

THE ELUSIVE CONCEPT OF  
 ‘TRADITION SCIENCE’ IN THE NORDIC  
 INSTITUTE OF FOLKLORE  
 UNDER LAURI HONKO’S DIRECTORSHIP

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ABSTRACT

The Nordic Institute of Folklore, internationally well known by its abbreviation NIF, left a lasting imprint on the history of Nordic and international folkloristics despite its relatively short operation period of less than four decades. The present article, first in a series of forthcoming articles on NIF, examines Lauri Honko’s directorship in the 1970s and 1980s and focuses on the changing of the institute’s field of operation from folkloristics to ‘tradition science’. The term ‘tradition science’ (*traditionsvetenskap* in Swedish, *perinmetiede* in Finnish) was never clearly defined in NIF, but was used – and it has continued to be used in folkloristics and ethnology in Finland – in three meanings: an approximate synonym for folkloristics, a joint term for folkloristics and ethnology, and (in plural) an umbrella term for an unspecified number of fields in the study of history, vernacular religion, and culture. The possible earlier history of the term is beyond the scope of this research, but there are indications that the term came into use in both Finnish-language and Swedish-language folklore research in the early 1970s, while the similar term ‘tradition research’ (*traditionsforskning* in Swedish, *perinteentutkimus* in Finnish) has a longer history. The term ‘tradition science’ was adopted into NIF’s statutes around the same time as the Nordic Council of Ministers – through which the inter-governmental funding of NIF was administered – initiated the expansion of NIF’s profile to cover folk culture “in its entirety”, suggesting specifically the extension of NIF’s field of operation to include ethnology. Whether NIF implemented this expansion or not, and to what extent, is a matter of debate, and the topic of this article.

KEYWORDS: Finnish and Nordic folkloristics • ethnology • tradition science • tradition research • Nordic Institute of Folklore • Nordic Council of Ministers

## INTRODUCTION

The Nordic Institute of Folklore (in Danish *Nordisk Institut for Folkedigtning*, in Swedish *Nordiska institutet för folkdiktning*, in Finnish *Pohjoismainen kansanrunousinstituutti*, internationally well known by its abbreviation NIF) left a lasting imprint on the history of Nordic and international folkloristics despite its relatively short operation period of a little less than four decades. The timespan can, however, be extended at least in principle when counting in the more than 25 years when the institute was in the process of emerging.

As an organisation, NIF was comprised of a secretariat and a board of directors. The secretariat included a director, two assistants (later research secretaries) and one office secretary, later two secretaries. (For personnel in the mid-1970s, see e.g. *NIF Newsletter* 2/1974a: 15 and *NIF Newsletter* 1/1977a: 10.) Together with the institute's director, some board members were also members in the executive committee, also called the working group of the board.

NIF was jointly funded by the governments of five Nordic countries via the Nordic Council of Ministers. The institute started its operation on 1 April 1959 and was closed on 30 April 1997. It was first located in Copenhagen, Denmark, and in 1972 was transferred to the University of Turku in Finland, officially starting its activities there on 1 April 1972. The first NIF directors were Laurits Bødker (1915–1982) from Denmark (director 1959–1966), Brynjulf Alver (1924–2009) from Norway (director 1966–1968) and Bengt Holbek (1933–1992) from Denmark (director 1968–1971). Between 1972 and 1990 NIF's director was Lauri Honko (1932–2002), Professor of Folkloristics and Comparative Religion at the University of Turku, full-time director from 1979. From the beginning of 1991, the institute was headed by Reimund Kvideland (1935–2006) from Bergen, Norway. His directorship ended with the institute's closure in April 1997.

The institute gained much of its practical and symbolic value as the cooperation body of Nordic folkloristics, the importance of which can at least partially be measured in the amount of funding that was allocated to Nordic research through it, and in the number of conferences and seminars organized by NIF and books and other publications as well as in the number of support letters that were written on behalf of the institute when its existence was in jeopardy due to a series of evaluations concerning its performance and "Nordic value". Yet another way to measure its symbolic value would be the examination of the expressions of disappointment that followed the institute's closure. However, the other side of the coin was, in my understanding, the reluctance to see or find out why the institute was abolished or what led to this. The termination of a long-standing funding program tends to be seen as a poorly thought-out decision by politicians in state administration or multinational cooperation bureaucracy allegedly hostile to small research fields like folkloristics. Such a view could produce a narrative of victimhood, which can be regarded as a variant to the often-heard argument that NIF's value as a research institute is proven by folklore's symbolic significance to national cultures in the Nordic countries.<sup>1</sup>

Some of NIF's final stages are described in *NIF Newsletter* issue 4/1996 (Herranen 1996). After NIF closed in 1997, the Nordic Council of Ministers promised to fund folkloristic cooperation for five more years, mainly in the form of a network called the Nordic Network for Folklorists (NNF), which was jointly administered by the Department

of Comparative Religion and Folklore at Åbo Akademi University in Turku, and the Department of Cultural Studies and Art History at the University of Bergen in Norway. Honko, on the other hand, after retiring from his position as professor in 1996, went on to revive the dormant Folklore Fellows organisation within the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, transforming it into an actively functioning international scholarly network. He continued to serve as the editor of the internationally renowned *Folklore Fellows' Communications* publication series, published by the Academy.<sup>2</sup> Honko also started a news bulletin entitled *Folklore Fellows Network*.

At the beginning of 1998, a new institute was born from the 'ruins' of NIF with the establishment of a national and international epic research unit called the Kalevala Institute in Turku through a cooperation agreement between the University of Turku, the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, the Finnish Literature Society, the Kalevala Society, and the Alfred Kordelin Foundation. This was processed under Honko's leadership with Honko as the full-time director of the institute until his untimely death in July 2002. Thereafter the administration of the Kalevala Institute was incorporated into the official tasks of the professor of folkloristics at the University of Turku. The institute ended its operations quietly in 2013 (Pekka Hakamies, personal communication 2023).

When NIF was abolished in April 1997 by a decision of the Nordic Council of Ministers, Honko commented on this in the December issue of *Folklore Fellows Network*. He referred to possible economic, geopolitical, as well as world political reasons for the fact that Nordic cooperation no longer seemed to be as important as it had been during the Cold War. One can read between the lines what he thought about the responsibility of NIF's last director for what happened to the institute. Honko compared NIF to the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (NIAS), which the Nordic Council of Ministers had planned to shut down in 1990, along with NIF and two other Nordic institutes. NIAS survived this crisis, at least partially because of Honko, while NIF eventually did not.<sup>3</sup> Honko (1997: 19) wrote about NIF and its closing as follows:

Whether the institute itself could have done any better in the process, is hard for me to say, since I was not informed about its decisions during the last six years. At the end of the 1980s, NIAS was in a worse shape than NIF. I was ordered to chair a reorganising committee, which made a number of suggestions in order to put NIAS back on its feet after a rather devastating evaluation. The fact is that NIAS sailed through the present crisis with ease whereas NIF was closed. NIAS managed to lift its level of ambition by expanding, despite its Asian focus, to European institutions in the field and by founding a research professorship for top Nordic scholars. Part of its success depended on its very able director.

Regarding NIF, I think Honko is not completely honest here, because he was aware of key NIF decisions during the six years when it continued its operations after Honko's two-decade term as director. Honko was in sporadic contact with NIF personnel, and he had his office in the same building as NIF, one floor above. When Honko commented on NIAS, saying that "part of its success depended on its very able director", my understanding is that this is not merely a descriptive statement or a compliment, it very likely meant that NIF did not have a "very able director". I will return to this question in a follow-up article. In this one I examine NIF's operational profile during Honko's directorship, specifically the changes made in the institute's statutes after the Nordic Council

of Ministers had indicated that NIF should expand its profile to cover folk culture in its entirety and specifically to add ethnology to the institute's field of operation.

The present article examines NIF during Honko's directorship in the 1970s and 1980s, while a follow-up article, or articles, will deal with NIF in the 1990s, during the directorship of Honko's successor.<sup>4</sup> My approach is research historical, but instead of merely reporting on past events in NIF as an organisation, my focus is partially on conceptual history and the history of terminology and partially on strategies in the production of disciplinary identity. The information and analysis concerning the institute's statutes, activities, correspondence, and reports is drawn from five categories of source: 1) the institute's publications, mainly the *NIF Newsletter*, 2) the institute's documents archived in the collections of the Åbo Akademi University Library in Turku, 3) my personal collection of NIF documents, which I photocopied when I was an employee at NIF, 4) my notes, publications, and correspondence from the period of my employment at NIF, and 5) my personal recollections and reminiscences of my employment at NIF as well as my observations on Nordic folkloristic circles and networks over the past decades.<sup>5</sup> The English translations of the NIF documents written originally in Finnish and the Scandinavian languages are mine.

#### ON NIF'S EARLY HISTORY

NIF was founded in 1959 as a folktale institute and centre of information concerning folklore and its study. It was housed at the Danish Folklore Archives, which is now part of the Royal Danish Library in Copenhagen. According to NIF's first director, Laurits Bødker (1959 [1958]: 165–166), NIF's scientific scope embraced tales, legends, and "some" ballads, rhymes and jingles, riddles, proverbs, and sayings, with the primary object being the formation of archives of such material in copies, transcripts, and microfilms. The original English translation for the institute's name *Nordisk Institut for Folke-digtning* was The Nordic Institute for Folk Literature (ibid.: 164–165).

In NIF's prehistory, the idea for a folkloristic institute grew gradually among Nordic folktale scholars concerned about accessing researchable and archivable materials in various vernacular languages. Consequently, a meeting in Copenhagen in 1907 between Kaarle Krohn (1863–1933), Axel Olrik (1864–1917) and Carl Wilhelm von Sydow (1878–1952) led to the foundation of Folklore Fellows (Nilsson 1936: 71; Rogan 2008: 287). However, instead of limiting its scope on folktale scholarship alone, the new network set its focus on the international publication series *Folklore Fellows' Communications*. In the 1930s von Sydow continued to pursue his idea of an institution dealing with the archiving of folktales, and among other things hosted a folktale congress in Lund in November 1935, the Congress for Science of Folktales (see Nilsson 1936; Garberding 2015: 153–156) with the plan of having the congress help him advance his idea. However, in what Bjarne Rogan (2008: 286–289) calls "the Ethnologist's Coup", the Stockholm ethnologist Sigurd Erixon pushed through "a plan for wider international cooperation than for folktales only" (see also Nilsson 1936: 73–76). The congress accepted the proposal for a new international organisation, "an association for ethnology, folklore and related linguistics of Northern, Western and Central Europe" (Rogan 2013: 90; see also 2008: 290–294). This was the International Association of Folklore and Ethnology

(IAFE), which was soon transformed into the International Association for European Ethnology and Folklore (IAEEF).<sup>6</sup>

Von Sydow brought up his idea of a folktale institute again at the Eighth Nordic Conference on Folk Life and Folklore held in Oslo in 1946. Speeches were made by participants from all five Nordic countries that commented on the proposal for the founding of the International Folktale Institute. The Danish government had promised 15,000 Danish Crowns and the Danish Folklore Archives was ready to house the institute. In addition, Dr Inger M. Bøberg was suggested as director, Bødker as scientific assistant, and operation was designed to start in April 1947 (Granlund 1947: 43). John Granlund (*ibid.*: 44) wrote that

the most important thing was that the institute, through extensive international contacts, through its connections with philologists and cultural researchers at the University of Copenhagen, would be able to effectively benefit the individual researcher by making excerpts available, obtaining translations, arranging research trips, etc.

Nils-Arvid Bringéus (1926–2023) wrote in his book on von Sydow that von Sydow gave an introductory talk at the Oslo conference entitled “International Folktale Institute”. Bringéus added that a year passed after the conference and nothing happened, but on 1 April 1949 the institute started its operation. However, the activities were discontinued at the end of March 1952 due to lack of funds. (Bringéus 2006: 131)

A new attempt was made after a meeting between Danish, Swedish and Norwegian folklorists and ethnologists, including Erixon (Rogan 2013: 95–96). The meeting took place at the University of Copenhagen in February 1954 (Bødker 1959 [1958]: 165; see also Bødker and Hammerich 1955), and the participants decided to establish the Nordic Institute for Folk Literature. This was only a couple of years after von Sydow had died without seeing his longstanding dream come true. However, Rogan (2013: 96; citing Bødker and Hammerich 1955) writes that

The geographical scope was delimited, compared to von Sydow’s ambitious plans: The new institute would not embrace the whole world but only the Nordic countries. The idea of extensive collecting of material was abandoned, but the thematic scope was widened from folktales only to other kinds of folkloristic material.

Yet, according to Bringéus (2006: 131–132), apparently no concrete steps were taken until the 13th Nordic Folklife and Folklore Congress in Lund in 1957 pleaded with the government(s) for funds. Eventually, a proposal regarding NIF was passed on to the Nordic Cultural Committee, which approved the plan in its meeting in Helsinki in 1957 (Bødker 1959 [1958]: 165; see also Rogan 2013: 95–96).

NIF’s first statutes begin with the following description of the institute’s creation:

Nordisk Institut for Folkedigtning was established by the Nordic countries in 1959 on the basis of a plan, adopted at a Nordic folklorist meeting in Copenhagen on 15–17 February 1954 and with the support of the Nordic Cultural Commission accepted by the governments of the Nordic countries. (*Nordisk udredningsserie* 1960: 37)

According to the first statutes, published in print (*Nordisk udredningsserie* 1960), NIF is a joint Nordic folkloristic central archive and its area of operation in terms of aca-



demic subject field is Nordic folklore, primarily folktales and legends. The statutes were revised in the late 1960s, and the new ones came into effect on 15 March 1969. These statutes state that NIF's "field of study is Nordic folklore with emphasis on prose traditions" (*NIF Newsletter* 1/1972: 2).

#### A NEW BEGINNING IN TURKU

Soon after moving to Finland and starting its work in the Department of Folkloristics and Comparative Religion at the University of Turku, NIF sent out the first issue of its newsletter, which became the key publication with which NIF reached its audience, displayed its goals and reported on its activities – in English. At the end of its first full year, which was 1973, *NIF Newsletter's* circulation was 1,454 copies, of which approximately half (715) were distributed in the Nordic countries and the other half (739) in other countries (*NIF Newsletter* 1/1974: 11; 2/1974a: 13). From the first issue onwards, Honko was the editor, and in the first two issues Outi Lehtipuro and Aili Nenola were assistant editors. Gun Herranen was one of NIF's research assistants (later research secretary) for almost all of the 25 years that NIF was in Turku.

