

Useful Basic Work on Minorities and Migration

Tytti Steel

Mats Wickström & Charlotta Wolff (eds) 2016. *Mångkulturalitet, migration och minoriteter i Finland under tre sekel*. [Multiculturalism, migration, and minorities in Finland during three centuries.] Skrifter utgivna av Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland nr 803. Helsinki: Society of Swedish Literature in Finland. 360 pp. ISBN 978-951-583-342-6.

The core message of *Mångkulturalitet, migration och minoriteter i Finland under tre sekel* is expressed in the final article of the book, written by Ainur Elmgren. From a longer historical perspective, Finland's population as a whole has been diverse. The book challenges also ethnologists to have a closer look at these themes from an ethnological point of view.

Like elsewhere in Europe, discussions on multiculturalism, migration and minorities have gained attention and space in traditional and social media in Finland in recent years, especially in connection to the so-called migration crisis of 2015. This book gives an overview of the subject area from the point of view of historical research but is highly recommendable also to ethnologists. The book offers basic knowledge on inbound and outbound migration and the living conditions of several minorities. The concept of multiculturalism is shortly discussed in the introduction, which leaves room for deeper analysis. Ethnicity as a concept is not defined or discussed in detail even though it would be highly relevant and there is plenty of international research to refer to.

The strength of the book is that it covers a wide range of aspects, otherwise scattered in literature. Klaus Törnudd's article gives an overview of legislation and immigration since the Second World War, for instance the situation in 2015. Max Engman's article takes a review of emigration from Finland especially from the point of view of the Swedish-speaking population. Charlotta Wulff's article on "elite immigration" and cosmopolitanism provides an overview of the diversity of immigrant business families and the influence they had on Finland. The article is interesting and well written: this is a research topic which could easily become a list of businessmen and their achievements. As an ethnologist, I would also have liked to read an article on the transnational relations of non-elites, for instance, sailors' and coastal peasants' trading.

As synagogues in many countries prepare for the possibility of violent racist attacks, Laura Ekholm's article on Finland's Jewish minority and

the consequences of antisemitism is regrettably timely. Ekholm shows how antisemitism developed and became established to be culminated during World War II. The complexities of ethnic discrimination and the pitfalls of thinking through the idea of ethnic groups become visible in this study. In general discussions, the Jewish community was recognized as Finnish only after the Second World War, even though Jewish families had lived in Helsinki since the 1830s, longer than many ethnically “Finnish” families who moved into the new capital from the countryside during the 19th century. In the Finnish army, soldiers with Jewish backgrounds fought allied with Nazi Germany from 1941 to 1944. According to Ekholm, it became especially important for the veterans with Jewish backgrounds to plead to the idea of Finland fighting its own war, independent from Germany.

The book would have benefitted from a clearer intersectional and gendered perspective. Women are often invisible and for example sexual minorities forgotten. A positive example of taking into account “internal” discrepancies is Panu Pulma’s article, which brings out the contradictions within Romany communities. The Romany have experienced and are still experiencing blatant discrimination in Finland, unpretentiously documented in Pulma’s text. Veli-Pekka Lehtola’s article on the discrimination of the Sami people brings forward the still existing understanding of Finland as an equal country. The consensus easily hides inequalities and supports equality based on the idea of everyone having the same possibilities and deserving the same support, denying affirmative action. According to Lehtola, in Norway the discrimination of the Sami has been official: the Sami were openly debarred by legislation. In Finland, the strategy of shutting out was silencing: the initiatives to improve the rights of the Sami became caught up in the processes, not taking shape in everyday life. In Finland, Sami activism started when several Sami groups were gathered together to escape the finale of the Second World War in Finland, which ended up in the destruction of Lapland. This is an interesting and stirring view to the post-war years often seen as uniform and homogenous.

With its eleven diverse articles, *Mångkulturalitet, migration och minoriteter i Finland under tre sekel* is an important contribution. The book offers all-round education for everyone living in Finland, not only researchers working with migration and minorities. It is elaborately edited and written in clear language, which implies clear thinking. An understanding that there are different views to the complicated issues is not central but clearly visible. This stance opens a path to dialogue with debaters who do not share

the cosmopolitan ideas researchers often highlight. One of the concluding articles is Markku Mattila's study on eugenics. The article makes the reader ponder what the blind spots of today's research are.

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