

Abstracts

The concept of people and its roots in christianity

By Thomas S. Suenson

The author finds the obliteration of the term “folk” (“people”) in Danish cultural-scientific context striking. Could the reason be that the dominant paradigm does not allow for the use of the term, and if so, why? Drawing upon a well-known early 19th-century theological strife in Denmark as exemplar, the author goes about demonstrating how one might employ the concept of paradigm in a humanities discipline such as European Ethnology in order to assess the problem. In the process of doing so, he brings up some findings from his master’s thesis about an early 20th century group of people engaged in setting up a local museum in a rural hamlet in western Zealand, not for the pursuit of history as a pastime but in order to express their national sentiment. The author further examines the assertion, to be found throughout much contemporary writing, that Danish national identity is a comparatively recent phenomenon, finding evidence that this is a misguided conception.

What does the dictionaries tell us? Towards a theory of Danish identity

By Ove Korsgaard

Dictionaries of the old Danish and Norwegian languages are a key to understanding the concept of people. If the word is looked up it is discovered that it isn’t associated with nation - as it is in the contemporary Danish dictionary - but with household and kinship. Through centuries people was a concept of household and kinship. Each house had a master and each master had his people, whether the master in question is a master tailor, the monarch or God our Father. As such, a sovereign people didn’t exist - until it was made. What did exist was an understanding of people as subject. In order to make the transition to democracy the concept of people had

to be upgraded. This was what happened during the 18th and 19th centuries. The concept of nation has also been through a succession of transformations. From a contemporary perspective, the decisive event was the coupling of the concepts of people and nation. This happened firstly in England and Holland during the 17th century, secondly in France in 1789. This coupling is a requirement for nationalism. This understanding of nationalism raises the question: What was the basis for identity building before nationalism became a strong identity building factor? This question hasn't yet been examined and answered to a satisfactory degree. Thus it is of great necessity to gain a deeper understanding of identity building in the period before people and nation became twin concepts.

Doing Folk – Nordic citizenship ceremonies in the 21st century

By Tine Damsholt

For decades states overseas have held citizenship ceremonies to create conscientious and loyal citizens. Citizenship ceremonies are, however, also a new cultural phenomenon in Western Europe. Every year a large number of people obtain citizenship in a new country and thereby they become members of another people/folk – in the political sense.

Within the last few years this conclusion of the naturalization process has been celebrated in the Nordic countries by the holding of a citizenship ceremony. By musical performances, speeches, food and drink, and by the absence or presence of national symbols the people and the nation are performed in both words and doings. In that sense the people/folk that is performed at the specific ceremonies is not definite - it is ambiguous. From a performative and comparative perspective the article examines three citizenship ceremonies in three Nordic countries – Denmark, Sweden and Norway – and analyses how the people/folk and the national state are enacted at these three ceremonies. Furthermore the article, by briefly referring to ceremonies in Australia and England, is analysing how various but at the same time intertwined versions and ideas of citizenship and people/folk are performed at all three ceremonies.

To be or choosing to be. Language and national identity as cultural elements – exemplified by the language change in Angel in 1800-50

By Peter Dragsbo

Language has been a key element in the nation building processes of Europe. In the peninsula Angel, situated between Flensborg Fjord and Slien, the vernacular language was Danish until the 13th century. In the 14-15th century, however, German had spread in this region and in the start of the 19th century the population could be regarded as multilingual, with Danish as

the most widespread vernacular and German languages as trade and administrative languages. During the first half of the 19th century the language of Angel rapidly changed into German vernacular. This was merely a matter of social and cultural reorientation towards urban culture, followed by other changes in material culture. The change of language became, however, linked with the political dispute about national affiliation, and as a result of their ideology of nation linked with language and culture both sides had difficulties in coping with the language change. The Danish side would argue that the change was 'unnatural', even 'treachery', while the German side would claim that it resulted from a 'natural' cultural evolution. The final point is that the language change of Angel clearly demonstrates that language and national identity is a matter of choice, especially in borderlands.

Since the language change became a topic in the Danish and German nation building processes, it is relevant to look at the state and life mode theory of Thomas Højrup in interpreting these findings. In this perspective the Danish multinational 'helstat' (United State) succeeded to interpellate the inhabitants of Schleswig-Holstein until about 1800. But as the conception of an ideal state changed, the inhabitants were forced to choose between competing national projects, of which the Prussian-German turned out to be the strongest. Though the state- and life mode theory can also be applied to the period before 1800, other theories have greater explanatory power in this period since the elder state forms didn't have a unifying ideology at their cores in the same sense as the nation states. Interpreting cultural processes in the pre-industrial society, theories of 'middle range' dealing with horizontal exchange of culture could have more relevance.

