



A Finnish Mormon Temple or "America in Karakallio"?

The Activation of a Stereotype at an Encounter of Cultures

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Purpose

- ▶ Show ways in which the stereotype of Mormonism's Americanness was activated in the minds of visitors to the public open house

Material

- ▶ Newspaper and magazine writings
- ▶ Comments by visitors on internet fora and blogs

Outline

- ▶ Definitions and functions of stereotypes and encounters of cultures
- ▶ Description and brief analysis of observer experiences
- ▶ Implications of Mormonism's Americanness stereotype

Definitions

▶ Culture

- "A package"? Something commonly shared and traded that governs behavior?

▶ An encounter of cultures

- The meeting of two individuals that see themselves as different from each other

▶ Stereotype

- Painting a simplified image of another group with a few brush strokes

Stereotype activated: Arrangements

- Det "förlovade" landet Utah
- Mormonismen
- Amerikas helt egna religion
- ▶ "As far as the instructions being given literally and in a foolproof manner goes, it has to do with the religion's America-rootedness."
 - ▶ "The Americans are splendidly competent at handling large crowds punctually and efficiently ..."

Stereotype activated: People

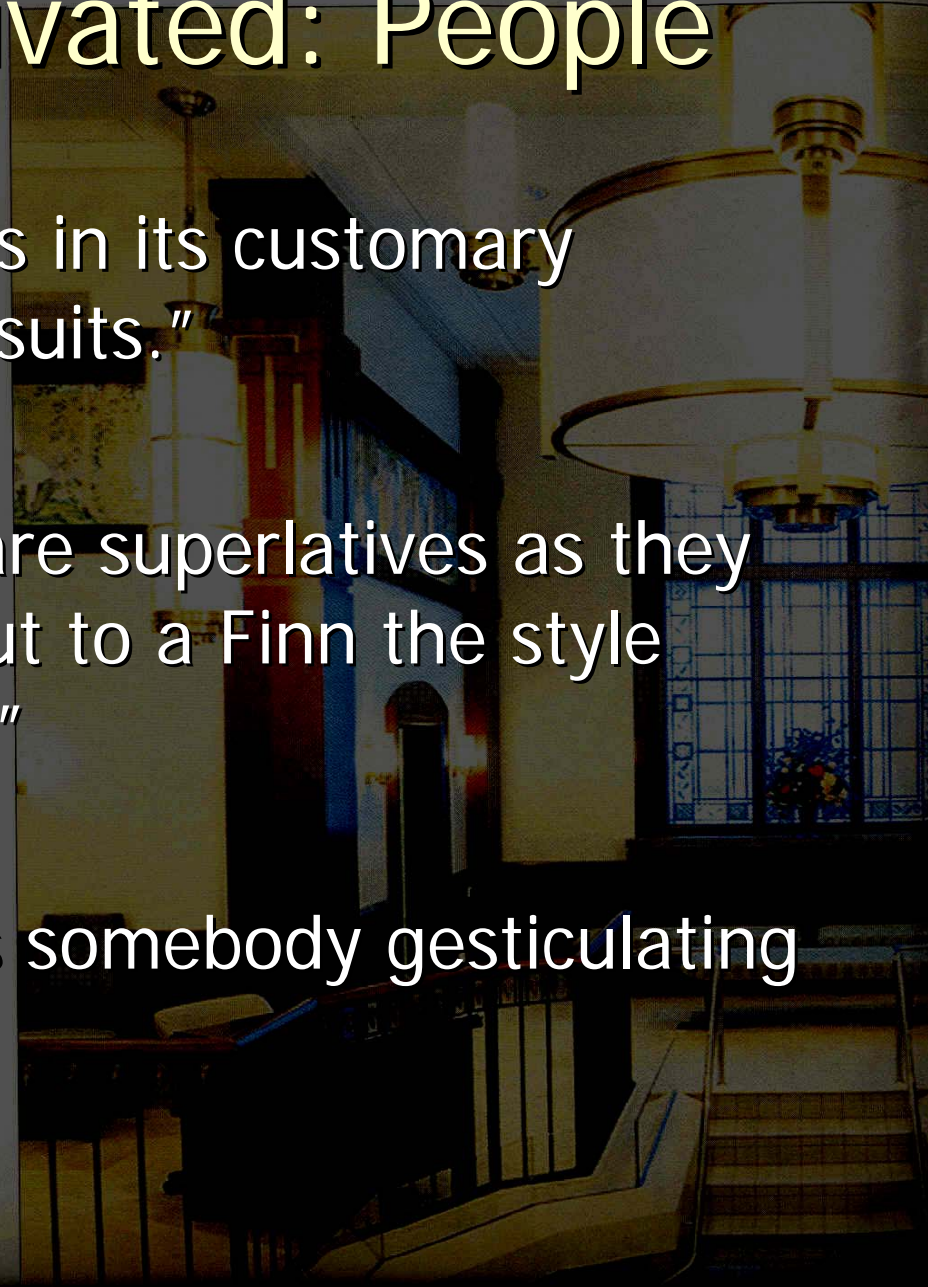
- ▶ "The organizing party was in its customary manner dressed in black suits."
- ▶ "Interviewees did not spare superlatives as they praised the temple – – But to a Finn the style was somehow alienating."
- ▶ "At every bend there was somebody gesticulating who spoke only English!"

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- DO you speak English?
 First thing I do to see
 way (American English
 menkää ensiksi tuohon
 suuntaan), viittilöi tum-
 maan pukuun sonnustautu-
 nut amerikkalaismies ja
 osoittaa kohti tiedotustis-
 kiä.

Noin 20 metrin matkalla
 tulee vastaan ainakin kolme
 leveää amerikanenglantia
 puhuvaa nuorta miestä, jot-

- Mormonit kirkko**
- ▶ Mormoneita kutsutaan myös Myöhempien Aikojen Pyhien Jeesuksen Kristuksen Kirkoksi.
 - ▶ Mormonien ensimmäinen "profeetta" oli yhdysvaltalainen Joseph Smith.
 - ▶ Mormonit asettuivat alun perin Utahin osavaltioon Yhdysvaltoihin, Suolajärven eli Salt Laken ympäristöön.
 - ▶ Jäsenmäärä oli vuoden 2005 lopussa 12,6 miljoonaa, Suomessa jäseniä on noin 4 500.
 - ▶ Kirkon jäsenet maksavat 10 prosenttia tuloistaan



Stereotype activated: Architecture

- ▶ "An impressive yankee-style spectacle."
- ▶ "For me it would take some getting used to to calm down in the holiest room that with regards to its furnishings and style reminds one of many yankee hotel lobbies and meeting rooms ..."
- ▶ "The whole is undeniably 'American' and has little in common with cool Nordic or austere Finnish design."



IHAN vähän amerikkalaista

Discussion

- ▶ "A kernel or truth" or mistaken views?
- ▶ The church knows the connection to Americanness exists and is to some extent distancing itself from it
- ▶ Rooted stereotypes are difficult to abolish
- ▶ Affects proselytising work to an extent

Conclusions

- ▶ For some it was a Finnish temple, for others it wasn't
- ▶ People's backgrounds and experiences are unique
- ▶ No general answer to our original question is thus possible
- ▶ One must pick individuals and probe deeper



Kiitos! = Thank you!

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