

Cultural Heritage, the Swedish Folklife Sphere, and the Others¹

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We are in the midst of a global "cult of heritage," asserts English geographer, historian and professor of heritage studies, David Lowenthal (1998, 1–30). Indeed, cultural heritage (or simply heritage) and its many equivalents or near equivalents, such as *kulturarv* (Swedish, Danish, Norwegian), *Erbgut* (German), *patrimoine* and *héritage culturel* (French), *menningararfur* (Icelandic), *turath* (Arabic), and the recent Chinese coinage *wenhua yichan*, are becoming increasingly dominant in cultural politics the world over. This happens at the same time as people and ideas circulate at an unprecedented pace, as many countries are receiving more refugees and migrants than ever before, and as more and more minorities and indigenous peoples are vying for self-determination. In what way is the ascendancy of cultural heritage as term and phenomenon linked to the ascendancy of intense multicultural co-existence? How is the heritage of various ethnic Others to be understood in relationship to that which is regarded as Our Own? These questions are unresolved and controversial in many countries, not least in the one which is at the center of this paper: Sweden. As recently

as the 1970s, Swedes regarded themselves as exceedingly homogeneous with respect to culture, religion, and language. However, it has become increasingly difficult to maintain such a self-image: during the past twenty or thirty years Sweden has received refugees and immigrants from all over the globe to such an extent that now almost one fourth of the 9 million inhabitants were born outside the country or are children of recent arrivals from afar.

On the next few pages I will discuss the rise of the Swedish word for cultural heritage, *kulturarv*, in a fairly long historical perspective. I will concentrate on an area of public culture that might be called the "sphere of the vernacular" or the "folklife sphere" (Klein 2000a). Included in this sphere are a variety of "folk" museums and "folk" disciplines, such as folklore, folklife studies, and ethnology, and such activities and phenomena as the homecraft and folk music movements. I will pay particular attention to the relationship between *kulturarv* and a few other terms and ideas, notably "folk," compounds with "folk," and "cultural difference." For the sake of concentration, the discussion will be linked to the Nordic Museum in Stockholm and to the scholarly disciplines that evolved out of the concerns of this museum.

In some ways, this paper can be read as an historical review of a cluster of concepts in relationship to ideological, political, and social changes. To some readers the discussion might seem to be mostly a disciplinary history touching on well-known as well as less well-known ideas. Yet, in a broad sense, this text is an attempt to enter the field of conceptual

history and to address the question of how a term emerges and how this emergence affects other ideas, phenomena, and concepts (Koselleck 2002). In a still broader sense, this article is concerned with cultural politics. I wish to point to some of the forms of political activism and social planning in which the Swedish folklife sphere has been involved ever since its appearance and to point to some of the forms at issue during the current ascendancy of cultural heritage.

A Grammar of Forms to Glorify the Fatherland²

As early as the 1600s, at the height of its imperialist ambitions, Sweden instituted legislation aimed to protect its monuments, churches, and other remains and traditions. The ultimate goal was to glorify the royalty and the nation-state and, in 1666, the *Antikvitetskollegium* ("Board of Antiquities") received the task to search all around the kingdom to find (*upspana*) and preserve not only material antiquities but also orally performed legends and ballads. As time went on, these ambitions were modified and, during the 1700s, the official interest turned to searching out and describing that which was economically useful for the country; in particular, Linnaeus' explorations and travelogues contributed to a new sense of discovery of the land.

The second half of the 1800s constituted yet another era with a heightened interest in locating and protecting the cultural achievements of the nation. But now the conditions were vastly different from what they had been before. In Sweden as well as elsewhere, this was a

period of immense societal transformations: agricultural restructuring, population increase, urbanization, industrialization, crop failures, emigration, workers' movements, temperance movements, struggles to achieve universal suffrage, and new communication technologies such as the railroad and the telegraph. This was also a time when new scholarly disciplines were created; some of them, such as art history, archeology, natural history, and ethnography, evolved in part because of the needs of the museums. Both the museums and the disciplines were established to serve the nation-states and their modernization. But the nation-states were no islands. Rather, museums and other scholarly and scientific establishments were developed in a spirit of international cooperation and competition. To "have" culture "was one of the main duties of a modern state" (Beckman 1998, 17) and the cultural achievements of nations were repeatedly compared in international congresses and world's fairs.

Artur Hazelius (1833–1901) was one of several learned and enthusiastic museum founders and system builders. As a young man he wrote a doctoral dissertation on Old Norse literature and, in 1873, he founded the Scandinavian-Ethnographic Collection, which in 1880 was renamed the Nordic Museum (*Nordiska museet*). At the beginning, it was by no means clear what kinds of materials were to be emphasized: skulls and craniums were among the possibilities. Eventually, it was decided that the Nordic Museum was to concentrate on the cultural history (*kulturhistoria*) of Sweden.³ All social classes, groups, and geographical

regions were to be represented: the nobility, the urban bourgeoisie, the tradespeople, the exotic Saami, and the peasantry (the growing numbers of urban/industrial workers were not considered as possibilities). Thus, in a broad sense, Hazelius was involved in a multicultural experiment. Yet, in actuality, he gave priority to varieties of peasant (*allmoge*) or rural culture. Initially, this priority met with resistance from official quarters, but Hazelius prevailed and, in 1891, when the open-air museum, Skansen, welcomed its first visitors, the emphasis on the peasantry was evident.⁴ Placed on a hilly area of Stockholm, not far from the spot where a new and grand Nordic Museum building was to be built, Skansen was organized as a miniature of Sweden containing animals, houses, people, and industry typical of most of the provinces from north to south.⁵

The emphasis on peasant culture was, of course, entirely in keeping with Romantic Nationalism and with Hazelius' own fascination with peasant customs and, in particular, with peasant costumes. This emphasis became even more pronounced during the first years of the 1900s through the influence of one of the few academically trained employees at the museum, Nils-Edward Hammarstedt (Hammarlund-Larsson 2004, 33). To him, to Hazelius, and to others, a nation was "naturally grown" and the peasants were closer to its spirit, soul, and soil than other social classes. Hazelius thought that if he could open the eyes of all Swedes—particularly the urban middle classes—to the beautiful sides of peasant life, their feelings for the fatherland would be awakened and main-

tained. To teach all Swedes to "know themselves" was the great task of the museum, and Hazelius pronounced the spiritual and material traditions of the peasantry as the base upon which the future cultural repertoires and moral standards of the nation were to rest. To that end, he and his collaborators engaged in a massive harvesting of peasant material culture and traditions.

