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## **Baltic-Finns and Scandinavians**

### **Comparative-Historical Linguistics and the Early History of the Nordic Region**

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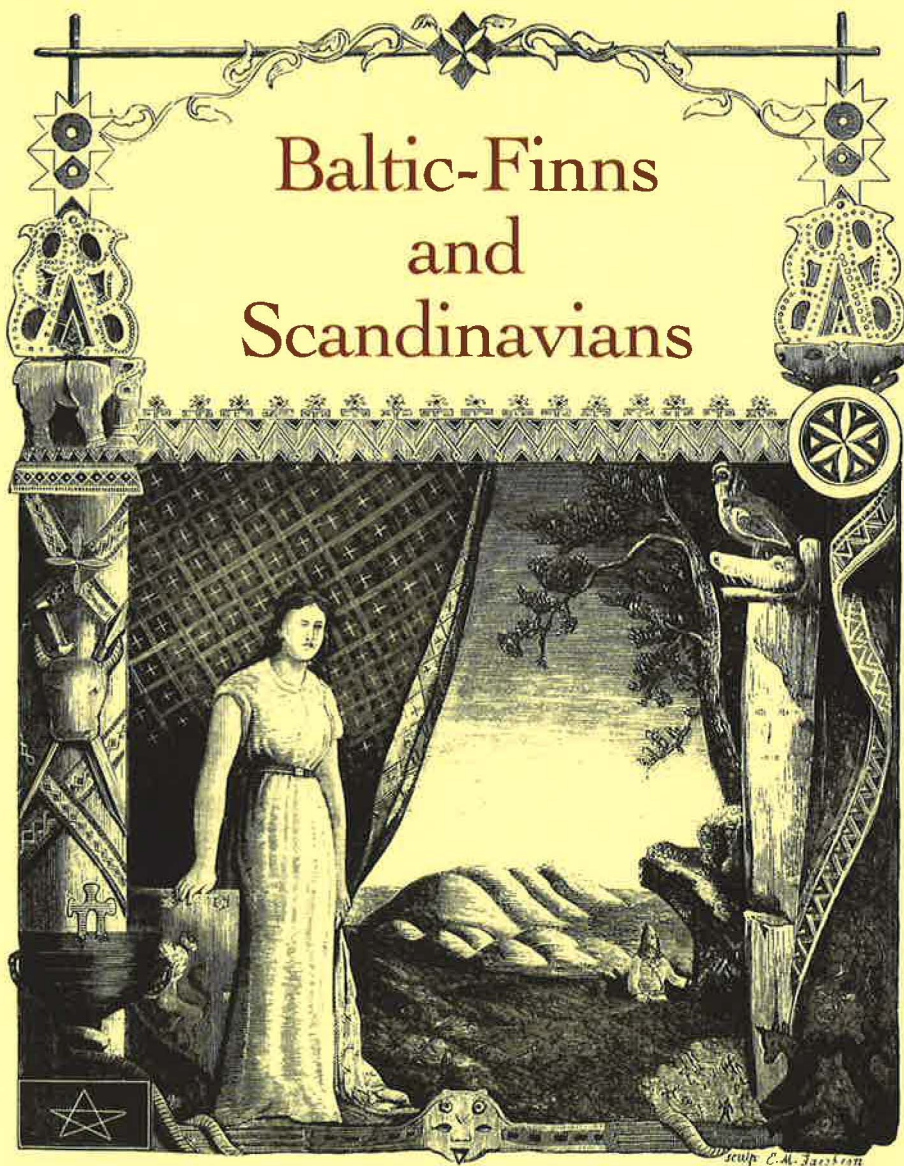
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# Baltic-Finns and Scandinavians



Comparative-Historical Linguistics and the Early History  
of the Nordic Region

Kristian Nilsson

# Baltic-Finns and Scandinavians

*Comparative-Historical Linguistics and the Early History of the  
Nordic region*



LUNDS  
UNIVERSITET

av

Kristian Nilsson

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## Errata

### Corrections

- p.7 Joel Parthemore  
p.66 (see e.g. Dalin 1747:68)  
p.81 (1796-1871)  
p.81 The Icelander Finnur  
p.120 Universities were important  
p.145 (Sommarström 1935:209)  
pp.177-178 (Steenstrup 1895-1897:115-121, 134-135)

### References

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Leopold, Joan, 1989, 'The Last Battle over the Tower of Babel: The controversy between August Friedrich Pott and Franz Kaulen' in Gessinger, Joachim & Wolfert von Rahden (eds), *Theorien vom Ursprung der Sprache*, vol. 1. Walter de Gruyter, Berlin and New York  
Sommarström, Hugo, 1935, 'Rudbeckianen Daniel Juslenius: Den finska nationalismens fader' in *Nordisk Tidskrift*, vol. 11 (new series), no. 3 pp. 203-214  
Steenstrup, Johannes, 1895-1897, 'Hvorlænge have Danske boet i Danmark? Nogle bemærkninger om arkæologisk og historisk Materiales Bevisevne' in *Historisk Tidskrift*, vol. 6 (6<sup>th</sup> series) pp. 114-138

## **Baltic-Finns and Scandinavians**

# Baltic-Finns and Scandinavians

Comparative-Historical Linguistics and the Early History of  
the Nordic Region

Kristian Nilsson



LUNDS UNIVERSITET

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I became interested in the history of linguistics and ethnohistory by attending professor Ago Künnap's lectures on linguistics. Künnap was elaborating a radically different approach to historical linguistics. His ideas inspired me to engage in the dissertation's theme.

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*Lund in January, 2012*  
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# 1 The study

## Outlining the study

### The historical context

During all times, humans have wanted to know as much as possible about the origin of their people. When history was not enough, poetry was used to fill the empty gaps. While modern humanity admires the beauty of the poetry, and its often deep meanings; it also tries with its judging sharpness to enter into the darkness of time. The study of languages guides us in this task.... A look at the various languages can reveal an overview of the origin of peoples, their migrations, their subjugation; and similarly reveal the deepest secrets of the languages, that are so closely related to the deepest spirit of Humankind. (H.C Ørsted 1816:19, translation by kn)

The present study begins from Danish natural scientist Hans Christian Ørsted's review of Rasmus Rask's famous prize essay *Undersøgelse om det gamle Nordiske eller Islandske Sprogs Oprindelse* ("Investigation of the Origin of the Old Norse or Icelandic Language"). In his essay, Ørsted reveals the optimism many scholars of his time felt about the new comparative-historical approach to linguistics and its potential for ethnohistorical research. The new approach was based on methods that, by the standards of the early nineteenth century, were regarded as scientific. Earlier ethnohistorical thinking had often been caught up in unscientific myths and speculations. By contrast, the new approach would – it was hoped – bring clarity and reliability to the early history of the peoples of the world.

Rask's groundbreaking research in comparative-historical linguistics was – like the work of many other linguists during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries – not a study of languages for their

own sake. The linguists did not separate languages from their speakers: they studied the history of a language to reveal the history of its speakers. The study and comparison of languages was supposed to reveal the broader histories of the peoples of the world (Morpurgo-Davies 1975:611; Campbell & Poser 2008:35-36). The new scientific methods of comparative-historical linguistics provided nineteenth century scholars with ethnohistorical narratives about ancient peoples. These methods – which will henceforth be referred to as *linguistic ethnohistory* – became useful for the study of early history, as the new science exceeded the frontiers of history which could be examined with the help of written documents.

The invention of comparative-historical linguistics and of linguistic ethnohistory led to the establishment of the scientific fields of Finno-Ugric studies – the study of Finno-Ugric languages and Finno-Ugric peoples – and Indo-European studies. These new fields became generally accepted and were used to study widely debated questions about the early history of northern Europe.

Rask's book was published at a time of great change in many areas of science and of European society in general. It was a period of transition – from Enlightenment to Romanticism; but also of secularisation, wherein the Church and the Bible were increasingly challenged. Arguably the era of modern nationalism began with the French Revolution. That nationalism would, in time, demand new types of national narratives and historiographies.

### **Aims and concepts of the study**

The present study investigates how the invention of comparative-historical linguistics affected European ethnohistoric thought, and how this process altered ethnohistorical research on the early history of the Nordic region. Since the investigation is Finno-Ugric, I chose the case study to be relevant both for the discipline history of Finno-Ugric studies and for the larger field of intellectual history: the case study examines what impact the inventions of comparative-historical linguistics had on narratives about the early history of the Nordic region.

The compound character of the study is reflected in its major aims: first, to describe the influence that the introduction of comparative-historical linguistics and linguistic ethnohistory had on the larger European debate over ethnohistoric thinking; second, to examine how the new ethnohistoric ideas affected scholarly discussions on the early history of the Nordic region, with a focus on the relations between linguistic Baltic-Finns and Scandinavians. The key question of the study is then formulated from these aims:

*How did the breakthrough in comparative-historical linguistics and linguistic ethnohistory affect scholarly ideas and hypotheses about the early history of the Nordic region?*

This is a complex question that includes several central concepts.

*Scholarly ideas and hypotheses* are texts produced by scholars working within established academic institutions, writing for an audience primarily of colleagues.

*Early history* describes that time period in the Nordic region before the spread of Christianity and the incorporation of the area into the larger Roman Catholic culture of the West. Early history can be contrasted with prehistory, which is often defined as Colin Renfrew does: “‘prehistory’ refers to that span of human existence before the availability of those written records with which recorded history begins” (Renfrew 2007: vii).

*The Nordic region* (“Norden” in the Scandinavian languages and German, “Pohjola” in Finnish, and “Põhjamaad” in Estonian) is a well established political-territorial concept, which for purposes of this study includes Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Iceland, Finland, and Estonia. The last country is included because one focus of the study is on the linguistic border between Scandinavian and Baltic-Finnish languages.

Today the main linguistic border between Baltic-Finn and Scandinavian stretches from northern Norway and Sweden, via the western and southern coastal areas in Finland, to the nearly extinct zone in northwestern Estonia and in the Estonian archipelago. Con-

temporary Baltic-Finnish-speaking populations live in Estonia, Finland, northwestern Russia, northern Sweden, northern Norway, and (a few locations in) Latvia. Contemporary Scandinavian-speaking populations live in Denmark, Norway, Sweden, coastal areas of western and southern Finland, northern Germany, Iceland, and a number of islands in the North Sea. A few Swedish speakers remain on the western coast and some islands of Estonia.

By including Estonia in the Nordic region, I can add an additional linguistic/cultural border segment to the border between Baltic-Finnish and Scandinavian (northern Germanic) languages. The border has typically been drawn between Baltic-Finnish and southern Germanic languages. This linguistic/cultural border segment shares some similarities with the Scandinavian-Baltic-Finnish border, but there are significant differences in e.g. the status of the representatives of various ethnic groups. However, the German-Baltic-Finnish border lies outside the scope of the present study.

When studying the history of ethnohistorical thinking, one realises that the concept of ethnohistory has had various meanings over time. Ethnohistory can be constructed from various perspectives with a variety of building blocks. It is important for a comparative study about ethnohistorical ideas to systematise different types of ethnohistorical approaches into a taxonomy that can support the investigation at hand. In this section, I present various ethnohistoric approaches towards early ethnohistory, as found in the source material.

*Literary ethnohistory* uses written sources to describe ethnohistory.

*Biblical ethnohistory* is similar to literary history but is founded on a specific text, the Bible, which differs from ethnohistorical texts in general. In addition to providing ethnohistoric material, it includes an epistemological and ontological framework that answers questions about e.g. the origin of the world, humankind, language, and linguistic variation.

*Lingual ethnohistory* gives language a decisive ethnohistoric role by equating language with people. It claims that the history of a



people can be reconstructed from the history of its language.

*Linguistic ethnohistory* is a special case of lingual ethnohistory founded on the linguistic classifications of comparative-historical linguistics.

*Physical-anthropological* ethnohistory regards the human body as the primary guide for the classification of humankind into different peoples.

The first and second methods are founded primarily on literary sources; the third and fourth methods are founded primarily on language; the fifth is founded primarily on physical appearance. These methods are to be understood as methodological ideal types: ethnohistorians often have not discussed their methods as explicitly as the taxonomy suggests.

The chronological heart of the present study is the breakthrough in comparative-historical linguistics in the 1810s and 1820s, although the study covers a much wider time period from the Middle Ages until 1900. Its chronological focus may be seen more broadly to include the time period 1770-1900. Both in the 1770s and at the turn of the twentieth century, one finds very important debates about the early history of the Nordic region.

In the 1770s, various scientific positions were elaborated over whether the indigenous population of the Nordic region was Baltic-Finn, Scandinavian, or Saami. The positions were separated by methodological considerations of which sources on early Nordic history were reliable.

At the turn of the twentieth century, an important debate between Swedish and Finnish ethnohistorians took place, over the ethnic character of the Stone Age in Finland. The Swedes tried to connect the Stone Age culture of southwestern Finland to the analogous culture in Sweden, and to treat this culture as representing the forebears of contemporary Swedes. The Finns regarded such connections as plainly wrong. Their debate demonstrates the methodological differences between mainstream Swedish and Finnish ethnohistorical research into early history. The year 1900 makes a logical endpoint for the study, as the new century began with such

new ethnohistorical inventions as genetics, which had a significant impact.

### **Comparative-historical linguistics and linguistic ethnohistory**

The breakthrough in comparative-historical linguistics is sometimes tied to János Sajnovics' (1733-1785) innovative works in the 1770s by and Sámuel Gyarmathi's (1751-1830) in the 1790s; but the breakthrough is more usually tied to works in the 1810s and 1820s by Rasmus Rask (1787-1832), Franz Bopp (1791-1867) and Jacob Grimm (1785-1863). Rask and his colleagues elaborated new, diachronic methods for the study of languages as e.g. in the Indo-European, Finno-Ugric, and Semitic language families – where languages within a family were supposed to have originated from a common *proto-language*. Their ideas became widely accepted and have remained so among mainstream comparative linguists into the twenty-first century.

Comparative-historical linguistics is a lively scientific field. J.F. Ellis provides a useful definition: comparative-historical linguistics / comparative philology “may be defined as the comparison of languages (through comparison of items within them) that are, or are assumed to be, genetically related, with the object of establishing such relationships and reconstructing original forms, from which derivation may be made” (quoted in Burrow 1966:152). Academic sub-fields of comparative-historical linguistics such as Finno-Ugric and Indo-European studies are founded on a belief in languages.

Finnish linguist Juha Janhunen describes the field of Uralic studies (where the Uralic language family includes Finno-Ugric and Samoyedic languages) as follows:

- (1) First, the Uralic languages are mutually related in the context of a language family;
- (2) second, the internal relations within the Uralic family are the result of diachronic divergence, which can be described as a family tree;
- (3) third, the diachronic divergence presupposes a more or less uniform prehistorical proto-language; and
- (4) fourth, the protolanguage, although only frag-

mentarily known, must have been a natural language with a limited geographical distribution, i.e. a homeland. (Janhunen 2001:30-31)

Janhunen believes that a Uralic proto-language existed and that the contemporary languages of the Uralic language family can be traced back to it. He does not explicitly require that the proto-language be understood as having been spoken by a specific people, but it seems an obvious thing to conclude.

The idea that the languages reconstructed by comparative-historical linguistics represent actual peoples as speakers of those languages was firmly supported by the first generation of comparative-historical linguists. The idea is still supported by many contemporary scholars, such as the archaeologist J. P. Mallory (1989) and the linguist Larry Trask (1996:239). Mallory summarises the view:

Once we acknowledge that the historically attested Indo-European languages must derive from an earlier common or Proto-Indo-European language, logic also requires us to accept the existence of prehistoric communities which spoke that language. (Mallory 1989:144)

This train of thought leads to the idea that – in principle – the entire historical process from the proto-language/people to the contemporary language/people can be reconstructed. Implicit in this is the idea of a close relation between language and people. The methodology of comparative-historical linguistics accounts for the existence of ethnic groups. The reconstructed history of the languages of e.g. the Finno-Ugric language family becomes equated with the history of the corresponding Finno-Ugric peoples. As mentioned above, this approach to ethnohistoric research is called linguistic ethnohistory. It is defined in the present study as follows:

*Linguistic ethnohistory* is a specific method of ethnohistory founded on the principles of comparative-historical linguistics. It

gives language a decisive ethnohistorical role by equating language with people and claiming that the history of a people can be reconstructed from the history of its language. Comparative-historical linguistics does not allow new languages to originate from the merger of languages. Therefore, linguistic ethnohistory does not, in principle, accept tangled ethnohistories.

The fields of traditional Finno-Ugric and Indo-European studies are organised according to neo-grammarians *Sprachwissenschaft* (in Swedish: *Språkvetenskap*), which consists of two separate fields of research: philology and linguistics (Malmberg 1962:1-4). Scholars working within *Sprachwissenschaft* linguistic ethnohistory to reconstruct the histories of Finno-Ugric and Indo-European speaking peoples.

### **The structure of the study**

The aims of the study are, once more:

(1) to describe the influence that the breakthrough of comparative-historical linguistics and linguistic ethnohistory had on the larger European debate over ethnohistorical thinking, and

(2) to examine how the new ethnohistorical ideas affected scholarly discussions of the early history of the Nordic region, with a focus on the relations between linguistic Baltic-Finns and Scandinavians.

These aims divide the study into two parts. The first part follows the introductory chapter and consists of chapters Two through Five. Chapter Two includes an overview of how, during the Early Modern Age, through various processes of secularization, Biblical ethnohistory gradually lost its dominance over European ethnohistorical thought. Chapter Three discusses how comparative-historical linguistics emerged from earlier attempts at classifying languages genetically and typologically. It contains an overview how the Finno-Ugric and Indo-European language families were discovered and reconstructed. These language families were sometimes organised into larger ones. Chapter Four starts from how comparative-historical linguistics laid the foundation for linguistic ethno-

history. The new ethnohistorical approach was successful, and auxiliary sciences of linguistic ethnohistory emerged. Chapter Five presents ethnohistoric challenges to linguistic ethnohistory in the form of alternative ethnohistories that focus on physical appearance or cultural characteristics.

In the second part, the focus changes from intellectual and disciplinary history to a regional study of research on the early history of the Nordic region. The focus of the Nordic case study is on ethnic Baltic-Finns (i.e., the speakers of the Baltic-Finn languages of the Finno-Ugric language family) and (i.e., the speakers of the Scandinavian languages of the Indo-European language family). Part Two is divided chronologically and geographically into four chapters, with the breakthrough in comparative-historical linguistics serving as the chronological nexus between chapters Seven and Eight. Chapters Six and Seven cover the debate over Scandinavia, Finland, Estonia, and the Saami regions up till the breakthrough in comparative-historical linguistics. Chapters Eight and Nine cover the ethnohistorical debates about the region during the nineteenth century.

The concluding chapter consists of three subsections. The first sums up chapters Two through Nine. The second describes how the changing political landscape and new ethnohistorical approaches during the nineteenth century affected ethnohistorical interpretations of the relations between Scandinavians and Baltic-Finns. The third looks forward towards further research.

## **Earlier research and sources**

### **Political and intellectual changes around 1800**

The breakthrough in comparative-historical linguistics occurred during a period of political turmoil and great changes in European thought. The great political changes during and after the Napoleonic Wars affected ideas and hypotheses about the early history of

the Nordic region. In 1809, Sweden lost Finland to Russia and was partly compensated with Norway, which was forced into a union with Sweden in 1814. Denmark was compensated for the loss of Norway with the last Swedish possession in Germany: Swedish Pomerania. Denmark, however, immediately traded the area away for Prussia's Lauenburg. Finland became a grand duchy with significant freedom within the Russian empire. Meanwhile Norway gained greater sovereignty in the new union than it had within the Dano-Norwegian union. In contrast to the other countries in the Nordic region, Estonia was less affected by the Napoleonic Wars and remained within the Baltic provinces of the Russian empire.

The political and intellectual changes in the Nordic region occurred in the context of the shift from the Early Modern to the Modern Age in European history. The accompanying radical change in European intellectual thought has gained the attention of many scholars. In *Les Mots et les choses: Une archéologie des sciences humaines* (1966), the French philosopher Michel Foucault examines how significantly the sciences of biology, economics, and linguistics differed between the *epistémè* of the Classical Age in the eighteenth century and that of the Modern Age in the nineteenth century. Another work that examines the great intellectual changes around the turn of the nineteenth century is *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (1972-1990), wherein German conceptual historians investigate how the meaning and use of concepts have changed over time. Editor Reinhart Koselleck and his colleagues claim that the nexus of these changes in German conceptual history can be located around the year 1800; however, they do not regard the change as being as abrupt as does Foucault. Instead, they outline a long transitional period of a *Sattelzeit* stretching from the mid-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century.

The transition from Early Modern to Modern Age is of great relevance to the present study because the breakthrough in comparative-historical linguistics occurred during this time. That breakthrough marks the nexus of the study, which, as said, extends over the time period 1770-1900.

An important assumption of the present study is that the new approach of linguistic ethnohistory filled a need for renewal – or even replacement – of older ethnohistorical approaches. Linguistic ethnohistory gained influence due to a general trend toward the secularisation of European historical thought. The decline in Biblical authority over Western historical thought is usually thought to relate to that process of secularisation, which is defined by the historian Peter Reill as “...a process whereby particular sacred traditions and certainties lose their sacredness and self-evident certainty” (Reill 1975:89).

The secularisation of European historical thought was accompanied by increasing criticism of belief in the literal historical truth of the Book of Genesis. According to Paolo Rossi (1984), the Bible gradually lost its role of providing the authoritative answers to existential questions about the origin of the world, humankind, language, and ethnic diversity. Such decreasing influence of biblical ethnohistory is described by Colin Kidd in *British Identities Before Nationalism: Ethnicity and Nationhood in the Atlantic World, 1600-1800* (1999). Of particular relevance to the present study is Kidd’s discussion of how the system of *ethnic theology* during the Early Modern Age was replaced by other ethnohistorical approaches, when the Book of Genesis lost its hegemonic influence. Ethnic theology was founded on the truth of the Book of Genesis, while secularised ethnohistorical thinking could include such different ethnohistorical ideas as the polygenesis of humanity and could consider far longer time lines for human existence than allowed by Biblical chronology. Kidd’s definition of ethnic theology is similar to the definition of Biblical ethnohistory used in the present study. In *Aryans and British India* (1997), Thomas Trautmann offers a related discussion on historiography based on Genesis, referring to the historical method as *Mosaic ethnology*.

In *Imagined Communities* (2006), Benedict Anderson investigates the role of linguistics, and the creation of “print languages”, in the emergence of nationalism. He claims that the emergence of nationalism should be understood within a larger context of secularisation.

The decaying influence of the Bible was replaced by the new ideas of nationalism, partly since that nationalism emerged – according to Anderson (2006:12) – through secularisation from the “erosion of religious certainties”, partly due to the potential for the content of (ethnic) nationalism to be manufactured by the new ethnohistoric methods emanating from comparative-historical linguistics. The linguists were supposed to reveal authentic history; their work could then be used for emerging nationalism. Anderson refers in particular to Hugh Seton-Watson when he describes “vernacularizing lexicographers, grammarians, philologists, and litterateurs” and how the “energetic activities of these professional intellectuals were central to the shaping of nineteenth-century European nationalisms” (Anderson 2006:71).

### **Linguistics and linguistic ethnohistory in the history of ideas**

Before presenting an overview of earlier research of direct relevance to the present study, I will make some short remarks on the influence of the history of linguistics and linguistic ethnohistory on broader debates in the history of ideas and the history of science. Although the history of linguistics has become a well-established field within linguistics, it is not especially influential in discussions of the history of ideas. Perhaps the importance of linguistics is even declining. The *Dictionary of The History of Ideas* (1973-1974) includes an extensive article by Henry M. Hoenigswald on the history of linguistics over the centuries. In contrast, there is no equivalent article in the *New Dictionary of the History of Ideas* (2005), although the dictionary does contain a couple of largely US-centric articles where the authors focus on the history of linguistics in the twentieth century. In any case, the importance of the history of linguistics on intellectual history has changed considerably between the two dictionaries.

The history of linguistics – as well as its relation to ethnohistory within a larger historical context – is not well researched. In *In Babel's Shadow: Language, Philology, and the Nation in Nineteenth-century Germany* (2008), historian Tuska Beneš finds that the history of



linguistics is far less examined in connection to ethnohistoric issues in intellectual history than are e.g. anthropology or psychology. Beneš finds this surprising, since “language scholars contributed to the rise of European nationalism and the emergence of nineteenth-century notions of race and ethnicity” (Beneš 2008:4). This topic should be of great interest for intellectual historians studying the history of ethnohistory, ethnology, and anthropology; but it has failed to gain wide attention.

After linguistics, the second component of linguistic ethnohistory is ethnology, in a wide sense. Dutch anthropologist Han F. Vermeulen finds the study of the historiography of ethnology – within the larger context of intellectual history – almost as neglected as linguistics as outlined by Beneš. He describes interest towards the history of anthropology — the historiography of race studies — as lively, interest towards the study of ethnology — the historiography of peoples — as far less so. The trend is global. Even in Germany – where, in the eighteenth century, the science of ethnography was invented – the history of the discipline has been largely overlooked (Vermeulen 2006).

Thomas Trautmann offers one possible reason for the lack of interest in the history of linguistically based ethnology: linguistic ethnohistory works within the larger master figure of the branching tree of nations. This is a very different approach to the relations between peoples compared with the established dichotomy of *self-other* – which can be traced back to Hegel but finds its modern form in the works of Claude Lévi-Strauss. Ethnic relations within the “segmentary” thinking of the tree model are conceptualised quite differently: “instead of difference it assumes sameness (kinship), which it then partions along a calculus of distance. Thus every position within the segmentary universe is both self and other at one and the same time, but the system allows for infinite modulations between oneself and the most distant point in that universe” (Trautmann 1997:10). Contemporary historical-comparative linguists still work within the segmentary understanding of relations between languages (and between ethnic groups); but this view is in

sharp contrast to the mainstream *self-other* understanding of differences between ethnic groups, as found among contemporary ethnologists and social anthropologists.

For Scandinavian readers, Beneš's question – about the lack of linguistics influence in relation to larger intellectual trends in intellectual historical research – is, to some extent, answered by historian of religion Stefan Arvidsson in *Aryan Idols: Indo-European Mythology as Ideology and Science* (2006) and by historian of ideas Sten Högnäs. In his article *Ett indoeuropeiskt Europa? Språkvetenskapen och gränserna* (2007), Högnäs discusses several of the issues that Beneš points out. He describes the strong connection between linguistics research and German nationalism, the importance of philology to the creation of the ethnic entities that formed around newly constructed languages, and the role given the Indo-European languages/peoples in defining an ethnic European identity. In his article – as covered, more thoroughly, in his book *Kustens och Skogarnas Folk: Om synen på svenskt och finskt lynne* (1995) – Högnäs takes a closer look at the linguistic and ethnic border between Swedes and Finns.

This short presentation of research on the importance of comparative-historical linguistics and linguistic ethnohistory in the European history of ideas has shown, I hope, that the field is not very extensive. The present study is structured with the aim of filling some of the gaps presented in the above-mentioned works.

### **Earlier linguistic and ethnohistorical research**

Since the study takes a historiographic approach, the relevant literature from earlier research will, to large extent, consist of works in the historiography of various disciplines related to ethnohistorical research on the early history of the Nordic region: e.g., in linguistics, history, archaeology, and ethnology.

The history of linguistics forms a large sub-discipline within linguistics. Important general works on the history of linguistics include, for a universal history of linguistics, Sylvain Auroux's *History of the Language Sciences* (2000-2006); for the history of Finno-

Ugric linguistics, Günther Stip's *Finnisch-Ugrische Sprachforschung: Von der Renaissance bis zum Neupositivismus* (1990); and, for the history of linguistics in the Nordic region, Hovdhaugen et al's *The History of Linguistics in the Nordic Countries* (2000). In *The History of Linguistics in Europe: From Plato to 1600* (2003), Vivian Law examines linguistic research up to the Early Modern Age, while in *History of Linguistics: Nineteenth Century Linguistics* (1998), Morpurgo-Davies focuses the century in which the breakthrough in comparative-historical linguistics took place.

Research into loan words has played an important role in ethnohistorical studies. In the article *Beröringarna mellan germanska och finska språk: Ihre som tidig samlare av gemensamma ord. Hallenberg och Geijer som banbrytare i fråga om låneriktningen* (1935), Arnold Nordling examines how linguists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries explained, according to which theory of early Nordic ethnohistory they supported, the direction of loan-word movement between the Baltic-Finnish, Saami, and Scandinavian languages.

The precise development of the science of *Sprachwissenschaft* (and of linguistic ethnohistory) is presented by Kurt Jankowsky in *The Neogrammarians: A Re-evaluation of Their Place in the Development of Linguistic Science* (1972) and by Hiroyuki Eto in *Philologie vs. Sprachwissenschaft: Historiographie einer Begriffsbestimmung im Rahmen der Wissenschaftsgeschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (2003).

The invention of linguistic ethnohistory initiated intense activity, whereby scientists tried to answer questions on the the early history and ethnogenesis of peoples and language families. Lothar Kilian's *Zum Ursprung der Indogermanen: Forschungen aus Linguistik, Prähistorie und Anthropologie* (1980), J.P. Mallory's *In Search of the Indo-Europeans: Language, Archaeology and Myth* (1989), and Valev Uibopuu's *Finnougrierna och deras språk: Kapitel om de finsk-ugriska folkens förflutna och nutid* (1988) all provide useful overviews of the process of locating the Indo-European and Finno-Ugric proto-homes and tracing the history of these peoples. Aulis Joki's *Uralier und Indogermanen: Die älteren Berührungen zwischen den uralischen und indogermanischen Sprachen* (1973) is, in part, a historiographic study

of discussions on early contacts between Finno-Ugrians and Indo-Europeans. The debate over these connections is brought into the twenty-first century in *Early Contacts between Uralic and Indo-European: Linguistic and Archaeological Considerations* (2001), edited by Christian Carpelan, Asko Parpola, and Petteri Koskikallio.

Ruth Römer's *Sprachwissenschaft und Rassenideologie in Deutschland* (1985) discusses the emergence of auxiliary disciplines connected to linguistic ethnohistory, within such scientific fields as comparative mythology, physical anthropology, ethnology, and archaeology; similar discussion can be found in Stefan Arvidsson's aforementioned *Aryan Idols: Indo-European Mythology as Ideology and Science*.

The process of the secularisation of Western historical thought stretched over centuries before the Book of Genesis was abandoned as the definitive source on the early history of humankind. Arno Borst's monumental *Der Turmbau von Babel: Geschichte der Meinungen über Ursprung und Vielfalt der Sprachen und Völker* (1957-1963) covers the re-interpretation of the story of Babel, with its connections to questions about linguistic variety. In *Die Säkularisierung der universalhistorischen Auffassung: Zum Wandel des Geschichtsdenkens im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert* (1960), Klempert describes how the universal history of the Bible became increasingly debated and questioned from the sixteenth century onwards.

The Bible lost its authority partly through Bible-critical theological research, as described in Hans-Joachim Kraus' *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments* (1969). The loss of Biblical ethnohistory's authority paved the way for alternative ethnohistorical approaches, whereby linguistic ethnohistory could complement Biblical ethnohistory so long as it did not challenge any of Biblical ethnohistory's fundamental beliefs. In *The Languages of Paradise: Race, Religion, and Philology in the Nineteenth Century* (1992), Maurice Olender examines how the philological aspect of the new linguistics smoothly continued a tradition of Bible-critical research.

Historiographies on early Nordic history are usually limited to

scholars from one country. Gustaf Löw's *Sveriges Forntid i Svensk Historieskrivning I-II* (1908-1910) offers a comprehensible overview of the historiography of early Swedish history from the Middle Ages to the twentieth century. No comparable studies are available on the historiography of the early history of other Nordic countries, although various positions on the early history of the Nordic region are briefly discussed in such works as Jørgensen's *Historieforskning og historieskrivning i Danmark indtil aar 1800* (1960) and *Historiens studium i Danmark i det 19. Aarhundrede* (1943), in Dahl's *Norsk historieforskning i 19. og 20. århundre* (1990), and in Päiviö Tommila's *Suomen historian kirjoitus: tutkimuksen historia* (1989). Georg von Rauch's *Geschichte der deutschbaltischen Geschichtschreibung* (1986) presents German ideas on the early history of the Baltic Provinces. In the article *Giants, Dwarfs or Lapps? A Discussion of the Origins of the Sami People and the First Inhabitants of Scandinavia and Lapland in the 17th to 19th centuries* (2000), Risto Pulkkinen provides a short introduction to ideas and hypotheses on the early history of Northern Europe, especially as it involves the Saami.

Erkki Urpilainen's *Algot Scarin ja gööttiläisen historiankirjoituksen mureneminen Ruotsissa 1700-luvun alkupuolella* (1993), Wallethe's *Sagens svenskar: Synen på vikingatiden och de isländska sagorna under 300 år*. (2004), Jensen's *Forntid i historien: En arkeologihistorisk studie av synen på forntid och forntida lämningar, från medeltiden till och med förupplysningen* (2002), and Arto Latvakangas' *Riksgrundarna: Varjagproblemet i Sverige från runinskrifter till enhetlig historisk tolkning* (1995) offer studies on a specific time period or scholar. Ann-Mari Ivars and Lena Huldén's *När kom svenskarna till Finland?* (2002) examines ideas on early Swedish ethnohistory in Finland, as seen from a wide range of ethnohistorical approaches.

A need for renewal of national and ethnic histories of the Nordic region arose during the second decade of the nineteenth century due to the great political changes taking place in Northern Europe. In his article "*Fornforskning är att vilja uphlyfta nationalesprit*": *Om forntidsuppfattning och minnesvård i 1800-talets nationalisering av Sverige* (2009), Ola Jensen describes how the loss of Finland forced

Swedish historians to formulate a new approach to research on early history; the earlier close relationship to the Finns was replaced by identification to a shared Scandinavian and Old Norse history. Within the new political context, archaeology and its study of pre-historical remains gained substantial importance in reformulating the early history of the Scandinavian countries.

In addition to the geographical delimitation used in the present study, many other divisions are possible, including the whole or parts of the Nordic region. A delimitation of the Nordic region or *Norden* draws a sharp border between the northern and southern parts of the Baltic Sea. According to some scholars, such a separation ignores a larger geographical region that one might call the Baltic Sea area. David Kirby's *The Baltic World* (1990, 1995), Matti Klinge's *The Baltic World* (1998) and Kristian Gerner and Klas-Göran Karlsson's *Nordens Medelhav: Östersjöområdet som historia, myt och projekt* (2000) all examine the larger Baltic Sea area. Nils Blomkvist defines "the Baltic Rim" as "the drainage basin of the Baltic" – which leaves out Norway and Western Jutland but includes large areas of Poland and Russia (Blomkvist 2005:11-12). In *Koordinaten des Nordens: Wissenschaftliche Konstruktionen einer europäischen Region: 1770-1850* (2004), German historian Hendriette Kliemann examines the concept of *Norden* and how, up to the 1850s, the geographical understanding of *Norden* had very different meanings.

Nordic ethnohistorical research has been influenced by ideas and trends from Europe. The influence of German scholars has been so large that Swedish historian of ideas Sten Lindroth has described Sweden as being a German cultural province for several centuries after the Reformation (Lindroth 1975:206). Sometimes intellectual flows have been reversed, as with German interest in Scandinavian mythology in the early nineteenth century, or the influence that archaeologist Gustaf Montelius had on Gustaf Kossinna's "settlement" archaeology (Baudou 2004:183-184).

Although the influence from Germany *has* been strong, nevertheless German ethnohistorical thinking during the time period 1770-1900 differed from Scandinavian thought. German scholars

usually took a more inclusive ethnohistorical approach, including all Germanic peoples/languages into a larger, shared Germanic history. Scandinavian scholars were more exclusive, focusing on the ethnohistory of a specific kingdom or, more broadly, of Scandinavia. German scholars usually took a positive, inclusive view towards Scandinavians, while Scandinavians often drew a sharp defensive line between themselves and the Germans. In *Deutsche Germanen-Ideologie: Vom Humanismus bis zur Gegenwart* (1970) and *Barbar, Germane, Arier: Die Suche nach der Identität der Deutschen* (1994), German literary historian Klaus von See examines these processes and relations.

### Sources

The main focus of the present study is on works on early ethnohistory of the Nordic region by academic scholars during the time period 1770-1900. These works can be regarded as primary sources; but, as they often include commentaries, historiographies, and references to other literary works on ethnohistory, they can also be used as secondary sources.

Gerhard Schöning's *Afhandling om de Norskes og endeel andre Nordiske Folkes Oprindelse* (1769), Peter Suhm's *Om de Nordiske Folks ældste Oprindelse* (1770), and Lagerbring's *Swea Rikes Historia: Från de äldsta tider till de närvarande: Första delen, som innefattar Rikets öden, ifrån dess början till år 1060* (1769), and August Ludwig von Schlözer's *Allgemeine nordische Geschichte* (1771) all important historiographical works from around the year 1770. About twenty years later in Finland through two articles in the fourth issue of *Kongl. Vitterhets historie och antiquitets akademien's handlingar* (1795), Henrik Gabriel Porthan presented a novel approach to the ethnohistory in Finland that gained widespread attention.

With respect to the time period in which comparative-historical linguistics and linguistic ethnohistory were invented, Rask's *Undersøgelse om det gamle Nordiske eller Islandske Sprogs Oprindelse* (1816) and Jacob Grimm's *Geschichte der deutschen Sprache* (1848) are both relevant to the present study. Friedrich Rühls in *Finland och*

*Dess Invånare* (1811) and Eric Gustaf Geijer in *Svea rikets hävder* (1825) represent two historians influenced to some degree by the new ideas.

The new inventions in linguistic ethnohistory and auxiliary sciences meant that new approaches questioning traditional ethnohistorical thinking and sources could be published starting in the 1830s. Central works include Sven Nilsson's *Skandinaviska Nordens ur-innevånare: ett försök i komparativa Ethnogafien och ett bidrag till människoslägtets utvecklings historia* (1838), Keyser's *Om Nordmændenes Herkomst og Folke-Slægtskab* (1839), and Jacob Worsaae's *Danmarks oldtid oplyst ved oldsager og gravhøje* (1843).

A new wave of ethnohistorical thinking began among Scandinavian ethnohistorians in the 1870s and continued beyond 1900. Central works include Gustav von Düben's *Om Lappland och lapparne* (1873) and Oscar Montelius' *Om våra förfäders invandring till Norden* (1884). Ethnohistorians in Finland and Estonia looked towards Scandinavia for methodological guidance; meanwhile original ethnohistoric thought can be found in e.g. Alfred Hackman's *Die ältere Eisenzeit in Finnland* (1905).

As the dissertation falls within Finno-Ugristic studies, it may seem surprising that the bibliography contains a relatively small proportion of sources written in Finno-Ugric languages. This is partly because Estonian and Finnish became established as scientific languages much later than the Scandinavian languages and such international languages as English, German, and French. Of the Baltic-Finnish languages, Finnish became an official language of Finland in 1862, while Estonian gained official status with the establishment of the Estonian republic after the First World War. During the time-period 1770-1900 – the focus for the present study – Estonian scholars wrote almost exclusively in German, Finnish scholars in Swedish or German (although the amount of ethnohistorical literature written in Finnish rose considerably during the second half of the nineteenth century).

In an international context, Estonian and Finnish are regarded as small languages. Therefore, the research on the history of these



languages and their speakers has often been written in an international language, usually German. The leading Finno-Ugric journal, *Finnisch-ugrische Forschungen*, founded in 1901 in Finland, publishes in German. Thus, the dominance of publications written in Indo-European languages is reflected in the bibliography.

## **Issues in ethnohistorical research**

### **Peoples and collective ethnic entities**

As has already been said, ethnohistory is a broad concept that can be elaborated through a wide variety of methods focusing on such specific features of a people as language or culture. Ethnohistorical methods can also differ in choice of source material. Some methods rely solely on written sources; others prefer other sources, such as spoken language or archaeological findings. The object for ethnohistory is the ethnic group, often referred to as a *people*. A people is an ethnic collective entity, clearly separable from *nation*, in this study is as a political collective entity representing the members of an existing or potential nation-state.

The ethnic group/people can be treated as an *objective-essential* or a *processual* concept. The idea of defining a people by objective characteristics has been undermined since the Second World War, especially since the 1960s: ethnic groups are thought to come into existence through social processes rather than being essential entities defined by objective criteria. In his introduction to *Ethnic groups and boundaries: The social organization of culture difference* (1969), Norwegian ethnologist Fredrik Barth describes an ethnic group as constructed and maintained through its borders to other ethnic groups. Despite his understanding of the importance of those socially constructed borders, Barth has been criticised as objectivistic about culture by scholars who hold a more processual view (Wallerström 2006a:16, 60-61).

One could argue not just that peoples are primarily processes but that they are altogether the construction of the human mind.

The existence of distinct proto-peoples can be regarded as a result of *reification*. As defined by Berger and Luckmann, “reification is the apprehension of human phenomena as if they were things, that is, in non-human or possibly supra-human terms. Another way of saying this is that reification is the apprehension of the products of human activity *as if* they were something else than human products – such as facts of nature, results of cosmic laws, or manifestations of divine will” (Berger & Luckman 1966:82-83).

Through the process of reification, ancient peoples have been given ethnohistorical existence – a process described by anthropologist Eric Wolf: “By turning names into things we create false models of reality. By endowing nations, societies, or cultures with the qualities of internally homogeneous and externally distinctive and bounded objects, we create a model of the world as a global pool hall in which the entities spin off each other like so many hard and round billiard balls” (Wolf 1997:7). This makes for a problematic approach: clearly, such entities should *not* be understood as hard objects. The scholar should examine them not with an objectivistic approach but through interpretation: “only by understanding these names as bundles of relationships, and by placing them back into the field from which they were abstracted, can we hope to avoid misleading inferences and increase our share of understanding” (Wolf 1997:3).

Such contemporary Western scholars dealing with ethnohistorical questions as ethnologists, anthropologists, and archaeologists tend toward a processual understanding of collective ethnic entities. In her introduction to *The Archaeology of Ethnicity* (1997), Siân Jones takes a processual approach to defining ethnic groups. She defines an ethnic group as “any group of people who set themselves apart and/or are set apart by others with whom they interact or co-exist on the basis of their perceptions of cultural differentiation and/ or common descent” (Jones 1997). This definition has gained traction among Scandinavian archaeologists studying Finno-Ugrian ethnohistorical issues; it is used by e.g. Thomas Wallerström (2006a) and Carl-Gösta Ojala (2009).

Some scholars claim that the processual approach goes too far. They define peoples by both processual and objective criteria. Sociologist Anthony D. Smith presents an ethnic entity he calls an *ethnie*: “named human population with myths of common ancestry, shared historical memories and one or more common elements of culture, including an association with a homeland, and some degree of solidarity, at least among the élites” (Smith 1999:13). Smith gives an important role in the existence of ethnic groups to narration and story telling. The relationship between ethnic history and historical truth is the subject of the following section.

### **Historical narratives**

Having examined the differences between the objective and processual character of ethnic groups, one must look at the character of the histories or narratives of these peoples. On an objectivist understanding, it is possible to claim that such narratives can be true. This does not mean that scholars with an objectivist view of collective entities cannot separate authentic and fictitious stories. Historian Peter Bietenholz (1994) claims that historians since Herodotus have been aware of the dichotomy between historical truth (*historia*) and fictional narrative (*fabula*).

