

PORQUE É QUE A NATUREZA TEM SIDO RELEVANTE NOS PROVÉRBIOS FINLANDESES?

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Resumo

A relação entre a natureza e os provérbios é definida pela sociedade com suas necessidades e suas ideias. A coleta e a pesquisa de provérbios estão vinculadas à sociedade. No século XIX, quando a Finlândia lutou pela independência, o neo-humanismo de Johann Gottfried von Herder teve um efeito sobre o *status* da poesia popular e a sua importância para o desenvolvimento da nação. A teoria do clima de Herder dá grande ênfase às condições de vida criadas pela geografia, clima e história. Antes disso, no século XVIII, David Hume notou diferenças na mentalidade entre os humanos. Na maioria das vezes, as diferenças refletiam diferentes ambientes e condições naturais. Influenciado pelo romantismo nacional, o nativo finlandês e o espaço natural foram procurados entre as pessoas. Não era tanto procurado na vida cotidiana das pessoas, mas na tradição coletada entre as pessoas. O romantismo que idealizou a linguagem e a cultura folclórica na Finlândia enfatizou a ligação entre a natureza e a tradição cultural do povo, observada na linguagem e na poesia popular, a que também pertenciam os provérbios. As coleções de poesia popular e provérbios de Lönnrot também foram uma resposta à sensação nacional do período do Romantismo. Mesmo na medida em que tanto os poemas populares quanto os provérbios foram modificados para se parecerem com os textos do *Kalevala*. Na formação da identidade nacional, a natureza e a relação das pessoas com a natureza ocuparam um lugar significativo.

Palavras-chave: linguagem, nacionalismo, paremiografia, paremiologia, provérbio como símbolo, teoria do clima.

Curriculum Vitae

Liisa Granbom-Herranen concentra a sua pesquisa atual em paremiologia folclorística na Universidade de Turku, Departamento de Folclorística. Obteve o segundo doutoramento em folclorística e o anterior é em (educação). É docente (professor associado) em folclorística na Universidade de Turku e em educação na Universidade de Jyväskylä na Finlândia. Os seus estudos são multidisciplinares, pois o principal interesse pelos estudos folclóricos está relacionado com os provérbios, com o conceito de metáfora na filosofia, bem como às questões de poder, autoridade e autonomia na educação. Entre outras atividades académicas, é membro da Associação Internacional de Paremiologia e também da Sociedade Europeia de Fraseologia. Compilou com a Dr. Outi Lauhakangas uma base de dados de reposição dos artigos do ICP publicados a partir de 2008 em (http://www.folklore.ee/rl/fo/koostoo:tavira/index_c.html).

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WHY HAS NATURE BEEN RELEVANT IN FINNISH PROVERBS?

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Abstract

The relationship between nature and proverbs is defined by society with its needs and its ideas. The collecting and research of proverbs are tied to the society. In the 19th century, when Finland strived for independence, had Johann Gottfried von Herder's neo-humanism an effect on the status of folk poetry and its importance to the development of the nation. Herder's climate theory puts great emphasize on the living conditions created by geography, climate, and history. Prior to this in the 18th century, David Hume noted differences in mindsets between humans. Most often the differences reflected different environments and natural conditions.

Influenced by national romanticism, Finnish native and natural-related space was sought among the people. It was not so much sought out in the everyday life of the people as in the tradition collected from among the people. Romanticism idealizing language and folk culture in Finland emphasized the connection between nature and the cultural tradition of the people, seen in language and folk poetry, which proverbs also belonged to. Lönnrot's collections of folk poetry and proverbs were also one response to the national sensation of the Romanticism period. Even to the extent that both folk poems and proverbs were modified to resemble texts in *Kalevala*. In the formation of national identity, nature and the relationship of the people to nature got on a significant position.

Key-words: language, nationalism, paremiography, paremiology, proverb as a symbol, theory of climate.

