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# Research on and by ‘the Other’. Focusing on the Researcher’s Encounter with the Lule Sami in a Historically Changing Context

BJØRG EVJEN

*ABSTRACT* A century and half ago, the encounter between the researcher and those (s)he researched were described and seen from the vantage point of the researcher. ‘The others’ participated in the encounters, but were seldom asked for advice regarding the approach or to provide their own perspectives. But this has changed. Originally playing the passive role of the objects of research, today the Sami and Kven of northern Norway have taken on the role of the active participant. These changes are apparent when examining research on the Lule Sami in Norway over the last 150 years. Several dimensions must be considered. First, the researcher and their research must be placed and understood within the contemporary ideological context, implying that the situation of the researcher will reflect the social and political conditions of the time. Analysis of research from the Lule Sami area demonstrates how the researcher’s perspective on the Sami people and culture has changed over time, how the Sami role in history, and thus cultural diversity, has been revealed in greater detail, and how the Sami part of the population has increasingly participated by taking on the role of the researcher. Finally, the encounter is analysed in an international context, which shows how the local and national changes are also part of an international development.

**KEY WORDS:** Lule Sami, Research history, Indigenous peoples, Norwegianization, Revitalization, Nineteenth and twentieth centuries

As a researcher going into the Lule Sami area of north Norway in the 1990s, I met several narratives which told me about previous encounters between the local Sami and researchers, encounters described as the active empowered researchers meeting the passive Sami. In subsequent years, I began to see the Sami being quite active in, aware of, and eager to participate in research projects, and thus they defined the encounter. Obviously, great changes had occurred. Most scholars are fully aware of this changing research milieu that includes a change in power of the academic, cultural and political sort (e.g. Niemi, 1995; Stordahl, 2008). Research can serve as a tool of power, defining the history of the past or present. It includes both those doing research and

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those being researched – both the researcher and the researched. This article explores the historical development of these changes by focusing on research conducted in the Lule Sami area. In what way has the encounter between the researcher and the researched in north Norway changed over the last 150 years, and if and when did the power to define research change?

### **The Encounter in a Historical Context**

‘The researched’ – the Sami – in this context are not one and the same. Firstly, there are three official groups of Sami in Norway: Northern, Lule and Southern Sami. In addition, we find several ‘unofficial’ terms in use reflecting divisions, either through their way of living or their geographical belonging, such as reindeer-herding Sami and sea Sami. ‘Sami’ is the in-group term, while in historical sources ‘Lapp’ and ‘Finn’ are the most common terms in use. In general, the reindeer-herding Sami lives a characteristically nomadic lifestyle, while the sea Sami are sedentary fisher-farmers, living in the same manner as the non-Sami. In addition, some Sami live off multi-mixed industries, such as the ‘Markasami’, sedentary Sami living on a combination of reindeer husbandry, farming and other minor industries. Most of the Sami in the Lule Sami area live in the Tysfjord municipality (Figure 1), consisting mostly of sea Sami, but also reindeer-herding Sami.



**Figure 1.** Map of Fennoscandia, showing the location of the Lule Sami area.

Several dimensions must be considered in order to explore changes in the nature of research encounters in the Lule Sami area over the last 150 years. First of all, the researcher and their research must be placed and understood within their contemporary academic context, reflecting social and political changes over time. The main lines of historical development forming the frames of the changes can be sketched briefly, phase by phase.

During the first phase, up to the mid-nineteenth century, research on minorities was characterized by exoticism and the belief that non-Norwegians were to be integrated 'naturally' into Norwegian society. During the second phase, from c. 1850 to 1940, nationalism held sway and minorities were regarded as 'outsiders'. Much effort was invested in absorbing all persons into a common Norwegian identity; given this policy of Norwegianization, minorities simply represented regional diversities within a shared Norwegian identity. In the decades prior to World War I, German universities and researchers were held in the highest regard by Norwegian researchers, including their focus on identifying national human physical features and races. This was the heyday of Social Darwinism with its agenda of the racial superiority of 'the White Man.' The attitude at the time strongly favoured the assimilation of 'the outsiders' into Norwegian society. In addition, there was a dominant attitude regarding the position of reindeer-herding Sami and the sea Sami. The latter were often portrayed as if they stood on the lowest rung of the social status ladder (Helland, 1907; Eriksen & Niemi, 1981). To what degree this was also considered to be true internally among the Sami has so far not been the subject of research.

The predominant German influence changed with the outbreak of the war in 1914. Now a meeting place for Nordic researchers was formed with the establishment in Oslo of the Institute for Comparative Cultural Research (*Instituttet for sammenlignende kulturforskning*) with its own publication series. The study of Arctic peoples became one of the Institute's main tasks, with a strong focus on the Sami. According to the founder of the Institute, Norway was obliged to do research on the Sami before they 'yield to the modern culture's leveling influence' (Stang et al., 1925: 62). The Sami were a numerically small people with a language and culture that were considered exotic and strange; thus the results from future research were expected to be rich and meaningful (Stang et al., 1925: 62). During these years, the cultures of Arctic peoples, and particularly the Sami, also became a main area of interest for the Norwegian Scientific Society (*det Norsk vitenskapselskapet*) and the Ethnographic Museum, which also produced their own publications. In this context the Museum's north Norwegian collections, where the Sami culture was strongly represented, merit special mention.

