

Traditions of Cultural History in Finland, 1900-2000

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A recent book *L'histoire culturelle: un 'tournant mondial' dans l'historiographie?*, edited by Philippe Poirrier in 2008, creates a comparative, transnational view on how cultural historical research has developed and pays attention to, for example, Australia and Brazil as well as Mediterranean and Scandinavian countries. The case of Finland is covered by Palle Ove Christiansen's article that describes the developments of Scandinavian cultural history. Finland is included in its scope but, in the end, it receives only passing, marginal attention. The article concentrates mainly on Danish, Norwegian and Swedish examples.¹ An obvious reason for this emphasis is the fact that Finnish historical research has long remained behind the language barrier: in fact, there are almost no articles or books on Finnish historiography in other languages. Swedish is the second domestic language in Finland, but still much of research is published only in Finnish.

However, Christiansen mentions two features that distinguish Finnish cultural history from other Nordic countries. Firstly, Finland started to institutionalize this particular field of research by founding chairs in cultural history, which is something completely different from, for example, what happened in Sweden at the same time. Secondly, Finnish historians were the first in Scandinavia to publish a comprehensive cultural history of their country. The four-volume *Suomen kulttuurihistoria* (Cultural History of Finland) was published in 1933-1936.² *Norsk kulturhistorie* (Cultural History of Norway) and *Svenska folket genom tiderna* (Swedish People through the Ages) were both initiated in 1938, at

1 CHRISTIANSEN, 2008.

2 After the Second World War, two other series titled *Suomen kulttuurihistoria* have been published: in 1979-1982 (3 Vols) and in 2002-2004 (5 Vols).

the eve of the Second World War. The Swedish project was completed in 1940, the Norwegian during the German occupation in 1942.³

Scandinavian historians have often wondered why the position of cultural history has been so strong in Finland.⁴ There are obviously many explanations for this. For the Finnish political thought and debate, *culture* has been an essential concept since the 19th century, and its meaning became crucial right after 1809, when Finland was detached from Sweden and became part of the Russian empire.⁵ At that time, influences were especially absorbed from Germany: Johann Gottfried Herder's (1744-1803) thinking, in particular, offered inspiration for those nationalists who emphasized the significance of language, literature, history and education. A recent volume *Herder, Suomi, Eurooppa* (Herder, Finland, Europe) points out how the enthusiasm for Herder flourished especially in areas where the fashionable French culture, or civilization, had not gained a foothold and where connections to ancient cultures were relatively thin.⁶ Finland was one of these areas, and the notion of *culture* became strongly tied with the German understanding of *Bildung*.

The cultural approach was highlighted during the 19th century when Finland was the autonomous Grand Duchy of the Russian Empire. Scholars, authors and poets focused on establishing and grounding Finland as a nation, as a culture in its own right. In the prevailing political circumstances, the importance of studying the history of the people not the state was emphasized. This particular emphasis did not disappear after the Finnish independence in 1917. The small nation state continued in defining itself in cultural terms.

Cultural Historical School

During the 19th century, German thinking had a profound influence on Finnish intellectuals. While the country had only one university before the First World War, it was also common to study abroad, and Germany offered several potential sites of learning for Finnish students and scholars. No wonder that also the cultural approach to historical research was influenced by Germany. In the end of the 19th century, many young historians were especially fascinated by Karl Lamprecht's (1856-1915) disputed ideas. Lamprecht was a renowned fig-

3 CHRISTIANSEN, 2008, p. 74, 76.

4 HAAPALA, 2007, p. 51.

5 RANTALA, 2010, p. 21.

6 OLLITERVO/IMMONEN, 2006, p. 8-9.

ure throughout Europe and advocated the study of collective phenomena, larger cultural and psychological trends, conformities and historical laws. Lamprecht's idea of *Volksseele* has often been argued to have influenced Annales School and its views on mentalities.⁷

