
ANNA-MARIA ÅSTRÖM

What is a Swedish Ethnology in Finland?

In his article *Five ethnologies - the rise of Finnish ethnology from a Finland-Swedish point of view*, prof. Nils Storå has characterised the development of Ethnology in Finnish and in Swedish not as dichotomised striving for two unique kinds of ethnology based only on two languages in Finland but as five paths that together make the history more diverse and sometimes overlapping, sometimes not. The article looks for the roots in different spheres: antiquarian interests, languages, regionalism, an interest in cultural history and in anthropology. Prof. Storå takes us up to the 1960s. The starting point is of course language based disciplines where the need for this emphasis was felt very strongly. In Finland almost 5.9% of the population has Swedish as their mother tongue; in the beginning of the 20th century the percentage was 12,9. A result of the fact that the Swedish speaking also under the Russian rule until the late 19th century held important civilian and political posts, was that Finland after the independence 1917 was declared a bilingual state (1919). This meant and means that the Swedish speaking have a strong guarantee when it comes to their linguistic rights. Also strong institutional support make a Swedish or bilingual life especially in the Swedish coastal regions and towns possible.

My intention is to look to what has happened in ethnology since 1960 in this Swedish context and what actors where and

are working and also in which scientific context one can look at the ethnology that is carried out at the Åbo Akademi University in Åbo (Turku), that is the Swedish university in Finland. But I will also consider the ethnological work at the Folk Culture Archives in Helsinki, since a similar documentation and research work has been made there. A third actor is the Scientific section of the Brage Society also situated in Helsinki.

To understand the present one has to have in mind also the outset when the discipline was founded and the chair of ethnology donated (1919). What one then must know is that not only the interest in the culture of ones own, that is the Swedish culture in Finland but also in other cultures, has since the beginning of the 20th century been a distinctive mark of Swedish speaking ethnologists in Finland. The study of ones own culture goes hand in hand with studying others. In this respect the two professors in Åbo, Helmer Tegengren (1952-1971) and Nils Storå (1972-1997) are exemplary. Helmer Tegengrens dissertation concerned a rural parish in Ostrobothnia, but his main scientific work adressed the historically distant culture of the Sami in the Kemi lapplands. Nils Storå in his work has also been interested in two marginal cultures in Finland, the Finnish Archipelago and the Scolt Lapp society as well as the same parish that his teacher engaged in, that is

Kronoby in Swedish speaking Ostrobothnia. In this they distinguish themselves from their predecessor and teacher, the first professor in ethnology, Gabriel Nikander (1920-1951) who on the whole can be said to have dedicated his scientific life to the culture of the Swedish speaking Finns. His scope was nevertheless very broad as he was interested not only in the folk culture of the peasants and other rural elements, but also in the culture of higher layers exemplified by manor- and mill owners and the urban bourgeois and the surroundings they formed. The area for his studies where thus cultural history and folk life studies, also stipulated in the name of the chair in his time (Storå 1992, 92-98, Lönnqvist 2000, 24-25)

The professors succeeding Nikander can on the other hand be said to come close to the anthropological paradigm of Edward Westermarck (1862-1939), contemporary and a colleague of Gabriel Nikander. The ethnologists seem to have been content in researching Northern and Arctic people and did not like Westermarck's pupils expand their interest to other continents like for instance Gunnar Landtman (Papua New Guinea), Rafael Karsten (Peru, Bolivia) or Hilma Granqvist (Palestina). An important researcher between these two trends is K. Robert W. Wikman, who did his research on premarital relations with a comparative perspective using material not only from Scandinavia but also from remote parts in Central Europe (*Die Einleitung der Ehe* 1937) and concentrating on folk customs, a speciality also for the "westermarckians" (Storå 1992, 98-101)

Operating in the ethnological field in the 1920s and 1930s was thus the holder of the chair of Nordic Cultural history and folk life studies at the Åbo Academy University, with intimate relation to the chair of Nordic history in the same building and since 1927 also the Institute for Nordic folk life research with K.R.W.

