

ATINA NIHTINEN

Åland as a Special Case

From Monolith to Diverse?

ABSTRACT The present article discusses two sets of issues. On the one hand, I consider the different factors and circumstances which have influenced relations between Swedish and Finnish on Åland and the implications of political change. On the other hand, I discuss the ways in which these are understood and presented in history writing. By considering continuity and change in history writing and language discussions I argue that history writing has changed from a rather monolithic interpretation rooted in nationalism and the early decades of autonomy towards a more versatile interpretation (such as considering Åland as being connected to both east and west and ideas such as many Ålands). At the same time the role of Swedish remains important, both as a matter of continuity (history) and as a matter of its instrumental function.

KEYWORDS Åland, Finnish, Swedish, Finland, Sweden, history writing, language relations

In a book titled *Life in Two Languages* Susanne Eriksson has argued that while most Finno-Swedes on the Finnish mainland interact daily with Finnish-speakers to some degree, many Ålanders live their lives exclusively in Swedish (Beijar *et al.* 1997: 74). In this argument, Åland's monolingual language policy was equated with individual language skills, which was not a truthful presentation. The present article discusses some of the recent reconsiderations of history writing and language

divisions on Åland. It argues that while language has remained a central question in sections of political opinion, scholarly narratives have paid attention to the multiplicity of understandings of Åland.

Background

At the beginning of the twentieth century most Ålanders differed in language from most of the Finnish population. In the context of Finland's independence, ideas of separation existed in several regions of the country. For Ostrobothnia, for example, the change of borders after the Russo-Swedish war was equally significant (Hårdstedt 2006; Kuvaja, Hårdstedt & Hakala 2008: 344). Ostrobothnia was orientated towards the west part of the unitary state. Because of the growth of Finnish nationalism, the importance of the region's Swedish language and connections to the former west part of the Swedish kingdom diminished. Sweden had lost territories. Helsinki had taken over the role of Åbo as the capital city in the Grand Duchy and symbolised the new times. The consequences of the Finnish war and subsequent nationalist developments were significant for various parts of the old state. However, it was on Åland that nationalism became political and led in the end to the establishment of Åland as an autonomous region. In history writing, it is possible to observe connections between developments in the isles and the mainland. In Finland, history writing and nation-building were closely intertwined and the matter of language was central in the process of nation-building. In a recent reassessment of history writing on Åland, historian Janne Holmén has shown how, in the mid-nineteenth century, Åland was on the way to becoming a well-integrated part of the Finnish nation. Ålandic history was written by Svecoman mainlanders and they tended to emphasize Åland's role in Finland's history. Counterfactually, it can be argued that if the process had continued, Åland could have acquired a different role in Finland's historical consciousness (Edquist & Holmén 2015: 402).

Karl August Bomansson (1827–1906), as the first Ålander to write on the islands' history, wrote a dissertation on a topic which was typical of nineteenth century Finnish national writing: during the time of Johan Vasa, Duke of Finland in the sixteenth century, large parts of Finland were governed as an autonomous region. His work preceded the language conflict, which became characteristic of the Finnish national movement. Another writer was Reinhold Hausen (1850–1942), who published historical documents on Finland's history and the cultural history of the isles in wider contexts. His historical articles were published by the association *Ålands vänner* ['Friends of Åland'], founded in 1895. Unlike most Ålandic writers who published after him and emphasized the egalitarianism of Åland's peasant society, he concentrated on Åland's elite (see Edquist & Holmén 2015). The

early writers of Åland's history, Bomansson, Hausen, and Fagerlund (1852–1939) belonged to the Finnish establishment and regarded Åland's history as part of Finland's history. Although connected to Åland, they expressed views similar to those of the Svecoman strand of Finnish nationalism. The late emergence of a political expression of difference, the Åland movement, can be considered significant. The movement did not emerge until December 1917, only a few months before Finland's declaration of independence. The leader of the movement, Julius Sundblom, listed the following reasons for why Åland was better off with Sweden: Åland's central position in the Baltic (the argument here was that the new Finnish state was less capable of protecting Åland from military actions in the region), the issue of language, and finally, that being part of Sweden was more likely to guarantee better times for Åland in the future (Högman 1986: 124; Nihtinen 2011). Gyrid Högman has questioned whether reasons other than the dominant political concerns of the time influenced Ålandic opinion before 1918 (Högman 1986: 126). Sweden had become popular both because of stabilising Swedish actions in the region and favourable treatment of reunification demands by politicians such as the navy minister Erik Palmstierna. Finland's mistakes had also led to diminishing popularity. Many Ålanders adopted a favourable attitude towards Sweden, because Sweden was Swedish-speaking (Högman 1986: 136). But the isles had also been part of the Grand Duchy of Finland for more than a century. Janne Holmén (Edquist & Holmén 2015: 213) has considered the question of why the Åland movement initially received scarce attention in regional history writing. One of the reasons was the movement's own rhetoric: Ålanders' willingness to join Sweden was not regarded as something new but as a continuation of the region's historical links with Sweden.

