 1960s, since the activities of Gustaf Retzius, the term was probably in Sweden most often taken to refer to physical anthropology. Between 1947 and 1970, this existed as a separate discipline at Uppsala University, taught by Bertil Lundman, who held a docentship. Lundman had first studied theology, intending to become a minister in the state church (also with its headquarters in Uppsala), but as that refused to ordain him for the priesthood, he turned to more physical features of humanity. His doctoral thesis work supposedly involved measuring the skulls of more than 11,000 individuals in the Central Swedish province of Dalecarlia.

In a 1946 book in Swedish on contemporary races, Lundman is extremely racist in his characterisation of the mental traits of Negroes (he also uses another n-word).²⁷ For one thing, he suggests, these traits make them excellent slaves. (True, it may be that Lundman, in the Uppsala of his times, had never actually encountered any African or Afro-American.) His books in the 1950s and 1960s, while printed in Tierp north of Uppsala, were in German, on *Rassenkunde* and *Stammeskunde*. In the early 1960s, Lundman gave his weekly lectures on Saturday mornings, showing slides of various human heads, commenting on skull measurements and other personal characteristics. These lectures were part of the Saturday amusements of academic Uppsala and drew sizeable audiences.²⁸

²⁴ The book was translated into English as *Return to Kashgar: Central Asian Memoirs in the Present* (Jarring 1986).

²⁵ Gunnar Jarring also took an interest in the local folklore of his south Swedish home area and published a couple of essays on the female trickster figure Potta Långhaka. I have referred to this research elsewhere (Hannerz 2022: 47-50).

²⁶ As much later I reviewed anthropology's "other press" for *Current Anthropology*, I reminisced about the early *Antropolognytt*, of which I had been one of the editors, as "a roughly produced, amateurish little bulletin" (Hannerz 1987: 215).

²⁷ This is from the book *Nutidens människoraser* (1946), as quoted in the *Wikipedia* entry on Bertil Lundman.

²⁸ Another scholar in the field of "racial biology" who has remained better but controversially known is Herman Lundborg, medically trained head of a State Institute of Racial Biology in Uppsala 1921-35. Lundborg, however, seems never to have identified himself as an anthropologist, even as one might feel that he moved in the same general area of research as Gustaf Retzius and Bertil Lundman.

As far as naming was concerned, then, reinventing anthropology took about a decade. Before that, in broad terms, who were the people in Sweden turning early to ethnography? Mostly people of urban background, middle-class with an occasional minor aristocrat. To begin with, their scholarly interest could be in some other field, but not purely desk work or library research – in archaeology perhaps, or entomology. Somehow studying living people could be a second step. Hardly anyone was from a farming family, or of the working class. It was a country largely ethnically homogeneous, although someone of Jewish background but otherwise similar to the others might also be there. By the 1970s, with much more transnational migration becoming reflected in academic life as well, this would change considerably.

Here as elsewhere, however, there was one kind of work which might also lead to something more or less like ethnography: that of the missionary.²⁹ Early on, there was Karl Edvard Laman, for nearly three decades from 1891 in the Congo, mostly concerned with language, doing for one thing a nearly complete translation of the Bible into Kikongo. But he amassed ritual and other objects as well; these would end up with the ethnographic collections in Stockholm. He earned a medal from the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, and an honorary doctorate in theology from Uppsala University. Bertil Söderberg, one of the people earning a doctorate under Gerhard Lindblom, went for missionary work in Central Africa and came back to the Ethnographic Museum in Stockholm in the 1960s to become its Africa curator. However, the best-known Swedish scholar with a mission connection and something approximating anthropological interests was certainly Bengt Sundkler, whose monograph *Bantu Prophets in South Africa* (1948) became internationally well-known. Sundkler was a Church of Sweden missionary in Tanganyika in the 1930s and 1940s and was Bishop of Bukoba in Tanzania in the early 1960s. For a quarter-century between the 1940s and the 1970s he was a professor in the Faculty of Theology at Uppsala University, specialising in mission history, but I have not come across any sign of his engaging in much contact with the discipline of ethnography at that university.

Apart from these more institutionally oriented comments on anthropology and related disciplines in Stockholm, Gothenburg, and Uppsala, I should identify a few individuals who appear mostly to have operated outside the university scenes. Present in a slightly wider awareness by reputation or through writings perhaps, but hardly in person.