But peasant creations could not be exhibited in an urban public sphere in their pristine condition. They had to be made pleasing, aesthetically and morally, to suit refined tastes and discriminating audiences. The shaping of a beautified repertoire of peasant traditions was part of a reform project to educate all citizens, to make them better, more ready to become moderns (Eriksen 1993). What took place was simultaneously an act of preservation and modernization. Historians, artists, crafts enthusiasts, and others participated in the massive efforts to study, preserve, exhibit, celebrate, present, beautify, promote, or sell the most aesthetically pleasing of the costumes, tools, furniture, and other arts of the country folk.

In the context of this article, two aspects of the activities are of particular interest. One is the terms that were used. For example, while Hazelius and his collaborators frequently emphasized that the new museum was concerned with *kulturhistoria* (cultural history), I have found no instances in which they used *kulturarv*. The word did exist, however. It is said that Victor Rydberg, a celebrated novelist who also called himself a "cultural historian," introduced it into Swedish in 1883 (SAOB 1939-; Svensson 2003).

Hazelius often spoke about *arvet* (the inheritance) from our fathers but not about *kulturarv*. Nor did he use folk or compounds with folk (such as *folkvisa* or *folksaga*) nearly as frequently as scholars tend to assume.⁶ He preferred such words as *allmoge* (peasantry) or *bönder* (farmers). Above all, he and his colleagues did not debate or theorize the folk or folk compounds. Indeed, "folklife research" had not yet been invented. Nevertheless, one might speak about the last few decades of the 19th century as a period when an inchoate folklife sphere was being shaped, i.e. a sphere in which facets of the life of peasant farmers were drawn into a bourgeois public sphere (Klein 2000a).

Another aspect of particular interest here is cultural difference. It is important to emphasize that Hazelius and other intellectuals did not aim to erase such differences, when they made peasant culture part of a public sphere. On the contrary, they were eager to select and celebrate the best and the most original local and regional traditions. Of all the regions, Dalarna became the most valorized. Since the Reformation, the peasantry of Dalarna, had played a special role in Swedish legendary history and now artists, composers, art school teachers, economic reformers, literary luminaries, and other intellectuals moved there in unprecedented numbers, thereby aiding Hazelius in his mission. The midsummer celebrations, costumes, houses, and paintings of the region were selected and transferred to Skansen, where they were highlighted as the best that Sweden had to offer.⁷ But neither Hazelius nor the artists and intellectuals

thought that preservation was their only goal. Most of them also emphasized that they wished to create something new on the basis of inspiration from peasant culture, something that was modern in spirit and would appeal to contemporary middle-class buyers or readers. Nor did reformers such as Lilli Zickerman, the forceful creator of the Swedish homecraft movement (*hemslöjdsrörelsen*), romanticize the peasants; rather, the peasants had to be taught to recover some of their forgotten skills to suit a new era (Klein 2000b).

But it was not only Dalarna and other favored regions that were given priority in the selection processes. Included in the canonized cultural history were also the cultural expressions of the country's most exotic group, the Saami (until the latter half of the 20th century, referred to as Lapps) who had long played an important role as Sweden's conquered exotic Others. When Skansen opened in 1891, the Saami were represented with a camp of their own, complete with reindeer; that camp is still there.⁸ However, the culture of other minorities was not similarly exhibited.⁹ The nomadic Roma (or Gypsies) were largely excluded, even though a gypsy-camp was temporarily arranged at Skansen in 1904. But the Roma were considered too foreign to receive a permanent space there and they were long excluded from most public arenas. Until the end of the 20th century, Jews and Jewish culture were, by and large, also surrounded by silence in the folklife sphere (Klein 2004). And, as noted, industrial or urban workers were largely excluded from this sphere until at least the 1930s.

In spite of the many exclusions and silences, Hazelius and his collaborators performed a bit of magic. They assured Swedes that they aimed to give them a sense of cultural wholeness at the same time as they would preserve provincial customs and dialects. In other words, maintaining difference was simultaneously an act of unification. At Skansen regional diversity stood out as a mosaic of differences, enclosed into one unit and surrounded by a high fence. These efforts to produce unity out of diverse rural traditions became the basis for the development of a special cultural repertoire with a distinct "feeling tone" or "structure of feeling" (Williams 1984, 64–88). And to this repertoire—easily recognized by all insiders—were gradually added other phenomena so that diverse peasant traditions came to coexist with flags, selected literary works, archeological remains, and many other phenomena. With much help from the mass media, Swedes have continued to add pieces to their national repertoire. It is remarkable that this conglomerate of add-ons and re-dos continues to produce such deep feelings: tears of joyful recognition as well as ironic jokes (cf. Billig 1995). To some Swedes this repertoire is not only silly and embarrassing but also a sign of murky chauvinism. But to many others it continues to play a powerful role, not least in providing logos for the tourist industry and symbols of Swedish business around the globe, i.e. in "branding" the country (cf. McCrone, Morris, and Kiely 1995).

In a still broader perspective, we are speaking about a complex (and still partially unwritten) chapter in the history of modernity, a chapter that involves all

peoples, albeit in different ways. Despite historical differences, different countries have followed, and continue to follow, a "grammar" of customs and traditions similar to the one that was shaped in Sweden.¹⁰ With Orvar Löfgren (1993) we could perhaps speak about a "tool-kit" of symbols. All countries need costumes, dances, tunes, celebrations, stories, and festivals, just as much as they need flags, national anthems, automobile companies, weather systems, and ancient monuments. If they do not have them, they had better make them up.

