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Focusing on fieldwork

Edward Westermarck and Hilma Granqvist — before and after Bronislaw Malinowski

Introduction

The purpose of this essay is to look at the results of two Finnish fieldworkers, with the history of the social anthropological research as background. By Finnish norms Edward Westermarck's academic career was impressive, but his pupil Hilma Granqvist was obliged to work mostly outside the academic world (Widén 1989: 26–35; Willman 1997: 92–94). Both of them did their fieldwork in countries, where the Islamic religion had a strong influence. Westermarck worked in Morocco, and Granqvist in Palestine.

Westermarck belonged to the first professional generation of anthropologists, who did their own fieldwork. He had however already earlier earned fame through his dissertation on the history of marriage. The dissertation was published in England in 1891 under the title "The History of Human Marriage".

During his fieldwork Westermarck worked on another great undertaking, namely "The Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas", which was published in two volumes in 1906–1908. With these works Westermarck placed himself at the top of the evolutionary school, which however already when the "Moral book" appeared came under heavy criticism by e.g. Emile Durkheim (1979: 40–51) in France.

When a British expedition in 1898 went to the Torres Straits, Westermarck travelled via Spain to Morocco, which was to be just a stopover on his way to more remote fields. However, Morocco was to be the object of Westermarck's studies for the rest of his life and career. Westermarck published his great works on Morocco as late as 1926 and 1930, but he had all the time published field results as minor writings, articles and popular books.

The major works on Morocco appeared late, especially in light of the great changes that took place in anthropology, when one in the beginning of the 1920's started to talk about the old and the new school. Westermarck remained faithful to the old school, but his pupil

Bronislaw Malinowski became a leader and symbol for the new school. Malinowski's great book about the Trobriand Islands "Argonauts of the Western Pacific", which was published in 1922, became a divider between the old and the new anthropology.

Hilma Granqvist started her fieldwork in 1925, at the junction between the new and the old school. She stressed that it was her own decision to do her study of a village based on a model from archaeological excavations. She attended Westermarck's seminar in London in 1929, and returned to London in 1938 in order to participate in a seminar conducted by Malinowski. She writes in the introduction to "Birth and Childhood among the Arabs." that some of the researchers that she had met earlier now used a completely new vocabulary, and thought in a new way. She herself also felt attracted by functionalism, i.e. the new school. She was attracted by the requirement that the different aspects of the social life should be studied in relation to each other (Granqvist 1947: 15)

In 1932 Granqvist defended her thesis "Marriage Conditions in a Palestinian Village", and extended this work with another volume in 1935. Granqvist published primarily in book format. After the Second World War three important works were published, "Birth and Childhood among the Arabs" (1947), "Child Problems among the Arabs" (1950) and "Muslim Death and Burial" (1965).

On the whole one can state that the paradigm shift between the old and the new school in anthropology weakened both Westermarck's and Granqvist's recognition. Without the advances of the new school their field results would have been much better received than what now was the case. Granqvist did get good reviews in international sociological journals (*Biography of Finnish Sociology 1945-1959*: 24-25, 36-37), but in her home country her work aroused only marginal interest and was forgotten. However, both Westermarck and Granqvist did pioneering work, and it is worth studying them again, as well as re-reading and re-evaluating their work.

Westermarck's fieldwork in Morocco.

When Westermarck arrived in Morocco in 1898 the fieldwork methods were poorly developed. As late as in 1926 Westermarck could limit the description of methods to a few pages by pointing out that the information about each tribe had been collected by local experts; neither Europeans nor members of other tribes had been used, when the habits of a certain tribe had been investigated (Westermarck 1926: 8-10). Westermarck's field reports only sporadically contained descriptions of his own experiences; this is especially true about the

works that Westermarck regarded as strictly scientific. His popular earlier articles and the book "Sex år i Marocko" (1918) as well as his memoirs (1927) are in fact the most satisfying for today's reader. It is in these writings Westermarck tells about the people he met and events he came across during his fieldwork. In "Sex år i Marocko" Westermarck (1918: 61–74, see also Suolinna 1994: 51–55) describes his key person Abdessalam El-Baqqali, who was to become Westermarck's friend and confidant. As the title tells, Westermarck performed fieldwork in intervals during about six years before World War I. The war interrupted his work, and Westermarck returned to Morocco only in 1923, when he started an intensive work period in order to complete his work there. At that time he did not any more in the true sense move around in the field doing research, but worked from his villa Tusculum in the outskirts of Tangier.