Wikman as its head. It had been the idea of Edward Westermarck that a deliberate direction in ethnology was to be towards the Scandinavian cultures because the Swedes in Finland orientated from the west. The chair was thus founded for the research of the origins and development of this culture. Already in 1885 a learned Society, the Swedish Literary Society in Finland was founded with the same purpose but without the Nordic orientation. Gabriel Nikander engaged himself also in The Swedish Literary Society in Finland and in questions concerning museums and he was also head of the Brage scientific section for the study of folk life. This section gathered also anthropologists and folklorists and their main forum was *Budkavlen*, which presented their articles in different spheres such as folk architecture, economy of the archipelago, folk customs, folk religion and belief and other different folkloristic genres. Early members were among others Yngvar Heikel, K.R.W. Wikman, Gunnar Landtman, Otto Andersson and Fritz Burjam the last ones folklorists.

Shortly before the war also a new agent had come into being as The Swedish Literary Society founded an Archive for Swedish Folk Culture in Helsinki 1937 with MA and later PhD Ragna Ahlbäck, the daughter of Gabriel Nikander, as the first ethnological archivist.

When after the war the task for Helmer Tegengren since 1952 was to build the Cultural history department and broaden and consolidate the Nordic orientation, the task for Nils Storå was since 1972 to continue this work and keep the Nordic contacts alive at a period when ethnology in Scandinavia changed in a direction not foreseen. Tegengrens interests were directed to cultural contacts and cultural diffusion, hence his interest also in founding the Questionnaire network and the Archives, the material of which was

gathered through extensive fieldwork and documentation in the Swedish regions. Tegengren's main areas for study where economic contacts, economy in itself, colonisation and settlement and his views could widely be labelled as cultural anthropological. Prof. Storås interests are directed to acculturation, technology, innovations and the ecosystem and natural resources of the archipelago. Prof Storås interest also in the history of the discipline has been instructive for this article.

In the 1960s the ethnological archivists at the Folk Culture Archives in Helsinki where two and on to the scene came MA, later PhD and professor Bo Lönnqvist, with studies in Finno-Ugric Ethnography at Helsinki University as his background. In Turku at that time the comparative methods where used with a material collected there, in Helsinki the documentary work was stabilised. There an Ethnological Atlas over the Swedish folk culture had seen the light already in 1945 with Ragna Ahlbäck as its editor as the first number in the series of *Folkklivsstudier* (Folk Life Studies), which soon was filled up with research reports also of the Åbo School.

The Scene in the 1970s

The name of the chair in Turku at the Åbo Akademi had in 1974 on professor Storås request been changed to Nordic Ethnology and Folkloristics whereas the brother Finnish University in Turku was dedicated to Finnish and comparative Ethnology (in 1986 Folkloristics was changed to a discipline of its own).

The five ethnologies described by professor Storå had changed a lot but new challenges were still ahead. The antiquarian ethnology stayed important as ethnology as a discipline was also directed to museum work, the linguistic base was never forgotten and the regional research was still one outset. The cultural historical trend was

not as alive as before, but still courses in cultural history belonged to the curricula. Anthropology as a separate discipline can almost be said to have died away with the last pupils of Edward Westermarck, but fortunately a chair was erected at the university in Helsinki, with Arne Runeberg as its first professor, a rescue operation that soon led to a flourishing tradition again.

In Åbo both professor Storå and the Finnish professor Talve had mentioned urban ethnology as an important task for the future. In Sweden the direction in ethnology moved towards social anthropological perspectives, later to more hermeneutic approaches and reflexions about the role of the researcher. Also studies of everyday life in the present became a new sphere that again meant that many ethnologist took up fieldwork but now with contemporary problems also in mind. A special focus was now on small communities, working culture, subcultures, youth culture and other economic activities than that of farmers and fishermen.

Nils Arvid Bringeus' *Människan som kulturvarelse* (Man as cultural being) has stayed as the core literature for beginning students as well as Orvar Löfgrens and Billy Ehns *Kulturanalys* (Cultural Analyses). The move to studies of contemporary society and all layers of society was never fulfilled completely in the ethnology at Åbo Akademi and by such a direction also the traditions of the former ethnologies were saved. But the focus of study was since the 1970s new: The rural population was broadened to encompass crofters and different categories of maritime populations as well as workers of different factories and mills. The comparative methods stayed in use, also historical approaches were applied and modernisation theories used. For long the research object had been cultural patterns and life forms. Also an interest in artefacts remained as a speciality for the

Åbo Ethnology. The intensive questionnaire work continued with dedicated informants in both Swedish and Finnish speaking areas all over the country. The intendent John Hackman was one of the first to use information technology in handling the answers. The interests of study were artefacts in rural and maritime surroundings and the economy in these areas.