Bietenholtz’s approach of separating narratives from historical truths has been described by many historians as difficult or even impossible to maintain, given the linguistic turn in various sciences (Kelley 2005:1290-1292). Given that turn – along with an increasing understanding of the narrative character of historical writing – historians have concluded that earlier confidence in the possibility of separating historical and fictional narratives has been undermined and that not even scientific texts should be given preferred “truth” status compared with other texts. Historian Alun Munslow, elaborating on Hayden White and Frank Ankersmit, abolishes any substantial difference between so-called historical fact and fiction (Munslow 2005, 2007).

Some scholars try to create an intermediate position between these extremes. Paul Ricoeur (2005) writes that works of history

and literary fiction are created through different types of agreement or bond between author and reader. A reader who reads a history book expects to read about events which have indeed occurred, within the context of available archival sources to hand for the historian. A reader of fiction considers the authenticity of events not important; she primarily expects the text to be interesting. The boundary between historical and fictional narratives is maintained through a principled ban on mixing genres (Ricoeur 2005:333-334). History can then be described as narratives about compilations of documents that are primarily kept in archives (ibid. 421-422).

Social anthropologist Thomas Hylland Eriksen discusses historical narratives about ethnic groups whereby an ethnic group is perceived of as a process rather than as an objective entity. If the objects of ethnohistorical research *can* be regarded as processes rather than people of flesh and bone, then the histories of these people can be regarded as narratives that need not describe a reality of objective peoples or ethnic groups (Hylland Eriksen 1996:44).

Meanwhile, Anthony D. Smith elaborates his ideas of both the objective and narrative characteristics of the *ethnie*. Scholars can reveal, construct, or invent narratives about the *ethnie*. These stories can stretch far back in time, even into pre-history. The goal is like that of "...political archaeology: to rediscover and reconstruct the life of each period of the community's history, to establish the linkages and layerings between each period, and hence to demonstrate the continuity". Stories may be constructed around the "linkages of name, place, language and symbol, and in the stratification or layering of collective experiences". Such stories create an assumed continuity from a modern people to its ancient ancestors: e.g., from the English people to the Anglo-Saxons (Smith 1997:42).

### **Ethnonyms and the ambient meaning of ethnic concepts**

Relevant texts on the early history of Europe stretch over thousands of years, from Biblical and otherwise antique texts to works of the nineteenth century. They include ethnonyms: i.e., names of ethnic groups. As Swedish archaeologist Tomas Wallerström has pointed

out, the conceptual meaning of ethnonyms may vary considerably. Wallerström claims that the modern idea of ethnic group emerged with Christianity and the Book of Genesis. Earlier, Pagan thinking had a different notion of peoples: one that did not share the Biblical perspective that all peoples have their origin in a small group of individuals. Pre-Christian ethnonyms, such as Herodotus' references to the Scythians or Tacitus' references to the Finns, could have described human entities conceptualised very differently from the Biblical perspective of collectives of ethnic groups (Wallerström 2006a:80-83). In his overview of Classical ethnological sources *De etnografiske kilder til Nordens tidlige historie* (1993), Allan Lund stresses the polygenetic idea of the origin of peoples over the Biblical monogenetic tradition (Lund 1993:49). For the student of ethnohistory trying to connect peoples from various literary eras, it is important to keep in mind that discussions of peoples from antiquity can differ fundamentally from ethnohistorical discussions made in the Biblical ethnohistorical tradition.

Scholars have not only been of different opinions on what constitutes a people but also on what ethnonyms represent. Wallerström gives ethnonyms an unusually wide meaning, so that they include other types of human groups than only ethnic groups: e.g., an ethnonym can represent a religion or a way of life / means of economic subsistence (Wallerström 2006a:40-52). Wallerström suggests that the geographically widely separated use of "Finn" in northern Scandinavia, southwestern Finland, and the deep forests of southern Sweden could indicate that "Finn" was originally an ethnonym representing a human collective entity *other* than ethnic. Perhaps "Finn" originally described a group of people's way of living (Wallerström 2006a:85-91, 2006b:103-105). He writes that "ethnonymes are by no means static. Meanings change when new hegemonies appear and those changing meanings *as concepts* are of historical interest. Ethnonyms are constructs as well as ethnic groups in general" (Wallerström 2004:85).

As with some ethnonyms, the meaning of concepts tends to change over time. It is important to be aware how concepts like

people and ethnohistory have been defined and analysed in various historical contexts. In *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, conceptual historians had a useful approach to studying the changing meanings of concepts. In introducing the project, Reinhart Koselleck emphasises that, at any given time, one concept can have several meanings (*semasiologic*); likewise, different terms can describe the same concept (*onomasiologic*) (Koselleck 1972:xxi-xxii; Persson 2005:18).

Consider the concept of people as one illustrating example of the changing character of concepts. During the time period of the present study, “people” could have very different meanings. Study of the concept of people as expressed in the source material is complicated. It becomes even more so when several languages are involved. It lies outside the scope of the present study to analyse concepts by some methodology of conceptual history. Let me just briefly note how conceptual history research has revealed that, across many European languages, the concept of people had three major meanings during the time period 1770-1900.

To wit, a people could be 1) an ethnic-cultural entity, 2) a political entity, or 3) an entity representing “the masses”: i.e., the common people, excluding the aristocracy or other elite (Koselleck 1992; Lindberg 2005:125; Korsgaard 2004:14; Fewster 2002, 2006:42, Cameron 2005). Given the source material, the concept of people could be described as semasiologic: i.e., the concept had different meanings. However, the meaning of people as ethnic entity could be onomasiologic as well, given that some languages allow it to be described by different terms. In Swedish, both *folk* and *nation* have been used as synonyms for “people” (Boethius 1908). In this way, the concepts of people and nation – defined in the present study as having separate meanings – can sometimes be understood as synonymous in the source material.

### **Finno-Ugristics and Finno-Ugric ethnohistory**

Linguistic ethnohistory is based on the assumption that the history of a people can be equated with the history of a language, and that a proto-language and -people can be reconstructed with the help of

comparative-historical linguistics. This assumption arose during the nineteenth century: an era that had more essentialistic/objectivistic ideas about such collective entities as peoples than the present one.

Although linguists such as Juha Janhunen regard linguistic ethnohistory as relevant to ethnohistorical research, Western scholars studying ethnohistory within other academic disciplines, such as ethnology, tend to be far more sceptical. This scepticism – about the objective character of the history of the peoples within a language family – is common among e.g. social anthropologists. Some linguists have challenged the very existence of proto-languages – which forms the basis for linguistic ethnohistory. They question whether a reconstructed proto-language should be understood as a real language that actually existed or as a logical construction of comparative-historical linguistics. In his book *Linguistic reconstruction: An Introduction to Theory and Method* (1995), Anthony Fox describes these opposing positions as that of *realists*, believe in the historical existence of proto-languages; and *formalists*, who regard proto-languages as the inventions of linguists (Fox 1995:3).

That critique – of proto-languages as real entities – arose much earlier, among scholars of the Finno-Ugric languages. So one finds an important critique of the objective existence of language families and proto-languages in Estonian-Swedish linguist Ants Uesson's *On Linguistic Affinity: The Indo-Uralic Problem* (1970). Referring to Russian linguist N. S. Trubetzkoy's 1930s critique of the concept of an Indo-European language family (Trubetzkoy 1971), he undermines the very foundations of linguistic ethnohistory. János Pusztaý elaborates these ideas in *Diskussionsbeiträge zur Grundsprachenforschung* (1995). In *Suomen kielen vanhimmasta sanastosta ja sen tutkimisesta* (1983), Kaisa Häkkinen presents an important – but not so devastating – critique considering belief in the objective existence of the language tree and a reasonably unitary proto-language (and proto-people), in the context of Finno-Ugric language study. Linguists Ago Künnap and Kalevi Wiik present a radically different approach in e.g. Wiik's *Eurooppalaisten juuret* (2002).

From the mid-twentieth century, ethnohistorians working out-

side traditional Finno-Ugristic and Indo-European studies have elaborated the processual character of ethnicities and their histories. These ethnohistorical inventions have been used for ethnohistorical research on the Nordic region. In *Finner og terfinner: Etniske prosesser i det nordlige Fenno-Skandinavia* (1983), Knut Odner makes an important contribution to re-evaluating the objective character of ethnic groups and their supposed histories. Gösta Bågenholm's *Arkeologi och språk i norra Östersjöområdet* (1999) and Carl-Gösta Ojala's *Sámi Prehistories* (2009) related thinking about the processual character of prehistorical ethnicities.



## 2 The decline of Biblical ethnohistory

### Introduction

Although arguably the process of secularisation in the human and earth sciences paved the way for the success of linguistic ethnohistory as a complement and even replacement to Biblical ethnohistory, this does *not* imply that secularised science generally replaced faith- or religion-based approaches or that science represented a higher level of knowledge. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, historians studying the relationship between science and religion tended to emphasise confrontation between the two, with – e.g., according to the thinking of Auguste Comte – science eventually succeeding religion. However, in the twentieth century, such confrontation-based interpretations were replaced by greater acknowledgement of a more cooperative relationship. Although the Bible might have lost direct influence on the ethnohistorical work of scientists and historians, this need not be interpreted as religion losing its guiding role for them (Ferngren 2000, Frängsmyr 1976:11-23).

Until the nineteenth century, important parts of the epistemological and ontological framework for European ethnohistorical thought were based on a belief in the literal, historical truth of the Book of Genesis. Biblical stories answered existential questions of the origin of the world, humankind, and language (Rossi 1984). In answering these questions, the Bible was no mere book of edifying literature: the historical chronicles of the Old Testament provided the fundamental sources for a universal history of humankind (Kraus 1969:74).

The scientific revolution, with its ideal of turning from literary sources to nature itself to explain and solve scientific problems, made

an important contribution to the secularisation of ethnohistorical thought. American historian Anthony Grafton describes the process as follows:

The prophets of the new intellectual world looked with particular disdain on their predecessor's method. The humanists had explicated other men's texts instead of investigating the world around them. This textual approach, which limited its purview to what other men had already thought, was necessarily sterile; trying to wring knowledge from the used-up components of the classics was like trying to make fresh tea from the bitter leaves left in an old pot. (Grafton 1991:2)

That move – from classical textual analysis to empirical research – clearly affected ethnohistorical research. Now living languages could be regarded as possible sources of ethnohistorical knowledge. The decline in Biblical influence was also visible in the work of political historians, working with the new natural law approach. Obviously, these historians continued to work with written sources; but they downplayed the historical links back to Noah and the Babylonian confusion. Peter Reill describes this new approach to history in writing about historiographies of the various German states. Earlier histories of a specific tribe or city included a long description how the founding people could be traced back to the House of Noah or survivors from Troy. Reill writes that, in contrast, a history written in the later part of the seventeenth century would only include a brief section on Biblical themes. It would not challenge Biblical authority, but its focus would quickly move on to a discussion of “how at a distant time past a group of individuals directed by their desire for self-preservation, had agreed to join together to form a state, a union they sealed by acceding to a basic social contract” (Reill 1975:75). From here, the historian would begin the history of the state itself. This shift of focus was demonstrated on an European scale in Samuel Pufendorf's influential *Einleitung zur historie der vornehmsten reichen und staaten in Europa*

(1682). He mentions the historical context of the Bible in only a few short sentences before moving quickly to describe the documented history of the European states (Pufendorf 1719:2 [1682]).

The dominance of the Bible on both human and natural history thus declined in the age of the scientific revolution and European world explorations. The existential truths of the Bible were challenged by results from empirical research in the earth sciences and by European encounters with foreign civilisations. European ethnohistorical thought underwent a similar process of secularisation. Next section considers the increasing problems with the Biblical truths that emerged during the Early Modern Age. The following section presents critiques by scholars who did not accept the basic truths of the Book of Genesis. They criticised Biblical ethnohistory from “external” ethnohistorical points of view.

## **Biblical ethnohistory and its challenges**

### **Biblical ethnohistory**

Until the nineteenth century, the Bible was a major source of Western ethnohistorical thought. The Book of Genesis – the first of the five books constituting the Pentateuch – was of special interest for ethnohistorians. In the first chapters of Genesis, the creation of the world and humankind is described as the conscious acts of God. Having finished constructing the world, God creates Adam and Eve, who become the ancestors of humankind. The Lord closely supervises humankind and punishes them – sometimes severely – for bad behaviour. His harshest punishment is the Deluge, when almost all humans perish. Only Noah and his family survive. They make landfall on Mount Ararat and move to the plains of present-day Iraq, where they settle and found the city of Babel. They start building the Tower of Babel, which infuriates the Lord. He punishes the previously linguistically homogeneous humankind, dividing them into peoples with mutually incomprehensible languages (Genesis:XI).

Until the Early Modern Age, many Jewish and Christian scholars believed that the so-called Babylonian confusion had split the original homogeneous population into linguistically separate peoples – usually an estimated 70 or 72 of them (Borst 1957-1966:3-7). These peoples are presented in the *Table of Nations* in the tenth chapter of Genesis. The peoples of the world were meant to be all descendants of one of Noah's sons: Ham, Japhet, or Sem. In this way, peoples were separated not just by their linguistic differences but also through their different bloodlines, according to which son was their forebear.

The story of Babel and the Table of Nations formed the basic framework for Early Modern Western ethnohistorical thought. Although the vague character of the text encouraged a plentitude of interpretations, some mainstream ethnohistorical ideas emerged. Before the great discoveries by European explorers, the world was thought to consist of three continents: Europe, Asia and Africa. The Mediterranean was taken as the border between Africa and Europe, the Nile or the Red Sea as the border between Africa and Asia, and the river Tanais (Don) in Ukraine and Russia as the border between Asia and Europe. Note that Christian scholars did not invent the division; they borrowed it from Classical sources (Lewis & Wigen 1997:23-25). Given it, however, the continents could then conveniently be populated by the bloodline of the appropriate son of Noah: the Hamites moved to Africa, Sem's descendants spread over Asia, and Japhet's family settled in Europe.

A fundamental starting point for Biblical ethnohistorical thinking was the monogenesis of humankind. This assumption fueled a historical interest in when humankind and world had been created. From the Biblical sources, it seemed possible to reconstruct human history back to the Flood or even the Creation. That said, it was hard to achieve consensus on the exact year for important Biblical events. After all, the Old Testament existed in several editions in various languages. Western Christianity used the oldest known Hebrew version. By studying the Bible, chronologists concluded that the world was created around 4000 BC. After thorough research,

Irish bishop James Ussher (1581-1656) claimed in 1650 that the world had been created in 4004 BC (Bowler 2003:4). The Greek Orthodox Church used the Greek *Septuagint* translation, which was older than the oldest remaining Hebrew text. Its chronologies were taken to suggest that the world had been created in 5501 BC (Septuagint timeline), making the world 1,500 years older than in the Hebrew translation used by the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches.

To Biblical ethnohistorians, the histories of peoples belonged to a larger universal history that began with the establishment of the first of the four kingdoms mentioned in the Book of Daniel. These kingdoms were usually interpreted as the Babylonian, Persian, Greek and Roman empires (Rossi 1984, Klempt 1960). Western European historians often took the view that the world had been in a state of decay since the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden. This understanding of human development – what could, according to Swedish archaeologist Ola Jensen, be referred to as *mundus senescens* “the aging world” (Jensen 2004:77-80) – influenced ethnohistorical thought until challenged in the eighteenth century by the idea of *progress*. Although *mundus senescens* described change of human societies, nature was not believed to be in a similar state of decay; it was rather in a state of stability. Every species in the universe had its defined position in a stable world of interdependent and mutual relations, according to the *Great Chain of Being* (Lovejoy 1936).

### **The origin of language and the lingua adamica**

The Bible answered the question of the origin of linguistic diversity, but a related question was also of great interest for many philosophers and ethnohistorians during the Early Modern Age: the origin of language. Klaus Dutz describes how scholars could choose one of three major positions: 1) the first human beings received language as a gift from God or from other non-worldly causes, 2) language and thought evolved during the history of humankind, or 3) humanity was created with the intellectual capabilities for speech. On the

latter view, although languages were not ready-made gifts from God, God had given humankind the ability to create its own languages (Dutz 1989:207).

The first position was the default among European scholars until the Enlightenment. The second had been discussed by ancient scholars: Epicures and Lucretius described a process of languages evolving from pre-linguistic cries and groans to real languages. Humans took an active part in inventing language, which could have occurred in many places (Wifstrand Schiebe 1999). These classical ideas on the origin of language were known to European Christian scholars, who could compare language as an invention with their preference of linguistic genesis as gift from God to Adam. As the Swedish archbishop Haquin Spegel (1645-1714) did in the introduction of *Glossarium sveogothicum eller Swensk ordabook* (1712), Christian scholars could describe the classical position as simply wrong. The third position was not introduced until the latter part of the Enlightenment.

A follow-up discussion to the claim that humankind had received language from God was *which* language had been first: i.e., what was the language of Adam, the *lingua adamica*? A common view among scholars was that, since the Old Testament was in Hebrew, the language of Adam had most likely been Hebrew. Protestant scholars challenged this idea in the sixteenth century. They pointed out that nothing in the Bible actually stated that Adam spoke Hebrew. Linguists could question Hebrew's special status without risking accusations of challenging Holy Scripture.

Flemish humanist Johannes Goropius Becanus (1519-1572) believed that the Cimmerian forefathers of the Dutch – who could trace their history back to Magog – had not been in Babel at the time of the Confusion; thus, they were the only people to retain the original language (Nordström 1934:111-115). Swedish polymath Georg Stiernhielm (1598-1672) claimed that the Confusion was not an actual historical event. Instead, languages change over time, and the variety of languages is due to natural causes. Stiernhielm concluded from his linguistics research that Hebrew was not the

original proto-language; it was not even the closest language to the original. Stiernhielm believed instead that the languages of Japhet (by which he approximately meant the Indo-European languages of Europe) remained most closely tied to the original proto-language (Setälä 1891:37-53; Agrell 1955:95-97). Although often sceptical of Stiernhielm, German philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716) agreed that Hebrew had probably not been the original proto-language (Schulenburg 1973:69; Robins 1990:89-90).

### **Challenges from European explorations and philosophy**

The discovery of America and of other continents and civilisations revealed significant empirical challenges to Biblical predominance over Western ethnohistorical thought (Grafton 1992, Kidd 1999:11-12). The existence of America challenged the previously conventional world view of the continents as nicely divided between the three sons of Noah. The discovery of a new population on a previously unknown continent raised many difficult questions: was the American population autochthonous or had it arrived from the Old World – if so, from which part? (Agrell 1955:49-62; Kidd 2006:61). If the American Indians were immigrants, then the ethnohistorical framework of the Bible remained valid; but if the population was autochthonous and thus *not* descendants of Noah, either they had survived the Flood on their own or were not the descendants of Adam and Eve. Such difficulties inspired a few scholars like Paracelsus (1493-1541) to reconsider Biblical monogenesis. Since the Bible made no mention of American Indians, European scholars had also to consider whether or not the Indians should even be treated as human. This question inspired the famous debate in Valladolid, Spain in 1550-1551 (Stepan 1982:29, Hernandez 2001).

Not only had the discovery of America raised empirical arguments against the use of Genesis as a rock-solid source of historical truths; increased knowledge of world cultures showed that civilisations such as China and Egypt had very old historical records, and Chinese civilisation would have needed to be established before the Flood (Kidd 1999:17-20; Bowler 2003:31). European scholars could

incorporate discoveries of new continents, peoples and civilisations; but the alternative Chinese and Egyptian chronologies forced the Europeans either to claim that the foreign chronologies were forgeries, or that the Chinese and Egyptians had a different understanding of such time units as “a year”. Dutch philologist Isaac Vossius (1618-1689) suggested that the China records could be incorporated into a universal history so long as ethnohistorians used the longer time line of the Septuagint (Rossi 1984:146). However, such attempts by Vossius and others could not stop the process whereby discoveries of ancient civilisations in Asia and America undermined the idea of the four founding kingdoms from the book of Daniel. It became clear that, throughout history, more than one civilisation had existed simultaneously. The discoveries of ancient civilisations and alternative chronologies planted a seed of scepticism about the historical reliability of Genesis and whether it was, indeed, a book about *universal* history.

In 1655, French lawyer and writer Isaac La Peyrère (1596-1676) published a series of critical re-interpretations of the book of Genesis. He claimed that Adam and Eve were possibly the ancestors only of the Jews; other peoples had been created before Adam, in various parts of the world. These pre-Adamites probably did not drown in the Flood, which (presumably) had only been a natural disaster in the Middle East. The Pentateuch was the history of the Jews and should not be interpreted as universal history. La Peyrère was harshly criticised and debunked in numerous pamphlets and books. He gained no significant following, but scholars who read his works – with their re-evaluation of the universal truth of Genesis – were encouraged to challenge ethnohistorical ideas based on the Bible (Grafton 1991:204-213, Kidd 2006:62-65).

Questions about the possible polygenesis of humankind and problems with chronologies were raised within the assumption that the Bible was a historical text. In the seventeenth century, discussions began whether the “historical” parts of Genesis were myths rather than historical narrative. Dutch philosopher Baruch de Spinoza (1632-1677) concluded that the books of the Pentateuch



should not be interpreted as factual accounts but rather as the mythological texts of the Hebrews during their ancient freedom (Spinoza 1951:8, 124). Like Peyrère, Spinoza gained no significant following; but the idea that the Pentateuch should not be treated as literal truth was picked up by other scholars, including French historian Richard Simon (1638-1712) (Klempt 1960:102-105, Kraus 1969: 65-70, Kidd 1999:16-17).

## **External criticism**

### **The idea of natural law, the idea of progress, and stronger source criticism**

An important challenge to Biblical dominance over historical thought and universal history came with the idea of *natural law*, as found in the writings of Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) and Samuel Pufendorf (1632-1694). Natural law initiated a debate whereby such juridical issues as the formation of societies and states could be discussed in a context not bound by Biblical universal history, since natural law was ahistorical (Reill 1975:89-90). By examining the hypothetical processes by which, through contractual agreements, individuals formed societies and eventually states, natural law laid the foundations for the idea of historical periodisations and of societal progress, from pre-state conditions to ordered governance.

In the seventeenth century, the critique of universal history intensified. In the second half of the century, historical alternatives, based on relative timelines, challenged the four-kingdom model. German scholar Christoph Cellarius (1638-1693) divided history into Ancient Time, Medieval Time, and Newer Time. His system relativised universal history: he tied the beginning of the second period to the arrival of Christianity, which happened at different times in different parts of Europe (Klempt 1960:75, 78-79). Such new ways of classifying history into relative stages of development laid the foundation for the idea of progress, which evolved from the

assumption that life was gradually improving. The idea of progress, largely elaborated by scholars of the French and Scottish Enlightenment, became a strong challenger not only to the idea of universal history, but also to the idea that the world was in decay (Olson 2004:182, 185, Condorcet 2002). It was usually envisioned as the development of peoples and societies from a very primitive level to gradually more developed stages. There was a universal progress from hunting and gathering through herding and nomadism to higher levels of culture, based on agriculture. Although the idea of progress challenged Biblical universal history, it was not until the nineteenth century that it became predominant.

During the Enlightenment, criticism of the Bible grew. Scholars of the German *Aufklärung* movement investigated Genesis as mythology rather than history. Biblical scholar Johann David Michaelis (1717-1791) claimed that Genesis was poetic literature of the ancient Hebrews and should not be literally interpreted as (universal) historical truth. In 1769, he wrote that the Table of Nations was a hodgepodge (*Sammelsurium*) of names with no connection to actual peoples. His colleague at the University of Göttingen, historian Johann Christoph Gatterer (1727-1799), initially held a strong belief in the historical truth of Genesis, stating in 1761 that all peoples of the world originated from the sons of Noah. Over time, he changed his mind in a more Bible-critical direction. In 1785, he proposed an original primitive humankind far back in time that spoke primitive monosyllabic languages. Michaelis' pupil Johann Gottfried Eichhorn (1752-1827) elaborated Michaelis' ideas. In a speech in 1788, Eichhorn declared that the languages of the world were so different that they could not have originated from a common proto-language. Furthermore, the Tower of Babel was not historical fact but Semitic myth (Borst 1957-63:1499-1501, 1531-32; Reill 1975:83, 196; Carhart 2007:167-170).

In the 1770s, Göttingen historian August Ludwig von Schlözer (1735-1809) articulated a position midway between Michaelis' position and Gatterer's original position. He believed in the historical truth of the Table of Nations (Schlözer 1771), but would, like

Gatterer, eventually change his views in a more Bible-critical direction. By 1785, he was explaining the variation in languages as a result of nature and time – not Babylonian Confusion. He still supported the idea of monogenesis, in particular the origin of humankind in Adam and Eve (Schlözer 1785:35, 149; Borst 1957-63:1501-1502). Schlözer believed it impossible to tell how old humanity was but suggested that it could be between 5,000 and 10,000 years old (Schlözer 1785:31). Although Michaelis and his German Enlightenment colleagues reduced the importance of the Bible to historical research, nonetheless they had a more favourable view of Christianity and religion in general than their French Enlightenment colleagues (Reill 1975:198).

The methods of careful Biblical examination were adapted to other literary sources. Re-considering Medieval Icelandic sources in light of the new, harder demands on sources by the Göttingen historians, Schlözer came in 1771 to the conclusion that these sources were unreliable and should be left out of research into the early history of Northern Europe.

### **Critique of Biblical answers to existential questions**

The Biblical answer to the origin of the world was challenged by the discovery of the so-called *Abys of Time*. Discoveries in the earth sciences presented convincing arguments that the world had to be much older than a few thousand years. In *Epochs de la Nature* (1778), French naturalist Comte de Buffon (1707-1788) made a fundamental contribution to creating a time scheme suggesting that the world could be as old as 75,000 years. Roman Catholic authorities were more supportive than critical; his hypothesis was endorsed in 1801 by Pope Pius VII (1740-1823) after Buffon convincingly argued that his new universal chronology was compatible with the Bible. He claimed that the “days” of creation should not be read literally. Instead, every day represented an *époque* that could have lasted for thousands of years (Harris 1969:86, Olsson 2004:183, Cutler 2005:177). By now, the floodgates of time had opened: a century after Buffon’s prolonging the age of the world to 75,000

years, Lord Kelvin (1824-1907) suggested that the world was at least 100 million years old (Olson 2004:209).

The question of the origin of language was open to alternative answers, once the idea that language was a gift from God to Adam could be regarded as mythology. New hypotheses based on the idea of progress suggested that small bands of primitive humans had, at some point in the past, made the transition from pre-language to real language. This had happened several times independently; this explained the linguistic variation in the world. Condillac's (1715-1780) thoughts about the origin of language were well known; but many other scholars of the French Enlightenment were interested in the origin of language as well (Juliard 1970, Aarsleff 1982:146-209).

Of course it was possible to combine polygenetic and evolutionist understanding of linguistic variation and change with a belief in the historical truth of the Bible. German philosopher Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803) tried to prove that the new polygenetic approach of the Enlightenment was indeed compatible with the Bible. In his prize essay *Abhandlung über die Ursprung der Sprache* (1772), he suggested that the ability to invent language was a gift from God, but it was Man himself who actually created new languages (Herder 1969).

With this move, Herder supported those scholars who believed that the study of nature need not mean a certain road to secularisation of understanding of the world. The study of nature could provide evidence of intelligent design: namely, that the world was created by the Lord. During the nineteenth century, such an approach became known as *natural theology*. When that approach was directed towards the study of language (as in Herder's tradition), then, according to Stephen Alter, it could appropriately be described as *linguistic natural theology* (Alter 2005:57-58).

Interestingly, the idea of a relatively short timespan for humankind did not change in such a dramatic matter as did other ideas during the Enlightenment. The age of humankind was not prolonged until the mid-nineteenth century.

### Early nineteenth century criticism

In the early nineteenth century, the usefulness of the Book of Genesis as a historical source became increasingly questioned. Historians raised the standards by which sources could be accepted as reliable. Genesis eventually lost its status as the central source for early history; suggestions by La Peyrère and Spinoza that Genesis was not history but mythology were increasingly accepted by mainstream ethnohistorians and historiographers. Danish linguist Rasmus Rask was particularly critical of the historical value of the creation story in the Book of Genesis. He asked:

But does not the Bible actually tell the story of the creation of the world? If so, do we not, in fact, have a continuous historical account from the beginning of time until this moment?

He answered:

“only the most feebleminded can argue like that. True, in the Jewish account, their national God, Jehovah, mightier than the gods of all other nations, created everything, ending with a human couple with Hebrew names from whom has sprung all of mankind — but especially the Jews, in direct line of descent. However, when we go to the Egyptians, *they* are the oldest of all nations. (Rask 1993:3)

Many peoples, including e.g. Scandinavians and Greenlanders, had ethnocentric descriptions of the creation of the world – as untrue as the Hebrew or Egyptian accounts. Rask believed that it was still possible – in some cases – to extract historical truth from mythological content; in a later book, he would suggest that the Biblical Eden could be located in Iraq. But the “history” of the Creation in Genesis should not be interpreted as mythological tale – only as “philosophical fabrication” of no historical value (Rask 1993:4, Rask 1828).

Other scholars regarded some stories in Genesis as historically

true and felt that e.g. the Flood could be verified from other mythologies of ancient floods. The re-interpretation of the Flood could then be used to answer questions about the monogenesis or polygenesis of languages or races. German linguist Julius von Klaproth (1783-1835) explained the origin of language families by the dispersal of Flood survivors only across mountainous areas. Being isolated over a long period, these peoples developed new languages: e.g., the Finnish language family originated in the Ural mountains (Klaproth 1831:40-42, 180).

With the loss of self-evident Biblical truth, Enlightenment ethnohistorians had to confront the possibility that no universal history of humankind existed. At this point, the idea of *prehistory* entered European historical thought. So long as historians believed in the historical truth of the Bible, the concept of prehistory made no sense: all ethnic and national histories were included within the universal history of the Bible. Bengt Hildebrand wrote that the concept of prehistory could not emerge until Western historiography had become sufficiently secularised: “as long as one combined one’s national history with the biblical chronology, there was no room for ‘prehistory’ within science” (Hildebrand 1937:33; my translation). Secularisation therefore had a tremendous impact on the foundations of European ethnohistorical thought.

## **Conclusion**

The Book of Genesis, which explained how and when human ethnic diversity originated, dominated Western ethnohistorical thought until the nineteenth century. The Bible had explained existential questions about the origin of the world, humankind, and language; but amazing new discoveries of previously unknown civilisations, new scientific approaches, greater scepticism towards the historical truth of Genesis, and the broader process of secularisation eventually ended the dominance of Biblical ethnohistory.

# 3 Comparative-historical linguistics

## Introduction

European explorers discovered new continents, new civilisations, and new languages, profoundly changing the European understanding of ethnohistorical research. The wealth of new languages collected by missionaries, adventurers, and officials provided European linguists with material for increasingly comprehensive comparative studies on language. The great expeditions in the Russian Empire during the eighteenth century provided material for linguists like Johan von Strahlenberg (1676-1747) to outline the Finno-Ugric and other Eurasian language families. Increased contacts with scholars in India and better knowledge of ancient Indian literature provided the necessary material for linguists like William Jones (1746-1794) to discover the affinity between European and Indian languages within a larger Indo-European language family. Such influx of linguistic material was of major importance to the breakthrough of comparative-historical linguistics.

Linguistic classification can be made either by *genetic* or *typological* classification. Comparative-historical language families are constructed by genetic classification, based on the law that all daughter languages within a language family originate from a common parent. Genetic language families are often visualised as language trees, where the proto-language is represented by the stem. A language tree is an example of a *phylogenetic* tree, and as such describes the order of branching from proto-language through sub-languages to contemporary languages. Note that phylogenetic trees only ever branch; they never include the merger (tangling) of branches.

Genetic and typological classifications differ according to the inclusion of time. In (diachronic) genetic classification, time is crucial to separating generations; while for (synchronic) typological classification, time is usually irrelevant. In addition to its synchronic character, typological classification is, according to American linguist Joseph Greenberg, “arbitrary because any criterion or combination of criteria can be used with consistent results” (Greenberg 1971:94). Languages can be classified according to different criteria, such as word order or morphology/word form.

Languages can be classified by other criteria. *Hierarchical* classification assumes that some languages are more advanced, developed, or beautiful than others. Scholars using hierarchical classification examine languages according to a scale of better or worse.

Comparative-historical linguistics is the dominant component of linguistic ethnohistory. The history of linguistic research that led to the invention of comparative-historical linguistics is presented in the first section, which also describes the parallel development of linguistic typology. The following section tells how the Finno-Ugric and Indo-European families were discovered and organised. In addition to describing individual language families, the section presents research into super-families.

## **Comparative-historical linguistics and agglutination theory**

### **Comparative-historical linguistics and its origins**

The idea that similar languages share a common ancestor is much older than comparative-historical linguistics. In European thinking, it can be traced back at least to the seventeenth century (Greenberg 1968:30, Morpurgo-Davies 1998:43). Many central concepts of comparative-historical linguistics – a dead parent language, the process of languages branching into dialects, the separation of original from loan words, the preference of grammar over vocabu-



lary when creating language families and linguistic relationships – had already been discussed, to some extent, by previous generations of linguists (Agrell 1955:19-20; Metcalf 1974:251); but eighteenth century linguistics had mostly been interested in *synchronic* aspects of language. An important methodological change in nineteenth century linguistics was an increasing focus on the *diachronic* character of language: i.e., language change. Of special interest was phonetic change from proto-language to daughter languages.

As with other sciences, linguistics developed within a process of secularisation: from a framework based on the Book of Genesis to a framework based on the criteria of the scientific discipline itself. An important contribution to the secularisation of linguistics was made by classifying languages *outside* the context of the Table of Nations. A well known example of such an attempt was made by French linguist and chronologist Justus Joseph Scaliger (1540-1609) a short text in 1605. Scaliger classified the languages of Europe according to the word for God. He found four major language groups, which later became known as Romance, Slavic, Germanic and Greek. The languages within a group – united by their word for God – were meant to originate from a common mother tongue. In addition to these four major language families, Scaliger mentioned seven minor, unrelated languages: Albanian, Basque, Breton, Finnish (and Saami), Hungarian, Irish, and Tatar (Zeller 1967:35-36, Campbell & Poser 2008:14-15). He did not discuss how the mother tongues were meant to relate to the languages/peoples in the Table of Nations. Contemporary languages were studied within their own context, and the framework of Biblical ethnohistory was left out. By omitting but not abandoning it, Scaliger contributed both to the development of comparative linguistics and the secularisation of linguistics and ethnohistory. In this way, Scaliger differed from contemporary and subsequent scholars, such as the Danish linguist and theologian Peder Syv (1631-1702) who in *Nogle Betenkninger om det cimbriske Sprog* (1663) recognised the Slavic, Germanic, and Romance language families as very different from Hungarian, which he believed to originate in Asia. However, Syv put all of these lan-

guages into a Biblical context and stated that Hebrew was the *lingua adamica* (Syv 1915:87).

Another important contribution to the development and secularisation of linguistics was made by Leibniz, who initiated an inductive approach to language classification. Leibniz recognised the importance of collecting large amounts of linguistic material in order to make reliable comparisons, and he asked correspondents around the world to contribute. He believed in the monogenesis of languages but questioned the position of Hebrew as the proto-language. The original language had probably become extinct. Leibniz correctly classified the Finnish, Hungarian and Samoyedic languages into a common Finnish family, but he lacked a similar vision of a common Indo-European family (Richter 1946:83-87, Latvakangas 1995:194).

Leibniz's inductive approach inspired ambitious language-collection projects around the world: the great works of German-Russian naturalist Peter Simon Pallas (1741-1811), Spanish linguist Lorenzo Hervás y Panduro (1735-1809), and Johann Christoph Adelung's (1732-1806) Mithridates project, completed by Johann Severin Vater (1771-1826) (Thomsen 1902:35-36). Until the nineteenth century, the dominant method for classifying languages remained the comparison of words. The major methodological problem was what words should be chosen for comparisons? Many scholars used translations of the Lord's Prayer to get a list of words, as in the project. Adelung and Vater used more than five hundred versions of the prayer (Adelung & Vater 1806-1817).

In the late seventeenth century, the Orientalist Hiob Ludolf (1624-1704) had already questioned the tradition of classifying languages into families according to vocabulary. He believed that grammar could produce more reliable results (Agrell 1955:19-20, Waterman 1978). The Hungarian mathematician and linguist János Sajnovics (1733-1785) developed the method, for the Finno-Ugric languages, of comparing languages primarily according to grammar and not according to vocabulary. His work focused on such grammatical features as declensions and conjugations (Wickman

1988:797, Stipa 1990:209-216). Sajnovics' co-national Sámuel Gyarmathi (1751-1830) further elaborated these methods.

In *Allgemeine nordische Geschichte* (1771), August Schläzer made an important contribution by correctly outlining the principles of language families and embracing the idea that some languages/peoples are closer related than others because they share a common linguistic origin. Schläzer supported Sajnovics' arguments for the affinity between Saami, Finnish, and Hungarian. He concluded that the Germanic, Baltic, and Slavic languages, together with most other languages in Europe, belonged to the same language family (Schläzer 1771, Fürst 1928:185, Stagl 1998:532-533). William Jones' discovery that Sanskrit belonged to the same language family as most European languages was a major step to the establishment of comparative-historical linguistics. While the existence of an Indo-European language family would eventually become a strong argument against Biblical ethnohistory, Jones had no intention of weakening Biblical authority; in contrast to Scaliger, Jones tried to trace the Indo-European languages back to the sons of Noah (Lincoln 1999:87-100, Campbell & Poser 2008:34).

Many methods used by the first generation of comparative-historical linguists had been used by earlier scholars, but they had usually lacked one or another critical component. According to Jan Agrell, Swedish linguist Johan Ihre (1707-1780) took a largely modern approach to examining affinity between languages, documenting the relations between phonetic changes in the Indo-European languages. He belonged, however, to an older approach to language: he firmly believed in the monogenesis of languages according to Biblical ethnohistory; he explained the emergence of language variation as the mixing of older languages. He believed that Italian had originated in the mixing of the Latin and "Gothic" (i.e., Germanic) languages (Agrell 1955:148-149).

For such pioneers of comparative-historical linguistics as Rask, Bopp, and Grimm, the rejection of this idea of mixed languages was an important principle. Prior to comparative-historical linguistics, scholars had believed that languages could emerge from merg-

ers and combinations (Foucault 1970:91). Comparative-historical linguists understood language development and the origin of new languages as a branching process analogous to the growth of trees, whereby new languages branched from older ones. To a great extent, the methodology and terminology of comparative-historical linguistics was taken from the natural sciences: particularly, from the anatomy studies of Georges Cuvier (1769-1832) and the botany of Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778). In *En Afhandling om Sprogkyndigheden (Lingvistikken), især de finniske Folkeslags Inddeling* (1820), Rask presents a model of language classification that strongly resembles the tree metaphor. He describes six levels of linguistic affinity: *Ætter, Klasser, Stammer, Grener* and *Folk/Sprog* (Rask 1932-33a:246; Bjerrum 1959: 62-68, 147-149).

While not providing a radical break to previous linguistics research, comparative-historical linguists laid the foundation for a more scientific approach, based on the ideas of early nineteenth century science. German linguist August Schleicher (1821-1868) continued in the footsteps of the first generation of comparative-historical linguists. Among his important contributions, some, such as his language-tree model, are still used by twenty-first century linguists. Schleicher made significant progress reconstructing the Indo-European proto-language; it is he who developed the practice of highlighting reconstructed linguistic forms with an asterisk. Schleicher was so confident in the possibility of reconstructing the proto-language that he even wrote a short fairy tale in Proto-Indo-European (Koerner 1983:liv, Mallory & Adams 1997:500-501).

The following generation of linguists, the Neogrammarians, claimed languages to be social institutions, created and maintained by the communications between their speakers (Koerner 1975:793). Although the Neogrammarians acknowledged the role of the individual in language change, they held a firm belief in the regular character of sound change. In *Morphologische Untersuchungen auf dem Gebiete der indogermanischen Sprachen* (1878) Osthoff (1847-1909) and Karl Brugmann (1849-1919) interpreted regularity of change as law (Bynon 2001:1228). The Neogrammarians were more

sceptical than Schleicher about reconstructing the Indo-European proto-language. Still, they discussed Schleicher's tree metaphor and the possibility of reconstructing a proto-language. Johannes Schmidt (1843-1901) – who did not define himself as a Neogrammarian – supported the assumption that the proto-language was real; but he doubted whether the proto-language could be reconstructed with the tools available; reconstruction efforts could probably not reach further back than the stage when the proto-language was already divided into dialects. Schmidt suggested that a better metaphor than that of tree growth for describing the relationship between languages was that of a *wave* (Schmidt 1872:27-29), whereby linguistic variety, change and relations could be drawn with the help of circles.

### **Typology and agglutination (glottogonic) theory**

With its diachronic approach according to genealogical and genetic principles, Biblical ethnohistory strongly influenced later linguistic classification. Language families were created on the principle of grouping together languages sharing a common history and origin. This was even more evident when linguistic classification was done within the context of ethnohistory. Typology provided a different principle for language classification – although, in the diachronic atmosphere of the nineteenth century, even typology became incorporated into diachronic methodology, since linguists generally believed that languages change morphologically over time.

In *Über die Sprache und die Weisheit der Indier* (1808), German linguist Friedrich Schlegel (1772-1829) presents a typological classification of languages based on the assumption of linguistic polygenesis. He separated “organic” (i.e. Indo-European) languages from “non-organic” ones and claimed they had different origins. The non-organic languages were manmade, originating from primitive pre-languages. In contrast, the origin of the “organic” language proto-Sanskrit (i.e., the Indo-European proto-language) was totally different. Of possibly divine origin, it was from the beginning already a complete language, with the capacity for philosophical and religious wisdom. The non-organic languages strove to become more

like Sanskrit: i.e. become more flective; but they would never reach the same level of linguistic perfection (Timpanaro 1977:xxi-xxiv, Morpurgo-Davies 1998:68-69, Formigari 1999:240-241). In this way, Schlegel used both genetic and typological theories on the origin of language to explain linguistic variation.

In the sixteenth century, a different diachronic approach to language emerged in the work of Johannes Goropius Becanus who, as noted in the last chapter, argued that Flemish was the *lingua adamica*, primarily on the claim that their ancestors had avoided the Babylonian Confusion, but also on the evidence that Flemish consists of a large number of short words, with roots of only one syllable. Goropius claimed that shorter words were older than longer ones; therefore, the language with the most *short* root words – i.e., Flemish – should be regarded as the oldest and most original language of the world (Grafton 1991:100). Goropius' ideas about the antiquity of short words were embraced by some scholars who believed Hebrew to be the original language, such as Peder Syv. Continuing Goropius' train of thought, Syv believed one could decide which were the oldest languages emerging from the Babylonian Confusion. Syv agreed with Goropius that Flemish along with the other "Cimbrian" (i.e. Germanic) languages included a vast number of short, monosyllabic words, taking this as proof that they were older than prestigious Greek or Latin (Syv 1915:92, 95 [1663]).

The idea that shorter words represented earlier or more primitive stages among languages survived the abandonment of Biblical ethnohistory. Enlightenment scholars often regarded humankind as older than its knowledge of language; human populations had undergone a transition from pre-language to language. This linguistic process was discussed within the larger context of progress as a process from simpler to more complex forms. Thus, a "new-born" language had a very simple structure that would gradually become more complex over time. From the perspective of regarding development as increasing complexity, it was logical to regard morphologically more complicated languages as more advanced or developed than morphologically less complicated ones. Monosyllabic

languages such as Chinese represented an earlier, more primitive stage than languages with compound words, such as Finnish or Swedish. This idea that monosyllabic languages were more primitive than polysyllabic ones was promoted by Adelung in his foreword to the first part of *Mithridates* (1806). Most of the first generation of comparative-historical linguists accepted these ideas about language change.

