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ORIGINAL PAPER

Public records and minorities: problems and possibilities for Sámi and Kven

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Abstract The Kven and Sámi peoples of northern Norway have been represented as groups without a voice in public records. Through the project 'National Minorities in Public Records in Norway,' however, hundreds of documents written in the Sámi and Kven languages were found inside the public archives. These documents were neither labeled, nor cataloged in any way as non-Norwegian-language documents. This essay raises a number of questions related to how a lack of knowledge has influenced our understanding of ethnic minorities both in archives and in research related to minorities. Furthermore, recent experience leads us to a few more questions concerning the usage of sources. How do Norwegian ministries treat requests for access to official documents less than 60-years old related to the Kven and Sámi peoples? How were documents in minority languages arranged and archived by archival personnel? How can an oppressed collective memory serve as a counter-memory for minorities? How can archival documents change our understanding of minorities? What might archivists do to make minorities more visible in archives? This paper describes my personal experiences and reflections in connection with the project.

Keywords Minorities · Minority language · Silence · Archiving · Norway

Introduction

In autumn 2006, I started to work on the project, 'National Minorities in Public Records in Norway.' The project is unique in that it is the first Norwegian archival research project where national minorities are the focus. During the 3 years of my involvement in the project, I have gone systematically through archival records from two municipalities[1] in northern Norway, trying to find traces of national minorities in documents. Before

[1] These local communities are Porsanger (Kistrand until 1963–1964) in the county of Finnmark, and Nordreisa in the county of Troms.

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beginning the archival work, I had assumed that finding any documents written in minority languages would be an important achievement. At that time, I had no idea that, after just 2 months, I would hold an amazing cultural treasure in my hands: over 240 documents in the Kven language and 120 in the Sámi language dating from the period 1860–1910. Since I was not the first person to go through these files, I could not understand why the existence of this treasure was unknown to the public. How was it possible that the researchers using these records, and the archival professionals processing and describing them, had overlooked these materials? The discovery of these documents has brought to light several weaknesses in Norwegian archival institutions, while also providing the grounds for policy changes related to the handling of records and research related to minorities.

In many countries including Norway, minorities and marginalized groups are faced with a number of challenges regarding access to and organization of information concerning themselves and their interests, because they did not participate in the creation of public records. Carter writes that 'the powerful can introduce silences into the archives by denying marginalized groups their voice and the opportunity to participate in the archives' (Carter 2006: 217). Having a voice is normally associated with empowerment and self-expression, while silence is represented as passivity and as a direct effect of oppression and exclusion (Kurtz 2006: 87). Minorities and marginalized groups frequently are unaware that public archives contain relevant records related to them, even in their own languages, because they have been represented as voiceless groups. In this article, I will discuss the weaknesses in the Norwegian archives in relation to minorities and what archivists might do to make them more visible in the archives.

The Kven and Sámi peoples in Norway

The Kven people, who are of Finnish descent in northern Norway, and the Sámi people are the two largest ethnic minorities in Norway. Until the 1960s, both groups were subject to a rigid policy of assimilation. Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, the Norwegian authorities started to exercise a strict linguistic and educational policy with regard to these minorities in northern Norway. The chief motives for this policy of Norwegianization were nationalism and Social Darwinism (e.g. Eriksen and Niemi 1981: 360). It may then seem paradoxical that this project uncovered hundreds of documents in minority languages, created at the height of the assimilation campaign. What also makes this case so special is that only a small part of the records from these areas survived the Second World War, due to the massive destruction of public and private buildings inflicted during the German retreat in 1944.

The Kven and Sámi people live in the same geographic areas of northern Norway. For many hundreds of years, these peoples had a number of similar practices in terms of dress and inhabiting similar places. Intermarriage and bilingualism were also common between these groups in several local communities. While these two peoples have many common practices, they are linguistically and ethnically two different populations. The traditional Sámi way of life depended on hunting, fishing and trading, while the Kvens were farmers and fishermen. Until 1999, the Kvens were considered as Finnish immigrants by the State of Norway, while the Sámi people were viewed as the original population of northern Norway. In fact, however, many Kvens settled in Norway before the border between Norway, Sweden (and Finland as a part of Sweden) and Russia was officially established in 1751.