Introduction

The article focuses on the connection between proverbs and ideological movements. Although the focus of this article here is on Finnish culture and history, on Finnish proverbs, most of the observations can be generalized to other societies and folk traditions. Ideological movements direct and guide society, its political strategies.¹ These strategies are in the centre of development in the society. In 19th century Finland the education of common people was seen as one of the most powerful ways towards the independent nation state. Oral history with folktales played an important role in this education process. (Granbom-Herranen 2020).

In Finland, the Enlightenment period goes back to the 18th century. Across 19th century Europe, the age of Romanticism began to replace realism and naturalism. As Romanticism idealized the language and culture of the "folk", it led to the idea of a genuine Finnish folk culture and the move toward independence. In Finland, the movement was called Finnish Romanticism or National Romanticism. (Granbom-Herranen 2015, 2020). Beginning in the 1840s, the Fennoman movement formed mainly by representatives of the upper classes. These people had got education at university, most of them were not native Finnish speakers. All of them was men as only boys had a pathway to study leading to university.² These educated men were

building an image of Finland as a unified national entity formed on the basis of a long history, either real or imagined history. The main European philosophical ideas in Finland proved to be useful in Finnish content to the nationality and national identity. The culture of common people played a crucial role among the enlightened upper classes thus it was seen as a proof that the folk had the spiritual resources necessary for the birth of the nation and the national state. (See Karkama 2001).

Paremiography and paremiology are connected with the ideas prevailing in society and time. Actually, it is not possible to think that paremiography could be free of the values of a society. Collections and collectors of proverbs, as well as material stored in archives, are always related with changes in society and larger political movements. As collectors participated in the discourse of which aspects of tradition will be saved for posterity, source criticism is needed when using existing material. It is necessary to ask who collected the proverbs, as well as when and where and for what reason. Also, every collection is based on the collector's (or publisher's) choice of what should be incorporated in the publication. (See more Granbom-Herranen 2015). It is true that many small nations in Europe have asserted their cultural independence through their languages and by collecting proverbs in the vernacular (Dorson 1963).³ Depending on what is valued, people see or do not see certain aspects of the living environment. The only question is, if the collectors have been aware of the valuations they have made (Pöysä1997). (Granbom-Herranen 2020).

Romanticism in Finland, which idolized language and folk culture, highlighted the connection between nature and folk cultural traditions, which also included proverbs. The inspirer of proverb collections in the 19th century was Elias Lönnrot, the compiler of the Kalevala, the Finnish national epic. In 1842, his collection of proverbs called *Suomen kansan sananlaskut* [Proverbs of Finnish Folk] was published. It was considered as the authentic voice of the "folk", but actually it was not, as the content was quite assorted. (See Granbom-Herranen 2015).

In 19th century Europe folk poetry was not only treated as poetry. It was understood as an expression of the collective memory of the folk and thus the nation. It offered plausible knowledge of the culture of the people as well as the history, its ancient customs, beliefs, narratives, and also the events that had received in poetry the mythical form. (Saarelainen 2019). Lönnrot's folklore and proverb collections were also one response to the national reform of the Romanticism period. As mentioned above, proverb publications are always accompanied by the collector's or publisher's decision on the included material. In the end, there is a possibility of purpose-seeking for publications. The earliest mention of the selection of Finnish material is in the commencement speech of Elias Lönnrot's collection of proverbs published in

1842, in which Lönnrot stated that he had included everything “except the expressions which were in themselves mindless parables, or somehow lecherous, lewd. For those I gave no room for publication”⁴, apparently without considering this as a problem (Lönnrot 1981, 8). Lönnrot also “re-wrote” proverbs, thus making the proverb overtures through the use (alliteration) or changes in poetic rhythm to take the form of ancient knowledge belonging to the heroic past. Both folk poems and proverbs were edited to resemble Kalevala’s texts. Neo-humanist conception holds that both individual life and people’s history are oriented towards ideal ends, freedom of individuals and nations. (Karkama 2001).

Johann Gottfried von Herder's⁵ Neo-humanism influenced the status of folklore and its importance for the development of the people. Herder emphasized the position of song and poetry among the manifestations of language. For him it was the earliest form of literature expressing national specificity, thus being the most fundamental element of the national character. At the same time, by no means least under the influence of Herder's ideas, an unlearned people, the raffle, and its poetry were discovered. (Nisbet 2006, Saarelainen 2019).