Franz Bopp elaborated the influential *agglutination theory* (or *glottogonic theory*), which explained morphological differences as resulting from linguistic development. Bopp suggested that all languages originated from basic sets of monosyllabic roots, although the particular set of roots was unique to every language family. Languages began as very primitive, their sentences created with monosyllabic roots. Later, when a language became more complicated, words could be created by combining roots and root words. Bopp called this process of gluing roots together *agglutination*. Some languages evolved even more: changes of meaning in flective languages occurred through changes within words themselves. The three morphological stages were monosyllabic (or *isolating*), agglutinative, and flective (or *inflective*) (Amirova *et al* 1980: 250-257, Amsterdamska 1987:41, Campbell & Poser 2008:227-228).

August Schleicher elaborated the agglutination theory, describing a process of language development from pre-language; via isolating and agglutinative stages; eventually to the highest, flective stage. He supported linguistic polygenesis and envisioned a situation far back in time when humankind was divided into numerous isolated tribes lacking proper languages. This meant that many tribes independently made the transition from a pre-linguistic existence to the first primitive stage of language. Like his colleagues, Schleicher supposed that this first stage of language was monosyllabic; and – since languages were born independently – their root words must have been different. These primitive languages became the proto-languages of the various language families, from which modern languages evolved (Schleicher 1983a:49-54, 1983c:28-29). Agglutination theory was intended to be universal: i.e., all languages in

the world had the capacity to reach the fleective stage, and all fleective languages had passed through monosyllabic and agglutinative stages (Schleicher 1848:25).

However, many observations undermined the simple yet elegant progress of agglutination theory. In his prize essay, Rasmus Rask remarked that languages tended to become grammatically *less* complicated over time:

Whichever language has the more complex grammar is the more unmixed, the more original, older and closer to the source; for grammatical inflections and endings are constantly worn off when new languages emerge, and require a very long time and a minimum of intercourse with other nations to develop and arrange themselves anew. Thus Danish is much simpler than Icelandic, English simpler than Anglo-Saxon; this is also the relation of Modern to Classical Greek, of Italian to Latin, of German to Mesogothic, and so forth in all the cases we know. (Rask 1993:34)

Bopp and Schleicher tried to explain increasingly isolating characteristics in such fleective languages as English as a process of decay. Schleicher suggested that languages developed until they became fleective. Once a language had reached the fleective stage, it inevitably started to decay and became increasingly isolating (Maher 1983:xxvii-xxix, Schleicher 1983c:13-15). Rask's examples in the above quotation were all Indo-European languages and so – according to the logic of Bopp and Schleicher – *proved* the process of linguistic decay. Schleicher's *ad hoc* explanation did not convince the following generation of linguists: the Neogrammarians. They rejected Schleicher's glottogonic theory and claimed that some principles of language change – which, on Schleicher's account, only ever affected languages at the fleective stage – were universal, occurring in languages of all morphological types (Campbell & Poser 2008:229).

The German linguist Georg von der Gabelentz (1840-1893)



reformed agglutination theory by abandoning its assumption of morphological development followed by decay. In its place, Gabelentz introduced the idea of the typological circle or spiral whereby languages underwent a process of continual morphological change. Isolating languages became increasingly agglutinative; agglutinative languages became increasingly flective; flective languages became increasingly isolating. Gabelentz came to this conclusion after studying ancient Chinese texts, which showed that the earlier Chinese had a more flective character than contemporary Chinese (Gabelentz 1972:257 [1901], Jespersen 1922:370-372).

Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835) proposed an alternative explanation for morphological diversity. He rejected the proposal that morphologic types were stages on a timeline *nach einander* (“one after another”); instead, he suggested parallel linguistic development *neben einander* (“beside each other”). Humboldt thus rejected evolutionary explanations. Coming from within the historicist tradition, he rejected the idea that languages developed unilinearly through distinct morphological stages (Bunzl 1996:35, Losonsky 1999:xxiii).

Some scholars would go further, objecting to the whole concept of agglutination. English linguist Archibald Sayce (1846-1933) claimed that the Indo-European proto-language had probably been flective from the beginning; it had never been isolating or agglutinative. Meanwhile, Finno-Ugric languages had probably been agglutinative from their proto-linguistic origins. Although Finnish shows some flective characteristics, it was, he thought, a solidly agglutinative language and unlikely ever to transform into a flective language (Sayce 1900a:75-76, Sayce 1900b:186).

## **Language families**

### **The Finno-Ugric language family**

In the seventeenth century, the Swedes Bengt Skytte (1614-1683) and Georg Stiernhielm and the German Martin Fogel (1634-1675?)

discovered the existence of the Finno-Ugric family and the genetic affinity between Finnish and Hungarian (Stipa 1980). Lars-Gunnar Larsson writes that Skytte in particular should be recognised as having spread knowledge of the affinity. Skytte collected a large Finno-Ugric corpus. Among others, he presented it to the young Leibniz, who later would strongly support the idea of a Finno-Ugric language family (Larsson 2001). Meanwhile, the German-Swedish officer and cartographer Philip Johan von Strahlenberg made an important contribution of his own to the notion of a Finno-Ugric language family, by presenting, in *Das nord- und ostliche Theil von Europa und Asia* (1730), a short list of words from various languages in Russia, with the Finno-Ugric languages presented as having originated from a common language.

In the late eighteenth century, Sajnovics and Gyarmathi grammatically described the Finno-Ugric family largely according to the principles of comparative-historical linguistics. In the 1820s, Rasmus Rask presented an overview of the Finno-Ugric languages that is still regarded as accurate. He divided the Finno-Ugric languages into three groups: a) Baltic-Finnic, Saami, Mordvinian, and Mari; b) Hungarian, Hanti, and Mansi; and c) Komi, Komi-Permyak, and Udmurt (Pedersen 1924:94, Rask 1932-33a:278, Häkkinen 1996:47).

Although Schleicher's tree metaphor was originally only intended to apply to flecive languages, Finno-Ugristic scholars found the tree model a useful metaphor for their languages. In *Über die Verzweigung der ugrischen Sprachen* (1879), German-Hungarian linguist Joseph Budenz (1836-1892) presented the first Finno-Ugric language tree, consisting of one major, northern branch with Saami, Permian, Ob-Ugric, and Hungarian, and a southern branch with Finnic, Mordvin, and Mari (Wickman 1988:803-804).

The Finnish linguist Otto Donner (1835-1909) criticised Budenz's tree. In *Die gegenseitige Verwandtschaft der Finnisch-ugrischen Sprachen* (1879), Donner presented a different tree, closer to Rask's classification. For his tree, Budenz had used just one phonetic marker; Donner used both phonetic and morphological data. Donner's tree

became the default description of genetic relationships in the Finno-Ugric family.

Since the late nineteenth century, the established name for the language family has been Finno-Ugric, although the name faced competition from such alternate names as Ugro-Finnic and Finnish-Hungarian. Indeed, in contrast to the disagreements over the name of the Indo-European language family, “Finno-Ugric” quickly became universally accepted – according to Valev Uibopuu, because of the works of scholars like Vilhelm Thomsen and Otto Donner, but also through the establishment of key scientific bodies that incorporated the term, such as The Finno-Ugric Society (1883-) and the journal *Finnisch-Ugrische Forschungen* (1901-) (Uibopuu 1988:35).

Although linguists were largely in consensus on the existence of the Finno-Ugric family, still, in the early nineteenth century, some leading linguists rejected it. Adelung was one such critic: in *Mithridates*, he turned against the idea of a wider Finno-Ugric family. He based his arguments on the established tradition of word comparison: the Lord’s Prayer in e.g. the Volga-Finnish (Mordvin, Mari) languages includes very few Finnish words; Russian and Tatar words are more common. Such comparisons convinced Adelung that the so-called Finno-Ugric languages in the Volga region were not related genetically to Finnish but were mixed languages (Adelung 1806:533-551). However, Adelung’s ideas had limited impact. Comparative-historical linguistics did not accept the idea of mixed languages; given its advancement, scholars of Northern European ethnohistory generally came to accept the existence of the Finno-Ugric language family.

### **The Indo-European language family**

Linguists discovered/assembled the Indo-European language family later than the Finno-Ugric family, even though the affinity between many of the Indo-European sub-families – e.g., Germanic and Slavic – had been observed by historians and linguists for centuries. The term “Indo-European” was not used before the 1810s. However, the idea for the family had been outlined more than a

hundred years earlier in the dissertation *De Lingua Vetustissima Europae* (1686), for which Georg Caspar Kirchmaier (1637-1730) served as *praeses* and Andreas Jäger (1660-1730) *respondens* (Considine 2008). The family was taken to include “Persian, Greek, Italic (whence Latin and in time the modern Romance tongues), the Slavonic languages, Celtic, and finally Gothic and the other Germanic tongues” (Metcalf 1974:233). Jäger’s system did *not* include the languages of India, leaving it to English lawyer and linguist Sir William Jones (1746-1794) to outline an extension into the Indo-European language family. *His Third Annual Discourse* was published in 1789.

The Sanskrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either, yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of verbs and in the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident; so strong indeed, that no philologist could examine them all three, without believing them to have sprung from some common source, which, perhaps, no longer exists: there is a similar reason, though not quite so forcible, for supposing that both the Gothic and the Celtic, though blended with a very different idiom, had the same origin with the Sanskrit; and the old Persian might be added to the same family, if this were the place for discussing any question concerning the antiquities of Persia. (Jones 1967)

Jones’ creation of the Indo-European family should not be regarded as the beginning of comparative-historical linguistics, in part because he believed that languages could emerge through mixing (Campbell & Poser 2008:37): a clear violation of the basic rules of comparative-historical linguistics. Increased knowledge of Indian languages and civilisations encouraged some linguists to go beyond Jones and claim Sanskrit as the family’s mother tongue. This idea became especially influential in Friedrich Schlegel’s *Über die Weisheit*

*die Indien* (1808) (Agrell 1955:19-20). Bopp was influenced initially by the idea, although he left the role of Sanskrit undecided in the first edition of *Über die conjugationsystem* (1816). In an essay he wrote a couple of years later (1820), he decided that Sanskrit was not the mother tongue but only another language within the Indo-European family (Bopp 1816, 1820).

No consensus emerged among nineteenth century scholars about the name of the family. In 1813, Thomas Young (1773-1829) suggested “Indo-European”; but German linguists preferred “Indo-Germanic”, coined in 1810 by the Danish-French geographer Conrad Malte-Brun (1755-1826) but becoming better known in 1823 by Julius Klaproth (Agrell 1955:22-23, Zimmer 2002:26). German-English mythologist and linguist Max Müller (1823-1900) used “Aryan”, which became common among non-linguistic ethnohistorians such as Isaac Taylor (1829-1901). Swedish author and culture historian Victor Rydberg (1828-1895) likewise used “Aryan” to describe Indo-Europeans (Rydberg 1886:3, Taylor 1890:2-3). However, since Bopp, many linguists had limited the use of “Aryan” to the Indo-Iranian branch of the language family (Bopp 1816). Some linguists, such as Vilhelm Thomsen (1842-1927), named the family “Japhetic” (Thomsen 1927).

Increasing knowledge of languages within language families raised the question of internal divisions. Naturally, this drew the attention of Indo-European linguists. A major difference arose in how to divide the family. Linguists including Schleicher and August Fick (1833-1916) believed the primary division to be between European and Indo-Iranian. Other linguists made the primary division according to the name for “one hundred” – between so called *Centum* (Germanic, Greek, Celtic, and Romance) and *Satem* (Indo-Iranian, Albanian, Armenian, Slavic, and Baltic) languages (Pedersen 1924:274-279, Morpurgo-Davies 1998:171). Schleicher’s division and his Indo-European tree became widely influential, but his critics could present convincing trees for their own divisions.

The Germanic languages were understood to belong to a sub-family of the Indo-European family, on the same level of the hierar-

chy as the Baltic-Finnic sub-family of Finno-Ugric. Internal relations in the Baltic-Finnic family were not controversial. The relationship between Scandinavian and German within the Germanic (sub-)family was far more debated, a dispute that went back to the Middle Ages – even though similarities showed them clearly to be closely related and easily arranged within a common (sub-)family. The controversy centred on the status of the various Germanic languages within the (sub-)family. Scandinavian and German scholars divided the (sub-) family differently. Before the coming of comparative-historical linguistics, such leading German scholars as Leibniz and Schlözer claimed that the Scandinavian languages were originally Low-German dialects: i.e., they were daughter languages of German (Schlözer 1771:335-336, Urpilainen 1993:180). Later generations of German linguists tended to agree that German and the Scandinavian languages were siblings, although the idea that Low German belonged to a common sub-family with the Scandinavian languages remained a topic in the 1850s for someone like Schleicher (Schleicher 1983c:227-236).

Scandinavian scholars generally rejected the idea of the Scandinavian languages being German dialects. In the seventeenth century, Gothicist ethnohistorians claimed that German was a daughter language of old Swedish/Scandinavian or Gothic; but this view was abandoned by the mid-eighteenth century, by which time scholars described the languages as siblings originating from a common ancestor (see e.g. 1747:68). Danish historian Peter Suhm (1728-1798) and Norwegian historian Gerhard Schøning (1722-1780) argued that the differences in syntax and vocabulary were too large for the Scandinavian languages to be daughter languages of German; rather, they ought to be treated as siblings (Schøning 1769:193, Suhm 1771:23). Rask (1993:67) clearly separated the German and Scandinavian sub-families; his classification was accepted by other Scandinavian ethnohistorians, such as Rudolf Keyser (1803-1864) (1868:9-11).

### Larger language families

With the establishment of comparative-historical linguistics and linguistic typology, *super families* that could include several established language families became popular. Of special importance to the present study is the once-influential idea of a north Asian super family, constructed using both genetic and typological arguments. With talk of super families, the idea of the language family could move beyond the established Finno-Ugric and Indo-European families/proto-languages. The inevitable question in a post-Biblical ethno-historical world became, *what existed before the Finno-Ugric and Indo-European proto-languages?* Agglutination theory had a partial answer: it claimed that every proto-language originated from a unique, primitive pre-language.

The abandonment of Biblical ethnohistory meant that new ethnohistorical approaches needed to be invented. One approach was to create larger genetic-based trees, amassing the established language families into super families. The proto-language of the super family would, by the logic of genetic classification, be pushed further back in time compared to the families of which it was composed.

Given the evidence of the Finno-Ugric and Samoyedic languages, such an expansion of the concept of language family became widely accepted. Grammatical similarities between families were explained as genetic affinity. With the Finnish linguist Alexander Castrén's (1813-1852) work on Samoyedic languages, linguists and ethnohistorians came to support a super family (Setälä 1915). In 1823, Klaproth suggested "Uralic" as a common name for the Finno-Ugric and other Eastern languages. In the 1880s and 1890s, linguists such as Donner would give "Uralic" the still-used definition of the Finno-Ugric languages together with a Samoyedic branch (Häkkinen 1996:67, Uesson 1970:79).

Rask went further, speculating in the mid-1830s about a large northern language family in addition to the well established Indo-European and Semitic families. He posited a *Scythian* family consisting of languages in Europe, Asia, North America, and Green-

land (Rask 1932-1933b:324). His idea influenced many linguists, although his nineteenth century colleagues preferred to include fewer languages. A large Eurasian family usually taken to include the Finno-Ugric, Samoyed, Turkic, Mongol, and Tungus languages was called *Altaic* by Alexander Castrén, *Ural-Altaic* by German linguist Wilhelm Schott and German-Estonian linguist Ferdinand Johann Wiedemann (Schott 1836, Ariste 1973:20, Alvre 1987:10), *Tataric* by Schleicher (Schleicher 1850:33), *Scythian* by American linguist William Dwight Whitney (Whitney 1868) and Finnish author/linguist Elias Lönnrot (1802-1884) (Lönnrot 1908:286), *Turanian* Rudolf Keyser (Keyser 1868:5-6). Like Keyser, Max Müller used Turanian as a contrast to the Aryan language family, although he included far more languages in the Turanian super family than did Keyser (Müller 1854, 1862).

Comparative-historical methods allowed the creation of ever larger families. That said, the Ural-Altaic/Turanian super family was mainly created using typological methods. Castrén's version, which consisted of the Finno-Ugric, Samoyed, Turkic, Tungusic, and Mongolian languages, used the typological evidence of pronominal suffix similarities. Castrén's idea gained a substantial following, even though he presented no arguments to prove the existence of the family as a *genetic* family (Hovdhaugen *et al* 2000:175). This raised an important problem: although the families within the super family were established by genetic classification, it proved difficult to bring them together by genetic methods. Therefore, the wider affinity had to be supported by typological similarities.

This weakness contributed to scepticism about a large Eurasian language family – a scepticism that grew stronger in the second half of the century. Whitney raised significant doubts about a Scythian family (Whitney 1868:315-316); while German-Russian linguist Otto von Böhtlingk (1815–1904) singled out Schott for criticism, for finding affinities between languages based on a very limited number of examples. According to the specialist on the Yakut language (Böhtlingk 1964 [1851]), much more extensive research needed to be done to establish a Ural-Altaic language family as fact. Vilhelm Thomsen dismissed any genetic basis for such a family as



hypothetical, lacking convincing evidence (Thomsen 1967:1 [1870]). In 1888, Finnish linguist Emil Nestor Setälä (1864-1935) took a similar approach. Although Setälä endorsed a larger Ural- Altaic language family, he thought that the proto-languages of the included language families needed to be more thoroughly examined before one could give any definitive judgement of Ural- Altaic genetic affinity (Setälä 1888:21). In an extensive overview in the first issue of *Finnish-Ugrische Forschungen*, Donner addressed the question of Uralic- Altaic affinity. He preferred a cautious approach, not directly addressing the question whether such larger language groups implied genetic affinity. Likewise he provided no straight answer, though he noted that some affinity could be detected among most languages in the larger language family, in typological characteristics such as use of vowel harmony (Donner 1901).

The idea of a large Eurasian super family was, indeed influential. At the same time, it was criticized by scholars who believed that the Finno- Ugric languages were more likely to have a genetic affinity with the Indo- European than the Asian languages. Daniel Europaeus (1820-1884) outright opposed the idea of a Uralic language family. Europaeus did acknowledge an Altaic language family that included Samoyed, Turkic, Mongol, and Tungusic; but it did not include the Finno- Ugric languages. He supported his position by comparing Finno- Ugric and Altaic numerals, finding significant differences. He claimed that similarities between the language families were not of ancient origin but arose from later contacts. On his view, Finno- Ugric was closer to the Indo- European languages than the Asian ones, and proto Finno- Ugric could even have a common origin with Sanskrit (Europaeus 1853:10, 32, Europaeus 1873:40- 47).

Russian librarian Theodore Köppen was likewise critical of Castrén's evidence for a Ural- Altaic family. Köppen found the argument that morphological similarities proved genetic affinity far from convincing, and said that the supposed affinity of the language families in the Ural- Altaic group was only due to morphological similarities. Köppen was more positive about a genetic affinity be-

tween Finno-Ugric and Indo-European, suggesting that the larger Indo-European-Finno-Ugrian family be named *Ariofinnen* (Köppen 1890:1002, 1007). In doing so, he followed in the footsteps of Baltic-German-Estonian linguist Nicolai Anderson (1845-1905). In his *Studien zur Vergleichung der ugrofinnischen und indogermanischen Sprachen* (1879), Anderson argued for a common Finno-Ugric and Indo-European origin: similarities between the language families could not be explained away as coincidence or by loans or language mixing. Anderson avoided any discussion of Samoyed-Finno-Ugric affinity and offered no opinion how to relate Indo-European to proto-Uralic (Anderson 1879:53, 77; Köppen 1890; Joki 1973:40). Anderson's and Köppen's ideas were widely discussed in the linguistic community, but they did not alter the mainstream view that Finno-Ugric and Indo-European were unrelated. German linguist Herman Hirt (1865-1936) wrote a highly critical analysis of any such affinity (Hirt 1905:71-72). Karl B. Wiklund (1868-1934) believed that many of Anderson's examples of words in common were wrong and should be regarded as instances of loan words, although he did not want to rule out the underlying claim, given similarities in grammar and some vocabulary (Wiklund 1906:64-65).

Some scholars supported a Finno-Ugric-Indo-European family by other arguments than genetic affinity. British linguist Henry Sweet (1845-1912) and religion historian Isaac Taylor both described the requisite affinity within an ethnohistoric context of linguistic and cultural evolution. They added Altaic languages to the larger Indo-European-Finno-Ugrian family (Taylor 1890:295, Sweet 1900:116-124). Sweet summarised the evolutionist's view of the relation between the language families: "just as Ugrian [Finno-Ugrian] represents an earlier stage of Aryan [Indo-European], so also the more highly developed of the Altaic languages, such as Turkish, may be said to represent an earlier stage of the Ugrian itself" (Sweet 1900:121). At the start of the twentieth century, agglutination theory still influenced discussions of linguistic and ethnohistorical affinity.

## **Conclusion**

Scholars during the time period of the present study used various methods of classification to get a better understanding of the world. When it came to languages, the goal was often to get a better understanding of the languages' speakers and their relationship to other peoples. Language classifications were made by genetic or typological methods; while non-scientific, hierarchical approaches were often added to describe some languages or language types as more advanced, developed, or beautiful than others. Such explicitly hierarchical classification inevitably affected thinking about the ethnohistories of the languages' speakers.

The invention of comparative-historical linguistics and of the language family created a viable ethnohistorical complement or alternative to Biblical ethnohistory. By keeping the relationship between language and people close, ethnohistorians could discover historical facts about peoples, not available in the Bible or from other ancient written sources.

# 4 Linguistic ethnohistory

## Introduction

The widespread criticism of Genesis as a historical source for ethnohistory opened up alternative approaches to ethnohistorical research. Some scholars continued to work within the framework of literary ethnohistory by using Classical and Medieval sources on early history. Others, regarding these sources as unreliable, looked for sources other than written ones to reveal early history. Many ethnohistorical scholars of the early nineteenth century regarded the comparative-historical study of language as one such promising alternative. Their hope stemmed from the old notion of a close relationship between language and people such that, by studying the history of a language, the history of its people could also be revealed. In this way, linguistic ethnohistory emerged from the juncture of comparative-historical linguistics and lingual ethnohistory.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section covers such inventions of auxiliary sciences as the methods of *Wörter und Sachen*. It also discusses the relationship between linguistic ethnohistory and the idea of progress. The second section examines how linguistic ethnohistory might be complemented by archaeology and physical anthropology. The final section presents research on finding the proto-homes of the proto-peoples uncovered by comparative-historical linguistics – with the help of the new methods of linguistic ethnohistory and its auxiliary sciences. The question whether the location of language family can influence the location of proto-homes is examined.

## **Linguistic ethnohistory and the idea of progress**

### **Comparative-historical linguists and ethnohistorical inventions**

While interest in studying the history of peoples is quite old, interest in studying the history of languages is modern. Jürgen Trabant describes how, in the sixteenth century, a previous (somewhat surprising) European uninterest in the study of modern languages changed. According to Trabant, the general Western understanding of the variation in languages had followed the tradition from Aristotle of differentiating languages from universal thoughts and ideas. Different languages were only different ways of expressing those universals. This Aristotelean tradition was complemented by the Biblical idea of considering linguistic pluralism the result of punishment, with the languages sharing a pre-Babel common origin. Building on these traditions, Medieval European scholars searched for some universal, linguistic character. They turned their linguistic interest mostly to Latin, which was then the language of learning (Trabant 2005).

Already in the Book of Genesis, language was regarded as a primary separator between peoples. That said, until the nineteenth century historians tended to trace the history of a people by means of literary sources. Whenever a people was mentioned by name in a Classical or Medieval text, historians regarded the text as a source for the people's history. If a contemporary people was missing in the sources, the scholars tried to make a connection from the contemporary people to the peoples/ethnonyms in the text and so establish ethnohistorical continuity.

Leibniz made an important contribution toward reducing literary dominance on early ethnohistory. Since language was the primary characteristic of a people, Leibniz suggested that the study of language itself was the best source for reconstructing the early history of a people. Such research could expand into the study of geographical names and thereby reveal the existence of earlier peoples in a particular territory (Ekenvall 1953:27, Waterman 1978:59). In the

article *Brevis designation meditationum de Originibus Gentium potissimum ductis ex indicio linguarum* (1710), Leibniz wrote that “when the remote origins of people transcend history, then languages take the place of ancient documents. And the oldest traces of languages remain in the names of rivers and forests, which, even though the inhabitants have change, are usually kept” (quoted in Waterman 1978:59). Finnish historian and linguist Henrik Gabriel Porthan (1739-1804) and Leibniz’s colleague Johann Georg von Eckhart (1664-1730) continued to elaborate the linguistic approach to ethnohistory.

In *Allgemeine nordische Geschichte*, Schlözer supported the idea of classifying peoples according to languages. Although he knew that peoples could have various ethnic characteristics besides language, he insisted that language provided the best criterion for ethnohistorical research. Schlözer thus continued the Leibniz tradition of deciding kinship between peoples according to linguistic similarities (Schlözer 1771, Stagl 1998:526-527). By studying a language – its grammar and phonetics, as well as (like Leibniz) its vocabulary – the early history of its people could be reconstructed.

In *Geschichte des Deutsche Sprache* (1781), Adelung emphasized the importance of language to the existence and development of a people. He described how the Vend people disappeared into Germans when they switched their language to German (Adelung 1781:5-6). Adelung gave language such importance to ethnic identity that new peoples could emerge simply from the mixing of languages. The unique character of the English people was the outcome of the mixing of the Anglo-Saxon and Briton languages, modified by Norman and French. As Michael Carhart describes Adelung’s position: “a common language did not necessarily indicate a common national origin, but language was the chief means by which a nation preserved its ideas and identity” (Carhart 2007:102-103).

Adelung developed his ethnohistorical ideas before the establishment of comparative-historical linguistics, with its principled rejection of mixed languages. From that point on, many linguists were to examine languages for information on and means of recon-

structing the history of peoples. Franz Bopp was an exception. In *Vergleichende Grammatik* (1833), he wrote that he studied languages for their own sake and not for such practical reasons as learning to speak them or revealing the history of a people (Morpurgo-Davies 1975:611, Amsterdamska 1987:69). By contrast, Jacob Grimm believed that languages should *not* be studied simply for their own sake: a language was linked to its people. A people consisted of individuals who spoke a common language (Torstendahl 1964:137, Gardt 2000b:254). Grimm's and Rask's ethnohistorical approach to linguistics became very influential: during the nineteenth century, linguistics research remained largely connected to ethnohistorical themes. Rask noted that "people" was a complicated concept, involving more than merely the speakers of a language; at the same time, language was, by far, the most important characteristic of a people:

The religion, manners, customs, and civil institutions of different peoples in the earliest period in which they are known to us, may give us many a clue to their relationship and extraction. The condition in which they make their first appearance can always lead us to some conclusions about their previous condition, or about the manner in which they arrived at their present one. But no other means of knowledge about the extraction and relationship of nations in the distant past where history forsakes is as important as language. Within one generation a people may change its religion, customs, conventions, laws and institutions, may rise to civilization or drop back into primitiveness and ignorance; but throughout these vicissitudes language endures continuously, if not exactly the same, still recognizable, through several millennia even. The Greek nation, for example, has suffered the fate of all these upheavals, but we can still tell the tongue of Homer in the Greek peasant's speech. In fact, language has changed even less in some other countries, circumstances having been more favorable: the Arab still understands what was written in Arab many centuries before Moham-

med, the Icelander still reads what Are Frode wrote and Ejjvind  
Skaldespiller sang (Rask 1993: 6-7)

However, linguistic ethnohistory did not emerge automatically with comparative-historical linguistics, because some of the first generation of comparative-historical linguists did not abandon older, literary ethnohistoric ideas. Even Rask believed firmly in the truth of Snorri Sturlason's (1178-1241) historical works, and he tried to verify Snorri with his linguistic discoveries. Rask's ethnohistory cannot be described as linguistic ethnohistory, even though he based his ethnohistorical thought on there being a close relationship between language and people and embraced many of the principles of comparative-historical linguistics. Rask could best be described as representing a transition position that included both literary and linguistic ethnohistorical components. Rask's belief in the historical truth of the Icelandic sources was not unusual. Up till the 1830s – and sometimes even longer – Scandinavian ethnohistorians presented ethnohistorical hypotheses that rested on both comparative-historical linguistics and the Icelandic historical sources.

Language had been used for ethnohistorical research long before the invention of linguistic ethnohistory. For centuries, scholars had used linguistic remnants to reconstruct ethnohistory. They often used place names and engaged in etymological speculation to tell the history of peoples. One well-known example was to explain the old Nordic name of Odin's people – *Asar* – as a sign that the people had originated in Asia. However, etymology got a bad name in the eighteenth century, and new methods were invented to complement or replace etymology's role in ethnohistorical research. Leibniz's ideas were of particular importance, as mentioned earlier. Remember that Leibniz emphasised the role of geographical names as empirical sources for reconstructing the ethnohistory of a region. The method's potential for tracing earlier populations in an area was obvious in e.g. the Americas, where the newcomers had driven away or killed the indigenous population, but the original place names had survived. For Leibniz, a similar situation held in Europe. Leibniz stud-



ied place names in Spain and France to conclude that the Basques had occupied much larger areas in the past (Robins 1990:92). In the 1830s and 1840s, Finnish linguists Andreas Johan Sjögren (1794-1855) and David Europaeus used the method to map previously Finno-Ugric-speaking areas in Russia (Donner 1936:20, Branch 1973:254).

In the eighteenth century, an additional ethnohistorical approach was elaborated, notably by the Finnish historian Porthan: examining loan words to reconstruct the history of a people. Loan words remained of interest for nineteenth century linguists and ethnohistorians: e.g., Ferdinand Johann Wiedemann emphasised their importance to ethnohistory (Ariste 1973:18-19). Such later comparative-historical linguists as the Danish Vilhelm Thomsen and the Finnish August Ahlqvist (1826-1889) conducted important research on loan words in the context of linguistic contacts between the Baltic-Finns and their neighbours (Thomsen 1930 [1869], Ahlqvist 1875).

After the breakthrough in comparative-historical linguistics, the ethnohistorical innovation of using place names and loan words was complemented by *palaeolinguistics*: a comparative-historical method that pushed ethnohistorical research very far back into time. The idea was that not only the proto-language itself but also the meaning of its proto-words could be reconstructed. In this way, it was possible to reconstruct the proto-culture and locate the proto-home with the help of the proto-vocabulary.

The invention of palaeolinguistics is usually attributed to German linguist Adalbert Kuhn (1812-1881), who, in 1845, presented his ideas in a public lecture, *Zur ältesten Geschichte der Indo-Germanische Völker*. Stefan Zimmer writes, “he was the first to develop the idea that reconstructible lexical items of the protolanguage should be proof enough to postulate the existence of all features they signify in the material, intellectual and spiritual world of the speakers of that language” (Zimmer 2002:29). In his lecture, Kuhn compared the vocabulary of various Indo-European sub-families and languages: especially Germanic, Greek, Latin and Indian. If a

word was shared among all of them – contemporary words could differ significantly, so long as those differences could be explained by comparative-historical phonetic laws – then it had also been part of the proto-language. In addition to words related to family such as “mother”, “father”, “daughter”, and “son”, the major Indo-European languages also shared words about culture and society (Kuhn 1845:2-4). He discovered shared words for e.g. cow, horse, grain, and plough (ibid. 8-12). This common vocabulary showed that the Indo-European proto-people had been an agricultural society (ibid. 16-18). He found shared words for leadership, which could indicate that the proto-people had lived within the structures of a rudimentary state (ibid. 7). Clearly – he thought – the proto-Indo-Europeans had lived at a relatively advanced stage of development. Kuhn accepted the hypothesis that societies develop from hunter-gatherers via nomadic herding to agricultural societies (ibid. 18). This meant that the proto-Indo-Europeans had already entered the third stage of development. Kuhn placed the Indo-European proto-home in Asia, without any further specifications (ibid. 1-2).

Palaeolinguistics rapidly became accepted as a core method for ethnohistorical research. Kuhn’s ideas were elaborated by Swiss linguist Adolphe Pictet (1799-1875) in *Les origines indo-européennes ou les Aryas primitifs, essai de paléontologie linguistique* (1850-1853). It was from Pictet’s book that the method became known as palaeolinguistics or *linguistic palaeontology*. Pictet pushed the boundaries of Indo-European studies even further, believing it possible to locate the Indo-European proto-home by means of the proto-vocabulary and comparisons of the proto-vocabulary with geography. Names of plants and animals were particularly useful. A match between the proto-vocabulary and the fauna and flora of a geographic region implied that the proto-home had been in that area (Campbell 1998:351).

Jacob Grimm’s *Wörter und Sachen* (“Words and Things”) complemented the establishment of comparative-historical linguistics and palaeolinguistics. In the foreword to *Geschichte der deutschen Sprache* (1848), he argued that the cultural history of a people could

be reconstructed with the help of its words: “I have never been satisfied by words [*Wörter*] without proceeding to things [*Sachen*]. My aim has not only been to build houses, but also to live in them” (Quoted in Lehmann 1992a:296).

Together, palaeolinguistics and *Wörter und Sachen* had an enormous impact on ethnohistoric research. It was believed that, using the reconstructed vocabulary, the level of culture of any proto-people could be determined. If all languages in a language family shared the words used in a primitive hunting and fishing culture, then the proto-people had been at this level of development before the proto-language split into various sub-languages (Scherer 1885:301). If the languages in a family shared a common word for metal, then the proto-people had been on a or Iron Age level. Likewise, if they lacked a common word for metal, then the proto-people had been on a more primitive, Stone Age level.

### *Sprachwissenschaft* and other auxiliary sciences

The most prominent ethnohistoric discipline emerging from the invention of comparative-historical linguistics and linguistic ethnohistory was the meta-science of *Sprachwissenschaft*, as elaborated by such Neogrammarians as Karl Brugmann (Brugmann 1885). *Sprachwissenschaft* was not a science in its own right but rather consisted of *Linguistik* and *Philologie* (Benfey 1869:4-8), where *Linguistik* focused on the study of language and languages, while *Philologie* had a wider meaning than the common twentieth century definition of philology as the study of texts. Friedrich August Wolf (1759-1824), who coined the term, defined *Philologie* as the study of antique cultures in a wide context of language, art, science, national characteristics, etc. August Böckh (1785-1867) widened its range to include such contemporary languages, cultures and peoples as Germanic and Slav. Böckh's *Philologie* included the history of a people as well as its language, its literature, and its habits (Eto 2003:166). *Philologie* came to mean the study of the outcomes of human thought, of the cultural life of a *Volk* (Jankowsky 1972:94; Amsterdamska 1987:67).

The Neogrammarians acknowledged that both aims and methods separated linguistics from philology, but they insisted that no clear-cut dividing line could be drawn between the two. Linguistics was meant to focus on the comparative historical study of languages, while philology examined a people or several peoples within a language family: i.e., philology was concerned with *Volksindividualitäten*. Brugmann stressed that philology also applied to languages and peoples without a written literature (Brugmann 1885:8-12, 17). Hermann Paul (1846-1921) applied philology to the task of studying human culture: a huge undertaking that could only be made by including auxiliary sciences. Paul regarded philology as a method and not a science, with peoples the objects of the method. For Paul, philology could include many different fields: language history, literary history, economy, law, military studies, mythology, tradition, art, hero legends, ethnography, etc. (Eto 2003:130-131). Meanwhile, the idea of *Sprachwissenschaft* was exported to other countries in Europe. It would come to strongly influence ethnohistorical thinking about the Nordic region (see Kock 1925).

The development of auxiliary sciences for linguistic ethnohistory was already started before the establishment of *Sprachwissenschaft*. Comparative mythology grew out of the principles of comparative-historical linguistics. The comparative method was used to study myths, with the understanding that the peoples belonging to a language family shared myths that could be traced back to the proto-people. With the establishment of the idea of an Indo-European language family, the myths of the Germanics, Greeks, and Indians could be compared: belonging as they did to the same language family, their myths should share a common origin (Arvidsson 2006). Among the Finno-Ugric languages, similar characteristics of Finnish and Hungarian myths and folk beliefs could be explained as remnants of a shared mythology.

The rise of comparative mythology initiated a debate over whether mythology was distorted history: the starting point for *euhemeristic* studies of mythology. Originating from the ancient Greek mythologist Euhemerus (fourth century B.C.), euhemerism

states that the gods of myth can be traced back to real, historical persons. Euhemeristic arguments were used to argue that the Old Norse god Odin was a historical figure. Comparative mythology widened the debate: were the myths of various peoples narratives without any historical content, or could they be used to reconstruct the early history of peoples: that is, were they more than mere distortions of actual history? The German classicist and librarian Christian Gottlob Heyne (1729-1812) claimed that *all* of the philosophy and history of ancient peoples proceeded from myths – as Michael Carhart notes (2007:108).

The early nineteenth century saw challenges to euhemerism. In *Deutsche Mythologie* (1835), Grimm concluded that Germanic mythology had to be studied by other methods than euhemerism, as euhemerism could not provide any useful explanations to mythological problems. Grimm's arguments convinced other ethno-historians. By the 1830s, scholars in Germany and elsewhere in Europe generally abandoned euhemerism (Scherer 1885:279, Bödl 2000:118).

With the decreasing influence of the Bible and of euhemeristic explanations of pagan myths, scholars began to study old Scandinavian and Germanic mythology as mythological works in their own right. In *Geschichte der Alte und Neue literatur* (1814), Friedrich Schlegel found similarities between the myths of Odin and the Odyssey, and presented a new approach to comparing Scandinavian with Indic mythology (Bödl 2000:89, 186). Franz Josef Mone (-1871) was one of those making contributions to the establishment of Indo-European and Germanic mythology studies. was the Icelander Finnur Magnússon (1781-1847), who, in *Eddalæren og dens Oprindelse* (1824-1826), found similarities between Nordic and Indo-Iranian religion. Comparative mythology became popular in the early nineteenth century with the discovery of similarities between Scandinavian, Persian, and Sanskrit mythology – all part of the Indo-European family (Scherer 1885:274, Bödl 2000:210-211).

From *Wörter und Sachen* came the principle that the culture of

a proto-people could be examined with the reconstructed proto-language. It became logical to see the study of sociocultural phenomena and physical artefacts in a larger context of the study of peoples and their ethnohistory. A pioneer of linguistic and ethnographic studies of Finno-Ugric peoples in Russia, Andreas Johan Sjögren emphasised the importance of studying not only the language of the Finno-Ugric peoples but also their culture. Michael Branch describes Sjögren's ethnological work: "Sjögren frequently drew comparisons between basic Zyryan and Finnish phenomena such as the size of fields, shape of milk-vessels, fishing methods, choice of colour in dress, the peasant's knife, rucksack, and staff, and knowledge of metals." Sjögren also looked at cultures' spiritual content:

The pagan beliefs of Finns, Lapps, Kurlanders, Livonians, Estonians, Cheremis, Zyryans, and Votyaks tended to revere the same kind of objects and to choose the same kind of places for acts of worship. Furthermore, according to Sjögren, some degree of affinity still survived in the contemporary expression of pagan cults. Sorcery was still practised by witches and wizards, who were characterized by many common features among all these peoples and the custom of bathing and throwing birch branches into rivers and lakes on midsummer's eve was still practised in some areas. (Branch 1973:163)

### **Agglutination theory and social progress**

One ethnohistorical approach, popular in the mid-nineteenth century, combined agglutination theory with the cultural development scheme of unilinear evolutionism. The idea of progress had influenced not only historical thought in general, but also research specifically on the development of languages. Agglutination theory represented the idea of linguistic agglutination as a process corresponding to the progress of societies. Evolutionist ethnohistorical thinking tended to equate so-called isolating languages with savagery, agglutinative languages with barbarism, and flecive languages

with civilisation (Campbell 2001:94). In a series of famous lectures in Oxford in 1861, German-English linguist and comparative mythologist Max Müller presented his thoughts on the relationship between morphological types and stages of civilisation. Sometimes they coincided, as in the border zone between fleective-speaking Aryan (Indo-European) agricultural civilizations and agglutinative-speaking Turanian (Finno-Ugric, along with other Ural-Altai peoples) pastoral ones. Müller presented an evolutionist scheme whereby monosyllabic languages corresponded to primitive societies organised around families, agglutinative languages were spoken by nomadic peoples, and fleective languages were used by agricultural societies (Müller 1862).

In the mid-nineteenth century, such Finno-Ugric linguists as Johann Wiedemann advocated a close linkage between language structure and the cultural level of a society. Alexander Castrén described how rapid Finnish cultural development was mirrored in the increasingly fleective character of the language. During his extensive journeys in Russia, he came to the conclusion that Finnish was more fleective than any of the Finno-Ugric languages in Russia or Asia. This correlated well with what he saw as the relatively more developed status of Finnish culture. Castrén believed that Finnish would eventually become a fully fleective language, precisely when Finnish culture reached the appropriate level of development (Ariste 1973:18; Castrén 1855:154-155).

If linguistic and cultural evolution were indeed universal, then all peoples of the world could reach a high cultural level, equivalent to all languages becoming fleective. However, empirical research showed considerable morphological variation within the Indo-European language family. Schleicher tried to explain the substantial typological differences between such languages as Lithuanian and English by developing an ethnohistorical theory around a revised concept of history. He described the progress of language and society as occurring over two, fundamentally different periods. The first period – the *age of natural linguistic development*– began with pre-language and ended with agglutinative language. The second

period – the *historical age* – began when a language (/people) entered the flective stage of language development: i.e., when the proto-language became flective, the proto-people – in a sense – entered history. Languages evolved gradually toward flective perfection; but, at the very moment a language became flective, its people entered history, and it became exposed to the historical forces of linguistic decay. Such less significant languages (/peoples) as Lithuanian or Icelandic, long isolated from the centres of historical events, had remained morphologically more flective than English and French, both of which played important historical roles. In a sense, these languages had been more exposed to history; thus, they had become less flective (Schleicher 1983c:12-16 [1850], Maher 1983:xxix).

On Schleicher's ethnohistorical account, only the Semitic and Indo-European languages (/peoples) had entered history (Schleicher 1983c:37 [1850]). Perhaps Schleicher's hypothesis sounded reasonable within a smaller, European setting; but, on a global level, the equating of language type with cultural level encountered serious problems in the case of e.g. China. Agglutination theory held that the most primitive languages were spoken by peoples at the most primitive stages of sociocultural development. Chinese was a language of what was deemed the most primitive type; but Chinese culture was highly developed: the civilisation had existed over thousands of years. The Chinese case made Schleicher's brand of ethnohistory unsustainable. The direct relation between the development of a society and the morphological type of its language came under increasing criticism. Swedish linguist Esaias Tegnér, Jr. (1843-1928) strongly attacked Schleicher's position. Tegnér held that a language could indeed be culturally less developed and have a limited vocabulary, but that was unrelated to the *structural* character of the language (Tegnér 1922:226 [1880]). English linguist Henry Sweet (1845-1912) argued that the Indo-European peoples had already spoken flective languages when they were savages and that civilisations could be built by peoples of *all* morphological types of language. The synchrony of and cultural development was simply wrong (Sweet 1900:141-142). Both agglutination theory and the



*idea of progress* were ways of describing progress; but, as became increasingly clear to late nineteenth century ethnohistorians, cultures and languages develop on different paths.

## **Linguistic ethnohistory, archaeology, and physical anthropology**

### **Archaeology**

The relationship between linguistic ethnohistory and archaeology was considered promising by many ethnohistorians. In the 1820s and 1830s, a new archaeological methodology was developed: the *Three-Age System*. It could be used both as an independent science and as an auxiliary science for linguistic ethnohistory. A central issue for nineteenth century archaeologists was *to focus on questions related to the issues of ethnic genesis* (Baudou 2004:113).