A new attitude emerged during the third phase post-World War II, when the previous nationalism was gradually left behind. The new trend emerged from the welfare state, the egalitarianism of which provided a space for pluralism – that is, a greater appreciation for diversity in society (Niemi, 1995). On an international level, the number of academic researchers increased, as did the number of international research networks in the days of globalization. The Sami were still considered 'the exotic' and 'the

outsiders' – although they had lived in the country from time immemorial – but after World War II they increasingly contributed to the majority's consciousness of the cultural pluralism of north Norwegian society.

In addition, a growing sense of ethnic consciousness occurred on the part of the people being studied. This development is clearly reflected in the growth of ethno-political organizations. Among the Sami, the first wave of ethno-political mobilization came at the beginning of the 1900s. It was dominated by Southern Sami initiators, but did not attract a large following and almost disappeared in the period between the two world wars. After 1950, the build-up continued with the establishment of Nordic and national Sami institutions, but it was not until the politicized 1960s and 1970s that ethno-politics had a wider impact (cf. Minde, 1997: 134). The National Association of Norwegian Sami (NSR, *Norske Samers Riksforbund*) was formed in 1968/69, and only Sami were accorded full membership. 'NSR was probably a sign that the Sami themselves were increasingly in charge' (Drivenes & Jernsletten, 1994: vol. 1, 265).

The fourth phase came with the watershed moment in the relationship between the Sami and the Norwegian state after the opposition to a planned damming of the Alta-Kautokeino river system. What followed was the establishment of the Sami Parliament in 1989, which led to further political and cultural revival and mobilization on ethnic grounds. The Lule Sami played an important role in this development.

In the following, these steps towards change will serve as a framework for a more in-depth examination of the relationship between researcher and research object in the Lule Sami area of Tysfjord. Most of the research done will be included, with deeper consideration of those projects that were presented to me when entering the Tysfjord community in the 1990s. Obviously, they represented encounters of great importance for the Lule Sami.

### 'The Exotic Other'

In the 1900s, the Sami part of the population of Tysfjord was sought out for several large international research projects. However, the Tysfjord Sami had been studied earlier. I will begin with one person who was not an actual researcher, but an academic who published several studies. This was one of the research stories I was told in Tysfjord.

The pastor Olav Holm, whose parish was in Tysfjord 1878–1884, arrived in a local society where different ethnic groups lived close together. He took a great interest in the Sami. Holm studied the cultural diversity of the area and wrote books and several articles for newspapers and periodicals (Evjen, 1998). In several publications, especially by non-academic writers, Pastor Holm is specifically mentioned as an example of the condescending attitude of the majority society towards the Sami. We will therefore take a closer look at his production in relation to the contemporary context.

In his work *Fra en nordlandsk Prestegaard* (From a Nordland Parsonage), Holm describes his meeting with the Sami of Tysfjord. Not surprisingly, his account is coloured by the distance between the state official and his subjects,

and gives an exotic picture of the Sami, in which both positive and negative qualities are highlighted. Thus, he is struck with wonder when Sami children demonstrate especially strong powers of reasoning in arriving at answers to his questions: 'It is remarkable how quick these youngsters can be with answers to questions when – it must be noted – they have had a good teacher. Truths pop into their minds from nowhere, as it were' (Holm, 1923: 129). Many times he remarks on how beautiful some Sami can be, as if this was something unexpected that had to be emphasized for his readers.

Holm's writings reflect the contemporary change of attitude from exoticism to nationalism. Being clearly influenced by the attitudes of Social Darwinism, 'the White Man's' culture was superior to that of the Sami. While central in the works mentioned above, the Sami are not mentioned in Holm's *Det norske Folks Historie* (The History of the Norwegian People; Holm, 1889). The influence of nationalism meant that any historical account had to stress the homogeneity of Norwegian culture. Given this point of view, the Sami were too different and a minority to boot. However, Pastor Holm collected stories, myths, names, etc., for an entire book about the Sami. For unknown reasons it was not published, but the manuscript for *Lapperne* (The Lapps) can be found in the manuscript collection of the University Library in Oslo. Holm viewed the Sami as if they were one homogeneous group rooted in an Eastern culture. He described them in a publication of 1907 in the following manner, a well-known attitude in the contemporary context:

I believe the Lapp is all but immune to what, to us, is higher culture, which is the level of our culture at this time. As far as I can see, he lacks the preconditions to create a social order that requires diligence, respect for rules, and a basic discipline in all aspects of higher form of social existence . . . for which the Asiatic nomad is not well suited, no matter how long he has been permanently settled (Holm, 1907: 16).