Honko had been a member of NIF's board since 1969 (see *NIF Newsletter* 4/1978: 13), and now, as the new director, he listed the tasks that he envisioned for NIF in Turku: 1) spread information about folkloristic research and teaching in and outside the Nordic region, 2) instigate and organise joint Nordic research projects "concerning Nordic traditions", 3) maintain contacts between folkloristic institutions in research and teaching and between archives containing folklore materials, 4) coordinate research, research training and archival activities, as far as possible without "interfering too much in the 'internal' problems of member countries", 5) engage in publishing activity, 6) arrange annual conferences and seminars, 7) coordinate the programs of visiting lecturers, provide information on the acquisition of research material and on the exchange of research and teaching materials, 8) maintain an archive and a library (*NIF Newsletter* 1/1972: 2).

The newsletter's 1/1975 issue made a reference to the question of NIF's administrative structure and the role that its activities play in cultural cooperation between the Nordic countries. The description was rather short, stating that these have already been described in the 1/1972 issue, and since then "there has been no major change in the Institute's status. NIF's regulations stipulate that the Institute's field of interest is Nordic folklore with special attention to prose traditions." (*NIF Newsletter* 1/1975: 2) The same text, except for the word 'regulations', was published in the 1/1976 issue: "NIF's statutes stipulate that the Institute's field of interest is Nordic folklore with special attention to prose traditions" (*NIF Newsletter* 1/1976: 4).

Yet, there were changes in the making. Some of these were coming from inside NIF and some from the outside. A year after NIF had started its operations in Turku, in April 1973, Honko presented in writing his ideas for the reorientation of NIF's profile and activities. Among other things, this concerned the question of prose narratives as the focus in NIF's field of operation. Honko wrote in the 1973 activity plan that the area of folkloristic research and its objectives were constantly expanding, meaning for NIF that a reorientation of the research field was taking place:

alongside the classic prose genres, the wonder tale and the legend, the whole multifaceted and varied oral communication of traditional culture has now been taken up as a research object. With the help of these, one can explore the role and functions of the exchange of traditions in different societies and social groups. (PC: Honko 1973)

In the autumn of 1975, the Nordic Council of Ministers came up with a plan to reform and coordinate the statutes for all joint Nordic research institutes in the interest of the Nordic cultural cooperation budget (PC: Sekretariatet 1976a). The idea was welcomed in NIF at least partially, as the current definition of NIF's purpose and activity field had come to be seen in NIF as too narrow (*NIF Newsletter* 1/1975: 15). In its meeting in October 1975, NIF's board decided to make a proposal to the Secretariat for Nordic Cultural Cooperation (*Nordiskt kultursekretariat*, NKS, a subsection in the Nordic Council of Ministers) for a reformulation of the first paragraph of the statutes. In this proposal, NIF's area of operation was defined as Nordic folkloristics with a priority on folk poetry (*ibid.*).<sup>7</sup>

NIF's board<sup>8</sup> confirmed this proposal in its meeting in April 1976 and submitted it to the NKS Secretariat in May 1976. The proposal was discussed in the Nordic Council of Ministers' Advisory Committee for Research (*Nordiska ministerrådets rådgivande kommitté för forskning*, RKF) in August 1976, after which the NKS approached NIF in September 1976 with the message that the RKF would not take a stand on the expansion that NIF suggested, an expansion from prose tradition to folk poetry (or more precisely, verbal folklore), before NIF's board takes a stand on RKF's suggestion for a more substantial expansion in NIF's area of operation (PC: Sekretariatet 1976b). A detailed initiative regarding the expected expansion was provided in an attached memorandum (PC: Förslag 1976).

The memorandum by the NKS Secretariat states that the current statutes present NIF's area of operation as "extremely narrowly delimited" (*ibid.*: 1). According to the Secretariat, NIF's annual reports and budget gave evidence of efficient and expansive operation, but the suggestion for an expansion in the statutes from prose narratives to folk poetry (*folkdiktning*) is "a minor change" (*ibid.*). The NKS Secretariat contended that NIF's field of activity should be expanded to cover Nordic folk culture in its entirety (*ibid.*: 2). This would mean that apart from folkloristics, ethnology (folklife research) should be included, and the word *folkdiktning* should be replaced with another term.

The memorandum by the NKS Secretariat emphasised that the Secretariat was in favour of promoting Nordic cooperation in the scientific study of folk culture. The Secretariat even showed interest in the idea of NIF developing into a Nordic coordination and contact centre within the study of folk culture (*ibid.*: 1–2). Yet, the NKS Secretariat considered the suggested reformulation of the clause covering the institute's purpose so limited "that a significant increase in resources hardly seems possible with the current delimitation of the subject area" (*ibid.*: 2). In addition, the Secretariat also considered it "questionable whether, in the long run, it is expedient to tie up the resources of the Nordic cultural budget to a permanent institution with such a limited subject area" (*ibid.*).

In addition to the economic aspects within Nordic cultural policy and its funding – as well as the question concerning NIF's location, in which no changes were demanded –

the NKS Secretariat presented viewpoints regarding the relationship between ethnology and folkloristics in the Nordic countries. According to the memorandum, it had been “natural” to establish a separate institute for folkloristics when NIF was founded, since at that time a clear distinction existed in the study of folk culture between folklife research and folklore study. However, the memorandum emphasised that there was a clear connection between these disciplines, and that this was visible in the collaboration, which had been strengthened by scientific developments in recent times. The memorandum suggested that by expanding the purpose clause to include folk culture in its entirety, the institute would emerge as a joint institution for these specialist areas, which already worked in close collaboration (*ibid.*).

The NKS Secretariat’s message to NIF can be read, at least now in hindsight, as basically encouraging rather than threatening, even though one can imagine that the demand for expansion towards ethnology could have been received in and around NIF as a token of hostility towards folkloristics. The memorandum included a suggestion as how to create a specialised research profile for NIF, and it is exactly this that can be seen as a sign of encouragement instead of hostility: “Possible themes for a specialisation in the study of folk culture as a whole could be, for example, the social aspects of folk culture, belief and custom, and – as before folk poetry” (*ibid.*).

In any case, the suggestion made by the NKS Secretariat appears to have been welcomed by NIF. The suggested areas of belief, custom and folk poetry became the exact key areas listed in the subsequent definitions of NIF’s field of operation and remained as such up to the institute’s closure.

#### NIF PLANS TO EXPAND AND AGREES TO EXPANSION

The NKS Secretariat’s assessment of the historical relationship between folkloristics and ethnology, which emphasised their mutual proximity, must be seen as a particular point of view, an opinion, or a policy approach, which differs from the view that regards ethnology and folkloristics as separate and mutually independent fields. In all but one of the Nordic countries at the time, ethnology and folkloristics were indeed separate university disciplines although regarded as being closely linked. It is possible that in the Nordic Council of Ministers the idea of bringing the two subject fields closer to each other in NIF operations was pursued by certain individuals, although the notion of regarding the two fields as parts of a whole was not in any way new in the mid-1970s. In fact, this issue had been debated almost since the beginning of the 20th century and has continued to be discussed into the 21st century. This is an old battle between those who wish to keep ethnology and folkloristics separate, or more precisely, those who wish or would have wished to keep folkloristics independent and separate from ethnology and those who prefer them combined or even unified.

From today’s multidisciplinary perspective one might assert that the position taken by the NKS Secretariat in the mid-1970s foretold the future. When research into folk or vernacular culture began to be established as a university subject in the Nordic countries, folklife research was regarded as comprising of study of the material aspects of folk or vernacular culture, while folklore or “folk memory research” was characterised as study of the non-material aspects. Folklife research or ethnology was closely con-



nected to culture historical museums, while the study of folklore was linked to dialect and folklore archives. Today the distinctions between material and non-material aspects of vernacular culture have lost many of their argumentative and/or theoretical premises, and on the general level it has become rather difficult to draw a line between ethnological and folkloristic research. A disciplinary specialisation in the study of traditional verbal art (verbal folklore) can still be regarded as warranted, at least in countries where the archived documents of orality carry extraordinary political value. An expansion towards oral and digital history and written reminiscences adds to the significance.

Perhaps this at least partially explains why in the Nordic countries today, folkloristics (identified as a disciplinary category through its research materials and their research history) is an independent university subject only in Finland and Iceland. Barbro Klein (2006: 76) made a reference to the “absorption of folklore/folklife into cultural heritage/cultural history” and specifically the integration of folklore studies into cultural studies and cultural history in Norway. She wondered whether “such a shift will spell the end of folkloristics as a field in the Nordic countries” (ibid.). In 2013, Owe Ronström, Georg Drakos and Jonas Engman (2013: 13) made the same observation about folkloristics being an independent university subject only in Finland and Iceland, but they also stated that there are still folklorists in all Nordic countries (see also Eriksen 2011: 39–43; Simonsen 2014; Henriksson and Nilsson 2021: 202).

In the 1970s, the idea of NIF’s profile covering both ethnology and folkloristics did not, most apparently, coincide with the views of most Nordic folklorists, even if they also celebrated or at least welcomed the renewal and expansion of their disciplinary perspectives. For those folklorists who wanted to emphasise the difference between folkloristics and ethnology as well as the independence of both, the talk of the close connection between the two fields, in my understanding, constituted an image of threat and put folklorists on the defensive. Indeed, the initiative by the Nordic Council of Ministers and NIF’s reaction to it must be examined in the context of Nordic folklorists being afraid of losing the academic independence of their field, and in this, the situation in Sweden was regarded as a frightening example.

In Sweden, ethnology has commonly been conceptualised as an *enhetsämne* (or *heltetsämne*), which can be translated into English as a discipline that is merged, united, unified, unitary, or composite. It means in practice that ethnology and folkloristics constitute a single subject field instead of two fields. The unified two are not, however, necessarily seen as equal partners, since folkloristics is a subfield of ethnology, and according to the experience of at least some folklorists, is a subsection *inside* ethnology. Folkloristics can be regarded as being subordinated, submerged, marginalised, devoured, “incorporated and turned less distinct and visible” (see for example Nagel 2012: 26, 56; Arvidsson 2016 [1999]: 17; Gustafsson Reinius, personal communication 2024; see also Skott 2008: 137–138).

On the other hand, the Finnish folklorist Outi Lehtipuro (1983: 215), with a positive take on the social scientific turn in Swedish ethnology since the 1970s, wrote that “it is precisely in Swedish folkloristics that the traditional folkloristic fields of research have been the main focus of attention longer than elsewhere.” Regardless of the fact that Lehtipuro (2006: 220; 2008: 216) seems to have changed her mind about the benefits of Swedish *enhets* ethnology for folkloristics, her comment from 1983 can be regarded as a discreet way of saying that without the ethnological turn Swedish folkloristics

would have remained old-fashioned. This notion also comes forward in the recently published obituary for Nils Arvid Bringéus, professor of Nordic and Comparative Folklife Research at Lund University 1967–1991. Anders Gustavsson, the author of the obituary, makes a reference to Bringéus’s essay in Lena Gerholm’s edited volume on ethnological visions (1993), in which Bringéus defends himself against criticism that he had pushed folkloristics into decline in Sweden when it was merged with ethnology. Bringéus responds by saying that folkloristics in Sweden was not fulfilling its promise until it became an integral part of *enhetsämne* ethnology, not least because of folklorists’ own demands for contextuality and their increasing inspiration from anthropology. (Bringéus 1993: 211; Gustavsson 2023: 111)

Von Sydow, who can be regarded as the founding forefather of NIF (see above), was one of the key characters in the decades-long debate over the status of folkloristics in Sweden. He was appointed docent (senior lecturer) in *folkminnesforskning* (‘folk memory research’; Nordic and Comparative Folklore) at Lund University in 1910 and was granted a professor’s title in 1938. In 1940, at the age of 62, he received personal professor’s status, but to his own disappointment this was in *folk Kulturforskning* (Nordic and Comparative Folk Culture Research) instead of folklore studies (Bringéus 2006: 89–90; Skott 2008: 137–138; see also Bringéus 1988). Fredrik Skott (2008: 32) writes that von Sydow “propagated the hardest for a division of the subject fields into two separate disciplines” (see also Rogan 2008: 288, 294). Löfgren (1988: 147) quotes von Sydow commenting that no one can master both areas, and the two branches of research make completely different demands on the researcher and his working methods (see also Skott 2008: 32–33). Löfgren (1988: 148) adds that von Sydow “asserted the role of folklore research as a separate branch of scholarship by drawing up sharp boundaries”. In my 11-page report on the department of ethnology at Lund for the *NIF Newsletter* in 1993 I wrote that “von Sydow’s views correspond to the line of thinking of most present-day Nordic folklorists” (Anttonen 1993: 3).

The opposite view to the disciplinary issue was presented, for example, by Nils Lithberg (1883–1934), professor of Nordic and Comparative Folklife Research at the Nordic Museum in Stockholm. According to Skott (2008: 33), Lithberg believed that “folk tradition should be studied as an entity, and the division of culture into a material and a non-material part is artificial and harmful and thus unnecessary”. Sigfrid Svensson (1901–1984), who followed von Sydow in the professor position at Lund, gave a report on the polemics between von Sydow and Lithberg in newspapers and journals during 1918 and 1919 (Svensson 1948: 199–200; see also Bringéus 2006: 101–102). Svensson surveyed the history of the procedures leading to the establishment of Nordic and Comparative Folklife Research, Particularly Ethnological at Lund University in 1946 and Nordic and Comparative Folklife Research, Particularly Folkloristic at Uppsala University in 1947.<sup>9</sup> Svensson (1948: 205) himself preferred the unified subject since it “brings wider educational opportunities with consequent advantages when choosing a profession”.

Lithberg’s professorship in Nordic and Comparative Folklife Research ended in his sudden death in 1934 and he was succeeded by Sigurd Erixon (1888–1968), a scholar of international renown who established the discipline as a fully-fledged academic subject, as the chair was expanded from a research professorship at the Nordic Museum to Stockholm University. Erixon envisioned, in the words of Rogan (2008: 284), “a new science, ‘European ethnology’ ... a modern study of material culture and the social life

of common people, to bridge the diversity of regional ethnologies and folklore studies" (see also Rogan 2013: 90, 91–92). Consequently, the discipline's name was changed to European Ethnology (*etnologi, särskilt europeisk*) in all Swedish universities in 1972. As an *enhetsämne* ethnology contained both material and immaterial dimensions of culture, making folkloristics a subfield.