Hilma Granqvist's fieldwork in Palestine

Hilma Granqvist went to Palestine in 1925, and she worked in the field between 1925 and 1931 for a total of about three years. In the village Artas Granqvist was able to establish very good field conditions due to the fact that she received help from Louisa Baldensperger, an elderly lady, who was the daughter of a missionary, and had lived about 30 years in this village. In addition Granqvist was able to make use of two key persons, Hamdiya and Alya, who were two older persons in the village, and who were able to give much of their time to the investigator. Both of them were namely widows, who had for some time lived outside the village, and due to unhappy family circumstances they lived at the periphery of the society. This was especially true about Alya, who was almost blind and without relatives, and lived on alms. Hamdiya lived under the protection of her brothers and their families. Both key persons were good informants (Granqvist 1947:21–25).

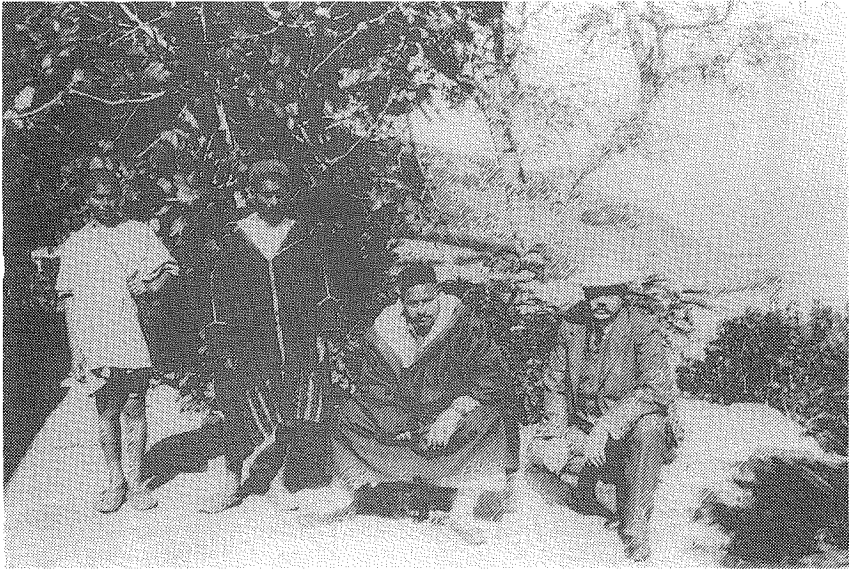
The field methods underwent development also independently of Malinowski's work after the first generation had done its work. Thus Granqvist collected demographic statistical data about the families in Artas. She collected information on all marriages during a hundred-year period from 1830 to 1930. She kept a field diary and carefully down all the comments of her key persons on the various phenomena in the village (In some letters she stressed the independence of her use of new methods). In contrast to Westermarck, Granqvist studied mostly the life and thinking of women. Granqvist was able to take the reader into the centre of the events in a completely different way than Westermarck was able to.



Edward Westermarck Professor in Philosophy at the Åbo Akademi University (1918–1931) and Professor in Sociology at the London School of Economics and Political Sciences (1907–1930). Åbo Akademi University Library.



Young woman in Artas. Photo Hilma Granqvist. Åbo Akademi University Library.



Edward Westermarck in the field with co-workers in the 1900s. Åbo Akademi University Library.



Edward Westermarck with co-workers and servants in the 1920s. Åbo Akademi University Library.

Westermarck's view of the holy

Westermarck regarded the different tribes in Morocco as microsocieties, and he recorded their customs and habits. Due to his approach to problems he has very little to say about the economical and political conditions, and how these influenced the development of customs and ceremonies. He did however state that the Berber tribes of central Morocco, who had been unknown before, lacked a central leadership so that each family had to defend its rights, and had to act as a unit. He found out that the Bedouin tribes on the plains had low status, and were despised by the Berber tribes in the mountains.

Westermarck has a matter-of-fact, neutral tone that seldom is broken. Somewhat surprisingly his tone became emotionally involved only when he described what forms the conditional curse could take among these very Berber tribes of middle Morocco. More about this later.

Even though Westermarck did not treat and analyse his data in the same way as we would do today, he did obtain many results of interest. This is especially true about the rich description of the different common-man beliefs about holiness (*baraka*), the evil eye, jinn or evil spirits, and the conditional curse.