At the Folk Culture Archives the decade was also full of activity. Bo Lönnqvists dissertation *Dräkt och mode i ett landsbygdssamhälle 1870-1920* in 1972 had led him to more deliberate research funded by the Academy of Finland and the staff now consisted of four ethnologists the tasks of whom were divided into rural ethnology, maritime ethnology, ethnology of customs and documentation (photography and drawing). Ragna Ahlbäck, Ivar Nordlund and Mary-Ann Elfving and since 1979 Bertil Bonns and the writer of this paper formed the team. Bo Lönnqvist had stipulated the work also to be directed to cultural elements and cultural forms, their vanishing, change and appearance.

Work was dedicated to fieldwork in different surroundings (a manorial society in western Nyland, a paper mill near Porvoo, insular communities in the western, south western and southern archipelago etc.) Ragna Ahlbäck's work still consisted in analysing the peasant culture in a historical perspective and a move on to handicrafts. The Archive got a printed Catalogue and Bo Lönnqvist published a Bibliography on all ethnological publications in Swedish until 1976. The questionnaires documented school life, the culture of children, reading habits, dress, annual festivities and material culture as well as the habits of drinking, smoking and the habits of taking snuff and the poor in society. The marginal layers of culture where to be covered.

The 1980s - an era of new theoretic insights and intensive fieldwork

In Åbo the challenges of the new Swedish ethnology were taken up in teaching at all stages. This manifested itself in the choice of themes for master's degree theses. Life modes, life styles, subcultures of different groupings in society as well as more traditional subjects of rural and maritime life were targets of study for the young and eager generation. The move towards documentation of contemporary society was accompanied by new insights in the mechanisms of culture and by intensifying fieldwork in surroundings where the categories of peasant life could no more give clue to an understanding of the manifestations. One could not however talk about a shift of paradigm, since another focus was still on the disappearing forms of traditional life. Concepts such as cultural identity, acculturation, cultural niche, cultural ecology nevertheless gave a deeper insight to the studies accomplished. The habits of summer residents in rural areas, new forms of economic activity in the countryside as well as the traditional way of women's life were focuses of studies among the Åbo ethnologists. A keen interest in the material life and artefacts were still very strong. Since 1981 Bo Lönnqvist was also attached to the department as docent and teacher.

At the Folk Culture archives in Helsinki an even heavier weight than before was put on fieldwork with an problem oriented outlook from the start. The archipelago life mode was thought of as moving and changing as a result modernisation in for instance communication, and with intensive contact relations between residents of the islands and summer residents. Peasant life was studied with the concept of time as its outset and a small town (Kaskö) was studied as an arena for different urban dwellers and language groups to manifest

different attitudes and life modes of their own. The extensive fieldwork was reported in a volume of the series Folk life studies: *Kaskö - kontinuitet och förändring i en småstad* (Kaskö continuity and change in a small town, 1985). Fieldwork was always carried out with a historical perspective that sought for answers to the changes of the 20s century. This meant that also historical sources and newspapers were used to clarify the picture of change. Some of the fieldwork took place as joint expeditions to different localities in the Swedish speaking areas with ethnologist from Jyväskylä and Åbo as partners and even Swedish partners from Sweden were invited. The position of the memories that the interviews highly relied on were not problematised in other manners than that the remembrances had to be controlled by other data and with memories from the same epoch. Bo Lönnqvist work was directed to different aspects of the Finland Swedes and the historicity of this population. But the bourgeois culture also attracted the interest of both him and me, with both the urban scene and the manorial as its main focus. Inspirations were sought by keen attending to international conferences such as the SIEF conference in Zürich (The Life Cycle) and the German ethnological congresses with City culture, Children's culture, Remembering and forgetting, Culture Contacts-Culture Conflicts and Industrial man as their themes.