At Lund, the main protagonist in this regard was Bringéus, who succeeded Sigurd Svensson as Professor and Director of the Folklife Archive, to be succeeded by Orvar Löfgren in 1991. I interviewed Professor Löfgren for my report on the department of ethnology at Lund for the *NIF Newsletter* in 1993 and he said that one of the consequences of the interest in general cultural analysis is that "it has become both impossible and irrelevant to draw a line between folklore materials and ethnological materials" (Anttonen 1993: 5). He gave an example:

One of the research interests in this department is the analysis of life histories as a narrative genre. Is that folkloristics? Is that ethnology? We all use life histories as a very important type of doing ethnography or collecting material. (Ibid.)

Löfgren's emphasis on the dialogue between the two sides of ethnology found support from Dr Inger Lövkrona, today Professor Emerita, who believed that the integration benefits both. Yet, she was concerned that "ethnologists know only about the old type of folklore research and find that irrelevant and old-fashioned" (ibid.: 6).

Around the same time, I also visited the Department of Ethnology at Stockholm University and wrote a report for *NIF Newsletter*. In addition to covering the history and profile of the department, I interviewed two representatives of folkloristics whose opinions differed on the question of whether the status of their field as a subcategory within ethnology is unfortunate or not. Bengt af Klintberg divided folklorists into two categories, literary folklorists and anthropological folklorists, and identified himself with the former category. He characterised himself as a "text-oriented folklorist who is not totally happy with what he calls the anthropological influence in folklore studies" (Anttonen 1994: 11–12). He said that folklore exists in the department on ethnology's terms but admitted that one of the consequences of anthropological folkloristics in the department is the decrease of the gap between folklore and ethnology. Af Klintberg said that since he left the department and became a freelancer, his branch of folkloristic tradition has consisted of analysing and cataloguing folklore texts and publishing folklore materials, in addition to running a weekly program on national radio (ibid.: 12–13).

The other folklorist I interviewed at the department in Stockholm was Barbro Klein, who was making her return to the department after spending 22 years in the United States as a doctoral student, teacher, scholar, and businesswoman. Because of Klein the influence of anthropological folkloristics was strong in the department. She said that folkloristics had always been subsumed under the heading of folklife research and pointed out that Erixon wrote several essays that would fall under the heading of traditional folkloristics, with the same applying to John Granlund (1901–1982), professor at the Nordic Museum, and Mats Rehnberg (1915–1984), professor of ethnology after Erixon. Although she campaigned for strong folkloristic insights, Klein did not always find it possible or even necessary to try to distinguish between folklore and ethnology. She even said that from the American perspective, almost everything that Stockholm ethnologists were doing in research would fit the concept of folklore studies (Anttonen 1994: 13).

In NIF in the mid-1970s, not all folklorists were frightened or pessimistic in the face of NIF being expected to expand towards ethnology. Shortly before the NKS Secretariat had sent NIF its initiative in September 1976, Urpo Vento, the Secretary General of the Finnish Literature Society and a member of NIF's board as well as a member of NIF's executive committee, wrote a letter addressed to "Lauri Honko & kumpp" (Lauri Honko & Co.). The reason why Vento was writing a letter was that he was unable to attend the forthcoming meeting of the executive committee. According to Vento, it is apparent that NIF would henceforth stand for something like Nordic Institute for Folk Culture. He wrote that "there is no doubt that '*folkdiktning*' is narrow and stinks of luxury" (PC: Vento 1976: 1). Apart from this, according to Vento, folklorists have always been quite open-minded in expanding their perspective, so it is also possible to "expand NIF's activity field in style and without risking anything" (ibid.). Vento continues:

In the new statutes, one just has to know how to wisely delimit the folk culture and the activities that fall under the scope of the new NIF; I guess research cooperation should be emphasised both at the level of ideas and as concrete projects, but ideological policy-making with folk traditions as well as local heritage and museum work as both professional and recreational activity should be crossed off. (Ibid.)

Vento did not specify what the risk would be if the activity field was not "delimited wisely".

NIF held two executive committee meetings and one board meeting in the autumn season of 1976 and took, in principle, a positive attitude towards the proposed changes. Honko wrote in a letter to the NKS Secretariat in November 1976, as well as in the 1976 activity report, that "the initiative to expand the institute's area of activity partially coincides with NIF's own efforts over the past five years to cover increasingly larger areas of research concerning Nordic folk tradition" (PC: Honko 1976: 1; PC: Verksamhetsberättelse 1976). In his letter to the NKS Secretariat Honko (PC: Honko 1976: 1) also insisted that the proposed change from prose tradition to *folkdiktning* in NIF's statutes is hardly a minor change, but "a measure that reflects not only the actual expansion of NIF that has taken place in recent years, but also a resource-intense commitment to NIF's future development".

Indeed, another reason for NIF's positive attitude towards the NKS Secretariat's initiative was the newly emerged opportunity to apply for significantly larger annual operating funds and a full-time director and researcher positions. Honko wrote in a PM (promemoria, memorandum) addressed to the board for its meeting in October 1976 that

if NIF is to be transformed into a real research institute that will initiate research and function as a Nordic coordination and contact centre for all institutions and researchers working with research into folk tradition, a resource increase is needed in the form of permanent staff (a professor position and a researcher position) and funds for extended project activity. (ÅAUL: Honko 1976: 1–2)

Regarding the institute's name, Honko wrote (ibid.) that *Nordiska institutet för traditionsforskning* or *Nordiska institutet för folktraditionsforskning*<sup>10</sup> would be an acceptable solution, but the abbreviation NIF should be maintained. According to Honko (ibid.: 2), NIF should be able to continue using the name Nordic Institute of Folklore, because the institute had an established position in information activity and in the mainte-

nance of international contacts. Regarding the definition of NIF's field of operation and purpose, Honko (ibid.) contended that "The institute's field of operation is Nordic folk tradition", adding that "A focus on non-material folk culture in a broader sense (folk poetry, folk belief and custom) and the methodology of cultural research would facilitate planning".

In its meeting in October 1976 the board took a position in support of these views and promised that NIF would expand its activity field in accordance with the NKS Secretariat's proposals.

The board noted with satisfaction NKS's initiative and agreed that a certain broadening of NIF's area of activity is justified on the condition that NIF is assured of the resources that such a development would entail. The board therefore took a positive view of the possibility of continuing and further planning a broader and intensified activity in the area of folk culture in the Nordic countries in accordance with the guidelines drawn up in NKS's letter. (PC: Protokoll 1976: 2)

It is worth noting that the statement by the board did not explicitly say that NIF would expand to cover ethnological research and research cooperation with ethnologists, even though it did express the board's positive attitude to the expansion "in accordance with the guidelines drawn up in NKS's memorandum". To be sure, these guidelines refer to the NKS Secretariat's initiative concerning NIF's expansion to ethnology, which was central in the memorandum addressed to NIF. This centrality was also acknowledged by Honko (PC: Honko 1976: 1) in his own letter to the NKS Secretariat in November 1976: "The question of ethnology's position in NIF occupies a central place in NKS's memorandum."

However, NIF's board did not express its positive attitude towards the expansion simply "in accordance with the guidelines drawn up in NKS's memorandum". To be exact, the board stated that a *certain* broadening of NIF's area of activity was justified. Similarly, Honko wrote in his letter to the NKS Secretariat in November 1976 and in the 1976 activity report that "the initiative to expand the institute's area of activity *partially* coincides with NIF's own efforts over the past five years to cover increasingly larger areas of research concerning Nordic folk tradition" (PC: Honko 1976: 1; PC: Verksamhetsberättelse 1976; emphasis added).

The relativity of the positive attitude can be seen in how the quoted sentence, with which NIF's board expressed its positive attitude towards the NKS Secretariat's initiative, continues:

The board therefore took a positive view of the possibility of continuing and further planning a broader and intensified activity in the area of folk culture in the Nordic countries in accordance with the guidelines drawn up in NKS's memorandum and the PM written by the institute's director (PC: Protokoll 1976: 2).

With reference to the PM, the minutes of the board meeting state that "the broadening of the field of activity should include a focus on non-material folk culture" (ibid.).

Accordingly, on the one hand, NIF expressed its positive attitude towards the NKS Secretariat's initiative regarding the expansion of NIF's activity field, but on the other hand limited this positive attitude to a "certain" expansion and a "partial" congruence between the NKS Secretariat's initiative and NIF's own expansion process. A similarly



reserved positivity can be seen in reference to the said focus on non-material folk culture. It is not clear whether a focus on non-material folk culture means the inclusion of ethnology or part of it in NIF's activity field, or on the contrary, the exclusion of ethnological research. The director's PM, which NIF's board refers to, is equally unclear in this question. As already mentioned, Honko (ÅAUL: Honko 1976: 2) states in his PM that "A focus on non-material folk culture in a broader sense [folk poetry, folk belief and custom] and the methodology of cultural research would facilitate planning."

Consequently, NIF's board says two things at the same time: it takes a positive attitude towards the expansion, first, in accordance with the guidelines drawn up in NKS Secretariat's memorandum, according to which the expansion would mean the inclusion of ethnology, and second, in accordance with the guidelines drawn up in the PM written by the institute's director, according to which the expansion would take place within non-material folk culture. Are these the same or different things? If they are the same, NIF has decided to expand into ethnology, albeit with a focus on non-material folk culture. If they are different things, so that the concept of non-material folk culture does not link to ethnology, can the board, logically speaking, take a positive attitude to both options at the same time? What did NIF in fact promise the NKS Secretariat?

It is obvious that NIF committed to some sort of expansion. The board stated that "a certain broadening of NIF's area of activity is justified" and "The board therefore took a positive view of the possibility of continuing and further planning a broader and intensified activity in the area of folk culture in the Nordic countries" (PC: Protokoll 1976: 2).

Such a commitment to a "certain" expansion can hardly be characterised as an indication of submissiveness or yielding to administrative pressure, since there was already willingness for this kind of expansion within NIF. As mentioned above, Honko (PC: Honko 1976: 1; PC: Verksamhetsberättelse 1976) wrote to the NKS Secretariat about the Secretariat's initiative concerning the expansion of NIF's area of activity coinciding with NIF's own interests and efforts in expanding its area of activity. For this reason, it is fair to say that NIF turned the NKS Secretariat's initiative to its own advantage. When the NKS Secretariat set the expansion of NIF's activity field as a prerequisite for the continuation of NIF's operating funds, NIF made the increase of its operating funds a prerequisite for the expansion – indeed, for the expansion which they were in the process of implementing anyway, except for merging into ethnology.

This can be regarded as Honko's and NIF's cleverly executed manoeuvre to strengthen the institute's organisational and financial status. NIF was already implementing expansion within folkloristics, and NIF most obviously did not intend to promise to the NKS Secretariat much more than to continue the chosen track. NIF would have asked for an increase in the operating funds as well as a full-time director's position in any case. According to the minutes of the executive committee meeting in October 1976, one day before the board meeting, the executive committee had an in-depth discussion after which it decided to take, in principle, a positive stand towards the plans concerning the expansion of NIF's area of operation, "on the condition that resources for this are made available to NIF" (PC: Executive 1976b: 2).

It is most likely that from 1979 onwards NIF received a larger increase in its operating funds than it had assumed before the negotiations over the expansion. This becomes evident from the institute's activity plans and reports. NIF was also given a full-time director in 1979, Honko. This undoubtedly increased NIF's activities. There is no reason

to question NIF's sincerity in benefiting and expanding Nordic folkloristic research, but one may ask to what extent NIF's scope expanded in the manner the NKS Secretariat had proposed, and to which NIF – at least in part – had agreed.

#### ETHNOLOGY IS NEAR BUT MATERIAL CULTURE IS AN OTHER

Despite NIF's own interest in expansion, an explicit step towards the idea of including the academic discipline of ethnology in NIF's activity field constituted a problem for those who wanted to keep NIF's profile folkloristic and support folkloristics as an independent academic discipline. Honko gave his own interpretation of the phrase non-material folk culture (*den andliga folkkulturen*), which he suggested as a focus for NIF in the new statutes. He claimed that folkloristics contains an essential part of research into non-material folk culture in its verbal and social forms. (PC: Honko 1976: 1)

While this can be regarded as understandable rhetoric in Honko's attempt at defending NIF's folkloristic profile, his argument can raise questions, as he appears to be saying that neither non-material culture nor the social aspects of folk culture are present to any substantial extent in ethnology. Ethnology is seen here as dealing solely with material culture, which in this context is a rhetorical means to make ethnology an Other. Ethnology was from the very beginning a field concerned with material culture and popular customs. When the chair of ethnology was established at the University of Helsinki in 1921, first in the Nordic countries, it was defined as comprising "primarily the material culture and customs of the Finno-Ugric peoples, provided that these do not impinge upon the departments of Folklore or Folk Religion" (quoted in Vuorela 1977: 10). The ethnologist Riitta Räsänen (1992: 108, 115) has paraphrased this as follows: "Ethnology was regarded as covering the study of not only objects but of customs, too, insofar as this did not encroach on the territory of folklore research." Many definitions of ethnology in Finland indicate a hesitation to draw a distinction between material and non-material culture (see for example Sääskilahti 1997: 38–42), and such a distinction was strongly opposed especially by ethnology professor Albert Hämäläinen (1881–1949), a linguistically oriented researcher of courting and marriage customs and vernacular rituals (see Hämäläinen 1933: 11; 19–21; Räsänen 1992; Turunen 1995: 51; Sääskilahti 1997: 54). After stressing how material and non-material culture cannot be separated since "all materiality is only a projection of the spiritual achievements of human culture", Hämäläinen (1933: 20) gives an example from the study of shamanism:

The god puppets, god images, drums, costumes of the Shamanistic cult should probably be included in the field of 'material ethnology', but who would as a researcher think of observing them without trying to find out the ideas on which they are based? (See also Turunen 1995: 51.)

