

## Artikkel III:

### Kven culture and history in museum terms<sup>1</sup>

“Nations and ethnic groups prove their existence and gain respect through the conservation and preservation of their cultural heritage. This is followed by museum construction [...]”<sup>2</sup>

Gaining a place in a museum has considerable significance for both the self-awareness of minorities and the perceptions of this group by society at large. But how do ethnic groups and minority cultures gain access to the museum arena? More specifically, how has Kven culture become “museumised”?

The expression “Kven” is primarily used of the Finnish-speaking immigrants, and their descendants, who came to northern Norway (Nordland, Troms and Finnmark) during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>3</sup> The vast majority of these immigrants settled down and took up residence in northern Norwegian parts of the country.

In Norway there are two particular museums that include the Kven as an important part of their sphere of action, respectively Vadsø museum/Ruija kvenmuseum in Finnmark and the Nord-Troms Museum in Troms.<sup>4</sup> Both museums were initiated and established during the 1970s. As in the case of national museums established during the nineteenth century, the growth of minorities’ museums cannot be seen as an isolated phenomenon, but rather in relation to other historical and contemporaneous processes.<sup>5</sup> The development of Norwegian society, international trends, regional growth and an increasing interest in local history during this period had considerable significance for the foundation of museums of Kven culture.

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<sup>1</sup> In Goodnow, K. and Akman, H. (eds) *Scandinavian museums and cultural diversity*, UNESCO, New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books.

<sup>2</sup> Olsen, B. (2001) ”...at ikke Fremmede skulle raade over en Jorbund, som gjemmer vore Fædres Been og hvortil vore helligste og ærværdigste Minde ere knyttede.’ Problemer knyttet til bruken av fortid og kulturminner i diskursen om opphav, rettigheter og identitet.” *Kulturstudier* 18, Norway, p. 82.

<sup>3</sup> Ryymin, T. (2003) ”*De Nordligste Finner*”. *Fremstillingen av kvenen i den finske litterære offentlighet 1800–1939*. Tromsø: Institutt for historie, p. 3; Megård, B. O. (1999) *Kvener og finskætta: En undersøkelse av betegnelsene 'kvener' og 'etterkommere etter finske innvandrere' i politisk diskurs og i utforming av identitetstilknytning*. Oslo: unpublished thesis; Niemi, E. (1991) ”Kven – et omdiskutert begrep”. *Varanger årbok*, Alta: Vadsø Historielag og Sør-Varanger historielag, p. 126; Niemi, E. (2002) ”Kvenene – fra innvandrere til utvandrere”, in Mellem, R. (ed.) (2002) *Innsyn i kvensk historie, språk og kultur*. Tromsø: Norske Kveners Forbund/Ruijan Kveeniliitto, p. 45.

<sup>4</sup> The name of the museum Vadsø museum/Ruija museum has both the name of the town Vadsø and the name Ruija. Ruija is the traditional Finnish name for the area of Norway between Malangen-fjorden to the west and Sør-Varanger to the east. The name is also used in a more general sense to denote the land or area adjoining the Arctic Ocean.

<sup>5</sup> Amundsen, A. B. and Brenna, B. (2003) ”Museer og museumskunnskap. Et innledende essay”, in Amundsen, A. B., Rogan, B. and Stang, M. C. (eds): *Museer i fortid og nåtid*, Oslo: Novus forlag, p. 16.

In this article I look more closely at how Kven culture and history gained their place in museums and what processes led to the foundation of these museums. In addition, I shall attempt to identify how Kven culture and history have been portrayed and which accounts of the Kven have been presented by these museums. In this context it is instructive to look more closely at why these museums may be understood to be upholders of tradition, places of remembrance and narrators.