One of the much-debated questions concerns timing: when did most Ålanders begin to see themselves as different from the mainland speakers of Swedish? The thought of a reunion with Sweden, followed by events leading to Åland's autonomy, was by no means a widely-supported idea (Kuvaja, Hårdstedt & Hakala 2008: 551–552). Examination of newspapers published in the newspaper *Åland* revealed the existence of conflicting views. The idea developed among the regional elite and only reached the island population at the end of 1917. An article titled "Sanningen" ['The truth'], attributed to Carl Björkman and published on 5 December, and an article by Julius Sundblom "Finland fritt, Åland svenskt" ['Finland free, Åland Swedish'] were supportive of the idea for a reunion. In Sundblom's descriptions, the Ålanders had always called themselves Ålanders, never Finns, hardly ever Finnish citizens, or Finno-Swedes. Moreover, they had never had the right to call themselves Swedes although the longing for the old motherland had

always been present in the soul of the Ålander. Whether longing for Sweden was present during the whole period from 1809 to 1917 is a question which both Nils Erik Villstrand and Christer Kuvaja have commented upon. Not only it is difficult, based on existing sources, to know what most Ålanders felt, but there are also indications of the opposite.

That such perceptions are questionable became apparent also from another article published around the same time in the *Åland* newspaper (Kuvaja, Hårdstedt & Hakala 2008: 552). In the views of an anonymous writer, Ålanders had not felt any particularly strong feelings for Sweden, but instead had felt sameness and community with the Swedish-speakers on the mainland. The Swedishness in Finland was something to fight for also on Åland. Prior to the period of 1917–1921 it was common for Swedish-speakers to celebrate the same events and to share similar concerns and ideas. Kuvaja has referred to a gathering in February 1899 concerning the strengthening of Russia's control over Finland which aroused sympathies for Finland among the Ålanders. Another meeting of youth organisations in the summer of 1900 was accompanied by expressions of concerns over Finland's future and the later anthem of Finland *Vårt Land* ['Our country'] was sung at the event.

The political situation in Finland was unstable, in contrast to that in Sweden, and the issue of language was initially of a secondary importance (see Nihtinen 2011: 272–309). Several important figures on Åland (including the leaders of the Åland movement) had their background in Finland. Carl Björkman was from the mainland and Julius Sundblom was in his early writings patriotic in his views concerning Finland. The aim of the association *Ålands vänner* ['Friends of Åland'] was to preserve Swedishness on Åland. The celebration of J. L. Runeberg on 5 February was initiated and celebrated on Åland as early as the 1890s. After 1896 the association Friends of Åland took over the organisation of the celebrations. Writings in the *Åland* newspaper accompanied the celebrations, a sign that these had become an important expression of patriotism. From a writing in 1910, as demonstrated by Christer Kuvaja, it can be noticed that existing views on Runeberg and Finland were hardly different from those of the Svecoman strand of Finnish nationalism. Starting in 1908, the celebration of *Svenska dagen* ('The Swedish Day') was organized on Åland as an event when feelings of belonging to the fatherland and mother tongue were strengthened (Kuvaja, Hårdstedt & Hakala 2008: 562). All these descriptions are connected to the changing import of the Swedish language—starting in the late nineteenth century, it was first intertwined with patriotism towards Finland and Finland-Swedishness. Later, however, it became an argument for a reunion.