Moreover, by the mid-1970s it was widely known that Swedish folklife research (*folklivsforskning*), due especially to Stockholm professor Erixon, had long been sociologically oriented. Klein (1986: 461) wrote that "During the last few decades, Swedish folklife research has increasingly departed from its earlier emphasis on the material aspects of peasant culture". Especially after folklife research changed its name to European Ethnology, it developed a closer proximity to anthropology and the social sciences (see for example Daun 1972; Frykman 2012: 574).

In Finland, the European Ethnology of Swedish ethnologists and its insights into cultural analysis have been a source of inspiration for younger people in both ethnology and folkloristics since the 1970s, and this has especially been the case at the Åbo Akademi University (see for example Henriksson and Nilsson 2021). Ethnology was also near NIF via Nils Storå (1933–2023), professor of Nordic Ethnology at the Åbo Akademi University (1972–1997), who was a long-term member in NIF’s board (1975–1989). In the 1970s, ethnology was oriented towards museum work, artefacts, and agrarian and maritime culture, but at the same time drew influences from Swedish ethnology and the study of everyday life, with ethnologists conducting fieldwork with folklorists (Åström 2021: 78–80).

Even before Storå’s professorship Nordic ethnology was closely linked to folklore study. The university founded Nordic cultural history and folklife research (*Nordisk kulturhistoria och folklivsforskning*) in 1920 and included in it the following areas of investigation: 1. Sources of livelihood and ways of life; 2. building conditions and home furnishings; 3. society and customary law; 4. folk crafts and ornamentation; 5. folk beliefs and customs; 6. oral lore; 7. folk music; 8. games, dance, and sports. (Nilsson 2021: 179) Fredrik Nilsson (*ibid.*: 189), the current professor of Nordic ethnology, characterises the early profile of the discipline as *helhetsämne*. The *helhetsämne* identity became even more evident in 1974 when the discipline was renamed to Nordic ethnology and folkloristics (*Nordisk etnologi och folkloristik*). In 1985 folkloristics was equipped with a lecturer position and in 1987 the two fields were separated.

Finnish-language ethnology at the University of Turku has also been oriented towards the social forms of folk culture. The professorship was established in 1960, and in the founding statements the field was defined as covering both the non-material and material folk culture of Finland, as well as of the neighbouring countries and Scandinavia (Ruotsala 2021a: 280–281). The recently retired professor of ethnology at the University of Turku, Helena Ruotsala (*ibid.*: 281), writes that non-material folk culture in the professorship’s requirements could be interpreted to also include folklore and folk poetry, provided the applicant also had competence in the study of material culture. Honko was one of the applicants, but he was only partially successful in the competition, as he did not win the professorship in ethnology but was given an extraordinary professorship in comparative religion and folk poetry research, in 1963. This became a permanent professorship in 1971, in which connection folk poetry research in the discipline’s name was changed to folkloristics. The fields of folkloristics and comparative religion were separated into two independent disciplines in 1995 (Hakamies 2015: 50).

The competition for the first professorship in ethnology at the University of Turku was won by Ilmar Talve, who started his work in 1962. According to Ruotsala (2021a: 282–285; see also 2021b), ethnology on the one hand followed the approach outlined in the 1950s by sociology professor Esko Aaltonen, and on the other, due to Talve’s influence, the sociologically oriented Swedish folklife research (*folklivsforskning*) as outlined by Stockholm professor Erixon. Ruotsala (2021a: 289) contends that material culture and artefact research did not play a significant role in ethnology at the University of Turku, “and interestingly enough, artefact research did not gain a foothold even later”. During Talve’s professorship, the emphasis was on expanding the concept of the folk from the agricultural population to the rest of society and examining Finnish folk culture as part of European cultural heritage (Ruotsala 2021a: 274, 284, 290).

The theme of expansion can be said to have characterised the profiles of both folkloristics and ethnology since the 1960s, but not in equal measures in all academic environments. Eventually, many universities in the Nordic countries have since abandoned the separation of ethnographic research into material and non-material culture in their disciplinary structures, and some even the separation between ethnology and folkloristics. In Finland, one example of this is ethnology at the University of Jyväskylä. The current professor, Outi Fingerroos (2015), stated in her inaugural speech that at Jyväskylä, “the open-mindedness that questioned the traditional boundaries in the two subject fields of folklore and ethnology was exceptional in Finland at the time”. She contrasted this with ethnology at the University of Turku by stating that in his inauguration lecture Talve “called for traditional subject boundaries” (ibid.). Fingerroos added that Talve characterised Sweden as an *enhetsämne* country, meaning that ethnology is a unified subject field that “wraps around itself both material and immaterial dimensions of culture” (ibid.). Thanks to the first ethnology professor at Jyväskylä, Asko Vilkuna, who had been studying modern ethnology in Sweden under the influence of Erixon, ethnologists in Jyväskylä borrowed the *enhets* attitude from Sweden and “smoothly combined the examination of the physical and mental characteristics of folklife side by side” (ibid.).

Talve’s inauguration lecture is interesting for its insights into the interrelationship between ethnology and folkloristics as fields of research. Talve contends that the study of traditional folk culture, which he also calls the study of folk tradition, constitutes a single discipline with several subfields, including ethnology and folkloristics. Although the sub-fields are independent, they jointly provide a holistic and comprehensive view of traditional folk culture. (Talve 1963: 111–115) Here Talve (ibid.: 112) appears to disagree with Erixon (1944: 309, 312), who had considered the independence of the specialisation fields to prevent a holistic picture. Talve (1963: 109, 112–113) thus has a positive attitude towards the development of specialisation within the study of traditional folk culture, although he also sees such specialisation as a division of labour born out of the necessities of research instead of being created through administrative measures.

Yet, Talve considers whether “our discipline” has a uniform name or not of secondary importance. The term ‘ethnology’ can be used, if necessary, but mentioning the two fields of ethnology and folkloristics together, as is customary in the context of Nordic Ethnology and Folklore Conferences, will also do (ibid.: 114–115). We can debate whether the same applies to, for example, SIEF (International Society for Ethnology and Folklore) or the student organisation NEFA (Nordic Ethnological-Folkloristic Working Group), which is inactive today on the Nordic level although its many local associations are still thriving. Joint activities and other linkages between ethnologists and folklorists are so numerous that while ‘folklore and ethnology’ or alternatively ‘ethnology and folklore’ displays the names of two independent research fields, the name pair can also be said to function as an over-arching designation of a single or a semi-single field – even if ethnologists and folklorists have also tended to emphasise their differences.<sup>11</sup>

One more point about Talve's inauguration lecture is worth mentioning. After presenting his view on the study of traditional folk culture as constituting a single discipline with several subfields, Talve comments on the regrettable demise of ethnological sociology in Turku, represented at the University of Turku by Uno Harva (1882–1949) up to his death in 1949 and by Karl Robert Villehard Wikman (1886–1975) at the Åbo Akademi University up to his retirement in 1955. Talve regarded the academic status of the study of folk culture as much stronger in Finland than in the other Nordic countries, but this status would have been even stronger had there been continuity in ethnological sociology (see also Storå 1992: 99). Yet, Talve (1963: 109) was aware of the plans to launch the discipline of comparative religion at the University of Turku to compensate for the loss.

Harva and Wikman shared a very similar profile in their scholarly orientations and identities. In addition to both being Swedish speakers, both were multi- and transdisciplinary in their approaches, both were professors in sociology, both were also folklorists, ethnologists, scholars of religion, and both were students of Edvard Westermarck (1862–1939), the world-renowned Finnish anthropologist and sociologist, professor of sociology at the London School of Economics between 1907 and 1930.<sup>12</sup> Harva had been a strong candidate for a professorship at the University of Helsinki in comparative religion in the 1920s and in folklore studies in the early 1930s (after Kaarle Krohn), but in one expert statement his scholarly profile was regarded as too wide for folklore studies. By that time, the University of Turku had already established a professorship in sociology for him. (See V. Anttonen 1987: 86–101.) Harva started work in the sociology department in 1926 without having any publications in sociology, but he saw sociology as closely linked to ethnology (Pipatti and Ahmajärvi 2022: 287–288). Veikko Anttonen (2008: 42; see also 1989; 2007) characterises Harva as “primarily a researcher of folk customs and their underlying belief traditions and popular knowledge”.

Wikman has been lauded as “one of the most learned and able Nordic humanists of our time” (Hultkranz 1975: 165). He was educated in Westermarck's anthropologically oriented comparative sociology, but instead of social anthropology he called his own approach ethnosociology (Storå 1992: 98–100; 2021: 70–72; Larsson and Suolinna 2008: 7; Pipatti and Ahmajärvi 2022: 288–289). He studied folk beliefs and customs, especially night courting and marriage customs, combining folklore studies with ethnology, sociology, and psychology. Storå (1992: 99–100; see also 2021: 71–72) characterises Wikman's research into folk customs as being “somewhere between folk life and folklore studies”, noting the sociological and psychological factors in the persistence of traditions. Wikman had first worked at the Society of Swedish Literature as curator of the Folklore and Ethnographic Archives and as chief editor of the monumental collection *Finland Swedish Folklore (Finlands svenska folkdiktning)*. In 1922 he founded the ethnological journal *Budkaolen* and worked as its editor until 1929 and again in the early 1940s. In 1927 he became the director of the newly founded Institute of Nordic Ethnology at Åbo Akademi University. After he had defended his doctoral dissertation in 1937, he was appointed docent in sociology and in 1942 extraordinary professor in sociology, while he continued his linkage to the ethnology institute. In addition to the dissertation, *Die Einleitung Der Ehe* (Wikman 1937), inspired by Westermarck's research on marriage, he



published more than 1,000 articles in journals and daily papers and was active in both Finland and Sweden, for example in assessor assignments in sociology (see Larsson and Suolinna 2008).

Honko was appointed docent in comparative religion and folklore in 1961, and as already mentioned his chair in comparative religion was established, at least partially, as compensation for the loss of ethnological sociology. It is well known that Honko paid his dues to Harva (see for example Hultkrantz 1991: 13–14), but Honko's debt to Wikman calls for research. Honko's study of belief narratives regarding house spirits in Ingria (see Honko 1962) was discussed at length relatively recently by Lehtipuro in both Swedish (2006) and Finnish (2008), situating it in the history of modern Finnish folkloristics as a turning point. Honko's interest in Malinowskian functionalism, perception psychology and sociological role theory might appear to bear some resemblance to Wikman's sociological and psychological approaches, but Lehtipuro does not bring up Wikman's possible influence, nor is Wikman cited in Honko's monograph. It is possible that Wikman did not have much, if any, influence on Honko, although Wikman's indirect influence on NIF is worth considering.

Above I have discussed the initiative from the Nordic Council of Ministers to encourage NIF to expand its profile to cover folk culture "in its entirety", and the NKS Secretariat's suggestion of how to create a specialised research profile for NIF. The suggestion comprised three terms, two of which were new (belief and custom – *tro och sed*) and one was familiar (folk poetry – *folkdiktning*). To be sure, all three terms must have been familiar to NIF, as they had been used in folkloristic discourse at length. Belief and custom have constituted a common category in Swedish-language works in folklore collection. The Folklore Archives at Lund University (renamed the Folklife Archives in 1946) were developed under von Sydow's leadership into a central organisation for the documentation of "folk belief, custom and poetry" (Skott n.d.). The same concepts were listed in the description of the university subject Nordic and Comparative Folklife Research at both Lund University and Stockholm University College in 1947 to describe the folklore side of folklife research. According to Sigfrid Svensson (1948: 199), the professor of folklife studies at Lund after von Sydow, the subject field, which was a combination of folklore research and Nordic ethnology, covered vernacular community building (*folklig samfundsbildning*), ways of living (*livsföring*), and artistic activity (*konstutövning*) in the form of folk belief, custom and poetry (*folklig tro, sed och diktning*).

The use of these same terms was highly marked in the works of von Sydow (1944: 5), who writes in his article "The Origin and Development of Folklore Research" that "folklore research can best be defined as the science of the people's oral traditions of belief, custom and poetry". His book *Our Folk Memory* (Sydow 1919: 2) also defines the object of the study of folklore (*folkminnen* 'folk memory') as that what is preserved in people's memory as *diktning, tro och sed* (poetry, belief and custom). Lehtipuro (2006: 214) makes a reference to "the Sydowian subject description of folkloristics as the study of poetry, belief and custom".

In addition to the fact that von Sydow was the founding forefather of NIF and Honko was especially fond of von Sydow's research, the familiarity of these terms might have led people in and around NIF to think that "belief, custom and poetry" listed in the definition of NIF's field of operation, firstly, point to von Sydow, and secondly, are 'pure' folkloristic concepts. However, to me this seems unlikely. Why would the NKS

Secretariat offer purely folkloristic concepts to NIF if the Secretariat wanted to make NIF more ethnological and less folkloristic? If von Sydow was one of the key sources or references for these terms, why would the NKS Secretariat, in their effort to make NIF expand to the holistic study of folk culture, want to promote terms that make an inter-textual link to von Sydow, who was known to have been the key person in Sweden to oppose the integration of folklore studies with the holistic study of folk culture?

It is my belief that the idea for “belief and custom” in the definition of NIF’s field of operation came from other sources than von Sydow. The wording in the NKS Secretariat’s message indicates that “poetry” was meant to link with NIF’s earlier interests, while “belief and custom” signalled a more ethnological approach. This might be verifiable if anyone who worked at the NKS Secretariat in the mid-1970s is able and willing to provide answers, or if there are archived documents available. As a second-best option I speculate that there was a linkage between the NKS Secretariat’s suggestion and ethnosociology.

Expressed in the above-mentioned key terms, Harva’s profile consisted of the study of “belief and custom”, and to some extent of “poetry”. It is unlikely, however, that the NKS Secretariat meant to suggest Harva’s profile as a guiding light to NIF as Harva was not topical in the mid-1970s. Harva’s colleague, Wikman, however, is a more likely candidate for the role of a guiding light, as his research profile was very similar to Harva’s, and as mentioned above, the focus in his research was popular customs and beliefs – *folkets seder och tro* (Storå 1975: 115; see also Nilsson 2021; 2022). Wikman (1962) himself had published an article on belief and custom in folklore research. Unlike Harva, Wikman was “in the news” in 1975 as he had died in May and obituaries were written for him. The *NIF Newsletter* published an obituary written by Knut Pipping (1975), professor of sociology at the Åbo Akademi University (see also Pipping 1979). Storå (1975) published an obituary in *Budkaolen* and Åke Hultkranz (1975) published his obituary in *Temenos*.