The invention of the Three-Age System is generally attributed to Danish archaeologist and numismatist Christian Jürgensen Thomsen (1788-1865) (Montelius 1905; Baudou 2004). Already in the 1820s, Thomsen had elaborated a system periodising archaeological artefacts into Stone Age, Bronze Age and Iron Age artefacts; but the breakthrough in his ideas came with an article in the booklet *Ledetraad til Nordens Oldkyndighed* (1836). Danish archaeologist Jens Jacob Worsaae (1821-1885) and Swedish zoologist and archaeologist Sven Nilsson (1787-1883) continued and elaborated upon Thomsen's research. By the 1840s, the Three-Age System was firmly established in Scandinavia. Other European archaeologists followed Scandinavian archaeology closely: the *Ledetraad* was translated into German in 1837 and English in 1848; but they remained largely sceptical of the Three-Age System and slow to accept it (Baudou 2004:119-121, Rowley-Conwy 2007). However, from the mid-nineteenth century onward, they began to contribute to and elaborate it: e.g., in *Prehistoric Times*, archaeologist and prehistorian John Lubbock (1834-1913) divided the Stone Age into the Palaeolithic and Neolithic eras (Lubbock 1865:2-3).

Ethnohistorians quickly recognised that Thomsen's system was useful for ethnohistorical research. Thomsen himself had avoided ethnohistorical speculation in the *Ledetraad*; but such contemporary colleagues as Nilsson and the Norwegian historian and linguist Rudolf Keyser used his idea of different archaeological periods to explain Scandinavian ethnohistory (Nilsson 1991 [1868]: Keyser 1868). Archaeological indications of a transition from one age to another were interpreted either as a people entering a higher level of development or a new people moving into the area – assimilating, killing, or driving away the indigenous population. A gradual and smooth transition meant that the original population had entered a new age. An abrupt transition – with no intermediary artefacts – was probably evidence for the immigration of a new people. With these assumptions in hand, Nordic archaeologists and ethnohistorians included archaeology in their ethnohistorical research (Worsaae 1843, Hildebrand 1866).

In his article *Om våra förfäders invandring till Norden* (1884), Swedish archaeologist Oscar Montelius (1843-1921) elaborated upon these ideas. He interpreted smooth transitions as evidence of ethnic stability. If no breaks existed in the archaeological record, it should be possible to trace a people from documented history far back into prehistory. Indeed, Montelius claimed that contemporary Swedes could trace their history back to the Stone Age (Montelius 1884).

As said, during the second half of the nineteenth century, Continental ethnohistorians adopted the Three-Age System into their research – partly because the methods of the palaeolinguistics had created such divergent and confusing results. Palaeolinguistics had become popular among ethnohistorians; but often they reconstructed the history of proto-peoples very differently and in contradictory ways. American anthropologist and economist William Z. Ripley (1867-1941) described the ensuing chaos regarding the ethnohistory of the Indo-European peoples: “and all these variant and conflicting conclusions are drawn from the same source of information. Is it any wonder that the reader becomes sceptical?” (Ripley 1900:483)

Ripley believed it insufficient to use palaeolinguistics alone to obtain reliable ethnohistorical facts; the method had to be supported by other sciences, such as archaeology.

Ripley's critical observation had earlier been made by the German linguist Otto Schrader (1855-1919) in his *Sprachvergleichung und Urgeschichte: Linguistisch-historische Beiträge zur Erforschung des indogermanischen Altertums* (1883). Palaeolinguistics seemed incapable of solving its methodological problems on its own. Schrader concluded that linguists had to collaborate with archaeologists and historians if they were to get better ethnohistorical results. The three disciplines – linguistics, archaeology, and history, but especially palaeolinguistics and archaeology – should co-operate in a process that begins with palaeolinguists locating a proto-home. Their work would then be picked up and carried forward by archaeologists, who would examine archaeological sites in the area. If the archaeological record matched the linguists' reconstructions, the linguists' hypotheses were thereby verified, backed by hard archaeological evidence (Schrader 1883). Patrick Geary (2002:34) describes such an auxiliary role for archaeology as *ethnoarchaeology*.

Schrader's remarks were generally received positively by ethnohistorians, although some linguists were concerned that, barring any linguistic documentation in the archaeological sites, the conclusions were based on speculation, no matter how good the match between linguistic hypothesis and archaeological findings. In particular, Neogrammarian Berthold Delbrück (1842-1922) was sceptical about the usefulness of archaeology for ethnohistorical studies (Brugmann 1885:15), and Finnish linguist Emil Nestor Setälä urged ethnohistorians to be careful (Setälä 1900:344). That said, Delbrück and Setälä held a minority position: Schrader's ethnohistorical principles became the mainstream approach.

German linguist Gustaf Kossinna (1858-1931) considered archaeology central to the study of Germanic prehistory. Kossinna even envisioned an expanded role for archaeology in prehistoric ethnohistorical research by emphasising the ethnic importance of typological differences in archaeological findings. Starting in the

1890s, he equated the borders of a cultural area – as determined by archaeology – with the extension of a people. For him, something like pottery decoration had ethnic implications (Kossinna 1911:3). In the twentieth century, Kossinna's *Siedlungsarchäologie* ("settlement archaeology") went on to become highly influential in European archaeological and ethnohistorical thought (Trigger 2006:235-240). Kossinna's ethnohistorical use of typological differences between archaeological artefacts places him in contrast to such first-generation Nordic archaeologists as Sven Nilsson, for whom pottery indicated only the cultural level of the people: e.g., in *Scandinaviska Nordens Ur-Innevånare* Nilsson describes pottery as having no specific ethnohistorical value (Nilsson 1991).

### Physical anthropology

Some ethnohistorians believed that ethnohistorical research should be complemented by physical anthropology: after all, archaeological sites sometimes contain human remnants, which can be examined for ethnohistorical purposes. The question whether physical appearance is relevant to ethnohistory was heatedly debated during the last decades of the nineteenth century. Although the position that physical appearance *is* relevant gained influence over that century, the arguments against remained strong – especially for such linguists as Otto Schrader. Max Müller took a central role in the discussion. In his 1861 Oxford lectures on language, he clearly separated language from physical appearance: e.g., the Aryans were those who spoke Aryan languages, regardless (in principle) of physical appearance (Benedict 1950:12, van den Bosch 2002:204-206).

Scholars opposed to the relevance of physical appearance saw physical appearance and language/ ethnicity as two, very different things: for them, language was a social category, physical appearance a biological one. In *Language and the Study of Language: Twelve Lectures on the Principles of Linguistic Science* (1867), American linguist William Whitney (1827-1894) summarised his arguments against treating physical appearance as an integral characteristic of a people. Since a child of any physical race could learn any language,

no natural bond existed between any particular language and any physical type: i.e., no direct connection existed between race/blood and language (Whitney 1868:14). “If the talk of our coloured citizens does not show that they were brought from Africa, neither do the shape and bearing of the Magyars show that they came from beyond the Ural, nor those of the Osmanii Turks that their cousins are the nomads of the inhospitable plateau of central Asia” (Whitney 1868:376). Such leading physical anthropologists as Rudolf Virchow (1821-1902) likewise to separate language/people from physical race. The linguistic affinity/similarity between Finn, Estonian, and Saami did not correspond to racial similarities: there were large physical differences between Finns and Estonians and even greater ones between Finns and Saami (Virchow 1874a:33-36).

However, such strong objections from both leading linguists and physical anthropologists to linking language with physical appearance did not end the debate over whether physical appearance mattered for ethnohistory. While consensus held that language and race should be separated in principle, some still felt that physical appearance could be relevant to the ethnohistory of a particular language family or, in particular, its proto-language. The logic for including physical appearance in these cases was based, in part, on the assumption that, due to their presumably small number, the members of a proto-people were probably physically fairly homogeneous. Even Whitney was convinced: “the farther we go back into the night of the past, the greater is the probability that the limits of race and speech approximately coincide, and that mixture of either is accompanied by that of the other” (Whitney 1868:376). He went so far to claim that “...upon the whole, in the light of our present knowledge, we are justified in regarding the boundaries of Indo-European speech as approximately coinciding with those of a race; the tie of language represents a tie of blood” (ibid. 379). Max Müller speculated along similar lines: i.e., that, due to their small numbers, the members of a proto-people could well have been physically homogeneous, in which case it might be possible to relate linguistic and ethnological race far back in prehistory (Müller 1890:

47-48). Müller rejected the ethnohistorical inclusion of physical appearance as a matter of theory but allowed that it could sometimes be relevant in practice.

In short, some scholars were convinced to include physical anthropology as a relevant auxiliary science for studying the history of peoples. Others were not so convinced, rejecting in particular the idea that proto-peoples could be regarded as having been physically homogeneous. Influential linguists, physical anthropologists, and ethnologists including Otto Schrader and Edward Burnett Tylor (1832-1927) saw no reason to suppose that the proto-Indo-Europeans had been any less physically mixed than the contemporary population of the proto-home region (Schrader 1883:158, Tylor 1960:58 [1881]). Note, however, that both Schrader and Tylor believed that the proto-Indo-Europeans belonged to the “white race”; their objection was to hypotheses that narrowed the proto-people to a specific type *within* the larger “white race”.

Kossinna challenged the common scepticism toward the role of physical appearance in ethnohistorical research. Indeed, he gave human remnants an increasing role in his interpretations of early European ethnohistory (see e.g. Kossinna 1922). Kossinna built his arguments on a new branch of ethnohistory, developed by such ethnologists as Robert Latham (1812-1882), Oscar Peschel (1826-1875) and Friedrich Müller (1834-1898). All claimed that not only was physical appearance relevant to ethnohistory; it was even more important than language for classifying the peoples of the world. This branch of ethnohistory will be discussed further in the next chapter.

## **Locating proto-homes**

### **Locating the Indo-European proto-home**

According to Biblical ethnohistory, the proto-home of humankind was in Babel: all ethnohistories started from there. The secularisation of ethnohistorical thought meant that the fundamental rules of how

to locate proto-homes changed radically over the nineteenth century. The idea from Herder and from the French Enlightenment scholars that language might have been invented on many occasions made the Babylonian Confusion an obsolete explanation for the origin of linguistic diversity: separate language families could have separate proto-homes.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, the debate over the Indo-European proto-home was intense. The original idea – for an Asian proto-home – remained strong among scholars even after the introduction of linguistic ethnohistory and the Bible's loss of its ethnohistorical monopoly. In 1850, a significant change in the debate occurred: in the foreword to an English translation of Tacitus' *Germania*, English ethnologist Robert Latham placed the Indo-European proto-home in Europe. Latham thought it made more sense that the Aryan proto-home had been in Europe, which contained several Indo-European sub-families, than in Asia, which contained only the Indo-Iranian branch of the family. Since the number of daughter languages was greater in Europe, it was more plausible to suppose that a minority migrated to Asia while the majority remained close to the European proto-home than to believe the converse: that only one family remained close to the Asian proto-home, while the rest set off for Europe (Latham 1851:cxxxix-cxliii). Latham's idea – that the proto-home of a language family is to be found where the variation in daughter languages is the greatest – is often referred to as *centre of gravity theory*, a phrase introduced by linguist Edward Sapir (1884-1939) in 1921 (Sapir 1921).

Latham's idea gained much support, ending the previously unquestioned assumption that the Indo-European proto-home had been in Asia. Various proposals for a European proto-home were suggested, by means of various ethnohistoric methods. German linguist Theodor Benfey (1809-1881) used palaeolinguistics to locate the proto-home on the steppes of Eastern Europe (Benfey 1868). Benfey's colleague Otto Schrader located the proto-home in various places in Eastern Europe, before finally settling on a location north-west of the Black Sea (Schrader 1906:506).

Another German linguist, Lazarus Geiger (1829-1870), used physical appearance to suggest a northern European proto-home. Geiger looked to the oldest available descriptions of the Indo-Europeans and Germanics in e.g. Sanskrit sources and in Tacitus' Germania, where they were blond and of large physical size. This seemed to match the description of people living in nineteenth century northern Europe. Geiger supposed that the physical characteristics of the world had remained geographically stable over time, implying that the Indo-European proto-people had originated from contemporary Germany (Geiger 1878). The idea that the Indo-European proto-people had been Nordic was popular among German scholars, many of whom placed the proto-home either in Poland or Lithuania (Poesche 1878), or in northern Germany or southern Scandinavia (Penka 1883, Wilser 1895).

However, there was no such consensus on a Nordic origin. Some scholars argued that the proto-Indo-European people had probably been of the brunette "Alpine" race, while others argued that they could have belonged to *different* types. A third position simply dismissed physical appearance as irrelevant to the study of linguistically defined human entities (Virchow 1874:30-34, Huxley & Haddon 1937:130, Ljungström 2002:285-288, 304-305).

### **Locating the Finno-Ugric proto-home**

The search for a Finno-Ugric proto-home likewise began with the assumption that all language families had most likely originated from Asia. The search for a Finno-Ugric proto-home often assumed that the Finno-Ugric languages were part of a larger Ural-Altai language family. Klaproth, in his account of a historical flood that covered the world, offered an important challenge to the Biblical ethnohistorical narrative: as mentioned, on his account, only peoples in mountainous regions had survived the flood. For a long time, these groups remained separated from each other, during which time linguistic variation evolved. The proto-home of each language family could be traced to a particular mountainous region: so for example the Finno-Ugric languages/peoples originated in the Uralic



Mountains, and these languages could therefore be described as Uralic rather than Finnish (Klaproth 1831:180). The Samoyeds originated in the Sayan and Altai mountains (*ibid.* 139). The Indo-Europeans had originated in two separate locations: the Caucasus Mountains and the Himalayas (*ibid.* 43).

Klaproth's hypothesis received little initial support. The dominant idea remained that the proto-Finno-Ugrians had lived together with other peoples in Central Asia: so e.g. in 1838, Wiedemann suggested that, prior to their arrival in Europe, the Finno-Ugric peoples had lived in Central Asia, with Tatars, Manchurians, and Mongols for neighbours (Kruse 1846:20). Schott believed that the Finnish-Tataric language family had originated in the Altai region (Schott 1847:281, 297) – an idea that became firmly established by Castrén. During the 1830s and 1840s under the sponsorship of the Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg, he travelled over large parts of European Russia and western Siberia conducting ethnological and linguistic research on non-Slavic peoples. Castrén believed that Finno-Ugric belonged to the same language family as Turkish and Mongolian, with a common proto-home probably in the Sayan Mountains. Castrén defended his position not only on the grounds of Ural-Altai linguistic affinity, but also based on geographical names and on grave types he interpreted as being Finno-Ugric (Castrén 1850).

Castrén's hypothesis gained important support from Johan Aspelin (1842-1930), the first professional Finnish archaeologist. Aspelin used archaeological arguments to support a proto-home in the Altai region (Aspelin 1875). Aspelin looked at two Bronze Age cultures: one in eastern Europe and one in western Asia. The European culture did not stretch much further eastward than Finland and Belarus. The Asian culture was located on the Asian side of the Ural Mountains. Importantly, the area between contained very few Bronze Age artefacts. Remember that Aspelin believed in an Asian proto-home for the Finno-Ugrians. He concluded that they must have lived in the area of the Asian Bronze Age culture, and that they could not have begun migrating to the West before the Iron Age

(Aspelin 1875). However, Aspelin dropped his support for a Finno-Ugric proto-home in the Altai region after archaeological expeditions to the area in the 1880s discovered graves of Turkish origin (Tommila 1989:114).

Support for a large Ural-Altai language family waned over the second half of the nineteenth century, as did the belief in a Central Asian proto-home. New proto-homes were suggested. Advocates of a Uralic language family (Finno-Ugric + Samoyedic) looked for a proto-home in the Ural Mountains or in western Asia. Otto Donner, in his own search for the Finno-Ugric proto-home, offered a serious alternative to Castrén's proposal. Using Pictet's palaeolinguistic methods, in an 1882 article Donner suggested that the Finno-Ugric proto-people had been herders somewhere in a region including the middle Urals and western Siberia (Donner 1936:75 [1882]).

Others argued for a Finno-Ugric proto-home in Europe. In 1873, Finnish linguist Torsten Aminoff (1838-1881) suggested a location in the Volga-Kama area, which included several contemporary Finno-Ugric peoples. Aminoff's hypothesis was supported by various ethnohistorical methods, notably the *centre of gravity theory*, the largest Finno-Ugric linguistic diversity is to be found in the Volga region. Although the proposal gained little initial support, it grew in popularity over time (Itkonen 1966:22; Uibopuu 1988:54).

Questions over the importance of physical type played a role in the ethnohistorical debates concerning the Finno-Ugrians. If one considered physical appearance relevant, then one had a strong argument against locating the proto-home in the Altai Mountains. Castrén was aware of this argument against his hypothesis. One response from scholars who supported Castrén's position was that the Finns had become physically Nordic after extensive mixing with their neighbours. In principle, Castrén was against giving physical appearance any significance to ethnohistorical research. That said, he did feel called on to address why Finns looked so strikingly different from the inhabitants of the proto-home. In his open lecture *Var låg finska folkets vagg* (1849), he suggested that already in their

proto-home, the Finns had had a different physical appearance from their neighbours: i.e., the Finns had looked basically the same in their proto-home as in their present homeland. This idea did not gain much influence however, largely because the whole idea of a central Asian proto-home was abandoned.

At the turn of the century, the major debate was between a location for the Finno-Ugric proto-home in the Urals versus the Volga region. As Hungarian linguist Josef Szinnyei (1857-1943) wrote in *Finnisch-ugrische Sprachwissenschaft* (1910), the question remained unsettled: there were good arguments for both central Russia and for the Ural Mountains. However, Castrén's hypothesis of a proto-home in the Altai region had been largely abandoned (Szinnyei 1910:19-20). It was not abandoned entirely, however: such prominent scholars as Georg von der Gabelentz (Gabelentz 1972:416 [1901]) continued to support a larger Ural-Altai language family. Moreover, outside the circles of professional linguists and ethnohistorians, Castrén's hypothesis remained influential.

### **Shared or linked Finno-Ugric and Indo-European proto-homes**

The idea that both the Finno-Ugric and Indo-European proto-homes had been in Asia remained dominant until the 1850s. Scholars often proposed that the Finno-Ugrians had arrived in Europe slightly before the Indo-Europeans, but had been driven away by the Indo-Europeans, who were stronger. The idea was also widespread that the proto-peoples had split before arriving in Europe. On Grimm's ethnohistorical account of Europe, the Finns and Basques arrived first but had to retreat to the north and to the southwest respectively because of later immigration waves from such Indo-European peoples as the Greeks, Celts, Germanics, and Slavs (Grimm 1848:6, 163-174).

According to most scholars, similarities in structure and vocabulary between Finno-Ugric and Indo-European languages were explained not by linguistic affinity but by close, long, and early linguistic contact. This could be used as an argument that their proto-homes had been adjacent or at least close to each other: so

e.g. German linguist Johann Gustav Cuno thought that the Finno-Ugrians must have lived in approximately the same area as the Indo-Europeans (Taylor 1890:32, Joki 1973:33-35). Schrader thought it made sense to look at contacts between language families in trying to locate a proto-home; so he found useful Cuno's proposal to look more closely at Finno-Ugric and Indo-European contacts. Schrader thought he had a location for the Indo-European proto-home. He located the Finno-Ugric proto-home to the north of the Indo-European one on the basis of similarities between the language families, resulting from periods of intense contact. In the third edition of *Sprachvergleichung und Urgeschichte*, he discussed the relationship between Indo-Europeans and Finno-Ugrians at some length. At that point, he located the Finno-Ugrian proto-home in the central Volga area, with contact to the Indo-Europeans to the south. He also mentioned the possibility of a genetic affinity between the families (Schrader 1906:522-527, Joki 1973:52-53).

Austrian linguist Karl Penka (1847-1912) likewise discussed Cuno's ideas and, more broadly, the relationship between the Finno-Ugrians and Indo-Europeans. He believed that they must have lived quite close and in regular contact, as one could already detect Indo-European loan words in the Finno-Ugric proto-language. However, this need not imply that Indo-Europeans and Finno-Ugrians shared a common origin or were otherwise genetically related. Penka thought it possible to locate the Indo-European proto-home by finding the proto-home of the Finno-Ugrians (Penka 1883:64-68), in part because of physical similarities between the Finns and Indo-Europeans: i.e., Penka was among those who considered physical appearance important to ethnohistorical research. He believed that the Finns' Aryan physical type was not original, claiming it had been gained through mixing with the Indo-European peoples (Penka 1883:63).

Scholars like Theodore Köppen who believed in a common Indo-European-Finno-Ugrian origin looked for a proto-home that suited both families. He suggested a location in the Middle Volga region for a people he called the "Ariofinnen". Köppen's main argu-

ment for a shared proto-home in Europe was that beekeeping had been present in the proto-cultures of both language families. Beekeeping had not been introduced into western Asia until the expansion of the Russian empire into Siberia (Köppen 1890). Daniel Europaeus tried to prove an affinity between the Finno-Ugric and Indo-European languages, with physical appearance as evidence for his claim. Specifically, he claimed that both the Indo-European and Finno-Ugric proto-peoples had been dolichocephalic (long headed) – which, according to his cranial ethnohistory, further strengthened his hypothesis (Europaeus 1876:81-83).

Scholars who located the Indo-European proto-home in northern Europe often tended to locate the Finno-Ugric proto-home in the same neighbourhood. Kossinna put both proto-homes in Jutland. From an Indo-European vantage point, this seemed reasonable, given the well-documented early contacts between the Finno-Ugric and Indo-European language families. However, very few Finno-Ugric scholars accepted this idea of a shared northern European proto-home. Many of them supported the existence of a Uralic language family. Obviously, it was difficult to combine a Finno-Ugric proto-home in Scandinavia with a proto-home in the Urals (Uibopuu 1988:56).

## Conclusion

After its establishment, the method of linguistic ethnohistory expanded with help from various auxiliary sciences. The success of these sciences was largely related to the *idea of progress*, which was easily incorporated into comparative-historical linguistics, linguistic ethnohistory, and the auxiliary sciences – especially archaeology. Agglutination theory's ideas on linguistic progress could be used to speculate about the development of societies and cultures.

One reason for the success of linguistic ethnohistory was that it did not simply substitute new literary sources when the authority

of the Bible and other ancient texts had been weakened. Of course, to some extent linguistic ethnohistory was compatible with Biblical ethnohistory: i.e., linguistic ethnohistory did not automatically render Biblical ethnohistory obsolete.

# 5 Alternative ethnohistories

## Introduction

By the time that linguistic ethnohistory had dominated European ethnohistorical thought for half a century, new methods were ready to challenge the dominance of language-centric ethnohistorical thinking. The co-existence between Biblical and linguistic ethnohistory would be seriously challenged by rethinking about the history of humankind in the works of Charles Darwin (1809-1882) and by the discovery of very old humanoid remnants in Europe: e.g., in the Neanderthal valley.

Aided by its auxiliary disciplines, linguistic ethnohistory had produced formidable results; but it had difficulty answering the argument that a people is something more than merely the sum of the speakers of a language. Linguistic ethnohistory is founded on the *a priori* assumption that language equates to people and that the history of language reveals the history of its people. This limited view left linguistic ethnohistory open to increasing criticism by ethnohistorians dissatisfied with the monopoly on ethnohistorical thought by linguistic ethnohistory. These scholars – often connected to one of the auxiliary sciences such as archaeology, physical anthropology, or ethnology – set themselves against “tyranny of linguistics” (Poliakov 1974). Out of their criticism, new ethnohistorical methods were elaborated that gave more attention to factors like culture, political system, religion, and physical appearance. A debate arose over how humankind could be divided according to various characteristics other than language.

The first section of this chapter discusses various approaches to classifying humankind, with examples from physical anthropology. The next section discusses the importance of the inclusion of culture to ethnohistorical research. The final section looks at vari-

ous additional aspects of the complex ethnohistorical debate at the end of the nineteenth century.

## **Classifying humankind**

### **Different approaches to classifying humankind**

A major conflict among ethnohistorians has been whether or not physical appearance is relevant to ethnohistorical research. During the time period 1770-1900, linguists tended to ignore or at least downplay physical appearance. In the 1770s, Schlözer had claimed that the importance of language to the classification of peoples was the equivalent of the stamen in Linnaeus' taxonomy of plants (Schlözer 1771:211). It was logical for scholars who supported Schlözer's view to study languages to reveal the early history of peoples. With the establishment of comparative-historical linguistics, language became the dominant component in the concept of people.

Nineteenth century linguists like Alexander Castrén, August Schleicher, and Max Müller all discussed the relationship between linguistic and physical classifications of humankind. They thought that language should be the sole – or at least the dominating – trait for classifying humankind into peoples. Schleicher argued that language was the trait that separated man from animals, and it was therefore logical to give language the decisive role for human taxonomies. “One can classify animals according to their morphological structure. For humans, however, outer appearances now seem to me to be a matter relatively insignificant and passé. To classify humanity we need, so it seems to me, finer, higher criteria, exclusively proper to man. These we find in language” (Schleicher 1983b: 79 [1865]).

The division of humankind according to linguistic criteria was already contested among eighteenth century scholars, well before the era of *the tyranny of linguistics*. The German anthropologist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752-1840) elaborated his own division of humankind according to the idea of physical monogenesis



and held, in the tradition of the Enlightenment, that the variation in languages was due to the intrinsic ability of humans to invent languages. Physical differences originated from environmental factors; the division of languages originated from human invention. From a naturalist point of view, humankind should, therefore, be divided primarily according to physical differences and not according to language (Borst 1957-1965:1535).

By the mid-nineteenth century, additional arguments were presented for including physical appearance. One compelling argument was the discovery that humanity was far older than a few thousand years. Since comparative-historical linguistics set the origin of language families at most a couple of thousands of years in the past, any physical differences had to be much older than linguistic ones. By the time that the Indo-European and Finno-Ugric proto-languages originated, the physical diversity of humankind was established fact, implying that physical appearance might be a better indicator of ethnohistorical identity than language.

### **Physical classification**

Scholars who wished to include physical appearance in their ethnohistorical thinking were dependent on the major physical taxonomies of humankind created by anatomists and physical anthropologists. It is therefore relevant to a study on ethnohistorical ideas about the Nordic region to take a brief look at these taxonomies.

Regardless of whether they included physical appearance within the concept of people, scholars had classified human physical variation into “races”. Swedish biologist Carl Linnaeus presented an influential division of humankind into four major types according to skin colour: white Europeans, red Indians, yellow Asians, and black Africans (Broberg 1974:222-223). Colour remained highly influential in the nineteenth century. It was the major variable in the physical classifications of e.g. the naturalist and zoologist Georges Cuvier and the diplomat and writer Arthur de Gobineau (1816-1882), both of whom divided humankind into black, white, and yellow races (Grayson 1983:148). Meanwhile, Blumenbach pre-

sented a division of humankind into five races, separated by skin colour and skull shape. These differences were to be understood as variations with no sharp borders. Linnaeus had never explained how the division of humankind had occurred historically. Blumenbach presented a monogenetic hypothesis: humankind had originally all belonged to the Caucasian or white race, but large parts of it had degenerated into the other major races. Stephen Jay Gould writes that Blumenbach's historical approach marked a significant change from Linnaeus', as his system included a hierarchical valuation treating physical variation as a matter of degrees of degeneration (Stepan 1982:37, Gould 2002:356-366).

Swedish anatomist Anders Retzius (1796-1860) elaborated this idea of using the human skull to divide human races. Retzius developed a method for comparing skulls according to facial angle and the relation between skull length and breadth. The method of dividing faces between "Classical Greek" profiles (*orthognathe*) and Sub-Saharan African (*prognathe*) had been invented by the Dutch anatomist Petrus Camper (1722-89) in the eighteenth century (Kidd 2006:16), but the *cephalic index* was Retzius' own invention. The index was obtained by dividing skull length by breadth. Retzius divided the results into two major types: *dolichocephalic* (long) skulls and *brachycephalic* (broad or round) skulls (Retzius 1843). Many anthropologists saw potential in Retzius's system. French physical anthropologist Paul Broca (1824-1880) and his German colleague Hermann Welcker (1822-1897) presented more complicated systems of ethnic-cranial classification that included the addition of an intermediate or mesocephalic cranial type (Hildebrand 1880:8-11).

The division of humankind according to skin colour or cranial proportions did not satisfy all physical anthropologists. Alternative morphological characteristics were invented and debated – among them the influential taxonomy according to hair texture introduced by German zoologist Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919) and Austrian ethnologist and linguist Friedrich Müller. They classified populations according to whether the hair was curly or straight (Müller 1879:16-

17). French-Russian natural scientist Joseph Deniker (1852-1918), with Haeckel's system as a starting point, recognised six sub-races in Europe; he did acknowledge that these races and sub-races had no clear-cut lines between them. He introduced "Nordic" as the name for the blond, dolichocephalic physical type predominant in northern Europe. It had been recognised earlier, of course; but it had usually been described as Germanic or Aryan. Deniker named his different types according to geographical principles (Deniker 1950 [1900], Martin 1926:361-362). American anthropologist and economist William Z. Ripley preferred Retzius' system based on cranial proportions to the alternatives based on hair texture, as a way of physically dividing up Europe's peoples. Ripley recognised three basic European races: the tall, blond, dolichocephalic Teutonic or Nordic; the small, brachycephalic Alpine; and the small, dark, dolichocephalic Mediterranean. He considered his taxonomy to be compatible with and not contradictory to Deniker's, which he understood as identifying additional sub-types of his own three basic European types (Ripley 1900, Hirt 1905:54).

### **Ethnic taxonomies of physical anthropology**

From the late 1830s and early 1840s, the inclusion of physical appearance in Scandinavian ethnohistorical research became well established, largely through the work of Retzius as well as archaeologist and zoologist Sven Nilsson. Retzius based his ethnohistory on his own system of physical classification, which assumed an ancient division in Europe into dolichocephalic and brachycephalic peoples. He did *not* base his approach primarily on linguistic divisions, although he made use of the traditional ethnic names taken from linguistics. Retzius used his cephalic taxonomy and the idea he borrowed from Camper about facial angles to classify world peoples into four major types: 1) Celts, Britons, Scots, Gauls, Germans, and Scandinavians, who were dolichocephalic and orthognatic; 2) Greenlanders, the majority of American Indian tribes, Negroes, and Australians, who were dolichocephalic and prognathic; 3) Slavs, Finns, other Baltic-Finnic peoples, Afghans, Persians, Turks, Lapps,

and Yakuts, who were brachycephalic and ortognathic; and 4) Tatars, Mongols, Kalmucks, Malays, Papuans, and a minority of American Indian tribes, who were brachycephalic and prognathic (Retzius 1843:4).

Retzius created his system using at most a few cranial samples of each group (and, in some cases, only a single sample). While his taxonomy might look reasonable on a limited European scale, as had the social agglutination theories, it encountered tremendous problems when understood on a global scale. Retzius tried to counter criticisms that he was pigeonholing peoples to make them fit his system of four physical types, by offering several revisions to his taxonomy (Müller 1879:11-13). Still, his non-language-based classification scheme was clearly not up to the task of classifying world peoples; its intrinsic flaws could barely stand up to the criticisms of the linguistic ethnohistorians. Castrén was especially critical. Retzius had included Finns, Afghans, Persians, Slavs, and Saami in a single physical type. Castrén considered this absurd. He worried that anthropologists would continue to make such errors if not guided by philology and ethnology (Castrén 1857:11-13, Isaksson 2001: 385).

Beginning in the 1850s – inspired by taxonomies based first on physical characteristics and second on linguistic ones – anthropologists explored other physical criteria, besides skull measurements, for dividing up humankind: e.g., Gobineau advocated a primary division by skin colour and a secondary division by language differences. He divided the “white” race into Caucasian, Semitic, and Japhetic; and the “yellow” race into Altaic, Mongol, Finnish, and Tatar, among others. The Hamites belonged to the “black” race (Gobineau 1999:146). Robert Latham created a complex classification system of his own, likewise based on a primary division by physical appearance and a secondary division by language. He recognised three major physical types: Atlanticae, Mongolidae, and Iaptidae, largely according to the common “white”, “yellow”, and “black” colour taxonomy. He then divided these types into linguistic groups (Latham 1850:2). He acknowledged that his system might

look illogical, given such empirical facts as the physical differences between Finns and Mongols. His explanation was that physical race and language need not develop on parallel paths but could develop quite differently:

We get at the answer to this by remembering that physical changes and philological changes, may go on at different rates. A thousand years may pass over two nations undoubtedly of the same origin; and which were, at the beginning of those thousand years, of the same complexion, form, and language. At the end of those thousand years there shall be a difference. With one the language shall have changed rapidly, the physical structure slowly. With the other the physical conformation shall have been modified by a quick succession of external influences, whilst the language shall have stayed as it was. (Latham 1850:62)

Such other leading ethnologists as Oscar Peschel and Friedrich Müller likewise argued strongly for including physical appearance in ethnohistorical research and, indeed, making it the *primary* category. Müller believed in physical monogenesis and linguistic polygenesis. Given the very long time period between the origin of humankind and the origin of language, Müller supposed that racial variety was well established by the time that various groups invented language. Different languages (proto-languages) had originated among populations of different physical types; each language family was historically related to a particular race. The Indo-European languages had originated in the “white” population, the Finno-Ugric languages in the “yellow”. Müller made his primary division between physical types according to hair texture; that said, his physical types mostly coincided with the ones based on skin colour (Müller 1879).

Müller’s system resembled Retzius’ in that he created a physical/anthropological taxonomy and then filled in the “slots” with various peoples. The Finno-Ugric peoples belonged to one tree, which branched according to various physical and linguistic vari-

ables: e.g., the *Straffhaarige* sub-group of the *Schlichthaarige* group included the Mongolians, who were then linguistically divided into a) monosyllabic peoples: e.g. Tibetans and Chinese; and b) multisyllabic peoples: e.g., Uralic, Altaic, Japonic, and Korean (Müller 1879:24-25). The Uralic *Volksstamm* consisted of the Finnish and Samoyed branches, where “Finnish” was to be understood as Finno-Ugric (ibid. 378).

Retzius’ cephalic index relied on the assumption that cranial proportions remain stable over generations. Retzius thought that the different cranial types he identified had existed far back in time and in particular that the long skulls and short skulls represented two clearly separated peoples. If cranial differences had ethnohistorical meaning, this opened new paths for ethnohistorical research and methodological improvements compared with classifications based purely on eye and skin colour. With the cephalic index in hand, one could examine prehistoric human remnants of which only bones remained. Ancient skulls could be compared with more recent ones and with those of living populations. Provided that cranial proportions remained stable, an ancient skull with the appropriate cranial characteristics would reveal its e.g. Saami ethnicity. The problem was that, if cranial proportions could change due to nutritional, environmental or cultural factors, then skull measurements would be ethnohistorically useless. Stability had to be assumed.

In the 1850s, British anthropologist Robert Knox (1791-1868) was one of those attempting to explain that presumed physical stability from a polygenetic perspective (Knox 1850). From such polygenetic perspectives arose the concept of mixed races, elaborated by Gobineau. Given certain basic types, intermediate types could be described as the result of racial mixing and not – as in monogenetic thinking – only as variations of a common human race. Intermediate types could continue to mix in various combinations. Gobineau described human variation as the result of secondary and tertiary levels of mixings (Gobineau 1999:207-208 [1853-55]).

Anthropologists from the generation before Retzius had accepted the plasticity of the human body: e.g., Blumenbach had discussed whether physical change was dependent on radical societal change. He believed that societal change could produce significant physical change – and consequently radical change in physical appearance – analogous to the transformation of animals when they become domesticated (Grayson 1983:144-145). Support for the idea of plasticity weakened in the second half of the nineteenth century, although it remained in favour among such traditional anthropologists as Rudolf Virchow. In the early twentieth century, it would make a strong comeback through the work of German-American anthropologist Franz Boas (1858-1942). His famous studies on US immigrants showed significant physical variation between different generations of immigrants (Boas 1982:35-36, 78).

On an approach like Boas', the usefulness of physical appearance became a question not only of the stability of physical characteristics over time but also of how close the relationship was over time between climate and physical characteristics: e.g., if the "natural" region for a blond and dolichocephalic population was limited to a specific geographic area, then that region could be regarded as its proto-home; and, in general, the modern centres of specific physical types could be supposed to be approximately the same as thousands of years ago. Migrations of populations to areas far beyond their natural physical territory – e.g., northern Europeans moving to a tropical climate – would, in the long run, lead to the inevitable extinction of the immigrant physical type, not only due to mixing with the indigenous population, but also the unsuitability of the immigrant physical type to anywhere outside its natural geographical area.

## The importance of culture

### The invention of culture and ethnology

Ethnohistorians could and did use various combinations of language and physical appearance to separate peoples from each other. Regardless of whether or not physical appearance was included, such approaches often seemed too limited. Many scholars had noticed significant differences between peoples who spoke similar languages or dialects, or belonged to the same physical type – differences that seemed to come down to differences in their way of living. Such cultural differences had been recognised already by Classical authors. During the Early Modern Age, it was discussed among others by Swedish scholar Olof Rudbeck (1630-1702) in *Atlantica* (1679-1702). Rudbeck described variation in peoples according to descent, language, and physical appearance, but also according to such cultural attributes as customs and laws, as well as the material culture of weapons and buildings. For Rudbeck, the concept of people was amorphous: one people could have a set of ethnic qualities very different from another's. That said, language remained, unquestionably, the most important factor. After all, linguistic diversity was a creation of the Lord Himself (Rudbeck 1937:15-22, Nordin 2000: 22).

The increasing interest in culture is evident in Schlözer's works. Schlözer paid more attention to cultural and social aspects of history than had been done by such scholars of natural law as Samuel Pufendorf, whose histories were largely chronologies of important events relating to states, kings, and wars. On the new approach, peoples – not polities – took centre stage, which meant that new concepts and methods had to be created. Joseph Stagl describes Schlözer's new discipline as *ethnohistory* (Stagl 1998:526-527). Schlözer differentiated history from prehistory, which he called *meta-history*. Meta-history was the condition peoples were in before the establishment of any state. Schlözer followed the tradition of treating the formation of a state as the starting point for the proper political history of a people (Schlözer 1771; Reill 1975:88, 93).



Around 1770, new terms began appearing, including “ethnology” and “ethnography” – along with the German equivalents *Volkskunde* and *Völkerkunde* (Vermeulen 1994:41, Stagl 1998). The German historians, too, established a concept of *Kultur* (“culture”), emerging from what Michael Carhart describes as a new approach towards human societies, peoples, and history. Within only a few years, the concept of *Kultur* was well established (Carhart 2007:2-3, 25, 99).

At the University of Göttingen, historians including Schlözer developed the concept of *Kultur* with an eye on historical research. They did so within the context of a universal history: i.e., they avoided describing history as consisting of the various histories about nations, peoples, etc. Instead, Schlözer and his colleague Johann Christoph Gatterer elaborated the old idea of the Four Kingdoms within a modern context, with the view that humankind shared a common history dating back to Adam and Eve: states and peoples developed within one shared, universal history (Schlözer 1785, Butterfield 1955:32-61).

Herder strongly criticised this approach: in particular, Schlözer’s idea of universal history and belief that all the ethnic histories of the world could be organised into a single historical narrative (Stagl 1998). Herder believed that every people had its own cultural and linguistic history (Anderson 2006:67-68). Although both Herder and Schlözer gave language a critical role for identifying peoples, they had quite different approaches to language classification. Schlözer had a deep interest in languages and made some quite accurate classifications of them, ones that would remain valid after the introduction of the Indo-European language family and the breakthrough in comparative-historical linguistics. Herder saw uniqueness and value in every language, but he did not share Schlözer’s linguistic interests: e.g., he made no attempt in his *Preisschrift* (1772) to create a taxonomy of languages. He merely said that it was difficult to make an accurate classification and trace genetic relationships, due to the variety of environmental factors affecting language (Herder 1969:184 [1772]).

### Unilinear evolutionism and cultural relativism

Over the course of the nineteenth century, the concept of Kultur/culture became well established among ethnohistorians. In 1871, British ethnologist Edward Burnett Tylor presented what came to be the best-known definition of culture: "CULTURE or Civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Tylor 1891:1). Many ethnohistorians embraced his definition, even though it was created primarily with the concepts in mind of progress and *unilinear evolutionism*. Note that language is not part of the definition: Tylor's ethnohistory remained firmly under the influence of *The tyranny of linguistics*, and so, in keeping with linguistic ethnohistory, he treated peoples and languages as closely related. Among other things, this meant that the Indo-European proto-people had been a real people (Tylor 1960:59 [1881]). Peoples differed according to their languages, but they followed the same path of cultural development: i.e., language was not a component of culture.

Unilinear evolutionism assumed the psychic unity of humankind and the ability, at least in theory, for every people to reach the highest levels of cultural and social development. As a good unilinear evolutionist, Tylor elaborated upon the established ideas of cultural progress, identifying stages of savagery, barbarism, and civilisation (Tylor 1871). As noted above, culture did not, for Tylor, interfere in the ethnohistorical classifications of linguistic ethnohistory. In *Ancient Society* (1878), Tylor's American colleague Lewis Henry Morgan (1818-1881) added a periodisation to the structure of the family, which he inserted into the larger cycle of societal progress from savagery through barbarism to civilisation. Morgan inspired Friedrich Engels (1820-1895) to write *Der Ursprung der Familie, des Privateigentums und des Staats* (1884), in which he outlined a model of social evolution, from barbarism through slave-owning society, feudalism, and capitalism to socialism (Engels 1978).

Some nineteenth century German scholars interpreted culture

pluralistically: a people could develop its own unique culture, separating it from other peoples. This idea harkened back to Herder and his idea that peoples have unique languages and cultures (Anderson 2006:67-68). Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, ethnologists Theodor Waitz (1821-1864) and Adolf Bastian (1826-1905) conducted important research questioning the Eurocentric universalist view of ethnohistory. Waitz claimed that unilinear evolution could not explain the variation in human cultures: its criteria were too blunt. A believer in human monogenesis, he felt that peoples should be studied individually: the researcher should look at the unique history, physiology, and psychology of a people (Bunzl 1996:45). A cultural relativist, Bastian refused to consider so-called primitive, exotic peoples and “advanced” European peoples as belonging to the same path of development, with the primitive peoples far behind and the Europeans far ahead. In the tradition of Herder, Bastian argued that peoples should be compared from a less biased perspective. All peoples were united, through the psychic unity of humankind and the sharing of fundamental values and ideas; but these ideas could be expressed differently among different peoples (Bunzl 1996:48-51, Barnard 2000:49). In the twentieth century, Boas would further elaborate these ideas.

Not only was cultural relativism used against the Eurocentric approaches of linguistic ethnohistory and unilinear evolutionism, it was also used to emphasise the differences between Europe and the the rest of the world, claiming they were much greater than the unilinear evolutionists could allow. By denying the psychic unity of humankind, and often by supporting the idea of polygenesis, such scholars as German ethnologist Gustav Friedrich Klemm (1802-1867) wrote of a world whose peoples were separated by unbridgeable rifts of culture and mental capabilities. In Part Five of his *Allgemeine Cultur-Geschichte der Menschheit* (1843-52), Klemm divided humankind into “passive” and “active” races, where the “passive” races (including Africans, Mongols, Hindus, Egyptians, and Finns, as well as the lower strata of European society) could never reach the technical development level of the “active” ones. Klemm was at pains to

argue that the “active” races should not be seen as better than the “passive” ones: rather, “active” and “passive” races were complementary, in the manner of the human genders (Klemm 1847, Lowie 1937:14, Harris 1969:102).