Westermarck has described in a separate book, "The Moorish Conception of Holiness (Baraka)" (1916), all the ways in which the belief in *baraka* could be expressed. He published the results presented in this book without changes ten years later in "Ritual and Belief in Morocco" (1926).

Holiness was one phenomenon that Westermarck came across everywhere in Morocco. His closest co-worker, Abdessalam El-Baqqali, belonged to a *shereef* family and was therefore regarded as a holy person. Westermarck was not allowed to visit his home, because El-Baqqali's holy grandfather was buried in the house (Westermarck 1926: 65).

The prophet Mohammed possessed more *baraka* than any other person, and his *baraka* was transferred to all male relatives that descended from the prophet's daughter Fatima. In Morocco there were numerous *shereef* families, both real ones and fake ones. The oldest families of *shereef* standing came from Mulai Idris, the first ruler of Morocco. The most eminent *shereef* family was however represented by the *shereef* of Wazzan, who had great authority over several tribes in Morocco. It was said that whilst the *shereef* of Wazzan could rule as a sultan, no sultan could rule without the support of the *shereef* of Wazzan (Westermarck 1926: 38).

A person, who had exceptionally much *baraka*, was called a saint. The graves of the saints were holy, and were visited by persons, who sought cure from various diseases and misfortunes. There were however restrictions. Some graves of saints could not be visited by Christians or Jews. Women were not allowed at some graves, some graves could not be visited by government employees or policemen etc. The saints could, Westermarck concludes, protect the tribes to which they belonged, and could also take revenge for the loss of its independence (Westermarck, 1926: 194).

The saints in Morocco consisted not only of men or women that lived or had lived, but also of individuals that had never existed (Westermarck 1926: 49). There were many holy places, such as hills, springs, caves and trees. By connecting them to a saint it was possible to explain the holiness of a place or natural object that had a deviating, rare or mystic appearance.

A saint that had really existed as a person could be found where a *gobba* had been built on top of the grave. The holy area around the grave could be large or small. The border was usually marked with stones or a fence. The *horm* of Mulai Idris in Fez consisted of houses, stores and a bathhouse. The storekeepers did not have to pay taxes, and even a murderer could take refuge there. To the *horm* of Sidi Heddi in the Bni Aros tribe belonged in addition to the grave also the near-by creek, and thus the fish in the creek was holy and catching it was not allowed (Westermarck 1926: 64).

After a very detailed description of the different manifestations of the *baraka* Westermarck reaches a surprising point of view. He said that a feeling of a miracle lies behind the fantasies of the *baraka*, and this feeling allows for *barakas* of many degrees. "There is not that impassable gulf between the holy and the profane which has been postulated by Durkheim. The Moors even assert that every person is possessed of *baraka*, although it is only in certain cases sufficiently strong to be taken notice of" (Westermarck 1926: 146–147). This point of view is surprising, in view of the fact that Westermarck all the time could make this distinction. Especially when he talked about the saints and their graves he noted the line between those, who could visit the holy place, and those who were excluded. The border between the holy and the profane could also be geographic (see also Anttonen 1996: 147–150).

Westermarck is obviously talking a completely different language than Durkheim. What separated them was what weight they gave the social versus the human-nature relationship. Durkheim emphasised the foundation of the religion in the social life, whereas Wes-

termarck considered that the practice of religion reflected the relationship between man and nature.

Westermarck and the evil eye

One of the most widespread ordinary beliefs is the belief in the evil eye. Westermarck (1926: 415) considers that the belief in the evil eye most likely has its origin both in the expressiveness and the mystic, secret character of the gaze.

The eye is an instrument, which transfers evil wishes and it is a source from which harmful energy is emitted, independently of the will. When a person envies another, the gaze reveals this.

As is the case with the *baraka*, the evil eye can be either inherited or acquired. Persons with deeply seated eyes and those whose eyebrows grow together were considered to have a dangerous gaze. In Morocco there were both those regions, where light eyes were considered dangerous (they were rare), and those, where dark eyes were considered dangerous (Westermarck 1926: 419).

In Morocco the beliefs in the evil eye were tied to demands on generosity and hospitality. If someone showed a great interest in another person's belongings, and wanted to buy them, the owner was expected to comply with these wishes. It could be a horse or a gun, i.e. quite valuable belongings. If the owner did not want to sell, this could lead to misfortunes, such is that the horse could get sick and die, or the gun could be stolen.