It is pure speculation to suggest that someone in the Nordic Council of Ministers had read all or some of these obituaries or for other reasons came to think of Wikman’s line of research as recommendable for NIF. But if someone did, it was not a bad idea. The definition of NIF’s field of activity as folk poetry, folk belief and folk custom corresponds much more directly with the ethnosociological study of folk beliefs, popular customs, and social practices than with the research by regular folklorists who customarily focus on folk poetry or in more general terms on verbal folklore.

In fact, when NIF’s executive board discussed the possibility of making changes to the statutes in early September 1975, before the NKS Secretariat had come up with their initiative regarding NIF statutes and the expansion of NIF’s profile, the members suggested the following: “NIF’s field of operation is Nordic folkloristics with emphasis on folk poetry and folk belief” (ÅAUL: Arbetsutskott 1975). The discussion continued in other meetings during the autumn, and one of the topics was whether folk music should be included – but no word of folk customs. Wikman has an article on ethnology as the science of customs (see Wikman 1945), but apparently, folkloristics was not a “science of customs” in NIF.

WIDE-RANGING STUDY OF NON-MATERIAL FOLK CULTURE,  
BUT APPARENTLY NOT ETHNOLOGY

As discussed above, Honko (PC: Honko 1976) wanted to emphasise that even though NIF's field of activity expanded from the earlier focus on prose narratives to the study of non-material folk culture, an essential part of the study of non-material folk culture is precisely folkloristics. This suggests that no actual expansion beyond folkloristics has taken place, and NIF is just as folkloristic as before, although now with "broader" concepts. This would mean that the change initiated by the NKS Secretariat was from NIF's point of view only terminological, or perhaps cosmetic. However, it is particularly significant, considering NIF's practical activities, that Honko did not want to draw strict boundaries around folkloristics. Instead, he emphasised connections between different academic fields, for which reason his approach can be characterised as interdisciplinary or at least open to interdisciplinary collaboration.

In this regard, it is of special interest when Honko (ibid.: 1) writes, with reference to the NKS Secretariat's initiative, that "It would be unnatural to draw boundaries between folkloristics and, for example, the study of popular belief and custom, which interests several cultural sciences. The collaboration between folkloristics and other cultural sciences is self-evident." In addition to highlighting an inter- or multidisciplinary approach, this comment can be interpreted to mean that non-folkloristic research into folk belief and custom also fits into NIF's scope, including, for example, research into folk belief in comparative religion and research into folk customs in ethnology. Yet, Honko contradicts this view with his statement about folkloristics containing an essential part of research into non-material folk culture in its social forms.

It is also somewhat peculiar that Honko appears to be defending inter- or multidisciplinary as if against allegedly restrictive policies of the NKS Secretariat. When he writes that "It would be unnatural to draw boundaries between folkloristics and, for example, the study of popular belief and custom", he appears to be insinuating that it is the NKS Secretariat who is drawing such boundaries. In fact, the NKS Secretariat called for an activity profile that could be characterised as a holistic approach in research into folk culture.

Thus, while Honko takes a constructive attitude towards the suggestions by the NKS Secretariat, he can also be seen to contest their approach in his defence of the independence of folkloristics and NIF's folkloristic profile. For these reasons it is not possible to determine from Honko's statement exactly which position he is taking. Does NIF's scope include only folkloristic research into folk/popular belief and custom or also non-folkloristic research into folk/popular belief and custom?

Whichever is Honko's intention, his statement does not say whether the expanded NIF would organisationally cover both folkloristics and ethnology. When preparing the expansion proposal for discussion at NIF's board meeting, Honko left the question open, or, more precisely, presented it conditionally:

If NIF is to be transformed into a real research institute that will initiate research and function as a Nordic coordination and contact centre for *all institutions and researchers working with research into folk tradition*, a resource increase is needed in the form of permanent staff (a professor position and a researcher position) and funds for an extended project activity (ÅAUL: Honko 1976: 1–2; emphasis added).

The statement about all Nordic institutions within folk tradition research fitting in NIF's field of activity might seem as if *all institutions* also include ethnology departments, but this depends entirely on how the term 'folk tradition research' is understood. One may note that despite Talve's equalisation of 'folk culture' and 'folk tradition' in his inauguration lecture (see above), folklorists have had a much stronger tendency to use the concept of folk tradition in their rhetoric than ethnologists and other cultural researchers. Even though there are exceptions, folklorists have tended to talk about – and study – tradition while ethnologists have tended to talk about – and study – culture. It is thus possible that by using the term folk tradition instead of folk culture, Honko is defining and delimiting NIF as folkloristic while appearing to sound inclusive.

One must acknowledge, though, that Honko (PC: Honko 1976: 1, 2) did use the term folk culture when referring to non-material aspects in tradition or culture. Yet, it is noteworthy that the memorandum by the NKS Secretariat in September 1976 used the term *den folkliga kulturen* (folk/popular/vernacular culture) once and the term *folkkultur* (folk culture) repeatedly, but not once did they use folk tradition. In contrast, NIF's responses to the NKS Secretariat's suggestions systematically used the term folk tradition, and NIF succeeded in fixing the institute's field of operation in the new statutes in folk tradition instead of folk culture. Accordingly, when Honko (PC: Honko 1976) ends his letter to the NKS Secretariat with the affirmation that NIF's board looks forward to spreading further and intensifying Nordic cooperation in the operative field of folk tradition (*inom folktraditionens arbetsfält*), he can be said to be at least partially contesting the NKS Secretariat's expectations of NIF's expansion towards a holistic approach to folk culture.

It is worth noting that the minutes of the meetings of NIF's board and executive committee in autumn 1976 do not mention the ethnology question explicitly when discussing the suggested expansion in NIF's field of operation. However, the activity report for 1976 says that "It should not be out of the question that NIF's field of activity will in the future cover extensive parts of research concerning Nordic folk tradition and folk culture" (PC: Verksamhetsberättelse 1976). It is not clear whether 'research into folk culture' refers here to the discipline of ethnology or not. Folk culture is mentioned here jointly with folk tradition, but still as a second category, which could point to secondary significance, as the two concepts are not synonymous. In any case, the board did not take a stand on the idea of integrating ethnology into NIF's activities, and as already stated above, it is impossible to draw a conclusion about whether the board was in favour of, or against, it.

In this regard, Honko's letter to the NKS Secretariat is an exception since he takes up the question regarding ethnology directly. He writes that it is somewhat strange to see the question of ethnology's role in NIF's activity linked to NIF's expansion. In his comments he appears to be saying that no expansion towards ethnology is needed because NIF is already ethnological. On the other hand, he is also saying that bringing in ethnology would be too costly. Honko's arguments here are as follows: 1) there are several members in the NIF's board who hold professorship in ethnology; 2) it is in ethnology's interest that folkloristic research in the Nordic countries does not die out, but as a motivating factor is strengthened within the framework of ethnological teaching and research; 3) on the one hand, folkloristics and ethnology are partially focused on the same research areas, on the other hand, NIF's research projects could in some cases

require interdisciplinary cooperation between disciplines other than folkloristics and ethnology; 4) material ethnology and especially museology represent such costly and at least partially such well-established fields of activity that one could doubt whether NIF's relatively limited resources can possibly be directed to these areas. (PC: Honko 1976: 1–2)

Honko's comment on museology calls for attention. In the suggestion for NIF to expand, the NKS Secretariat did not mention museology at all; bringing it up in connection with ethnology shows that from Honko's point of view museology is intimately linked to ethnology while folkloristics is not. This is not remarkable since the link between museology and folkloristics was almost nonexistent at the time. Yet, instead of referring to multidisciplinary in the context of museology, Honko rhetorically creates the impression that NIF's expansion into a cooperative organisation with ethnologists would mean an expectation to financially support the activities of historical museums and local heritage associations, which Honko finds unrealistic. As in Honko's claim that the NKS Secretariat was asking NIF to draw boundaries between folkloristics and the study of folk belief and custom (see above), Honko's objections against the distribution of NIF's funds to museology and heritage associations can be characterised as straw-man argumentation.

#### 'TRADITION SCIENCE' AND FOLKLORISTICS

NIF's response to the NKS Secretariat's initiative was negotiated in 1976 in two executive committee meetings, one in September and one in October, as well as in one board meeting in October. The meeting of the executive committee on 9 and 10 September 1976 discussed the proposed change in the purpose paragraph (*ändamålsparagraf*) in NIF's statutes in connection with the 1978 budget plan. It was noted that "a broadening of NIF's area of activity would entail both a revision of the stated purpose clause and a change in the institute's name" (PC: Executive 1976a: 3). The executive committee decided to suggest to the board that NIF's area of operation was Nordic folk tradition, and the purpose of the institute was to promote and coordinate *traditionsvetenskaplig forskning* (literally, 'tradition-scientific research'), education, and the collection of traditions (*traditionsinsamling*) at Nordic institutions.

The difference with the previously proposed definition is that folkloristics was now dropped and replaced with the terms *folktradition* ('folk tradition') and *traditionsvetenskap* ('tradition science'). The board meeting in October 1976 added a clarification to this definition: "The institute's area of operation is Nordic folk tradition, especially folk poetry, folk belief and custom" (PC: Protokoll 1976: 3). With this clarification, the board wanted to secure NIF's distinct profile by including a focus on non-material folk culture in the institute's expanded field of activity (*ibid.*).

The question concerning the statutes was then tabled and brought up again in 1977, when the statutes were revised and then approved in their final form by the Nordic Council of Ministers on 9 November, entering into force at the beginning of 1978 (PC: Statuter 1978). Another set of revisions took place in 1983 and the then-revised statutes came into force on 1 January 1984 (ÅAUL: Stadgar 1984). Yet, no changes were made to the purpose clause, which remained in force from 1978 to 1995.



The new statutes (called regulations by NIF) were introduced in relative detail to the readers of the *NIF Newsletter* twice, first in issue 1/1978 and then in 1/1979, with almost the same wording. The following quotation is from the first introduction:

The Nordic Council of Ministers has laid down new regulations for NIF: these came into force on January 1, 1978. According to the new regulations NIF's activities, which had earlier been defined as follows: 'its field of study is Nordic folklore with emphasis on prose traditions', have been extended somewhat. NIF's field of study now comprises 'Nordic folk traditions, especially folk poetry, beliefs and customs'. It is also 'the Institute's task to further and coordinate Nordic research, teaching, the collection of material and archive work in the tradition sciences. The Institute shall also, to the best of its ability, provide information about Nordic work in these fields to scholars and institutes in and outside the Nordic area'. (§ 1). (*NIF Newsletter* 1/1978: 12; see also *NIF Newsletter* 1/1979: 2)

Considering the long process in the negotiations between NIF and the NKS Secretariat (the Nordic Council of Ministers) over the redefinition of NIF's field of activities, two things stand out: first, the characterisation of NIF's activities as having been "extended somewhat", and second, the mention of the plural term "tradition sciences" without explaining its denotation.

As discussed earlier in this article, the NKS Secretariat regarded NIF's wish to expand its area of operation from prose narratives to folk poetry as "a minor change", while Honko objected to this characterisation and wrote back (PC: Honko 1976: 1) saying that it is "hardly a minor change", emphasising NIF's "actual expansion" in recent years and its significance for NIF's future. Now that NIF had reached an agreement with the NKS Secretariat over the expansion of NIF's field of operation to, or at least towards, ethnology, NIF in the above presentation characterises this expansion as a minor change, describing NIF's activities as having been "extended somewhat". One wonders whether this is an openly (perhaps defiantly) expressed indication that NIF had no other intention but to continue its own self-initiated expansion process within the field of folkloristics, which mainly concerned the extending of NIF's interests from prose narratives to other genres of verbal folklore, although also including such "semi-ethnological" research areas as tradition ecology and ethnomedicine. However, the fact that there is a reference to "tradition sciences" in the plural speaks against this assumption. Indeed, the presentation indicates that NIF now operates in more than one discipline but chooses not to name them. Perhaps their familiarity is taken for granted or the description is intentionally obscure. It appears as if NIF chose not to reveal in public the extent to which it had agreed to expand its profile.

The presence of the plural term 'tradition sciences' raises also other questions. The original text of the statutes in Swedish (see PC: Statuter 1978: 1) uses the adjectival expression 'tradition-scientific' research (*traditionsvetenskaplig forskning*), which does not specify whether it refers to one discipline or many. The English translation makes an explicit reference to several, since the term is in plural, but it does not specify how many they are, or what their names are. Neither the Swedish term nor the English term explains the meaning or range of 'tradition science' in relation to the discipline of folkloristics, which was specifically mentioned in NIF's earlier statutes. It appears as if one is supposed to be familiar with the meaning of the term as well as understand (or

remain confident) that NIF was going to continue being just as folkloristic in its profile as before. Indeed, even though the above presentation says that NIF's field of study was previously Nordic folklore, it does not claim that "Nordic folk traditions, especially folk poetry, beliefs and customs" in the new statutes denote something different. Moreover, the term 'folklore' continued to be used in the institute's name. Consequently, it is hardly wrong to conclude that NIF is signalling here of the continuation of its familiar profile. The changes, if there are any, are minor and insignificant. Moreover, it is not possible to determine whether the listing of folk belief and custom as elements in NIF's field of study stand for a newly established focus on the social aspects of folk culture, as proposed by the NKS Secretariat.

One may assume that NIF wanted to use the rather obscure characterisations of its field of operation to signal two things: first, NIF was going to remain as a folkloristic institute, and second, NIF was going to pursue folkloristics with a multidisciplinary approach. In order for NIF to remain a folkloristic institute, the terms 'tradition science' and 'tradition scientific' should be understood as being more or less synonymous with folklore studies. Then again, had this been the only message that NIF wanted to convey, it would not have served a purpose to drop folkloristics from the statutes and start describing the institute's profile with the term *traditionsvetenskap*. It is more likely that NIF, or at least Honko, wanted to pursue a more multidisciplinary approach but without making any explicit statement about NIF having expanded to also cover the field of ethnology. 'Tradition science' as an unspecified disciplinary category turned out to be handy in the context-sensitive oscillation between three meanings: as a synonym for folklore study, as a joint name for folkloristics and ethnology, and as an overarching name for several disciplines in the study of religion, culture, and history.