Towards the end of the 1800s, many researchers held the view that cultural minorities were in the process of becoming extinct, whereas the culture of the majority would thrive. Among others, the linguist Just Qvigstad, with his interest in the Sami people, saw it as a task of major importance to collect Sami material while there still was time (Hansen, 1991). Qvigstad had contacted none other than Holm to become better informed about the conditions in Tysfjord. Qvigstad took a special interest in the sea Sami and, among other things, he took on the task of examining the sea Sami dialect of the area called '*finnagiella*' or 'the old Tysfjord dialect'. This dialect was significantly different from that spoken by the reindeer-herding Sami (Qvigstad, 1925: 18). According to Qvigstad, the dialect was close to extinction, to some extent caused by influence from the mountain Sami, in addition to Norwegianization. The Lule Sami dialect of the mountain Sami still held its own against Norwegian influence (Qvigstad & Sandberg, 1888; Qvigstad, 1925).

Qvigstad managed to collect samples of the 'old Tysfjord dialect'. According to oral tradition, he paid a sea Sami to visit him in his home town Tromsø and share his knowledge. Another story relates how when visiting Tysfjord Qvigstad even had to follow an informant in a rowboat across the fjord to get information. The sea Sami disliked Qvigstad's

comparison of the dialects and claims for a common origin for mountain and sea Sami; the relationship between the researcher and the research object was somewhat strained. Qvigstad succeeded only to some extent and did not manage to define the ‘old Tysfjord’ language grammatically; in a wordlist he gave an overview of the words he managed to find. Today we do not know much more about the ‘*finnagiella*’ beyond what was found by Qvigstad.

Of a more ethno-cultural documentation was his collection of fairytales, published between 1927 and 1929 (Qvigstad, 1929a; Amundsen, 1972: 61f). Qvigstad also wanted to document the extent of the Sami population in the Lule Sami area. In 1929, he published *Sjöfinnene i Nordland* (Sea Lapps in Nordland), in which he quantified and documented sea Sami settlement on the basis of several source categories. Tysfjord had the highest number of sea Sami in Nordland County (Qvigstad, 1929b). Decades were to pass before researchers picked up this thread.

Qvigstad maintained contact with Nordic and European linguists to stay informed and to develop new research projects. Among others there was K. B. Wiklund, with whom he documented the cross-border reindeer herding. The Swedish researcher also documented the cross-border activity in his own publication. That there were two publications dealing with the same subject must be seen in the context of the break up of Norway’s union with Sweden in 1905, when Norway became an independent state. The Swedish researcher Wiklund wanted to document all the Swedish Sami that seasonally were moving from the Swedish side of the border to the Norwegian side, while the Norwegian researcher Qvigstad wanted to underline the Norwegian Sami using the same areas (Wiklund, 1908; Qvigstad & Wiklund, 1909). Thus, nationalism still held a strong position.

### **Physical Measurements of ‘the Other’**

Around the turn of the century, research became intensely focused on ‘races’ in order to determine, among other things, the differences between ethnic groups of people. One method was anthropometrics, physical measurements that emphasized the skull but also included other parts of the body. Military physicians all over Norway gathered data in conjunction with drafts for military service, data that also were categorized according to ethnicity. This was the topic of the second research story I met.

International research projects were undertaken in order to make physical measurements of ethnic groups. In Norway this was done with Sami, Kven, and Norwegians. Tysfjord was one of a number of Norwegian areas included in the study, along with Setesdal and Sogn in south and west Norway, among others. Extensive materials were also collected in Sweden. The leading researchers in Norway were the physician Kristian E. Schreiner and his wife Alette. Initially, they wanted to examine the sea Sami part of the population because they had been told that they were the original inhabitants. They changed their approach to focus on a particular fjord – the Hellemo Fjord – when they learned that the sea Sami were scattered across the area. In this fjord lived descendants of both sea and mountain Sami. Schreiner’s

measurements in Tysfjord in 1914 and 1921 comprised 210 Sami, with as many as 28 measurements per person. It turned out to be impossible to assign exact measurements to any possible distinctive features of Sami people; they were as different amongst themselves as the people of London, according to Schreiner (1935). Neither did the results of the international research provide any basis for documenting a clear pattern of correlations. It was problematic, if not impossible, to determine the 'original' physical features of the members of an ethnic group.

In the generations which followed, the descriptions from these encounters between Sami and researchers became veritable migratory tales. There are still people who remember these events. Different versions have been told, among others, that the Sami had to be physically restrained while the measurements were taken. Many refused to undress, not surprisingly making it impossible to take measurements of their bodies. Others present at these measurement sessions supposedly found the whole scene interesting. They probably were not familiar with the theories that could only be tested with their participation. This situation was an extreme case of using the Sami as passive research objects. The results of the investigations conducted in 1914 and 1921 were published in German and English and printed in the publications of the Scientific Society (*Vitenskapsselskapets skrifter*). This made them all but inaccessible for the local population (A. Schreiner, 1932; K. E. Schreiner, 1935, 1939; see also Evjen, 1997).