The 1990s - the era of new research in ethnicity, urban ethnology and modernisation, generational and gendered culture and historical anthropology

At the ethnological department in Åbo the concept of culture and its consequences for its many-faceted articulation of differences could be dealt with by heavily leaning on the thought of Swedish scholars such as

Orvar Löfgren, Jonas Frykman, Lissie Åström, Barbro Klein, Karl Olof Arnstberg, Britta Lundgren and others. An interest in modern life was self evident by now and themes of gender and ethnicity came to the fore. This was reflected also in the work of Monica Nerdrum on tradition and modernity among archipelago women and a deliberate study and teaching about the different minorities in Finland. Courses were also held in Nordic ethnology and ethnicity as a field of study.

This was also the most active period of the Brage section for folk life studies with monthly meetings and yearly symposias with titles such as Goodbye to urban history books, Nature and Culture, The Dynamics of Culture, Symposium on Symbols, Ethnicity, Archipelago Culture and the Land of the Regions. Only the last mentioned covered explicitly the Swedish speaking Finns whereas the other were directed to general issues under the headings. As chairman functioned Bo Lönnqvist and as secretary Anna-Maria Åström. Lesser seminars and meetings were held where tourism, seaside resorts, the Russian culture in Finland and stereotypes where dwelt upon. All of the papers presented were published in the bulletin *Laboratorium för folk och kultur* that had since the light in 1989. The ethnological series *Budkavlen* that had been founded by Brage had since 1928 jointly been published by Brage and the Institute of Folk life research in Åbo but in 1971 the work had been taken over entirely by the ethnologists and folklorist in Åbo. Thus the new circle in Helsinki had decided to take the risk at starting a new series that had the popular stance which was connected to Brage, a society founded 1906 to ensure and preserve the interest in Swedish folk life and folklore in Finland.

The decade of the 1990s proved to be productive in many other ways. The Swedish ethnologists published a book of

honour for Bo Lönnqvist called *Kring tiden*, Around time, for his 50th birthday, with a deliberate outset in the concept of time. In his teaching docent Lönnqvist had always underlined this concept among with the concepts of things and space. Bo Lönnqvists own large work on children's creative culture *Ting rum och barn*, Things space and children was published 1992 and won the National prize of information in 1993. The small town urban studies with an ethnic component was continued by a team under the head of professor Matti Räsänen of the Turku University in the formerly Swedish town of Loviisa and at that time the Soviet town of Võru in Estonia as a joint Finnish-Estonian project. The Swedish part was written by an ethnologist from Åbo Akademy, Marina Airo (*Everyday life and Ethnicity* 1994). This study focussed on the contacts and possible conflicts between Finnish- and Swedish speaking local residents of Loviisa in comparison to those of the Estonians and Russians in Võru. Also new studies were initiated in the capital of Helsinki, where four large ethnological questionnaires were sent to the inhabitants looking for memories of and attitudes in the capital. Already in 1990 a book called *Hemma bäst* (At home is best) dedicated to childhood memories in bourgeois and worker families in the first three decades of the 20th century written by Swedish speakers was published and sold out in a year. The new material also resulted in a book *Elämästä kaupungissa - Att bo i stan* (Living in the city) which concentrated on memories of living in the immediate center of Helsinki in the bustle and traffic of the 1950s. The memoirs were published in the language in which they were written, either Finnish or Swedish.

The writer of this article had since 1987 been working on the historical cultural arena of manors owned by Swedish officers and officials in the eastern Finnish district of Savo. The work was entirely based on

historical sources and the historical anthropological disertation "*Sockenboarne*" was presented in 1993, soon followed by Monica Nerdrums disertation *Skärgårdskvinnor* Archipelago women (1998), where the author discusses the modernisation process among women. An interesting and thorough study on the world view of a female museum creator and curator Irja Sahlberg, *Kvinna i museivärlden*, was presented by Solveig Sjöberg-Pietarinen (1997). Thus two books dedicated to women studies made the male dominated ethnology change. Already in 1987 a book written by one of Gabriel Nikanders pupils, Hjärdis Dahl, could be published although the author was over eighty. The book was named *Högsäng och klädbod* and it is a grand survey of the textile culture of the Swedish peasantry in Finland. And thus the link to museology was once again intimately connected to the university discipline ethnology. In 1993 professor Nils Storå celebrated his 60th birthday with the Festschrift *Resurser, strategier, miljöer* and in 1999 the portrait of him was uncovered in the auditorium at the Humanisticum building in Åbo, where he sided with professor Nikander, Tegengren and Wikman and the donators of the building councillor of commerce Ernst Dahlström and his wife Rosina. Professor Storås many-faceted task was successfully completed and he can be said to have done something impossible: reforming ethnology at the same time as staying true to his own visions. He has since continued his work and in 2002 a new book will appear.