The Folk Home, Folklife Research, and Cultural Analysis

The tool-kit or grammar also furnished the basic genres of phenomena that were studied within the new scholarly discipline called "Nordic and Comparative Folklife Research" (*Nordisk och jämförande folklivsforskning*). Although the name was coined as early as 1909 (Hultkrantz 1960, 133), the discipline as such can be said to have been founded in 1918, when the Nordic Museum, thanks to a private donation, instituted a professorship in the field. In other words, the discipline was created because the museum needed researchers who could study the now vast collections of artifacts and texts. The first holder of the new position was Nils Lithberg, but it was in 1934, when Sigurd Erixon—the future giant of Swedish folklife research—was invited to hold the position, that the discipline and the two museums established themselves as true forces in the Swedish academic and political landscape. This was done in ways that differed considerably from Hazelius' vision.¹¹

However, while *kulturhistoria* continued to be an important word, neither Sigurd Erixon nor any of the other eminent scholars of his cohort or slightly younger than him—such as Sigfrid Svensson—used *kulturarv*. The word was not banned from their vocabularies, but it was seldom used and, above all, not a subject of conceptual debates. Instead, the important words to them were tradition, culture and, in particular, folk and various compounds with folk. In fact, the word "folk" was used and debated much more at this time than during Hazelius' lifetime. To some extent, its prominence from the 1920s through the 1950s was doubtless the result of influence from German museums and German scholarship. Not all the inspiration came from Germany, however. Erixon and his followers also studied British social anthropology, North American cultural anthropology, and sociology.

In particular, the new discipline of sociology came to have a strong impact on Erixon and some of his students. As a field, sociology was concerned with social planning, a political activity in which Erixon, along with many other academics, was involved during the 1930s and after World War II. This social planning was part of a monumental effort to create a welfare state or a *folkhem* ("folk home") to use the phrase once proposed by radical conservatives in their efforts to unite Swedes, a phrase which, in 1928, became a powerful metaphor for the efforts of a succession of Social Democratic governments (Wittrock 2004, 56). And so, the "folk" discipline, "Nordic and Comparative Folklife Research" went hand in hand with the shaping of a modern "folk

home." As Bo G. Nilsson (2004) observes in an important essay, the period from 1930–1970 constituted the Swedish "folk era," not only in terms of governmental politics as a whole, but also insofar as Sigurd Erixon and his successor, Mats Rehnberg, placed the discipline of folklife research in the service of state social planning. Both Erixon and Rehnberg were members of various planning committees and, for a while, Erixon collaborated with Alva Myrdal who along with her husband, eminent economist Gunnar Myrdal, was one of the architects of the Swedish welfare state.¹² It was during Erixon's era that a true "folklife sphere" can be said to have flourished.

Erixon argued that folklife research offers "the kind of information in support of the building of a democratic society that cannot otherwise be had" (Nilsson 2004, 75). Folklife research was not to be conducted for its own sake; rather, researchers were to help the planners of a modern society to avoid mistakes committed in the past, for example during the break-up of traditional villages. Where modern planners ignored "the human factor," folklife scholars could step in to fill the gaps. To Erixon and his colleagues, the first task of the folklife scholars at the Nordic Museum was to investigate the life of rural and urban common people during the approximately 200 years preceding their own time; the scholars were to strive to reach back to "the oldest structure of the contemporary period" (Nilsson 2004, 71). In particular, the immense documentation of traditional housing and village structures undertaken by Erixon and his

collaborators was potentially highly useful when new housing was to be built for all the members of the rural proletariat who had migrated to the cities in search of jobs.

In order to further increase the supply of knowledge, Sigurd Erixon (together with Gösta Berg and Sigfrid Svensson) began, in 1928, to send out open-ended questionnaires to a network of respondents all over Sweden, an activity for which he had obtained substantial state funding.¹³ In the 1940s and 1950s, Rehnberg, in collaboration with different unions, followed up this effort by distributing questionnaires to urban and industrial workers. His and Erixon's efforts inaugurated an increasing acceptance of working class life into the folklife sphere and Erixon further contributed to this with a book he wrote on harbor workers of Stockholm (Erixon 1949). Yet, the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie continued to have a presence at the Nordic Museum, not least due to the work of art historians, such as Sigurd Wallin. Thus, in a limited sense, the "upper classes" were included in the folklife sphere.

Yet, in the actual investigations, peasant material culture before the "structural transformations" of the 20th century remained the most important topic of folklife research. With the exception of research devoted to traditional Saami culture and a few investigations of the conditions of Roma and travelers—conducted with the aim to further their assimilation into Swedish life—little was written by folklife scholars about "ethnic" diversity in customs and traditions. Indeed, the 1950s seem to have consti-

tuted a peak period for the idea that Swedes were extraordinarily homogeneous. For example, in 1953, a widely distributed encyclopedia unabashedly stated that the Swedish population "with regards to race, language, and religion, is more homogeneous than the population of most other countries" (*Bonniers Folklexikon* 1951–1953).

The Social Democratic planning ideology during the 1930s–1950s had given folklife researchers and employees in cultural historical museums a special role in social planning. Yet, a few years later another scholar was to give folklife research an even more pronounced role in these activities: Åke Daun. He achieved great visibility as an often highly critical member of governmental committees and as a media personality. His influence was considerable during the late 1960s through the early 1980s, when he was involved with community planning and housing policies. But where Erixon had argued that folklife scholars were useful because of their familiarity with the housing traditions of the past, Daun maintained that they were useful because of their understanding of contemporary social life.

Inspired by Fredrik Barth, Daun fashioned a new kind of "anthropological" folklife research.¹⁴ To him and his followers the "folk" terminology was detrimental to the development of an academic discipline. He worked hard to eliminate it and was in favor of the name change at all Swedish universities during 1971–1972, when Folklife Research became European Ethnology or (in daily parlance) Ethnology. Yet, at this very time, "folk" and folk cultural research under-

went an unexpected popular renaissance. Folk music, "back to rural life" movements, and leftist radical movements stood at their height and university courses in folkloristics attracted great numbers of students. However, the emphasis in these courses remained historical; it was primarily rural traditions of the past that were taught. Nevertheless the meaning of the word "folk" had changed. It now referred not only to peasant culture but, even more, to the culture of the industrial proletariat, i.e. the children of the once impoverished rural dwellers who had moved to the cities or emigrated a few decades earlier. However, the young radicals of the 1970s who studied folklore (in the sense of oral traditions) and sympathized with a "folk" did not really include studies of minorities and ethnic groups in their vision. And while some had begun taking an interest in the situation of new immigrants, this interest seldom included customs or oral traditions. Nor did the young radicals contemplate a broadening of the concept of the folk to encompass "us all," i.e. the kind of broadening that Alan Dundes (1965) introduced in the United States.

Furthermore, and not surprisingly, the term *kulturarv* was hardly ever used by ethnologists. In Daun's opinion, ethnologists were not at all in the business of "preserving and presenting," neither folk culture nor any other kind of culture of the past or the present. In his view, the task of ethnologists was to describe contemporary social life in order to bring about political changes. To him and to those influenced by him, the past history of the field, in particular its links to Na-

tional Romanticism and to cultural historical museums, was a heavy burden to be shed.