During the period 1917–1921, history writing was different in Finland and Sweden and divided along national lines (Nordman 1986). In Sweden,

two competing interpretations of history co-existed: an old state-idealising viewpoint on history, represented by Harald Hjärne and his followers, and a new critical viewpoint supported by Lauritz Weibull (see Nordman 1986; Edquist & Holmén 2015). Hjärne supported the idea that historians should serve national interests and support the Swedish cause. The second group, Lauritz Weibull and his followers, based at the University of Lund, did not participate in the debate as they objected to the use of history for political ends. In the politicized atmosphere of the 1920s, history was used as a weapon to support opposite claims. Swedish historians focused on showing why Åland had to be allowed to join Sweden. In Finland, leading historians and lawyers signed a document titled *Ålandsfrågan och Finlands rätt* [‘The Åland question and Finland’s rights’] which claimed that Finland had a right to the islands. They provided arguments for why Åland should remain with Finland. The differing opinions of Swedish and Finnish nationalists were based on their different views as to whether or not Finland constituted a separate entity within the old Swedish kingdom. Furthermore, the extent to which Åland could have claimed a relatively autonomous position within the kingdom was debated as the isles had been part of the east part of the kingdom in an administrative sense. In the early medieval period Åland belonged to the Linköping diocese, but was transferred to that of Åbo in 1309. In 1634 Åland’s administrative position had changed and Åland had become part of the County of Åbo and Björneborg, to which the isles belonged until 1809.

Whereas the Finnish nationalists paid more attention to the border conflict with Russia in Karelia, the Finno-Swedes’ main concern was the battle for Åland. It was not only an important Swedish-speaking area in a country with a Finnish-speaking majority; much of the early Finno-Swedish archaeological and historical interest had also been focused on Åland. The Finnish ethnologists and language researchers, on the other hand, had been paying more attention to Karelia, seeing it as essential for the development of the Finnish nation. For most of the twentieth century, regional Ålandic history writing was reproducing the Swedish historians’ argumentation from the years 1917–1921. Those Ålanders who had desired a reunification with Sweden had used in their arguments the threat of Fennification (in the sense of expansion of the Finnish language) and the need to protect the Swedish language. In all subsequent extensions of political autonomy, the same argument was used with the original agreement of 1921 in mind. A Swedish-Finnish dichotomy became central for Ålandic history writing and descriptions of languages and their speakers, except for maritime history (Edquist & Holmén 2015: 235), which, as noted by Holmén, being business-funded history writing, was not concerned with ethnicity, not even in the 1940s.

Schoolbooks, however, have been divided in their descriptions of the Åland question. The research of Matti Similä (Similä 2011) compared descriptions of central historical events and individuals such as Snellman and Freudenthal in Finnish and Finland-Swedish books. In addition, Similä examined differences and similarities in schoolbooks, used in teaching in Finland and Sweden. The Åland question was viewed differently in all three categories (Similä 2011: 102). In the Finnish books, the actors were two nation-states, the Swedish state, and the new Finnish nation-state. In this conception, the relations between the two countries became more complex after the emergence of the Åland movement in the isles. Finland offered autonomy to Åland, the argument goes, but Sweden's reaction led to disagreement between the two countries. Sweden's support for the separatists, the occupation of Åland, the attempt to have the question included at a peace conference in Paris and the demand for a referendum concerning the status of Åland were presented as parts of a game to win Åland. The new Finnish state was in turn protective of its territory. The Finland-Swedish books included a more detailed description and an insider perspective as the Ålandic perspective (Similä 2011: 104). Events such as the meeting in Finström, the number of persons who signed the petition and the leaders Sundblom and Björkman were included. Sundblom and Björkman were Ålanders. Sweden was described as siding with what the Ålanders wanted. The goal was a reunion with Sweden and the Finnish state was of another opinion. The Union of Nations both assigned Åland to Finland and guaranteed autonomy as a compromise solution. Relations between Finland and Sweden continued to be tense, the argument goes, then saw a change for the better and worsened again during the period of language conflicts in Finland of the 1930s. The Autonomy Act was presented in Finland-Swedish books, whereas Finnish books seldom mentioned it. The contrast between viewpoints is striking, regardless of whether the writing was a result of a conscious decision or implicit assumptions about the importance of specific events, documents or persons.

The Swedish books, as stated in Similä's argument, emphasized an agreement between two countries as the solution. The actors were two nation-states, Sweden and Finland, which resolved the Åland question together in a peaceful and civilized way (Similä 2011: 105). In the books used in Finland, descriptions were more conflict-oriented than those in Sweden. Furthermore, the Åland question was given much more attention in the books in Finland as Åland was part of Finland.