Schreiner also received skeletal materials from Tysfjord for use in his anatomical research. This supposedly did not meet with protests, as had happened further north in Neiden, Finnmark, and elsewhere. At this point, it should be added that researchers from other fields relating to culture, such as ethnology, also collected materials for Sami-related research. Objects and clothes from Tysfjord were used for research at the Ethnographic Museum in Oslo. The materials were almost exclusively collected by the reindeer-herding inspector and the travelling secretary of the Lapp Mission. The largest collection of Sami clothing at the Norwegian Folk Museum – specifically 50 of the colourful outfits referred to as '*kofter*' in Norwegian – comes from Tysfjord. This is surprising in view of the fact that there are relatively few Sami in Tysfjord compared to the core Sami areas farther north in Troms and Finnmark. A great deal of costume material was also collected in the 1950s. A possible explanation for the large quantity might be that at this time there was a weak sense of Sami ethnic identity, such that many Sami shed visible markers of identity like ethnically specific clothing. Thus, it was a simple matter to buy '*kofter*'. Besides, people's need for cash in hand was probably more important than the question of ethnic markers. These were encounters of a more pragmatic and less offensive kind.

### **Increasing Focus on the Sea Sami**

In the 1920s it was claimed that only the reindeer-herding Sami had an exotic culture different from the Norwegians. As the sea Sami had been living near the Norwegians and had absorbed many of their cultural attributes they were



of less interest as research objects (Stang et al., 1925: 74). However, shortly after World War II, there was a renewed focus on the sea Sami part of the population. It began in Finnmark with the teacher Anders Larsen's book *Om sjosamene* (About the Sea Sami), written in the Sami language in 1947 and translated into Norwegian in 1950. Larsen was himself a sea Sami, but was not a researcher. His account presented the sea Sami culture through the activities of everyday life. He published his knowledge and familiarity with the sea Sami after the strong urging of Qvigstad. Larsen's publications broke new ground – an attempt to reveal the distinctiveness of sea Sami culture and way of life, seen from the vantage point of 'the others'. However, it fell to the ethnologist Knut Kolsrud to make the sea Sami culture of the Lule Sami area the focus of scholarly attention.

Kolsrud's doctoral dissertation of 1947 – *Finnfolket i Ofoten* – dealt with the Sami people of an area north of Tysfjord, Ofoten. This was a seminal work for later research on Sami and especially sea Sami culture, settlement and way of life. Kolsrud demonstrated how the sea Sami originally comprised a clear majority in Ofoten, but were later pushed aside by Norwegian migration into the area. He was also the first to document and analyse how the special jurisdictional institution known as '*finneodelen*' (special Sami allodium rights) functioned in relation to the traditional sea Sami sites and settlements in Ofoten.

During Kolsrud's doctoral defence a discussion ensued about the background for the seasonal movements between the winter settlements of the inner fjords and the summer pastures at the outer parts of the fjords which could be documented among some of the sea Sami population of Nordland County. On the basis of this publication, Kolsrud published the study *Sommersetete* (Summer Pasture) in 1961. In this work he documented that the population of Tysfjord around 1600 was almost totally Sami and that the varied economic adaptations of the sea Sami were quite similar to that of Ofoten, the only exception being that the majority regularly moved seasonally to summer pastures because of the need to access fodder resources for raising cattle. Together with Qvigstad's earlier investigations, Kolsrud's works on Ofoten and Tysfjord were to become an important foundation for later research on sea Sami history in the Lule Sami area (Evjen & Hansen, 2008).

This encounter between the researcher and the sea Sami occurred on the basis of the researcher's archival studies and interviews. Kolsrud also sought to become informed about the living conditions by questioning his contemporary sea Sami relatives, but how this transpired is unknown to this author. Kolsrud provides no information about his informants in the text.

### **Changing Encounters: the Researchers of the Welfare State**

Several social changes after World War II had a bearing on Sami research. During the post-war years, egalitarianism was one of the underpinnings upon which Norwegian society was built. This principle forms the basis for the following characterization of Sami culture in the book *Nordnorsk kulturhistorie* (North Norwegian Culture History):

It would seem that Norwegian social democracy found it difficult to support the Sami cultural awakening. The rhetoric of social democracy about social solidarity and national unity meant that social differences within the nation had to be reduced, and given such an ideological perspective it was difficult to attach much value to developing minority cultures (Drivenes & Jernsletten, 1994: vol. 1, 265).

The new welfare state was in the making, with one of its goals being that all should have a fair share of the material prosperity. Such an understanding was probably the reason why Ambassador B. M. Bergersen at the Norwegian embassy in Stockholm, who would later become Minister of Church Affairs in 1950, contacted would-be professor Ørnulv Vorren at the Tromsø Museum. Bergersen, a professor of anatomy, was from Kvæfjord in Troms County, not far from Tysfjord. From back home, Bergersen had heard that the social and material conditions in Hellemofjorden in Tysfjord left a great deal to be desired. Vorren was asked to map out these conditions. Travelling in Tysfjord, Vorren not only noted the material conditions but also contacted people. Here the researcher made an effort to get to know the people he sought to learn about. Most locals were accommodating, but there were also homes that denied him access. Vorren found that the conditions were not as dire as Bergersen had believed. He wrote a diary during his stay and also collected data on the Tysfjord Sami moving between Sweden and Norway. Although his diary has not been published, the investigations provided material for a later article on settlements in the area (Vorren, 1977).