### **Factors affecting the culture or society of a people**

If one included culture and society in the ethnohistory of a people – especially if one was a cultural relativist – it was of interest to study how external factors were of influence. The influence of environment/climate was prominent in Montesquieu’s (1689-1755) *L’Esprit des Lois* (1748). He counted as influential ethnohistorical factors climate, laws, religion, style of government, historical examples, and morals (Bury 1955:147); yet it was the chapter on environment in particular that became influential, because of the importance Montesquieu gave to the environment as a factor in the development of political systems (Montesquieu 1992). Montesquieu’s ideas influenced Herder along with later generations of romanticists, all of whom believed in a close relationship between environment and people.

During the nineteenth century, however, the ethnohistorical role of environment/climate decreased as arguments arose over observations that such culturally and mentally different peoples as Germanics and Slavs had originated in similar natural environments. Belief in climatological determinism became marginalised. Logic implied that, if the study of cultures included history as well as environment/climate, it would be difficult indeed to explain the variation in peoples and cultures in a given geographical area over time (Frängsmyr 2000:113). Such cultural relativists as Waitz and Boas believed that environment had a minimal influence on ethnohistory (Lounsbury 1968:212, Bunzl 1996:45). None of this means that considerations of environment were entirely abandoned in ethnohistorical research: e.g., many linguists believed that environment affected both vocabulary and phonetics. Peoples in mountainous areas pronounced words differently from peoples living near the sea (Römer 1985:132, Bär 2000:210).

Too, some nineteenth century ethnohistorians still gave environment/climate an important role. Friedrich Müller suggested that cultural differences between the physically similar Indo-Europeans and Semi- both supposedly belonged to the *Mittelländische Rasse* – were caused by the environment of their proto-homes: the Semites had originated in the harsh environment of the desert, the Indo-Europeans in the lush forests of Europe. In consequence, the Indo-Europeans were e.g. friendlier towards animals (Müller 1879:64).

More generally, Müller thought that different peoples acquired different psychological characteristics because of climate. Other scholars believed that language caused the psychological differences. In the late eighteenth century, *linguistic relativity* – which gave the dominant role to language – emerged in the works of German philosophers Johann Georg Hamann (1730-1788) and J.G. Herder. Linguistic relativity stood in opposition to the common-sense idea that one could separate language from thought (Berlin 1976). Starting from the assumption that thought depended on language, Wilhelm von Humboldt argued that different languages have different world views (Humboldt 1997). Romanticist ethnohistorians made great use of linguistic relativity: the uniqueness of a people was created not only by its history or culture, but also by its language. German philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814) had the idea that language transcended the individual speaker: language created man more than man created language (Fichte 1914, Formigari 1999:238).

Linguistic relativism had an idealist bent; it lost its influence in the mid-nineteenth century, by which time mainstream ethnohistorians were trying to avoid such metaphysical biases. Humboldt's relativistic thinking on language and world views survived among such scholars as German linguist Heymann Steinthal (1823-1869), who developed the arguably non-metaphysically-biased *Völkerpsychologie* (Steinthal 1968). Linguistic relativism remained marginalised through the latter half of the nineteenth century, with occasional exceptions such as Friedrich Nietzsche's (1844-1900) *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* (1886). It was not until the twentieth century works of Leo Weisgerber (1899-1985) and Benjamin Lee Whorf

(1897-1941) that linguistic relativity reclaimed a role in ethno-historical thought.

The idea that physical appearance or “race” played an important ethnohistorical role emerged as the previously uncontested ideas of physical monogenesis and psychic unity of humankind were challenged, spurred on by the weakening of Biblical ethnohistorical thought. The idea that physical appearance was a key factor in determining the sociocultural characteristics of a people became known as *anthroposociology*. Arguably, the most influential nineteenth century anthroposociologist was Arthur de Gobineau, who claimed that race determined the social and psychological character of a people much more than e.g. environment. Indeed, race remained stable, unaffected by environment. Each race had its own psychological characteristics; societies belonging to different races were consequently very different. Even small physical variations influenced culture and language: e.g., Gobineau believed that the variation in French dialects was the outcome of slightly different proportions of racial mixing (Gobineau 1999:200-201). Gobineau believed the “white” race to be intellectually superior. There was no hope for the other races to catch up: “the tribes which are savage at the present day have always been so, and always will be, however high the civilizations with which they are brought into contact” (ibid. 174).

However, followers of Gobineau such as the German Otto Ammon (1842-1916) and his French colleague Georges Vacher de Lapogue (1856-1934) remained on the fringes of nineteenth century European ethnohistory. Mainstream ethnohistorians including German ethnologist Friedrich Ratzel (1844-1904) stressed the importance of keeping cultural and physical diversity apart. Ratzel compared peoples from the same race. Chinese and Mongols were supposed to belong to the “yellow” race; yet they had built very different cultures. A comparable difference was to be found between the highly civilised, “white” Romans and their barbarian, “white” Celtic and German neighbours (Ratzel 1885:10). A plethora of historical examples convinced most ethnohistorians to reject anthroposociology’s logic.

## **Ethnohistory, language shift and Biblical legacy**

### **The question of ethnohistory and language shift**

With interest in physical appearance and culture among ethnohistorians, the question of *language shift* became important. Linguistic ethnohistory assumed language to be the primary ethnic marker: if a people changed its language, it also changed its ethnohistory, and its members became incorporated into the ethnohistory of a different language/people. The difficulty with this was that peoples were observed to adopt a new language while retaining a clear identity as a separate people. The process whereby peoples switched languages drew the increasing interest of ethnohistorians.

Some difficult issues in northern Europe, such as the relationship between Finns and Saami, could be re-examined by taking language switch into account. The possibility that the Saami people had gone through a language shift had already been discussed in the seventeenth century by the German-Swedish historian Johannes Schefferus (1621-1679); but the debate was revitalised when, from the early 1890s, Swedish linguist Karl B. Wiklund began stating that the Saami had substituted for their original language a Finno-Ugric tongue from their Baltic-Finnic neighbours (Wiklund 1891, 1915). Wiklund's hypothesis remained dominant within Swedish ethnohistory well into the twentieth century.

For scholars who believed that the Germanic languages were the true heirs to the Indo-European proto-language, supposing that the proto-Indo-Europeans were physically Nordic helped in arguing that the non-Nordic Indo-Europeans had become Indo-European through language shift: they were not the descendant of the original (Nordic) Indo-Europeans. German-anthropologist and economist Theodor Poesche (1824-1899) based his own ethnohistorical thinking on this idea (Poesche 1878:236). Karl Penka argued that the Indo-European proto-home in Scandinavia had been small and that the proto-people had been both linguistically and physically homogeneous. When the Indo-Europeans started to ex-

pand out over Europe, they encountered Turanian peoples, many of whom adopted one or another of the Indo-European languages. Due to carryovers from the original languages, such new Indo-European sub-families as Baltic and Slavic emerged (Penka 1883: 125-126).

William Ripley was one of those who noticed that populations could switch languages, even while their physical characteristics remained the same:

The Bulgarians have entirely abandoned their original Finnic speech in favour of Slavic. The Roumanian language, Latin in its affinities, is entirely a result of wholesale adoption: and a new process of change of speech like that in Bulgaria threatens now to oust this Roumanian and replace it also by a Slavic dialect. Magyar, the language of the Hungarians, spreading toward the east, displaced by German, which is forcing its way in from the north-west, is also on the move. Beneath all this hurry-skurry of speech the racial lines remain as fixed as ever.... Waves of language have swept over Europe, leaving its racial foundations as undisturbed as are the sands of the sea during a storm. (Ripley 1900:25)

### **Darwinism and the legacy of Biblical ethnohistory**

A decisive question that would determine the ongoing ethno-historical influence of the Book of Genesis was: how old is human-kind? Combining the Biblically inspired idea of human monogenesis with a human existence of under 6,000 years posed mounting problems. Empirical observations fueled the debate. Researchers noticed that neither Africans in North America nor Europeans in India appeared to have changed physically even after hundreds of years in the new environment. This appeared to argue against physical change as a rapid process. Humans seemed to be less affected by environment than had previously been believed. Such physical stability re-opened discussion on human polygenesis, which could, plausibly, be combined with a less literal reading of Genesis.



An additional problem challenged Biblical universal history: human remains found in caves in England and elsewhere in Western Europe suggested that humankind could be much older than Biblical chronology allowed. These findings were initially met by strong scepticism, but the scepticism vanished quickly: already by the late 1850s, European ethnohistorians were accepting a much older age for humankind; and by 1860, a general consensus had emerged (Grayson 1983:195).

According to Donald Grayson, this rapid shift occurred independently from what posed arguably the most important challenge to the ethnohistorical authority of Genesis: Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859). Showing that humankind had existed for a very long time, Darwin's book largely ended the controversy between mono- and polygenesis (Kidd 2006:158). It introduced transmutation as a means for classifying species. He downplayed the importance to classification of typology and elevated the role of genetics (Darwin 1985 [1859]). No species was stable; nature was in a state of flux. Development followed not a divine plan but blind laws of selection (Liedman 1971:65).

Darwinism significantly changed the terms of debate over the origin of language and its development, the origin of humankind, and the relationship between humankind and animals. Darwin was influenced by the diachronic methods of comparative-historical linguistics. When discussing his tree diagram in the *Origin of Species*, he made reference to linguistic methods. Darwin followed the logic of comparative-historical linguistics in regarding descent as more important than superficial resemblance for creating taxonomies (Alter 1999:30-31).

Linguists such as Schleicher and Max Müller adopted from Darwinism the concepts of natural selection and struggle for life. They adapted the concepts to their own purposes: the selections and struggles they were interested in were between language features or between languages (Alter 1999:90-91). Schleicher saw evolution as explaining the pre-historical part of language development, when languages first evolved from pre-language via the isolating and agglu-

tinative stages towards the final, flective stage. For this, Schleicher (and Müller) employed the metaphor of the staircase.

When a (proto-) language entered the flective stage and started to branch into daughter languages, however, one no longer had evolution, but history (Schleicher 1983a). Müller supported a partly Darwinian view of language development; but he did not accept Darwin's position on the origin of language. In particular, he could not support the idea that language had originated during the long process whereby humans evolved as a distinct species, and he strongly rejected a natural origin for language. He took a position closer to that of Herder and the tradition of linguistic natural theology, claiming that the dividing line between human and animal marked out by consciousness and language was a difference in kind, not a difference in degree (Alter 2005:64, 85, 181-182).

Darwinism was controversial because of its implications for the Church, not because of its long time scales: it was the idea that humankind's origin had a natural and not a divine explanation that was outrageous (Cutler 2005:178). Many Christians found it difficult to accept Darwinism, because of the way it left out teleology from the development of the world and threatened to remove the boundary between humans and the rest of nature. For Roman Catholics, it was important that humans had a rational soul, implanted in every individual by God. Roman Catholicism could accept evolution but not the claim that humankind had lost its unique status vis-à-vis animals (Olson 2004:213-214).

Biblical influence on ethnohistorical research did not disappear entirely, even though "the supporters of the Bible's views on the unitary origin of language in the Garden of Eden and the diversification of tongues at the Tower of Babel had largely retreated from the field of linguistic scholarship, least in Germany" (Leopold 1989:548). Biblical ethnohistorical ideas were still occasionally presented as alternatives to secularised ethnohistorical ones. In the middle of the nineteenth century, German linguist August Friedrich Pott (1802-1887) refuted the linguistic theories of Franz Philipp Kaulen (1827-1907), which Kaulen founded on a firm belief in the

historical truth of Genesis. Pott argued that religion could not answer linguistic problems, and linguistics should be separated from theology (Pott 1863:65, Borst 1957-1963:1686) Edward Tylor likewise stated that ethnology should be separated from theology, as astronomy and geology had already been for centuries (Tylor 1891: 35-37).

One core idea of Biblical ethnohistory survived among nineteenth century ethnohistorians: the *psychic unity of humankind*. Peoples and populations could differ in culture, language, and physical appearance, but they remained united by their shared psychological characteristics. *Psychic unity of humankind* was supported by ethnohistorians as diverse as the unilinear evolutionist Tylor and the cultural relativist Franz Boas (Herskovits 1953:52-54, 101; Bowler 1989:37).

Some of the ethnonyms presented in the Table of Nations remained in use. Already in the eighteenth century, Schlözer suggested that the language families be named according to the sons of Noah (Fürst 1928:200). The *Semitic* and *Hamitic* language families became widely accepted; but *Japhetic*, used family by e.g. Danish linguist Vilhelm Thomsen (Thomsen 1902) to describe the Indo-European language family, never gained a wide following.

## Conclusion

The second half of the nineteenth century produced increasingly sophisticated research on the history of human peoples and societies. Ethnohistorians began downplaying the importance of language to their work. Having escaped the *tyranny of linguistics*, they remained divided on which factors to include in ethnohistorical research. Anthropologist Han F. Vermeulen summarises the trends in Ninetheenth century ethnohistorical methodology as “a shift away from a geographical, historical and linguistic type of ethnography, towards a physical and racial type of ethnology” (Vermeulen 1994:55).

# 6 Scandinavian ethnohistories until 1800

## **Introduction**

Until the Nineteenth Century, Western ethnohistorical thought was dominated by the Book of Genesis, which was taken to explain how and when human ethnic diversity had originated. Historians studying northern Europe combined Biblical evidence with material from other sources. The Bible did not provide any information specifically on northern Europe, so scholars had to complement the Biblical stories with Antique and Medieval sources to reconstruct the history of the ages before the spread of Christianity and literacy in northern Europe.

Universities began to be established in northern Europe with the foundation of Uppsala University in 1477 and Copenhagen in 1479. Uwere important for educating priests and civil servants. After the Reformation, national Lutheran clergy were educated on proper national historical narratives, as propagated by the state. History was regarded as important because of the political rivalry between Denmark and Sweden.

This chapter consists of two major sections. The first section covers major ideas on the early history of Scandinavia. The second goes into more detail on the different positions.

## **Ethnohistorical ideas on Scandinavian history before the 1770s**

### **Classical and Medieval sources**

Given the lack of Nordic material in the Bible, Nordic ethnohistorians had to be inventive to find material for their research.

Some believed that three verses in the Book of Ezekiel (38:2, 14-15) explained which peoples from the Table of Nations – originating from Japhet's son Magog – had settled in northern Europe (Pekkanen & Seppälä-Pekkanen 1987:14, Wifstand Schiebe 1992:19-20). Classical Greek and Roman sources were more helpful: Herodotus, Pytheas of Marseilles, Pliny the Elder, and Ptolemy could all be used to reconstruct northern European history. Written in the First Century AD, Tacitus' *Germania* was of special importance. Tacitus described several Germanic tribes among others, which historians tried to connect to contemporary Baltic Sea peoples (Lund 1993).

The ideological and methodological difficulties of using Classical pagan sources went away once one came to Medieval sources, for here a number of Medieval Christian sources on northern Europe were available. The Sixth Century scholar Jordanes claimed that the Goths had originated from the island of Scandza. Moreover, several other peoples had originated in this same “womb of nations” (Jordanes 1997:37-41). Of Gothic origin, Jordanes lived in Rome, far away from Scandinavia.

Once the area became part of the larger Western/Christian cultural sphere, native Nordic scholars emerged. As Christianity spread to areas far beyond the old Roman Empire, so did literacy; and so the art of writing historical chronicles was adopted in northern Europe. Wulfstan's and Othere's travel reports – found in King Arthur's (849-899) translation of Orosius' *Historiarum Adversum Paganos Libri VII* – are the first known Christian sources on the Arctic and Baltic seas (Lund 1984). These reports were followed by more thorough historical works on Scandinavia by such Germans as Adam of Bremen and such Scandinavians as Saxo Grammaticus and Snorri Sturlason. The early histories of Russia and the Baltic countries were described in the chronicles of Nestor (ca1056 - ca1114) and Henry of Livonia (ca1180 - ca1259).

Danish historiography began in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries through the works of Sven Aggesen (1145-?) and in *Gesta Danorum* by Saxo Grammaticus (1150-ca1220). Saxo described the founding of the Danish state by a man named Dan.

Unlike Sturlason, Saxo did not describe the history of Denmark before arrival, nor did he discuss Dan's origins or the tracing of Danish history back to the stories of Genesis.

The late twelfth century saw the history of Norway presented in three major works: 1) Theodoricus Monachus' *Historia de Antiquitate Regum Norwagiensium*, 2) *Ágrip af Nóregs konunga sögum* (author unknown) and 3) *Historica Norwegie* (author unknown) (Boje Mortensen 2003). These works already show an interest towards narratives of the history of the various northern peoples. *Historica Norwegie* describes the ethnic borders between Scandinavian, Baltic-Finn and Saami as follows:

To the west and north, Norway is enclosed by the Ocean tides, to the south lie Denmark and the Baltic Sea, while to the east are Sweden, Götaland, Ångermanland and Jämtland. The peoples who live in these region, thanks be to God, are now Christians. However, towards the north there are, also, a great many tribes who have spread across Norway from the east and who are in thrall to paganism, that is, the Kirlaers and Kvens, the Horned Finns and the two kinds of Bjarms. Yet we know nothing for shore about the races living beyond these. (*Historia Norwegia* 2003:53-55)

*Historica Norwegie* describes Scandinavia in the process of incorporation into the larger political and economic Christian/Roman Catholic European world. The Nordic countries had never fallen within the borders of Roman civilisation. Swedish historian Nils Blomkvist describes the process as one of "Europeanization" (Blomkvist 2005). The kingdoms of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden were formed during this time.

Iceland had a strong Medieval tradition of historiography, allowing the historian Snorri Sturlason to gain tremendous influence on Scandinavian historical thought. Snorri presented his early Scandinavian historical narratives in two slightly different versions. One version was included in the introduction to the *Literary Edda*,

the second in the introduction to the *Ynglingasaga in Heimskringla* (Sturlason 1932, 1983).

In the *Edda*, Odin ruled over Trance; while in *Heimskringla*, he ruled over Asgard, which lay on the Asian side of the river Tanais (Don). The Asar left their homeland – in large part because of the expansion of the Roman Empire into the area – and moved slowly through Russia and Germany. Along the way, Odin seized control over large areas, appointing some of his sons as rulers in Germany: Vesdeg in Saxonia; Beldeg/Balder in Westphalia, and Sige in Franconia. However, the bulk of his people continued to the north. Odin appointed his son Skjold as king of Denmark – to be regarded as the foundation of the Danish state. Odin continued on to Sweden, which already had a ruler: Gylfi. Gylfi was weak, and was forced to offer land to the Asar. In Sweden, Odin founded the town of Sigtuna, which remained his main base of operations for the rest of his life. From Sigtuna, he continued to expand his influence further north. His son Säregner became king of Norway. Odin eventually grabbed power from Gylfi and appointed a new ruler of Sweden. In the *Edda*, Odin installed his son Yngve; while in *Heimskringla*, the crown went to Niord, who was unrelated to Odin but a close ally.

Snorri provided a fairly precise date for the arrival of Odin in Scandinavia. In the *Edda*, he wrote that Frode had been king of Denmark at the birth of Christ (Sturlasson 1983:113). Frode was the son of Fridleif, who was the son of Skjold. Thus, it was plausible that Odin had arrived during the first century BC. Sturalsen wrote that the original population had spoken a different language than the Asar. This could be and was used to argue that Gylfi was Finnish, and that the Scandinavian languages arrived with Odin and his people.

Another important ethnohistorical source for the Nordic debate was the Medieval story *Fundinn Noregr*, which appeared to describe an earlier stage of Nordic history. It was established as an accurate historical source in the eighteenth century, when it was published in two slightly different versions (1737) by Eric Julius Bïrner (1696-

1750). *Fundinn Noregr* was far more mythical than the stories about Odin, leaving it free to be interpreted according to the preferences of the ethnohistorian.

### **Early Modern ideas on Scandinavian history before 1700**

Early Modern Scandinavia was divided into two states: Denmark-Norway and Sweden. Naturally, this division affected Scandinavian historical research. The ethnic Scandinavian parts of the Danish realm included Denmark, Norway, Iceland, and several other islands in the Atlantic. The Swedish kingdom consisted of Sweden, Finland, and Sweden's Baltic possessions.

Sweden had no Mediaeval historian on par with Saxo or Snorri. In the fifteenth century, Ericus Olai (?-1486) laid the foundations for Swedish historiography by elaborating a specifically Swedish historiographic path different from the Danish, Norwegian, or Icelandic. Already from the thirteenth century, the history of Sweden had been linked to the history of the Goths. A Scandinavian origin for the Goths had originally been proposed by Jordanes. Swedish historians developed a Swedish-Gothic historical approach that became known as Gothicism (*göticism*). Its central work was theologian Johannes Magnus' (1488-1544) *Historia de omnibus Gothorum Sveonumque regibus* (1554). Translated into Swedish in 1620, Magnus' *Historia* was the official historical work of Sweden until the Swedish defeat in the Great Nordic War. Magnus placed Swedish history within a larger framework of universal history. He claimed that Sweden had been colonised 88 years after the Flood by Magog, who arrived by boat from Finland. Referring to the ancient Jewish historian Josephus, Magnus claimed that Magog's people were also known as the Scythians. Since he believed that the Goths had originated from the Swedes, he could present a continuous ethnic history from Scythians to Swedes and Goths. Magnus claimed that several other peoples, including the Danes and Langobardians, had also originated from the Swedes (Magnus 1995).

In Olof Rudbeck's *Atlantica*, historiographic ideology of Gothicism reached new levels of glorifying the ancient Swedes. Modify-



ing Magnus' chronology, Rudbeck claimed that the Nordic countries had been colonised 200 years after the Flood (Rudbeck 1937:41, 48; Frängsmyr 2001:98). He thought that Magog and his Scythian people had marched from their original settlement in Asia (Shinar), via Russia to Finland, northwards along the Bothnian Gulf to Sweden. From here, they expanded into southern Scandinavia and Continental Europe. Thus, the ancestors of the Swedes were the first immigrants to Scandinavia. However, the Scythians (or the Goths, or *Götar*) were not the only people to have migrated early into Europe. Other parts of the continent were colonised by Greeks and Celts; while the Finns and Slavs arrived later to northern Europe (Rudbeck 1937:41, 49, 55; Urpilainen 1993:167).

Rudbeck followed the thinking of earlier Gothicists such as Georg Stiernhielm (1598-1672) in claiming that the mythical Hyperboréans had been the ancestors of the Swedes. Rudbeck went one step further, stating that ancient Atlantis had been located in Sweden, its capital in the same location as Rudbeck's hometown of Uppsala (Rudbeck 1937). In one respect, however, Rudbeck was more cautious or modest than at least some of his Gothicist predecessors (e.g., Stiernhielm): he believed that Hebrew was the proto-language of humankind. Scythian/Gothic, along with the other major European languages including Celtic and Greek, had originated from the Confusion (Rudbeck 1937:29-41, Agrell 1955:108-109).

Unsurprisingly, Magnus' history was hostile towards the Danes. In Denmark it was recognised that Saxo was not enough to counter Magnus before an international audience. With Arild Huitfeldt's (1546-1609) *Danmarks Riges Krønike* (1595-1610), Danes had a new Danish history, in Danish, the early history based on Saxo. A need remained for a Danish history in Latin, for international readers. No Danish historian managed this, and so two Dutch scholars were commissioned. The first, Johannes Meursius (1579-1639), followed the tradition of Danish historiography by not questioning the authority of Saxo too much (Skovgaard-Petersen 2002:240). In contrast, the second, Johan Pontanus (1571-1639), tried to put

Danish history into a larger, international context. Pontanus claimed that Saxo's early history was not reliable, and instead began Danish history by describing the early history of various Germanic tribes – especially the Cimmerians – as documented by Roman historians (ibid. 178-180). That approach – of including the early history of Germanic tribes – was popular among contemporary German historians.

Writing in 1664, the Icelandic historian Tormud Torfaeus (1636-1719) argued that Snorri described the early history of Scandinavia more convincingly than did Saxo, following up this same line of thought later in his career. Although his ideas were initially controversial, they would gradually convince Danish scholars and others in Scandinavia to prefer Snorri over Saxo (Jørgensen 1931: 143-148). Peder Syv's book *Nogle Betenkninger om det cimbriske Sprog* (1663) presents an early example of how Snorri's rediscovery influenced Danish historical thought. In it, he briefly discusses the early ethnohistory of Scandinavia, including his belief that Scandinavia had been inhabited before the arrival of Odin. Syv does not speculate on the ethnicity of the indigenous population. He believed it had probably spoken a language closer to Hebrew than was Odin's, and that the Cimbric (i.e., Germanic) languages had originated from the mixing of its language with Odin's. German had continued to mix with other languages while e.g. Norwegian and Icelandic had remained close to the language produced by Odin's arrival (Syv 1915:92-93).

### **German alternatives**

In the second chapter, I noted that relations between German and Scandinavian historians have often been asymmetric: While German ethnohistorians have often taken an inclusive view toward other Germanic peoples, Scandinavian scholars have tended to draw a sharp line between themselves and other Germanic peoples. This division – between an inclusive and exclusive view – already existed during the Early Modern Age, at which time Scandinavian historians were usually focused on the history of their direct forefathers'

tribes, while German scholars were interested in all Germanic tribes. Perhaps this inclusiveness was motivated by the lack of any specifically *German* tribe as there were e.g. distinct Danish and Norwegian tribes. The Germans traced their forefathers to such Germanic tribes as the Saxons, Bavarians, Franks, etc., all of which had very different histories before settling in Europe. It was commonly believed that the Franks had originated from Troy, and that the Saxons had been soldiers in Alexander's army, who had arrived in northern Europe by boat (Borchardt 1971:18-19). German ethnohistorians included the Scandinavians into a larger Germanic people, making them equivalent to other Germanic tribes, such as the Bavarians and Saxons.

The idea of a shared German or Germanic identity became widely popular with the re-discovery of Tacitus' *Germania*. Tacitus described the German tribes living beyond the Eastern border of the Roman Empire. He believed them autochthonous to the vast Germanian forests. According to Tacitus, they believed themselves all to have originated from the mythical leader and his son Mannus: i.e., they shared a common myth of origin. The idea of the Germanic tribes having a long shared history was strengthened by the histories of Annius of Viterbo's (ca. 1432-1502) *Antiquitatum Variarum* (1498). Meanwhile, German scholars compared Tacitus' stories with Genesis and concluded that Thuyscon – Noah's alleged fourth son – was the same person as Tuisco. By linking Tuisco to Thuyscon, Germans could trace their history back to Noah (Tacitus, Borchardt 1971:90).

Even after *Antiquitatum Variarum* recognized as a forgery, the idea that the Germans had an uninterrupted history back to the house of Noah remained strong. The German ethnohistorians believed in ethnic purity. According to French historian Leon Poliakov, such thinking separated German ethnohistory from other European schools. English, French, and Spanish ethnohistorians all treated the ethnogenesis of their peoples as a fusion of an indigenous, relatively primitive people with a more advanced immigrant or conquering people. Since the sixteenth century, German scholars had

taken a very different view of German ethnohistory. They regarded that the Germanic peoples had remained pure since their ethnogenesis (Poliakov 1974: 11-128).

In articles from the late 1690s through the 1710s, Leibniz made important contributions to Nordic ethnohistorical research. He claimed that the Germanics had emigrated over land from their Asiatic proto-home along a route north of the Black Sea then via the Danube to Germany. The Scandinavian tribes continued to Scandinavia, via the Danish islands (Waterman 1978:29). Leibniz believed that the Scandinavian languages had been dialects of German. He equated the relation of the Scandinavian languages to German to the relation of French and Spanish to Latin (Ekenvall 1953:31-32, Urpilainen 1993:179).

The migration route from Germany to Scandinavia via Denmark was not Leibniz' original invention; the Swedish Lutheran reformist Olaus Petri (1493-1552) had already suggested it in the 1540s (Petri 1995:34); German scholars of the same time period had discussed it as well (Borchardt 1971:144). Leibniz' addition was the idea that Scandinavia had already been populated by Finns and Saami at the time the Scandinavian tribes arrived; Scandinavian Germans drove away the Finns and Saami. Contemporary Finns and Saami were the descendants of the original population (Ekenvall 1953:31, Waterman 1978:57-59, Urpilainen 1993:179-180). Leibniz did not match the arrival of the Scandinavians with the arrival of the historical Odin, as Snorri had described. On the contrary, Leibniz was sceptical about the accuracy of the Icelandic histories and recommended that they only be trusted if they could be verified with Saxo's history. Leibniz was likewise sceptical of Jordanes' claims that the Goths had emigrated from Scandinavia (Ekenvall 1953:29-30, Latvakangas 1995:195).

A number of Leibniz's ideas were controversial for Gothicist historians: the claim that the Saami/ Finns were the indigenous population, the rejection of colonisation of Scandinavia from the East, and the insulting claim that the Scandinavians originated from the German languages/peoples. Leibniz's conclusions ran opposite

to the Gothicist scholars, who described the Germans as having originated from the Scandinavian languages/peoples.

### **Eighteenth century debates**

Leibniz's ethnohistorical ideas arrived in Scandinavia during a time when Scandinavia's own ethnohistorical ideas were in a process of significant change. The rediscovery and publishing of the Icelandic works were used to challenge Gothicist ethnohistory, and scholars began seriously to discuss alternatives to the officially sanctioned Gothicist ethnohistorical doctrine. Sweden's disastrous defeat in the Great Nordic War of 1700-1721, which ended Sweden's era as a major power, challenged many established ideas, not just ethnohistorical ones.

Leibniz's ideas were met with cautious enthusiasm by non-Gothicist Scandinavian scholars, who largely ignored his claim that the Scandinavian languages were dialects of Low German, as well as his scepticism about the reliability of the Icelandic historical sources. His disbelief that the great emigration waves of Germanic peoples – as described by Jordanes – had actually originated from Scandinavia remained at the least controversial (Ekenvall 1953:48-49). More positively received was his belief in a southern Scandinavian immigration into a Scandinavia already inhabited by Finns/Saami; it was, after all, compatible with Snorri's ethnohistory. His observation about the ethnohistorical potential of geographical names was widely adopted. A new, specifically Scandinavian ethnohistorical approach emerged as a combination of the Icelandic histories and Leibniz's ideas – for all that Leibniz had criticized the usefulness of those very histories.

Historian and theologian Eric Benzelius (1675-1743) met Leibniz in the late 1690s and was influenced by him. In a series of history lectures at the University of Uppsala in the 1710s, he outlined migration routes from the Asian proto-home to Sweden. The eastern route followed the Volga in central Russia before turning north into Finland. The southern route went through central Europe, Germany, and Denmark. Under Odin's leadership, the

Scandinavian forefathers had arrived in the first century BC, along the southern route, from their original home on the Black Sea. On their arrival to Sweden, they encountered Finns and Saami who had migrated to the north along the eastern route. The Finn/Saami migration could be verified: the sanctioned Gothicist ethnohistorical doctrines still prospered this route, as far away as the Caspian Sea. Like Leibniz, Benzelius believed that the Finns or the Saami (or both) formed the original population of Scandinavia. He supported his claims with stories from the Icelandic sources, according to which the original inhabitants of Scandinavia had spoken a different language from the Asar; and with examples of contemporary Finnish place names, which he took as evidence for ancient Finnish/Saami settlements. He believed that the Finns in the western parts of Värmland along the Swedish-Norwegian border were descended from the original Finnish population (Benzelius 1763:15-19, Urpilainen 1993:180).

The artist and historian Elias Brenner (1647-1717), who was born and raised in Finland, recognised that there is a close relationship between some Finnish and Swedish words. He wrote about his findings in a 1716 letter to Benzelius, which was published 1732. In the letter, Brenner offered over twenty Finnish words with their equivalents in older and in contemporary Swedish. From their comparison, he concluded that the Finns had most likely lived in Scandinavia before the arrival of the Scandinavians. However, he did not find any genetic relation between the Finnish and Scandinavian languages (Setälä 1891:79-81).

Benzelius' lectures were not published until decades after they had been written. It was not through them but through the works of Baltic-German historian Jacob Wilde (1679-1755) that the "Snorri-Leibnizian" hypothesis was presented to a larger audience. He relied heavily on such Icelandic sources as *Fundinn Noregr* and Snorri, but he made use of Classical sources as well: especially Herodotus. The original inhabitants of Scandinavia were Herodotus' Hyperboreans, who were the same as the Thussar of the Nordic sagas. Wilde recognised them as Saami. Another people, the Jotuns,

were at least partly the ancestors of the Finns. The Jotuns had originally lived in Qvenland/ Finland and had expanded over land into Norway and by sea into Sweden and Denmark around 200 BC. They met some resistance in Norway from the Saami (Wilde 1738:29-30; Löw 1910: 6-7). Wilde embraced the idea of an indigenous Finnish-Saami proto-people. Odin's people had expanded from the southwest, so that the Scandinavian peoples evolved within Odin's realm. Unlike Leibniz, he did make reference to Snorri. He briefly discussed the possibility that the Swedish people had originated from the Finns (Wilde 1749:136, 302-303).

During the eighteenth century, other Swedish scholars elaborated Benzelius' and Wilde's ethnohistorical ideas. Algot Scarin (1684-1771), professor of history at Turku University, believed that Scandinavia had been colonised in three successive waves by the ancestors of the Saami, Finns, and Scandinavians. He believed that Odin's people – in the last wave – were few in number; so the Swedes had largely originated from the indigenous population, which had switched languages. Those who did not adopt the new language became Finns. The original Finns could still be found in the Scandian mountains and in the Swedish province of Bohuslän (Urpilainen 1993:181-183).

Like Wilde, Arvid Moller (1674-1758) had been a scholar at the University of Tartu/Pärnu before it was evacuated in 1710. Moller believed the first inhabitants of the Nordic region to be Scythians, from whom the Scandinavians, Finns, and Saami originated. When Odin's Scythians arrived in the Nordic region, the Finns and Swedes diverged into different peoples – due partly to the ongoing process of language change, partly to the cultural impact of Odin's people; their early common history could be detected with the help of "Finnish" place names – places like , ärmland, and in Sweden and in Denmark – that had survived the great linguistic changes. These place names provided evidence for the earlier Finnish presence in Scandinavia. The small Finnish-speaking communities in the border area between Sweden and Norway were the remnants of a population that had not altered their language with the influx of Odin's

people (Moller 1756:123-131). Moller's belief in an affinity between Finns and Scandinavians resembles Wilde's belief in an affinity between Finns and Swedes; according to Wilde, the Swedes originated from the Finns with the arrival of Odin's people. The difference is that Wilde believed the Swedes to be the descendants of Finns (ibid. 122), while Moller himself treated Swedes and Finns as siblings.

The Swedish historian Anders af Botin (1724-1790) believed that the indigenous population of Sweden had been the ancestors of the Finns, who had arrived via Russia and Finland. They had lived in Sweden at least as far south as Småland, as observable in such geographical names as Finnveden (Botin 1756:10). Odin's Asar had lived along the River Tanais. Botin followed Snorri's lead in describing the Asar's migration: they had come via Russian and Germany, entering Scandinavia from the south. The culturally primitive inhabitants of Sweden were ruled by King Gylfi, who could not resist the superior Asar. Odin took control of Sweden. However, the indigenous population was neither driven away nor extinguished. Instead, the modern Swedish people was created through a fusion of Odin's and Gylfi's peoples (ibid. 12-18). A new language emerged, largely based on that of the Asar; but many words and sayings from the language of the indigenous population were retained. Botin compared this process with the emergence of new languages and peoples from the Roman conquests (ibid. 11). The history of the Swedes and of the Swedish state began with the establishment of Odin's rule.

Not every Swedish historian agreed with the Snorri-Leibniz hypothesis. Eric Julius Biörner, Johan Göransson (1712-1769), and Gustaf Bonde (1682-1764) to support Gothicism (Lindroth 1978:643-658). Meanwhile, the historian and author Olof von Dalin (1708-1763) supported a modified version of the hypothesis, proposing a latter colonisation of Scandanavia in his *Svea Rikes Historia* (1747). He believed that northern Europe had remained submerged far longer after the Flood than was usually thought to be the case. His hypothesis truly was innovative, being largely founded on observation rather than literary reflection and speculation. Scandinavian



scholars had noticed that sea levels were changing. Some interpreted this to mean that land elevations were rising, others that the water was retreating. Dalin claimed that water levels were dropping by about half an inch annually. This meant that the sea level in Sweden had been thirteen fathoms higher at the time of Christ's birth, and large parts of it had lain under water (Dalin 1747:1-9). The first habitable parts of Scandinavia were the mountainous areas, which formed an archipelago; they were colonised by Scythians from about 400 BC. In the next several centuries, other immigrations followed: the Scythian *Vodines*; the Greek *Gelonians*; and the *Neurons*, a tribe with mixed Greek, Hebrew, and Scythian ancestors. The Estonians, the Finns and the Saami descended from the Neurons (ibid. 49-62). Dalin followed the Snorri-Leibniz hypothesis in accounting for the migration of Odin and his Scythian Asars, who settled in Sigtuna around 125 AD (ibid. 100-107).

In *Dannemarks Riges historie* (1732-1735), the Norwegian-Danish historian and author Ludvig Holberg (1684-1754) describes the major hypotheses on early Danish history among Danish historians. The first is Gothicism, which served as official state history in Sweden but was not popular in Denmark. Second is Saxo's claim that Denmark was founded by Dan. Historians could not agree when this had occurred: suggestions ranged from 1000 to 300 BC. However, Saxo was understood to be far from reliable as a historical source. The third is the Icelandic account, according to which Odin and his people founded Denmark. This became the dominant tradition, according to which the first Danish king was Skøld, son of Odin. Holberg considered the Icelandic sources very important. He acknowledged Saxo's historical unreliability but believed one could find truth in Saxo the closer one came to Saxo's own time period (Holberg 1762:37-42).

## Ethnohistorical positions of the 1770s

### Lagerbring and Ihre: Finno-Ugrians as the indigenous population

Swedish historian Sven Lagerbring (1707-1787) makes frequent use of Icelandic sources in the first part of his Swedish history *Svea rikets historia* (1769-83), treating both *Fundinn Noregr* and Snorri as historically credible. The Fornjoter people mentioned in *Fundinn Noregr* probably lived in the border area between Sweden and Finland. They were the most likely ancestors of the Finns (Lagerbring 1769:35-36). A Finnish expansion in Scandinavia occurred around 400 BC, so that Sweden was inhabited by both Finns and Saami on the arrival of Odin and the Scandinavians around 150 BC (ibid. 19, 25). Odin came from Asaheim, on the Asian side of the River Tanais. He was invited by the Swedish King Gylfi to settle in Gylfi's kingdom, where he founded Sigtuna. Odin's son Skiöld remained in Denmark with his wife Gefion; there, he founded the Danish capital, Leyre. Other sons settled along the migration route through Europe, creating kingdoms in Russia and Germany (ibid. 53). Odin introduced the use of the runic alphabet and money. The original inhabitants might have known the use of metals, but this was not certain (ibid. 67-68). The new rulers gradually absorbed the Saami and Finns, who were closely related; but some evidence remained from a time when the Finnish peoples had lived all over Scandinavia: a claim that Lagerbring supported by reference to Gustaf Bonde and Pehr Högström (ibid. 43-45).

Swedish linguist Johan Ihre (1707-1780) largely agreed with Lagerbring's ethnohistory. In his foreword to the great Saami-Swedish dictionary (1780), Ihre referred to Leibniz and declared that the Saami people were the oldest in Sweden. With the arrival of Odin, a new people, very different from the original inhabitants, entered Sweden – as the Icelanders had clearly and correctly pointed out (Ihre 1780:iii-iv). The names of towns, villages, forests, lakes, and rivers all suggested that the oldest people in Scandinavian had been

Finnish or Saami. Ihre listed examples: Mora, Kolmorden, Loka, Calmar, Wärmåland (ibid. xix-xxiii). Loan words offered additional evidence. The Finns and Saami had probably originated from a common ancestor a couple of thousand years ago (ibid. xxvii).

Ihre thought that Odin's people had arrived in Scandinavia around 40 BC. These forefathers of the present-day Swedes might not have been the ones mentioned by Tacitus, since the Sviar could have been Saami. Odin's arrival in Sweden and his expansion northwards drove the original population of Götaland out through the forest Kolmården, to settle in northern Scandinavia (Ihre 1772:33, Ihre 1780:xxiii). Unlike Lagerbring, Ihre did not believe that Odin had brought the rune alphabet and use of runestones with him. Runes had probably not been used before the fifth or sixth century AD. Ihre was more sceptical than Lagerbring about the reliability of the Icelandic sources. In a letter to Lagerbring published in 1772, he claimed that *Fundinn Noregr* was not a historical account but a creation myth: *Fornjodr* (Löw 1910:34). Lagerbring seemed to be convinced by Ihre's argument; in *Sammandrag av Swea Rikes historia* (1778-1780), he accepted that *Fundinn Noregr* was essentially mythological, although he did not wholly dismiss its historical value (ibid. 48).

Lagerbring and Ihre did much to strengthen the Snorri-Leibniz position of early Scandinavian ethnohistory. The following generation of Swedish historians – including Jacob Fredrik Neikter (1744-1803) and Erik Michael Fant (1754-1817) – regarded Finns and Saami as constituting the indigenous population in Scandinavia, otherwise driven away or assimilated by Odin's people (Agrell 1955:165; Löw 1910:39-40; Frängsmyr 2000:86-87). Meanwhile, the archaeologist and historian Nils Sjöborg (1767-1838) claimed that Odin and his Scythians, on arriving in Sweden, had driven the indigenous population of the Fornjoths – ancestors to the Finns and Saami – north (Sjöborg 1797:63).

### **Suhm & Schøning: Scandinavians as the indigenous population**

In eighteenth century Scandinavian thought, the Snorri-Leibniz hypothesis was influential but not uncontested. Such Swedish schol-

ars as Björner and Göransson continued in the Gothicist tradition. Björner denied that the indigenous population had been Finnish. He that the people of *Fundinn Noregr* were the ancestors of the Scandinavians, not the Finns. They had arrived as the first people to Scandinavia under the leadership of a historical Odin, coming from the east. Some of them remained in Kwinnland (Finland) until they were defeated or driven away by the Finns, who arrived later. Björner wrote of a second or younger Odin, who migrated from Tanais according to the stories of Snorri. This Odin entered a Scandinavia already inhabited by a closely related people (Björner 1738: 10-14, 34, 52).

Danish historian Peter Fredrik Suhm and his Norwegian colleague and friend Gerhard Schøning further elaborated this idea of an early, ethnically Scandinavian population arriving from the East. Their objective was to write the history of the Danes and Norwegians back to the Babylonian Confusion. In his 1763 dissertation, Suhm outlined his methodological and theoretical approach, presenting three types of ethnohistorical sources: 1) language, in the tradition of Leibniz's 1710 article; 2) monuments and artefacts, including coins, inscriptions, buildings etc.; 3) and written sources: books and documents (Jørgensen 1931:217-218).

Suhm and Schøning both believed firmly in the historical truth of the Bible, which provided the best information on the origin of peoples. Genesis in particular was the most valuable historical document for ethnohistorical research. Suhm used language as his primary resource for reconstructing how peoples related and for tracing their history from the present day back to Babylon (Suhm 1769:70). He divided world languages according to the twelve major languages or *Hovedsprog* that originated in the Confusion, believing that the traditional 70 or 72 proto-languages was exaggerated. He recognised a Finno-Ugric language family but not an Indo-European one. The Celtic, Greek, and Germanic languages shared a common origin; the Slavic languages originated separately (ibid. 89-92, 96).