Change in Writing

Until the early 1980s, history writing on Åland had been dominated by the views of very few writers from the islands, who were creating a rather monolithic representation of the history of the isles. Party politics did not emerge until the 1960s and was not established in its current form until the 1970s. History writing had started to reflect and construct a new political situation after the 1980s. Pertti Hakala, for example, has demonstrated how it was only after the establishment of Åland as an autonomous region, that images and perceptions on Åland had changed. This was visible in the book *Sångfesten på Åland 1922* [‘Song celebration on Åland 1922’], built on history presentations of Swedish authors (Hakala 2006: 43). In the 1980s, the ethnologist De Geer-Hancock discussed nation-building on Åland and demonstrated how autonomy was conceived as a nation-building project (De Geer-Hancock 1986: 118–126). In the 1960s a variety of books were produced which were aimed at both Ålanders and a wider readership.

The then new Åland symbols, such as the flag and regional citizenship, signified that Åland resembled a nation-state. In 1984 Åland was granted the right to issue its own post stamps. In 1993 the name *Åland* appeared also on passports issued in the islands. The introduction of a new concept, *Åland hembygdsrätt* [‘regional citizenship’] was a result of the revised Åland Self-Government Act of 1951. An examination of Åland as a tourist destination by Mikael Korhonen (Korhonen 2008: 43) has demonstrated that there is a clear line of continuity in images of Åland created during the period of autonomy. The first history book for school children written from a regional perspective *Åland och älänningarna* [‘Åland and the Ålanders’] appeared in 1943 (Drejier 1943). The book was written by Åland historian and archaeologist Matts Dreijer (1901–1998), who was employed as a county archaeologist by the regional government in 1933. He became a dominant voice in the interpretation of Åland’s history for several decades and is sometimes described as *the* national historian of Åland (see e.g. Sjöstrand 1996: 113). He was also the editor of the magazine *Åländsk Odling* [‘Ålandic culture’] from its beginning in 1938 until 1972.

In a book celebrating the 100th anniversary of an Ålandic insurance company, Matts Dreijer considered the history of the isles from a long historical perspective, including Åland’s greatness in the medieval period. In his presentation of Åland’s autonomy and the events that led to its emergence, Dreijer saw Sweden as the old motherland (Drejier 1966: 78). The existence of earlier links eastwards was downplayed. An example of this approach was a claim that there was a sharp border between place-names: in Dreijer’s argument the water’s edge between Åland and mainland Finland formed one

of the sharpest borders between place-names in this part of the world with, in Dreijer's words, only names of Scandinavian origin on the west side and only Finnish place-names east of the border, layered with newer Swedish ones (Dreijer 1966: 52). Dreijer's etymology of the name *Åland* was connected to the meaning of 'island.' This etymology proved to be useful in interpretations of historical evidence. As noted by Janne Holmén, this made it possible for Dreijer to treat all possible medieval sources with references to "island" as sources with references to Åland (Edquist & Holmén 2015: 187).

In the presentation of Ålands history in the 1960s, Dreijer claimed that from the type of graves, place-names and other findings it can be concluded that the first migration to the isles was Scandinavian. Åland was influenced by "Christian civilisation at a very early date because of its commercial connections with Christian Western Europe" (Nyman, Dreijer & Eriksson 1965: 40). The oldest churches on Åland were "utterly different" from the churches in Finland and there were "many unexpected indications of southern Scandinavian influence on buildings" from the Middle Ages. Furthermore, from the fourteenth century Åland had its own law and constitution. Dreijer's search for distinctiveness culminated in a theory relocating the Viking-age port of Birka to Åland. The Åland Dreijer depicted had been the kingdom of Birka and center of German mission in the Baltic, later a sovereign earldom and the base for Danish hegemony in the northern Baltic. In his view, Sweden did not have a presence in the isles until the mid-thirteenth century and the isles had been a jurisdictional province with a written lawcode of their own. Dreijer also found references to Åland in a variety of old sources to support his controversial claims.

