

JYX



**This is a self-archived version of an original article. This version may differ from the original in pagination and typographic details.**

**Author(s):** Nenola, Pirjo

**Title:** Finland's favourite stimulant

**Year:** 2013

**Version:** Published version

**Copyright:** © Ethnologia Scandinavica 2013

**Rights:** In Copyright

**Rights url:** <http://rightsstatements.org/page/InC/1.0/?language=en>

**Please cite the original version:**

Nenola, P. (2013). Finland's favourite stimulant. *Ethnologia Scandinavica*, 2013(43), 205-207.  
<https://gustavadolfsakademien.bokorder.se/sv-SE/article/2888/ethnologia-scandinavica-2013>

and the shifting aesthetic appearances that are required if one is to keep up with the times.

Ulrika Torell's article with the captivating title, "Draped in dessert", is interesting to read. It is about the rather absurd practice of draping food on a body as if it were clothes. The article is based on an exhibition that was on display for a short time in the museum's entrance hall, where four chocolatiers had made wedding dresses of sugar and chocolate. Apart from demonstrating exceptional handicraft, Torell points out that these chocolate wedding dresses create an urge to taste and touch them. They function in the same way as the intention behind advertising. They foster desire in a dual sense, in that both the chocolate and the exquisite dresses made for idealized bodies trigger a desire to consume, which is a central practice for modern people.

Anders Nyblom's article also deserves to be singled out for its witty reflection on the collection of historical persons' clothes in the Nordiska Museet. This collection seems atypical in a museum of cultural history, and the article indeed confirms this. It is the absent body that is crucial for understanding these clothes. "The king is dead, long live his clothes," writes Nyblom! But as he points out, it is a kind of illusion that is created because the body is not there. The real person is missing. In such contexts the clothes show themselves as representations of bodies rather than something in themselves – and representations, note well, that are so specifically associated with a person's life that it is difficult to use them to convey the ordinariness of everyday life.

How bodily ideals are shaped by changes of fashion through time is exemplified by Marianne Larsson in her article about female skiing dress from the late nineteenth century to the end of the 1930s. Larsson tells how the interest in sport has created sporty fashions and bodily ideals, and at the start of the twentieth century was an important part of the women's emancipation movement in Sweden.

Birgitta Svensson ends the volume with an article about the exact opposite of the situation considered by Nyblom when it comes to the role of the body. It is about the visible and present body: the body as a canvas, the tattooed body. Regarding the relationship between body and clothes, Svensson explains tattoos as a form of interface between the body and the surrounding world, which simultaneously distances and intimizes the body. A tat-

too is thus a central element in marking one's identity, and of a more lasting character than clothes. One might be tempted to say that a tattoo is a stamp that confirms that a human being is a hybrid between a cultural and a natural being. The article can be recommended, as can the rest of the book, as an instructive introduction to the relationship between body and clothes, and why it is such a central relationship if we wish to understand ourselves as humans and our cultural history.

*Marie Riegels Melchior, Copenhagen*

### Finland's Favourite Stimulant

*Tuija Saarinen, Pannu kuumana. Suomalaisia kahvihetkiä. Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, Helsinki 2011. 278 pp. Ill. ISBN 978-952-222-287.*

■ Finland's favourite stimulant is coffee. Foreigners may be surprised discovering how passionately we take coffee and coffee drinking rituals. In her book, *Pannu kuumana. Suomalaisia kahvihetkiä*, PhD, folklorist Tuija Saarinen describes the cultural history of Finnish coffee drinking. The book includes coffee-related heritage, innovations, cultural practices, and social dimensions.

Saarinen's non-fiction is clearly aimed at the general public. The book is analytical and demonstrates a deep familiarity with the topic. The author's fluent text makes it a delightful reading for anyone. There is a compact theoretical summary at the end of the book, the extensive theoretical discussion being left out. Saarinen does not extensively open up discourses behind the texts, nor does she analyse the forms of remembering – and therefore the book is easy to reach for the common reader. Saarinen's study might be called a specimen of the direction that the Finnish Literature Society wishes their non-fiction to go.

