MAN AND IDEA A SHORT HISTORY OF THE BARON EMIL CEDERCREUTZ' MUSEUM

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The museum of Emil Cedercreutz in Harjavalta, Satakunta, represents the life's work of Baron Emil Cedercreutz (1879-1949). Emil Cedercreutz was a sculptor by profession, but he is also known as a silhouette artist, antiquarian, and writer. Cedercreutz's reputation as an antiquarian in his own time is based on the museum called the Temple of the Rural Spirit, which he founded. It forms one part of the present Emil Cedercreutz Museum, which also comprises Cedercreutz's home, Harjula, and an art museum.

Cedercreutz made unusual choices in the style of his life and attitudes, considering his birth, education, and cultural environment. The problems involved in the history of his museum are to some extent determined by these choices: Why and how did a baron belonging to the Swedish-speaking gentry and possessing an international education as a sculptor decide to live and work in a country studio in a Finnish rural environment? Why did he begin to turn his attention to folk traditions and folk art? Why and how did he begin educating the common people in his region to appreciate its own traditional lifestyle and its basic form of livelihood, agriculture, at a time when industrialization and urbanization were accelerating in society? What

exactly was his museum, the so-called Temple of the Rural Spirit, and how did it develop?

CEDERCREUTZ' BACKGROUND FOR MUSEUM WORK

As a result of foreign influences on Cedercreutz, his attention was much drawn to social injustices, to an appreciation of physical work, socialism, the worship of nature, theological-philosophical ideas and the ideas of art nouveau, so that he began to apply the concepts from these sources in his work and activities.

The work done by the Satakunta Student Society and by youth associations corresponded to the ideas which Cedercreutz had embraced on his travels

- 110 abroad. One form of work in popular education pursued by youth associations and the Student Society was furthering knowledge about the native region and collecting folk traditions. The popular education work of the youth associations had a Tolstoyan flavour. Cedercreutz began to appreciate the folk traditions and handicraft skills of his region. Work on behalf of native regions led to a feeling of local unity, and in the case of Cedercreutz it grew into a strong appreciation of being a native of Satakunta, to 'Satakunta-ism'.

Cedercreutz's special contribution to regional activity consisted of beautifying the region with outdoor sculptures. Sculpture was Cedercreutz's medium for taking a stand in social matters. Following Constantin Meunier, Cedercreutz began to use symbolic sculptures for proclaim to values which he found important. He took descriptions of local agricultural work as his central subject matter. The aim was to pay tribute to agricultural work and to the simple, modest way of life of the countryside with its closeness to nature. As a sculptor, Cedercreutz seems to have embraced these ideas just when he was in Brussels. He then began to speak for them in Finland. The 1910s are a particularly significant period in this work; one may indeed speak of Cedercreutz's «manifesto». It included the aesthetic values of traditional everyday objects and condemned borrowing from abroad and mass-produced objects. The manifesto was particularly directed towards the praise of folk textiles - above all rugs - but also towards buildings and tools. Cedercreutz educated people to appreciate genuine, homely, handmade, well-functioning implements.

Cedercreutz's aestheticism of artifacts was based on the ideas of the Arts and Crafts movement which appreciated aesthetic values found in traditional handicrafts and opposed the spiritlessness and joylessness of factory production. His activity, however, united the utilitarian attitude of the Swedish-speaking amateurs in Finland with a knowledge of the past and an appreciation of folk traditions which were prevalent in Finnish nationalist circles. This union was brought about when Cedercreutz wanted to utilize handicraft skills and folk art which had developed over a long period, and particularly in his own region of Satakunta.

The aim of architecture was to create a holistic work of art. Interiors and everyday objects belonging to them were an essential part of the environment. Cedercreutz made both his rural studio homes into just such holistic works of art, following the principles of his manifesto. For his interiors he used original pieces of folk furniture which he had collected in Satakunta or reconstructions made in accordance with them, and genuine old folk textiles, such as rugs, but he also included foreign pieces, insofar as they suited the whole.

IDEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND OF THE TEMPLE OF THE RURAL SPIRIT

During his studies in Brussels Cedercreutz espoused Tolstoyan views through Constantin Meunier and some other artists. Continuing his studies in Paris, he made further contacts with followers of Tolstoy. In Finland, Cedercreutz met with a sympathetic response to the Tolstoyan world of ideas in the works of some aut-

*A Ploughman. Silhouette
cut by Emil Cedercreutz
1929*

hors. Current socio-political problems such as land ownership and the position of small farmers on the one hand and attempts at popular education, urbanization and industrialization on the other also made it necessary to consider the rural spirit: the value and significance of working the soil and living a simple country life.