However at Lund University, the seat of the second major Swedish department of Folklife Research/European Ethnology, the situation was different. Here Sigfrid Svensson (who had once worked at the Nordic Museum with Sigurd Erixon) and his successor, Nils-Arvid Bringéus, continued to emphasize the rural culture of the past and its links to the present. But at the same time, the concept of culture was increasingly in focus. It was "culture" that was debated in Lund in the 1970s, not the "folk" or "tradition," and certainly not "cultural heritage." This is true of Bringéus' influential introductory textbook, *Människan som kulturvarelse* ("Man as cultural being"), first published in 1976 and reissued many times. And culture is even more in focus in a seminal book by Jonas Frykman and Orvar Löfgren (1979), translated into English as *Culture Builders. A Historical Anthropology of Middle Class Life* (1986). Spirited and full of ideas, this book combines British anthropological structuralism, the thinking of Norbert Elias, and of sociologists such as Richard Sennett into an entirely fresh mixture; the book inaugurated a special Swedish ethnological brand of cultural analysis in which the works of Clifford Geertz were also central (see also Ehn and Löfgren 1982).

The new kind of cultural analysis became more influential among young scholars than Daun's emphasis on social planning, not least because of Billy Ehn's inspired field investigations of daily life in medical companies, day-care centers,

and other places of work (Ehn 1981, 1983). "Cultural analysis" was in principle not adverse to museum work or studies of cultural history. But even so, the proponents of ethnological "cultural analysis" of the 1980s and early 1990s clearly distanced themselves from "the old folklife research" and its emphasis on the material traditions of what was often ironically called "the old peasant society" (*det gamla bondesamhället*).

Furthermore, the term *kulturarv* played no role in the cultural analysis developed by young ethnologists; if it was used at all, it was in an unmarked sense. And in many ways, these attitudes prevailed through most of the 1990s: the ties between the discipline of ethnology and the cultural historical museums were brittle. At the same time, many ethnologists became actively concerned with studying the migrations that within a few years had transformed Sweden into an intensely multilingual and multicultural country. Yet, few if any of these ethnological studies concerned cultural history, folklore, or material culture of the kind that Hazelius and, to a great extent, Erixon too had placed at the center of their work. This was also true of the studies of immigration and the multicultural society conducted within sociology, anthropology, history, political science, and other fields. Research efforts concentrated on employment, education, and health care, not on the arts, traditions and cultural history—vernacular or otherwise—of the new arrivals.

At the same time, a cultural historical museum, such as the Nordic Museum, was struggling to maintain its task

to preserve and present 400 years of Swedish cultural history and simultaneously make room on its agenda to include the culture of immigrant groups and the cultural mixtures that were being shaped in Sweden. The task did not become easier when, in 1995, the cultural historical museums—like all other public institutions—were given an official "diversity mandate" (*mångfaldsuppdrag*) (Högdahl 2004; Högdahl and Svensson 2004) and were enjoined by the government to take into account in all their activities that Sweden is now multicultural. To make things even more difficult, the museums received little support from the ethnologists with whom they were historically linked. Rather, there was suspicion on both sides, and the Nordic Museum, (along with other cultural historical museums) had to look elsewhere for inspiration. Its old research ally—an ally that the museum itself had spawned—was no longer a trustworthy partner.

Cultural Heritage Ascendant

It was in this atmosphere that the terms *kulturarv* (cultural heritage) and *kulturarvsskapande* (heritage-making) made an entrance. Undoubtedly, the impetus came from the use of "cultural heritage" in English speaking discourses, a use that began with UNESCO's heritage initiatives after the Second World War and increased during the 1970s and 1980s.¹⁵ In some ways, it could be said that the Nordic Museum and Swedish folklife scholars had been in the business of heritage-making all along, as had the antiquarians in the 1600s. But, as repeatedly emphasized on these pages, these

earlier efforts were not discussed in terms of *kulturarv*. While the term had occasionally figured as early as the 1970s—together with *kulturminne* ("cultural memory") and *kulturmiljövård* ("care for the cultural environment")—in texts produced by the Department of Culture and the Board of National Antiquities (*Riksantikvarieämbetet*), it was rarely used within the cultural historical museums, the discipline of ethnology, or other discourses until the middle of the 1990s. For example, it is not included in the comprehensive national encyclopedia (*Nationalencyklopedin*) that was launched in 1993. Then in 1994 and 1995 *kulturarv* appeared as a (fuzzily defined) key concept in government bills concerning cultural politics (Bohman 1997, 40), the very same bills in which museums were given the "diversity mandate" mentioned above. Not long afterwards, *kulturarv* was everywhere and it was used about a variety of phenomena deemed worthy of preservation, not only archeological remains and historical sites: children's jokes, Swedish jazz, the literary classics. Indeed, *kulturarv* was speedily adopted by all kinds of people, not least by members of parliament and the government, to describe some of the most positive and morally praiseworthy forms of social action in a democratic society. In 1998, the *Riksantikvarieämbetet* changed its official translation into English from the Central Board of National Antiquities into the National Heritage Board.

In Sweden, as well as in other countries, *kulturarv* is now increasingly spoken about in terms of human rights and sustainable cultural development (cf. Hafstein 2004; Turtinen 2006). Suddenly,

it is taken for granted that all human beings have a right to their own cultural heritage. In other words, cultural heritage and cultural diversity are deeply linked to one another. If in the year 1900 all nation-states had to have Culture, in 2000 all human beings have to have a Cultural Heritage.¹⁶ Heritage has swiftly become the valorized term for all the "threatened facets of the world" (Hufford 1994, 4) deemed worthy to be selected for preservation, protection, and presentation in public arenas (cf. Klein 1997, 19). In theory, at a given present all individuals can select their own heritage. In Sweden, as well as elsewhere, heritage is "a new mode of cultural production in the present that has recourse to the past" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, 149, cf. 2004). These new forms of cultural production are often linked to powerful emotions and values.