It is my understanding that NIF had picked this term up to underscore the expansion of its activity field both within folkloristics and, at least to some extent, from folkloristics towards ethnology, as expected by the NKS Secretariat, and towards multidisciplinary cooperation in cultural research. Yet, it seems clear that the new term was not introduced as a *direct* response to the NKS Secretariat's expectations of NIF's expansion towards ethnology. Nor was the term brought to NIF's attention by the NKS Secretariat. The term had been around in NIF's activities for at least a few years before the NKS Secretariat made its initiative, having to do with Honko's wish to expand NIF's profile within folkloristics while also avoiding strict boundaries vis-à-vis neighbouring fields of scholarship, especially his own field of comparative religion.

Honko wrote in the 1973 activity plan that the folkloristic research area and its objectives were constantly expanding, and that a reorientation of the research field was taking place in NIF. This meant in practice, according to Honko (PC: Honko 1973), that "the whole multifaceted and varied oral communication of traditional culture has now been taken up as a research object". Honko listed various forms of activity that he envisioned for NIF, one of them being a plan to launch and organise joint Nordic research projects within *traditionsvetenskap*. In all other points on his list the field of activity was specified as folkloristics.

An early usage of the term *traditionsvetenskap* in NIF's operations is NIF's first book publication from 1972, before the institute moved to Turku.<sup>13</sup> This is a handbook that offers an inventory or a register of Nordic institutions, mainly university departments, archives, libraries and museums that house folklore and folk music materials (see Hol-

bek and Rørbye 1972). One of these university departments is the Department of Folklore at the University of Helsinki, which is said to be responsible for teaching *traditionsvetenskap*. One can choose between three study lines: folkloristics, cultural anthropology, and the study of religion (ibid.: 162).

The same inventory book was published in English translation by NIF in 1978, now edited by the NIF secretaries Gun Herranen and Lassi Saressalo. They write that the Department of Folklore “is responsible for the teaching of tradition sciences at the University of Helsinki”, with “four main branches in the curriculum which can be chosen: Folkloristics, Cultural Anthropology, Popular Culture, and Fieldwork” (Herranen and Saressalo 1978: 47).

Pekka Laaksonen, who later became the director of the Folklore Archives at the Finnish Literature Society in Helsinki, was the person who provided the information on ‘tradition science’ at the University of Helsinki for the inventory book’s Danish editors. In the early 1970s, Laaksonen was a researcher and teacher in the multidisciplinary Karelian Institute at the University of Joensuu, where his field was *kansankulttuuri, erityisesti perinnetieteellinen tutkimus*. This translates as ‘folk culture, specifically tradition-scientific research’, or it is alternatively translatable as ‘research in tradition science’ or ‘research in the science of tradition’. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s the term *perinnetiede* (‘tradition science’ or ‘science of tradition’) continued to be deployed in the Karelian Institute as a broadly defined disciplinary designation for research and teaching in folklore studies, ethnology, general ethnology, and cultural anthropology (see Björn 2022: 46, 59).

This led eventually, in 1985, to the founding of an endowed professorship in *perinteentutkimus* (‘the study of tradition’), which was originally designed to deal mainly with the study of Karelian culture, but due to Professor Anna-Leena Siikala (1943–2016), the research and teaching came to cover a far wider field, without the regional focus on Karelia (Knuuttila 2013: 53; Knuuttila, personal communication 2024). The official English translation of the name of the discipline is Folklore Studies, but the discipline was (and is) generally regarded as being much broader in scope than folkloristics in its regular sense as the study of verbal folklore. The interdisciplinarity of *perinteentutkimus* was the central topic in my lengthy report about the Joensuu department in *NIF Newsletter* 4/1992 (see Anttonen 1992), and was the central topic also in Knuuttila’s farewell lecture in 2012 (Knuuttila 2013: 54–55).<sup>14</sup> One might describe this type of *perinteentutkimus* as folkloristics approaching ethnology and other cultural sciences – not unlike what the NKS Secretariat expected from NIF in the mid-1970s.

Documents available for the present study do not reveal whether the adoption of the term *perinnetiede* or *perinteentutkimus* at the University of Joensuu was inspired by the corresponding Swedish-language concepts of *traditionsforskning* and *traditionsvetenskap* used in NIF, or whether it was the other way round. Influences from other sources in Swedish are also possible. Blanka Henriksson and Fredrik Nilsson (2021: 198) write that although the term *traditionsvetenskap* is uncustomary in Sweden today, it was used to describe folklife research before the term was dismissed during the second half of the 20th century, when ethnology was reoriented towards contemporary society and drew inspiration from social anthropology. I have no other sources to verify the occurrence of the term *traditionsvetenskap* in Sweden, but many documents indicate clearly that the terms *traditionsforskning* (tradition research or research into traditions) and *traditionsfor-*

*skare* (tradition researcher or researcher of traditions) have been in use in Sweden at least since the early 20th century. For example, von Sydow (1941; 1942) had two publications entitled “Old and New Research into Traditions” (*Gammal och ny traditionsforskning*). Skott (2008: 33) writes in his doctoral dissertation on the collection of folklore in Sweden in the 1919–1964 period that *traditionsforskning* was “an overarching term that includes dialect research, place name research, folklife research and folklore research”, while folk culture research is a unified designation for folklife research and folkloristics.

Among the older generation of Swedish-speaking researchers in Finland, Wikman, whose research orientation has been discussed above, stands out as someone who used the term *traditionsforskning* as a designation for his own research, not unlike von Sydow, his contemporary and colleague. For example, Wikman (1949) had an article entitled “Contemporary Research into Traditions” (*Nutida traditionsforskning*).

More recently, *traditionsvetenskap* has been actively used by Swedish-speaking ethnologists and folklorists to refer to both fields at the same time. This has been the case, for example, in the scholarly committee called The Committee for Ethnology and Folkloristics (*Traditionsvetenskapliga nämnden*) within the Society of Swedish Literature in Finland. However, the committee has just recently changed its name to *Kulturvetenskapliga nämnden*, which is translated into English as Committee for Cultural Studies. The earlier focus on ethnology and folkloristics remains visible in the Committee’s description, according to which “The committee supports and promotes ethnological, folkloric and other traditional research on the Swedish-speaking population in Finland” (SLS 2024). Considering a series of changes in names and profiles regarding ethnology and folkloristics, it is not far-fetched to conclude that cultural studies as an umbrella term is more attractive today than tradition studies.

Whichever was NIF’s source for the new term, *traditionsforskning* and *traditionsvetenskap* came to be used in NIF contexts in the early 1970s. If NIF drew inspiration from Joensuu, the link was basically between Honko and Laaksonen, who were in close contact both in person and in correspondence. Yet, the terms *perinnetiede* and *perinteentutkimus* were also in use among folklorists at the University of Helsinki, as was already noted in reference to the inventory book that NIF published in 1972. One of the basic reasons for their relative popularity is apparently the fact that *perinteentutkimus* as a word is originally a shortening from the previously more common concept of *kansanperinteiden tutkimus* (research into folk traditions). The shortening was prompted by the concept of ‘folk’ (*kansa*) becoming unnecessary in the delineation of the social dimension of folk tradition (see for example Virtanen 1980: 136). The synonymisation of *perinteentutkimus* with folkloristics has even gained an ‘official’ confirmation in the Helsinki Term Bank for the Arts and Sciences (see HTB Folk 2023).<sup>15</sup> The database does not contain an entry for the term *perinnetiede*.

Not surprisingly, the synonymisation of *perinteentutkimus* with folkloristics also applies to *perinnetiede*. Both terms are mentioned as synonyms to folkloristics in a newspaper review of the *Kalevala Society Yearbook 50* by the literary critic Juhani Niemi (1970: 12). Another early occurrence of the latter term is in the Terminology of Folklore Studies (*Perinnetieteiden terminologia*), which was first published in offset printing by the Department of Folklore in 1970. The list of terms and concepts explained did not contain an entry on ‘tradition’, but it did contain one on *perinnetiede*, which is said to constitute the other half of ethnology and examine “along with oral tradition and folk beliefs, customs

and institutions from the point of view of folklife as a whole" (Terminologia 1976 [1970]: 30–31).

*Perinnetiede* is also synonymised with folklore studies in an article published in 1977 by Matti Kuusi (1914–1998), professor of folk poetry research, in the journal *Kotiseutu*. Kuusi writes that in addition to a few "academic celebrities" and a small group of other professionals, who draw on theoretical frameworks and models of explanation imported from foreign countries, the field of *perinnetiede* is a "grass-roots science" constituted of informants and amateur researchers as experts on folk traditions and local knowledge. According to Kuusi, encountering such top specialists of folk culture in person epitomises for any folklore professor a "star moment" in the experience of Finnishness, something that other branches of science, such as philosophy and natural sciences, are unable to produce. (Kuusi 1977: 162–165; see also Knuuttila 2013: 57.)

In 1980 Lehtipuro edited a volume entitled *Basic Concepts in the Study of Folklore (Perinteentutkimuksen perusteita)*, with articles written by four major Finnish folklorists, Kuusi and Honko among them. The preface (Lehtipuro 1980) introduced the scholarly field of the articles as folkloristics, although in many instances folkloristics was presented as interchangeably synonymous with *perinteentutkimus*, without explicating the reasons for this terminological choice. Accordingly, folklore was here synonymised with tradition, which calls for a comment. When folklorists describe folklore via the concept of tradition, we can argue that tradition and traditionality provide an analytical aspect to folklore and its study. For example, Roger Abrahams (1963: 101) has written that "folklore is by its nature traditional" (quoted also in Ben-Amos 2020 [1984]: 89). Simon Bronner (2017: 17) quotes Stith Thompson (1951: 11) proclaiming that "the idea of tradition is the touchstone for everything that is to be included in the term folklore". Bronner (2017: 17) also quotes Richard Bauman (1992: 30) declaring that "there is no single idea more central to conceptions of folklore than tradition". In these constellations, folklore and tradition are not exactly synonymous. Folklore concerns traditionality, be it change or continuity (Oring 2021), for which reason the study of folklore as tradition makes the folklorist a researcher of tradition.

Lea Virtanen (1991: 10) (1935–2002), who succeeded Kuusi as professor at Helsinki, wrote that the term *perinnetiede* is "a catchy, vernacular name which some people in the 1970s attempted to ingrain into the language. Yet, the difficulty was that history, archeology and many other fields also regarded themselves as sciences that study tradition." Virtanen appears to be saying that the attempt to use *perinnetiede* as a synonym for folkloristics was unsuccessful, because the term is used in plural for several disciplines. She did not explain why it would be a problem if other fields are also regarded as "sciences that study tradition", since tradition as a research object is not reserved exclusively for folklore studies. Regarding her characterisation of *perinnetiede* as a vernacular name, it is possible that she was referring to the term's unofficial status in scholarly discourse, in addition to being a Finnish-language term, unlike the foreign-based term *folkloristiikka* (folkloristics), which as professor she adopted in 1989 as the new name for the field previously known as folk poetry research.

Yet, Virtanen's matter-of-fact depiction of the term *perinnetieteet*, the plural form of *perinnetiede*, as "sciences that study tradition" is quite logical when aligned with, for example, the similar concepts of 'language sciences' and 'natural sciences'. It also follows the depiction provided by Honko and NIF about "tradition sciences". In *NIF*



*Newsletter* 4/1976, Herranen and Saressalo as the newsletter's assistant editors wrote a report on NIF's conference in Bergen, Norway, on 21–23 October 1976, and in this context, among other things, they presented and summarised Honko's paper entitled "The Role of Fieldwork in Tradition Research". According to the authors, Honko defined 'tradition research' as "those branches of study which could be said to deal with tradition" (Herranen and Saressalo 1976: 4). They quoted Honko as follows:

By the tradition sciences I mean disciplines such as folkloristics, ethnography, ethnology, cultural and social anthropology, comparative religion and other related disciplines which together form a group lying between the arts and social sciences and which have taken an interest in empirical research (often alongside other, non-empirical interests). (Ibid.)

The quotation is from the very beginning of the paper, which was published in Swedish by NIF the same year (Honko 1976) and in English in the journal *Ethnologia Scandinavica* the following year (Honko 1977). The wording is slightly different in the latter publication, but what is more noteworthy is that instead of 'tradition sciences' Honko discusses 'traditional sciences'. The term 'traditional sciences' is used throughout the article, but the reader cannot know whether this formulation was Honko's preference or an editorial choice. The term 'tradition research' occurs once (ibid.: 79), in addition to the title. Overall, the paper discusses recent influences in folkloristic and ethnological fieldwork received from sociology and anthropology, dealing specifically with interactionist fieldwork methodologies. While tradition research is here an overarching name for ethnology and folkloristics, traditional sciences refers to multidisciplinary cultural research in Scandinavia and as such is distinct from social and cultural anthropology.

Five years later Honko referred to "tradition sciences, i.e. principally ethnology and folkloristics" in the final discussion at the 22nd Nordic Congress of Ethnology and Folkloristics, held in Liperi in eastern Finland on 9–11 June 1981 (see Honko and Laaksonen 1983: 233). Honko was the chairperson of the organising committee of the conference, and together with Laaksonen he edited the conference publication entitled *Trends in Nordic Tradition Research*. The topic of the conference was "Nordic tradition research – schools and lines of thought". Both titles indicate that tradition research was used as an overarching name for ethnology and folkloristics. However, the two fields were also listed in the company of other fields and described with such alternative terms as 'tradition studies' and 'tradition disciplines'. For example, in his introduction to the conference publication, Honko (1983: 13) made a reference to "ethnology, folkloristics and the other tradition disciplines".

The book *Trends in Nordic Tradition Research* received a great deal of international attention, especially for its final chapter, which was a transcript of the final discussion at the conference. The topic of this discussion was the concept of tradition. However, despite of the analytical attention that the concept of tradition received because of the publication, the term tradition research did not catch on. One example of this is the previously mentioned English-language name of the chair of *perinteentutkimus* at the University of Joensuu in 1985. It was Siikala, the first professor, who decided that it was going to be Folklore Studies (Seppo Knuutila, personal communication 2024).