Christianity had first reached Åland, which he believed was Ansgar's Birka, in apparent contrast to earlier evidence. In his *Vita Anskarii*, Rimbert, Ansgar's successor to the archiepiscopal seat of Hamburg-Bremen, mentions Birka as one of the ports Ansgar visited as early as the ninth century. In the 1970s and 1980s Dreijer marketed extensively his theory in various books and presentations on Åland history. Because the theory was based on interpretation of scarce evidence (a limestone-cross found in Sund) and related to distant times it was a hypothesis hard to prove. The theory was criticised by both Finnish (see e.g. Villstrand 1984: 338–339) and Swedish scholars (e.g. Ringbom 1986: 11–45; Sjöstrand 1998: 45). Matts Dreijer's view of Åland's Viking Age and early medieval history were depicted by Sjöstrand as constructions, entirely motivated by a political agenda (Sjöstrand 1996: 91–94, 113). In a book about minorities in the Baltic Sea region the Swedish historian Runblom also criticized Dreijer's campaign to place Birka on Åland (Runblom 1995). In the conception of Åland history, created by Matts Dreijer historical arguments were needed for the defence of the new autonomy.

It was difficult to find convincing arguments in recent history as this was shared. For this reason, Dreijer considered it necessary to build distinctiveness on ancient times.

In *Alla tiders Åland. Från istid till EU-inträde* ['Åland of all times. From the Ice Age to EU acceptance'] Benita Mattson-Eklund has devoted a page to the Birka-controversy (Mattson-Eklund 2000). Mattson-Eklund has agreed with the criticism towards part of Dreijer's theories but she has also expressed the view that Åland is often absent from national presentations of history. In Swedish presentations, Åland is not taken into consideration, because it is not part of contemporary Sweden while in Finnish presentations Åland is simply one of many places on the periphery (Mattson-Eklund 2000: 80). In the 1990s there was an extensive debate on Ålandic identity in the local press and on the pages of the *Radar* magazine: what could be called Ålandic identity or Ålandic culture and what was the relation between the Swedish language and Ålandic culture? For example, an article by politician Olof Erland, published in the magazine, emphasised the difference between the original situation, which was meant to preserve the Swedish language and culture of the region, and the situation which had developed after political change. The establishment of political autonomy had enabled the development of a separate culture, and not a Swedish culture, but with Swedish as the language of education and communication (Erland 1997: 50).

One of the myths reassessed at the beginning of the new millennium concerned the peasant uprising against Russian troops in 1808, which has been widely used as a proof that the Ålanders wanted to belong to Sweden. The research of Pertti Hakala has demonstrated a considerable shift in opinion on Åland after the mid-1980s with more recent writers distancing themselves from the rhetoric of the Åland movement. The uprising was no longer seen as a struggle to remain Swedish (Hakala 2006: 40–55). History writing on Åland has experienced a shift in paradigm in recent decades, which Hakala has attributed to the change in generation of writers. The notion of many Ålands, suggested by Christer Kuvaja in *Det åländska folkets historia* ['The history of the Ålandic people'], can be seen to reflect a wider change in interpretations. Historically, Åland was a heterogeneous region with only minor differences in societal, social, and cultural structures (Kuvaja, Hårdstedt & Hakala 2008: 69). Civic aspects of Ålandness are also emphasized in *Islands of Identity* by Samuel Edquist and Janne Holmén (Edquist & Holmén 2015). Holmén analyzed identity-formation on Åland through an empirical investigation of how different themes on Åland history have been portrayed in regional history writing. Until 1917 the political elite on Åland remained faithful to Finnish nationalism, but in the autumn of the same year they initiated the Åland movement, which was seeking

reunification with Sweden. From the Åland movement until the Second World War, Åland was characterized by ethnic nationalism, emphasizing the Swedishness of Åland. The initiation of a campaign to promote autonomy consciousness in the 1950s and the development of autonomy gradually transformed Ålandic nationalism from ethnic to civic. The civic aspect was enhanced through the introduction of regional citizenship. The essence of Ålandness, in Holmén's conception of Åland, is defined not by heritage, but by acceptance of autonomy and monolingual language policies.

Finnish on Åland

From the very beginning, Åland's autonomy was defined as a tool for the preservation of the Swedish language and Swedish culture and language laws were an important component of the autonomy laws. The working language of regional and municipal authorities has been Swedish. The same legal principle has applied to the authorities of the national government of Åland and the national church. Citizens of Finland have nevertheless been entitled to use Finnish in dealings with the courts and other national institutions. The Language Act has also prescribed that the language of instruction in education on Åland is Swedish (Beijar *et al.* 1997: 75).