But why is the term so attractive at this point in time? The explanations are legion (Bendix 2000; Lowenthal 1998). Undoubtedly, one factor is the rise of interest in history, historical memory, and "roots," an interest that has different ideological parameters in different parts of the world.¹⁷ But this explanation is related to a host of others. Let me point to two of them. One can be called the catalog of the ills of late modernity. In an era of seemingly incessant destruction of past ways of life, an era of increasingly speedy mobility of humans across the earth, an era of global greed in which nature and culture are targets of endless exploitation, efforts to preserve the natural and cultural heritage are seen as moral imperatives. To be engaged in the preservation of nature and culture is a

form of political action necessary to protect life in the future. In that sense, cultural heritage and heritage-making stand for something normative and binding.

A second set of explanations for the attractiveness of cultural heritage is linked to the first, not least in terms of economics. I am speaking about tourism. Many of the most precious heritage forms and practices could not survive without the growth of tourism, increasingly one of the world's most profitable industries. As Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998) reminds us, heritage and tourism depend upon one another in creating "high density" heritage geographies and spots to visit or live near: museum rows, eco-museums, world heritage areas, nature reservations. And thanks to all these heritage geographies and other commercial enterprises people are able to enter creative dialogues or "involvements" (Lowenthal 1998, 250) with their own past or the pasts of others the world over. In a liberal market economy, a symbiosis has developed between cultural preservation, entertainment, and money-making, a symbiosis that builds on processes began long ago by such museum founders as Artur Hazelius and takes these processes to ends of which he and his contemporaries could not have dreamed.

This leads us back to the current popularity in Sweden of the term *kulturarv*. At this point in time the word is often used where, not long ago, *kultur* alone would have sufficed. New professorships in *kulturarvsvetenskap* (heritage studies) have been instituted at Linköping University, in some respects following a British model, and more or

less formalized institutes and programs are being discussed in a number of contexts (cf. Bolin 2001). And, imperceptibly, in such a way that, at first, nobody seems to have noticed, *kulturarv* crept into the cultural historical museums as well. Employees at the Nordic Museum discovered that the term very well describes what they had been doing all along. Suddenly, it seemed self-evident to use the word and no real discussions regarding its meanings appeared to be necessary. Museum curators now seem to find it self-evident that museums of cultural history work to discover, select, protect, and preserve cultural heritage and that they do so to serve democracy. Furthermore, *kulturarv* is now increasingly used by many university-based ethnologists who not so long ago denied that their field had anything at all to do with efforts to preserve and present culture or with any other activities tainted with the worst aspects of "the old folklife research." Even the long marginalized study of folklore (in the sense of oral traditions) has now, almost unquestionably, been absorbed into the study of cultural heritage, which in this context is regarded a component within "cultural history," a field that is making a victorious comeback, and not only in Swedish academe (cf. Burke 2004).¹⁸ To some Swedish ethnologists, it now appears that cultural heritage combines the best aspects of ethnological cultural analysis and the study of cultural history.

The increasing acceptance of *kulturarv* within Swedish ethnology also has other dimensions. One has to do with the discipline's entanglement with political action and social planning. In particular

as a result of Daun's work during the 1970s and 1980s, folklife research/ethnology developed an ongoing tension between museum work and cultural preservation, on the one hand, which were regarded as non-political activities, and social analysis and social planning, on the other hand, which were regarded as highly political activities. It seems to me that *kulturarv* is attractive because it dissolves this tension. The term highlights the idea that protecting and preserving a vanishing past is just as praiseworthy a form of political action as is involvement in the politics of housing, health, and primary education. A second dimension is that the term is appealingly broad in its implications. To study cultural heritage is to study much more than "tradition," for example. Cultural heritage involves places, concrete objects, and concretized memories preserved in archives. In that sense, the study of cultural heritage speaks to current ethnological interests in places and place-making. Moreover, a number of phenomena can be included under the heading "cultural heritage" but not under "tradition." You can hardly speak about the "Holocaust tradition," but call it the "Holocaust heritage" and you have thereby indicated that the Holocaust has something to teach to humankind and to warn it against. Heritage speaks to contemporary concerns and it is in this sense that it has moved in so easily also into the folklife/ethnology sphere. What is missing so far is a broader conceptual debate.

Furthermore, *kulturarv* makes more sense than *folktradition* and other "folk"-compounds. In a post-"folk home" era, the term "folk" is a burden. As noted,

American folkloristics turned everybody into the "folk." But in European countries, including Sweden, a semantic shift of that sort never occurred and could not occur. Six decades after the Second World War, the "folk" has increasingly become a burden, even though this has not been quite as clearly articulated in Sweden as in Germany (cf. Bendix and Eggeling 2004). Now, for more than many decades, the Nordic Museum emphasizes, in the spirit of Hazelius, that it is a museum concerned with the *kulturhistoria* of all social strata, groups, and geographical regions in Sweden. And now "all" potentially includes recent immigrants.

The ease with which *kulturarv* has been broadly accepted in Sweden indicates that it says something important to many. But it also appears that the term is on its way to become ideologically and politically charged in ways that may not have been foreseeable a few years ago.

The Heritage Sector and the Others

The large-scale immigration of the last few decades has had a profound effect on all aspects of Swedish life, on institutions, education, healthcare, and the labor market. It has also changed the Swedish self-perception so that Swedes now often say that not long ago they were exceedingly homogeneous culturally, religiously, and linguistically but that this is no longer true. But, as was just emphasized, it was not until the mid-1990s, that the government enjoined all cultural institutions, including that which is now called the "heritage sector," to take into consideration that the country is now "multicultural." How was this to be done in the face of the idea of basic

homogeneity with which the sector had lived for so long and in the face of the widespread feeling that the symbolic repertoire shaped in the late 19th century still stands for something basic and profound? How was it to be done when so little research had been conducted on the cultural aspects of the multicultural society? The unease was great.

To meet the new political demands, the National Heritage Board inaugurated in 1996, with governmental support, a program entitled *Agenda kulturarv* (Agenda Cultural Heritage). This program was designed to broaden the concerns of the sector, away from the strictly antiquarian and towards the multitude of forms of heritage-making in a culturally diverse society. What quickly happened within the program was an expansion of the idea of "cultural diversity" to include gender, generation, social class, disability, and sexual orientation, not only ethnic diversity. The new ideas were expressed in phrases such as the following, in which one of the architects of the program writes that "the great social responsibility with regards to history and cultural heritage is to guarantee diversity and richness, knowledge and depth, holism, and broadmindedness" (Lindvall 2002, 16). In other words, a broadened notion of "cultural diversity" and a broadened notion of "cultural heritage" have now simultaneously become official ideologies. They have both become governmental responsibilities; sometimes it is also stated that both are essential to efforts to achieve "integration." *Agenda kulturarv* has been rather successful insofar as the unease within the heritage sector a few years ago is now

changing into a realization that it will have new and important responsibilities.