In the post-war era there was mainly cross-border reindeer herding in the Lule Sami area, with summer residence on the Norwegian side of the border and winter residence on the Swedish side. On the Swedish side of the border, the geographer Israel Ruong (later professor in Sami language) published – in the 1930s and later – several works on reindeer herding, as well as works on the permanently settled Sami (e.g. Ruong, 1937). Ruong found the area south of Tysfjord – Pite Lappmark – especially interesting because here linguistic, ethnological and cultural borders crossed between the forest and mountain Sami areas. He himself was a Pite Sami from the southernmost part of the Lule Sami area. This time it was an account by 'the others': both researcher and the objects of research were Sami. The topics, however, were not different from earlier research.

Some 10 years later, a third story emerged from the arrival of the sociology professor Vilhelm Aubert in Tysfjord. In the 1960s he was the coordinator of a US-financed project on employment and out-migration from north Norway, known as the 'Isolation Project' (*Isolationsprosjektet*; Aubert et al., 1970). In a report, would-be professor Per Mathiesen, also taking part in the project, composed an analytic discourse on the position of the researcher taking part in this project on the living conditions of 'the other'. The gist was that thorough research information should be given to the minorities concerning how the majority society made decisions of importance for the minority. The aim was to enable the Sami themselves to formulate, present and implement their political causes, in this case concerning housing conditions (Mathiesen, 1970: 64).

The Isolation Project's research locales included inner Finnmark, Ringvassøy in Troms County, and Tysfjord. Tysfjord's neighbouring municipalities of Hamarøy and Sørfold were included to a lesser degree. Project publications indicate that Aubert and his assistant Lina Homme got to know Sami society from the inside in their attempt to find answers to their sociological questions. There were close, more personal, connections between researcher and research objects under the impetus of Aubert's initiative and Homme's enthusiasm. The economy, poverty, the place of religion, youth, and sexual morality were some of the themes analysed in their work. The research demonstrated that the Sami part of the population struggled with problems of poverty, as well as issues related to culture and powerlessness. However, Aubert and Homme also showed how Sami society was imbued with solidarity, tolerance, and openness (Homme, 1969; Aubert & Homme, 1965, Homme & Aubert, 1970).

Aubert and Homme not only compiled documentation but also applied their research in order to help where, in their opinion, it was needed. As products of their time they were exemplary representatives of the ideals of the welfare state. In this connection, the relevant point was the ideal of justice and equal access to material benefits. At the Institute for Social Research in Oslo, Homme took up a collection for clothes which, when the packages arrived in Tysfjord, were received with both joy and indignation. One of the politically conscious Sami did not want a package, but none the less received an angel-shaped candleholder.

For his part, Aubert went to work for equality and fair access to quality housing and employment. At the time, the Norwegian state made the case that, if possible, people had to move to small towns for access to modern housing with electricity and indoor plumbing. In Tysfjord, this meant that the Sami had to move from the fjords out to the coastal Norwegian-dominated areas, a relocation which the Sami regarded as problematic for ethnic, practical, and economic reasons. In order to preserve Sami settlement areas and prevent relocation, Aubert approached the Norwegian authorities with the argument that Tysfjord be included in the housing project for inner Finnmark, which had been undertaken to improve the living conditions of the nomadic Sami through government support. Tysfjord was then included, in no small measure thanks to Aubert. He also made personal economic investments in the area in order to secure employment and settlement for the Sami.

Homme and Aubert were admitted into many homes; many Sami in Tysfjord came onboard the housing project, but some refused to participate. This was partly a result of the project gradually attracting media attention with a great deal of negative commentary directed at how the Sami were not getting their fair share. The media attention led to the Sami organizing and choosing representatives to make statements on behalf of the Tysfjord Sami. This was the first Sami association in the area and must be seen as a concrete response to the description of woe given of the living conditions in order to legitimize the housing project being implemented by the authorities. From then on, most of the statements made by Tysfjord Sami were expressed in organized form through letters to researchers and public authorities as well as

through newspaper articles. In later years, Aubert and Homme have come in for both positive and negative comments regarding their active involvement in this matter.

### **Demand for Active Participation**

The next big project involving Tysfjord Sami elicited similar reactions, which brings us to the fourth research story. In the 1980s, Karl Jan Solstad led the Norwegian branch of an international research project titled 'The Developmental Conditions of Growing Up in Sami Communities'. The project was financed by the van Leer Foundation, an international fund which usually supported projects for at-risk groups in non-industrialized countries, but the board changed the guidelines of the fund to allow for Sami participation. The project was assigned to Nordland Research (*Nordlandsforskning*) in Bodø and became the largest project ever in terms of its financial framework.

The goal of the project was to enhance the environment in which Sami children were brought up and to reduce possible discrimination. There was also a desire to stimulate the use of Sami language and culture in the school environment. Evenes, Hattfjelldal and Tysfjord were the chosen areas to promote this development. It turned out that conversations with the parents – meant to be one of the starting points for the project – could not take place as a matter of course because the Sami part of the population was reluctant to come forward.