Lamprecht's thought-provoking arguments were discussed in *Historiallinen Aikakauskirja*, the Finnish academic journal for historians, which started its publication in 1903. Lamprecht's name was already mentioned in the first issue of the journal.⁸ Also the Finnish Historical Society discussed Lamprecht in 1895 when U. L. Lehtonen, a history student at the time, spoke on the first three volumes of *Deutsche Geschichte*.⁹

The most famous Finnish historian of his generation was Gunnar Palander (1876-1933, after 1906 known as Gunnar Suolahti), who actually studied in Leipzig in 1898-99. Together with his colleague U. L. Lehtonen he followed Lamprecht's lectures.¹⁰ The timing was favourable in the sense that the controversial historian had just published his essay *Was ist Kulturgeschichte?*, inspired by Wilhelm Wundt's psychological theories. For Lamprecht, *Kulturgeschichte* was an overarching research agenda that was interested in the collective rather than the individual and allowed the study of, amongst others, natural conditions, economic and social factors, legal issues, language... The dispute between collective and individual historiography was heated at the time of Suolahti's visit to Leipzig.¹¹

Suolahti was by no means uncritical towards *Kulturgeschichte*: he wanted to construct his own type of cultural history where, in addition to collective phenomena, also singular perspective and individual experience could have more value.¹² Suolahti's interest in the individual becomes especially obvious in a critique of Arvède Barine's two-part biography of *la Grande Mademoiselle* (1626-1693) in *Historiallinen Aikakauskirja*. The book on "a minor and historically rather insignificant princess" receives much appreciation from Suolahti, as cultural history in the form of a biography.¹³

7 On Lamprecht's notion of *Volksseele*, see CHICKERING, 1993, p. 135.

8 Lyhyitä tiedonantoja, 1903, p. 32. On Lamprecht, see also PALANDER, 1904; SALOMAA, 1915.

9 SUOLAHTI, 1947, p. 67. On Lehtonen's later understanding of cultural history, see LEHTONEN, 1925.

10 Including, for example, the lecture course *Deutsche Verfassungs-Wirtschaft in Kulturgeschichte*. See SUOLAHTI, 1947, p. 68.

11 SUOLAHTI, 1947, p. 71-73.

12 See, for example, KLINGE, 1993, p. 469-470.

13 SUOLAHTI, 1905, p. 225.

Suolahti shared Lamprecht's view that historians should pay more attention to the mental or spiritual life (in Finnish, *sielunelämä*) of the past. For Suolahti, cultural history should also cover, as he wrote in 1905, "the history of instincts, emotions and thoughts".¹⁴ As Suolahti's review on Barine's biography reveals, he aimed at recognizing the general within the singular and here emotions would be an essential focal point. His interest in *historical characters* or *types* led to some of his most fluent cultural historical essays, such as *Keimailijat* (Coquets), published in 1913.¹⁵ In addition to historical types or characters Suolahti argued that cultural history should also pay attention to epochs and their characteristics. In this sense, there was, if not a morphological view of cultures, at least an idea that each historical period was a culture of its own and had particular features that historians should try to track down. Later, the idea that historical periods had a particular character became popular in Finland through Egon Friedell's *Kulturgeschichte der Neuzeit*, which was published as a Finnish translation between 1930-1933 under the title *Uuden ajan kulttuurihistoria*.¹⁶ Suolahti did not go as far as Friedell in his literary efforts, but aimed more at understanding the past as a lived and experienced world.