As the 1980s in Sweden can be said to be the decade when the Swedish ethnologists woke up with the questions like what is Swedish and how can Swedishness be reliably researched, the decade for such reflexive thoughts were the 1990s in Finland. This new interest was a direct result of the multicultural situation in Sweden, but in

Finland the challenge from the outset was the European integration. Many a book on what Finnishness is appeared in the early 1990s, seeking different and inherent traits but also discussing the term in a constructionist manner. The Finnish ethnologists on the other hand began the debate by inviting anthropologists and ethnologists to reflect on cultural contacts and cultural conflicts rather than looking at different cultures from inside. The ethnic questions were thus focal and this was reflected also in dissertations about contacts between different segments of the Finnish population. Works in these matters were carried out for instance by Pirkko Sallinen-Gimpl and Outi Tuomi-Nikula. The former studied the interference between evacuated Carelians and Finns after the Second World War and the latter marriages between German men and Finnish women. These topics also activated ethnologists in the Swedish institutions: Anna-Liisa Kuczynski studied the acculturation of Polish immigrants in Finland and later wrote her licentiate thesis on the cultural loyalty in marriages between Finns and Poles. Marjut Anttonen in her turn defended her doctoral thesis on Finnish descendants in Norway and their political awakening in the 1990s. Since the middle of the decade Finland's decision to join the EU also activated the cultural sciences.

The position of the Swedish speaking Finns in this new political and scientific context was somewhat blurry. The Academy of Finland launched a great program Ethnicity, Identity and Multiculturalism in 1994 and in this context three scholars, Bo Lönnqvist, Yrsa Lindqvist and myself, got the opportunity to offer our view on the question. The two cultures, the Finnish and Swedish was thought to intersect on each other both by transgression of borders and by upholding borders to keep the cultures as pictures or mental images clear. At the same time a

quest for having to define oneself in terms of ones own had began to appear on the scene. The construction of this image of the Swedish speaking Finns relied on two different pillars, the one consisting of four regions (Ostrobothnia, Åboland, Nyland and the Åland Isles) and the other of a "pact" between the leading layers, the political party and the "people". Our goal was to show how this apparatus worked on the image plane and how confrontations between different language groups took their content from different images and stereotypes about oneself and the other. The result was a monograph with the title "Gränsfolkets barn" (Children of the border) which won a National information prize in 2002.

At the end of the 1990s you could fairly say that ethnology with the Swedish prefix in Åbo and Helsinki was well informed with the latest trends in the field. The theoretical points of departure encompassed semiotic perspectives, historical anthropological views, constructionist views on ethnic identity and on modern modes of life in rural and urban settings. What had not been neglected either was the study of modern customs and material culture with new inspiration from symbol theories of different kind, nor where the ecological theories abandoned. The difficult connections between nature and culture were still ahead waiting for answers, not the least because of the population areas of the Finland Swedes: the vulnerable areas at the Baltic Sea. Pollution problems and other problems concerning the environment were in focus also because the Åbo Akademi University had declared itself an Environment University. An ethnological answer that focused on the cultural environment of the archipelago appeared 1998 with the name *Etnografi på hemmaplan* (Ethnography at home)

The shift to studies of contemporary society was well under way and new studies

of urban life and urban memories were initiated in the Finnish Academy project Town Dwellers and their places, which was a joint project with ethnologists from Åbo, Jyväskylä and Helsinki. Methodological questions were discussed during seminars and the Brage Symposias: on debate were mentalities, topophilia and lived space, symbol theories, ethnicity, stereotypes, representations of different kinds, not the least in the area of museums and tourism, authenticity, and the intricate questions on memories and questionnaire answers. Ethnology had come to a reflective phase.

