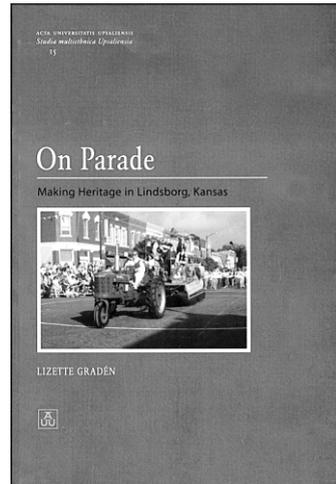


BOOK REVIEW

Gráden, Lizette. ON PARADE. MAKING HERITAGE IN LINSBORG, KANSAS. Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsalensis. Studia multiethnica Uppsalensia, 2003. ISBN: 91-554-5724-X. 260 pp.

It is common that when speaking about identities, changes in identity and multiple identities, we mean non-Western and mainly non-European identities (e.g. Anderson 2000, Barth 1969, Myers 1989, Romanucci-Ross & De Vos 1995, Schlee 1989). The topic of immigrant and multiple identities in the American ‘melting pot’ has a long tradition in anthropology (which is partly proved by the bibliography of the reviewed book), but only few works have up to date crossed the boundary of regional studies and entered the general discussion (e.g. Nash 1989).



The book by Lizette Gráden is a study about the construction of the Swedish identity and its changes over time in the small town of Linsborg, Kansas, USA, which its inhabitants call Little Sweden, USA. Lizette Gráden compares the perception of identity on different levels of the social and ethnic scale, and in different geographical regions – in Kansas, USA and Sweden. The author focuses on the annual ritual of the community – the Svensk Hyllningsfest – to demonstrate how Swedishness is constructed, maintained and celebrated in the fifth generation immigrant community. She shows how the Hyllningsfest has multiple functions as a consolidator of the community, carrier of common values, answer to the feeling of loosing one’s roots and celebration of Americanness at the same time.

Insightful is the discussion of inclusion and exclusion in Linsborg, depending on one’s contribution to maintaining what is seen as ‘Swedish heritage’: even people of non-Swedish heritage have an opportunity via participation in the ceremony to ‘become a Swede’

and at the same time reach the status of accepted community member, but not to a full extent (Chapter 3). Using the concept of Swedishness as a white, Protestant, sober and hard-working person, Gráden shows how ‘Swedishness’ reflects American WASP middle class values and comes in conflict with the conception of the ‘Swedishness’ of Swedes from Sweden (especially in the ethics of consuming alcohol and knowing one’s history). In this sense, the study is about the development and understanding of Swedish identity in America and Europe and undoubtedly interesting as such. Also, the discussion of the multiple levels of the Hyllingsfest parade and preparations for it in the community itself is interesting: the parade is a celebration of identity, but also a tourist attraction which must fulfil certain standards to be ‘marketable’ and arranged ‘behind the scenes’ (Chapter 7, 8).

On the other hand, the book leaves too many open ends. The description of becoming a Swede over the contribution to the parade could be more elaborate. Also, when speaking about the different groups in the Swedish immigrant community and their understanding of Swedish heritage and Sweden itself, the author focuses mainly on the older generation (who represent the viewpoint that Sweden has become, due to modernisation, less Swedish than their community) and the young generation (who is the main force in maintaining the representation of the Swedish folklore in the community), while the generation in their 20s-40s who are familiar with ‘Swedish politics, history, culture and business life’ and with both Swedish country-side and night-life of Stockholm (p. 231), is hardly mentioned. These are the issues which Lizette Gráden could hopefully elaborate on in her further publications.

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