The author's material consists of responses to different informal inquiries located in different heritage archives in Finland, as well as interviews, biographies, and fictional releases. Her own inquiries are *Ikimuistoiset kahvihetket* (Memorable coffee moments) in 2002 via the Folklore Archives of the Finnish Literature Society, and an inquiry targeted at the members of the Kuopion Isänmaallinen Seura in 2003. She has also availed herself of the responses to the coffee heritage inquiry of the Museovirasto in 1969, and an inquiry about the food heritage of the manses in 1969. Furthermore, her sources

include narratives from the competition that the Finland's leading coffee company Oy Gustav Paulig Ab arranged on the Internet in 2005.

A number of coffee-oriented books have been published in Finland, but the position of coffee drinking in Finnish social life has not been previously studied on a more extensive scale. It seems that no one has seen any reason in studying coffee, because it is such a self-evident part of the Finnish daily life and celebration. Coffee drinking has been researched as part of nutritional science, and the significance of coffee drinking has been briefly discussed in both Finnish and international researches when it comes to cuisine and stimulants.

Saarinen highlights an important aspect of Finnish culture: the whole social life is built around coffee drinking instead of meals. She is convinced by her sources that coffee's position in Finnish social life has been and still is essential.

The oldest coffee-related memories in the responses date from the 19th century and the timeline runs to the present day. It has been difficult for Saarinen to specify exactly when certain coffee drinking customs have been habitual in different parts of Finland because the narrators have been imprecise when sharing their coffee-related memories. They have timed their responses such as the end of the First World War or before the war. In her theoretical summary Saarinen brings up the risk included in the data collected over time. It has not always been easy for her to decide whether to write about the phenomenon in the present or the past tense, because she is not always sure if it still exists.

Saarinen describes what kinds of implements were needed for making coffee at home. She also describes a variety of roles that coffee had and still has – as a stimulant, part of a meal, and even remedy. Coffee drinking is a means of social interaction, and an attribute to one's communal status. To common people coffee has been, above all, a stimulant offering refreshment and comfort in the middle of a heavy workday. Coffee has also highlighted festivals and other special moments.

Merchants from Turku provided coffee for the first time in the 1720s. Neither regulations nor even a threat of fines could prevent the Finns from coffee drinking. It was well known that the smell of coffee could be hidden, for example, by boiling the cabbage. In time of war or emergency the boiled substitutes of coffee helped to maintain the coffee ritual,

expressed generosity, and symbolized cohesion. A coffee substitute was prepared, for example, from rye, barley, and chicory.

At first coffee was drunk in towns by the gentry and wealthy people, and it was considered a rare luxury product. Soon the custom of coffee drinking spread to the countryside, and in the 19th century it was already a stimulant used by all. In advertising coffee still has an image of luxury.

Coffee seems to have been extremely important for place-bound housewives in farmhouses. They were having conversation while drinking coffee and resting. For women coffee drinking was an honourable way to refresh themselves, even though their husbands thought it was an expensive habit.

Coffee-making was learned through manse. The housekeepers went around with the priests to the parish catechetical meetings. Their task was to make coffee, and the housewives observed how they did it. As common people got an example to follow, mistakes were avoided. It occurred that raw coffee beans used to be cooked in a pot, because the housewives did not know that they should have roasted and ground them first.

Coffee mills and copper coffee pots became status symbols, and nowadays they are collectors' items. A new kind of coffee culture has reached homes. Coffee drinkers have enjoyed espresso and cafe latte since the 1990s. Furthermore, they have also begun to affect the type of coffee they drink. Fair-trade coffee has reached grocery shops at the consumers' requests.

Coffee cosies have traditionally been necessary objects for the home. The pan roast coffee was allowed to brew under a cosy for a few minutes before drinking and it was possible to leave it, if necessary, under the cosy for a longer time. In today's homes coffee cosies are already rare because coffee machines keep the coffee warm. Serving and dining habits have become prosaic. Today we drink coffee from mugs, and the beautiful coffee set remains in the cupboard.