Gunnar Suolahti himself studied gentry, especially clergy, and its way of life; his most popular book was the two-volume *Elämä Suomessa 1700-luvulla* (Life in the Eighteenth-Century Finland, 1909, 1917) which is still used as a course book. Suolahti also made exercises in short, essayistic form and published a collection *Vuosisatain takaa: kulttuurihistoriallisia kuvauksia 1500-1700-luvulta* (Beyond the Centuries: Cultural Historical Descriptions from Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries, 1913).¹⁷

During the late 19th and early 20th century, academic life in Finland was centered on Helsinki and Suolahti became an influential figure within the limited academic circles. The centrality of an influential cultural historical approach in Finland at the turn of the century can be connected to the fact that Suolahti personally was the heart of Finnish historical research. He was one of the founders of *Historiallinen Aikakauskirja*, the most important scholarly journal for historical research and he was also its first editor-in-chief in 1903-10. Since 1918, he was professor of Finnish history and since 1929 professor of Finnish and Scandinavian history at the University of Helsinki.¹⁸

14 ID., p. 226.

15 SUOLAHTI, 1993, p. 149-168.

16 FRIEDEL, 1930-1933.

17 JUTIKKALA, 2000; SUOLAHTI, 1993.

18 JUTIKKALA, 2000.

Suolahti's activity as a cultural historian can be crystallized in the four-volume work *Suomen kulttuurihistoria* (Cultural History of Finland), published in 1933-1936. Suolahti died in 1933 and saw only the first part of his work. The series was completed by his students, such as Pentti Renvall and Eino Jutikkala who later became eminent figures in Finnish historical research up to the 1960s and early 1970s. Some of Suolahti's disciples went on to social sciences, like Heikki Waris who became professor of social politics and Esko Aaltonen who made a career as professor of sociology. It seems obvious that the influence of the Cultural Historical School, as it was called, extended to social sciences and gave an impetus for Finnish historical sociology and social history.

The publication of *Suomen kulttuurihistoria* started 16 years after the Finnish independence, and it is astonishing that it completely ignored the political periodization. As the editors state in the Preface, they understood culture so widely that it covered "the different phenomena of both material and spiritual life from business and trade and social conditions, from the everyday life of lower and upper classes to the highest expressions of the human mind, art, science and religion".¹⁹ It seems that the Lamprechtian agenda was still at stake, in particular in respect to the understanding of cultural history as an overarching perspective that went above other fields of historical research, such as economic or social history. On the other hand, it seems that the book series lacked many of those sensitive, essayistic features that were typical of Suolahti's own work. *Suomen kulttuurihistoria* was the final blooming of the Finnish Cultural Historical School that soon, especially after Suolahti's death in 1933, started to disperse.

Obviously, there were several background factors for the cultural history boom of the early twentieth-century Finland. At the end of the autonomous period, during the years of Russification, there was no need to use *culture* as an exclusive concept. Instead, the inclusive notion remained through the turbulence of independence and the Civil War. Perhaps in the end the Civil War of 1918 even intensified the need to highlight cultural issues instead of political ones and contributed to seeing culture as a unifying principle.

Cultural Histories in the Shadow

The Cultural Historical School saw the concept of culture in a wide sense. Still, its major effort *Suomen kulttuurihistoria* aroused criticism. Two years after the last volume in 1938, *Historiallinen Aikakauskirja* published a critique by Rag-

19 SUOLAHTI et al., 1933, p. 5.

nar Rosén, simultaneously unveiling time how things had changed. The author drew on the political events of his day and referred to the rising totalitarianism: “the shaking events around us emphasize the individual again, with profound consequences”. In the contemporary situation, Rosén argued that there would be no sense in concentrating only “on the activities of the masses and on the averages” and forgetting the historical role of leaders and politicians.²⁰

Rosén also questions the notion of Finland and notices that there is much less on the developments of Eastern than Western Finnish culture. Another aspect, not mentioned by Rosén, is the obvious connection of the Cultural Historical School to the rising Finnish-language culture and to the political movement called the Fennomans. The language feud had settled down during the 1930s, but it laid its impact on the academic scene. Suolahti had followed Scandinavian research and was very much interested, for example, in the work of T. F. Troels-Lund in Denmark.²¹ Suolahti was probably irritated by the ways the language feud influenced universities and tried to find reconciliation.