A similar project was undertaken at the same time in Tornedal on the Swedish side of Lule Sami area. In the Norwegian final report, an interesting difference between the two projects was highlighted. On the Swedish side, the project director was Sami, in spite of the fact that the project was not explicitly directed toward the Sami community, and the project was considered a success. On the Norwegian side, the project was led by non-Sami and was specifically directed toward the Sami community, but as indicated above, the Norwegian project was marred by implementation problems.

Representatives of the local Sami association, established in 1979, had strong objections to the implementation of the van Leer project, claiming that it represented the attitudes of the past that the Norwegian majority knew best and made decisions without the Sami having a seat at the table (Høgmo, 1992: 68). The Sami population would no longer participate as passive research objects for the representatives of majority society – they insisted on real influence in the project. The time had come for change; the project was now to have a Sami participant from the local community. A tangible and positive result of the project was the production of Sami teaching aids for use in school (Solstad et al., 1981; Bråstad Jensen, 1991; Høgmo, 1992; Grenersen, 1995; Eriksen & Skjelnes, n.d.).

### **Historical Research Eventually Inclusive of the Sami**

None of the projects mentioned above were led by historians; the discipline of history was relatively slow in taking up the study of ethnic minorities. This

has been explained in terms peculiar to the discipline of history itself. As an academic discipline, history came of age when the focus was on a homogenous national culture and a shared identity. Within such a perspective, minorities were overlooked, as we have seen with Pastor Holm. Besides, after World War II, the emergent social sciences of sociology and social anthropology shed light on minority aspects of society.

Not until the 1970s did the Sami past become a subject in its own right within the discipline of history (Minde, 1992: 24). A growing interest in local history led to the first historical account of Tysfjord municipality being written. When the author of the first two volumes, the historian Alf Ragnar Nielsen, was about to start in 1985, there was a request from the Nord-Salten Sami association that the Sami part of the population had to be represented in the local history committee, a request that was granted. This happened during the period when the van Leer project was on-going and the same demands had been made with reference to that project, as we have already seen. When the next series of local history projects started 10 years later in 1995, it was a foregone conclusion that there were to be both Sami and Norwegian members of the committee (Nielsen, 1990; Nielsen & Pedersen, 1994; Evjen, 1998, 2001). The reindeer herders, the Lule and the sea Sami parts of the population were dealt with in all four volumes and the diversity was highlighted.

Over the last few decades, the discipline of history had also been expanded to encompass social and cultural conditions – more widely understood – that required the use of oral sources. This contributed to the researcher and the researched being on more equal terms.

Another development over the last decades has been a growing interest in religion-related research. In this connection it is necessary to draw attention to Læstadianism, a revivalist movement (but part of the Norwegian state church) in which Sami and Kven make up a significant portion of its following. Læstadianism held a strong position in the area and has been researched both at the regional and local levels (Sivertsen, 1955; Larsen, 1995; Malmbekk, 1995; Andersen, 2007). Recent acceptance of diversity has also contributed to a research interest in pre-Christian Sami religion. In the 1990s, the religion historian Håkan Rydving studied the seventeenth century sources from Lule Lappmark as well as the notes made by Jens Kildal in the eighteenth century. Kildal was a missionary who lived most of his adult life at Kjårnes in Tysfjord. The Lule area was one out of many in the eighteenth century that needed to be re-Christianized, according to the missionaries (Rydving, 1993, 1995; Kalstad, 1994, 1997).

### **Sami Research on Sami Topics**

Increased Sami consciousness has also led to the establishment of institutions to strengthen Sami education and research. In these years, several Sami institutions were established, e.g. The Nordic Sami Institute (NSI) in 1973 and the Nordic Council of Ministers. In 1982, a commission for higher Sami education was appointed (NOU, 1985: 24). The Sami Education Council and

the Sami University College were established in 1976 and 1989, respectively (Stordahl, 2008). In 1996, the education council set up a branch office at *Árran*, a Lule Sami centre in Tysfjord opened in 1994, with the Lule Sami language as a field of study. Thus, the area has a high-profile Sami institution at the local level. The University College in Bodø also has an office at *Árran*, and in 1998 established two chairs for the study of Lule Sami language and culture.

To a great extent, the young people of Tysfjord have received secondary schooling. In this context, it is worth noting that Aubert urged Sami young people to get an education. It is said that a prodding coming from a well-regarded researcher was seen as important. Many sought to study topics and write papers dealing with their own area and culture, a development which in no small measure was due to the interest in local history. To put the themes taken up into more concrete terms, we will look at student work done at the level of higher regional education in Bodø.

Sami students in the 1970s and 1980s were mainly drawn to Sami topics of general interest (Myklebust, 1998). For example, many papers were written on Sami and non-Sami settlement patterns, the organization of the old *siida* system (local group units), ethno-politics and Læstadianism. In the 1990s, the challenges of bilingual education were revisited, and topics dealing specifically with the Lule Sami area gradually became more common, e.g. the struggle to retain the Hellefjord settlement, the Lule Sami dialect, Lule Sami handicrafts, Lule Sami *yoik* (songs), and religious issues in the area (see Evjen, 1999 for a more comprehensive treatment). Student work reflects changes in contemporary social and political conditions in the same manner as the research mentioned above. Here we find both an ethno-political consciousness and an appreciation for a pluralistic society.