Finland as a part of the European ideological traditions

As mentioned above, one of the reasons for the interest in proverbs was the growing nationalistic movement, which was exciting the sense of Finnish identity and would later be laid the conceptual foundation for Finnish independence from Russia. (Granbom-Herranen 2015). In the 19th century the linguistic-aesthetic and ethnological-historical meanings intertwined and began to play an important part in Finnishness. (Karkama 2001).

Herder’s attention to the songs of non-literary people (who made up the majority in Finnish area) laid the foundations for the cultural self-awareness of many small nations of Europe. The ultimate message of his ideological notes was that every nation and each folk must have the right to their own language and culture and the opportunity to realize their own history. The cultures of all nations, despite their differences, are equal. Therefore, folk culture and folk poetry plays a central role in Herder's thinking. Due to the variety of nature, civilization, and culture, every nation and nation can, according to Herder's relativistic thinking, carry out humanity in different ways and at different times, and therefore each nation and nation has its own history. (Karkama 2008). This is how and why folk culture and folk poetry played a central role in Herder's thinking.

Also Lönnrot defined folk poetry as the poetry of the unlearned and as a way of generating knowledge and consciousness. According to Lönnrot, folk poetry not only introduces some (supposed) facts, but shapes the whole way the world and human community are perceived,

seen and understood. This was how already Herder understood the main function of folk poetry and the idea is clearly inherited to Lönnrot as well. It is not just about customs, norms, beliefs and explaining the phenomena of nature, but also a very basic understanding of what the world is basically like living and dynamic. Lönnrot's definition of folk poetry also includes placing its origins in the far past and among an unlearned people. (Saarelainen 2019). Herder's purpose was to show that all human beings are ultimately equal and that the same dignity belongs to everyone. The difference in the circumstances does not determine what people everywhere basically are, that is images of God. (Karkama 2007, 242).⁶

The cohesion of nature and society

In the 18th century, David Hume (1924; 1953; 1978) noted the differences in people's ways of thinking. He brought out that in most cases, the differences reflected different environments and natural conditions. In his works, as early as the 17th century, he paid attention to the different environments and conditions. He suggested that the underlying differences in mindsets between people most often lie in different circumstances of life. As Hume stated, differences in manners are mostly motivated by different environments and conditions. Language guides thinking, but living conditions have an effect on the concepts needed in language. (Granbom-Herranen 2008). In the formation of Finnish national identity, nature and the relationship of the people to nature reached a significant position. Perhaps the most impressive has been the picture Zachris Topelius created of the Finnish nature connection, the influence of nature on human nature and world-view. The book *Boken om vårt land* [in Finnish *Maamme kirja*] has been republished time after time, in 90 years: 57 Finnish versions and 20 Swedish or Finland-Swedish ones. In the official education, it has been the guide to Finnishness for four to five generations. The book highlighted natural conditions as one factor determining nationality. (Rantala 2013, Granbom-Herranen 2020).

Historian Johan Jakob Tengström (1787–1858) was a professor of philosophy at the *Keisarillinen Aleksanterin yliopisto* [Imperial Alexander University in Finland] in Helsinki. Also Topelius became his student in the 1830's. Tengström published texts in *Aura*-magazine, which sought to promote the enlightenment thinking in 1817—1818, calling for the study of the Finnish language and compiling folk poetry. However, the themes familiar from Herder's works were included in Tengström's writings. He wrote in a flattering tone about the beautiful nature in Finland, its streams and lakes, mountains, hills and forests. He also ties to this natural beauty to the spiritual qualities of the inhabitants of the country, such as sincerity, independence and reliability. Tengström praised the Finnish soil, which was bisected by streams, lakes,

mountains, hills and forests. On the other hand, he considered the climate of Finland to be an invincible obstacle to the development of culture. The perception leaned on Montesquieu's soil and climate doctrine, according to which people and plants, in different atmospheres and in different places, receive their own physiognomy. The view produced a deterministic world-view, according to which the given conditions determined the limits of development. (Rantala 2013).