At the turn of the century, exceptionally interesting research was done by Swedish-language scholars. The most renowned Finnish academic outside Finland, the philosopher, sociologist and social anthropologist Edvard Westermarck became world-famous in 1891 with his book *The History of Human Marriage*, published by Macmillan in London. Already then Westermarck’s approach could have anthropologically influenced Finnish cultural history, but his thoughts seem not to have reached the members of the Cultural Historical School, or if they did, they were regarded to be historically problematic.

The language feud was etched into the Finnish university structure. Up to 1918, the University of Helsinki had been the only university in the country, but soon after the independence it got two rivals, both from Turku. In fact, Turku had hosted the old Swedish Royal Academy, founded in 1640, but the academy had moved to Helsinki after the Great Fire of Turku in 1827. In the wake of the language feud, Turku became the host town for both the Swedish-language university, Åbo Akademi, and the Finnish, the University of Turku. Åbo Akademi was finally founded in 1917 and the University of Turku three years later. Edvard Westermarck became the leading figure of Åbo Akademi and served as its first rector in 1918 and as a professor of philosophy up to 1932.

The Turku universities in particular became the influential sites of cultural historical research in Finland after the Second World War. They both even sought to institutionalize this field of research; while cultural history was only

20 ROSÉN, 1938, p. 323-324.

21 See the review of Troels-Lund’s *Lifsbelysning*, PALANDER, 1903, p. 25-26.

one branch of historical research promoted by Suolahti and his disciples at the University of Helsinki, the establishment of chairs and departments started to take place in Turku. In 1920, Åbo Akademi founded the chair that was defined to the *cultural history and folk life studies*. It seems that, according to the outline of the chair, cultural history referred to high culture, but that the professor should also emphasize the study of folk life. The first appointed professor was Gabriel Nikander (1884-1959) who actually had been docent of Nordic cultural history at the University of Helsinki since 1917 and later wrote several chapters for *Suomen kulttuurihistoria*. Nikander's production lacks a *magnum opus* but he wrote several articles, for example, on the history of agriculture, fishing, mining industry and technology.²²

After Nikander's retirement, Åbo Akademi even founded an institute of cultural history (*Kulturhistoriska institutionen*) in 1953 under the leadership of Nikander's follower Helmer Tegengren (1904-1974). Tegengren was the scholar of rural life in Ostrobothnia, but also addressed the distant culture of the Sámi in the Kemi Lapland. Although Tegengren himself published highly appreciated books on local history, the Institute was in practice a department of ethnology and concentrated on the study of folk culture.²³ After Tegengren's death in 1974, the institute finally changed its name into the Department of Ethnology.

Another institution worth mentioning in this connection is the Donner Institute which is a private research centre as part of the Åbo Akademi Foundation and was established in 1959 as a result of a large donation made by Uno and Olly Donner. The aim was "to encourage scholarly research in religious and cultural history". The institute is mainly known for its contribution in religious studies and maintains one of the most valuable Nordic libraries of the field, the Steiner Memorial Library.²⁴

After the Second World War, the institutes of Åbo Akademi remained rather small units, but they supported cultural historical research at a time when social sciences and new structural approaches wiped over the Finnish academia.

Curiously enough, at the same time many of Suolahti's students in Helsinki had continued their work in social sciences. It seems also that the concept of culture lost its explanatory power during the turmoil of the Second World War and its aftermath. If the First World War had been succeeded by the debate on a

22 JUTIKKALA, 2001. See also VUORELA, 1977, p. 54.

23 On TEGENGREN, see PALOPOSKI, 1974, p. 160-161.

24 WIDÉN, 1993, p. 180-182. See also Donnerska institutet, <http://web.abo.fi/institut/di/>, 23.02.2011.

cultural crisis²⁵, similar tones can be detected in the late 1940s. Culture was very much seen as a matter of values. At the same time, however, the concept became more and more used as a dividing practice in the contemporary discourse. In the 1950s, the gap between high and low culture was perhaps deeper than ever before. This tension was clearly intensified by many new forms of popular culture, from rock music to television.