### **Dissemination of Research to 'the Other'**

As we have seen, earlier research has for the most part been conducted, and the results disseminated, by researchers coming from the outside. However, ascertaining the results of the research was not without some difficulty for those Lule Sami who might be interested in such insight. In large measure, this was a result of many of the publications having restricted access – that is, they were not open to general inspection. Furthermore, Alette Schreiner wrote her report from Tysfjord in German, while Kristian E. Schreiner mostly published his results in German and English. Aubert and Lina Homme published their major sociological reports in English and with restricted access to both. Homme's reports from Tysfjord, Hamarøy, and Sørfold were also restricted. The final report from the van Leer project was written in English (Høgmo, 1992). Publishing in a language other than Norwegian/Sami is not uncommon in projects involving international cooperation and must be understood as an act of communicating with an international research community, and final reports are usually restricted for reasons of privacy. However, paternalistic attitudes might also be at work. In other words, there might be a wish to protect the population from

insights that – in the view of the researcher – are too complex or painful, or subject to misunderstanding.

It is not only researchers and research institutions from the outside who keep information and material out of the public domain; many Sami students have also chosen to allow only limited access to their papers. As in the case of researchers, the reasons may be many and complex. Firstly, it might be a matter of privacy: the Lule Sami constitute a small group where individuals can be easily recognized. Secondly, it could reflect a desire to protect the Sami community: new knowledge is withheld to avoid misunderstandings and inappropriate use, something which is probably the case in regard to papers with religious themes. Thirdly, the reason might be to avoid internal criticism and to shield against anticipated disagreement and internal conflict. The restriction also prevents students and researchers from the outside from gaining access and finding fault with the conclusions. Most student papers are, however, open and available. Sami participation in research is now a fact of life.

Inadequate communication of results to those participating in the investigations has given rise to myths of various kinds. One such myth is that researchers made so many strange discoveries and came to such unbelievable conclusions that publication would be imprudent. Or, the researcher had crossed the line and publication would show that the people had been exploited. This is part of a wider discussion of research ethics, which will not be pursued any further here.

With reference to the object materials and ethnic clothing that were brought out of the Lule Sami area, there are ongoing negotiations about a possible return. According to the Norwegian Folk Museum, some consideration has been given to introducing the tri-partite Canadian system, according to which one-third is returned, one-third is kept by the national institution, while one-third can be lent out. The Lule Sami museum, *Árran*, hopes to keep most of its material in its own possession.

### **Increased Focus on Cultural Pluralism**

Qvigstad's and Kolsrud's ground-breaking research on the sea Sami part of the population was not quickly followed up by increased research on this theme in the Lule Sami area. However, in 1982 an issue of the popular journal *Ottar* from the Tromsø Museum was published under the title *Kytsamisk bosetting* (Coastal Sami Settlement; Aarseth, 1982). An issue of *Ottar* from the previous year dealing with the Alta dam controversy had raised questions about the rights of the sea Sami (Bjørklund, 1981: 31), although the Alta controversy involved primarily the rights of reindeer-herding Sami. In the 1982 *Ottar* introduction, the point is made that the name 'coastal Sami' is used instead of sea Sami, in order to include all permanently settled Sami by the sea. No mention is made of the argument also possibly being a wish to avoid using the term 'sea Sami', as going back a hundred years the social hierarchy among groups of Sami had placed the sea Sami at the bottom. Among the authors there were also Lule Sami who received the new concept positively, wanting to leave the 'sea Sami' in the shadows of history.

In the popular scientific journal *Bårjås*, published by the *Árran* Lule Sami Museum, articles by researchers and lay-people – both Sami and non-Sami – have been published every year since 1999. The writers have become fellow authors and colleagues, thus giving the encounter between researcher and those they are researching an extra dimension. It is perhaps of interest to note that none of the articles have the name 'sea Sami' as part of the title; instead it is Sami or Lule Sami. There is, on the other hand, an increased focus on Sami fisheries. This matter may be reminiscent of the state of affairs in Nordland in the 1970s, when an investigation showed that even if the plans and reports from the county government dealt with Sami issues and reindeer herding, the word Sami was not mentioned until 1974 – only 'practitioners' and 'associated with reindeer herding' were used (Evjen, 2004a). In *Bårjås*, we read about the Sami living by the sea but there is no mention of 'sea Sami'. This could also be seen in light of the establishment of the Lule Sami as the third official group among the Sami, in addition to the North and the South Sami. It was not until the 1980s that such a definition was approved by the national authorities (Evjen, 2004b). Some 15 years later it was still a matter of political strategy to appear as one culturally homogeneous group and not as sea Sami, reindeer Sami and Lule Sami. In the process of establishing an ethnic or national group, the first step is to appear as one whole, as in the case of establishing Norway in the nineteenth century as a state with one homogeneous culture.

The Norwegian Research Council (NFR) is a central government institution which has strongly influenced contemporary research. Through its programme grants, NFR determines directly what it sees as the most promising directions for future research. In the second Sami research programme, beginning in the autumn of 2007, there is increased investment in Sami research topics in general, but there is also a strong focus on the Sami as a heterogeneous group and on developing a Sami scientific language. In other words, the national government has become strongly involved in this endeavour.