It was dangerous to eat in the presence of others without sharing the food. Also, when carrying foodstuff from the market, one should cover that with a cloth. Otherwise one had to give away some of the food to each person one met, especially if one met a woman.

Westermarck gave some extreme examples of what the evil eye could accomplish, but these are only stories. One story he was told was about a group of men that had gathered near the grazing lambs of one of the men. A man with the evil eye made a joke without any bad intentions. The following night all the lambs of the owner were dead. The owner, who also had an evil eye, looked for an opportunity to take revenge. He got his opportunity when the horse of the man, who had brought the misfortune, came close to him and he made a joke about the horse. That night the horse fell sick, and the following night the horse died (Westermarck 1926: 416).

An even more dramatic tale is about the man, who had so horrible eyes that he killed all of his children. In order to avoid further accidents he left his pregnant wife. After many years he however wanted

to see his son, who had been born while he was away. In spite of all care the eyes of the son and the father met, and they both fell dead to the ground (Westermarck 1926: 417).

After having recounted these tales, Westermarck remarked that the gaze of women, especially older ones, was even more feared than that of men. Here exists a parallel to the curse, which pronounced by women is even more dangerous than that of men. In festive occasions women were allowed to eat first, because otherwise they could harm the men by their gazes (Westermarck 1926: 420). This order was not always adhered to, as Westermarck himself describes a wedding, where the men ate first, then the boys and last the women (Westermarck 1918: 77-78).

People try to defend themselves against the evil eye by covering whatever could attract the evil eye. The bride is to be protected by a veil, and be transported to the home of the bridegroom in a box. The face of the bridegroom should be covered by a hood. Wearing disguise can also protect them both. The bride is protected both from being reached by the evil eye and from causing harm by her gaze.

In former times young and handsome men in Arabia would cover their face during festivities or at fairs, so that they would be protected against the evil eye. Since ancient times the Arabic women have covered their face with a veil, and the custom has spread widely in the Islamic world (according to the Koran women should wear veil). In Morocco the custom was adopted in the cities and among the "*djebalas*" (mountain people) in northern Morocco. The custom was not observed by the Arabic speaking tribes on the plains or among the Berbers in central Morocco, and neither among the "Shloh" in the great Atlas mountains, nor among the Rif-Berbers who treated women with great harshness (Westermarck, 1926: 424-427).

Westermarck interprets his results about the wearing of the veil so that it is not because of the jealousy of the man, but because of the fear for the evil eye. This point of view Westermarck (1926: 423) has borrowed from C. B. Klunzinger, who already in the 1870's had done research in Egypt. Westermarck presented his viewpoint in an article already in 1904 (Westermarck 1904: 412). He repeated his interpretation in the "Ritual and Belief" (1926). It may be appropriate to quote Westermarck (1926: 427) "There can be little doubt that the custom in question is not merely due to masculine jealousy, but serves the object of protecting the women from the evil eye". This interpretation is interesting as it seems rather superficial coming from a philosophically educated person, as of course Westermarck was. But earlier in the third edition of "The History of Human Marriage" (1921:537-538) Westermarck argued a bit more clearly. According to

him the custom of covering the body of married women may have originated as a safeguard against supernatural dangers. Later this custom was required by modesty. Here Westermarck did not accept the jealousy explanation but saw it as an interpretation given by some other researchers. In view of the results from Morocco it is evident that the veil was not used everywhere, even if there otherwise was a strong segregation of gender, as among the Rif-Berbers. On the other hand Westermarck admits that envy is a feeling (why not then also jealousy) that lies behind the belief in the evil eye. The evil eye also gives people the possibility to explain accidents without taking personal responsibility for what has happened, as the forces are uncontrollable. Such explanations seem to be taken into use, when unexpected events such as sudden deaths occur (see also Evers Rosander 1991a: 159–191).

The life of women in Palestine as observed by Granqvist

Hilma Granqvist studied the lives of women and children in the patriarchal Palestine, a society characterized by a strong segregation of gender. All her key persons were women. Granqvist was a pioneer in her choice of research subjects, and in her way of analysing her data she also shows great innovation.