If there were clear signs of institutionalization to be distinguished in Turku, the role of cultural history at the University of Helsinki remained ambiguous and unstable. During the Second World War many historians have found themselves in the propaganda units of the Finnish army where their services were used for political purposes. The early twentieth-century interest in collective phenomena in the scholarly agenda remained not only in social sciences but also in historical research, where economic and social aspects gained more popularity. The crisis of cultural history in Helsinki is reflected by the fact that Gunnar Suolahti's nephew, Eino E. Suolahti (1914-1977), was the docent of cultural history at the University for 25 years (1947-1972), but earned his living outside the academia, first as the literary director of Werner Söderström Publishing Company in 1951-1966 and later as the director of the Academic Bookshop between 1966-1976.²⁶

Still, Eino E. Suolahti made a strong impact on the Finnish understanding of cultural history. During the Second World War he was one of the few that followed international discussions of the field, especially the work of Johan Huizinga. His three essays on Huizinga in *Historiallinen Aikakauskirja* are among the best commentaries of the famous Dutch historian in Finland. The first of them, published in 1941, concentrated especially on Huizinga's *The Autumn of the Middle Ages* and on its interpretation of medieval history.²⁷ Suolahti continued his Huizinga presentations in 1943 and 1945, and was informed of Huizinga's untimely death just before finalizing the last essay.²⁸ Interesting in these texts is Suolahti stressing the importance of combining analytical rigour with the touch of synthesis. Furthermore, Suolahti uses Huizinga to emphasize the role of art and literature in analysing the cultural modes of the past. This, on the other hand, makes his approach different from the more ethnologically oriented cultural history that was underlined in Åbo Akademi at the same time.

As a publisher, Eino E. Suolahti continued his work as a proponent of cultural history. In the late 1940s and 1950s he participated in the publication of

25 On the Finnish debate on cultural crisis, see MIKKELI, 1996.

26 LEIKOLA, 2007.

27 SUOLAHTI, 1941.

28 SUOLAHTI, 1943; SUOLAHTI, 1945.

some key works of classical cultural history. His own company, Werner Söderström, published Johan Huizinga's *Homo ludens* as *Leikkivä ihminen* in 1947, *The Autumn of the Middle Ages* under the title *Keskiajan syksy* in 1951 and *Erasmus* in 1953; the latter as his own translation from the German language. The project continued with Jacob Burckhardt's *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (Italian renessanssin sivistys) in 1956. Suolahti himself translated also Burckhardt's *Reflections on History* (Maailmanhistorian näköaloja), but the book came out through the rivaling publication company Otava in 1951.²⁹

Towards the Cultural Turn

There is historical irony in the fact that at the time when the Institute of Cultural History at Åbo Akademi was renamed as the Department of Ethnology, the other university in the town, the University of Turku, started the process of establishing its own chair in cultural history. In fact, the process had already started at the turn of the 1960s and 1970s and was connected to a larger change in the Finnish university system. There was a huge expansion of education in Finland when the baby boom generation entered the scene new universities were opened, for example, in Oulu in 1958 and in Joensuu in 1969.

History departments usually had two chairs, one for Finnish and one for general history. After the Second World War, however, special chairs and departments were established to enrich the field and widen the educational options. Contemporary history got its chair in the 1950s and economic and social history in the 1960s, both at the University of Helsinki. In the 1970s, history of science and ideas was established at the University of Oulu and cultural history at the University of Turku. There seems to be a particular division of labour, although this development probably evolved without any overall plan.

After initial difficulties, the chair in cultural history was finally founded in 1972 at the University of Turku and not only a chair but also a department, thus making it possible to study cultural history as a majoring subject both on

29 NB. The Finnish translations of Huizinga and Burckhardt came in the 1940s and 1950s. Still, both authors were known by Finnish academics before the Second World War through Swedish translations and German originals. Jacob Burckhardt's name was mentioned in Finland already in a newspaper advertisement of his *Handbuch der Geschichte der Malerei* in 1861. See *Finlands Almänna Tidning*, 19 June 1861. Huizinga's *Autumn of the Middle Ages* was sold in Academic Bookshop in Helsinki in 1927 as a Swedish translation. See *Historiallinen Aikakauskirja* 4 (1927), p. 338.

