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The Finnish and Czech Art Parallels in the Late 19th & Early 20th Century: A Comparative Study of Nationalism in the Arts.

In the course of the nineteenth century nation-building movements swept across the Europe. That was reflected not only in the social and political life, but also in the cultural and artistic sphere. Many small, oppressed nations went through the process of national revival - Finns and Czechs among them. They found themselves in a similar situation: the Finnish people who were part of the Russian Empire with largely Swedish speaking upper classes, have declared independence in 1917, and the Czech people who until 1918 were a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire with German elites, emancipated themselves to create Czechoslovakia. As shown by Miroslav Hroch in his classic work on nationalism, Finns and Czechs belong to the same type of national movement concerning the social composition of patriotic groups. The need to promote and develop their own culture was thus extremely important for both Finns and Czechs.

Several comparative transnational studies exploring how nationalism affects arts have been published recently, yet the Finnish-Czech case remained unnoticed. Therefore the thesis is going to be a comparative study of selected topics from Finnish and Czech national art at the turn of the 20th century. The aim of the research is to verify a hypothesis that the parallels in history exist also in the arts. The hypothesis emerged from apparently similar patterns used by the Finnish and Czech revivalists-artists:

- Naturally, it was the nation itself that served as the main source of inspiration and appropriate subjects for the artists. Rediscovering of the folk art became particularly important for oppressed nations. The Finnish and Czech artists undertook expeditions to the rural regions in search for folk motifs (e.g. Akseli Gallen-Kallela, I. K. Inha, Josef Mánes, Joža Uprka).
- For Finnish art it was above all the Kalevala, national epic by Elias Lönnrot, which formed the idea of Finnishness. Czech equivalents to Kalevala are Manuscripts of Dvůr Králové and of Zelená Hora, literary mystifications pretending to be Slavic medieval

manuscripts. Both Kalevala and the Manuscripts sparked inspiration for many and often the most significant works of national art (e.g. painting “The Defense of the Sampo” by Akseli Gallen-Kallela, sculptures for the Palacký Bridge in Prague by Josef Václav Myslbek).

- Similarities can be seen in the artists’ homes from the turn of the century, in which Finns and Czechs enriched the influence of the Arts and Crafts movement with their own national essence (e.g. studio residence in Hvitträsk by Herman Gesellius, Armas Lindgren and Eliel Saarinen and The Jurkovič House by Dušan Jurkovič in Brno). There are many other topics that call to be explored from the comparative perspective. The nationalism in the arts is a complex issue, which requires a strictly methodical approach. My PhD thesis will discuss art of these two national revival movements with respect to their similarities and differences. The aim is to study the interaction of nationalism and arts in general. Comparative analyses based on specific works of art and primary and secondary literature will be used. In addition, the research will briefly touch literature and performing arts. This is necessary since the nationalism penetrated all fields of art. The study will thus be an interdisciplinary research using plurality of methods and approaches. To prevent a broadly set comparative research, just paradigmatic artists or works of art representing relevant fields of arts will be chosen to be compared, analysed and interpreted in depth and in a wider framework.