The question of Finnish, however, has been relevant for the examination of language divisions, visible in recent presentations of Åland's history in the nineteenth century. During the first half of the nineteenth century it was still common to employ a speaker of Finnish in religious services but during the period between 1860 and 1890 there was no longer a need to hire labour from the mainland (Kuvaja, Hårdstedt & Hakala 2008: 100). The rising number of Finnish speakers at the end of the century was connected to a demand for labour and an emigration wave to North America. Finnish-speakers had spread throughout the isles but the number of speakers in places such as Saltvik, Hammarland, Finström, Sund and Mariehamn was particularly high. Their employments were diverse, with two-thirds of all Finnish-speakers being either workers or civil servants (Kuvaja, Hårdstedt & Hakala 2008: 100).

Until the end of the nineteenth century, Åland was not involved in the ongoing language conflict on the mainland. The Fennoman movement was of little significance to an almost completely Swedish-speaking Ålandic society. Nevertheless, during the last decade of the nineteenth century elements of Fennoman ideology began to appear in Åland when the number of Finnish-speakers was growing. The first lecture in Finnish was presented in the autumn of 1891 in Mariehamn and 50 people participated in the event. Writings in the newspaper *Åland* which followed the event pointed out that the language conflict does not concern the isles. The threat of

the Fennomans seemed unlikely. However, the mid-1890 saw the founding of a Fennoman party and some Fennomans were chosen as candidates in the town council elections. Some were members until the beginning of the twentieth century. Around 1895 a Fennoman society was also formed and named *Ahvenanmaan Suomalainen Sivistysseura* [‘The Ålandic Finnish education society’]. An initiative of *Finska folkskolans vänner* [‘The friends of Finnish grammar schools’] led to the opening of a private Finnish school in Mariehamn in 1902, but this was short-lived. Similarly, a Finnish school that opened in Haraldsby in Saltvik did not last long. In Haraldsby a bilingual celebration also took place in 1899 (Kuvaja, Hårdstedt & Hakala 2008: 101).

Conceptions of Finnish-speakers on Åland gradually started to reflect nationalist discourses and became negative, which became visible from writings in the press. Kuvaja (Kuvaja, Hårdstedt & Hakala 2008: 102) has elaborated how differences in individual characteristics were increasingly described as differences between Swedish-speakers and Finnish-speakers as groups. The press became negative towards Finnish-speakers based on individual cases. Furthermore, in the early twentieth century, Finland-Swedish nationalism often took on racial overtones among the most radical Swedes, who saw themselves as Germanic. The Finns were depicted as degenerate and as people who would attach themselves to ideas of socialism. Swedish, the preservation of Swedish culture and Swedishness became central arguments in press debates and, in the 1920s, in the foundation of Åland autonomy.

The situation of Swedish in relation to Finnish has been discussed in the doctoral dissertation of Barbro Allardt Ljunggren, *Åland som språksamhälle* [‘Åland as a language environment’] published by Stockholm University in 2008. The notion of language environment refers to language relations in a specific society. The empirical part of her research was based on questionnaire surveys conducted among pupils in grade 9 of primary school and the second grade of the secondary school Ålands Lyceum. In the first case, 257 students participated in the survey and ninety in the case of Ålands Lyceum (Allardt Ljunggren 2008: 57).

Central questions on which responses were gathered included choice of language, media habits, a subjective examination of the respondents’ own language competence and language attitudes in a broad sense. Allardt Ljunggren’s theory was that the Ålanders constituted a secure minority in Finland with a high ethnic profile and an insecure majority on Åland. The results of the study revealed strong feelings of affinity towards Åland. Attitudes towards English and English-speakers were in general positive while attitudes towards Finnish and Finland were ambivalent. Several variables showed a tendency among adolescents to favour Sweden rather than

Finland and to express negative attitudes towards Finnish. Nevertheless, if parents had spoken Finnish at home, respondents had more positive attitudes towards Finnish and at the same time displayed the strongest feelings of affinity with Åland. Åland government and representatives of regional parliament had often expressed concerns that Finnish is needed on Åland (Allardt Ljunggren 2008: 230).