Today, the Kven people are one of the five officially recognized national minorities[2] in Norway. Groups with a long-standing attachment to the country are defined as 'national minorities,' but are not recognized as an indigenous population. The other national minorities are Jews, Forest Finns, Roma/Gypsies and Romani people/Travelers who inhabit the southern part of Norway. National minorities are ethnic, linguistic, cultural or religious minority groups, who have a long-lasting connection to the country of residence (Council of Europe 1995). In 1999, the State of Norway ratified the Council of Europe's 'Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.' As a signatory to this convention, the State of Norway is obliged to take care of national minorities, their language, culture and religion; at the same time, these groups have the right to express, preserve and develop their identity, culture, language and religion (The State of Norway 2001). Today, there are an estimated 10,000–15,000 Kvens in Norway.

The Sámi people are the largest ethnic minority in Norway with a population of about 40,000. In 1989, the Government of Norway ratified the *ILO Convention* (No. 169) concerning 'Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries.' As a result, Sámi people were recognized as bearing specific rights in the areas they inhabit. These rights relate to their identity, language, culture and livelihoods, and distinguish them from other segments of the population. According to the ILO convention provisions, indigenous people are defined as an original population in the country or geographic region, who were in the area before the present state established jurisdiction (International Labor Organization 1989). Indigenous people are entitled to special protection from the state concerning linguistic, economic, social and cultural matters. Otherwise, they have similar rights as national minorities to express, preserve and develop their identity, culture, language and religion (Holmesland 2006: 17; Lindbach 2005: 5).

The Sámi people are the only minority in Norway who have their own archive, *Sámi arkiiva*, which was established in 2005, under the National Archival Services of Norway. *Sámi arkiiva* is located in Kautokeino and is responsible for public records related to Sámi society, culture and history. *Sámi arkiiva* takes care of documents produced by the Sámi Parliament and by the central administration for reindeer husbandry. *Sámi arkiiva* also keeps records from the Municipal archive in Kautokeino and private archives consisting of records from private persons, organizations, institutions and businesses. *Sámi arkiiva* contains many documents written in the Sámi language, but most of these documents are relatively new—having been produced only in the last decade or so.

Access to information concerning minorities in municipal archives

This project has included the study of both municipal and 'state' archives. State archives is the term commonly used in Norway to refer to national government archives. Municipal archives in Norway contain records produced by local administrations, while state archives gather records that are the results of stately activities or transactions (Kleppa 1990: 6). Most documents in the archives are accessible to the public; however, due to matters of privacy of personal information, some materials which are under 60 (or in some cases 100)-years old are subject to special clauses. If private persons or researchers wish to access and use such documents, they must make a special application in each case. The

[2] The concept of 'national minorities' developed considerably in Europe after the Second World War. However, this concept had its origin in the 1920s and 1930s when it was connected to so-called border minorities like the German-speaking population in Denmark.

National Archival Services of Norway and regional state archives grant access to documents kept in state archives, while Norwegian ministries grant access to documents related to municipal matters.

In 2001, the Norwegian Government published a White Paper, which stressed that national minorities should become visible in Norwegian archives, libraries and museums (The State of Norway 2001: 6.6.1). In the White Paper, the Government stated its wish to grant justice to national minorities, while also emphasizing the cultural pluralism of public institutions. Therefore, it is a paradox that several Norwegian ministries would not grant either me—or the Norwegian Association of Local and Private Archives (LLP) that runs the project—access to classified records that were kept in municipal archives. The LLP represents institutions that administer the records produced by private or local government bodies, as well as being a spokesman for archival policy matters in Norway. The Ministry of Justice and Police was the only institution that provided access without argument to files concerning criminal cases, while the Ministry of Labor and Social Inclusion, the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, and the Ministry of Education and Research refused to grant access to the records in their jurisdiction. One of the frequently cited arguments was that access could only be given to records that had been identified in advance. However, this reasoning indicates a lack of understanding of the type of research being conducted. The records were being used as an object of the study, not as sources. These authorities also failed to take into account the fact that several archival institutions[3] were involved in the project through the LLP.

Some ministries also demanded official recommendations from the Sámi Parliament and the Norwegian Kven Organization to access these records despite continuous contact throughout the project with leading representatives of these organizations. These organizations regarded this research as important and supported the project from the beginning. In fact, both *Sámi arkiiva* and the Institute of Kven Language and Culture are the partners in this project. The Ministries' arguments and reasoning illustrate a lack of knowledge when it comes to handling requests for archival access related to ethnic minorities. With research projects on the ethnic Norwegian population, such requirements are never demanded by government.