Eric von Rosen was with Erland Nordenskiöld on his first expedition to South America; but he may be best known for his book *Träskfolket* (“The swamp people”) from 1916, reporting on another expedition, to Central Africa – more precisely, the Lake Bangweulu area of what is now Zambia. Gerhard Lindblom’s book on the Akamba is dedicated to von Rosen. From an aristocratic family, he became the brother-in-law of Hermann Göring, one of the German Nazi leaders close to Adolf Hitler, and was himself a pro-Nazi commentator in Sweden in the 1930s. His son, Carl Gustaf von Rosen, was a professional pilot, active in Ethiopia, and briefly a notable bomber pilot in the service of Biafra in the Nigerian civil war in the late 1960s.

Gustaf Bolinder earned his doctorate in Gothenburg in 1919, with a thesis on a

²⁹ In an obituary for Anita Jacobson-Söderman, more widely known as Anita Jacobson-Widding (Professor of Cultural Anthropology at Uppsala University, and Sture Lagercrantz’ successor), Kaj Århem (2014) notes that she was inspired to take an interest in Africa by the stories she heard from her missionary maternal grandfather. For a period, before returning to academic life, Jacobson-Widding was also active as a journalist.

South American Indian group, the Ijca. In various Swedish contexts he is frequently titled “professor,” but it seems his professorship was in Bogotá, Colombia, 1935-36. He went on to write popular travel books, on Africa as well, and a great many books, in large part fiction, on distant exotic lands for young readers.

On my shelf I find *Genom luften till Afrika* (“Through the air to Africa,” 1939), on a two-month journey to Liberia, with intermediate stops: a striking literary exhibition of colonial and quasi-colonial attitudes and practices. With *Vilda buschmän* (“Wild bushmen,” 1952), he is back in Africa, this time in Angola. Actually, Bushmen do not have any dominant part in the book, while the varieties of missionaries helping him along his inland route are visible enough.

His ethnographic work seems in large part to entail artifact shopping, for museum collections – and do the descriptions of varied Angolan ethnic groups really go much beyond tribal stereotypes? And then again, he will be in the air making it back to Stockholm in time for Christmas, after a little more than two months. The following year there is the next book, *Indianernas hemliga värld* (1953, “The secret world of the Indians”) – more compactly an ethnography of South American highland Indians, their beliefs, rituals and dances, with one chapter on slavery and cannibalism in the past. Bolinder was the grandchild of a Permanent Secretary of the Swedish Academy.

Yngve Laurell apparently had a subordinate position with the ethnographic collections in Stockholm when they were still with the Museum of Natural History. With the support of Carl Hartman, he recorded folk music with such primitive technology as was available in the 1910s, and then lived in China between 1921 and 1947. He is said to have been a professor of ethnography at the University of Shanghai from 1937 and was also active in art trade there and in Beijing. By 1947 he was back in Sweden.

His professorship at Shanghai could seem to have coincided with the time of Japanese conquest in China. An interesting life history to be explored?

Now over to what was emerging (somewhat ambiguously) as a neighbouring discipline: sociology. In the 1950s a couple of doctorates awarded in that discipline could be seen to link to anthropology.

In Stockholm there was Börje Hanssen, with his dissertation *Österlen* published in 1952. It was a volume of 561 pages, devoted to a study of a region in the south-eastern corner of Sweden, with the town Simrishamn as its center, as it had been in the 17th and 18th centuries. The materials came in large part out of official regional and local archives. Hanssen’s aim was to portray relationships between town and country. Mostly this involved livelihoods and commerce, rather than the character of personal ties. The organisation of the text could seem bewildering. He noted that he was inspired by the Chicago School of sociology under Robert Ezra Park, but then shifted between terming his study social anthropology and social ecology. In the original edition the subtitle, in translation, was “a study of social anthropological connections under the 1600s and 1700s in south-eastern Scania.” In the bibliography of the dissertation one could find Ferdinand Tönnies, Richard Thurnwald, Bronislaw Malinowski, Robert Lowie, and George Peter Murdock. Hanssen was evidently well-read, but there was no mention of any of his contemporaries in Swedish ethnography.

In 1976, after 24 years, *Österlen* was republished, with a new foreword by the author. Hanssen reminisces here about writing his dissertation in a forest cottage, mostly in a snow-

rich winter, in the light of a kerosene lamp, taking breaks to cut firewood. Hardly any academic contacts here, it would seem. And then he returned to Stockholm, for the public defence of his dissertation.