The demographic analysis helped Granqvist to differentiate between ideal and actual conditions. Thus she noticed that marriages between cousins were considered desirable, but they were nevertheless quite rare. The size of the dowry on the other hand depended on factors such as if the marriage was between relatives, within the same clan or village, with someone, who had been previously married, or with an outsider. The statistical analysis showed a great deficit of women, a fact that the villagers themselves were aware of. Divorce was not as common as rumours led one to believe (men had much greater rights to dissolve the marriage). Granqvist reported these advances in her research reports (Granqvist 1950: 7). In comparison to Westermarck she is closer to Malinowski's ideal that one should not only pose questions to informants but also report observations. She always reported her own observations as well as the comments of the key persons to events. Thus she closely watched childbirth, marriage ceremonies, circumcision festivities and funerals as well as the every-day life in a small village.

According to Granqvist women were in many respects more conservative than men. In other words, they held to old pre-islamic traditions. For example they expressed sorrow in ways the Koran forbade

and went the morning after a burial to the grave and wailed. It happened that the men in the village drove them away (Granqvist 1947:153-154)

Childbirth in Artas took place in the presence of women, with the midwife in a central role. Granqvist tells about a difficult delivery, where the parturient woman and her mother to the end wanted to avoid calling in the midwife, in order to save on the costs. But the delivery was long and difficult and the midwife had to be called. She undertook to protect the parturient from the evil eye. In order to start the delivery a piece of sackcloth was ignited, and the parturient was to breathe the smoke. Granqvist (1947: 67) wrote:

“Then the women began to say that this was done against the evil eye. The whole time of her pregnancy Aliy il-Ali had been so well. But of course this had aroused the envy among her neighbours, and so her delivery was difficult. And they must give her smoke in order to destroy the influence of the evil eye.” This quote does not reveal if the villagers themselves talked about envy, or if this was the interpretation of the investigator.

The sex of the child was then to be told to the father, who according to the custom was in the men's club. One of the women, who had been present at the delivery, was given the task of telling the father if it was a boy or a girl. The nature of the following celebrations depended on the sex of the child. Birth of boys into the village could be celebrated collectively (Granqvist 1947: 78-80). The boys were circumcised a few years later, and these festivities were compared to weddings (Granqvist 1947: 184-187). In discussing how the birth of the child was announced and celebrated Granqvist (1950:148) made the comment that we in Western countries also are familiar with the fact that the birth of a boy gives rise to a much bigger joy than that of a girl. Yet she often gives examples that show how hard life for a woman was in this society. She tells about a case, where the father vowed that a girl will never survive in his family, and so it happened. But this had later, when the sons were in marriage age, fatal consequences. There was no daughter to be given in exchange for a bride for the sons. Through her marriage a daughter could gain a bride for her brother. A family thus needed both sons and daughters (Granqvist 1950: 140s-141). Having only daughters was considered to ruin the family, and bringing up daughters was considered a risky undertaking. The men in Artas lived in constant fear that a daughter would cause a scandal. A pre-marital relationship did not destroy only the honour of the daughter, but of the father and the whole family as well (Granqvist 1950: 139). Through her studies Granqvist is able to take us into the homes of the Artas-people. Her way of

documentation fulfils our modern criteria. She was able to show how common beliefs took form in real situations, and how real persons acted and reasoned.

When her dissertation about "Marriage Conditions" appeared, ten years had passed since Malinowski's book "Argonauts of the Western Pacific" was published. Even so she had been influenced by many different developments in anthropology. Malinowski was surely not the only one to renew and develop the fieldwork methods.

Granqvist's important theme, family life, excluded some other important themes, e.g. the political life. Nevertheless we can share her belief that it was the marriage issues that were central for the Artas inhabitants, and especially for women in this society characterized by segregation of gender.

Westermarck's and Granqvist's view of the consequences of segregation of the gender

Both Westermarck and Granqvist studied societies that were characterized by a strong segregation of the gender. Even though both scholars reflected on the role of women, they tried to take as neutral an approach as possible. Granqvist asked herself, if women did not develop a strong sense of solidarity, since they acted as a group in many situations (Granqvist 1935: 64).

Westermarck talks about the repression of women by Islam, about how proverbs reflected the society, where a man and a woman could not express any tender feelings toward each other if outsiders were present, and where women more than men were bearers of the evil eye and possessed by *jinn* (Westermarck 1930: 51–52). In 1911 Westermarck (1912: 28) gave a lecture, where he said: "In Morocco I was often astonished by the fear men had for their wives. They regarded the woman as a dangerous being, who in secret could force the men to almost anything. The woman knows a thousand ways of making the man her slave, of rekindling his love, when it is gone, of making him hate other women, whom he has fallen in love with".