Suhm and Schøning tried to reconstruct both the timing and

the route of their Scandinavian ancestors' migration from Babel to Scandinavia. Schøning believed that the first part of the trip was made by a common German-Nordic people, which split in the area between the Tanais and Volga rivers. The Germans continued to the west, the Scandinavians to the north. The two Germanic branches did not meet again until several hundred years later (Schøning 1769:182). The forefathers of the Scandinavians passed into Finland, where the tribe branched further into Swedes and Norwegians. The Swedes passed into Sweden via the Åland archipelago (Schøning 1769:26, Suhm 1771:18). The Norwegians followed the Finnish coast until they rounded the northern shore of the Bothnian Gulf, entering Norway from the north. Both Norwegians and Swedes then expanded southwards. Eventually, they encountered Germans on the Danish islands or Jutland or both (Schøning 1769:197-198).

In addition to the Germans and Scandinavians, a third Germanic tribe, the Goths, had immigrated to Scandinavia, probably from Livonia, migrating via Saaremaa and Gotland (Schøning 1769:128). As the Swedes and Norwegians continued expanding to the south, they confronted the Goths in the northern parts of Götaland. They either drove away or assimilated both Goths and Germans during their expansion, which ended at the River Ejder: the border between Schleswig and Holstein.

In this way, Suhm and Schøning explained the origin of the Danes: i.e., as the result of ethnic mixing through Scandinavian conquest of previously German areas. The Goths' expansion – as described by Jordanes – was the result of the Goths' expulsion from Sweden by the Scandinavians. Unlike the Gothicists, Suhm and Schøning believed the Goths to be siblings to the Scandinavians, not their offspring.

Suhm and Schøning argued against the Finns being the first population in the Nordic countries; they both claimed that the Scandinavians had been there longer. Suhm believed that the Scandinavians had arrived to a largely uninhabited area, thus making them indigenous to the region (Suhm 1771:9). He believed in the historical truth of *Fundinn Noregr*: e.g., the major characters

Nor and Gor were historically real, ethnic Scandinavians. The primitive mountain people had most likely been Saami, who could not provide much resistance to Nor's expansion (*ibid.* 16). The Finns arrived much later than the Scandinavians, with no signs of Finns in the Nordic countries before the birth of Christ (Schøning 1769: 127).

Suhm expanded on Björner's two Odins by adding a third. The first was a leader who, at the River Tanais, introduced a sun cult for his people. The second moved to the north with his fellow Goths, under pressure from the Persian king Darius. The third was the well-known historical Odin, who arrived to Scandinavia from Tanais (Bruun 1890:288). Schøning and Suhm believed Gylfi's people and Odin's to be closely related Germanic tribes, making the peaceful merger they envisioned between the two plausible.

#### **August Schlözer: Increased criticism of sources**

In the late eighteenth century, Scandinavian scholars belonged to either one or the other of two major camps in ethnohistorical thought: one supporting the positions of Lagerbring-Ihre; the other, Schøning-Suhm. Meanwhile, German scholars continued their tradition of taking a broader Germanic approach to ethnohistory than their Scandinavian counterparts. The jurist Mascov (1689-1761) believed that the histories of peoples could be determined independently of the histories of states or dynasties. Like Leibniz, he believed that the Scandinavians were really Germans. This "fact" had already been recognized by the Greeks and Romans, who included the Scandinavian territories into a larger Germany. That said, he was more sceptical than Leibniz of the possibility for reconstructing how the Germans (understood broadly) had arrived in Europe from the proto-home of humankind. He did not follow up Leibniz's suggestion to use linguistics for ethnohistorical research, instead continuing the traditional path of using Classical texts for his work, in this case reconstructing the history of the various Germanic tribes. He avoided using the Icelandic texts as sources for the northern Germanic tribes (Mascov 1726).

The German historian August Ludwig von Schlözer (1735-1809) stands out among his German colleagues. Herbert Butterfield describes him this way:

Having spent some years in Sweden, he studied the available resources for the history of northern Europe; and he gave this branch of scholarship a drastic revision which was to have no parallel until the famous Niebuhr carried the argument a stage further by a still more remarkable revision of the history of ancient Rome. (Butterfield 1955:52-53)

Most critically, Schlözer raised the standards for source criticism, in the process rendering many of the Classical and Medieval sources useless for studying the history of northern Europe. The result was a blow to literary ethnohistory, wherein the works of such ancient writers as Herodotus and Tacitus had been uncritically accepted as historical accounts. Because these works could not be verified from other sources, they could no longer be considered reliable.

Schlözer believed that the history of northern Europe could only be traced back to the spread of Christianity. Although he did not question the ethnohistorical status of the Book of Genesis – indeed, he continued to believe in the historical truth of most parts of the Bible – he believed it impossible to reconstruct any link between the Table of Nations and contemporary peoples. It was likewise impossible to trace any connection from peoples mentioned in Classical works – like those of Herodotus and Tacitus – either backwards to the Table of Nations or forwards to contemporary peoples. The Greeks knew nothing about the northern peoples. The Scythians should not be regarded as an actual people, to be linked to other, historically documented peoples. Jordanes fared no better: his account of the Goths' migration from Scandza was no more than historical fiction. Schlözer decided that, in his own work, there should be no mention of Japhet, Noah, Gomer, Magog, or any other Biblical persons or peoples. Neither should there be any discussion

of Scythians, Celto-Scythians, or Sarmatians (Schlözer 1771:289-290).

Schlözer was highly sceptical of the usefulness of any of the Icelandic sources. So had e.g. the Swiss historian Paul Henry Mallet (1730-1807), writing in the 1750s on the early history of Denmark (Mallet 1847).

Schlözer rejected as useful sources *Fundinn Noregr*, the *Edda*, the Book of Genesis, and the works of all of the Classical authors. He supported universal history but did not believe it possible to trace the history of the northern European peoples back to the peoples mentioned in the Bible. The consequence was that the early history of northern Europe was to be understood without any reference to the Bible. Helmut Neubauer (1970:211-212) writes that, in this way, Schlözer contributed to the secularisation of the historical sciences.

Schlözer was aware of conceptual history and the ambiguity of words and ethnonyms: e.g., the various meanings of the term “people” or *Volk*. described several methods for providing a population with a *Volksname*: 1) geographical, 2) political, and 3) genetic/historical. Geographically, the Icelanders were Scythians (*Nordländer*); politically, they were Danes; historically/genetically, they represented a *species* within the Germanic *genus*. Such a separation was, for Schlözer, obvious (Schlözer 1771:210).

Schlözer held out hope that the discussions between Ihre and Lagerbring would eventually bring to an end any belief in the ethnohistorical usefulness of the Icelandic sources (Schlözer 1771:269). His ideas were met with interest by Scandinavian scholars, although they also found the ideas disturbing. Schlözer tore at the foundations of Scandinavian ethnohistory with his exclusion of the Icelandic sources; but he could not provide any alternative account of early, pre-Christian Scandinavian ethnohistory. As Sten Lindroth (1971:607) notes, Schlözer’s critique of the Icelandic sources went so far that some Nordic scholars outright turned against him.



## Conclusion

Historical research on the early history of Scandinavia can be traced back to the great Medieval works by Danish, Icelandic, and Norwegian scholars of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. During the Early Modern Age, ideas drawn from Saxo and Snorri clashed against Swedish Gothicism. Gothicism lost its appeal in the early eighteenth century. In its place, various ethnohistorical systems were elaborated, drawing on Genesis, the linguistic thinking of Leibniz, and more. They divided into two major camps:

a) The Finns or the Saami – or both – formed the indigenous population of Scandinavia. The Scandinavians entered the area later, immigrating from the south. Those following the tradition of Leibniz supported this view by Biblical and linguistic arguments; those influenced by Lagerbring and Ihre drew upon Medieval Icelandic sources.

b) The Scandinavians were the first to enter Scandinavia – with the possible exception of the Saami in the far north. They immigrated from the east. Suhm and Schøning took this position, drawing support from the ethnohistorical framework they found in the Book of Genesis.

In contrast to these two positions, Schlözer provided a cautious account of early Scandinavian ethnohistory: one that did not stretch further back than the Europeanisation of the area in the Middle Ages. Schlözer's source-critical approach left no role for Genesis, Classical authors, or Icelandic historians. On the question "who was first?", Schlözer chose to be silent.

All three positions lived on into the nineteenth century.

# 7 Ethnohistories of Finland, Sápmi and Estonia until 1800

## Introduction

Although Estonia and Finland are populated by peoples whose languages are almost as linguistically close as the Scandinavian ones, ethnohistorians have not treated them as a united region in the same way as they have Scandinavia. In the first part of this period (1770-1900), they belonged to different states: Sweden and Russia. Although, from 1809, both belonged to Russia, they were territories under different laws with different political and academic traditions and different spheres of influence. Things could have turned out differently. Both Estonia and Finland belonged to Sweden from the 1560s (for northern Estonia) or 1620s (for southern Estonia) up till 1721, when the Baltic provinces were ceded to Russia.

This chapter examines ethnohistorical thought up to the nineteenth century, during which period Sweden founded universities in various of its territories. That said, by the time of the period under study, Estonia was already out of the Swedish sphere of influence, and Finland shortly would be – weakening its position as a Nordic country.

The chapter consists of two sections. The first covers the ethnohistory of Finland. The second reviews ethnohistorical discussions on Sápmi and Estonia and, to some extent, the southern Baltics: Latvia and Lithuania. This division does not reflect any political-geographical principles, as the Saami region in the north is discussed with Estonia rather than Finland. This is done for two reasons. First, the Sápmi region includes not only northern Finland but northern portions of Norway, Sweden, and Russia as well. Sec-

ond, Saami ethnohistory was traditionally separated from Finnish ethnohistory. The Saami ethnohistory could have been included in the chapters on Scandinavia; but since Saami belongs to the Finno-Ugric language family, it seems reasonable to include Saami and Sápmi in the chapter on Baltic-Finnish ethnohistory.

## **Finland**

### **Ethnohistorical ideas up to Porthan**

Historians lacked sources on either the early history of Finland or the process of Europeanisation in the area. The oldest description of Finland, Finns, and Saami was Tacitus's account of the Fenni in *Germania*. Othere's eighth century travelog of the Arctic – included in King Arthur's translation of Orosius – concerned the Saami as well as the Byarmians, a people further east along the Arctic Ocean, often understood as a Finno-Ugric people. Saxo and Snorri made a few references to Finland and the Finns, but nothing compared to the large number of histories available on the Scandinavian countries.

The process of Europeanisation proceeded differently in Finland from its Scandinavian neighbours. The Swedish monarchy expanded their zone of influence into Finland during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Finland became firmly incorporated into the Swedish realm, and Finnish territories eventually gained the same political status as the Swedish provinces. As a consequence of Finland's incorporation into the Swedish state, its history before the conquest held far less interest for historians than the early history of Sweden. Johannes Magnus paid almost no attention to early Finnish history in his work.

Greater interest was directed to early Finnish history only in the seventeenth century. The Swedish historian Johannes Messenius (1679/1680 – 1636) was imprisoned in Kajaana from 1616 to 1635. During his years there, he wrote *Scandia illustrata*, the tenth book

of which concerns Finland and the Baltic provinces. Although he finished the series in 1636, it was not printed until 1703. Messenius put the early history of Finland into a larger Scandinavian context of how the region was colonised from the south by emissaries of Tuyscon, Noah's fourth son. Tuyscon is never mentioned in the Bible. He is probably the creation of Anniius of Viterbo, the fabricator of various ancient chronicles who, on a creative reading of Tacitus, claimed that Tuisco was the proto-father of the Germans. Messenius used the Icelandic sources, claiming that *Fundinn Noregr* chronicled a Finnish royal family who were the forefathers of the Finns (Messenius 1987, Löw 1908:69, Lincoln 1999:48-49).

Turku University was founded in 1640 and quickly became important in the study of Finnish history. The official Swedish doctrine of Gothicism was imposed from the beginning. Its first professor of history, Mikael Wexionius (1609-1670), to a great extent followed Johannes Magnus' lead on the early history of northern Europe, which, when it came to the early Swedish kings, he complemented with the recently rediscovered works of Snorri. In his great overview of the Swedish state and its history, *Epitome* (1650), Wexionius paid more attention to the early history of the Swedish realm's eastern parts than had previous Swedish historians, with the exception of Messenius. By reference to Snorri, Saxo, and Magnus, he claimed that ancient Finland had been ruled by kings. Wexionius had no specific suggestions on why or when the Finns immigrated to Finland, only that they had come from somewhere in Asia (Laitinen 1912:240-241).

The question of whether the country had been governed by kings before the Swedish conquest was widely debated. Medieval sources and *Fundinn Noregr* hinted at the possibility. Finnish scholars took it as a matter of national pride to prove that early Finnish society had been no less developed than the peoples of the Scandinavian countries. During the 1670s, a short chronology of the supposed Finnish kings began to circulate as a handwritten manuscript. Compiled with the help of several Scandinavian sources, it listed fifteen kings, from Rudolf to Dumper, over a time period

stretching from Odin's arrival until the Swedish conquest. Probably written by Elias Brenner in the early 1670s (Anonymous 1988), the chronicle was not published until 1728, as part of the first issue of Christian von Nettelbla's *Schwedishes Bibliothec*.

In 1679, Rudbeck published his great *Atlantica*; but he had only slightly more interest in the Finns than Magnus. He does discuss Finnish history in *Atlantica*, suggesting that the Finns might have originated from Masek, a younger brother of Magog. Masek's people differed in physical appearance from Magog's Scythians (*Göter*) (Urpilainen 1993:178-179).

Until the end of the Great Nordic War, Finnish scholars continued to be heavily by Swedish Gothicism. When the Finnish theologian Daniel Juslenius (1676-1752) wrote history of Turku, he copied both the style and the patriotism of the Swedish Gothicists (Sommarlund 1935:209). In a section on the early history of Finland, Juslenius outlined his idea that the first inhabitants had arrived with Magog shortly after the Flood. Magog founded Turku before probably moving on to Sweden. Juslenius agreed with Rudbeck that Magog's people had been the Scythians; but, in contrast to most Gothicists, he suggested that the Scythians had been Finns rather than Swedes. The culturally highly advanced Finnish society weakened over time so that, by the Middle Ages, the Swedes were able to conquer Finland. The Swedish conquest was followed by the systematic destruction of written documents that proved the existence of that earlier, advanced culture. The Finns were forced into serfdom at first, but, because they showed great loyalty to the Swedish crown, they soon gained the same rights as Swedes (Juslenius 2005).

From the 1720s, Swedish historians abandoned Gothicism, which made its impact felt among Finnish scholars. Juslenius' Gothicist-inspired ideas were replaced by the more cautious ideas of Algot Scarin and Johan Bilmark (1728-1801), professors of history at the University of Turku. During the eighteenth century, it was generally agreed that the large differences in language meant that Finns and Swedes had different ethnohistories prior to the Swedish conquest. It became generally accepted among Swedish

historians that the Finns were the original inhabitants of Finland, although they made no serious effort to examine what kind of people the Finns were. None of the leading eighteenth century Swedish historians – Dalin, Botin, or Lagerbring – had any personal relation or connection to Finland (Mustelin 1957:39-40). The historians in Turku – Scarin and Bilmark – likewise showed little interest in early Finnish history, possibly because both had been born and raised in Sweden (Urpilainen 1993).

The Finnish priest Nils Idman (1716-1790) advanced the common idea that the Finns and the Saami were the original peoples not only in Finland but also in Sweden and other parts of Scandinavia. Idman strongly emphasized the different origins of the Finns and the Scandinavians. He supported Benzelius' and Lagerbring's positions on the ethnohistory of northern Scandinavia, although he was hesitant to conclude whether or not the Finns had been the indigenous people of Denmark. With the arrival of the *Götar* to Scandinavia, the Finns were assimilated; while the Saami – a branch off the Finnish stem – remained a separate people. Before their arrival in Scandinavia, the Finns had probably lived north of the Greeks, along the Black Sea (Idman 1774:4-6). Idman looked for contacts between the Greeks and various Finnish (i.e., Finno-Ugric) peoples by comparing similarities in vocabulary and grammar (ibid. 32-85). The Scythians and early Finns were one and the same. Their many tribes spread over a large part of Europe and Asia. Due to their significant contacts with the Greeks – and possibly a shared origin – the Finns in Scandinavia had been culturally highly advanced when Odin arrived. Gylfi's kingdom was built on both rule of law and philosophy: it was not the case that Odin had introduced these things into a primitive society (ibid. 85-88).

Idman's belief in Finnish-Greek affinity was a minority position. Many scholars believed Finnish to be more closely related to Hebrew. On the one hand, this downgraded Finnish from a status as an independently important language; on the other, it upgraded its status by establishing an affinity with Hebrew. The Swedish theologian Enevald Svenonius (1617-1682) elaborated the first specifi-

cally linguistic treatment of the relationship between Finnish and Hebrew. He offered around twenty examples of supposedly Hebrew words found in Finnish. The idea that Finnish originated from Hebrew remained influential until the mid-eighteenth century. It was far from unique: Svenonius argued that Swedish had Hebrew origins. Of more interest was the suggestion per Olof Rudbeck the Younger (1660-1740) that the Saami and, possibly, the Finns could have originated from the lost tribes of Israel (Agrell 1955:71-74, Harviainen 2005).

### **H.G. Porthan and the Finnish academic sphere of ethnohistory**

Until the 1770s, Finnish ethnohistoric thought had been strongly influenced by Swedish trends. This changed suddenly, because of the work of Henrik Gabriel Porthan, professor of eloquentiæ at Turku University. Inspired by Schlözer and, in particular, Schlözer's views on use of sources, Porthan developed an independent ethnohistorical model of the Finns.

Porthan originally presented his approach in *Chronicon episcoporum* (1784-1800), although it became known to a broader audience through his 1788 inaugural speech to the Swedish Academy of Letters, History, and Antiquities. That speech, together with an article on the relationship between Finns and Saami, was published in 1795 in the academy's journal.

Porthan tried to reconstruct what Finnish society had looked like before the Swedish crusades of the Middle Ages. Medieval sources were scarce. It was known about Finland prior to the period of the crusades, which led, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, to Swedish rule (Porthan 1795a:2-3). No written documents of the earlier period remained, and only a few Swedish sources addressed Finland in the period just after the crusades (ibid. 5, 7). Porthan assumed that Finnish society had been similar to the Finns' close Estonian relatives to the south. The pagan societies of Northern Balticum were described in the Chronicle of Henry of Livonia; this provided enough information to draw a picture of early Finnish society.

Porthan believed that the Finns had probably had a social structure and judicial system closely resembling Estonia's (ibid. 8-9).

Porthan had an additional tool to hand for reconstructing the culture of the Finns before the arrival of the Swedish invaders: Swedish loan words in Finnish (Porthan 1795a:8). Porthan believed that the earlier Finnish culture had been relatively primitive, rising to Swedish standards upon Finland's incorporation into Sweden. The rapid cultural and social development that resulted could be observed in the language, where words of artefacts and cultural elements previously unknown in Finnish society had been added: e.g., *kaupunki* ("town"), *katu* ("street") and *turku* ("market") were probably loan words based on the Swedish *köping*, *gata*, and *torg*, respectively. By subtracting out the loan words, the original Finnish language could be reconstructed, and with it its culture. The original Finnish society had been rural, and possibly lacked towns. Yet the original language included a rich vocabulary relating to the life of a settled farmer, and the Finns had knowledge of metals before the arrival of the Swedes (ibid. 14-16).

The idea of studying language to reconstruct the history of a people was not Porthan's invention. The Swedish author and statesman Bonde had noticed that Finnish lacked an indigenous word for king: the word *kuninkas* is a loan word from Swedish. Bonde concluded that Finland had not been ruled by kings before the Swedish conquest (Bonde 1755:80-81), as Early Modern Swedish historians had supposed (Latvakangas 1995:218).

Erik Lindahl (1717-1793) and Johan Öhring (1718-78) employed the same approach in their Saami-Swedish dictionary *Lexicon Lapponicum* (1780). No information on Saami history existed in the literature or in any oral traditions. Only through the study of language could parts of Saami history be reconstructed (Öhring 1780:xxxiii).

Not only did Porthan try to reconstruct Medieval Finnish culture; he attempted to reconstruct that history back to a proto-home on the Caspian Sea, from where the Finno-Ugric peoples migrated in various directions. Porthan made no use of Biblical stories about



Magog and others to describe early Finnish history, although he supported the basic chronology of Genesis (Fewster 2006:57-58) and the Biblically inspired assumption of a common human proto-home in Asia – from which, on his account, the original Finno-Ugric peoples had traveled to the Caspian Sea (Porthan 1795b:43-44). Like Schlözer, Porthan believed Genesis to be historically true but not applicable to northern European ethnohistorical research.

On Porthan's chronology, the Finns did not arrive in Finland until the fourth or fifth century AD (Porthan 1795, Urpilainen 2001:238), at which time the Saami occupied the whole area of Finland. The Saami were later driven away, to take refuge in the north. Traces of the broader Saami presence in Finland remained in the names of lakes, gulfs, straits, mountain ridges, etc. (Porthan 1795b:49). This put Porthan in opposition to the view, widely held in Sweden, that the indigenous population of Scandinavia had been the Finns and the Saami. Early contacts mentioned in the sagas had been between the Scandinavians and the Saami and not between the Scandinavians and the Finns. When the medieval traveller Othere spoke about the Finns as nomads, he was probably referring to Saami; the Finns were already farmers upon their arrival to Finland (Porthan 1795b:39-40).

If Porthan's chronology was correct, then King Gylfi's people – mentioned in Snorri's works – could not have been Finns. Porthan's view of Finnish ethnohistory was not so different from that of Schøning and Suhm, who believed that neither the people mentioned in *Fundinn Noregr* nor Gylfi's people had been Finns.

Early in his career, Porthan supported the commonly held idea that the Finnish and Saami languages were clearly separated from the Germanic languages and were more closely related than them to Hebrew. Porthan changed his mind. Beginning in the late 1770s, he followed Sajnovics and Schlözer in advocating the existence of an independent Finno-Ugric language family as an ancient family distinct from other families and not the result of language mixing (Agrell 1955:81, Tommila 1989:52).

Through the efforts of Porthan, Finnish ethnohistoric think-

ing gradually released itself from Swedish dominance and began to develop according to its own logic: a distinctly Finnish sphere of ethnohistorical research had been established.

## **Sápmi and Estonia**

### **Ideas about the Saami**

The Saami were of special interest for historians, due to their distinctive culture and way of living, compared to their Scandinavian, Finnish, and Russian neighbours. Most historians rejected any affinity between Scandinavians and Saami with arguments as per Rudbeck that large linguistic, cultural, and physical differences made any such affinity unlikely (Rudbeck 1937:270 [1679]). The relationship between the Saami and the Finns was more complicated. Clearly a linguistic affinity existed; but the cultural differences were as big as between the Saami and the Scandinavians.

The confusing terminology used to refer to Finns and Saami in Classical and Medieval sources raised a substantial problem for ethnohistorians attempting to reconstruct relations between the two. Tacitus' *Germania* offers a well-known example: in the final chapter, Tacitus describes a people he identifies as the Finns; but their character seemed to scholars more of a kind with contemporary Saami.

The Fenni live in a state of amazing savageness and squalid poverty. They are destitute of arms, horses, and settled abodes: their food is herbs; their clothing, skins; their bed, the ground. Their only dependence is on their arrows, which, for want of iron, are headed with bone; and the chase is the support of the women as well as the men; the former accompany the latter in the pursuit, and claim a share of the prey. Nor do they provide any other shelter for their infants from wild beasts and storms, than a covering of branches twisted together. (Tacitus)

Perhaps the Finns had lived on the same cultural level as the Saami in the time of Tacitus. More plausibly though, Tacitus describes the Saami and not the Finns. That was the position taken by such Scandinavian ethnohistorians as Mikael Wexionius and Jacob Wilde (Tommila 1989:28, 52). The ethnonymic discrepancy carried over into Norwegian, where the Saami were referred to as Finns, rather than Lapps: the common name in Swedish and Finnish. The ethnic Finns in Norway were referred to as Quens (*Kvæner*) (Keyser 1868:116-117).

In his book about the Saami, *Lapponia* (1673), Schefferus (1621-1679) discusses the relationship between the Finns and the Saami. He believed that a people and its language could have separate histories. Hence, Schefferus discusses the history of the Saami people in one chapter and the history of its language in another. Schefferus considered language, culture, and physical appearance in comparing the Saami to other northern European peoples. He dismissed suggestions that the Swedes or the Russians are related to the Saami; but he found many similarities when it came to the Finns, leading him to conclude that the Saami people had originated from the Finns. Schefferus explained the allegedly large anthropological differences as the result of lifestyle and nutrition. The Saami's dark complexions were due to their life in smoke-filled tents. In truth, their complexions were not so different from that of their neighbours (Schefferus 1956:79-80). Meanwhile, Schefferus believed that the Saami language, like its people, had originated from the Finnish. Due to the Saami's isolation, their language had changed less than Finnish, which had had more contacts with outsiders. Of the two languages, Saami was the younger, even though it seemed more archaic. Schefferus reinforced his surprising conclusion by comparing the Finnish/Saami linguistic relationship with the Icelandic/Norwegian one. The Icelandic language had developed from Norwegian but, due to its isolation in the Atlantic, it remained more archaic than Norwegian, which had far more contacts (ibid. 212-214).

Other scholars likewise believed that the Finns and the Saami

were closely related but claimed that the Saami represented the older, more original stage of the family. Swedish priest Pehr Högström (1714-1784) thought the relationship between Saami and Finn quite straightforward: when the Saami abandoned their previously nomadic way of living to settle down and farm, they became Finns – an ongoing process that Högström saw as continuing into his own lifetime (Högström 1980:40-42 [1747]).

Porthan strongly criticised Högström: the relationship between Finn and Saami was more complicated. Otherwise how could one explain the failure of Finns and Saami to understand each other without the assistance of translators? In the southern Alps, the shepherds were Germans, and the settled farmers on the slopes were Italians. By Högström's logic, the Germans who became farmers would evolve into Italians and start to speak Italian! Like Högström, Porthan believed that the Finns and Saami had a common origin despite their physical differences. However, neither Finns nor Saami had originated from the other. Most likely they had split into separate peoples while their proto-tribe still lived next to the Caspian Sea, following its departure from the Central Asian proto-home (Porthan 1795b:40-44). Both peoples migrated to Finland, although the Saami came long before the Finns. The Saami might have lived in Scandinavia at the time of the Scandinavians' arrival. The Finns did not come until much later.

The relationship between Saami and Finn had important implications for ethnohistory. If the Finns were no more than settled-down Saami, then the early Saami ethnohistories were also the early Finnish ones. If, as Porthan argued, the relationship was more distant, then the early history of the Finns described by Tacitus was not about contemporary Finns at all but about the Saami. (Remember that, on Porthan's account, the Finns did not enter the region until several centuries after the Saami.) As mentioned earlier, several scholars – notably Rudbeck the Younger – believed that the Saami might be closely related to the Hebrews. Rudbeck's hypothesis gained some favour in the first half of the eighteenth century but was shortly thereafter abandoned (Agrell 1955:71-74).

### **Estonia in historical context**

Ethnohistorical research in Estonia developed under similar conditions as in Finland. Historiography began with Europeanisation under foreign rule. The northern Baltics were conquered by Danish and German crusaders during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. After the Danes sold their possessions, Estonia came under German rule until the German federation collapsed in 1561. From that point, Estonia gradually came under Swedish rule. Established in 1632, the University of Tartu was well integrated into Swedish ethnohistorical thought.

Swedish rule in the area was far from consolidated. Tartu University closed in 1656 during the Russian war and was not reopened until 1690. In 1699, the university was transferred to the more fortified coastal town of Pärnu. With the Swedish army's 1709 defeat at Poltava, the last Swedish strongholds in the Baltic provinces became indefensible. Pärnu surrendered to the Russians in the summer of 1710. The remnants of the university were evacuated to Sweden (Piiirimäe 2007).

Swedish domination of historiography was broken with the loss of the Baltic provinces at the treaty of Nystad in 1721. Under their new Russian overlords, the Baltic Germans could regain their former influence; from the eighteenth century, the provinces became reintegrated into the German cultural sphere. With no university of their own the Baltic provinces, ethnic Germans studied mostly at German universities and thus became incorporated into the German sphere of ethnohistorical thought. Teachers and clergy moved to the Baltics from the Protestant parts of Germany. This cultural context, chronologists and historians tended to begin their histories with the arrival of the first Germans to the area (Raik 2004:43, 91).

### **Ethnohistorical ideas about Estonia**

Tacitus was often evoked in discussions on the early ethnohistory of Estonia. Since the re-discovery of *Germania*, his description of peoples living on the eastern shore of the Baltic Sea had remained sub-

ject to considerable ethnohistorical speculation. As Tacitus wrote in chapter xlv: "upon the right of the Suebian Sea the Aestian nations reside, who use the same customs and attire with the Suebians; their language more resembles that of Britain." (Tacitus). The observation that the Aesti spoke a different language from their neighbours was taken by some to indicate that the Aesti were not Germanic. Tacitus described the collecting of amber as a significant activity for them – suggesting that Aesti lived further to the south than present-day Estonia.

During the time of the Livonian Confederation, chronicles of the area were written in the German tradition of describing history from the starting point of German and Christian conquest. Chronicle of Henry of Livonia was the best known of these chronicles (Angermann 1986, von Taube 1986). Writers such as Balthasar Russow (ca. 1536-1600) started their chronicles by explaining that the Baltics had originally been divided between the indigenous Estonian people in the north and the Latvians in the south (Russow 1967 [1584]). Although proper history may have begun with the Germans, the Germans were not the first to enter the area.

As in Turku, the founding of the University in Tartu included a chair in history. Little attention was given to early Baltic history, although Friedrich Menius (?-1659) and Olof Hermelin (1658-1709) did write about it (Laidla 2006, Piirimäe 2007:59-60). The most comprehensible historical work on Estonia during the Swedish period was written by Thomas Hiärne (1638-1678) during the university's interregnum. Hiärne had studied at the university until its closure in 1656. He wrote his history from a Swedish point of view: i.e., the periodisation was in concordance with Swedish historiography. Part of it was published in 1794, but it was not published completely until 1825.

Hiärne believed that the original population living on the eastern shores of the Baltics had been Finnish, as far south as the river Weichsel (Vistula). Tacitus' Aesti had not been Germanic but, most likely, Estonian. (The name "Estonia" came from the Swedish, meaning "East".) The Baltic-Finns were forced out from the southern

Baltics by the Latvians, Prussians, Courlanders, and Lithuanians (Hiärne 1825:12-13, 25). All of these Baltic peoples originated from a common ancestor. They had probably arrived in northern Europe from the province of Dacia in southeastern Europe (*ibid.* 17, 25).

In his later years, Moller, the professor of law who fled from Tartu University to Sweden, wrote a book about the history of the Estonians and another about his hometown of Tartu. These were published in a combined edition in 1756. Not only did he believe that the Baltic-Finns and the Saami were the indigenous population of Sweden and Norway; he believed that, in ancient times, they had lived in large areas around the Baltic Sea, from the Gulf of Finland to the River Weichsel (1756:, 44-45).

Estonian domination of that wider area ended when, in the fourth and fifth centuries AD, the Latvians and other Baltic tribes moved into Estonian areas, in the process partly dispersing, partly assimilating the Estonians. According to Moller, these tribes had a very mixed background. Their ancestors emerged from the mixing of Getians, Sarmatians, Greeks, and Romans in the Roman province of Dacia. Gothic and Hunnic invasions of the fourth and fifth century pushed them out from Dacia. They moved northwards, settling in Lithuania. The Latvians continued into Latvia (Moller 1756:36-37). Moller was not the first to claim that the Latvians were a mixed people; Wexionius had suggested as much in 1650 (Laitinen 1912:279).

Although most research on Estonian ethnohistory was conducted by local scholars, some was done abroad. Finnish scholars believed the Estonians to be ethnically related to the Finns. Porthan drew a number of his conclusions about the Finns from studying the Estonians and their history. Because he believed in a late arrival for the Finns, this meant he also believed in a late arrival for the Estonians. Like Moller, the Swedish historian Hans Thunmann (1746-1778) was interested in the history of the Baltic peoples, especially the Latvians. He agreed with Moller that the Baltic tribes were mixed peoples, but he thought their ethnohistory to be not as complicated as did Moller. Thunmann claimed that the Baltic tribes

were originally Slavs who had expanded into previously Finno-Ugric-speaking areas. The Latvians originated from this encounter. The other Baltic peoples – the Prussians and the Lithuanians – originated from other contacts between the Slavic peoples and the Goths. Thunman saw a heavy Baltic-Finnic influence in the Baltic languages, especially in words related to the sea and to sailing. He offered a short list of Baltic-Finnish loan words in Latvian (Thunmann 1772).

Schlözer was strongly of the opinion that the Baltic languages/peoples were *not* mixed. The Latvian *Stammvolk* were as independent as their Germanic and Slavic neighbours. Schlözer was careful to avoid any definitive position on the indigenous population, but he did discuss the possibility that the Baltic tribes had lived over the whole of the Baltics and in neighbouring areas as far north as the Gulf of Finland. Their area shrank considerably with expansions of the Estonians from the north, Germanics from the west, and Slavs from the east and south (Schlözer 1771:319).

Schøning and Suhm took a broad European perspective in their own ethnohistorical research, which included paying some attention to the ethnohistory of the Baltics. Suhm claimed that, at the time of Tacitus' *Germania*, the population in Balticum had been Germanic. Over time, it became increasingly mixed. Finns and the Estonians had lived in the vicinity of the River Vistula. The Germans eventually abandoned their settlements in the Baltics and moved towards present-day Germany. The vacuum was filled by the Baltic-Finns (Suhm 1771:11-14).

## Conclusion

The founding of the University of Turku did not, initially at least, initiate any uniquely Finnish sphere of ethnohistorical thought. Although, early in the eighteenth century, Daniel Juslenius described a distinctly Finnish ethnohistory, nevertheless the university remained within the framework of Swedish historiography. It was not



until Porthan that a uniquely Finnish ethnohistorical perspective was created. According to Porthan, the Finns did not enter Finland until several centuries into the Christian era. Therefore, they could not be the indigenous population of Scandinavia. If this population had been Finno-Ugric, that meant it was most probably Saami. Faced by the lack of written sources on early Finnish history, Porthan, influenced by Schlözer, elaborated an ethnohistorical method that put emphasis on the study of the vocabularies. He could adopt Schlözer's methodology more easily than his Scandinavian colleagues precisely because no equivalent sources to Saxo or Snorri existed for early Finnish history.

Estonian ethnohistorical thinking changed with the trends in Baltic politics. German domination was gradually replaced by Swedish. From the establishment of the university in 1632, the history department of the University of Tartu taught the official Swedish Gothicist doctrine. The university was closed in the early eighteenth century and did not re-open until the nineteenth century. When Sweden ceded power over the provinces to Russia, German cultural and scholarly dominance in the region was re-established.

Estonia attracted some interest among German, Scandinavian, and Finnish ethnohistorians who preferred to take a broader Baltic-Sea- or Europe-wide view. Thunmann believed that the indigenous population of Estonia was Baltic-Finnish; Suhm and Schøning believed that the Estonians had originally lived along the southern shores of the Baltic Sea. As he did with respect to Scandinavian ethnohistory, Schlözer avoided speculating about the history of the area before reliable sources emerged in the Middle Ages.

# 8 Scandinavian ethnohistories 1800-1900

## Introduction

Traditionally, European ethnohistorians had used Classical and Medieval sources to complement the Bible. In the early nineteenth century, with the loss among progressive historians of Biblical dominance, the question arose whether the Classical and Medieval sources should also be abandoned as Schlözer had suggested, or whether they remained valuable for ethnohistorical research. The new ideas brought by linguistic ethnohistory and its auxiliary sciences further fueled the debate as to which was the best approach for revealing the secrets of prehistory.

These debates took place within the new post-Napoleonic political landscape of Scandinavia, within which the Norwegians were able to set up independent institutions for higher learning and research. In the Middle Ages, Norway had been under heavy Danish influence. Although attempts had been made to build a university there, it was not until the final years of Danish rule – 1811, to be precise – that a university was founded in Christiania (Oslo). During the union with Sweden (1814-1905), the university was the centre for Norwegian thinking within the larger sphere of Scandinavian ethnohistorical research.

This chapter is divided into three chronological sections, each of which reflects major changes in methodology for researching early Scandinavian history. The first describes how the breakthrough represented by linguistic ethnohistory affected the debate. The second shows how increased scepticism towards written sources, as well as the introduction of the Three Age System in archaeology, changed the ground rules. The third presents the new hypotheses on early

Scandinavian ethnohistory that came with new sciences, including physical anthropology, and such groundbreaking discoveries as the timing of the last ice age.

## **Ethnohistorical ideas 1810-1830**

### **Linguistic ethnohistory and the hypothesis of indigenous Finno-Ugrians**

The comparative-historical linguistics breakthrough occurred at a time when Biblical ethnohistory had been substantially weakened. While Bopp focused on linguistic issues, Rask and Grimm used the new linguistic methodologies for sweeping ethnohistorical speculations. Grimm believed that only a minor ethnic difference separated Germans and Scandinavians, while Rask took the typical Scandinavian position of clearly separating the Germanic sub-families. Rask claimed that the Germans had settled in northern Germany while Odin's people were still living on the plains north of the Black Sea. When the Scandinavians migrated to Scandinavia, they moved first through the German areas (Rask 1993:108-109).

Although Grimm and Rask disagreed about how the various Indo-European sub-families were related, came about, and were named, they both supported the basic Leibniz idea that the area was already inhabited by Finno-Ugrians when the Scandinavians entered Scandinavia from the south. used the new linguistic methods to locate indigenous Finnish/Saami place names around Scandinavia, remnants of a population that was either driven away or absorbed by the Scandinavians: e.g., he claimed that the names of the islands Samsø and Ven were Finno-Ugric (Rask 1993:109-110). In a later article, Rask gave additional examples of place names of possible Finnish, Saami, or unknown origin: Falstr, Mön, Somen, Kolmorden, and Oslo (Rask 1932-33b:315-320).

Both Rask and Grimm examined the Finnish and Scandinavian vocabularies for evidence of early contacts between the peoples. They

identified several shared words as possible loan words from Finnish to Swedish. One was *juusto* (“cheese”), which became the Swedish *ost*. Rask presented a list of around fifty words that could have a Finnish or shared origin (Rask 1993:100-102). It was agreed that the Finns and the Scandinavians had been in close contact during their early history; but the scholars of the new linguistic methodology did not treat the encounter of Finns and Scandinavians as either a fusion of peoples or the creation of a new people, as had been earlier proposed by e.g. Botin.

The new ethnohistorical methods did not imply the end of literary ethnohistory. Rask, who laid the foundations for linguistic ethnohistory, played a major role in dismantling Biblical ethnohistory in the Nordic countries; nevertheless, he retained a strong belief in the historical usefulness of the Icelandic sagas in particular and of literary ethnohistory in general (Rask 1993:108-111). Ethnohistorical approaches based on both literary and linguistic ethnohistory found strong support among Scandinavian scholars of the 1820s and 1830s. Niels Matthias Petersen (1791-1862), professor of Danish at Copenhagen University, proclaimed that the immigration of Odin and his Asar was historical fact (Petersen 1870:76, Jørgensen 1943:47).

Swedish historian Eric Gustaf Geijer (1783-1847) similarly believed that the story of Odin’s immigration in *Heimskringla* was based on historical events (Geijer 1825:391-392, 424). Although the Saami were the indigenous population in the Nordic countries, the Finns had also arrived early and were known in Scandinavia as Jotnar or Qvens [Quener]. Geijer repeated the old belief that the “Finns” could have lived as far South as the Danish islands (ibid. 414). Geijer kept his belief in the historical truth of the historical Odin through his lifetime (Latvakangas 1995:430-431).

### **Linguistic ethnohistory and its hypothesis about the indigenous Scandinavians**

Despite the dominance of the Snorri-Leibniz hypothesis of an indigenous Finno-Ugric population, the ideas of Suhm and Schøning

had far from disappeared. The hypothesis had strong support from such leading comparative-historical linguists as Grimm and Rask, criticism came from, among others, the historian Jonas Hallenberg (1748-1834). After a thorough analysis of Ihre's and Lagerbring's linguistic, and etymological arguments, Hallenberg concluded that most of them failed to provide any evidence for an indigenous Finno-Ugric population in southern Scandinavia (Nordling 1935). Hallenberg rejected any Finno-Ugric origin for such place names as Värmland (Hallenberg 1819:64, 71). He challenged Lagerbring's interpretation of *Fundinn Noregr* and dismissed his attempt to link the Fornjoter names to Finnish names (ibid. 73-76).

Hallenberg criticized Lagerbring's interpretations of the Icelandic sources, not the usefulness of the sources themselves. Unlike Schlözer, Hallenberg treated Snorri's *Heimskringla* and *Fundinn Noregr* as historically reliable. The Fornjoter people were not Finnish but Gothic, having arrived in Sweden before Odin (Löw 1910:41). Hallenberg agreed with Suhm that the indigenous population had spoken a language close to Odin's own, rejecting the proposal that Odin had imposed a very different language on them. Both languages had been Germanic (Hallenberg 1819:84, 94).

In the 1830s, Hallenberg's positions on early Scandinavian ethnohistory gained some support among Swedish historians. Anders Magnus Strinnholm (1786-1862) believed that Gylfi's people had not been Finno-Ugric; more likely they were of the Scandinavian Göta tribe. The Finns and the Saami had definitely lived in northern Scandinavia, but they had never lived in the south (Strinnholm 1834:106, 158-160). Strinnholm followed Suhm and Schøning in claiming that before Odin's arrival, the Danes had been a mixed Gothic-Germanic people (ibid. 93). He believed strongly in the historical truth of *Heimskringla* but was more sceptical about *Fundinn Noregr* (Strinnholm 1834:156, Torstendahl 1964:61-62). Strinnholm was basically a literary ethnohistorian. However, he was aware of the new ideas coming from comparative-historical linguistics and comparative mythology, notably their ability to establish a close relationship between the Scandinavian languages/peoples on the one

hand and the Persian and Indian languages/peoples on the other (Strinnholm 1834:127-130).

Strinnholm's colleague Abraham Cronholm (1809-1879), professor of history at the University of Lund, likewise believed that the indigenous population met by Odin had not been Finno-Ugric. By making reference to Porthan and Arwidsson's Finnish ethnohistory, Cronholm argued that the Finns did not enter Finland until several hundred years after Odin's people arrived in Sweden. If that was true, the Finns could not have lived in Sweden long before they arrived in Finland from the south and southeast. He believed that the people living in Denmark and southern Sweden on Odin's arrival might have been ethnic Celts (Cronholm 1835:359-363).

### Source criticism and mythistory

Although Schlözer made no major impact on Scandinavian ethnohistorians, some German scholars did take up his ideas. In particular, his ethnohistorical ideas about northern Europe re-emerged in their debates of the early nineteenth century. The linguist Adelung claimed that Snorri's tales of Odin and his immigration should not be understood as history but as literature. The German-Swedish historian Christian Friedrich Rühls (1781-1820), who wrote about the history of both Sweden and Finland, rejected *Fundinn Noregr* as a historical source, although he did believe that Snorri's tales contained some historical truths. Later, like his teacher Schlözer, he became much more critical towards Snorri (Stavenow 1918, Henningson 1961:216-224, Menger 1985:41).