His work, he notes in that new 1976 foreword, met with “disgust, admiration, confusion.” That public defence event lasted for six hours, very much longer than what would be considered normal. After the appointed examiner, a number of additional critics and commentators stood up from the auditorium floor. Then, in a system where dissertations were not just passed or failed, there was a question whether Hanssen would be accepted as a “docent,” that higher level of approval which would point to a better chance of an academic career. And if a docent, of what? It seems to have taken a year before the Faculty of Humanities (as there was not yet a Faculty of Social Sciences) could vote – 16 votes for a docent of sociology; three for social anthropology; two for sociology, especially cultural anthropology. (True, neither of the anthropologies existed as established disciplines in Sweden at the time.) Then the highest officer of Swedish academic establishments, the University Chancellor, decided on “sociology, especially historical sociology.”³⁰

Thus, Hanssen got a six-year appointment as docent, but was mostly frozen out of any connection with the regular teaching of sociology at Stockholm – the discipline was heading in a different direction there. His *Wikipedia* entry notes that he was a Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study at Stanford in 1957-58 and began a chicken farming enterprise in 1959. This was in a rural area of Sweden, some 200 kilometres west of Stockholm. Evidently it remained his main occupational activity for the rest of his life, even as that second edition of *Österlen*, published on the initiative of the Institute of Folklife Research at Stockholm University, was evidence of a renewed interest in his work. He died in 1979, aged 62.

There was also Bengt Danielsson. Tor Heyerdahl’s 1947 *Kon-Tiki* expedition on a raft across the Pacific was mostly a Norwegian enterprise, and Danielsson was the only Swedish participant. The raft landed on the Raroia island in Polynesia, and Danielsson would soon return there for ethnographic work. His dissertation *Work and Life on Raroia* gave him a sociology doctorate in Uppsala in 1955. But he would then go back to Polynesia, to live on Tahiti with his French-born wife.

He could still be a distant celebrity in Sweden, “Resare-Bengt,” pictured in colourful shirts and an unusually long beard, furthermore the author of a popular children’s book, *Villervalle i Söderhavet*, turned into a television series in the early 1960s. There were other popular travel books as well. On my shelf is *Söderhavskärlek: Polynesiernas sexualliv och familjeförhållanden* (1964; “South Seas love: The sexual life and family relationships of the Polynesians”), but inside it a number of other Danielsson books are listed.

Then Danielsson returned to Sweden in the late 1960s to become director of the Ethnographic Museum in Stockholm. He was the first to hold that office without any university obligations. By then, however, a changing Sweden was no longer so receptive to his personal exotic image, and he was soon disappointed that the construction work for a new museum building did not get quickly underway, so he returned to Polynesia where along with his wife, he became an activist against French nuclear weapons experiments. He

³⁰ In January 1980, just a couple of months after Hanssen’s death, the Institute of Folklife Research at Stockholm University, distributed to a select set of readers, a mimeographed collection, 248 pages long, of statements, correspondence and reviews relating to *Österlen* and its early reception. The collection had been assembled by Hanssen in his last year of life.

died, back in Sweden once more, in 1997.

It seems reasonable to also mention Martin Allwood here. A remarkably rich *Wikipedia* entry describes him as the Swedish-born son of the English school activist Charles Allwood and the Finland-Swedish Baroness Aina, née Åkerhielm. Martin Allwood himself was also active in Sweden and elsewhere in a variety of fields, notably (like several generations in his family) in non-state educational institutions in his home area in south-central Sweden. In Sweden he is probably best remembered for a book co-authored with Inga-Britt Ranemark, *Medelby* (1942) – the first Swedish instance of the genre of local “community studies”, otherwise most developed in the United States. This was not a doctoral dissertation, but the *Wikipedia* entry states that he later earned a dissertation in sociology in 1953 at the Technische Universität Darmstadt, Germany, based on a local study there. While *Medelby* was published a decade before Börje Hanssen’s *Österlen*, it is not among Hanssen’s references.