MA and PhD levels. This emphasis was a major turn in the institutionalization process of cultural history in Finland. Eventually, it proved to be difficult to find a professor who would have fit the profile of the new chair. The outline of the professorship tried to diverge from both the Lamprechtian and ethnological traditions and emphasize also on the history of art, science and religion.

In 1978, the first professor Veikko Litzen (1933-2011) was finally appointed.³⁰ Litzen had defended his doctoral theses *A War of Roses and Lilies: The Theme of Succession in Sir John Fortescue's Works* in 1971 and had also published a text book on medieval cultural history under the title *Keskiajan kulttuurihistoriaa* (Cultural History of the Middle Ages, 1974). Although the chair was originally outlined to focus on high culture, Litzen soon redefined the points of departure. Instead of seeing culture as sector of social life, the new department started to emphasize cultural history as a perspective into the past.

In 1981, Litzen defined his discipline in a way that stressed culture as communication:

“Culture is comprised of those solutions and ways of action that people of the past have developed as answers to the challenges posed by their environment (social environment included). These habitual reactions, patterns of the answers as well as the answers themselves—both tangible and intangible—create the whole that is called culture.”³¹

This definition was repeated by Litzen in his lectures, but already in 1982 he was appointed the director of the Finnish Institute in Rome, Villa Lante. Litzen's successor Keijo Virtanen (born 1945) continued to cultivate an open, inclusive understanding of culture and became the architect of the success of cultural history in Turku. The wider understanding of culture was exemplified by his interest in the study of popular culture. At the time this was unusual, since popular culture was not on the agenda of academic research in Finland, at least not in history departments.³² In 1993 Virtanen defined cultural history as a discipline that studies “those plans, habits and deeds, through which people of the past formed their relationship with their lives and through which they communicated with their environment”.³³

30 On the nomination process, see Turun yliopiston kulttuurihistorian professorin virka, 1979, p. 58-59.

31 LITZEN, 1981, p. 8.

32 VIRTANEN, 1984.

33 VIRTANEN, 1993, p. 11.

In the 1980s, in addition to classical cultural history, influences came from German cultural research and social sciences, like Walter Benjamin, Georg Simmel and Max Weber, but also from the Annales School, from the work of Marc Bloch, Lucien Febvre, Michel Vovelle, Fernand Braudel, Roger Chartier, Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie and many others. Also Swedish ethnological research was noted, and especially Jonas Frykman and Orvar Löfgren's *Den kultiverade människan* (The cultured human, 1979) was used as a course book for years. Gunnar Suolahti's works were also used and read through the 1980s and 1990s, but otherwise the new department no longer saw much continuum to the tradition of cultural history in Finland. The gap, left presumably by the success of social sciences in the 1960s and 1970s, was too wide to cover. On the other hand, the idea of being a path-breaker was important for the identity of the small academic unit in the 1980s. There was an apparent interest in digesting influences from different international traditions and also from other fields of research within humanities. Litzen's interview from November 1982 reveals that already at that time the popularity of cultural history among students had risen so much that the number of teachers seemed inadequate.³⁴ The steady growth continued through the 1980s and 1990s.

It seems obvious that the Department of Cultural History had taken a keen interest in defining itself. During the 1980s and 1990s, several books were published on the nature of cultural history. In 1981 *Mitä kulttuurihistoria on?* (What Is Cultural History?) was edited by Kari Immonen (born 1945), future professor of cultural history himself. The most important work was Keijo Virtanen's *Kulttuurihistoria—tie kokonaisvaltaiseen historiaan* (Cultural History: towards a Comprehensive Understanding of History), published in 1987, which aimed at positioning the Turku department in relation to contemporary debates on cultural research. Also in 1991, a small booklet *Mitä kulttuurihistoria on?* (What Is Cultural History?) by Timo Tarmio was produced for open university courses.³⁵ An important addition to the conceptual basis of cultural history was offered by Kari Immonen in 1996 in his book *Historian läsnäolo* (The Presence of the Past) which, drawing on the idea of *Geschichtskultur*, stressed the active nature of historical knowledge and the importance of studying how history exists in the present day.³⁶