Alcohol, which had previously been offered to the guests, was gradually replaced by coffee. Coffee drinking was associated with great moments, but also harsh memories. For example, coffee breaks in formal public situations are sometimes recalled as terrible because you required a strong cultural knowledge of serving order to behave correctly. One was also supposed to know the right moment for ac-

cepting the invitation to come to the table, and there were a variety of ways for inviting guests to come to the table. Saarinen describes how many cups of coffee it was polite to drink in different parts of Finland. There were also different ways to inform another person whether the coffee was good or not, and if the guest wanted to drink one more cup of coffee.

Saarinen has included in her text some descriptive quotations from her informants, and in addition she has created story boxes of some of the citations. The illustration at the study informs us about both the luxury image of coffee drinking (the Paulig Archive) and the importance of coffee breaks for, for instance, an exhausted aging housewife sitting in front of an oven (Folklore Archives of the Finnish Literature Society).

*Pirjo Nenola, Jyväskylä*

### Expressions of Folk Religiosity

*Torunn Selberg, Folkelig religiøsitet. Et kulturvitenskapelig perspektiv. Scandinavian Academic Press & Spartacus Forlag, Oslo 2011. 174 pp. ISBN 978-304-0065-4.*

■ Until the start of the 1980s religion was studied mainly within the disciplines of theology or comparative religion. Even then the researchers were mostly interested in institutionalized expressions of faith. Nowadays the general interest in individuals opens up opportunities to take personal faith seriously as well – in whatever guise it occurs. University project thinking brought together researchers from various disciplines for more or less fruitful cooperative ventures. This book about folk religiosity is a good example of a successful project conducted by students of religion and students of folklore at Bergen University in Norway. The underlying project was called “Myth, Magic, and Miracle Meeting the Modern”.

Selberg starts her book with a good chapter about the prerequisites for research about religion among postmodern people. In Norway there are several recent and relevant occasions where modern folk religiosity was seen. Even the Norwegian Princess Märtha Louise founded an angel school, a fact that aroused some debate. Unfortunately, Selberg does not consider this theme in detail, but the mention of it takes her readers into the middle of her field of research, a field that was called folk belief, folk reli-

gion, new religion, alternative religion or even superstition. She defines her object of research as “divergence from hegemonic religion”, and she wants to “discuss how continuity, discontinuity, and re-interpretations are expressed” (p. 10).

In Selberg’s opinion, old and new phenomena make a mixture in folk religiosity. What is new, to her, is that these forms of belief are now clearly demonstrated by the believers. In olden days it was even difficult for the field-working folklorist to make people admit that they had met with the *huldra*. They might be afraid of being regarded as bad Christians, for all kinds of contact with other types of supernatural beings than the Christian God were regarded as reprehensible.

Old components of religion such as the *huldra* are found today, but they are used in new contexts. In the rural society of the nineteenth century, the *huldra* was connected to rural economic interests, whereas the *huldra* today is related to environmental, “natural” and feminist fields of association. This was also demonstrated by another Norwegian researcher, Ann Helene Bolstad Skjelbred. Selberg combines this modernization of folk belief with professionalism. The modern *huldra* is also connected to economy, when, for instance, a hairdresser advertises her shop with a picture of a *huldra*. Today you can learn how to manage angels in an angel school, or you can have a certificate to practise shamanism. She also calls her field New Age and says (p. 21) that it is no longer a kind of protest against institutionalized religion, but has changed into an individual faith, offering opportunities for a development of the self with the aid of (alternative) science, ecological thinking, alternative therapy, psychology, eastern religions, paganism, which means old religions, and Indian, Sami, and Celtic religion (p. 21).

Being a folklorist herself, Selberg takes the narrative as a foundation for her study. She scrutinizes articles in newspapers, magazines, advertisements, and different kinds of popular booklets, including novels. She also analyses a couple of interviews that she conducted among believers. Theories about narratives (for instance, Bakhtin) and methods for analysing them are her tools. Selberg has given her book the subtitle “A cultural-studies perspective” and, consequently, it is quite right that she also presents her reader with this perspective, which, to me, seems to consist of two important concepts: tradition and narrative, with all their problematic conno-