The basis for the rural spirit was the traditional rural way of life, but the youth association movement gave it a Tolstoyan flavour. The rural spirit was seen to be a counterweight to the decadent Nietzscheanism then fashionable in urban culture. It was thought possible to further the rural spirit with the aid of energetic popular education. Its strengthening was also seen as strengthening the national position of Finland.

The background to the word 'temple' in the name of the museum is the religio-philosophical ideas current at the turn of the century, particularly monism. Cedercreutz received significant monistic influences from his friend Émile Verhaeren,

with whom he became acquainted in Brussels. These influences were strengthened by his Swedish friend Ellen Key, the writer. Both Key and Cedercreutz expressed their monistic creed in the device *Memento vivere*, which dates back to Goethe. The monistic energetic concept of nature contained the idea of the unity of earth, sun, and man. The Temple of the Rural Spirit was not only an ode to the rural spirit but also a monistic church.

THE TEMPLE OF THE RURAL SPIRIT AS A TEACHING AID IN POPULAR EDUCATION

The Temple of the Rural Spirit was founded in 1916. The collections of the museum began with agricultural implements used by Cedercreutz and with objects he collected from his immediate environment. The theme of the original exhibition of the museum was the appreciation of agricultural implements, or of the rural spirit. This was an exhibition displayed in the form of a storage room.

- 112 Geographically the exhibits came from the Kokemäki River valley and from Köyliö in Satakunta. It was characteristic of the objects that they were worn with use or already discarded, and not skillfully made, presentable pieces of artisanship. Socially the objects were limited to everyday implements used by agricultural labourers. It is an indication of Tolstoyism that Cedercreutz explained his desire to collect and preserve things as a desire to do something for his native region, that is, to give it a museum in which «a member of the common people would meet his or her ancestors' life and toil».

Cedercreutz educated people and taught them the values of the rural spirit in the museum and on his antiquarian travels; he went from house to house explaining to people why he went around begging for used or discarded objects for his museum. The incentive for Cedercreutz's antiquarian activity was the aestheticism of folk artifacts, which it was possible to utilize in various ways, e.g. by creating holistic works of art in homes. Tolstoyan ideas led Cedercreutz to appreciate simple rural life and farm labour and settle to work and live in the country. The appreciation of rural life was founded on the belief that

The Temple of the Rural Spirit. The Facade to the South drawn by Matti Kava 1993: (1) The first building 1916: agricultural implements. (2) The tower 1932: textile artifacts of folk tradition. (3) Section for transports 1935. (4) The third extension 1937: a section for containers, the former studio was changed to depict the interior of a farm house, the cart shed was joined as a carriage and cart section on to the Temple. (5) The smithy, tannery and woodworking sections 1938. (6) The last extension 1942: ship section.

Tolstoyism could render social problems less acute. Cedercreutz's Tolstoyism was connected with a monistic, pantheistically coloured religious view according to which earth, sun, and man were one. The museum was a suitable means in educating the people appreciate rural life and farm labour. Objects preserved in the museum had a sacramental value in that they showed man's victory over nature.

LACK OF SUCCESS

The outbreak of the First World War meant the foundering of Tolstoyan pacifism. The construction of a power plant with its railway connection was begun in Harjavalta, next door to Cedercreutz's home. The project was seen as spoiling the landscape as well as disturbing the

natural peace. Local farmers became suddenly rich by selling their shares in rapids to the electricity company. This access to wealth interrupted the idyll of simple, modest rural life. Cedercreutz felt he had failed in his popular education work. Education for the rural spirit also began to seem unnecessary as belief in socialism as a healing force for social wrongs grew stronger and the differences between rural and urban Finland began to fade.

The original idea behind the Temple of the Rural Spirit was further undermined by the reforms of the early 1920s concerning such things as land ownership and compulsory education. The reforms meant an improvement in the economic and educational position of the rural population.

Cedercreutz directed his attention to art

- 114 education and donated some of his works to schools, largely to the school of Private Classes in Helsinki. This school was to be a forerunner of art education in Finland. The project was connected with the idea that the school would simultaneously become an Emil Cedercreutz museum. Cedercreutz also wanted to have a room for his sculptures in the museum of Satakunta.

Cedercreutz was not allowed to experience the blessing of work in the 1920s. There were no commissions for public monuments, and it was difficult to find publishers for his books. The beginning of the 1930s saw the foundering of the plans for the Emil Cedercreutz museum of sculptures both in the Private Classes in Helsinki, since the school went bankrupt, and in the Satakunta museum, since there was not enough space. Due to the death of counselor of commerce F. A. Juselius, the big commission for reliefs in the Juselius Mausoleum in Pori was cancelled before it was finished.

MUSEUM FOR LOCAL HISTORY AND CULTURE

Emil Cedercreutz returned to his activity in his native region and as an antiquarian because of his lack of success as a sculptor as well as because of the revival of local activity in Satakunta and the rise of the regional spirit and of museum enthusiasm. Cedercreutz resumed his museum work at the beginning of the 1930s by expanding the Temple of the Rural Spirit.