What is most daunting about the Norwegian Ministries' behavior during the processing of requests for access was their inaction. Some ministries, such as the Ministry of Education and Research, spent several months processing the applications without giving any temporary answer. However, the recommendations of the Council of Europe's policy, *Access to official documents* (2003), demand that requests for access to official documents be dealt with promptly. The decisions should be reached, communicated and executed within a specified time limit. The time limit in Norway is 1 month, which is similar to other European countries. During the process of requesting access to these archives, the Ministry of Labor and Social Inclusion, the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, and the Ministry of Education and Research failed to respond either to the head of the project, to the Norwegian Association of Local and Private Archives, to the archival institutions or to the local municipalities. The Ministries chose not to respond to institutions that have specialized knowledge of records, legislation and access to documents under secrecy. Instead, they refused to grant access to records. When the refusal to grant access was challenged by project organisers, the Ministries started to interpret the regulations so as to depict the project as less than serious. The manner in which they

[3] *Sámi arkiiva*, the National Archival Services of Norway, the Regional Archives of Tromsø, the Municipal Archives of Troms and the Municipal Archives of Finnmark are all partners in this research project.

treated us and dealt with our requests indicates that minorities are not treated on an equal footing with the mainstream by Norwegian ministries.

The main reason for the ministries' refusal appears to be insufficient knowledge, combined with arrogance. Fearful of making mistakes, the Ministries used their power to cover their insecure position. Lack of knowledge often underpins racism. Some may call the behavior of Norwegian ministries 'institutional racism.' In my opinion, that term is unfortunate, as it is used—in Norway at least—to refer to direct discrimination executed by the state and the main population. In my study, the term 'systematic and durable inequalities', used by social scientist Rattansi, better describes the ministries' behavior than does the term 'racism.' Racism is a conscious and intentional act, while Rattansi's term draws attention to unconscious actions (2007: 134–135). A fear of treating ethnic groups differently, combined with insufficient knowledge, is often based on prejudice and the construction of 'the other.'[4] While the ministries may not have known it, they were a part of this archival research.

Municipal archives differ from state archives in many ways. State archives have clear guidelines and processes concerning access to records. To gain access to records kept in the Regional Archives of Tromsø, for instance, the request was processed within 1 week of submission. Unfortunately, municipal archival institutions in Norway do not have similar practices. As a result of the cumbersome process of granting access, few people are granted permission to use municipal archives. As Ketelaar has pointed out, '[i]n our 'age of access' record keeping systems and archival institutions are moving from providing physical documents to providing access to the collective memory' (Ketelaar 2002). If municipal archives in Norway are to pursue the development Ketelaar mentions, the ministries will have to change their practices for determining access to municipal records. This is a very relevant point because it is precisely in the municipal records that so many documents related to minorities and local circumstances are located. Following the disclosure of the weaknesses of and difficulty of access to municipal archives, the Norwegian Association of Local and Private Archives submitted a proposal to the Norwegian ministries recommending similar policies and practices regarding access to information between state and municipal archives. This proposal is being debated by the ministries; however, the process may take a couple of years before it is resolved.

Archiving and minorities

Norwegian archives contain a number of policy documents concerning the assimilation of minorities. The way minorities are represented in public records is related to where they appear in those records. Graeme Reid (2002) has come to a similar conclusion in connection with the Gay and Lesbian Archives of South Africa in his article 'The History of the Past is the Trust of the Present: Preservation and Excavation in the Gay and Lesbian Archives of South Africa.' The way in which minorities were observed and their representations controlled reflects how their lives and histories were constructed and documented within holdings of archival institutions. Antoinette Burton points out that archives are not merely sources or repositories as such but act as 'full-fledged historical actors' too (2005: 7). Most of the documentation related to minorities is found in records from the education, health and social welfare systems, and from the church and criminal justice

[4] This concept is based on Said's argument (1978) that the West has strengthened its identity by setting itself against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self.

system, because these sectors have been the primary sites of assimilation. Documents, letters and reports express the points of view of the government and rationalize the motives for its policies. The minorities' own views are often absent from the public records. These groups appear as objects in the records, which emphasizes their marginalized position. Therefore, discovering documents in minority languages constitutes an invaluable find.