In spite of Westermarck's honest opinion about the position of woman in Moroccan society, he himself in one respect got upset about the power of women. In mid-Morocco among the Ait Yusi Westermarck had as informant an older man, who three times had been forced to marry women, who had said a conditional curse. In order to keep his honour, the man was obliged to marry these women. A woman, who wanted to leave her husband, could by giving a condi-

tional curse, make another man marry her. She could announce this conditional curse by grasping the pole that supported the tent, or turn the handmill, as if she was grinding with it (Westermarck, 1914: 60). A man who was thus challenged had to marry the woman for the sake of his honour (Westermarck 1914: 63).

Westermarck (1927: 316, also 1918: 299–301) expressed his view on this with uncustomary emotion, and said: “The old man had many times in his life had the misfortune to be a victim for the most dreadful custom I ever have heard about”. What is dreadful about this custom, compared to child marriage (in Palestine), or the ease with which a man can divorce his wife. It is doubtful that Westermarck would be horrified by the compensation the new husband had to pay the former husband of the woman (for the loss of labour). It is likely that Westermarck here was thinking in terms of Westerners’ right to choose their own sexual partners. But such freedom of choice existed neither in Morocco nor in Palestine.

An re-evaluation

Later studies have in many instances verified the effects of the strict segregation of gender observed and commented by Granqvist and Westermarck. Among later studies I want to mention just two, those of Pierre Bourdieu and Eva Evers Rosander. Bourdieu did his fieldwork in the 1950s and 1960s in Kabylia, in northern Algeria (Bourdieu 1962:1–16 and Bourdieu 1965:191–241), and Evers Rosander hers in the 1970s and 1980s in Ceuta, the Spanish enclave bordering to Morocco (see Evers Rosander 1991a and 1991b: 159–191). Bourdieu (1996:192) uses in a recent paper referring to Kabylia the concept of the “paradigmatic masculine cosmogony-in-action”, which includes a strict segregation of gender as well as a worldview legitimating the male dominance. Bourdieu says that “Kabylia offers a living paradigmatic instantiation of a masculine cosmogony-in-action that is at once both exotic and familiar, because it lies behind our own European and Euro-American cultural tradition”. Theoretically one can say for example that the male dominance in Morocco and the Middle East is maintained, when women are veiled or otherwise have made themselves invisible. In this respect it is not important to ask if veiling is to protect the women from the evil eye or from the man as a jealous creature.

Evers Rosander has described how the male dominance in Moroccan culture hinders women from developing solidarity among themselves, and how crisis in family life puts the burden on women. Belief

in the evil eye and evil spirits gives the parties in a crisis the opportunity to put the blame outside their own action and responsibility. At the same time the cultural explanations give women the role of being the experts on and the users of these same evil forces (Evers Rosander 1991a: 159–191). These examples indicate that the results of Granqvist and Westermarck are of interest for today's researchers. Their writings give also clues to situations, where women did not surrender to the rules set by males. When women visited a new grave, they acted against the will of men in Artas and were brutally driven away. An Ait Yusi woman could divorce a man and oblige another to marry her by using a conditional curse. This is another important clue to breaches in the pattern of male dominance.

All in all both Westermarck and Granqvist made a strong contribution to research with the methods that were available to them. Prior to Malinowski doing his fieldwork Westermarck emphasized the importance of learning the local languages and of getting thoroughly acquainted with the environment, in which one did research. Granqvist independently took the initiative to report results of observations, and to give statistical information about the society, where she did her research. Both published a lot and our evaluation should not be blinded by differences in style or ways to record the results. Of course Granqvist as a representative of a younger generation is more modern and closer to our ideas of recording and reporting field results than Westermarck. Nevertheless, it is advantageous for the modern reader that Westermarck wrote popular articles and books as these are more easy to approach than his strictly scientific publications. The criticism Westermarck received during his lifetime did not hinder his career, and his works were much translated, and he received many honorary awards. He had faithful followers in Finland. In Granqvist's case we can be satisfied that her academic misfortunes did not hinder her from doing active research. She worked with great patience and her results have lasting importance. As far as I know, a biography on her is under preparation and, that it happens is not at all too early.

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