Into the new millennium and looking back to historical times

The new millennium meant even more changes and challenges also for the ethnology that can be characterised as Swedish in Finland. The starting point was defined to rely on an examination of what the post- or late modern times have meant for the cultural arena and everyday life in localities in Finland. The late modern times are said to be fragmented and focused on different life styles at the same time as history becomes a fantasy area to explore at the same time as heritage sites become popular places to visit. At the department of Ethnology at Åbo Akademi the look for days gone was started by a questionnaire concerning the 1950s. This starting point could reveal both how people remembered this already remote time and how they considered the changes of time. The students made an exhibition of this material that took us the 1950s of Åbo and a book *Så minns jag mitt Åbo* (Thus I remember my Åbo). The exhibition in turn proved to be successful, and one masters thesis was dedicated to the source critics and the study of narration, generations, places and things that were mentioned in this context.. This thesis by Katja Hellman was one of many that sought to penetrate the role of History in our lives and in contemporary society.

The quest for historical milieus is at the moment under focus on different levels in Åbo. Solveig Sjöberg-Pietarinen is completing her doctoral thesis on two open-air museums: The Klosterbacken handicraft museum in Åbo and the Amuri workers living museum in Tampere. But her ambitions are higher: to look for what can be represented in open-air museums and how the representation work is done.

As ethnology in Åbo still is connected to cultural history and courses on European cultural history and historical anthropology is being taught, it is natural to look at contemporary culture with one eye to history. Besides master thesis on Internet and mobil phones many young ethnologist have been fascinated by new forms of history presentation and historically valuable living areas. The former studies have been led under the title of History in our times and encompass studies of how the 18th century is elevated in dramas and historical enactments beside expositions in museums, how the medieval times come to live one week in Åbo every summer as the medieval market is put to play, and how children join pedagogical groups at the museums focusing on medieval knights and archaeological times at ecomuseums. Other studies under the head of History in local society, focus on the gentrification processes of urban areas including mostly wooden houses in the centers of the towns or just outside and the awareness of history by the inhabitants and the meanings they give the historical milieus. Other studies focus on the agrarian roots and how living on historical farms is understood and used as a means for living or how old farms only consist of one alternative while modern replicas have higher value for young families. Thus it is well understood that postmodern ideas and images are as easily planted in the rural milieu as in the towns.

The questionnaire department under John Hackman is as active as ever. Beside

the 1950 questionnaire (200 answers) two more have been released since 2000: Our Nature (120) and Mill and factory milieus (by now 90 answers). The network being the whole of Finland we have got long narrations from very different and distant localities both in Finnish and in Swedish as the main officials and high officials in the factories used to be Swedish speaking until the end of the 1960s. The last fieldwork in May was also located to a factory milieu, in Varkaus in eastern Finland, where the students could feel as anthropologists in a somewhat alien milieu of a large paper mill and an inland town. We also visited Sorsakoski, where the manufacturing of cutlery last year was moved to France. But the delivery station was still functioning and the Hackman saucepans still produced in this factory that was started as a sawmill in 1787. Thus a vanishing culture is explored, the material of which will be useful for many disciplines in the future. The insights in industrial logistics were also thought provoking for ethnologists, and led us to contemplations about consumer society on the whole. New topics are now also found in youth culture, rites the passage and the challenge of the new migrants to Finland. Another area of great interest is also consumption where focus already has been on ecological and reliable consumption and the consumption of young people in different decades.

As has been presented, ethnology at Åbo Akademi university has engaged in contacts with other ethnological departments in Finland in joint research projects. This is quite natural because the personnel at the department in Åbo only consists of the mentioned professor Anna-Maria Åström (since 2000), the intendent Johan Hackman and the assistant Niklas Huldén. Six researchers are attached to the department with projects of their own and they also take part in the training of the students. For the time being the total

number of students is 82.

A new project has started in 2002. It is project initiated by the Swedish Literary Society with the name Faces of the City. It is an interdisciplinary project, that focuses on urban culture in 1880-2000 in many different towns and from different angles. For the first time historians, ethnologists and researchers in literature are working together with the aim at founding new ways in looking at the urban transition and how it has been perceived. International contacts are intimate with Sweden, especially with Gothenburg and Stockholm but also more distant universities as St Petersburg Kiel and Krakow are sites of contacts.

If we look at the near future of ethnology at Åbo Akademi it can be said that focus is both on contemporary society and its historical roots; applications lie waiting for funding for two large research projects: Tradition and modernity concerning public festivities in cities and The modernisation of the countryside in which the aim is to study the new challenges rural areas and the rural population have to confront. As the interest in anthropology is growing, more than elementary courses has to be offered. Thus ethnology in Åbo could once again be connected with the great traditions were Edward Westermarck started.

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