Still, one can wonder why the government thinks it has to be involved in promoting cultural diversity (cf. Beckman 1998). Granted, Sweden has a long history of political planning of details in everyday life, an activity that stood at its height during the social engineering of the "folk home." All the same, one might legitimately wonder why the government and its agencies believe that they have to be involved in actions to promote and protect that which is frequently called the culture of "the new Swedes." After all, at present, immigrants (as well as many others) create a multitude of art forms and stage a variety of cultural activities without any intervention whatsoever from the government or an *Agenda kulturarv*. Several accomplished authors who were born abroad create works in Swedish and other languages, among them Theodor Kalifatides (born in Greece), Mehmet Uhsun (born in Iraqi Kurdistan), and Rawia Morra (born in Palestine). Furthermore, immigrants in Sweden, as well as elsewhere, create and perform a great many vernacular forms relating to their past and present. Indeed, one can argue, as folklorists in North America have done for a long time, that traditional songs, celebrations, and holiday foods are so flexible and adjustable that they can play a particularly important role in situations of migration and resettlement (Klein 2001). These forms are embodied and sensory: they live in gestures and color combinations, when people move together to the sound of familiar music, or when the aroma of selected foods

wafts through the air. Through such repeated expressions and performances, images of the past are "stored" in bodily memories (Connerton 1989) and transported across oceans. For people who have fled from one part of the world to another, a lullaby or a dish of food can incarnate a precious inheritance that must be preserved or reconstituted. As North American folklorists have repeatedly observed, immigrants from far away—sometimes even more than people who have lived in one environment for generations—use vernacular expressive forms as special resources to debate, understand, or joke about their lives. They use them to enter into dialogue with their history and their senses of themselves. Indeed, when people of the "second" generation no longer speak the languages of their ancestors, dances, foods, festivals, and other forms that do not depend on language proficiency can become especially important.

Great varieties of cultural forms are currently shaped among immigrants in Sweden. Many groups, such as Croatian-Swedes and Ethiopian-Swedes, create their own more or less private museums in order to celebrate their history. It would be an interesting task, indeed, to compare these museums with those of Croatian or Ethiopian immigrants in other countries. Many Swedish-born Assyrians (who are Christians and whose parents have often fled from south-eastern Turkey or north-western Syria) have long been engaged in establishing symbols of a new homeland, an Assyrian nation. It is a homeland they can visit primarily on the internet where many of the Assyrian sites were long

produced in Modesto, California. Many other forms of heritage are created or maintained diasporically on the internet. In fact, debates on the net suggest that creating heritage forms is sometimes more important than the realization of political hopes.

Another example of heritage-making is the so-called "Wednesday feast" or *charshanbé soori* with which Iranians in Sweden conclude the old year and inaugurate the celebration of the new. A highlight of the feast occurs when people jump over little fires to cleanse themselves of the pollution they have accumulated during the past year. Since the 1980s, many thousands of Iranian-Swedes (and increasingly their Swedish guests) have celebrated this event on a big football field outside of Stockholm. Many older immigrants from Iran assert that a mass event of this kind does not take place there—at least it did not when they grew up. Jumping over little fires was a tradition linked to the family, the neighborhood, or the village. Since the 1979 revolution in Iran, the tradition has officially been frowned upon or forbidden as pre-muslim or Zoroastrian. But outside the country it has assumed importance as a large-scale political protest against the present regime (Klein 2001). Recently, there have been reports that *charshanbé soori* has turned into a ritual of political protest inside Iran as well. The development from village ritual in the old country, to a celebration of "our" heritage among exiles, to a large political manifestation among exiles around the world, and the return back to Iran as a political manifestation is an intriguing example of developments that can take place in a globalized world.

Yet, the research on symbolic events such as this remains remarkably sparse in Sweden. The few scholars who call themselves folklorists often do not consider themselves competent to work with "immigrant" materials and general ethnologists do not see themselves as students of vernacular performances. For a long time, some even stated that they wanted to be concerned with more important things, such as education, employment, and health care, and not with "culture's Sunday varnish" (*kulturens söndagsfernissa*). Nevertheless, recently some museum professionals and other heritage workers are beginning to recognize the significance of doing research in areas in which they have never before been involved. A few recognize that the "creation of cultural heritage is a process that takes place all around in society and not only through the activities of museum professionals" (Silvén 2004, 209). Some museum professionals are eager to conduct research on the cultural heritage of immigrant groups, because they think that through such research they can help to combat xenophobia and foster integration into Swedish society.

A great deal has happened in Swedish museums in just a few years and, no doubt, there are better solutions regarding exhibitions and presentations of the cultures of the Others today than there were some years ago (cf. Klein 2000a). Furthermore, ambitious exhibitions can be expected at the new Museum of World Culture that opened in Göteborg in December 2004. In the meantime, a few recent exhibitions and events in other museums have focused on the rituals and clothing of diverse groups in

Sweden, one example being "The Art of Celebrating New Year Nine Times" at the Stockholm City Museum in 2002, in which Jewish, Sikh, Chinese, Hindu, Muslim, and other forms of New Year's celebrations in Sweden were appealingly displayed. A comparable example is furnished by Skansen which, for many years, has staged an annual costume parade. For a long time, the first to enter in the parade were people from different Swedish regions whose costumes were explained in elaborate terms. Toward the end came "South African" costumes or "Thai costumes" which were sometimes barely commented on at all.¹⁹ Events such as these, i.e. parades of cultures within a Swedish frame, are similar to the mosaic of diverse Swedish regional customs once created by Hazelius or the "immigrant parades" that have a long history in the United States (Eaton 1932; Bronner 1998, 414–423). Indeed, the basic idea is not unlike the "commonwealth of cultures" within one frame (Hufford 1991) that is being created at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival (formerly the Festival of American Folklife), staged annually on the Mall in Washington, D.C. In the latter case, the aim is to include all kinds of peoples in a celebration of diversity within an American heritage umbrella. The grammar has remained the same through decades and centuries and despite cultural differences.