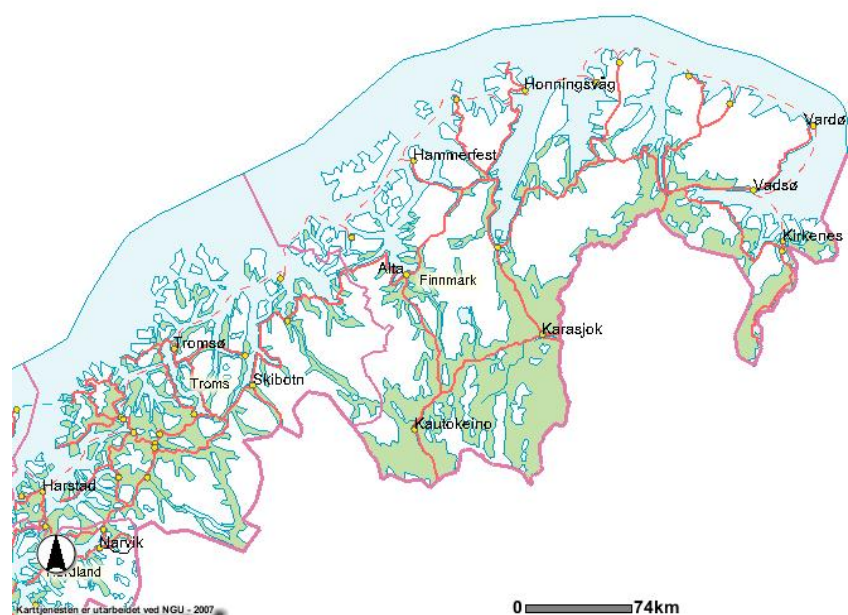


Figure 1. Troms and Finnmark.

### **Museums as upholders of tradition, places of remembrance and narrators**

Museums can be so much and exist in so many different forms with different objectives. The internationally recognised definition of museums is that they are “permanent, non-commercial institutions that collect, preserve, research and impart”.<sup>6</sup> One of the functions of museums is to be producers of exhibitions of historical frames of reference and these mostly consist of physical spaces that, together with textual, visual and material effects, depict various histories.<sup>7</sup>

Museum liaison between exhibitions and activities is strongly linked to the expression *tradition* and to the paradox of this expression. This paradox is linked to an understanding of tradition as something conservative representing that which is durable but at the same time

<sup>6</sup> Amundsen and Brenna (2003) op. cit., p. 9.; Hudson, K. (1999) “Attempts to define ‘Museum’”, in David Boswell and Jessica Evans: *Representing the Nation: A Reader*. London: Routledge.

<sup>7</sup> Amundsen and Brenna (2003) op. cit., p. 18.

open to change and innovation.<sup>8</sup> Museums' anchoring in tradition may thus be perceived as an attempt to represent what is permanent but also what is undergoing change. A constructivist view of tradition implies that this represents practices that can be invented anew.<sup>9</sup> Museums promote various activities for the public – at the same time as maintaining traditions. Nor is it unusual to adopt new strategies in order to uphold traditions. Barbro Klein has investigated the traditions of Swedish-American immigrants and their descendants. Her analysis indicates that when the command of language worsens or disappears, it tends to be other, more physically based customs that are brought to the fore to represent culture and identity.<sup>10</sup> Culture and tradition are relived through taste and other sensory activities. The character and position of museums is also connected to the fact that they have changed considerably over the past few years. Since the 1970s, these institutions have gradually taken up the position of cultural centres in their local communities.<sup>11</sup> They occupy essential roles as local actors and are important meeting places in the local community, but they are also arenas for activities other than those relating purely to museums. A physical presence in the local community is important for a museum's contact with the outside world.

Establishing museums may be viewed as a specific strategy concerning how the memory of one's own or another's culture should continue and be preserved – as both an individual and a collective memory. French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs has observed that memory is a social phenomenon and that the collective memory contributes to holding a group together.<sup>12</sup> His theoretical stance has been of great significance for a more recent understanding of collective memory. The protection and preservation of inherited items, knowledge and memories can be achieved by museum strategies. Museums are concerned with both collective and individual memory, but also oblivion, in that when one thing is brought forth other events remain in the shadows. Establishing new museums may also be interpreted as establishing what Pierre Nora calls memory places.<sup>13</sup> In museums traditions gain their place in the present. The past is mobilised in museum exhibitions for the public so that these once

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<sup>8</sup> Jackson, P. and Redin, J. (2004) "Förord", in Assmann, A. *Tid och tradition. Varaktighetens kulturella strategier*, Sweden, pp.14–17.

<sup>9</sup> e.g. Hobsbawm, E. and Ranger, T. (1992) *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University press; Anderson, B. (1983) *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, London: Verso; Assmann, A. (2004) *Tid och tradition. Varaktighetens kulturella strategier*, Sweden: Bokförlaget Nya Doxa.

<sup>10</sup> Klein, B. (1997) "Skatter från hemlandet? – Om föremål, seder och svensk-amerikanska resor", *Tradisjon, Tidskrift for folkeminnevitenskap* Nr 2, pp. 27–41.

<sup>11</sup> Hudson (1999) op.cit. p. 371.

<sup>12</sup> Halbwachs, M. (1992) *On Collective Memory*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago press.