An additional factor affecting the relations between the two languages was the influence of European agreements such as the "Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages." Whereas the results of the study are revealing in terms of language attitudes, notions of Finland and Finnish often appear in similar arguments, which reinforces the image of Finland as a particularly language-based nation-state. There were similarities in depictions of Finnish and Finnish-speakers as *the other* and registered observations of feelings of anxiety about the intrusion of Finnish into Åland society. On the one hand, there were practical concerns regarding language skills. On the other hand, opinions have tended to reproduce existing images of language-based divisions. Some of the conclusions seemed to confirm expectations: reported positive attitudes to Finnish were expressed by those who had Finnish in the family and simultaneously favoured integration and local patriotism. Divergence was regarded as potentially problematic if it was combined with perceptions of exclusion (Allardt Ljunggren 2008: 224). Allardt Ljunggren's research is a comment on the relation between the two languages, or, alternatively, the speakers of these languages, bearing in mind that there is no direct correspondence between languages and their speakers. On the other hand, these descriptions could reinforce language-based divisions by describing, for example, the students from Finnish-speaking homes as a somewhat separate group.

Language relations on Åland have been reported as being influenced by emigration and immigration (Hannikainen 1992: 14). In the case of Åland, emigration to Finland and Sweden is common, as is the process of immigration to Åland from Finland and Sweden. The fact that Finland and Sweden are presented in a report about linguistic rights as equal places of emigration and immigration reveals the extent to which Åland and the rest of Finland are perceived as different entities. In estimations from the 1990s the numbers of emigrants from, and to Åland, were roughly the same, as were the shares of Finland and Sweden in both emigration and immigration, in addition to immigration from other countries (Hannikainen 1992: 15). In 2011 half of the migrants were from Sweden, one third from (mainland) Finland and one sixth from elsewhere, including individuals from 87 countries. Around two thirds of the islands' inhabitants were born on Åland

(18,800) and one third were migrants to Åland based on statistics of place of birth (9,500 born elsewhere).

History writers have described Åland as being oriented towards the Anglo-Saxon world and the use of loanwords from English in the islands has been widespread. Many Russian words had entered the Ålandic dialect in the nineteenth century in conjunction with the placing of Russian troops in the isles, but history writing did not report or comment on any negative attitudes towards Russian influences (Edquist & Holmén 2015: 207). Extensive migration from other countries has also added to the use of English and several other languages in the isles. Attitudes to Finnish have thus differed because of the continuation of existing societal discourses.

Swedish in Politics

On the grounds of Swedish, the Ålanders could belong to the Finno-Swedish minority (Runblom 1995: 115). However, based on constitutional position and relative isolation from the Swedish-speakers on the mainland they were defined as a separate category. Several studies have argued that Ålanders feel themselves to be primarily Ålanders. Arguments of different surveys and questionnaires have been used to build a case for independence (e.g. Häggblom, Kinnunen & Lindström 1999: 9–27; Anckar & Bartman 2000: 76–78). The centrality of Swedish has been visible in the political agenda of *Ålands Framtid* [‘The future of Åland’], a political party the aim of which is an independent microstate (Anckar & Bartman 2000). From the very beginning, one of the central arguments of the party were the practical concerns arising from Åland’s official language policy and the diminishing use of Swedish within Finnish contexts since most of the inhabitants of Finland have Finnish as their mother tongue. For the authorities of Åland, the argument goes, it was becoming more problematic to communicate with Finnish authorities in Swedish, and this, as the party pointed out, was a right that the isles were once guaranteed.

The political parties on Åland are the Ålandic Centre, the Liberals in Åland, the Moderates, the Ålandic Social Democrats, the Independent Congress, and the Future of Åland. The current government is in power during the period 2015–2019. The parties represented in the regional government are the Liberals (*Liberalerna på Åland*), the Ålandic Social Democrats (*Ålands socialdemokrater*) and the Moderates (*Moderat samling för Åland*). The greatest change in relation to language and politics among the Social Democrats on Åland occurred between 1905 and 1920. This is visible from the history of Åland’s Social-Democratic party, published in 2006. A Finnish-Swedish workers’ society was initiated through an advertisement in the newspaper *Åland* on 31 December 1905 in Mariehamn (Forsgård 2006: 9).

In 1907 the society had 207 names on its membership lists during a time when Mariehamn had around 1,100 inhabitants. Because of internal disputes over language the societies in Mariehamn and Haraldsby split into separate Swedish and Finnish societies (Forsgård 2006: 13–14). Social-democratic groupings were formed also in Bertby, Tengsöda and Kastelholm. During demonstrations on 1 May 1917 that rallied around 1,000 participants in Haraldsby speeches were held in three languages—Swedish, Finnish and Russian. The view of Åland’s Social-Democrats of the Åland Movement was critical—they sought to distance themselves from the strongly anti-Finnish ideology of the Åland movement. Firstly, its ideology was not compatible with internationalism. Secondly, the Åland Question was regarded as connected to conservative social ideas (Forsgård 2006: 18).