During the arrangement and description of the archives, archivists undoubtedly saw the documents in the Kven and Sámi languages. However, these documents are absent from the catalogs despite the fact that the Kven and Sámi peoples have constituted an important part of the population in the areas where these documents were created. These omissions demonstrate that the process of archiving is not an objective activity, nor are archives impartial institutions; rather they serve particular interests and needs (Lindbach 2006). As Schwartz and Cook have pointed out, '[c]ontrol of the archive—variously defined—means control of society and thus control of determining history's winners and losers' (2002a: 4).

I found one other problem related to the documents written in minority languages; they were often arranged after each other inside archival files, at the beginning or at the end of the files, even though this seems to be contrary to their original order. The persons who processed the records did not appear to understand the languages of these documents and regarded them as irrelevant. Arranging an archive in this way can sway the attitudes of persons who read the documents afterward. Researchers and others who do not understand minority languages may have felt that these documents were irrelevant and therefore omitted them. However, I do not believe that archivists have consciously omitted information about minority language records. It seems to me that the main reason why these are not mentioned in archival catalogs is because regulations and guidelines for archival description were formulated in the central administration at the other end of the country. There appears to have been little if any consideration that archives in northern Norway should reflect the specific local cultural, historical and linguistic conditions, or that minorities should be regarded as relevant. Therefore, we find marginalization in all areas of record management—from record creation and keeping to record appraisal, arrangement and description.

We need guidelines for managing records, even though it is the dominant power who decides which records are worth archiving. Due to the enormous abundance of documents, we cannot take care of all information. What is the difference between 'information' and a 'record'? Should we take care of sales slips or vouchers, for instance? Do they constitute records? Such questions are important because our understanding of what is worthy of archiving changes over time. Caroline Williams states that '[w]hat really distinguishes a record from any kind of information is that it is produced as a result of unique activity or transaction and can therefore provide evidence of that activity or transaction' (2006: 7). According to Williams' understanding, sales slips and vouchers are records; today, however, according to the general appraisal guidelines, many of these types of documents will be destroyed. Fortunately, some local administrators took care of and stored every single item and put each into files over 100 years ago, even though such documents should have been thrown away according to the accounting regulations of that time. For the Kven people, this procedure was fortunate, because I have found many orders and vouchers written in the Kven language. These items are now considered to be a cultural and linguistic treasure for the Kven people. The fact that so few documents survived may color our understanding of history, and the limited sample of documents may not accurately reflect the past. However, there are also other types of documents produced by local administrators in the archives.

From the mid-nineteenth century until 1950, most Norwegian local administrations were comprised of five committees: a local council; a school commission; a poor relief commission; a treasury and bookkeeping committee; and a minor civil court. Each of these municipal committees functioned as a record creator[5] (Valderhaug 2003). I found documents in the Kven and Sámi languages in all these archives. The documents in the Sámi language are mostly letters, while documents in the Kven language include letters, acts, dismissal notices, and accounts and vouchers from the poor relief commissions and tax form vouchers. In some cases, individuals' inquiries were answered in their own language. These documents show that this particular local municipality had been trilingual for more than 100 years. Community administrators were able to communicate in the Sámi and Kven languages. In fact, the documents tell us something even more sensational: the Kven language was used as an administrative language together with Norwegian—meaning that the Kvens could use their own language in official correspondence in this particular local community 100 years ago. However, documents created by other municipalities in northern Norway need to be reviewed before final conclusions can be drawn regarding how representative these documents are in relation to the strictness with which the Norwegianization campaign was implemented.

These documents in minority languages also tell us something new about archives in Norway. Until now, it has been assumed that administrators used either Norwegian or Danish as the language of records and written correspondence. The discovery of documents in minority languages reflects the fact that the Kven and Sámi peoples to some extent could use their own languages when communicating with the local authorities and in conducting public affairs in the community. This situation seems to be unusual—in many local communities in Norway, the conditions for minorities were quite difficult, and they were marginalized in most aspects of local society. More research in the Norwegian archives is needed before final conclusions can be drawn about the overall situation of minorities and the extent to which they could participate in creating and dealing with documents.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the main implementing institutions of Norwegianization—the church and the school system—became aware that in Kistrand the process of Norwegianization had not progressed as quickly as it had in other trilingual communities in northern Norway. The trilingual administration in Kistrand was brought to an end. Officially, the Norwegianization policy lasted until World War II; in reality, however, it lasted well into the 1960s. But minority languages did not die out. When the Kven people started their ethno-political mobilization in the 1980s, they established the first local organization of Kvens in that community. Although this municipality is officially trilingual today, the language of the administration is Norwegian.