Recent research represents the pluralistic view. In the anthology *Nordlands kulturelle mangfold, etniske forhold i historisk perspektiv* (The Cultural Diversity of Nordland, Ethnic Conditions in Historical Perspective; Evjen & Hansen, 2008), the authors focus especially on the sea Sami in history, both by identifying them in the sources, their part of the population and their participation in various livelihoods. In this anthology, the emergence of reindeer herding in the area is also pushed farther back in time than it previously had been. In this research group both Sami and non-Sami were represented, and the text also has summaries in the Lule Sami language. Some 10 years ago this would have been a sensation.

In addition, the demand was made that the Sami institution *Árran* should play an active part in administering the project, and it was argued that the researchers were representatives of 'the other' (i.e. Sami). Obviously, one could no longer take for granted that 'the other' represented the minority. This can be seen in a broader context, providing the last step of developing the encounter between the researcher and the researched Sami. Earlier the



definition of 'the other' was always given by the majority – the Norwegian researchers – but now these researchers represented 'the other' from an articulated Sami point of view.

### **'The Other' in a New Position**

Over the last decade some indigenous researchers have formulated what is called an 'indigenous methodology', which holds that indigenous research should be designed by those understanding the culture to ensure that the indigenous peoples' knowledge is the foundation (Smith, 1999: 15). Indigenous methodology also asserts that research should be disseminated back to people in a language they can understand 'in order to support them in their desire to be subjects rather than objects of research' (Smith, 1999: 15; also Porsanger, 2004: 117). Between the lines it is understood that 'those who understand' come from the minority group, such that 'the other' would then be part of the majority group.

Other features in this methodology are more challenging. The term research is understood as the way in which scientific research has been and still is implicated in the excesses of imperialism. It is argued that a deep understanding of the indigenous culture can only be achieved by a member of that culture. Consequently, an outsider's understanding is a biased understanding. Such a line of argument can be understood in connection to international ethno-political revitalization since the 1970s and the power of defining the research focus. This is part of an international discourse involving 'those who understand the culture'. An important issue follows regarding who has the power or the monopoly to create such a definition? Much of the debate over the criteria for participation in the discourse concerns variations of the 'question of ethnic monopoly' (Thuen, 1995). Programmes of preferential treatment should not be seen to replace one type of monopoly (Western academic structures) with another (indigenous) monopoly, but they have an important role in establishing a context of genuinely equal opportunity (Saugestad, 1998: 9). In research, academic competence rather than ethnic identity must be given priority.

The arguments for and against the 'indigenous methodology' are taken up both in national and international academic fora. The international trend is moving on, taking its point of departure from the fact that the educational level of indigenous peoples is increasing, especially among the Sami. In fact, the Sami in Norway are among the highest educated indigenous people (Stordahl, 2008: 255). In a recent international anthology, one-third of the presentations are on the politics of knowledge, discussing how higher education and research can build a vision for the future, being conducted by 'the others' in either understanding of the word (Minde, 2008).

Taking the topic of this article as a point of departure, the new methodology could be seen as the last step in a line of change from the nineteenth century up until today and as such is part of an interesting process. It can be concluded, however, that any form of monopoly is detrimental to the ideals of intellectual freedom. 'The other', being an insider or an outsider,

may present different knowledge, differences that together provide a broader picture of an indigenous culture than by either one of them alone.

### Significant Changes

The relationship between researcher and research object has indeed changed dramatically in the course of the 1900s. Parish Pastor Holm's relationship with the Sami was the elevated position of the state official to that of the low position of the common people, many rungs below his own vantage point. The relationship between the present-day researcher and those (s)he is researching has changed significantly, with the greatest changes having occurred over the last 50 years.

The new roles have come about through a complex set of reasons. The social democratic ideal of equality, the ethno-political revitalization and the level of education generally have led to a greater sense of equal human worth between the researchers and the researched. The person being researched has developed a more reflective attitude toward her/his existence through increased education and ethno-political involvement. They will insist on influencing what is transpiring and that the results are communicated back in a language that can be understood. Compared to Holm and Schreiner, today's researchers have to take into account not only this, but must also be more open to society at large. Being conscious of the power dimension embedded in research is another theme.

Development within disciplines has also changed the focus of research. Changes within the history of research on ethnic issues are important, but also that new disciplines have come into existence and that traditional scholarly fields of study have been expanded, e.g. history, which today encompasses both social and cultural history. In addition, there has been a change of focus from merely studying the meeting point between two peoples or cultures – the minority and majority – to a stronger focus on the Sami culture alone or as a part of the international indigenous community.

Today, in the meeting between researcher and research object and with ethnicity as a theme, this can just as easily involve a meeting between two representatives of minority groups, for example two Sami, as it can involve one coming from the majority. Which one of them represents 'the others' can also be debated. In any event, the encounter will be coloured by a strong consciousness of ethnic identity on the part of both individuals.

*Translated by Ellen Marie Jensen, Minneapolis, MN, USA*

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