Still, as many scholars and museum employees recognize, there are difficulties with attempts to re-establish the old grammar of genres (albeit in a new format). There are difficulties involved, when colorful vernacular practices of

immigrant groups are to be exhibited and celebrated and made into heritage in such public arenas as cultural historical museums and when immigrant traditions are turned into components of the symbolic system of the new land. As anthropologist Mikael Kurkiala (2002) remarks, such ambitions can also be detrimental to the discussion of true differences. "Diversity is celebrated, difference is shunned," he says, as a sort of "feel-good" diversity is established. It seems to me that this has often been true within the heritage sector. Indeed, given the broadened understanding of cultural diversity that is guiding a program such as *Agenda kulturalarv* there is a risk that ethnic differences disappear among a multitude of diversities and identities and are made invisible.²⁰ The reason for the reluctance to single out ethnic difference can be laudable: scholars or curators wish to avoid stereotyping, "culturalizing" or exoticizing the Others. Yet, the upshot can also be that other cultures, religions and languages stand out as something disagreeable that should be avoided. In this context, we can find many examples of the observation that heritage processes can trivialize, debase, ignore, or simplify difficult issues (Bendix 2000; Ronström 2001).

In a provocative article published in 1999, Per Rekdal of the University Ethnographic Museum in Oslo wonders why it is important to the government in a country such as Norway that museums include immigrant cultures. After all, says Rekdal, the desire to be included in a cultural historical or ethnographic museum often does not come from immigrants themselves but from "the po-

litical establishment" or the "intelligentsia." He suggests that a partial answer to the question could be that "by including the immigrant cultures in the museums, the majority culture could also include them in ... their own value hierarchies, thus making the display of cultural difference an expression of overarching equality" (Rekdal 1999, 116; cf. Klein 2000a). There is a great deal to this observation and to the critique it implies. Indeed, Rekdal's observations apply to many of the processes of heritage-making in Sweden, Norway, and other countries from Hazelius' era and onwards. But, as Rekdal himself seems to recognize, the question is: what alternatives are there? If people live in a new country and become citizens of it, should they not also be included in its public institutions? It seems to me that inclusions and invitations into the public sphere must take priority over exclusions and silences. This does not mean that museums or other institutions should impose upon immigrants (or anyone else) forms of representation that they do not want. Rather it means that immigrants—just like other citizens—are to be given an opportunity to be included in the cultural political efforts of their new country, if that is their wish. After all, both Norway and Sweden say that they are willing to protect the cultural heritage of all as long as it does not infringe upon the rights of others. The questions involved here are fraught with difficulties and balance between exclusion on the one hand and forced inclusion on the other.

Perhaps some of the difficulties will be resolved when immigrants and their descendants themselves become in-

volved in the Swedish heritage sector, something which is likely to happen when they have accumulated a history in Sweden. Many are likely to come forward wishing to study and display their cultural heritage as it has been shaped in the new country and in the diaspora. This is a process that has already taken place in "older" immigrant nations, such as Australia and the United States.

Concluding Remarks

The Romantic Nationalism of the days of Hazelius may be long gone, the folk and the "folk home" may be dying, folklife research may no longer exist, and folkloristics as a field may be marginal in an era in which the heritage paradigm is taking over some of the older terms and concerns and as new disciplinary alliances and allegiances are being shaped. One such alliance that is currently taking shape in Sweden combines ethnology, archeology, history, cultural geography, business management, and tourism studies.

Yet, the remarkable thing is that through all the transformations, the grammar of genres, established by the world's fairs and by museum builders such as Hazelius, is still being used or debated, when the cultural heritage of new immigrants is to be included in an "Us." Costume parades, dances, festivals, and food displays remain viable alternatives now, just as they were, when Skansen and other museums incorporated different rural Others into an urban, bourgeois public sphere. What is happening now is a process similar to that which took place then: inclusion of

the recognized Others in a harmonious diversity encircled by a fence. Moreover, immigrants themselves often select a similar grammar of forms and use the same toolkit when they display their vernacular cultural heritage in the Swedish public sphere. On the heritage stage, the idea of a nation full of appealing diversity is on display and some of its features will undoubtedly be added to the Swedish repertoire of add-ons and re-dos. It is highly uncertain to what degree the established nation grammar will be broken up to include "more diverse arts, cultures, and traditions . . . in a multiplex public sphere" (Clifford 1997, 214). Furthermore, while many conversations take place between the heritage sectors in separate countries and such supranational institutions as UNESCO, the actual effect of these conversations on the national agendas is unclear.

Another point concerns the extent to which there is now a new reformist heritage ideology, every bit as moralistic as the various agendas that inspired Hazelius, Erixon, and Daun. In government circles the protection of cultural heritage is seen as an unquestionably moral good, as a democracy issue of high dignity, as an important part of a civil society, and as a human right. Heritage issues are entangled with hopes for improved integration and, therefore, representation in such public arenas as museums is seen as a task of importance to all. Yet, as has been noted, one must ask to what extent inclusion in these arenas will serve to hide actual inequalities in order to celebrate a harmonious diversity? And what happens to all those (primarily young) people

who regard themselves as mixtures of all kinds of cultures and backgrounds? Will they forever be stereotyped in the heritage sector as examples of the exciting youth cultures brewing in "our" immigrant suburbs? Will the traumas and stigmatizations suffered by some groups be endlessly trivialized in new forms of exploitation not unlike those that have taken place as some memorials of trauma (such as Holocaust memorials) have become tourist attractions (Finkelstein 2000)? What happens to all those forms of heritage that are offensive, frightening or incomprehensible?

Cultural heritage—as phenomenon, concept, and discourse—does not pose danger in and of itself; in all likelihood, it is here to stay for a long time. The dangers lie in a naïve, uncritical, unhistorical, and untheorized understanding of cultural heritage and its ideological parameters in an era in which the boundaries "between culture and politics and between cultural production and the market" are becoming increasingly blurred (Bendix and Welz 1999, 123). This holds true whether we are dealing with a "vernacular sphere" in one specific country, as has been the case in this paper, or expand our concerns to cover a greater spectrum of heritage issues. The term heritage is not innocent; we must ponder its role in the ongoing worldwide re-mapping of ideological, political, economic, disciplinary, and conceptual landscapes.