Rühls did not find much support for his ideas even from German scholars. In the early nineteenth century, the *Aufklärung* rationalism of the 1770s had been replaced in historical research by the romanticist approach of *mythistory* (Kelley 1990). For the romanticists, myths could contain material of great value. With the establishment of comparative mythology, scholars could defend the historical value of the Icelandic sources – not as descriptions of absolute truth but rather as transmitters of somewhat distorted history (Bödl

2000:171-173). Geijer saw Schlözer's and Rüh's' approach as reflecting the Enlightenment thinking of Voltaire, who had failed to understand such spiritual factors in history as religion, mythology, and poetry (Stavenow 1918:323; Henningsson 1961: 258). Geijer dismissed Rüh's' rejection of the Icelandic sources with the argument that the sagas they contained tangled history and myth. It was simply too drastic to treat them as having no historical value at all. Instead, the historian need only take account of their particular character (Baudou 2004:135).

Nineteenth century Scandinavian scholars did not accept Rüh's' rejection of the Medieval Icelandic sources; but they did interpret them more critically than their eighteenth century colleagues. According to the mythohistoric approach, some parts could be historically accurate even while other parts were fiction. In a couple of articles in 1807-08, the Danish poet and theologian N.F.S. Grundtvig (1783-1872) responded to Adelung's critique of Snorri, claiming that the Icelandic sources should primarily be read in the poetic spirit of the Old Norse authors. To Grundtvig, these texts were works of poetry at the level of completed harmony, to be studied within their own context and from their own perspective (Begtrup 1904:242; Grundtvig 1904a:218, 1904b:251). That said, Grundtvig believed in the historical existence of Odin: it was not plausible that both Saxo and Snorri had invented the same character; therefore – taking a mythohistoric perspective – some of the material had historical value (Grundtvig 1904b:246, 252-253).

Schlözer's and Rüh's' tougher standards on sources had to wait until the 1830s and 1840s, by which point the mythohistorical approach was in decline, and the ideas of critical German historicism gained influence.

## Ethnohistorical ideas 1830-1870

### Sven Nilsson: Three-Age Archaeology and the cephalic index in ethnohistorical research

The belief that Odin had established the states of northern Europe was based on very weak sources: Snorri's *Edda* and *Heimskringla*. As belief in their historical value declined, the established versions of early Scandinavian history became difficult to defend. From the 1830s onward, Odin's status as a founding father and his very existence historically came under heavy criticism. The Danish historian Christian Molbech (1783-1857) wrote outright that no such person had existed. Scholars of early history and prehistory would need to find new sources (Molbech 1855).

By abandoning Snorri's history, Nordic ethnohistorians were forced to regard pre-Christian history as largely unknown. They concluded that the Nordic peoples had lived in a kind of dark ages before the arrival of Christianity and, with it, written history. In the 1830s, Scandinavian scholars began to talk of a Nordic prehistory (*förhistoria* in Swedish, *forhistorie* in Danish) (Kristensson 2005a, 2005b; Rowley-Conwy 2007).

Archaeology in general and the new ideas on classifying archaeological findings according to the Three-Age system in particular were to make important contribution toward a new Scandinavian ethnohistorical approach. The system's inventor, Christian Jürgensen Thomsen, did not take up the ethnohistorical implications of his system, but others did.

In *Jaktens och fiskets historia* (1835), Sven Nilsson (1787-1883) presents a methodology for investigating Scandinavian pre-ethnohistory. Nilsson accepted the division of peoples according to languages; but, unlike Rask, he did not pay any further attention to linguistic issues. In his book *Skandinaviska Nordens Urinnevånare* (1838-1843; second edition 1868-1870), he goes further and outlines prehistoric ethnohistory. For that task, Nilsson created a new methodology organised within evolutionary ethnology, in the tra-



dition of the French and Scottish Enlightenment. He recognised four major stages of societal development: hunter-gathering, pastoralism, agriculture, and advanced agriculture (with money and writing) (Nilsson 1991 [1868]). He made use of Thomsen's Three-Age System for discussing archaeological remains, as well as a new form of physical anthropology developed by his good friend, the anatomist Anders Retzius. While embracing new ideas from such disciplines as archaeology and physical anthropology, Nilsson still believed in the historical usefulness of folk tales and other ancient literary sources. Klaus Bödl writes that Nilsson was one of the last influential ethnohistorians to interpret Odin euhemeristically (Bödl 2000: 109; Nilsson 1923:64).

Nilsson believed that the Stone Age people of Scandinavia could not have been Germanic. He supported his claim with references to such Classical sources as Tacitus, who described the Germanic and Cimbric peoples as having reached the Age of Metal (Nilsson 1991:89). He concluded that the Celts and Germanics must have arrived in Scandinavia already possessing the knowledge of metals. The Scandinavian Stone Age people must have been a different people: probably, the ancestors of the Saami. To verify the Saami hypothesis, Nilsson examined cranial remains from a Stone Age grave in Denmark. He found striking similarities in proportions between the Stone Age skulls and skulls of contemporary Saami (*ibid.* 104). Like Retzius, he believed that cranial proportions remained stable over time. The resulting picture was of a Megalithic Saami culture that existed across southern Scandinavia and large parts of north-western Europe (*ibid.* 108).

The Saami had not had Scandinavia to themselves before the arrival of the Indo-Europeans. A more advanced people, the Jotuns, lived in Sweden. The Jotuns worshipped Thor. They were probably the forefathers of the present-day Finns (Nilsson 1991:18). Initially, contacts between Jotuns and Saami were hostile and even violent: Saami folklore talked of encounters with giants. However, Jotuns and Saami united in the struggle against the invading dolichocephalic Germanic peoples. The Götur settled in southern Sweden, pushing

the Jotuns north. Over time, Götar and Jotuns came into increasing contact; the Götar probably adopted the Finnish cult of Thor (ibid. 157-158). During the first century BC, the Iron Age Svear migrated into the area, bringing with them the Odin-Valhalla cult. They passed through the area of the Götar, drove away the Jotuns, and settled around Lake Mälaren. Wanting to incorporate Jotuns into their own people, the leaders of the Svear encouraged the priests of the Odin-Valhalla cult to include Thor as a son of Odin (ibid. 159). The Saami remained outside this process.

Over time, Nilsson modified some of his ideas. When, in 1843, the Danish archaeologist Jens Jacob criticised his connecting of the Saami to the Stone Age graves in northwestern Europe, Nilsson revised his position, instead linking the Stone Age sites to a short-skulled Iberian (Basque) people that had expanded from the Iberian peninsula as far as southern Scandinavia. The Saami belonged to the same race but had entered Europe by a different route, following the reindeer from Asia into northeastern Europe. Eventually they entered Sweden from the north. Meanwhile, a more advanced Bronze Age people, the Celts, arrived in southern Sweden by boat from Ireland. The Celts were long skulled. Most likely, they had originally been Phoenician traders who had sailed out through the Mediterranean to settle in Ireland. Odin's Asar made their migration from the Don River to Sweden later than had usually been supposed: Nilsson suggested that they had arrived in Sweden during the fifth or sixth century AD, swiftly crushing the weak Götar King Gylfi (Nilsson 1923:50-53, 59-65, 70-79).

A second edition of Nilsson's *Skandinaviska Nordens Urinnevånare* was published in 1868. Although Nilsson made some further changes in his thinking on prehistory – the Bronze Age people went from being Celts in the first edition to Phoenicians in the second; the Asar's arrival moved almost 500 years later, to around 510 AD – he did not change his view that the Saami had originally occupied large parts of Europe. He likewise maintained his earlier idea that the Asar were the same people as the Herulians described by the historian Procopius (Nilsson 1991:175, 192).

Nilsson's belief that the Phoenicians had played a role in the history of northern Europe was not new: it had been raised by Peter Suhm (1771:11), who believed that traders stationed in England had sailed to the Baltic Sea in their hunt for amber. an ethnohistorian, Nilsson represents a transitional figure. On the one hand, he relied on such older ethnohistorical methods as Classical literature and not the new ones of linguistic ethnohistory. On the other, he used Thomsen's Three-Age System and contributed to it with his elaboration of Retzius' anthropological classification.

### **Keyser and Munch: Renewal of the eastern arrival hypothesis using linguistic ethnohistory and archaeology**

Through the efforts of the Norwegian historian Rudolf Keyser, literary ethnohistory gave way to linguistic ethnohistory. Like Nilsson, he made use of the Three-Age System and included archaeological findings in his ethnohistorical research (Keyser 1868:233). He did not, however, pay much attention to the new methods of physical anthropology. He denied the existence of any historical Odin and, with that, the arrival of the Scandinavians under a king as an actual historical event (*ibid.* 21). Languages and peoples were to be studied without reference to the Bible. No longer were peoples to be divided according to the Table of Nations nor languages by reference to the Tower of Babylon: the ethnohistorian should focus instead on the intrinsic character of languages and on their construction (*ibid.* 4).

Keyser interpreted the archaeological records of Scandinavia as revealing the immigration into the area of peoples with increasingly advanced cultures (Keyser 1868:235). He elaborated his own version of Scandinavian ethnohistory, including the proposal that the indigenous population of southern Scandinavia was probably Saami. The Saami he linked to Megalithic Stone Age culture. Around 600 BC, the Saami had probably been driven out to the north by a Celtic Bronze Age people who, in their turn, were driven off to Britain by advancing German and Gothic tribes from the south (*ibid.* 173, 240-244). Keyser believed that the ancient proto-home of the Eu-

ropean peoples had probably been in Central Asia (ibid. 225). From here, the proto-Germanic peoples had moved northwards until they reached the central Volga region (ibid. 221), where they split into proto-Germans, who moved west into Europe and later southern Scandinavia; and proto-Scandinavians, who travelled north. On their way to Finland, they encountered the Finns, also on their way north. The two peoples entered Finland around the same time, drove away the indigenous Saami, and continued their expansion until they reached the Bothnian Gulf. Here the Finns settled among the proto-Scandinavians, who split into two groups. The proto-Swedes continued west, over the Åland archipelago, into Sweden. The proto-Norwegians colonised Norway from the north (ibid. 204-206). Both peoples pushed south over the Scandinavian peninsula, eventually encountering the Germans and Goths at *Göta älv* and driving them away. They continued as far as the Danish islands and Jutland (ibid. 70, 154), where they established the state of Denmark.

Keyser elaborated his ethnohistorical approach in collaboration with his colleague Petter Andreas Munch (1810-1863). Munch's theories about the Norwegian immigration into Norway differed slightly from Keyser's: on his account, they had not passed through Finland or northern Sweden. While the Swedes were moving into Finland, the Norwegians continued north along the River Dvina until they reached the Arctic Sea, where they built boats and sailed west to Norway (Munch 1852:89-90).

Keyser and Munch's account was reminiscent of Schøning's and Suhm's eastern arrival hypothesis, with the Biblical and literary ethnohistory of the eighteenth century replaced by linguistic ethnohistory and archaeology. Their views on Norwegian ethnohistory remained dominant until the 1860s, when Ludvig Kristensen Daa (1809-1877) presented his alternative account. Daa rejected the eastern arrival hypothesis: he thought it quite unbelievable that the Norwegian forefathers had passed through Russia and then sailed along the Norwegian coast. Daa believed that the Scandinavians had arrived along a southern route. They gained their culture and language through contacts with the original Finno-Ugric popula-

tion, under the influence of the Nordic climate (Dahl 1958:74-76, 85-87).

### **Worsaae and Hildebrand: Supporting the southern arrival hypothesis using linguistic ethnohistory and archaeology**

As noted earlier, Thomsen did not employ his archaeological system for ethnohistorical research. The first archaeologist to do so consistently was Jens Jacob Worsaae, Thomsen's successor as museum curator. *Danmarks oldtid* (1843), Worsaae presented his own ethnohistory of Scandinavia by elaborating on Nilsson and Keyser. He based his thinking on the principles of the Three-Age System, which he applied to the archaeological landscape of the Nordic countries, dividing the cultures into zones. Unlike Nilsson, Worsaae did not link the Megalithic Age graves to the Saami. He thought that, based on currently available knowledge, the grave makers had to be considered ethnically and linguistically unknown. Primitive hunter-gather tribes of Finns may have lived in the area, but they were not related to the grave makers (Worsaae 1843:104-106). The Bronze Age had probably arrived in Scandinavia with the immigration of a new people; but Worsaae was sceptical of naming that people as the Celts. It was more plausible that they had been a Gothic (i.e., Old Danish) people, arriving from northern Germany to annihilate or enslave the original, Stone Age people (ibid. 108-110).

Although the difference between the Iron Age culture of Scandinavia and the Bronze Age culture was smaller than between the Stone Age and Bronze Age cultures, Worsaae followed Keyser in arguing that the Iron Age had arrived in Scandinavia, via Denmark, with yet another immigration, this time of a people out of the north and east (Worsaae 1843:103). However, Worsaae believed that Keyser had overrated the military skills of these newcomers. Most likely, their conquest had ended at the Danish isles. Originally Germanic, like the Norwegians and Swedes the Danes became Scandinavian as the result of extensive contacts. Worsaae ended his volume with vague support for the value of comparing skulls and skeletons to clarify the ethnicity of the Stone Age inhabitants (ibid. 107).

Hans Hildebrand (1842-1913) defended the first Swedish doctoral thesis on prehistory: *Svenska folket under hednatiden* (1866). He included elements of the southern immigration hypothesis but also made mention of the eastern hypothesis. His focus was the prehistory of the area falling within the borders of modern Sweden. He strongly criticised the use of ancient literary sources for research into Scandinavian prehistory, using Schlözer's and Rüh's arguments about their unreliability. Only with the arrival of Christianity could literary sources of any historical reliability be found (Hildebrand 1866:7-11). Prehistory was best revealed and reconstructed with the help of language studies and archaeology.

Hildebrand believed that the transitions from Stone Age to Bronze Age to Iron Age all occurred through the immigration of new peoples (Baudou 2004:162-163). One Stone Age people had entered Sweden from the southwest and gradually expanded north. Another may have entered from the north, given the large differences in the nature of Stone Age remains between north and south.

Hildebrand did not speculate about the ethnicities of either of these peoples (Hildebrand 1866:35, 43-44). Available archaeological evidence suggested an abrupt transition from the southern Stone Age culture to the Bronze Age culture, which Hildebrand interpreted to mean that a new people had entered the area and conquered it (ibid. 44) – although he was, once again, reluctant to speculate on its ethnicity. Their reign did not last long: they were soon defeated by Iron Age invaders: the Germanic forefathers of the Swedes (ibid. 47).

Hildebrand thought that, like the Indo-European proto-home, the Germanic proto-home had been in Asia (Hildebrand 1866:50). By the time they entered Europe, the Germanic tribes had known and used iron (ibid. 47). The immigration of proto-Swedes to Sweden was not straightforward, however: Iron Age excavations revealed the existence of two different Iron Age cultures, one older than the other. This meant that the Germanics had probably entered Sweden as two different peoples in two different waves (ibid. 32). First, the Gutar and Göter expanded from the Black Sea to the Baltic in a

northwest direction. The Gutar settled on Gotland; the Göter continued to Sweden (ibid. 73-74). Next came the Svear, who took a different route from the Black Sea north. They arrived in Scandinavia from the east via Estonia or Finland and the Åland islands (ibid. 70). As their Norwegian neighbours to the west had already done, they then expanded south into the lands of the Göter. The Göter were thoroughly defeated in Sweden; but they fared better in Denmark, where they retained some of their cultural identity (ibid. 81, 91-92).

Hildebrand made some changes in the second edition of his dissertation, by which time the idea of an Indo-European proto-home in Europe had become more widely accepted. The Indo-European proto-home was now to have been located close to the Caspian Sea. He continued to support an eastern arrival route for the Svear (Hildebrand 1872:84, 98).

Hildebrand later expanded his research into prehistory to include all of Europe. In his great work on the prehistory of Europe *De förhistoriska folken i Europa* (1873-1880), he was cautious about speculating on the ethnicity of any Stone Age cultures, with one exception: in the case of the so-called Arctic culture, he agreed with such Scandinavian archaeologists as Oscar Montelius and Oluf Rygh that the people had been Saami. Given the differences between Stone Age cultures north and south, if the Arctic culture had been Saami, then the Stone Age culture to their south could not have been (Hildebrand 1873-1880:414).

Although, in the tradition of *Wörter und Sachen*, Hildebrand linked language and peoples, he clearly separated language/culture from physical appearance and people from race. Races differed according to physical classifications; peoples differed according to such social characteristics as language, culture, and religion. The dividing lines of the one were often not the dividing lines of the other (Hildebrand 1873-1880:57-58).

Like Hildebrand, Worsaae gradually expanded the geographical focus of his ethnohistorical research. As he gained in knowledge of Eastern European prehistory, his support for the eastern migra-

tion hypothesis waned. No archaeological evidence existed to suggest that the Scandinavians had passed through Russia to enter Scandinavia from Finland. New archaeological findings clearly showed that the Iron Age culture of Scandinavia had expanded out of the south (Worsaae 1872:403). Worsaae the common belief that the transition from Bronze Age to Iron Age in Scandinavia had occurred through the immigration of a new people. He believed that the transition could have occurred in northern Europe as it had in the south: not through the arrival of a new people but as a change within the existing one. This made the argument for Scandinavian passage through Eastern Europe even weaker. The only plausible migrations through Russia to Scandinavia had been made by the Saami and Baltic-Finns (ibid. 429).

## **Ethnohistorical ideas 1870-1900**

### **Von Düben: The changing ethnohistory of the Saami**

From the early 1870s, the old hypothesis was discarded in favour of a new one: the Saami were expansionist latecomers to Scandinavia. New excavations of previously discovered Stone Age graves showed that the vast majority of the skulls recovered were dolichocephalic and not brachycephalic, as Nilsson's ethnohistorical system predicted. In 1873, Montelius published an influential article about four skeletons found in a Stone Age grave. Their skulls were dolichocephalic. According to Montelius, this proved that they could not have been Saami (Lundmark 2000:14). Nilsson's hypothesis had been based on a very limited number of skulls. The findings from an increasing number of excavations simply did not support it.

The linguistic arguments for early Finno-Ugric settlement in Scandinavia, which had been supported by such prominent linguists as Ihre and Rask, now came under sustained criticism from linguists following in the tradition of Hallenberg. The Finnish linguist David Europaeus studied place names in Scandinavia. He concluded that



no Finnish or Saami population had ever lived in southern Sweden, and that the Finnish names in the forests of Värmland and Dalarna were only a few hundred years old. Saami place names were not to be found much further south than the area in which the contemporary Saami lived (Europaeus 1873:19).

In *Lapland and Lapparne* (1873), Swedish anatomist Gustaf von Düben (1822-1892) introduced a new paradigm for studying the history of the Saami. Düben had participated in the archaeological excavations that documented a dolichocephalic Stone Age population in southern Scandinavia. To Düben, the findings clearly challenged the old belief that the Saami had been the original inhabitants of southern Scandinavia. Furthermore, Finno-Ugric place names were not evidence of Saami settlements. The area might have been populated by a Baltic-Finnic people, but not by the Saami (von Düben 1977:390). A key issue in reconstructing Saami history was the relationship of the Saami to the Baltic-Finns. Düben believed that the Finns and the Saami were indeed related, but not very closely: their culture and physical appearance were too different. Both peoples probably originated from the Altai. During their separate migrations to Europe, they lived in isolation from each other. Contact was re-established somewhere in an area east of Finland, where the Finnish language and culture were transferred to the Saami (ibid. 399-400). The Finns gradually pushed the Saami north until the Saami came to the area north of the Bothnian Gulf, from which they expanded into Norway and Sweden. Düben rejected Ihre's arguments for mutual borrowing of words between Saami and Swedish; he claimed that, usually, the more primitive peoples borrowed words and culture from their more civilised neighbours and not the other way around (ibid. 313-314). Düben's concluded that the Saami were relative newcomers to Scandinavia, coming from the north and slowly advancing south (ibid. 365).

This new ethnohistory of the Saami became readily accepted (Lundmark 2000:17-18). Karl B. Wiklund, for decades the leading Finno-Ugric scholar in Sweden, came out in strong support of Düben's version of events. Over the centuries, the Saami had ex-

panded south as far as the southern parts of Härjedalen (Wiklund 1895:371-372, 1915:2).

### **Montelius: Tracing Scandinavians back to the Stone Age**

If the 1870s were the decade when the role of the Saami in Scandinavian ethnohistory forever altered, then the 1880s was the decade when Scandinavian prehistory took its turn. Worsaae asked whether the turn of a new archaeological age always meant the immigration of a new people. The Norwegian archaeologist Ingjald Undset (1853-1893) claimed that no major immigration brought about the shift to the Iron Age in Norway. Neither had there been any immigration or invasion into Norway with the transition from Bronze to Iron Age. The ancestors of modern Norwegians had lived in Norway since the Bronze Age. The new cultures spread from south to north, possibly bringing some minor influx of immigrants; but any immigrants had not substantially altered the ethnic character of Norway (Undset 1880:184).

In his influential article *Om våra förfäders invandring till Norden* (1884), Oscar Montelius introduced two ethnohistorical innovations. The first had been pointed out by Ingjald Undset: transition from Bronze to Iron Age culture in Scandinavia had been smooth not abrupt, suggesting ethnic continuity rather than the immigration of a new people. Neither did Montelius believe that the transition to Bronze Age had been brought about by the immigration of a new people (Montelius 1884:26). Second came via the German scholars Victor Hehn (1813-1890) Otto Schrader: the proto-Indo-Europeans had been a relatively primitive Stone Age people with a knowledge of agriculture (ibid. 35). Prior to Montelius, it was thought that the Stone Age and Bronze Age populations in Scandinavia could not have been Scandinavians, because the Proto-Indo-European culture was already on the the Iron Age level.

It thus became possible to imagine Germanic habitation of Scandinavia going back all the way to the Stone Age (Montelius 1884:27, 33): the area had been populated by the same people up to the Iron Age (ibid. 33). That said, the change from Palaeolithic

to Neolithic Stone Age *had* been abrupt, with no transitional stages. To Montelius, that meant a major immigration probably had occurred.

In summary, only two major prehistoric immigrations into Sweden had taken place. The first was a savage population of hunters and fishers, who arrived when the area first became inhabitable after the Ice Age. The second brought the more advanced Neolithic culture. Based on the archaeological findings, no major subsequent immigrations had taken place. The transitions from Stone Age to Bronze Age to Iron Age had occurred gradually. Sweden had an ethnic continuity going all the way back to the Neolithic Era, about 2,000 years BC. With the possible exception of the Denmark and Norway, no other regions in the world had such ethnic continuity.

Scandinavian colonisation of Scandinavia began from the area around the Black Sea and along the Danube to the northwest. The Proto-Scandinavians entered Jutland and the Danish isles before moving on to Scania and other parts of the peninsula (Montelius 1884:35). Northern Scandinavia had originally been inhabited by the Saami, whose area of influence, according to the archaeological findings, had stretched further south than at present (*ibid.* 36).

Montelius believed in the value for ethnohistorical research of dividing Europeans into long- and short-skulled peoples, reflecting a pattern of cranial stability over time. He argued against Nilsson's claim that the skulls found in southern Scandinavian Neolithic graves had been of the short type. To the contrary: the majority of skulls were of the long dolichocephalic type, proof of ethnic continuity given that modern Swedes were predominantly dolichocephalic (Montelius 1884:33-34). The few Bronze Age skulls that had been found fit the expected pattern.

Montelius stretched the Scandinavian habitation of Scandinavia further back in time; but he believed that other peoples had played a role in the region for as well. The discoveries of Stone Age cultures in northern Sweden and Norway distinct from the south suggested a long Saami presence in the area (Montelius 1884:36). A distinction existed as well between two, co-existing Stone Age cul-

tures in the south. The first domesticated the dog but no other animals; the other had basically the same animals as a contemporary farmer (Montelius 1885:7-9). This could be taken to imply parallel Scandinavian and Baltic-Finnish populations. Montelius did not rule out the possibility that the ancestors of the Finns and Saami had also lived in Scandinavia since the Stone Age. Findings suggested that the Palaeolithic people had possibly been brachycephalic; but the evidence was too scant to draw any reliable conclusions. If it had been brachycephalic, then the contemporary brachycephalic population in Scandinavia could partly be explained by descent from the Palaeolithic people.

The author and cultural historian Victor Rydberg agreed with Montelius that the ancestors of the Swedes immigrated to Sweden during the Stone Age. This Germanic people had the physical appearance that would later become known as Nordic (Rydberg 1886:22). By the mid-1880s, the Scandinavians had become very early inhabitants in Scandinavia indeed – albeit not the first population, which had most likely not been Germanic.

Montelius' hypothesis – that the first inhabitants of Scandinavia almost 15,000 years ago were the Indo-European forefathers of the Swedes – faced a significant hurdle: it could not be matched chronologically with the idea from ethnolinguistics that the Indo-European proto-language was, at most, a few thousand years old. Still, this did not prevent the hypothesis from becoming the dominant one in Sweden by the turn of the century.

Like Montelius, the Swedish linguist and Germanist Axel Kock (1851-1935) believed in the early arrival in Scandinavia of proto-Germanic peoples. In contrast to Montelius but in keeping with Pösche, Kock located the Indo-European proto-home in the area of Lithuania. Despite being mainly a linguist, Kock included physical anthropology in his ethnohistorical approach. The existence of small numbers of brachycephalic skulls in southern Scandinavia from prehistory into modern times could be taken to belong to remnants of the indigenous population, who were of a different physical type from the Indo-Europeans. The Mesolithic Stone Age people of the

so-called *Kitchenmidden culture* in Denmark could have been the ancestors of the Finns or the Saami, or both (Kock 1905).

Readily accepted by Swedish scholars, Montelius' hypothesis was met more cautiously by such Danish colleagues as Sophus Müller (1846-1934) and Johannes Steenstrup (1844-1935). They believed that one could not rule out any post-Stone Age large-scale immigration or invasion to Scandinavia (Müller 1897:187, 282-283; Baudou 2004:200). The archaeologist Sophus Müller was agnostic on this point: he also did not rule out the possibility of continuous habitation since the late Stone Age by the ethnically Scandinavian population. He expressed conditional support for the ethnohistorical importance of differences in skull proportions; but he was sceptical towards Montelius' description of the cephalic variation in Scandinavia. The differences observed by Montelius could have existed already during the older Stone Age (Müller 1897:188-189).

The ethnohistorian Johannes Steenstrup followed in the methodological footsteps of Montelius and Hildebrand. After looking at the archaeological records, Steenstrup came, like Montelius, to the conclusion that the transitions in Denmark from Stone Age to Bronze Age and from Bronze Age to Iron Age had been smooth and gradual ones: the result of changes in the local population and not immigration of a new people into the area (Steenstrup 1896:92-93). Steenstrup likewise concluded that skeletal remains from both Stone and Bronze Age graves largely revealed the same dolichocephalic cranial shape as found among contemporary Danes, although a minority of the skulls had the brachycephalic shape found among contemporary Finns. Steenstrup could not find a definitive explanation for this mixing, given that the different cranial types were neither separated archaeologically nor culturally. Two explanations suggested themselves. First, one people had arrived later to the area and mixed with the local population, since when the two populations had lived side by side. Second, the short-skulled people had tried several times to establish themselves in Denmark, but these attempts had been unsuccessful and were relatively short lived.

England, seemingly protected by the sea from invasion, had

experienced at least three major immigrations, involving a large change of population, and at least five political conquests. Although no hard evidence existed for such a dramatic prehistory in Denmark, circumstances were suggestive, making Montelius' hypothesis no more than a hypothesis: ideas of ethnic and political stability in Scandinavia could not be accepted uncritically. Steenstrup reminded his readers of the great wealth of the Danish islands and the peninsula of Jutland and of their defencelessness, lacking as they do any natural borders. Archaeological findings could not resolve the issue, since peoples with different languages could share a common archaeological culture. If an ethnic shift had occurred slowly and gradually — as with the German colonisation of the Slavic lands — nothing in the archaeological record would reveal it (Steenstrup 1896:93-94). Steenstrup made no reference in his work to any linguistic or palaeolinguistic material, only mentioning that the Danes spoke a Germanic language within the larger Japhetic (Indo-European) language family.

Montelius' belief in early Germanic settlement of Scandinavia was received very positively by the German scholars Karl Penka and Ludwig Wilser (1850-1923), who located the Indo-European proto-home in southern Scandinavia; and by Gustaf Kossinna, who located the proto-home in southern Denmark or northern Germany. However, Montelius himself never accepted the idea of a northern Indo-European proto-home, preferring to locate it more to the south-east. Although the Germanic peoples had lived in the area for thousands of years, their culture came, with their Indo-European forefathers, from southeastern Europe and Asia (Montelius 1917).

With the realization that human beings had been around for a long time came an increasingly influential role for the earth sciences in debates over how climate change and other natural events might have affected how long humans had lived in the Nordic region. The discovery in the 1830s of the last Ice Age, by Swiss-American naturalist Louis Agassiz (1807-1873) — generally accepted within the scientific community by the 1870s (Frängsmyr 1976:103-104; 117) — reduced Nordic ethnohistory to a short interval, compared to the

possibly long time scale of human existence. Note that the discovery of the last Ice Age finally settled the old debate over water retreat versus land elevation. In 1865, Scottish geologist Thomas Jamieson (1829-1913) suggested that the weight of the ice cap during the last Ice Age had compressed the Earth's crust. Since the retreat of the glaciers, the land was slowly regaining its former elevation (ibid. 161).

## Conclusion

The methods of comparative-historical linguistics and linguistic ethnohistory became widely accepted in this period; but linguistic ethnohistory could not fundamentally challenge the established ethnohistorical positions until the appropriate auxiliary sciences had been developed. The belief that the Finns were the indigenous population of Scandinavia remained dominant among Scandinavian scholars into the mid-nineteenth century, even though, from the time of Porthan onwards, their contemporary Finnish colleagues generally believed that the Finns had not arrived in Finland until the first millennium AD, and had never lived in southern Scandinavia.

With acceptance of the *abyss of time* and increasing discontent over linguistic ethnohistory's fundamental rule of equating history of peoples with history of languages came new ethnohistorical approaches in the second half of the nineteenth century. These methods gave greater weight to physical appearance and culture, less weight to language. With his claim that the Scandinavians could trace their history back to the Stone Age, Montelius introduced a new paradigm for early ethnohistorical research.

# 9 Ethnohistories of Finland, Sápmi, and Estonia 1800-1900

## Introduction

The first decades of the nineteenth century were dramatic in Finland: previously a Swedish province, Finland was lost to Russia and became an autonomous Grand Duchy within the Russian Empire. The political centre moved from Turku to Helsinki, and the university was likewise transferred to the new capital after the great fire of Turku in 1828. Given this new status, the process of consolidating a Finnish sphere of ethnohistorical thought independent from the Swedish one intensified.

Over the nineteenth century, the tension between Finnish- and Swedish-speaking scholars increased as the Finnish language itself gained in status. In 1862 Finnish was added to Swedish as an official language of Finland. Out of the ethnic tension evolved different approaches to studying Finland's early ethnohistory.

In 1802, the University of Tartu reopened. This was of great importance to strengthening academic research in the Baltic region. For most of the century, the university remained a Baltic German institution; but Estonian and Latvian students gained increasing access.

The first section of this chapter overviews nineteenth century ethnohistorical thinking about Finland. The next section is about the Saami areas and Estonia. It considers the wider debate over the use of physical anthropology for Baltic-Finnic and Saami ethnohistorical studies.



## Finland

### Ethnohistorical ideas about Finland until the mid-century

Finnish scholars encountered the new ideas of comparative-historical linguistics firsthand during Rasmus Rask's brief stay in Turku in March 1818. He was travelling from Stockholm to St. Petersburg on a larger journey that would bring him to the Caucasus and India (Petersen 1870:259). Rask believed in the historical truth of Snorri's works, which placed him in opposition to much of German ethnohistorical thinking. No equivalent debate over the reliability of Medieval sources existed among Finnish ethnohistorians: Finnish literature lacked anything comparable to Saxo and Snorri. By the time the *Kalevala* was published in 1835, much of the mythistorical thinking among European ethnohistorians had been replaced by historicism's more critical approach. Eventually a heated debate would arise over the historical authenticity of the events described in the *Kalevala*; but this would not occur until the twentieth century (Wilson 1976).

After the establishment of the Grand Duchy, the first major work on the history of Finland to appear was Friedrich Rüh's *Geschichte von Finland*. Rüh's history quickly became influential in Finland. In the tradition of Porthan and Schlözer (Menger 1985:43), Rüh pushed Finnish historiography in a direction independent from that of Scandinavia. Meanwhile Porthan's ethnohistorical ideas survived the dramatic political changes in Finland to be elaborated in the writings of Adolf Ivar Arwidsson (1788-1858). Arwidsson translated Rüh's history of Finland into Swedish in 1812. Being sceptical about the reliability of any sources on prehistory, Rüh began his history with Medieval sources and wrote nothing about the early history of Finland. In the second edition of the Swedish translation (1827), Arwidsson filled this gap with a fifty-page introductory overview of Finnish prehistory. Arwidsson made use of the Icelandic sources for his history of early Finland, but not physical appearance nor archaeological findings. In 1832, Arwidsson published a school textbook on Finland's history, with a similar account of its prehistory.

Arwidsson mainly followed Porthan's lead; but he disagreed with Porthan about the civilisation level of the Finns upon the arrival of the crusaders, believing it to be more developed than did Porthan (Arwidsson 1827:210-211, 214). Arwidsson complemented ideas from Porthan with arguments from Hallenberg, Suhm, and Schøning. He supported the hypothesis of a late Finnish arrival in Finland. Hallenberg had claimed that the Finns were not the indigenous population of Sweden; Arwidsson went one step further, claiming that the Finns were not even the indigenous population of Finland, which had possibly been Germanic. This echoed Suhm's and Schøning's claim that the Scandinavians had lived in Finland much earlier than agreed to by mainstream Swedish historians.

Arwidsson fully supported Hallenberg's position on ancient Finnish and Saami place names. He denied that the Jotland of *Fundinn Noregr* was Finland (Arwidsson 1827:166, 169). He agreed with Suhm that the indigenous Jotuns were Goths who had immigrated from the area between the Caspian and Black seas. The Finns had originally come from Asia; related tribes could be found from the River Jaxartes to Ob and the Caspian Sea. During their migration, the Finns left several tribes behind in the area of Volga and Kama. At the time the Goths were passing through Finland to Scandinavia, the Finns were living in present-day Lithuania and Poland. The Finns began to move north but did not enter Finland until the late fourth century AD (Arwidsson 1827:173-174, Arwidsson 1832:4).

Since the Finns were not the indigenous population of the Nordic countries, they could not have been observed by the Classical authors before Jordanes as living in the Baltic Sea area. Earlier authors who wrote about Finns, such as Tacitus, were actually describing the Saami people and not the Finns (Arwidsson 1827:165). The Finns and the Saami shared a common history; they divided into two peoples during the migration north and developed in separate directions, resulting in large differences in language, traditions, and way of living. The Saami moved north first; the more powerful Finns followed behind. The Finns later divided into the

Tavastian and Karelian tribes. The Tavastians followed a more western route, some of them settling in Livonia and Estonia as Livonians and Estonians, while the bulk followed the Finnish Gulf to settle in Finland. The Karelians followed a different route into Finland, expanding as far as the Bothnian Gulf, Qvenland, and Finnmarken (Arwidsson 1827:174-176, 1832:5-6). Arwidsson disagreed with Porthan on the ethnicity of the Qvens. Porthan regarded them as Swedish Helsingar; Arwidsson believed them to be Finnish (Arwidsson 1827:178).

According to the eastern immigration hypotheses elaborated by Schøning and Suhm in the 1770s and by Keyser in the 1840s, the Swedish population of Finland originated from Swedes who had stayed behind when the Swedes moved through Finland on their migration into Sweden. Keyser describes the migration from the Volga region almost as a race between the Scandinavians and the Finns, with the Scandinavians taking only a hundred years to reach Scandinavia. Meanwhile, the Norwegians reached the Keel separating Norway and Sweden around 300 BC (Keyser 1868:206). On Keyser's account, the Saami occupied large areas of northern Europe, including the whole of Finland, during the time of Tacitus (*ibid.* 117). Finland was already inhabited by the Saami when the Scandinavians and Finns ("Tschuds", in Keyser's vocabulary) arrived; but the Saami offered no resistance to the newcomers (*ibid.* 204-205).

The priest and historian Anders Johan Hipping (1788-1862) supported a Scandinavian migration route from the Caspian Sea via Finland and Estonia, with some of the people settling in those places (Tommila 1989:116). The eastern route for the Swedish and Norwegian immigration to Scandinavia was convenient for those scholars supporting a long Swedish presence in the region. In the 1860s, the leading Swedish-speaking nationalist Axel Olof Freudenthal (1836-1911) came out in support of a Swedish migration route from the Black Sea via Finland. Some people settled in Finland but kept in contact with their kin in Sweden (Kemiläinen 1998:131).

## New linguistic and archaeological methods for studying Finland's ethnohistory

During the nineteenth century, the focus on language in Finnish ethnohistorical research remained strong. The Danish linguist Vilhelm Thomsen and his Finnish colleague August Ahlqvist (1826-1889) used new methods based on linguistic ethnohistory. Both rejected the tradition from Ihre, Rask, and Grimm of loan words being mutually shared between Baltic-Finnic and Germanic languages. Instead, the Baltic-Finnic languages had been on the receiving end. This placed them close to Porthan, who likewise saw Finnish as mainly being on the receiving end in these contacts.

In his doctoral dissertation (1869), Thomsen examined the evidence for language contacts between the Germanic and Baltic-Finnic languages. He later complemented this work with a study (1890) of language contacts between the Baltic and Finno-Ugric languages. Thomsen considered Saami and Baltic-Finnic to be genetically related. He thought that their first contacts with the Germanic languages had occurred after they had already split off separately from the Baltic-Finnic-Saami proto-language. Thomsen identified two periods of Baltic-Finnic/Saami and Germanic contact. The first occurred in prehistoric times, in two regions: a) northern Scandinavia, between Saami and Proto-Scandinavian; and b) in an area east of the Baltic provinces, between Proto-Baltic-Finnic and Proto-Gothic or Proto-Scandinavian, or even a common Proto-Scandinavian-Gothic language. The second involved ongoing contemporary contacts a) between Swedish, Norwegian, and Saami, in northern Scandinavia; b) between Swedish and Finnish, in Finland; and c) between German and Estonian/ Livonian in Estonia and Latvia (Thomsen 1967:115-119 [1869]).

Thomsen suggested that the Indo-European Balts and Germanics had been living on the shores of the Baltic Sea longer than the Baltic-Finnic peoples, who arrived as late as the ninth century AD. The Finns entered Finland via the Karelian isthmus, then across the eastern parts of the Finnish gulf. Estonia had been inhabited by Germanic peoples before the Estonians entered the area,

obtaining both the territory and their name from the original inhabitants (Thomsen 1967:120, 125, Häkkinen 1996:55).

In his book on the Baltic/Finno-Ugric contacts, Thomsen concluded that the contacts occurred before the Finno-Ugric contacts with the Germanic languages. This was evidenced by the difference in vocabulary that the Finno-Ugric languages borrowed in the two cases: the Baltic loan words were on a lower cultural level. Meanwhile, the Volga-Finnish Mordvinian language contained Baltic loan words but lacked Germanic ones. This suggested that the Baltic languages had spread further east than the Germanic languages, also that the Finno-Ugric languages had once existed over a larger area but then gradually retreated. By the time that the Baltic-Finns encountered the Germans, the continuous contacts between Baltic-Finns and Volga-Finns (Mordvinians and Mari) had been broken; at the time that the Baltic loan words were brought in, the connection had still been intact. That said, the appearance of Baltic loan words in the Volga-Finnic languages could also be the result of contacts occurring before the common Baltic-Finnic-Volga-Finnic proto-language had split (Thomsen 1931: 260-265 [1890]).

In *Die Kulturwörter der westfinnischen Sprachen* (1875, originally in Swedish 1871), August Ahlqvist continued Thomsen's study of Finno-Ugric and Indo-European language contacts. He concluded that a large percentage of the cultural words in the Baltic-Finnic languages were of Germanic and Baltic origin, suggesting that the culture of the ancient Finns had been very primitive before making contact with the Baltic and Germanic peoples (Korhonen 1986:84). Ahlqvist thought that Ihre's, Rask's, and Grimm's theory of symmetry in linguistic and cultural relations was simply wrong.

With the help of Indo-European loan words in the Finno-Ugric languages, Ahlqvist claimed it highly probable that the Finno-Ugrians had been primitive hunter-gatherers when they first encountered the Indo-Europeans. With those contacts, the western Finno-Ugrians had adopted the material culture of the Indo-Europeans, settling down as farmers. Ahlqvist even thought (1875: 370) that the contemporary Voguls (Hanti) remained on the same primitive

cultural level where the western Finno-Ugrians had been before adopting the Indo-European culture. Meanwhile, the first contacts between the Finns and the Germanics took place east of the Baltic Sea, leading Ahlqvist to conclude that the Finns had arrived relatively late in Finland.

The first professional Finnish archaeologist was Johan Aspelin. He had a wider scope of interest than his Scandinavian colleagues, using archaeology to reconstruct the ethnohistory of the Finno-Ugric language family. Studying the whole family meant looking beyond Finland to include large parts of Russia. Aspelin was particularly interested in finding a connection in the archaeological records between culture and ethnicity (Aspelin 1877, Klindt-Jensen 1974:116, Tommila 1989:113).

Aspelin followed Castrén in positing a Central Asian proto-home. The ancestors of the Finns had possibly begun their migration to the Volga area during the late Bronze Age. Here, they evolved into an Iron Age people and expanded west as a late Iron Age culture. These Iron Age Baltic-Finns had lived east of the Baltic Sea but, under pressure from the Slavic expansion, were forced to invade the Baltic provinces and Finland, then inhabited by Baltic and Germanic peoples. Like Thomsen, Aspelin thought that the eighth century colonisation of Finland had occurred via different migration routes for the major Finnish tribes: the Suomi and the Häme (Tavastians). The Häme came via the Karelian isthmus; the Suomi via southwestern Finland, by boat from Estonia. On arrival, they encountered a Germanic Iron Age culture living in the southwest that they probably assimilated. These indigenous Germanics were not the ancestors of contemporary Swedes (Hackman 1905:323-324; Aspelin 1942:82; Tommila 1989:113-114; Salminen 2003:61). In support for his hypothesis of a Baltic-Finnic invasion into the Baltic region, Aspelin referred to Hildebrand who, in his doctoral thesis, wrote of the arrival of the Svear from the Baltic region and Finland in the sixth century (see page 171). Aspelin thought that this migration could be explained as the Svear being forced out by the Baltic-Finns (Hackman 1905:324). The Germanic influence in

Estonia and Finland had been crushed by the Baltic-Finns, who would not come under Germanic influence again until the crusades in the twelfth century.

Worsaae took up Aspelin's ideas, supporting an ethnic separation of Bronze Age cultures in the Nordic region and the Urals. Since almost no Bronze Age artefacts were to be found in the area between Lithuania/Belarus/Poland and the Ural Mountains/Siberia, it could safely be assumed that the cultures had lived in isolation from each other. The few bronze items in Finland had arrived from the west (Worsaae 1872:354), meaning that the Bronze Age people responsible could not have been Finno-Ugrians, who were supposed to live in the eastern parts of European Russia and belong to the Uralic bronze culture. Worsaae thus believed that the Baltic-Finns had entered their present region as Iron Age peoples.