Medelby was inspired by the pioneering study *Middletown* (1929), by Robert and Helen Lynd. (“Middletown” has been identified as Muncie, Indiana.) Ranemark, the junior author, was identified as holder of a *filosofie kandidat*, bachelor’s degree, and her contributions to the work were apparently rather limited. “Medelby” is a pseudonym; some 80 years after the publication of the book it may be revealed that the community in question is Mullsjö, not so far from the city of Jönköping, where Allwood was born in 1916. (The Allwood family remains involved with the community now.)

The study was planned with the support of Gunnar Myrdal, surely the most prominent social scientist in Sweden at the time. A large part of it is based on interviews and social surveys. Here and there you get to listen to the voice of the locals; this adds colour. *Medelby* has a rich mixed economy. Mining and metal work came early but remained on a small scale. The railway arrived in 1862, but what was probably more important were the local bus lines which tied the surrounding countryside more closely to the community. There are petty entrepreneurs of various kinds, including barbershops and shoemakers who still make shoes. Media habits include radio, newspapers, and popular magazines.

Religious life is divided between the state church and Pentecostals. It is at the beginning of a world war, which is already leaving its mark on consumption. The turn to locally produced gas, “gengas,” for your car is a particular nuisance. Allwood certainly identifies with sociology, although Bronislaw Malinowski’s *Sex and Repression in Savage Society* and Margaret Mead’s *Sex and Temperament in Primitive Society* somehow make it into his bibliography. On the other hand, one could note that Swedish folk life research is not represented there.

And then we are back, almost 20 years later, with Gunnar Boalt, first professor of sociology in Stockholm. In his contribution to *Minnen*, he reminisces about the need to produce textbooks for growing student numbers:

Next time I will lecture about this, and then sit down and write them down and then throw it out as a book. One book per year, sometimes two. One awful year there were four. The books were as they would be. (Stockholms universitet 2005: 35)

At a time when social anthropology may have been seen as a potential expansion area for sociology, there would be a book on this as well. For *Socialantropologi* (1960), Boalt would

have two co-authors, Börje Hanssen and Lars Gustafsson, a graduate student – so Hanssen at least had a toehold here.

There was a division of labour chapter wise between them. The cover of the book shows five dark-skinned, black-haired, minimally clothed individuals, as exotic as you can get.

In just above 200 pages, the book places the beginnings of modern social anthropology with Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown, notes the military uses of anthropology in World War II (drawing on Clyde Kluckhohn's attempt at public anthropology, *Mirror for Man*), apparently finds George Peter Murdock's view of social structure appealing, and devotes a chapter to Bengt Danielsson's dissertation on Raroia from not so many years earlier. There is also a somewhat oddly detailed chapter drawing on Ralph Piddington's study of the Karadjeri, Australian Aborigines, including their male circumcision ceremony. In large part the book draws on comprehensive overviews and textbooks, rather than monographs, but Evans-Pritchard is heard on Azande witchcraft, and Fortes on Tallensi kinship and clanship. Kroeber gets to contribute a great deal on cultural processes.

On the whole, the view of social anthropology here entails studying sideways, at a distance; not an inside view. There is no mention of a discipline of "general and comparative ethnography" existing at certain Swedish universities, including Boalt's own. Perhaps he had not noticed? In any case, things would change in the following two decades. As Boalt co-authored, with Bengt Abrahamsson, an overview of Swedish sociology in *Current Sociology* in 1977, there was no mention of social anthropology.

Finally, we may well note again that some representatives of earlier Swedish anthropology, such as Karl Gustav Izikowitz, Gerhard Lindblom, and Gustaf Bolinder, did attempt some public outreach, with popular books on their excursions. One should not forget here either that in the mid 20th century, travel writing about faraway countries was more generally a genre of creative non-fiction which probably had an influence on understandings of exotic peoples and societies among the Swedish reading public. Some of the writers were primarily naturalists but could also describe the humans who lived next-door to their favourite animals and plants. Rolf Blomberg was an expert on frogs (and had one species named after him) but also had something to say about rain forest Indians in South America. Sten Bergman specialised in "birds of paradise" in New Guinea, but also interacted with local people, and was even adopted by one family. A resulting book had the title *Min far är kannibal* – "my father is a cannibal." Agneta Pleijel, in her semi-autobiographical novel, indeed mentions Bergman and Blomberg as childhood readings which drew her to ethnography. Rather differently, Olle Strandberg, with a doctorate in literature from Uppsala, writing as a journalist for an upmarket Swedish weekly, tended to also take a humorous approach in his books about journeys in Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean. At the same time however, there could also be critical insights into the colonial order in his books, as it had been or still was.³¹