Notes

¹This text is based on a workshop and a lecture given at the Reykjavik Academy in January 2004. Many thanks to Valdimar Tr. Hafstein and Ólafur Rastrick for inviting me and many thanks to them and to the other participants on these occasions for the stimulating discussions. The article is to be seen as one result of the project "Folklore, Heritage Politics, and Ethnic Diversity," which I directed in 1997–2000 together with Anna-Leena Siikala, Pertti Anttonen, and Stein Mathisen. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.

²In part, the discussion in this section draws on the following: Aronsson 2004; Beckman 1993a, 1993b, 1998; Bohman 1997; Ekström 1994; Eriksen 1993; Frykman and Löfgren 1986; Hammarlund-Larsson 2004; Klein 2000a; O'Dell 1998; Stoklund 1993; Sörlin 1998.

³In 1919, it was officially decided that the Nordic Museum was to be responsible for Swedish cultural history from the 16th century and onwards. Thus, the beginning was set at the period of King Gustav Vasa, i.e. at the Protestant (Lutheran) Reformation. The Historical Museum was to be responsible for earlier periods, i.e. the Pagan and Catholic eras. Long housed inside the National Museum, this museum was moved into a building situated a few hundred meters away from the Nordic Museum in 1943.

⁴See Beckman 1998, 17. It is not unimportant to take note of this resistance: many contemporary scholars seem to take it for granted that the inclusion of the rural folk in 19th century public arenas was universally greeted with jubilation.

⁵Skansen is frequently called the world's "first" open-air museum. However, this is probably an overstatement. As Bjarne Stoklund (1993) shows, precedents can be found, not least in 19th-century international exhibitions.

⁶ Observations in this paper regarding the frequency with which a word is used by a particular author or during a particular period are based on impressions formed in the reading of relevant texts, not on close textual analysis or statistical evidence.

⁷ Dalarna is comparable to Karelia in Finland, Hardanger in Norway, Appalachia in the United States, Dogon land in Mali, and other "old-fashioned" or "relic areas" far away from a capital. This is one of the senses in which ethnology, folklore, and related efforts can be said to have been "born in an act of love between the province and the nation-state" (Noyes 1999, 258).

⁸ As early as the late Middle Ages, it was customary to bring reindeer and accompanying Saami as diplomatic gifts during state visits abroad. Saami were also featured at a number of the world's fairs and, in many respects, it was self-evident that they would be included at Skansen and the Nordic Museum from the very start (Klein 2000a).

⁹ Since 2000, five groups in Sweden are officially designated minorities, whose members speak five officially recognized minority languages: Saami, Meänkieli (Tornedal Finnish), Finnish, Romani, and Yiddish.

¹⁰ There are considerable differences in the historical circumstances that have led to an emphasis on certain materials over others, as countries have built up their national repertoires. In Iceland the saga manuscripts came to play an early and central role whereas in Finland and Estonia the shaping of national epics on the basis of oral traditions had overarching importance. Indeed, in Estonia and other countries in Eastern Europe, the national symbolic repertoires were essential during the processes of reconstruction after the years of Soviet rule.

¹¹ Folklife research is, of course, one of many names for the "folk disciplines" in different countries. In Sweden alone a multitude of names have circulated. From 1912 to 1944, a

lecturer (docent) in "Folk Memory Research" (*folkminnesforskning*) was active at Lund University: Carl Wilhelm von Sydow. Then, in 1946, Lund University received its first chair in "Nordic and Comparative Folklife Research" and, one year later, a department with the same name was founded at Uppsala University. In 1972, "European Ethnology" (*etnologi, särskilt europeisk*) was adopted at all Swedish universities and Folkloristics was named a subfield thereof. Unlike other Nordic countries, Folkloristics has never been a separate discipline in Sweden, although Uppsala University cultivated such a specialization until the middle of the 1980s.

¹² One can detect parallels here to developments in the United States, where folklore study expanded after World War II. This expansion is linked to President Roosevelt's New Deal, the Federal Writers Project, unionizing, and the folk song movement (cf. Abrahams 1999).

¹³ See Nilsson 2004, 90. Although the last few years have seen many changes, this activity still continues at the Nordic Museum and a few other institutions.

¹⁴ My comments on Daun are in part based on his fascinating recollections of the development of Swedish ethnology during the 1960s and 1970s (Daun 2003).

¹⁵ According to David Lowenthal (1998), the first documented use of "heritage" is to be found in the St James Bible (Psalms 16:6: "I have a goodly heritage"). Margaret Thatcher's inauguration of the National Heritage Act in Britain (in 1983) and Ronald Reagan's prominent collaboration with the Heritage Foundation (founded in 1973) in the United States most likely contributed to the world-wide increase in the use of "heritage" in the 1980s.

¹⁶ I will not attempt here to discuss the exceedingly complex issues at hand. It has been argued that modern societies need this kind of functional differentiation, since they can

no longer attempt to integrate all members within one overarching human value system. They need systems of rights in plural. However, in his recent work on the origin of human rights, sociologist Hans Joas (in press) is critical of this functionalistic explanation.

¹⁷ See, for example, Selberg 2002. A great deal has been written on the distinctions between the concept of history and the concept of heritage (Lowenthal 1998). However, the distinctions are often difficult to grasp, in particular in discussions comparing cultural heritage and historiography.

Contemporary China constitutes one example of the multiplex use of cultural heritage in the creation of a new ideology. I am indebted to Marina Svensson, Department of East Asian Languages, Lund University, for her insightful comments on the politics of heritage in China today.

¹⁸ For example, folklorists and ethnologists at the University of Oslo in Norway now work within a Section on Cultural History and, recently, Arne Bugge Amundsen, as editor of the pan-Nordic journal *Arv*, replaced the journal's emphasis on folklore with a focus on cultural history, including cultural heritage. One might well wonder, if such a shift will spell the end of folkloristics as a field in the Nordic countries. The absorption of folklore/folklife into cultural heritage/cultural history can be observed all over Europe. For example, the recently (2000) launched Hungarian yearbook, *Hungarian Heritage*, contains articles on the kinds of topics that, not long ago, were called folklore and folklife.

¹⁹ Also, I have been told that Skansen has plans to invite a variety of ethnic and religious groups to celebrate their traditional festivities there all around the year.

²⁰ This is to some degree true of the unprinted document "Kulturarv är mångfald! ("Cultural Heritage is Diversity!"), circulated by the Swedish Heritage Board (Riksantikvarieämbetet 2004).

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