The article collection *Kulttuurihistoria: Johdatus tutkimukseen* (Cultural History: Introduction to Research, 2001) summarized the development of the 1990s. The book included essays on gender history, history of the senses, history

34 Mies puolipäivässä, 2009, p. 19-21.

35 IMMONEN 1981; VIRTANEN, 1987; TARMIO, 1991. See also SALMI, 1987, p. 228-229.

36 IMMONEN, 1996. See also IMMONEN, 1993, p. 19-33.

of death, history of cinema and popular culture, history of family, childhood and sexuality and also essays on the methodology of micro-history and the history of mentalities. Research activities laid particular emphases on medieval and early modern history, on late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century history as well as the history of popular culture. There were also active research groups on the history of modernity, technology, gender and material culture.

During the 1980s, the Department of Cultural History was a small unit compared to its related departments, Finnish History and General History; but the amount of students rose steadily during the 1990s and soon Cultural History grew into a unit with two professors and three other positions. In retrospect, it seems that the depression of the early 1990s also influenced in the education sector, and cultural history became a popular field in the open university. By the end of the decade almost a thousand students had studied the basic courses in cultural history all over Finland through distance learning.

The 1990s were characterized by a clear enthusiasm for cultural studies in Finland, and it is obvious that more cultural historical research was conducted in every university than ever before. Markku Peltonen has estimated that almost half of the PhD's in history, completed in Finnish universities after 1989, can be classified into a broad category of cultural history, intellectual history and the history of ideas.³⁷ Still, the Turku department serves not only as an illuminating example of the cultural turn, it also participated in constructing the change in Finland.

The consequences of the cultural turn become discernible in the figures on the Turku department's educational output. Table 1 shows the numbers of MA graduates per year. It demonstrates that the 1990s was a decade of gradual growth, and after the year 2000, the annual number of graduates has settled down to 20-25 (however 2009 was an exceptional year with 41 MA's). It is interesting to compare this development with the Cultural History MA in Aberdeen (cf. Nick Fisher's article in this book). In Finland, cultural history took on institutionalized forms which enabled long-term development. It remains to be seen how the new university policy, and those economic fluctuations it seems to involve, will influence this development in the 2010s.

37 PELTONEN, 2009, p. 85.

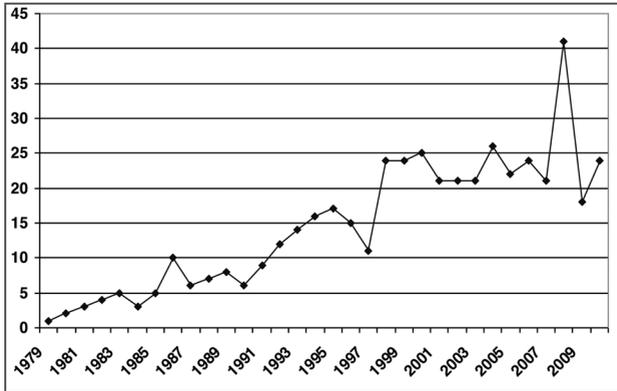


Table 1: MA Theses (per year) in Cultural History, University of Turku 1979-2010

In addition to annual MA graduates, it is important to look at doctoral dissertations that tell more about research activities. A similar rising curve can be observed in the amounts of PhD theses. The first doctoral dissertation, Luigi de Anna's *Conoscenza e immagine della Finlandia e del settentrione nella cultura classico-medievale* was completed in 1988, fairly late considering that the department had started in 1972.³⁸ Table 2 shows how the library of doctoral dissertations has increased. A total of 35 completed between 1988-2009. During the same period the country produced just under 500 new doctors of history. Approximately 7% of them come from the Department of Cultural History and 16% from the University of Turku. During the last ten years the percentages are marginally higher, 9% and 17%.

