
Four centuries of the Ingrian Church

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The most essential notion behind this study comes already in the first few pages of the preface: that the book in question is not only about the history of the Ingrian church, parishes and spiritual life, but also about the cultural history of the Ingrian people. The role of the church (or religion), even in Finland, is so deeply rooted in our culture that we do not notice it in our everyday lives. Thus, the starting point for the book is very much welcome.

As the authors note, many of the previous studies on and presentations of the Ingrian people have concentrated on the tragic events of the 20th century. This is the first book, however, to discuss the entire history of the Ingrian church. A massive book, it may exhaust the reader at first; but being the first study on the subject, it surely defends its size.

For an ethnologist, it is always exciting when a book of this nature makes use of recollections, memoirs and interviews. It should come as no surprise to scholars in the field that the fate of the Ingrians in the 20th century has evoked many recollections. It is good that the voices of the people come alive in the pages of the book.

The authors have found the own perspective for each of the four periods being studied. As an example, the chapter on the 18th century focuses on how the Ingrians culturally protected themselves from other nationalities and cultures. This was due to the Russians establishing the city of St Petersburg and the changing social status of

the Ingrians as a result. Also, the role of slavery is worth considering: working for landlords and noblemen strongly influenced Ingrian identity. The marks were seen long after such slavery was no longer practiced.

The 20th century is discussed in two rather lengthy chapters. From the year 1938 until the 1970s, there was no Ingrian church: nonetheless, it survived the many phases of Communism through the spiritual practices of the Ingrian people. Between the world wars, the work of the Ingrian church relied on lay preachers. Nowadays, the church is better organised than ever before, but this is not the only thing that matters: the parish seems to be important as a place where people can gather, meet others and share memories and thoughts.

The religious life of the Ingrians and the Ingrian church has been considered from several viewpoints, which is the unquestioning strength of the book. The authors do not only focus on the official side of the story and the connections between the church and the state or the central administration; they also discuss the priests and parishes, parishioners and their homes. The reader is given a glimpse into the architecture of the churches and vicarages, their interiors and even important objects and shown how church records inform our knowledge of the religion, habits and behaviour of the Ingrian people.

It was interesting to read about the relations between the Lutheran Ingrians and Russian members of the Orthodox Church. It has never been merely about living peacefully among and next to each other; for example, in the 18th century such coexistence inevitably led to many everyday life phenomena, such as mixed marriages, 'found children' and even different calendars – phenomena where the church was forced to have a say and give

its opinion. Even still, the ability to read, the spoken language and a religion of their own have all helped separate the Ingrians from Russian Orthodox peoples, which has been important for their identity, national feelings and sense of distinctiveness. Furthermore, the church has been frightened that the Orthodox religion would spread to the Lutheran parishes, which had been left without a priest of their own. Priests were needed.

The primary sources for the book consist of literature, magazines and journals, interviews and archival material, such as protocols, collections of laws and orders, maps, letters and church records. It lists numerous academic studies on the Ingrians, but it neglected to mention one important book: *Ingrians and Neighbours. Focus on the eastern Baltic Sea region* edited by Finnish ethnologists Markku Teinonen and Timo J. Virtanen. Since the authors failed to take into account this key study, the limits of the present book become obvious with respect to the stated aims of the authors: to cover the entire cultural history of the Ingrian people. The authors would have needed

to also address the present and future of the Ingrian people. Since one of the articles in *Ingrians and Neighbours* already discusses the role of the church in the life of the Ingrians at the end of the 20th century and casts a look at the history of the church, this study should have done more than repeat such a perspective.

In addition to the articles, readers can find lists of bishops and priests, secular leaders, parishes, family names and even marriages of the priests. Supplemented with pictures, the book gives us an enlightened look into the world of a people not so far removed from own — neither temporally nor geographically. It may be difficult to imagine what life in Ingria had been like at various times, but the photographs show us landscapes, villages, towns, buildings and people quite similar to those in Finland, with a slight Slavonic touch. The book aims to remind us that the Ingrians are a part of our culture and history and that the Ingrian church is part of the Finnish church.

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