Discovering these documents in the Sámi and Kven languages has attracted the attention of the archival milieu in Norway (see Lindbach 2007a, b, Lindbach 2008). Archivists in northern Norway in particular have become more conscious about minority records in archives. This project has directly contributed to new practices in archival arrangement: in the process of arranging and describing archives, archivists should take note of records in languages other than Norwegian. Improved language skills among archivists are also needed although archives in Norway have limited financial resources. At the moment, there is only one archivist in Norway, the head of the Sámi people's own archival institution, who can speak some Sámi, while no one can speak the Kven language.

[5] This practice changed in the 1960s when record creators were established in the smaller municipalities to prepare and carry out decisions on behalf of several committees.

Archives as minorities' counter-memory

I am not the first person who has gone through the archives where these minority language documents are found. Local historians, for instance, have used the same archives, but failed to analyze the contents of these documents when they wrote the local history of the area. In their work, they have described the ethnic groups, and their culture and history in the area, but they have given an incorrect picture of local circumstances, probably because they did not understand the minority languages (e.g. Hanssen 1986). I would like to suggest that Norwegian-speaking historians, because of their own linguistic limitations, have chosen not to use the material in the Sámi and Kven languages. First of all, they could not distinguish these two languages from each other, because they both belong to the same Finno-Ugric language group. On the other hand, it seems likely that they felt the documents were unimportant and irrelevant to their projects, because they and the persons who had read them earlier could not understand the language in the documents. These occurrences suggest that these historians have taken part in the 'institutional forgetting.' Abdul JanMohamed and David Lloyd argue that:

> One aspect of the struggle between hegemonic culture and minorities is the recovery and mediation of cultural practices that continue to be subjected to 'institutional forgetting', which, as a form of control of one's memory and history, is one of the gravest forms of damage done to minority cultures. Archival work, as a form of counter-memory, therefore is essential to the critical articulation of minority discourse. (JanMohamed and Lloyd 1990: 6)

Hegemonic cultures all over the world frequently fit the histories of minorities into their own. Norwegian historians have studied the history of ethnic minorities predominantly from the standpoint of the state and have not written as much on the local authorities, their behavior toward ethnic minorities and their interpretation and implementation of the Norwegianization policy. Hence, the public records offer the voices of the master narratives but do not reflect the voices of oppressed groups (e.g. Bastian 2006). At the same time, stories of oppressed cultures are commonly converted to suit the oppressor's expectations, which is why minorities need to define their own past and have their official history rewritten, either by themselves or by historians who have a good understanding of their language and culture (Lindbach 2001: 27). Archives can serve as a counter-memory in such processes.

Minority language records are rare in archives, the world over. It is more usual to find traces of the minorities in documents created by or managed by the dominant culture. Even though minorities and marginalized groups appear as silent and invisible in archival documents, we may still find their voices 'between the lines' or if we read documents 'against the grain.' Regarding colonial archives, Ann Laura Stoler writes that by reading texts 'from the bottom up,' we may find 'histories of resistance that might locate human agency in small gestures of refusal and silence among the colonized' (2002: 99). This is important especially in connection with groups which are marginalized within a marginalized group, like women and children.[6] We can find other stories and perspectives, and at the same time we can use these documents as a counter-memory for marginalized groups.

The archives of the Norwegian state church also contain many documents related to minority history. One of the most important tasks of the state church was to promote

[6] Ghosh (2005) writes that marginalized groups in India, such as women and children, are not often mentioned by name in public records in England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. That is the reason why they are invisible in public records.