Another indication of the term not catching on was in March 1984, when an American-Hungarian conference entitled Culture, Tradition, Identity was organized at Indi-

ana University's Folklore Institute in Bloomington, with the papers published in the *Journal of Folklore Research* later that same year. Several esteemed scholars in folkloristics made reference to the Nordic conference in Finland and its final discussion on the concept of tradition, but only one person, a non-native speaker of English, mentioned the term tradition research – and only once (see Hofer 1984: 134).

Both tradition research and tradition science failed to catch on in international folkloristic discourse. This might have something to do with the apparent lack of catchiness in the theoretical approach behind the term science of tradition, promoted by the late 19th-century and early 20th-century English folklorist Edwin Sidney Hartland, who called folklore study “the science of Tradition”.<sup>16</sup> Surveying academic titles and making a reference to both Hartland and the above-mentioned Nordic conference in Finland, Bronner (2000: 90) writes that “there is yet to be conceived a program in tradition studies or traditionology”, and similarly in another context: “You will not find ‘tradition science’ or ‘traditionology’ in an American university catalogue” (Bronner 1998: 12). He added that “tradition science or research is not a label for a university department in the Nordic countries either” (ibid.: 503; 2000: 90).

Regarding Hartland's concept, Bronner (1998: 503) states that “academic titles did not pick up the reference to tradition science”. He also notes that he has frequently encountered references to tradition in several university subjects and interdisciplinary combinations, “but I have yet to find ‘tradition studies’ as a separate program” (ibid.: 12). According to Bronner (2000: 90) “It might be argued that folklore avoided becoming ‘tradition studies’ for the same reason that history did not reconstitute itself as ‘past studies’.” Folklorists in Finland and in NIF were apparently not aware of this avoidance. Then again, as noted repeatedly above, the term tradition studies in its Finnish or Swedish equivalents did not simply denote folklore studies in NIF or elsewhere. In many contexts it has served as an umbrella term for ethnology and folkloristics, a function not needed in, for example, American scholarship.

In any case, the lack of catchiness in such terms as ‘tradition studies’, ‘tradition research’ or ‘tradition science’ in the English-speaking world has also to do with questions of grammar and style. As mentioned above, the Finnish term *perinnetiede* is according to Virtanen (1991: 10) “a catchy, vernacular name”, and the same can be said to apply to the term's geographically and culturally specific English translation, tradition science. It is vernacular since it has not been adopted outside of Finnish or Nordic folkloristic discourse. As pointed out by Frog, Docent in Folklore Studies at the University of Helsinki, tradition science is a calque or a loan translation of *perinnetiede* and as such an example of word-for-word translation from one language into another. In compound constructions with the word ‘science’, the English language prefers an adjective, as in ‘biological science’ or ‘natural sciences’. Constructions with the preposition ‘of’, as in ‘science of law’ or ‘science of tradition’, are more common outside the hard sciences. A construction with a noun, as in ‘language sciences’, is also possible, but as far as I can tell, a native speaker would not say “tradition science”, and my gut feeling is supported by Frog's native-speaker intuition. (Frog, personal communication 2024)

Moreover, as a word-for-word translation, tradition science represents a compound construction characteristic to the Finnish language. In Finnish the term *perinnetiede* is made of two nouns, *perinne* (tradition) and *tiede* (science), indicating that the first noun in the compound denotes the object of the activity designated by the second noun: sci-

ence about tradition. The English language would expect a preposition to indicate such a relationship, as in 'the study of traditions'. In addition, 'tradition' as a word for a symbolically significant temporal relation can be linked to whichever noun denotes activity, as in 'research tradition' or 'cooking tradition'. In contrast, "tradition science" and "tradition discipline", both used by Honko in English in various NIF contexts and elsewhere, lack nouns of activity. Accordingly, they can be seen to follow the logic of Finnish compound construction.

Opinions vary about the irregularity of other terms with similar constructions. According to Frog, tradition research is just as acceptable as literature research, but "tradition materials" "sounds non-native-like" (Frog, personal communication 2024). I would prefer research into traditions instead of tradition research, and instead of tradition archive<sup>17</sup> I would say archive of traditional culture. In the Finnish language we can see similar compound construction in such folkloristic key terms as *perinnelaji* (folklore genre, literally 'tradition species' or 'tradition kind'; cf. Frog et al. 2016: 17–18) and *perinneteksti* ('tradition text'). The latter refers to folklore as a textual product, including those texts not yet written down.

Yet, this is not merely an issue of vernacular compound constructions or word-for-word translations. When used as a noun, 'tradition' tends to be reified into an entity of countable and collectable items, blurring the meaning of the term as a discursive quality in temporal relations. Consequently, if we approach and use such terms as *perinnetiede* or *perinnetieteet* by deploying their "official" or conventional translations into English, such as 'folkloristics', 'folkloristics and ethnology', 'study into folk tradition(s)' or 'study into folk culture', we fail to see them as particular kinds of rhetorical construction that enable the use of their elusiveness for argumentative purposes. In NIF contexts, their denotations have ranged from a synonym for folkloristics or an umbrella term for folkloristics and ethnology to an umbrella term for a variety of disciplines in cultural research. Their argumentative use is context specific, making statements about the discipline of folkloristics in relation to certain other disciplines. My follow-up article will highlight these statements when comparing Honko's views on NIF to those by Honko's successor. The multiple meanings of tradition science suggest contextual and speaker-based variation and may thus serve to give evidence of the richness of elocution. However, I shall discuss how the multidisciplinary of tradition science in NIF was also met with objection and open criticism, and a particular interpretation was made a tool in folkloristic boundary-work (Briggs 2008).

#### THE MULTI-, INTER- AND TRANSDISCIPLINARITY OF 'TRADITION RESEARCH'

Even though the term tradition science can be regarded as problematic as a scholarly term, it has its benefits. As discussed above, the term has been used in Finnish, Swedish and English in the singular and the plural. In singular it has denoted folkloristics exclusively or it has alternatively been used as an umbrella term for folkloristics and ethnology. In plural (as "tradition sciences") it refers at the same time to several subject fields in the study of history, popular religion, and material as well as non-material

culture. Honko used the term often to refer to folkloristics together with such neighbouring fields as ethnology and comparative religion, but on occasion he would also include anthropology. However, it is not always easy to determine what exactly the term tradition science was supposed to refer to. Such is the case, for example, in NIF's activity report for 1975: "NIF's activities have increasingly assumed the character of a coordinator for Nordic tradition-scientific research, teaching, and archival activities" (PC: Verksamhetsberättelse 1975).

Dropping folkloristics from the definition of NIF's field of activity in the statutes and replacing it with *traditionsvetenskap* sounds like a major change unless the new term was so familiar to everyone that it raised no questions. Or perhaps questions were not allowed. To what extent any questions were raised without being documented for example in minutes of board meetings is now hard to say. In hindsight, one would have expected or hoped NIF would clarify the new term, but no such clarification appears to have been provided, except, to some extent, in job vacancy notices.

In 1983, *NIF Newsletter* published in Swedish a call for applicants for a research secretary position, the requirement for which was a higher academic degree with folkloristics in the applicant's subject combination. There was no mention of 'tradition science' in the 1983 call, except that the description of NIF's area of operation as well as the institute's task followed the statutes established in 1977, according to which the institute's task is to promote and coordinate 'tradition-scientific' research, education, collection and archiving in the Nordic region as well as provide information about Nordic folkloristics to researchers and institutions in and outside the region (*NIF Newsletter* 2-3/1983: 20).

In the first call of 1987, announced in *NIF Newsletter* (1/1987: 22), NIF was looking for a person who was acquainted with *traditionsvetenskap*. *Traditionsvetenskap* was specified as "folkloristics or closely related subjects". Later that same year in a new call (*NIF Newsletter* 4/1987: 23), as well as in the 1990 call, a higher academic degree was a general requirement. In addition to the general requirement, a qualified research secretary was expected to have at least one "tradition scientific subject" in the subject combination, for example folkloristics, ethnology, or history of religion (*NIF Newsletter* 2/1990: 23).

When Honko was stepping down from the director's position, *NIF Newsletter* published an announcement in Swedish regarding the open director position for the period 1991-1994. The first-mentioned requirement was docent competence<sup>18</sup> or equivalent higher scientific qualification within the institute's research area, but the announcement did not specify the research area explicitly. Instead, it referred to the institute's area of operation as "Nordic folk tradition, especially folk poetry, folk belief and custom". The institute's operational task was described by referring to both *traditionsvetenskap* and folkloristics, as can be seen in the citation above. (See *NIF Newsletter* 2-3/1989: 31.) There were seven applicants, five from Finland and two from other Nordic countries. They came from the fields of folkloristics, ethnology, and the study of religion.

The announcements for open positions in NIF speak of a multidisciplinary approach to NIF's activities. If *traditionsvetenskaplig* in NIF's statutes can be read as referring to several disciplines in addition to folkloristics, the statutes guarantee that an employee did not need to be a folklorist to serve the institute's task of providing information about Nordic folkloristics to researchers and institutions in and outside the Nordic region.

The negotiations on the changes in the statutes in the mid-1970s also concerned the paragraph dealing with the constitution of the board. According to the statutes that came into force in March 1969, the board members were appointed by the respective Nordic governments after consultation with the universities and the folkloristic institutions (ÅAUL: Vedtægter 1969). In the statutes approved in 1977, which came into force at the beginning of 1978, this statement took the following form: "In appointing the board members, consideration shall be given to the desirability of achieving the best professional composition of the board" (PC: Statuter 1978: 1). No academic subject fields were mentioned, and folkloristics was in no way prioritised.

The possibility of NIF employees and board members representing several different but closely related disciplines is just one aspect in the multi- or interdisciplinary profile that NIF was developing either on its own or because of the influence from the Nordic Council of Ministers. The obvious context for this development was, as has already been discussed above, the interdisciplinary trends in both social scientific studies and cultural research internationally. Some academic environments were more welcoming to new trends than some others. In the 1970s NIF had its office in the Department of Folkloristics and Comparative Religion at the University of Turku, and here the two fields were engaged in unique and continuous dialogue (Lehtipuro 2008: 194). According to a report published in *NIF Newsletter* 2/1974, the disciplines of folkloristics and comparative religion "have gone hand in hand ever since the days of Kaarle Krohn ... and Uno Harva", making the study of folk belief "an inseparable part of folkloristic research" (*NIF Newsletter* 2/1974b: 9).

To understand at least the Finnish context in the development of multidisciplinary in NIF under Honko's leadership, supported and expressed by the concept of tradition science, we need to consider this multidisciplinary as something more than just a modern trend: as history, heritage, or probably as nostalgia. As already mentioned, *perinnetieteet* ('tradition sciences') in Finnish is an unofficial collective name for several neighbouring disciplines that are, according to Honko, "branches of study which could be said to deal with tradition" (Herranen and Saressalo 1976: 4).

Yet, *perinnetieteet* as a collective designation could be more than just a random group of neighbouring or related fields dealing with tradition, as they are related for a particular reason. It has been noted (Turunen 1995: 152) that in the early history of all those disciplines that are conventionally called *perinnetieteet* in Finland, the same scholars come up as founding fathers or are otherwise significant to each branch. These branches have a common foundation in the study of national history, national languages and Finno-Ugric languages, folklore, folk religion and mythology, and material culture (in ethnology and archaeology). This common foundation could go back to the era of the multidisciplinary Henrik Gabriel Porthan in the late 18th century, but it mainly concerns the scholarly and literary activity before the disciplinary specialisation of late 19th century. These are the early stages of historical and ethnographic scholarship in which folk culture, language, popular religion, as well as vernacular customs and history culture were studied without clear disciplinary specialisation.

Such an early stage of common scholarship could become romanticised, mythologised and/or seen as constituting a common heritage. The term tradition sciences can be argued to catch a glimpse of this multi- or transdisciplinary heritage before the era of disciplinarity. It is an *enhetsämne* of a kind, even if today the term *perinnetieteet* is no



longer regarded as the most attractive designation for it. In Finland the Finnish Literature Society and the Kalevala Society with its multidisciplinary yearbook can be said to echo such transdisciplinary heritage, encouraging scholars to go against the mentality of disciplinary specialisation and ensuing boundary-work.

#### ETHNOLOGY INCLUDED?

It has hopefully become clear by now that NIF expanded its profile in both actual and rhetorical measures in the 1970s, both despite and because of the expectation from the Nordic Council of Ministers to expand NIF's field of activity towards ethnology or at least to the social aspects of folklore. NIF continued to keep folkloristics centre stage, but the promise to expand towards ethnology created a need to report to the NKS and the Nordic Council of Ministers in ways that would show that NIF's activities went well beyond the networks of folklorists.

In February 1979, NIF responded to a questionnaire from the Council concerning low-frequency study areas in the Nordic region by presenting itself as an institute with daily contacts with 22 institutions that teach or do research or archival work in tradition science (*traditionsvetenskapliga institutioner*) in Nordic universities, 47 other institutions in the field of tradition science, which do research or archival work but do not offer teaching at the university level, as well as sporadic connections with numerous other institutions (PC: Undersøgelse 1979: 1). In NIF's response, the listed university institutions that NIF cooperates with represent both folkloristics and ethnology without giving any special status to either one. This principle was highlighted by dividing the institutions in terms of their subject area in the following three categories: 1) institutions and archives in folkloristic research and teaching; 2) institutions and archives in ethnological research and teaching (folklife research); 3) other research institutions, whose subject area only partially coincides with NIF's field of operation (some museum institutions, language and dialect archives, anthropological institutions, music and folk music institutes, etc.). (Ibid.)

In addition to publication activity, NIF's response provides information on the number of researchers, teachers and students in institutions that NIF cooperates with: 136 researchers and teachers at university institutions, and 2,700 students; 72 researchers and 44 research assistants and technical personnel in archives. A curious detail here is that while in 1976 Honko wrote about his reluctance to see historical museums as NIF's cooperation partners (see above), the list given as a response to this enquiry contains approximately 20 museums in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden.

The response submitted to the Nordic Council of Ministers thus gave a strong message of NIF as an institute that covers and is in cooperation with both folklorists and ethnologists, as well as with several museums. The same picture at least partly emerges from the description of NIF's field of operation included in the 1984 activity report. Unfortunately, I was not able to locate this report in my photocopies or archive search, but according to my notes the report states that "The institute's main task is to promote and coordinate Nordic tradition-scientific (folkloristic and ethnological) research, teaching and archival collaboration" (PN: Anttonen 1994). Consequently, while it is not always easy to conclude from the various statements and turns of phrase whether NIF

expanded into ethnology or not in the 1970s, here the message seems to be clear: *traditionsvetenskap* means just as much folkloristics as ethnology and, in addition to this, it also includes some other disciplines.