Another "other": national and global communities at Düppel Hill

By Mads Daugbjerg

The battlefield of Düppel, just north of the Danish-German border, is the site of interpretive and ceremonial contestation in these years. As the site of the Danish defeat to the Prussian army in 1864, Düppel has been regarded as a bastion of Danishness and ultimate sacrifice in the name of the nation by generations of Danes.

The article argues, however, that such national readings are being increasingly challenged in recent years by subtle attempts at rendering Düppel as a site imbued with values of an alleged 'global' character. Drawing upon material from ethnographic fieldwork in the region, the article documents such parallel developments at two central settings: (1) the annual military ceremonies of the Düppel Day, commemorating the fallen of 1864, and (2) the day-to-day historical interpretation at the experimental Battlefield Centre located right in the heart of the 1864 battlefield. In both cases, it is argued, the traditional one-sided Danish perspective on the war is vying with more recent agendas of inclusion of former enemies and reconciliation. In place of the stereotypical German 'other' that has historically shaped Danish identities, these recent developments seem to spell out alternative, less tangible 'others' in the shape of

proponents of worldviews taken to be 'antidemocratic'.

Thus, though there is a clear orientation towards universal humanitarian ideals, it is noted, in conclusion, that even within such internationalist discourses one finds allegations of (new interpretations of) Danishness in which Düppel, and thus Denmark, is imagined as an exemplary centre of such 'universal' values.

" ... the Nation is the Norwegian People". The Norwegian conception of nation in theory and practice in 1814

By Rasmus Glenthøj

The Norwegian elite was the driving force behind the national and democratic upheaval in Norway in 1814. Even though the upper classes in Norway were tied to Denmark through culture, education and family relations, they had a feeling of being Norwegian. Their concept of nation and nationality was, however, ambiguous. For educated Norwegians these terms could both refer to a sort of citizenship and a more ethnic concept of nationhood. Those who in 1814 primarily understood nationality in political terms were ready to recognize all who swore allegiance to the Norwegian Constitution and the Norwegian cause as Norwegians. Others who had a more cultural and ethnic understanding of nationality - which was founded on descent, languages, environment, history, and tradition - fought the former interpretation of the concept. During the constitutional assembly at Eidsvold in 1814 the two different perceptions of nationality clashed in a debate on who could be granted Norwegian citizenship and who could serve as civil servants. In its final form the Constitution's concept of nationality was primarily political. However, even in this liberal interpretation one had to speak Norwegian and have a Lutheran confession to enjoy the full extent of Norwegian citizenship. Furthermore, the legal definition of Norwegian nationality did not necessarily reflect the general perception of the concept. Throughout the 19th Century and into the 20th Century there were intense discussions about what it means to be Norwegian.

Martyr for Russia – The canonisation of the last Russian tsar

By Laura Maria Schütze

With the canonization of the last tsar in the year 2000 the Russian-Orthodox Church continued a custom they hadn't used for 400 years. In history books Nicholas II (1894-1917) is described at best as a mediocre ruler that was incapable of building bridges between the Russian people and the tsar. So why was he canonized?

The article examines why the Church chose to canonize a secular ruler about a decade after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Here three generations of Russians were brought up with a minimal knowledge of the tradition and rituals of the Church. But the collapse meant that the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics had now become the new state Russia. The need for a new Russian identity was evident and the Church would play a central part in this.

Since grand prince Vladimir had christened Russia in AD 988 a close bond between the Orthodox christianity and the Russian rulers existed, and so the Russian history is rich in holy princes. The first Russian saints are the princes Boris and Gleb, who like Nicholas II was canonized as 'passion-sufferers', a uniquely Russian type of martyrs that are killed for political reasons, but in their death imitates Christ by suffering and dying as him, as opposed to "regular" martyrs dying for him. It's most likely because Boris and Gleb were princes of Russia that they were canonized at all and hence "passion-sufferers" became a category of Russians saints.

By examining why the two princes were canonized it's possible to get an understanding of the reasons behind the canonization of Nicholas II one millennium later. The young christian state needed myths and rituals that could create a Russian-Orthodox tradition.

With the canonization of the last Russian tsar, the Church tried to explain the pain and suffering that killed millions of Russians during the Soviet period. The tsar family were killed by the Bolsheviks in 1917 and hence they were 'the first' out of many to suffer under the oppression of the communists. With the canonization of Nicholas II a myth was created that would explain the unity of Russia, the Russians and the Church in post-Soviet Russia.