Table 2 reveals that the rise has been particularly sharp after 1999. There are many explanations for this development. One reason is the increase of research funding in Finland after the depression of the 1990s which benefited also humanities and provided opportunities for young scholars. On the other hand, more and more talented students were interested in continuing their studies. Also in 1997, department's PhD education was reorganized around research groups, which seems to have given an extra impetus for scholarly efforts and also widened the professional basis for supervision. General background factors cannot explain the growing interest in cultural history, as the increase in figures has been more moderate in other departments. Table 3 shows how PhD education has devel-

38 The complete list of doctoral dissertation can be viewed at <http://www.hum.utu.fi/oppiaineet/kulttuurihistoria/jatko-opinnot/vaitos/vaitoskirjat.html>, 23.02.2011.

oped in relation to other history departments of the University of Turku: here also Art History as well as the Department of Contemporary History is listed, which is situated in the Faculty of Social Sciences. The table seems to refer to a similar development in the two new departments, Cultural and Contemporary History.

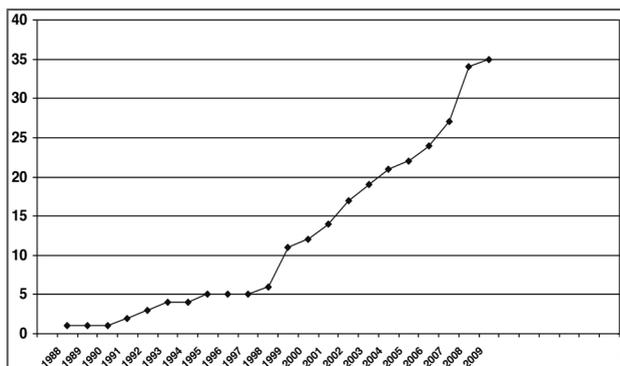


Table 2: PhD Theses in Cultural History, University of Turku 1988-2009

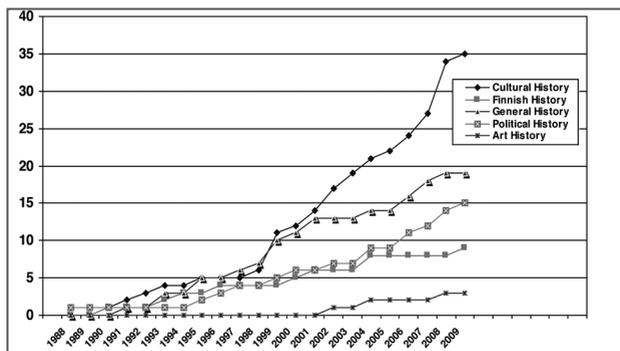


Table 3: PhD Theses in History, University of Turku, 1988-2009

In conclusion, it is evident that there is a century-long tradition of cultural history in Finland and that the concept of culture has had explanatory powers in historical research. However, it is just as evident that there were two periods of particular interest in cultural history. In a recent analysis, based on all doctoral dissertations in history completed in Finland, Markku Peltonen has drawn a similar conclusion. Peltonen notes that the first upheaval of cultural history was in the 1930s and 1940s. Many of the PhD theses, inspired by the Cultural History

School before the war, were completed in the 1940s. The second boom started in the 1990s and is still underway.³⁹

In Finnish historical research of the late 1960s and early 1970s, historians rarely described themselves as cultural historians. Back in the 1980s this began to change gradually. The development of the Department of Cultural History is an epitome of those profound changes Finnish historical research has gone through. The Department started as a tiny, often neglected unit with only a few students, but it experienced a huge expansion in the 1990s and was suddenly at the centre of attention as, at the same time, historical research in general increasingly opened up to the so-called new histories and the *cultural turn*.

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