However, since it has also become clear that NIF's folklorists did not at least full-heartedly agree to expand the institute's activities to ethnology, one can wonder whether ethnology is included in NIF's scope only when reporting on activities to the source of funding. On the other hand, it should be noted that the participation by two or three ethnologists as board members could not have been totally insignificant. In addition, *NIF Newsletter* carried a series of articles that listed and provided descriptions of Nordic periodicals in both ethnology and folkloristics: Finland (*NIF Newsletter* 2/1976: 7–15), Norway (*NIF Newsletter* 1/1977b: 11–13), Sweden (*NIF Newsletter* 2/1977: 2–7), and Denmark (*NIF Newsletter* 4/1977a: 8–12). In issue 4/1977 the editors of the newsletter made an announcement regarding "their interest in making newly published works within the field of folkloristics and ethnology known to the readers of *NIF Newsletter*" (*NIF Newsletter* 4/1977b: 15).

It is also worth noting that, especially in the 1980s, NIF was a relatively wide-ranging institute that organised numerous scientific events that brought together researchers from many different fields. Likewise, NIF's publications brought together authors from many disciplines, and the seminars and conferences that NIF organised had speakers and participants from several disciplines. In addition, *NIF Newsletter* provided a wide range of publicity to the larger field of cultural research. Indeed, *NIF Newsletter* wrote in 1983 as follows (in English):

The purpose of the Newsletter is to provide information about research in the tradition sciences in general, about conference activities in and outside the Nordic countries, about the Institute's research projects and other work for both Nordic and international readers (*NIF Newsletter* 1/1983: 11).

All in all, during Honko's directorship, NIF expanded within folkloristics as well as in wider terms, gained an even stronger international status, and participated in and gave birth to interdisciplinary debates. NIF acknowledged ethnology in its field of operation, but at the same time manoeuvred against a full-scale institutional expansion that would place folkloristics and ethnology on equal terms in NIF. One is tempted to conclude that for Honko the expansion of NIF was the fulfilment of a well-planned, self-initiated vision as well as a partially ad-hoc strategy to try to save NIF approximately in its original state as a folkloristic institute that was at the same time multidisciplinary in its activities. With the help of such elusive concepts as tradition research and tradition science, Honko's NIF reached out for cooperation with other disciplines in the Nordic countries, and as a folkloristic institute reached out for contacts and cooperation with researchers in many other parts of the world.

#### A PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

In the 1970s, NIF's expansion towards multi- and interdisciplinary cultural research was expressed explicitly, for example, in the 1975 activity report, which uses such expressions as *traditions- och kulturvetenskaplig forskning* and *kulturvetenskaplig verk-*

*samhet*. The former translates as 'tradition-scientific and cultural-scientific research' or 'scientific research into tradition and culture', while the latter can be translated as 'cultural-scientific activity' or 'activity in cultural research'. The report makes an explicit statement about the "approval of the broader activities within tradition-scientific and cultural-scientific research in the Nordic countries that NIF has already developed in recent years", as well as "in principle positive stance towards continued work for an increasingly comprehensive cultural-scientific activity within NIF, provided the limited resources do not put too great obstacles in the way" (PC: Verksamhetsberättelse 1975).

Such a statement reflects the renewal and expansion that took place in folkloristics in the Nordic countries in the 1970s and 1980s, which in turn followed new international currents in folklore studies as well as cultural and social sciences in general. The renewal and expansion concerned both the selection of research objects and perspectives as well as theoretical premises. The older philologically and geographically oriented analysis of motifs and types and their historical changes and distributions, to which the first statutes of NIF directly refer, gave way to influences taken from such fields and branches as sociology, literary research, history of ideas, the study of mentalities, sociolinguistics, comparative religion, structuralist and post-structuralist social and cultural anthropology, phenomenology, and cognitive studies. It is particularly noteworthy that according to the statement quoted above, NIF was willing to take a comprehensive turn to cultural research.

My first and foremost interest in this enquiry into NIF during Honko's directorship has been the question of whether *traditionsvetenskap* in NIF's profile and statutes meant 1) folkloristics as strictly defined, 2) folkloristics as widely defined, linking it to related fields in an inter- and multidisciplinary approach, or 3) folkloristics and ethnology jointly and equally. This is a valid question for research-historical reasons. I also have a personal motivation, which I will discuss in a follow-up article. From a research-historical perspective, another interesting question concerns the strategical use of the concept of *traditionsvetenskap* by Honko and NIF when the Nordic Council of Ministers and its subsection the NKS Secretariat wanted NIF to expand toward ethnology while most folklorists in NIF apparently did not. Despite their lack of enthusiasm in this regard, they still wanted to create the image that the institute was responding positively to the Council's expectations to expand to ethnology and cover folk culture "in its entirety". The term *traditionsvetenskap* was not suggested to NIF by the NKS Secretariat, but it is my understanding that the term was integrated into the statutes and statements as a confirmation of NIF's expansion, even if the intention was not to expand to the extent expected by the Council. Otherwise, dropping folkloristics from the institute's field of activity in the statutes would not be logical.

My examination of the relevant NIF documents shows that by changing the name of NIF's designated field of activity in the official statutes from folkloristics to tradition science NIF succeeded in creating an image of expansion, while at the same time still positioning itself, under Honko's leadership, in a way that kept folkloristics centre stage in addition to keeping related research fields in a multidisciplinary manner close at hand. In other words, the expansion was real, but it did not go as far as the Nordic Council of Ministers had suggested. A follow-up article will discuss, among other things, the criticism that Honko received from some of his fellow Nordic folklorists for his multidisciplinary NIF policies. The follow-up article will also discuss how Honko's

successor treated the multidisciplinary aspect of the elusive term of tradition science, and how this might have indirectly contributed to NIF ending up being closed just six years after Honko's term.

#### ABBREVIATIONS

- IAEEF – International Association for European Ethnology and Folklore  
IAFE – International Association of Folklore and Ethnology (*Internationaler Verband für Volksforschung*)  
NEFA – Nordic Ethnological-Folkloristic Working Group (*Nordisk Etnologisk-Folkloristisk Arbetsgrupp / Nordisk Etnologisk-Folkloristisk Arbetsgrupp*)  
NIAS – Nordic Institute of Asian Studies  
NIF – Nordic Institute of Folklore  
NKS – Secretariat for Nordic Cultural Cooperation (*Nordiskt kultursekretariat*)  
NNF – Nordic Network for Folklorists  
RKF – Nordic Council of Ministers' Advisory Committee for Research (*Nordiska ministerrådets rådgivande kommitté för forskning*)  
SIEF – International Society for Ethnology and Folklore (*Société Internationale d'Ethnologie et de Folklore*)

#### NOTES

1 This comment is not meant to denigrate NIF, and the same applies to my critical discussion of selected lines of argumentation in the administration of NIF. On the contrary, I think NIF fulfilled its great international potential especially under Honko's leadership, and NIF's demise is unfortunate. Still, it is not my purpose to eulogise NIF. Expressions of group identity and sense of belonging are objects of research, not its methodology.

2 Since 2020, the Folklore Fellows' Communications publication series has been published by the Kalevala Society.

3 NIAS ceased its operations due to financial problems on the last day of 2023 (see NIAS 2023).

4 The follow-up article(s) will be partially autobiographic and/or autoethnographic, as my reporting and analysis of NIF in the 1990s is inevitably conditioned by the fact that I was employed as one of NIF's research secretaries between 1991 and 1995.

5 I wish to thank the two anonymous peer reviewers for their helpful remarks regarding the previous version of this article. I would also like to thank the editor and staff of the *JEF* journal for accepting my exceptionally long article for publication and, in addition to the more regular editorial tasks, assisting me with the many types of reference. In addition, I extend my gratitude to the following colleagues (in alphabetical order) for relevant insights, advice, and assistance with various details in the text: Professor Emeritus Veikko Anttonen of the University of Turku; Docent Frog of the University of Helsinki; Professor Emeritus Terry Gunnell of the University of Iceland; Professor Lotten Gustafsson Reinius of Nordiska museet (The Nordic Museum) and Stockholm University; Professor Emeritus Pekka Hakamies of the University of Turku; Professor Anne Heimo of the University of Turku; Professor Emeritus Seppo Knuuttila of the University of Eastern Finland; Dr Erik Nagel, independent folklorist, of Lovisa, Finland; Docent Eija Stark, Development Manager of the Finnish Literature Society, and Docent Susanne Österlund-Pötzsch of the Swedish Literature Society in Finland.

6 These two organisations and specifically the Nazi connections of the IAFE are investigated in Garberding 2012 and 2015.

7 The original wording in Swedish is *nordisk folkloristik med huvudvikten lagd på folkdiktning*, for which no exact equivalent in English appears to have been given. Both *folkdiktning* and its Finnish equivalent *kansanrunous* denote 'folklore' as a general category, although *kansanrunous* translates literally as 'folk poetry' or 'folk poesi', and *folkdiktning* as 'folk poesi' or 'folk literature', as is the case with the German word *Volksdichtung* (see for example Tokofsky 1996: 208). The original focus in NIF according to its first statutes was *folktale*, with *folkedigtning* denoting such genres as fairytale and legend, song, riddle, proverb, rhyme and chant, etc. (*Nordisk udredningsserie* 1960: 38). The original English translation of NIF's name, as mentioned above, was the Nordic Institute for Folk Literature. Since the use of the concept of 'literature' in the context of oral tradition has waned, while 'folklore' in NIF's activities has been mostly restricted to verbal genres, I choose to translate *folkdiktning* in the definition of NIF's field of activity as 'folk poetry', but with the understanding that it means 'verbal folklore'. In the annual report of NIF's activities in 1972 Honko wrote that "NIF's most central research area is the verbal folk tradition of the Nordic population groups" (ÅAUL: Berättelse 1972: 3).

8 Between 1975 and 1978, NIF's board consisted of the following members (including deputy members): Hans Bekker-Nielsen (D), Iørn Piø (D), Nils Schiørring (D), Lauri Honko (F), Nils Storå (F), Urpo Vento (F), Hallfredur Örn Eiríksson (I), Kjell Bondevik (N), Olav Bø (N), Reimund Kvideland (N), Nils-Arvid Bringéus (S), Bengt Jonsson (S), Edvard Reuterswård (S, Chairperson), Anna-Birgitta Rooth (S). The members of the Executive Committee were Nils-Arvid Bringéus (S), Hallfredur Örn Eiríksson (I), Reimund Kvideland (N), Urpo Vento (F), Iørn Piø (D, Chairperson) (PC: Sekretariatet 1975; see also *NIF Newsletter* 1/1976: 4; *NIF Newsletter* 1/1977a: 9).

9 The names of the departments are *Nordisk och jämförande folklivsforskning, särskilt etnologisk* and *Nordisk och jämförande folklivsforskning, särskilt folkloristisk* respectively. The first folklife professor at Uppsala was Dag Strömbäck (1900–1978), a folklorist and historian of religion, who served in the NIF board during 1959–1971.

10 *Nordiska institutet för traditionsforskning* can be translated into English as Nordic Institute for Tradition Research or Nordic Institute for Research into Traditions or Nordic Institute for Research into Traditional Culture, and *Nordiska institutet för folktraditionsforskning* as Nordic Institute for Folk Tradition Research or Nordic Institute for Research into Folk Traditions.

11 Changes in the relations of university subjects not only occur in the form of merger, but administrative measures can also be taken to combine study requirements in different subject fields. According to Anne Heimo, professor of folkloristics at the University of Turku (personal communication 2024), for practical reasons the subject fields of folkloristics, European ethnology and comparative religion have for the last four years shared a common set of courses and readings for first-year students. In addition, folkloristics and ethnology run a joint Master's seminar, while folkloristics and comparative religion run a joint research seminar for PhD students, with ethnology students joining in occasionally. Starting in the autumn of 2024, in-coming students in these three fields will choose their major subject only after completing their lower-level university degree. According to Heimo, the teachers and researchers in all these fields stress their different disciplinary identities while considering themselves cultural researchers. Consequently, the practical choice for close cooperation does not forge these disciplines into an *enhetsämne*.

12 In addition to Uno Harva and Karl Robert Villehard Wikman, Albert Hämäläinen, professor of ethnology at the University of Helsinki between 1931 and 1948, also deserves attention as a pupil of Westermarck and a scholar who combined his interest in material culture with research into belief traditions and folk customs as well as linguistics. (Regarding Hämäläinen, see Räsänen 1992.)

13 I am indebted to Docent Eija Stark, Development Manager of the Finnish Literature Society, for pointing this out to me.

14 In his inauguration lecture in 1997, Seppo Knuutila stated that he is sceptical about the distinction made between research into material and non-material culture while convinced about



the harmfulness of the disciplinary distinction made between ethnology and folklore studies (see Knuuttila 1998). In his farewell lecture, Knuuttila (2013: 53) stated: "I am absolutely sure that 25 doctoral theses would not have been completed in *perinteentutkimus* at Joensuu in 15 years, had the subject field turned inward and rejected everything that is not considered to belong to the field of *perinteentutkimus* or folkloristics."

15 The Helsinki Term Bank for the Arts and Sciences is "a multidisciplinary project which aims to gather a permanent terminological database for all fields of research in Finland" (HTB 2024).

16 For folklore as "the Science of Tradition", with its aim of discovering the laws of the non-modern human mind and its products, see Hartland 1899: 6–7, 10–11; Bronner 2000: 91; 2007: 170, 356; 2017: 25–27; Oring 2019: 138–141; Ben-Amos 2020 [1984]: 66–68.

17 I am indebted to Docent Susanne Österlund-Pötzsch of the Swedish Literature Society in Finland for the tip on the term tradition archive (personal communication 2024).

18 Docent is an academic title for competence higher than the doctoral degree but below the rank of a full professor and without university employment. It corresponds in rank to the highest university degree known in many European countries as Habilitation, except that Habilitation is a degree and Docent is a title.

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ÅAUL = Åbo Akademi University Library

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