A turret or tower was constructed in 1932, which made the building resemble a church. The museum also widened its scope. In addition to implements used in farm

labour, exhibits now included the central artifacts of Emil Cedercreutz's enthusiasm for folk tradition: everyday textiles such as rugs and national costumes, and tools used in their production.

In the second phase of expansion in 1935 Cedercreutz added to the Temple a section for transport, which displayed horse-drawn vehicles. The contribution of the horse as a beast of burden, a subject which Cedercreutz had earlier used symbolically in his sculptures, was brought out in the displays. Presenting the section, Cedercreutz pointed out local differences in folk art in Satakunta. In addition to women's handicrafts, men's handicrafts such as woodwork and wrought iron were now also displayed.

The third extension of the museum took place in 1937. In this fourth building phase another wing was added, and at the same time the nearby but separate studio and cart shed were joined on to the Temple. The former studio was changed to depict the interior of a farmhouse in Satakunta. The new wing housed containers such as baskets, chests, and cupboards. The cart shed was connected to the museum as a 'carriage-and-cart section, reflecting cultural history. Artifacts used in storehouses and lofts were displayed in the linking parts of the buildings. The theme of the displays was, as before, limited to artifacts of rural life in Satakunta. Even more attention than before was paid to the time perspective and interiors. The focus changed from objects to entities in the grouping of the exhibits. A section on ethnography and another on cultural history were presented separately and received particular attention, due to the influence of the Finnish National Museum and

the ideas gleaned by Cedercreutz on an excursion to Norway.

In the fourth phase, a fifth building was added to the Temple of the Rural Spirit in front of the original Temple. In 1938 this housed the smithy, tannery and woodworking sections. The aim of the display was to create an impression of the active workshops of artisans, a so-called living museum.

The last extension (the sixth building phase) began in 1940 and was completed in 1942. It contained the so-called ship section, which displayed rowing boats, a sailing boat used in fishing with drift nets, and other implements needed for moving on waters or in fishing.

After six building phases and 26 years, the Temple of the Rural Spirit became a museum of local history and culture about 140 m long, meandering in all directions, covering about 650 square metres and comprising ten parts and 12 sections.

As the Temple of the Rural Spirit grew and developed, its aim gradually became the depiction of the geographical factors of Satakunta - the Kokemäki River, its cultivated river valley, and the sea - with artifacts of traditional river fishing, agriculture, and shipping.

The development of the Temple of the Rural Spirit corresponded to the general development of museums in Finland in the 1930s. The time was favourable to museums. The war years, 1939-1945, paralysed their development up to the 1950s. Cedercreutz's work was an exception in this development since he was able to expand the Temple of the Rural Spirit by building and by adding to the collections in spite of the war.

THE EMIL CEDERCREUTZ' MUSEUM

Cedercreutz added to his knowledge of museology by participating in seminars organized by the Finnish Association for Museums and in other courses of instruction. An assistant in his work was Niilo Valonen (later Professor of Ethnology at Helsinki University), who was originally a member of the Satakunta Student Society and became later a distinguished in museum work. Valonen's views about developing the Temple of the Rural Spirit as a museum were to have a decisive influence on Cedercreutz's antiquarian activity. Economically the care of the museum was in Cedercreutz's own hands, apart from some small grants awarded by the Museum Association.

The antiquarian ideas of Emil Cedercreutz expanded in the 1930s to embrace the preservation of his whole life's work as a museum. In order to preserve the Temple of the Rural Spirit and the rest of his life's work in a museum, Cedercreutz altered his will and founded the Emil Cedercreutz Foundation in 1945, whose board of directors was to include a representative of the Satakunta Student Society. The charter created the foundation of the present Emil Cedercreutz Museum, which is still owned by the Emil Cedercreutz Foundation, but which is managed at present by the town of Harjavalta under an agreement.

Three different phases can be seen in Emil Cedercreutz' museum activity. The first original phase in Cedercreutz's antiquarian activity is the period 1916-1931. This can be described as the phase of the rural spirit in regional and antiquarian activity.

116 A second phase extends from 1932 to 1938. This period can be said to be the period of Cedercreutz's individual museum enthusiasm at a time when the museum begins to develop from a temple of the rural spirit in the direction of an ordinary museum of local history and culture.

The third phase is the final phase of Cedercreutz's museum activity up to about the year 1947. It is characterized by an increase in the number of his assistants and their influence on the museum work while Cedercreutz's own activity sank into the background. This period can be called the period of professionalization and institutionalization of museum work. The preservation of Cedercreutz's life's work as a museum becomes certain, and Cedercreutz lays the foundation for the activity of the Emil Cedercreutz Foundation, and also for the present Emil Cedercreutz museum.

LITERATURE

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