Norwegianization. In this connection, it is obvious that archives are not objective and reliable repositories of truth. Stoler writes that '[w]hether documents are trustworthy, authentic, and reliable remain pressing questions, but a turn to social and political conditions that produced those documents' is key (Stoler 2002: 91). Our memory in archives is not something which is merely found or collected, but which is made and continually remade (Cook and Schwartz 2002b: 172). The archive does not merely contain documents, but can itself be considered as a primary document of history (Dirks 2002: 62). This point was obvious in connection with documents created by the pastors in each local community I researched. Documents were steeped in subjective attitudes related to the predominant ideology of the day.

Even though the documents expressed the viewpoints of clergy and their attitudes toward minorities, I could find voices of marginalized groups hidden inside the pastors' stories. Although I discerned other stories and perspectives in the priests' stories, my disclosures are stories too. Writing is always a narrative act where understanding of truth is bound to the existing ideology and beliefs of those who create documents in particular circumstances at a particular time and those who use them later. Duff and Harris write that narrativity is not a neutral container:

> It shapes, even determines, the narrative content in significant ways. Every narrative construction of the past is by definition creative, a work of the imagination—it recalls referents which, in all their particularity, their uniqueness, are irrecoverable, and which flow in a chaotic open-endedness. The construction attempts to give them a shape, a pattern, a closure (2002: 276).

Records contain several layers of stories that depend upon the viewpoint we choose to focus on. Therefore, my disclosures are also narrative constructions of history, which reflect my choices and my understanding of truth. I have consciously tried to give voice to marginalized groups.

Before the Second World War, there were many records related to the Kven and Sámi peoples, but after the war, they disappeared from archives. The official explanation is that the state assumed that these groups, especially the Kven people, were assimilated because most of them could speak and write Norwegian. Notions of the Kven as a 'people of silence' and 'the quiet death of the quiet people' still exist in Norwegian society. In my opinion, the state acted consciously by making the minorities invisible and emphasizing their silent position, while simultaneously carrying out an 'unofficial' policy of Norwegianization. Records from the 1950s and 1960s show that record creators failed to even mention the Kven and Sámi peoples in documents related to the reconstruction of war-damaged regions, even though these groups have been a relevant part of culture and history in these regions. However, we can connect these records to a story of injustice. 'Through their unique knowledge of the records in their collection, archivists have the opportunity to make injustice known, to read the archives against the grain, flagging silence and identifying the presence of the marginalized within the records of the state and its apparatus' (Carter 2006: 231) These documents serve as evidence of the injustice experienced by minorities, and we can use this knowledge in political discussions and to restore voice to those minorities who have been made voiceless.

Documents in minority languages and the writing of history

The discovery of the Kven language documents is quite sensational, since no one knew that they even existed in the archives. Nowadays, linguists work with projects to revive and

recreate the written Kven language, while they also work to revitalize the spoken Kven language. The 240 documents will be one of the most important sources for linguists working with the Kven language in the future. In addition, the Regional State Archives of Tromsø, a partner in this project, has digitized the documents which have been found so that all can have access to them.

The discovery of records in the Sámi language is not as surprising, because it was known that archives might contain documents in this language. However, the volume of documents was surprising: 150 items. Documents are important vis-à-vis the perspective of the coastal Sámi people. Today, few speak the Sámi language. Many of the most influential researchers and archivists in the country imagined that only a few documents in minority languages from the nineteenth century were in the archives, even in the central areas of Sámi land where over 90% of the population have been and still are Sámi. After these findings, we can ask whether these assumptions are correct. Why is it assumed that archives do not contain documents in minority languages, for instance? I suppose that these arguments reflect the attitudes of the mainstream culture based on the concept of understanding the Sámi language as irrelevant and unimportant in public contexts. We need to pursue the study of archives in minority areas more closely and find out what they actually contain.

These newly found documents all point to the need for revisiting and rewriting the history of the Kven and Sámi. Historians have frequently written about minorities' relations with the national government authorities, but have forgotten the local authorities and the local society (Ryymin and Maliniemi 2009). In local communities in northern Norway, where the population was stable, the relationship between Norwegians, Sámis and Kvens was based on solidarity and co-operation.[7] Most historians have focused on typical Sámi communities or local communities, which were under strict state control. I will not criticize this research, because these works are indeed necessary. My point is that this tradition has been taking the focus away from other areas of the history and culture of the northern minorities, especially with relation to the Kven people.