However, the relationship between nature and proverbs is defined by society with the needs and ideologies of the society. The national entity, folk, is determined by the characteristic natural environment. The organisms and ecotypes, topography and climate of the environment determine life form. In the case of identity, nature is at least conveyed by the ways of looking at the community. Nature, even in all its barrenness, is cultural, tinged with humanly created classes and esteem. (Anttila 2007). Also, the relationship between nature and proverbs is defined in relation with society. The society defines the needs and thoughts reigned in society. The collecting, recording and research of proverbs always interact with the surrounding society. Herder developed the climate theory from the base of the views of Immanuel Kant and Montesquieu⁷. The term "climate theory" might be misleading to some extent since Herder emphasized the influence not only of climatic, but also of other environmental factors, on the history of folk and cultures. Along with climate, geographical location, vegetation and fauna, and socio-cultural factors (traditions) influenced the course of history. (Rantala 2013, Väyrynen 2006).

In Herder's writings, geographical factors are seen as similarities to mental factors. The impact of natural conditions on national characteristics was also considered in Finland. (Rantala 2013). During the Romanticism period, climate theory was quite universally accepted in Europe. The traditional nature relationship was seen as an integral part of national traditions. New forms of use of nature, especially emerging industry and urbanization were criticized. (Väyrynen 2006).

Summary

Geography, climate and history have created living conditions. Living conditions lay the groundwork for language and its concepts. Language and thinking are necessarily intertwined. Moreover, as each culture is unique, the values of one culture should not be applied to another culture.

As I see, it is justified to draw some conclusions. First, there is no coincidence that the recorded Finnish proverbs show nature. Second, it is not a coincidence that the geographic-historical method received in Finland in the study of proverbs for a hundred years of dominance.

The beautiful nature of Finland, which Topelius, among others, described quite beautifully in his book, could be considered to have supported the growth of both individuals and the nation into good humanity. The nature in Finnish proverbs can be seen as the image of the ideal Finnishness: lofty principles are manifestations of the beautiful and barren nature which brings up people hard-working survivors. Even today this is a divided description of Finnishness. Another question is if this is true.

Endnotes

1. Some background information can be found in my previous presentations in the colloquium, for example, articles from years 2020 [Proverbs in the best-known textbook in Finland – what and why?] and 2018 [Proverbs participate in the nation building].
2. Actually, this was the situation up to 1870 when Maria Tschetschulin became the first female university student in Finland. However, she needed and got the emperor's dispensation from sex.
3. As Robert Howard (2019) puts it, "'vernacular' refers to discourse that is non-institutional".
4. "paitsi mitkä olivat itsestään mielettömiä vertauksia, eli muuten rietassanaisia, rivoja, joillen ei ole taittua sias antaa" (Lönnrot 1981, 8).
5. Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803) was a German Lutheran pastor, churchman and theologian. He was scholar of history, language, literature, morality and social theories. His theories are well-known among folklorists and paremiologists, at least in Finland and Estonia. If they are unknown to the reader, I recommend familiarizing yourself with the topic thus this article refer to Herder's theories but does not explain them.
6. Pertti Karkama refers to the original writings in *Herders Sämmtliche Werke I–XXXIII herausgeben von Bernhard Suphan. Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung 1877–1913*, volume XIII: *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (1784–1791).
7. Charles Louis de Seconda, Baron de la Brède et de Montesquieu (1689–1755).

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Curriculum Vitae

Liisa Granbom-Herranen — my current research focuses on folkloristic paremiology. I gained my second PhD in folkloristics and the earlier one is in PhD (education). I have the title of docent (adjunct professor) at University of Turku, Department of Folkloristics, where my specific field is paremiology. I also have the title of docent (adjunct professor) in education at University of Jyväskylä in Finland, specific field in informal education. My studies are multidisciplinary as the main interest in folkloristic studies is related to the proverbs, the concept of metaphor in philosophy as well as the questions of power, authority, and autonomy in education. I am a member of the Associação Internacional de Paremiologia / International Association of Paremiology (AIP-IAP).

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