Yet more finally, an event: in the fall of 1953, Robert Redfield, one of the leading anthropologists of the times, came from the University of Chicago to Uppsala to give a brief series of lectures; supported by the Gottesman Foundation of New York, and invited

³¹ We should also remember Ester Blenda Nordström – journalist, doing more or less ethnographic reporting for the Swedish press, in Sweden (concealed as a farm maid, and among the Sami), in the United States (among Swedish immigrants), in Latin America, and in Soviet Siberia, from around World War I and on for a couple of decades or so. Several of her books came out in new editions recently, with fresh afterwords (Nordström 2012, 2015, 2017a, b) – but by 1960, probably hardly any Swedish ethnographer knew about that, or paid any attention. See also Bremmer (2017).

by Torgny Segerstedt, local sociology professor. The lectures became a book, *The Little Community* (1955), an anthropological classic, still well worth reading. Redfield had prepared carefully for these lectures on Swedish research writings, about Sweden. In the preface he thanks Robert Pehrson for informing him about Swedish studies of community life. Pehrson, American anthropologist, had done field research among the Sami in the most north-eastern part of Sweden (Könkämä; see Pehrson 1954).³² And indeed as a courteous and interested guest, Redfield draws a number of times in his lectures on Swedish research and writings, and about Sweden. Per Gräslund, a young Swedish folk life student, had been an exchange student in Chicago, and had recently written a comparative account of two villages on the Swedish east coast, Harstena and Kråkmarö.³³ Redfield discusses that, and he also refers to Börje Hanssen's *Österlen* study, to the Stockholm ethnologist Sigurd Erixon's historical study of the village Kila, to Allwood's *Medelby* community study, and to Karl Nickul and Ernst Manker on the seasonal movements of Skolt Lapps. (Of course, he could hardly have read the Swedish-language publications himself.) It is not that *The Little Community* is a book focusing on Sweden – these references appear in a world-roaming account of different anthropological analytical perspectives, together with comments involving E. E. Evans-Pritchard on the Nuer and the Dinka and Meyer Fortes on the Tallensi; Raymond Firth on Tikopia; Marcel Griaule on Ogotemmel, the old Dogon diviner; Clyde Kluckhohn on the Navajo; James West's American *Plainville*; Redfield's own work in Chan Kom, Mexico; and a great many others. The first end note is to Alfred Kroeber, the second to Sigurd Erixon. Yet Swedish research elsewhere in the world gets a single mention, in passing: setting Erland Nordenskiöld's comparative study of South American artifacts, a quarter-century earlier, next to that of Franz Boas on the features of the bone or ivory needlecases of the Eskimo. Of more recent Swedish ethnography, from perhaps a few blocks away in Uppsala, or from Stockholm an hour's drive or train ride away, there is no mention. Too often the history of Swedish anthropology in the earlier decades of the 20th century indeed seems to be a history of failed connections.³⁴

³² Pehrson may be best known in anthropology for his field research, just slightly later, among the Marri Baluch in Pakistan, during which he tragically died. His widow turned over to his field notes to Fredrik Barth, who edited them and also undertook some brief complementary field work in the same location before publishing the study in Pehrson's (1966) name.

³³ Per Gräslund later shifted to a business career, but when he died in 2015 the obituaries in Swedish newspapers noted that he had maintained a strong interest in the local history of that same area, where his family had its summer home.

³⁴ Apparently, Robert Redfield did have a little spare time at the end of his Swedish visit. In a volume on early American anthropology, in large part devoted to Redfield, James B. Griffin, an early student of his and later a University of Michigan museum director who happened to be in Sweden at the same time, could reminisce about an extensive tour of folk life museums in and around Stockholm, hosted by 'Esteruud', most likely the folk life researcher Albert Eskeröd, co-author with Karl Gustav Izikowitz of that 1959 review of Swedish Anthropology in *American Anthropologist*. "On Sunday, while coming back into Stockholm after seeing many museums, we drove through a large park belonging to a former noble family that held the last of the museums, and a shot rang out. Esteruud turned around and said, 'pheasants!' Redfield in the back seat said, 'Did you say 'peasants?'' Well. By that time the nonspecialists in Swedish folk culture were all ready to see Swedish peasants shot." (Murra 1976: 144)

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