### **Historians on ethnohistory**

The historian Yrjö Koskinen's (1830-1903) *Oppikirja Suomen kansan historiassa* (1869) provided an important starting point for a more Fennocentric position on early history. It was soon translated into Swedish and German. For Koskinen, the history of the Finns was primarily built not on the territorial state of Finland but on the history of the Finnish-speaking people (Engman 2004:151). He made no substantial break with tradition from Porthan, though he took up Arwidsson's efforts to upgrade the level of Finnish society at the time of Christianisation.

At the birth of Christ, the ancestors of the Finns lived in the northern parts of the Volga region. Next door, to the northwest, lived a people that stretched over into the Nordic region. Most likely they had been Finno-Ugric, probably Ugrian. The Baltic-Finns and the Saami were closely related, but differed culturally: the Saami were a nomadic people, while the ancestors of the Finns had been farmers and cattle breeders. When the Saami moved on into Finland and Scandinavia, the ancestors of the Baltic-Finns stayed behind. They began to migrate in the first century AD, settling to the south of Lake Ladoga and Onega. The Baltic-Finns became sepa-

rated into the Karelian and Tavastian tribes, which moved off in different directions. In their new home, the Baltic-Finns encountered Lithuanians and, occasionally, Swedish Vikings. In the eighth century AD, some Baltic-Finn tribes moved west along both sides of the Finnish gulf. In the north they evolved into Finns, in the south into Estonians. The Tavastians soon followed the other Finns into Finland. The Slavs moved into the formerly Baltic-Finnic area in the eighth century and founded Novgorod (Koskinen 1874:2-9). The Baltic-Finnic tribes did not find Finland uninhabited: they discovered and conquered some minor Swedish habitations in Western Finland. The Swedes had only tiny settlements on the mainland and were firmly established only on the Åland islands. Contemporary Swedish settlements in mainland Finland were established several hundred years later, during the Middle Ages (*ibid.* 17).

The Finnish historian Gabriel Rein (1800-1867) joined many others in believing that the peoples of Europe had immigrated from Asia. He took up Castrén's suggestion that the Baltic-Finnic proto-home had been in Altai, from which the other peoples of the Ural-Altai language family also originated. From their proto-home, the Baltic-Finns gradually migrated west. Their final move, into their presently inhabited region, was in reaction to ethnic Russian expansion from the Danube into Russia in the seventh and eighth centuries AD. This forced the Baltic-Finns west once more. The Stone-Age Saami people, who were living in Finland and Scandinavia, could not withstand the Finnish expansion. Basing his ideas on Rask and Nilsson, Rein believed that the Finns – an Iron Age people – had advanced even further into Scandinavia (Rein 1870:2-6). However, in the tradition of Porthan, Rein believed that the Finns had been on a more primitive level than the neighbouring Swedes. Like Porthan, Rein reconstructed the pre-crusade Finnish society with the help of Finnish vocabulary; but he also made use of *Kalevala* (*ibid.* 14-71). Meanwhile, Rein explained the mystery of the Bronze Age findings in Finland as representing a short-lived Celtic settlement (*ibid.* 11).

Rein's successor as the chair of history at Helsinki University,



Magnus Gottfrid Schybergson (1851-1925), who based his own ethnohistorical thinking on the works of Ahlqvist and Aspelin, recognised the Baltic-Finns as belonging to the great Ural-Altai race (*folkracen*) (1887:3); but he located their proto-home as no further east than the region around the Volga, where their forefathers had lived as a Stone Age society. With their migration west, they encountered more advanced peoples, so that by the time of their arrival into Finland toward the end of the first millennium AD, the Finnish tribes had been on the Iron Age level described in the Kalevala. Though far more advanced than their original Volga culture, this Iron Age culture was still not as advanced as that of their neighbours to the west, the Swedes (*ibid.* 6-7, 15). The original primitive inhabitants of eastern Finland before the arrival of the Finns had probably been the forefathers of the Saami, pushed out by the advancing Finns (*ibid.* 2-4).

Schybergson discussed various archaeological findings. Finland had been inhabited since the Stone Age, with a clear division between a western Stone Age culture similar to the Scandinavian cultures and an Eastern culture closer to the cultures of Russia. This division remained until the Iron Age, when the whole of Finland became dominated by a culture originating from the east. Schybergson believed that this Iron Age culture had been brought by the Finnish tribes. Not until the late Iron Age – but before the twelfth century Swedish crusades – did a distinctly western Iron Age culture emerge in Finland. Thus, “Swedes” had lived in Finland before the Medieval Swedish colonisation (Schybergson 1887:1-2, 15-16). The Finns as well as the slightly more advanced Baltic-Finnic tribes in Estonia were incorporated into the Western Roman Catholic world through the twelfth and thirteenth century conquests (*ibid.* 9). These events proved essential for the further development of Finland and of the Finns. The Swedes did not turn the Finns into serfs but let the Finns keep their freedom and possessions, integrating them into Swedish society (*ibid.* 19-21).

### Alternatives at the turn of the twentieth century

The late nineteenth century debates over early Finnish ethnohistory reached something of a consensus: during the Stone Age, Finland had consisted of two peoples with distinct cultures: most likely a Germanic people lived in southwestern Finland, while the primitive and nomadic Saami occupied the rest of the country. The Germanic people developed an Iron Age culture while the Saami remained in the Stone Age. The situation changed radically with the arrival of the Iron Age Finns, who drove the Saami away to the far north and assimilated or expelled the Germanic people. The Finns later came under the dominance of the expanding Swedish state and the Roman Catholic church. The ancestors of contemporary Swedish-speaking Finns arrived as part of this Medieval process. Ethnohistorians debated when the various immigrations had occurred and what had been the level of pre-crusade Finnish culture; but they accepted the larger ethnohistorical picture.

Montelius challenged this consensus. In an 1897 lecture and an article the following year, he attempted to redraw the prehistoric map of Finland as dramatically as he had done with Scandinavia. Montelius addressed the controversy over the continuity of the Swedish-speaking population in Finland. He opposed the dominant belief that, around 700 AD, a Germanic people in the southwest was assimilated or driven away by Finnish conquerors. Likewise he contested the assumption that the ancestors of the contemporary Swedes in Finland had arrived with the Swedish crusaders (Montelius 1898:93).

The Iron Age cultures of Finland and Sweden were very similar; so it was probable that the same *Swedish* population had lived in both Sweden and Finland (Montelius 1898:96-97). Such cultural similarity was also to be found during the Bronze Age and even the Stone Age. Montelius pushed the Swedish immigration into Finland back to around 2000 BC, when tribes of the *Boat-axe culture* migrated into Finland via the Åland archipelago and then directly over the Gulf of Bothnia. Archaeologists had found boat-axes along the Finnish coasts, in the same areas inhabited by con-

temporary Swedes in Finland. If Montelius was correct, continuous Swedish settlement had existed in Finland for almost 4,000 years. Indeed – taking in a larger context – the Swedes had spread European culture from central Europe to Finland (*ibid.* 99-101, 104-105). Montelius did not rule out the possibility that the Finns had also lived in Finland for a long time – long before their usually supposed arrival during the first millennium AD. Meanwhile, Stone Age archaeological findings in northern and eastern Finland indicated a very long Saami presence in those areas (*ibid.* 92-95).

Montelius' claims were immediately rejected by Finnish scholars. Commenting on Montelius' lecture, the archaeologist Hjalmar Appelgren-Kivalo (1853-1937) wrote that the Boat-axe culture in Finland far from proved Montelius' version of Germanic/Scandinavian colonisation; the axes might be no more than evidence of cultural diffusion, which might not even have originated from Sweden but instead from other regions around the Baltic Sea (Baudou 2004:185-186). The linguist Eemil Nestor Setälä went further, observing that the axes were common in Finland and Sweden but not in other parts of Scandinavia – thus questioning their status as ethnically Scandinavian. The axes found in Finland seemed to have been manufactured in Finland. It was entirely possible that the Boat-axe culture had spread from Finland to Sweden and not the other way around (Setälä 1900:343).

Setälä and his colleague Ralf Saxén (1868-1932) criticised Montelius for entering the discussion with only limited knowledge of contemporary Finnish ethnohistorical debates. Montelius knew no Finnish, and a large proportion of the archaeological and ethnohistorical debate had been published in Finnish. The linguists likewise rejected Montelius' attempt to use place names to support his hypothesis. Montelius claimed that place reflecting such pre-Christian phenomena as the gods Frigg, Odin, and Thor proved that Swedes had lived in Finland before the twelfth and thirteenth century crusades. Saxén and Setälä found no convincing evidence that the Swedish place names were any older than the Middle Ages (Setälä 1900, Wiklund 1901:2, *én* 2002).

Setälä's biggest argument against Montelius came from the timeline of comparative-historical linguistics: if the colonisers of Finland had indeed arrived about 2000 BC – when neither Swedish nor any other of the proto-Nordic languages/peoples had evolved from Proto-Germanic – then they should be regarded as Germanic, not Swedish. If there really had been a continuous Germanic settlement in southwestern Finland all that time, then the language would have evolved into a Germanic or possibly Scandinavian tongue, but definitively not Swedish (Setälä 1900:345-348).

In 1901, the Swedish linguist Karl B. Wiklund joined the debate with an article defending Montelius against Setälä. Wiklund noted the pre-historic division of Finland into two separate cultures in the archaeological record: one in the southwest, the other in the east and north. Although Wiklund acknowledged that no clear one-to-one relationship could be made between a distinctive archaeological record and a distinct people, nevertheless the great differences between the two cultures, with a history of different contacts (the southwestern culture resembled that of Sweden, the eastern culture that of parts of Russia) argued conclusively for two separate peoples. It was highly unlikely that one people could incorporate such different cultures. Even while southwestern parts of Finland developed from Stone Age to Bronze and Iron Age – in a pattern similar to the development in Sweden – the rest of Finland had remained in the Stone Age. Since the cultural border was sharp and demonstrable over thousands of years, Wiklund found it reasonable to equate it with an ethnic border between the Germanic Proto-Swedes and the Saami. The Saami had not originally been a Finno-Ugric people at all. They had adopted their contemporary language from the Finns when the Finns entered Finland (Wiklund 1901:2-7).

Wiklund held a more traditional view than Montelius concerning the arrival of the Finnish ancestors, the Proto-Baltic-Finns. They had arrived in Finland with an Iron Age culture during the first centuries AD, reaching as far as the areas of the Proto-Swedes. However, Wiklund rejected Setälä's claim that the Finns had absorbed the Proto-Swedes (Wiklund 1901:26). Interestingly, the sharp divi-

sions in the archaeological record disappeared with the Finnish immigration; therefore, ethnohistorians working on periods from the late Iron Age onward had to rely on other sources than archaeology: namely, history and *Språkvetenskap* (*Sprachwissenschaft*) (ibid. 16).

Wiklund likewise countered Serälä's claim that the Swedish dialects in Finland and Sweden were so similar that they could only have separated after the Swedish migration to Finland in the Middle Ages. There had always been extensive contacts between Swedes on both sides of the Baltic Sea, which explained the similarities in the dialects (Wiklund 1901:9-10). Wiklund used his claim of a long Swedish settlement in Finland to solve a different problem, which had arisen with Vilhelm Thomsen's research into prehistoric language contacts between the Baltic-Finns and Germanics. Thomsen's conclusions required a Germanic people living on the eastern shore of the Baltic Sea; but it was difficult to verify this from other sources. Wiklund came to the rescue, claiming that the language contacts between the Baltic-Finns and Germanics had indeed occurred; but they had taken place in Finland, between the Proto-Swedes and Baltic-Finns. The need for a hypothetical east Germanic language/people vanished. Wiklund pushed the arrival of Finns into Finland several hundred years earlier than established ethnohistorical views allowed (ibid. 20-22).

The debate over Montelius created a rift between Swedish and Finnish ethnohistorians that could not be easily bridged. The Finnish archaeologist Alfred Hackman (1864-1942) brought it up in his doctoral dissertation (1905), where, with that debate in mind, he made an extensive study of the Iron Age record in Finland. Hackman wrote his ethnohistory in the Finnish tradition; but he disagreed slightly with mainstream opinion about the Finnish immigration into Finland, which he believed to have occurred a couple hundred years earlier than did Aspelin, Koskinen, and Thomsen, having begun in the fourth century AD. In contrast to Aspelin and Koskinen, he described the Baltic-Finnic expansion as a peaceful resettlement from Estonia to Finland rather than violent invasion. It might have been initiated when, in the third century AD, Slavs expanded into

their area, a change that also affected the Baltic-Finnic peoples further north. The migration to Finland took place over hundreds of years, not as the movement of a united tribe but rather many smaller groups. The Baltic-Finns did not throw out the Germanics, who inhabited southwestern Finland only sparsely. The Finns were able to settle peacefully in the same area. Eventually the Germanics and Baltic-Finns formed a mixed Scandinavian/Finnic culture; over time, the Germanics became assimilated into the Finns. Hackman endorsed the view that the contemporary Swedish population of southern Finland had arrived during the Swedish crusades (Hackmann 1905: 312-313).

Setälä established what would become the mainstream Finnish position for the rest of the twentieth century. He created a synthesis of Thomsen's and Hackman's ideas, claiming that the initial contact between the Germanics and Baltic-Finns had occurred east of Finland and had involved the easternmost Germanics: the Goths. When, later, the Finns arrived in southwestern Finland from Estonia (in accordance with Hackman's account, although Setälä thought the colonisation could have occurred a few centuries earlier), the territory was probably already populated by Proto-Scandinavian tribes, who were quickly assimilated by the Finns. Contemporary Finland Swedes were not the descendants of Stone Age Swedes but the result of Swedish colonisations of the Viking age or later (Häkkinen 1996:83-84). Setälä believed it possible to locate the Finno-Ugric proto-home by mainly linguistic methods. He was sceptical of the value of archaeology to the search for Finno-Ugric pre-history and was strongly opposed to the use of physical anthropology. Setälä contributed to an academic environment in Finland that was much more critical towards anthropological ethnohistory and anthropo-sociology than was the case in Sweden (see e.g. Setälä 1915).

Hackman and Setälä set forth the mainstream Finnish ethno-historical view of a late Finnish arrival, opposed by only a few ethnohistorians – among them Johan Adolf Lundström (1815-74), who supported Castrén's position on the proto-home but believed that the ancestors of the Finns and Saami had moved quickly to

Europe, becoming the first inhabitants in the Baltic Sea region as early as around 500 BC (Tommila 1989:114). Another, Väinö Voionmaa (Wallin) discussed (1894) in the manner of Montelius the possibility that the contemporary Finnish-speaking population had lived in Finland since the Stone Age, given that no significant breaks could be found in the archaeological record (Wallin 1894a, Tommila 1989:115). Voionmaa remained isolated in his views; it was not until Finnish archaeologist Julius Ailio's (1872-1933) *Hämen historia* that Voionmaa's idea of continuous Finnish settlement in Finland gained some support. That said, Ailio's own ethnohistorical ideas remained largely ignored (Ailio 1916; Tommila 1989:115).

## **Sápmi and Estonia**

### **The Finns and the Saami, and the inclusion of physical appearance in Finnish ethnohistory**

The linguistic relationship between Finnish and Saami was largely settled by the time of the breakthrough in comparative-historical linguistics. They belonged to the same language family, but they were not as close as the members of the Germanic language family. The cultural differences between their peoples were explained within the context of ethnic affinity, as defined by language. This trend toward emphasizing the importance of language was strengthened – especially for the Indo-European languages – by the establishment of the concept of a language family. At the same time, much criticism was levelled against the often overly crude use of language in ethnohistorical research. With the increasing attention being paid to culture and to physical differences came increased interest in the relationship between the Finns and Saami. Ethnohistorians had long discussed their apparent physical differences; but with the new methods of Retzius and Nilsson, those differences could be viewed in a whole new light.

Still, during the first part of the century, the linguistic distinc-

tions remained the dominant ones. Rask took a keen interest in the Saami, writing a Saami grammar in 1832. Rask – who, one will remember, saw language and people as closely related – suggested that the more complicated character of Saami made it an older and less mixed language than Finnish, although both languages belonged to a larger Finnish language family. The Saami had kept more of their original culture and language due to their relative isolation: they did not mix much with other peoples (Rask 1932-33c:325-326).

The influential Swedish historian Eric Gustav Geijer claimed that the Finns and Saami belonged to a larger tribe (*huvudstam*) and had the same proto-home. Over time, the various peoples within that larger tribe had undergone substantial changes in culture and physical appearance. The Finns drove the Saami north much as the Norwegians and Swedes had done. Relations between the Finns and Saami were often hostile. The two were not as closely related as the Scandinavian peoples/languages, but were more like the Danes and Germans (Geijer 1825:414-419).

The increasing importance given to physical appearance is clearly seen in von Düben's *Om Lappland och Lapparne* (1873). Düben believed that physical appearance was more informative of older affinities between peoples than language, since a people could change its language (Düben 1977:290-291) – something that, Düben speculated, the Saami might have done. He held to the conventional view that the Finns and Saami had originated from a common proto-home in the Altai. The differences between them were due to their separation already in the proto-home, which the Saami left long before the Finns. By the time they met again, the Saami had developed their own distinctive way of living etc. They proceeded to borrow words from the language and ideas from the culture of their powerful Finnish neighbours (ibid. 399-400).

Including physical appearance in ethnohistorical research had been popular for some time among Swedish scholars proud of the Swedish contributions to the field, from the works of Linnaeus to those of Retzius. The influence of physical anthropology on



ethnohistory was weaker in Finland – partly because Finnish ethnohistory was regarded as more complicated than Swedish; but also because the first notable research on physical appearance and ethnohistory, by the Finnish anatomist Carl Daniel von Haartman (1792-1877), had generated a great deal of scepticism if not outright ridicule. He made the first extensive anthropological review of the various Baltic-Finnic tribes in Finland, in the process discovering a significant difference between the Häme-Finns in western Finland and the Karelians in the east. Haartman concluded that the Häme and Karelians were not only separate tribes, they stemmed from separate races: the blond Häme were the descendents of the Proto-Finns, while the darker and more lively Karelians traced their ancestry to the Arabs or the Bedouins (Haartman 1847:851, 858-860; Retzius 1878:156).

Physical anthropology would eventually become more popular in Finland, especially among scholars of Swedish descent. Works on Finland by the prominent anthropologists Gustaf Virchow and Gustaf Retzius (1878) inspired Finnish scholars to measure the population in large anthropometric studies. F.W. Westerlund measured 130,000 Finnish- and Swedish-speaking conscripts over the period 1885-1992 (Kemiläinen 1998:171; Isaksson 2001:223-224). There was, however, an important difference between studies made by Finnish-speaking and Swedish-speaking anthropologists: the Finns rejected the anthroposociological methodology of linking physical characteristics to psychological traits, as had become increasingly popular in German and Scandinavian anthropology during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Finnish scholars were less interested in questions of race and more inclined anyway to think that racial mixing was not a bad thing. Another important factor was the politics of the Finnish “two languages, one people” ideology. Placing too much emphasis on race would be against the interests of national unity (Isaksson 2001:391-393).

The differences between Swedish and Finnish ethnohistory was clearly visible in the Montelius controversy. Wiklund adopted Retzius’ and Nilsson’s ethnohistoric ideas uncritically, so that e.g.

the population in southwestern Finland largely belonged to the Nordic physical type dominant in Sweden. For Wiklund, this meant that the population had probably immigrated from Sweden and were originally ethnic Swedes (Wiklund 1901:8). The brachycephalic Finn population entered Finland from the East. The Saami belonged to a third different racial type. Wiklund argued that the Saami had switched their language, adopting the Finno-Ugric language of one of their neighbours.

Wiklund argued for the possible affinity of the Finno-Ugric and Indo-European languages. He believed that the Finno-Ugric proto-home had been in Europe. It fit his larger ethnohistorical picture of northern Europe that the Saami, with their allegedly Asiatic physical appearance, were not originally a Finno-Ugric people but had acquired their language from the Finns, possibly during the time of the Proto-Baltic-Finnic language (Wiklund 1901:25, 1915:3).

Others made similar appeals to physical appearance. The Austrian linguist Karl Penka claimed that the Finno-Ugrians originated in Central Asia and that the proto-people were Mongol (Penka 1908:31). Difference between Finns and Saami arose from the mixing of the Finns with their Germanic speaking neighbours of the Nordic physical type (Penka 1886:26-27).

Some leading anthropologists like Rudolf Virchow resisted the widespread use of physical differences taken as stable entities over time. Virchow acknowledged the physical differences between the Saami and Finns, but he did not explain it as the product of separate Finn and Saami ethnohistories or the greater mixing of the Finns with the Scandinavian peoples. Virchow preferred a different solution, based on his idea of pathology: the Finns and Saami shared a common history; but the environment, lifestyle, and diet of the Saami had created a new physical type. On his travels through Finland, Virchow discovered a previously unidentified physical type that was brachycephalic and blond, in contrast to the central European brachycephalic type, which was darker (Virchow 1872, 1874a:34-35).

Again, Finnish ethnohistorians did not interest themselves in physical differences as much as their Scandinavian colleagues did. Setälä clearly stated that physical appearance was irrelevant to linguistic affinity. The significant differences between Finns and Saami were not physical but cultural ones: mainstream Finnish ethnohistorical thought portrayed the Finns as the strong conquerors who easily drove away the weaker Saami (Isaksson 2001:386-387). This portrayal of the Baltic-Finns as battle-hardened conquerors proved useful: it explained how even the Germanic tribes had been driven away by the Baltic-Finnic invasions.

### **Nineteenth century ideas about Estonia**

The University of Tartu reopened in 1802 as a university primarily for the Baltic-German population. It was mostly staffed by German scholars and was part of the greater German academic sphere for the most of the century. In the final decades the process of Russification began, weakening the German influence on the university. During those first years though, the history professors were quite uninterested in the early history of the Baltics.

The situation changed when, in 1828, a new history professor arrived in Tartu: Friedrich Kruse (1790-1866), who had earlier been a professor of history at the University of Halle, where Kruse had paid much attention to the early history of the Germans. On his arrival in Tartu, he extended this interest to include the early history (*Urgeschichte*) of the Baltic region. Kruse followed the established methods of literary ethnohistory, although he excluded the Bible; he was not much influenced by the new ideas in linguistics and archaeology. He made some archaeological excavations, as described in his book *Necrolivonica* (1842); but these were not done within the framework of the Three-Age System. He believed that the Estonians had lived a long time in the area before the Danish and German expansions. Based on Tacitus' description of the *Æsti* and (methodologically outdated) ideas of the German scholar Johan Leonard von Parrot, he claimed that the Estonian and Celtic languages were related (Kruse 1846:122, 166, 190-201, 346-347). Kruse

speculated whether the Æsti had been the ancestors of the Estonians or some indigenous Baltic-Finnic people who had been upgraded by German culture and who had a possible linguistic connection to the Celts (ibid 1846:348). He believed that the Latvians were the outcome of the mixing of Lithuanian, Germanic, and Baltic-Finnic peoples (ibid 1846:167).

Kruse's confidence in the historical reliability of written sources extended to Snorri and Saxo, whom he relied on extensively (Kruse 1846:424-449). His faith in Tacitus was so strong that he drew a map, based on Tacitus, with the various tribes plotted over northern Europe. He mostly disregarded Schlözer's and Rüh's methodological extensions to ethnohistory. He was far from alone in treating Tacitus as a historically reliable source. The controversy over the ethnicity of the Æsti remained the focus for many ethnohistorians. Some described the Æsti/Aistr as a Germanic or Baltic tribe that was later either assimilated or replaced by the Finno-Ugric Estonians, who inherited the name. Grimm believed that the Æesti were originally a Germanic tribe (Grimm 1848:717-722). Eventually they adopted a Finnish language and became the modern Estonians: "*die benennung eines damals noch germanischen volks, der Aestier, gieng im verfolg der zeit auf das finnische der Esten über*" (ibid. 174). Kaspar Zeuß believed that the Æsti were originally Germanic and were, indeed, the ancestors of the Balts (Zeuß 1837:268). Like Kruse, Zeuß belonged to the older tradition of literary ethnohistory. He saw no problem in giving the classical ethnonyms, Sarmatian, and Romarici the status of actual peoples.

Even Keyser – for all of his articulation of the new ethnohistorical ideas of modern archaeology and linguistics – expressed an opinion on the ethnicity of Tacitus' Æsti. They were *not* a Germanic people but were the Finno-Ugric ancestors of modern Estonians, who settled on the eastern shores of the Baltic Sea during the fourth century BC (Keyser 1868:203).

Although Tartu University became a leader in many fields, it was not prominent in developing new methods for ethnohistorical research or new ideas on the early history of the Baltics. Modern

ethnohistorical methods, arriving mainly from Scandinavia, gradually became accepted by the university's scholars. The professor of geology, Constantin von Grewingk (1819-1887), used the Three-Age System to classify local archaeological remains. The starting date for modern archaeology in Estonia is usually dated to Grewingk's book *Das Steinalter der Ostseeprovinzen Liv-, Est- und Kurland und einiger angrenzenden Landstriche* (1865).

In addition to researching Stone Age graves, Grewingk elaborated a prehistoric ethnohistory for the Baltic provinces, initially gaining some influence among Scandinavian scholars. Grewingk claimed that the indigenous Estonian population had been Baltic-Finnic, probably arriving in the area from the western slopes of the Ural Mountains. They were a Stone Age people when they arrived and did not develop beyond this level until they came into contact with the expanding Germanic tribes in the first centuries AD. The Baltic-Finns – Estonians, Livs, and Courons – lived in the northern part of the Baltic provinces and along the coast further south. Their closest neighbours had been Baltic tribes – Latvians, Lithuanians, and Prussians – in the southern part of the provinces and in Prussia. The Balts were also a Stone Age people, albeit on a slightly higher level than the Baltic Finns.

The ethnography of the area changed dramatically with the arrival of the Iron Age Germanic tribes. The indigenous population adopted the new culture and made the leap directly from Stone Age to Iron Age. Grewingk evidenced this cultural leap with the lack of Bronze Age findings in the area. He knew of only four locations in the area with Bronze Age items, which he believed to have arrived from abroad.

Grewingk's ethnohistorical approach became known as the *Gothic theory*. It remained popular among Baltic-German ethnohistorians into the 1920s and 1930s. After the initial positive response, however, his ideas met with strong international criticism. In particular, the Russian archaeologist Viskonow rejected Grewingk's that the so-called *Tarand* Iron Age graves were German; he thought that the graves had probably been built by the ancestors of contem-

porary Estonians. also criticised Grewingk for claiming that the Stone Age culture of the Baltic provinces was Finno-Ugric (Aspelin 1875: 53, Lang and Laneman 2006). Thomsen initially accepted Grewingk's hypothesis that the Stone Age culture had continued in Estonia even after the birth of Christ and that the Iron Age had come with the Germanic tribes. That said, he did not believe that the Baltic-Finns were the indigenous population in the Baltic provinces; instead, they had not entered their present area until the eighth century. The Stone Age people in Estonia were not the ancestors of modern Estonians (Thomsen 1931:60 [1890]).

Karl B. Wiklund believed that the Proto-Baltic-Finnic tribes had expanded along the southern shore of the Finnish gulf after removing the Stone Age Germanic peoples from the eastern shores of the Baltic Sea. The Baltic-Finnic tribes could have been living in Estonia since the Stone Age, while the Germanic Goths did not enter northern Balticum until the Iron Age. They were soon replaced by Estonian and Baltic Iron Age peoples (Wiklund 1901:19).

## **Conclusion**

Linguistic ethnohistory and its auxiliary sciences did not influence Finnish ethnohistorical thought as thoroughly as in Scandinavia. The fundamental aspects of Porthan's ethnohistory were compatible with palaeolinguistics, the Three-Age System, and physical anthropology. Hackman's 1905 dissertation established a distinctive, Porthan-inspired Finnish ethnohistorical view, with its proposal of an indigenous Germanic people in southwestern Finland and a Saami population in the rest of the country. A slow immigration of Finnish tribes beginning from the first few centuries AD eventually assimilated the Germans and drove the Saami to the far north.

Literary ethnohistory remained dominant much longer in the Baltic provinces than in Scandinavia or Finland; but from the 1860s,

the new methods of archaeology and physical anthropology made their impact felt on Baltic-German ethnohistorical work. The primary ethnohistorical hypothesis elaborated by Baltic-German scholars – *The Gothic theory* – held that the Baltic area had been inhabited by a Baltic-Finnic Stone Age people before the arrival of the Iron Age Germanic tribes. It was largely rejected by Scandinavian and Finnish ethnohistorians.

The influence of ethnic Estonians in the Baltic provinces was weak, so that for most of the century Tartu University remained within the German academic sphere of ethnohistorical thought, and the first few generations of Estonian academic ethnohistorians, such as Mihkel Veske, mostly had to pursue their academic careers outside the region. German influence diminished significantly in the last decades of the nineteenth century through the process of Russification. A distinctly ethnic Estonian academic sphere of ethnohistorical thought did not emerge until the establishment of the Estonian University in Tartu in 1920.

# 10 Conclusions

## Summing up

The major aim of the study was to discuss the question: *how did the breakthroughs in comparative-historical linguistics and linguistic ethnohistory affect scholarly ideas and hypotheses on the early history of the Nordic region?*

The study was divided into two major sections. The first focused on general intellectual history, discussing issues of e.g. secularisation and ethnohistorical methodology. The second was a case study of the changing ideas and hypotheses on the Nordic region.

Before the breakthroughs represented by comparative-historical linguistics and linguistic ethnohistory, coming in the 1810s and 1820s, ethnohistorical ideas on the early history of the Nordic region fell within four major positions.

The first position took an older, mainly Biblical approach that tried to link the ethnohistory of the Nordic region peoples back to the Bible. According to *Gothicist* tradition, the Scandinavians entered the area before the Finns, arriving from the east. The Saami could already have been living in the northernmost parts of the region.

The second did not reject the historical truth of Genesis, but it did not include Genesis in ethnohistorical research. Proponents accepted Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz's hypothesis that the Finns and Saami were the indigenous populations of the Nordic region, and the Scandinavians entered Scandinavia from the south. Leibniz's hypothesis was generally combined with arguments based on Medieval Icelandic sources, which describe the migration of Odin's people from present-day Ukraine to Scandinavia.

The third took a strongly source-critical approach. The Icelandic sources were rejected as unreliable. Ethnohistorians could not examine the Nordic region's history much further back than the era of Christian expansion.



The fourth position was originally elaborated by Henrik Gabriel Porthan, with Finland and Estonia in mind. The Baltic-Finns entered the Nordic region much later than the Scandinavians and Saami. There had never been a Finnish population in Scandinavia before the arrival of the Scandinavians.

Although their influence as a result of the debate over sources initiated by the German scholars, the Icelandic sagas continued to influence Scandinavian historians into the early nineteenth century via the principle of mythistory: the belief that stories could and often did have historical value. Not everything in Snorri's tales was necessarily true; but parts of the tales had certainly originated from actual historical events.

The comparative-historical linguistics breakthrough came at the end of the Napoleonic wars, which resulted in the Norwegian union with Sweden and the incorporation of Finland into the Russian Empire as a Grand Duchy. The new methodology of linguistic ethnohistory was put to use building independent Finnish and Norwegian academic spheres of ethnohistorical thought as well as rebuilding the weakened Danish and Swedish spheres.

Initially, neither the dramatic political events nor the new ethnohistorical methods had any significant impact on the major positions concerning the Nordic region's early history. Linguistic ethnohistory was elaborated with such methodologies as *Wörter und Sachen* and linguistic palaeontology. The search for the past could now afford to ignore the Bible and other Classical and Medieval literary sources. By the late 1830s and early 1840s, Scandinavian scholars had generally abandoned Genesis and Snorri as historically reliable.

Some scholars argued that the Finns and Saami were the first inhabitants of the region; the Scandinavians arrived with the coming of Iron Age culture. Others claimed that the forefathers of the Scandinavians lived in the Nordic region from the Stone Age until the arrival of the Iron Age Baltic-Finns. Those scholars often suggested as well that the Saami had lived in the far north from the Stone Age. Though initially persuasive, August Ludwig Schlözer's

and Friedrich Rühls' rejection of any claims about the period before the emergence of written sources became much weakened and had no real influence on nineteenth century debates over early Nordic history.

The dominant position among Finnish scholars was that the Finns were relatively latecomers to the region; it found some support among Swedish scholars as well. Not until the 1870s and 1880s did mainstream Scandinavian ethnohistorians begin to consider that the Scandinavians had lived in the area much longer than had previously been believed, perhaps as far back as the Stone Age. The Baltic-Finns came to have a far less important role in the Nordic region's ethnohistory. In Finland, Porthan's views remained largely dominant. From the mid-nineteenth century, they were supported with archaeologically inspired arguments that the Baltic-Finns had entered the region as Iron Age peoples. The new hypothesis on the early ethnohistory of the Baltics was that the Estonians and Latvians had lived as Stone Age peoples until the arrival of Iron Age Germans around the time of the birth of Christ.

Physical appearance gained significant influence over ethnohistorical thought in Scandinavia but especially in Sweden, providing a substantially new approach to the region's early ethnohistory. By equating the Nordic race with the Indo-European language family, scholars made southern Scandinavia the proto-home not only for the Scandinavians but the entire Indo-European family. Oscar Montelius was one of those who did not believe that the Swedes were autochthonous in Sweden. The linguistic similarities between Finno-Ugric and Indo-European languages, as well as the physically Nordic characteristics of the Baltic-Finns, inspired Gustav Kossinna to locate the proto-home of the Finno-Ugric family in southern Scandinavia as well – an idea not accepted by other scholars of Finno-Ugric ethnohistory, who suggested a proto-home in the Volga area or near the Ural Mountains, with a Baltic-Finnic immigration to the Nordic region as Iron Age peoples. Montelius' claim that the Baltic-Finns had already lived in the Nordic area as Stone Age peoples was popular among Baltic-German scholars; but

it was not until the twentieth century that Estonian and (to a lesser extent) Finnish scholars would be persuaded that the Baltic-Finns had lived in the area since the Stone Age.

From the 1880s, physical appearance became as ethnohistorically important as language or culture. That said, its influence was weaker in Denmark and Norway than in Sweden, and it was even less accepted in Finland. Linguistic ethnohistory remained dominant in Finland, even as the new archaeological and anthropological approaches took hold in Sweden. The differing relations between linguists and archaeologists in these countries are visible in two important works from 1905: one by Finnish archaeologist Alfred Hackman and the other by Swedish linguist Axel Kock. Hackman took great interest in the ethnohistorical ideas of such linguists as Vilhelm Thomsen and Emil Nestor Setälä. Meanwhile in Sweden, Kock adjusted his time frame for the proto-home of the Germanic peoples to fit Montelius' archaeologically inspired time frame, which was based on the assumption of no major immigration to the region since the Stone Age.

Because of its equating of the history of language and people, linguistic ethnohistory was criticised as too simplistic. This criticism grew over time. During the late nineteenth century, the question whether a people could survive ethnically if it abandoned its original language became a hot topic. In the 1890s, Karl B. Wiklund claimed that the Saami people had exchanged their language for a Finno-Ugric one, while remaining ethnically distinct people.

In the late nineteenth century, an important re-evaluation of the cultural level of the Proto-Indo-Europeans occurred, on a European scale. So long as it was supposed that the proto-people had been on the level of Bronze or Iron Age, the Stone Age cultures found in Europe could not have been Indo-European. Perhaps they had been Finno-Ugric or Basque or something else again. As the idea of Stone Age Proto-Indo-Europeans became influential, the ethnicity of the European Stone Age cultures came to be re-evaluated. The need for a widespread Finno-Ugric presence in Europe during the Stone Age vanished, and the ethnohistory of the Finno-

Ugric peoples moved to the outskirts of Europe. This was not bad news to scholars who believed that the Baltic-Finns had possessed an Iron Age culture when they entered present-day Estonia and Finland: the Stone Age remains in the area were not connected to Baltic-Finnic ethnohistory.

### **Changing relations between the Scandinavians and Baltic-Finns**

Both the new political landscape of the early nineteenth century and the new methods of linguistic classification brought fundamental changes to the relations between Scandinavian and Finn ethno-historical thinking. The idea of Finns and Scandinavians having different origins was certainly nothing new; but the division was not sharply emphasized so long as Sweden and Finland belonged to the same state. That changed when Finland became part of the Russian Empire.

While comparative-historical linguistics and linguistic ethno-history had important consequences for the debate over the relationship between Germans and Scandinavians – arguably bringing them closer – they had even more impact on the debate over the relationship between Swedes and Finns, given that they came about at the same time as the political separation of Sweden and Finland. This likely made linguistic ethnohistory more interesting, as in principle it placed any Finnish-Swedish ethnic and linguistic affinities in the distant past.

Swedish historian Jonas Hallenberg puzzled over the logic of linguistic ethnohistory, according to which the Swedes and the geographically distant Persians were more closely related than the Swedes and their neighbouring Finns: 1) Swedish and Persian belonged to the same language family, which became known as the Indo-European family; and 2) language and people were assumed by linguistic ethnohistory to be closely tied: a people was largely defined by its language (Hallenberg 1819:148).

Meanwhile anthropologists from Johann Friedrich Blumenbach onwards classified the Finns and Saami as belonging to a different race than the Scandinavians. Such classifications had considerable impact on discussions whether or not the Finns and Saami should be treated as “white” or “European”. During the the time period of virulent racism and Eurocentrism, this was no purely academic question.

The new rules of linguistic ethnohistory, which denied the possibility of ethnogenesis through the fusion of languages/peoples, helped in separating the Finns and Swedes from a too intimately shared ethnohistory. Swedes and Finns were not the products of ethnic or linguistic fusion: they belonged to clearly different peoples from clearly different language families. Over the centuries they had had extensive contacts, affecting them both culturally and linguistically; but these contacts should not obscure the underlying fact of distinct origins.

Linguistic ethnohistory, which helped to separate Swedes from Finns, brought Scandinavians and Germans closer together. The relationship between Scandinavian and German ethnohistorical thinking was generally asymmetrical: the Germans took a positive and inclusive attitude towards the Scandinavians, while the Scandinavians took a more reserved or even hostile attitude towards the Germans and German culture. Already by the sixteenth century, German ethnohistorical thought followed a different path from that of other Western European countries, where scholars tended to regard the ethnogenesis and development of peoples like the Englishmen, French, and Spaniards as the result of mixing between a primitive indigenous population and a more advanced intruder, usually the Romans. In contrast, German scholars believed that the Germanic peoples were *not* the result of ethnic mixing but could trace their history back to the Table of Nations.

After belief in the historical value of the Table of Nations had been abandoned, this uniquely German line of thought found support from comparative-historical linguistics. Again, comparative-historical linguistics, which equated the history of languages with

the history of peoples, denied that new languages/peoples could emerge through mixing, although it accepted that languages/cultures could be heavily influenced by other languages/cultures. Peoples, who previously had been regarded as “mixed”, had to have a linguistic core: e.g., the French and Spanish peoples had a Latin core, the English a Germanic one. That core showed how the local, daughter language related back to its language family.

The invention of comparative-historical linguistics and linguistic ethnohistory was largely made by German scholars. The dictum that new languages could not emerge through mixing or tangling was possibly related to the old idea of the Germans (and the Germanic peoples more broadly) as a pure, unmixed people. This logic brought the Germanic languages/peoples closer together within the Indo-European language family and, at the same time, clearly separated them from e.g. Finnish, Estonian and Saami, which belonged to a totally different family.

If comparative-historical linguistics brought the Germanic peoples closer together, then the invention of the cephalic index in physical anthropology and the Three-Age System in archaeology helped maintain a dividing line between the Scandinavians and the larger Germanic family.

### **“People” as both a changing and stable concept**

Conceptual historians study the way concepts change their meaning over time. Such conceptual change is clearly visible in the present study when looking at the central role played by “people” (*folk* in Swedish). Contrast the early eighteenth century priest and ethnographer Pehr Högström (1714-1784) and the late nineteenth century linguist Wiklund (1868-1934), both of whom studied the ethnic relationship between the Finns and Saami (e.g., Högström 1747; Wiklund 1891, 1911). Högström and Wiklund were in full agreement on the significant linguistic, cultural, and physical differences between the Finns and Saami – but they had widely different notions of what characterised a people.

Högström lived during a time when the history of a people was

traced back to the sons of Noah, and the fundamental histories of humankind were to be found in the Bible. All peoples shared a common, monogenetic origin. Physical differences between peoples were the result of environmental factors. A people could physically change rapidly if it moved to a different environment or changed its way of living. Högström acknowledged the differences between the Finns and Saami, but he regarded them as small, the ethnic division easily bridged. Högström believed that the Finns had originally been Saami who dropped their nomadic lifestyle. Their change to farming was sufficient to explain the changes in language, culture, and physical appearance.

For Wiklund, the Bible was historically irrelevant. He regarded the ethnic divide as much larger than did Högström, the cultural and physical differences between the Finns and Saami due to different ethnic origins. Their linguistic similarity arose from the Saami abandoning their original – now forgotten – language in favour from one borrowed from their Finno-Ugric neighbours. The Finns and Saami had different ethnohistories and originated from different proto-homes. The Saami proto-home lay deep within Asia, which explained the Saami's more Mongoloid appearance. The difference in origin helped explain the cultural difference, which depended on far more than a settled (Finn) versus nomadic (Saami) existence.

For all that they agreed upon, Högström's and Wiklund's concept of people was certainly far apart. Högström represented an Early Modern understanding of peoples embedded in the historical narratives of the Bible. Wiklund described peoples with the Modern Age methods of linguistics, anthropology, and archaeology.

## **Further research**

In the present study many possibilities, outside the scope of the study, emerged during the process of writing the dissertation. Some of these could be interesting subjects for further research. One ob-

vious possibility is to continue the study into the twentieth century, with its continuing interest in early history. Although linguistic ethnohistory remained influential, the challenge from alternative ethnohistorics reduced the value of language to ethnohistory considerably, giving culture, physical appearance, and genes higher priority.

Another possibility would be to broaden the study of the conflict between different academic spheres, placing it in the larger context of whose history, exactly, is being studied. The discussion of the early ethnohistory of Finland and Estonia in this study followed a different pattern from that for Scandinavia. Most scholars discussing Scandinavian ethnohistory were ethnic Scandinavians; the resulting ethnohistory of Scandinavia was, to large extent, a discussion of “their own” early history. The struggles in Finland between Finnish and Finland Swedish interpretations is a well studied area; but it holds great potential for comparisons with the academic struggles in Estonia between the Estonians and Baltic-Germans, or the post-WWII struggles between Estonian and Soviet-Russian interpretations.

A third possibility is to look more closely at whether the comparative-historical linguistics breakthrough and the invention of linguistic ethnohistory constitute a *scientific revolution*. The differences are so large between Biblical ethnohistory and the new approaches that, in Thomas Kuhn’s terminology from *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), each is basically incommensurable to the other. That said, strong arguments speak against such claims of a scientific revolution in ethnohistorical research.

A fourth and final possibility is to examine the relative importance of being the first people in a given territory, often considered essential to claiming rights over an area. Nineteenth century Finnish ethnohistorians felt no need to claim that the Finns were first; they gave that privilege instead to the Saami and a mythical Germanic people. The Finns came later, taking control by pushing aside or assimilating the original population.

Twenty-first century scholars show more sensitivity toward the



treatment of indigenous peoples and the often self-righteous attitude of the strong. One could usefully compare different epochs of ethnohistorical research on their relative acceptance of ethnic violence.



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*Baltic-Finns and Scandinavians* explores how the breakthrough in comparative-historical linguistics affected European ethnohistoric thought. The investigation has a multi-disciplinary approach by including intellectual history and the histories of Finno-Ugric studies and linguistics. It contains a case study, which examines what impact the inventions of comparative-historical linguistics, linguistic ethnohistory and other auxiliary sciences had on narratives about the early history of northern Europe.

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