Nevertheless, as Swedish and Finland-Swedish rhetoric intensified, things changed. The leaders of the party on Åland were K.H. Week and Hjalmar Eklund, representing Finland-Swedish views. Party differences were now seen as marginal in comparison to the perceived need to unite Ålanders around the idea to keep Åland separate and Swedish-speaking (Forsgård 2006: 19). In the 1920s most supporters had signed up for the Swedish newspaper *Svenska Socialdemokraten* [‘The Swedish Social Democrat’]. In the elections for the regional parliament in 1999, the party’s slogan was “We are all Ålanders,” which emphasized images of equality and social inclusion. During the period of autonomy, the use of language for political aims experienced a role reversal: whereas originally preservation of the Swedish language was achieved through autonomy, later political autonomy was preserved and enhanced through Swedish. All political parties on Åland have considered the Swedish language important but to different extents. Differences exist in relation to the question whether the Åland model has been successful in maintaining the Swedish language on Åland or whether the language is continuously under threat. The latter claim was emphasized by the Ålandic politician Thorvald Eriksson.

Thorvald Eriksson was, among other things, the Speaker of the Parliament of Åland during the period 1955–1971 and leader of the Bank of Åland during the period 1954–1986. He has written accounts of Åland’s constitutional status and debated language as part of an argumentation in favor of greater autonomy and independence. A feature which was particularly prominent in his books was the image of a threatened Swedish language, not for internal but for external reasons (Eriksson 2006; Eriksson 2007: 35–38). Eriksson argued that the Finnish language was becoming increasingly pervasive in Ålandic society and self-government, and that radical measures were needed to change the situation. In his view, what caused the Fennification of Åland was the region’s connection to an increasingly Finnish-speak-

ing Finland and not the migration to Åland of a few Finnish-speakers (Eriksson 2007: 38). The Swedish language as a cultural question was losing ground. The only solution was thus Åland's independence. In an independent Åland, Finnish would have been a more neutral language, comparable to any other language spoken in the isles (Eriksson 2007: 40).

The pro-independence party the Future of Åland has changed their aim in the Swedish text on their website to include Ålandic rather than Swedish.¹ This could mean a change in a tradition of referencing to Swedish on Åland rather than to the Åland dialect. This change is only symbolic in this case, however. The website in English meant for, presumably, an international audience retains the arguments concerning the diminishing use of Swedish in Finnish contexts, communication problems between Åland and Finnish authorities and the matter of preservation of Swedish as a right that the isles were once guaranteed.

Conclusions

The extension of Åland autonomy and change of writers weakened the perceived need to construct separateness in history writing. During the first few decades of autonomy, the rhetoric of the Åland movement was often reproduced in historical presentations. Ålandic history writing and changes in the roles of the Finnish and Swedish languages originated in the same period. The early writers of Åland's history belonged to the Finnish establishment and described the history of the islands as part of Finland's history. Autonomy was intended to guarantee the preservation of the Swedish language and culture of the region. However, Åland's role as a peace ambassador has increasingly been functioning as an alternative, widespread image. Janne Holmén has argued that the political left used the concept of Åland as islands of peace as a “means to reshape Ålandic identity away from the old language of nationalism” used by the political right (Edquist & Holmén 2015: 166). Recent developments have suggested a turn away from the language of nationalism in sections of political opinion while at the same time language divisions are also being reconsidered. Whereas narratives of separateness and belonging can be rewritten, the issue of language is a complex matter also because of its instrumental function. Whereas historical divisions as constructions are disappearing, the importance of Swedish is likely to continue to be used as an argument for self-government, while at the same time Ålandness can be expressed in various ways.

NOTE

- ¹ See homepage of *Ålands framtid*: www.alandsframtid.ax; access date 23 March 2017.

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AUTHOR

Atina Laura K. Nihtinen, PhD, Researcher for Åbo Akademi Jubileumsfond and the Department of History, Åbo Akademi University, Turku, Finland. Apart from articles on several themes, Nihtinen has published a monograph on political and cultural change in the Shetland Islands (from 1970 to the present) and has one ongoing project: "Merry, New London. Reconsidering the Past."

atinalaura@outlook.com