One of the geographic areas of focus for historians has been the northeast Norway. At the end of the nineteenth century, many people moved from Finland to this area. This Finnish-speaking population and the Kvens were regarded as a threat to the security of the state, because Finland belonged to Russia at that time. Therefore, the policy of Norwegianization was more strictly enforced there than in other areas where the population had been stable for many decades. These areas were not regarded as threatening; minorities could therefore use their language freely in those surroundings. The policy of Norwegianization and the focus of historical research have understandably occupied a central position in the discussion of minorities, while also forming and shaping a representation of minorities in the public and in our understanding and knowledge of their history and culture over the past two centuries.

It is not only historians who have influenced our understanding and knowledge of minorities in Norway. Generally speaking, during the last 100 years, scientific works have presented minorities[8] as poor, miserable and uncivilized populations who in most cases were illiterate. These kinds of representations are particularly relevant to the depiction of

[7] Some writers describe the solidarity between ethnic groups in the north of Norway, for instance, Idar Kristiansen in his series of novels *Kornet og fiskene* (1978–81).

[8] Edward Said was the first to problematize 'eurocentric' views and concepts of presentation in his book *Orientalism: western conceptions of the Orient* (1978).

the Sámi people.[9] Even though many researchers today are critical of ethnocentric representations of minorities, many still use old scientific literature as a source. In their research, minorities are described as 'victims' of the state and of the hegemonic culture. Conceptualizing minorities as victims simplifies and reduces the dynamics between minorities and the hegemonic culture, because it carries on the assimilation and discrimination of minorities, even though the official policy of assimilation has stopped (Lindbach 2001: 193). That conceptualization also embodies other ideas of minorities as passive groups of people at the time when they were oppressed by the hegemonic culture. These conceptions of minorities are deeply ingrained in our (and in the minorities' own) consciousness.

These archival findings suggest that conceptualizing minorities as passive and miserable populations is incorrect even in the economically poorest areas of Norway. The voices found in the handwritten documents are demanding and definite, even in documents connected to the poor relief commission. Many could write in their own language, although they were not sufficiently educated in it. Many researchers appear to have been influenced by ethnocentric views about minorities, even though some of them have a minority background of their own. Scientific literature in the last 100 years may have caused an effect of 'epistemic violence', which means an attack on the culture, ideas and values systems of the oppressed ethnic groups (Spivak 1988: 22). The records in the Sámi and Kven languages can have a positive effect on minorities and their identity by showing that their ancestors were historical actors. They were also capable of taking part in local democracy and did so in their own languages.

Conclusion

My archival research indicates that there is insufficient knowledge about minority-related materials in archives in Norway. This point is relevant because archival institutions should also represent minorities. Archives should have knowledge about minorities, their history, their language and their situations in the past and today. Archival studies related to minorities and marginalized groups are an important part of making minorities and marginalized groups more visible in society. We should also include minorities and marginalized groups in record management and allow them to create archival institutions of their own.

Finally, I will conclude by pointing to the need for more archival research. We need more research to find out how documents are created, selected, transferred and used over time. My findings indicate that modern theories can serve as a fruitful tool in archival research concerning minorities and marginalized groups all over the world. Archival projects, informed by postmodern and postcolonial theories, can make available to 'the Other' those voices and knowledge marginalized by the western-dominated global mainstream (Harris 2004). Postmodern theories in archival science provide relevant arguments for archival discussion generally, because they problematize the objectivity of archives and the relations of power. The experiences and knowledge that this kind of research yields can be used in the education of archival practitioners. Ketelaar has pointed out that the 'new

[9] Many scientific books claim, for instance, that laestadianism, a special movement inside Lutheranism, saved the Kvens and especially the Sámi people, from alcoholism and destruction. Such claims embody a racialized characterization and imply that these minorities are incapable of saving themselves and require help from the outside their communities.

'archivistic' demands that archival education be comparative and multi-disciplinary' (2000: 322). Furthermore, results of the analyses can create a channel, which can be used in relations between the 'margins' and the 'centre,' where minorities can reach out from the marginalized position to the center. Knowledge of minorities and marginalized groups in the past and the present can make them more visible in different areas of society and can facilitate their participation in discussions concerning themselves and their interests in a society which has marginalized them for many hundreds of years. In modern society, the archive should be one of the basic parts of a working democracy, and it should provide reliability also for minorities and marginalized groups.

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