<sup>13</sup> Nora, P. (1996) "From Lieux de mémoire to Realms of Memory, in Nora P. (ed.) (1996) *Rethinking the French Past of Memory. Vol I. Conflicts and Division*. Paris: Gallimard.

again become part of the individual and collective consciousness. Keeping this memory fresh is what is essential, as Jan Assmann maintains, with memory rituals.<sup>14</sup>

Museums are institutions whose ambition is to narrate and the expression *narrative* is central to museum analysis. This expression is important because we not only think but also communicate and interpret by means of narratives.<sup>15</sup> The historian Hayden White has observed that narratives, in an attempt to reform the fragmentary past into a narrative, consist of a beginning, middle and ending. He calls this a *plot* and characterizes these elements as a kind of basis structure in all narratives. With the help of narratives there is also a focus on what constitutes a culture's past, present and future. White clarifies plot in narratives as a juxtaposition of different relationships, in which the selection of events that will be omitted is central.<sup>16</sup> Each narrative will thus be constructed from a series of events that could have been included but have been omitted. White believes this is because it is continuity that controls the depiction of reality, not discontinuity.<sup>17</sup> What the constitution of narration and memory has in common is that certain events have to remain in the shadows in order for others to be brought into the light. In this context it is important to look at which memories and narratives are depicted in the Kven museums. White has also characterised narrative structure as tragic, comic, romantic or ironic – categories that he in turn has borrowed from the literary critic Northrop Frye.<sup>18</sup> Do the representations of the Kven fit into these categories?

Aesthetic and literary effects are also decisive to the content and meaning of presentations.<sup>19</sup> My concern in this chapter, however, is not to analyse the individual accounts in the museum exhibitions but to attempt to provide an overall view of what is being said about Kven culture by the museums. Is it possible to trace one or more meta-account of Kven culture and history in these museums? Over the past ten years, new centres have been established, apart from the traditional museums. What accounts can be identified here and do they differ from the accounts provided by museums?

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<sup>14</sup> Assmann, J. (2006) *Religion and Cultural Memory*, Stanford; Stanford University Press, p. 10.

<sup>15</sup> Berkaak, O. A and Frønes, I. (2005) *Tegn, tekst og samfunn*, Oslo: Abstrakt forlag, p. 125.

<sup>16</sup> White, H. (2003) *Historie og fortelling*, Oslo: Pax Forlag p. 64.

<sup>17</sup> White (2003) op. cit. p. 66.

<sup>18</sup> White see Norland (2003) "Utvalg og innledning", in White, H. (ed) (2003) *Historie og fortelling*, Oslo: Pax forlag p. 33.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p 11.

Before I look more closely at the foundation of the Kven museums I offer a short introduction to Kven history.

### **Introduction to Kven history**

The present-day Kven are descendents of immigrants who came from Finland and Finnish-speaking northern Sweden to northern Norway in search of new opportunities. This immigration was the result of several circumstances in Finland and Sweden, such as the Great northern War; limited opportunities for clearing new areas of agricultural land; an increase in population; a lot of shared usage; and periods of need and famine. Opportunities in Norway were attractive for many farmers and others with dismal prospects for supporting themselves. In northern Norway at this time it was still possible to clear new land, take part in seasonal fishing and obtain work in the thriving mining industry.<sup>20</sup> For some it was one section of a phase in their migration to America. For various reasons, such as improved economic conditions in Finland and Sweden and new opportunities for emigration to America, this immigration nonetheless dried up towards the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>21</sup> Up until that time, the Kven had settled throughout Ruija and were involved for the most part with combined use, primarily agriculture and fishing.

### **Minority policy**

The Norwegian state's minority policy and attitude towards the Kven changed considerably during the period from the eighteenth century up to the Second World War. Broadly speaking, this may be summarised as a positive relationship during the eighteenth century, until a growing negative relationship developed from the 1860s onwards. After 1880, positive relations had disappeared and the Kven were regarded as a threat to Norwegian society. Ethnic nationalism ("*Fennomani*") flourished in Finland during the same period. After Finland gained independence in December 1917, the Finnish authorities pursued an expansive foreign policy that aroused disquiet in Norway. This led to the Norwegian authorities fearing that the Kven might collaborate with Finland by integrating northern parts of Norway into a greater Finnish empire.<sup>22</sup> At the same time, the Norwegian authorities were worried that the Kven in many places were living in so-called "Kven colonies" and made up the majority of

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<sup>20</sup> Niemi, E. (2003) *Norsk Innvandringshistorie* bind 2, pp. 130; Nielsen, J. P. (1990) *Altas historie, Bind 1. De glemte århundrene (1520–1826)*, Alta: Alta kommune, pp. 201–204.

<sup>21</sup> Niemi, E. (1977) *Oppbrudd og tilpassing. Den finske flyttingen til Vadsø 1845–1855*, Vadsø: Vadsø kommune, p. 162; cf. Ryymin (2003) op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>22</sup> Ryymin, (2003) op. cit., pp. 203–212.

the population in certain areas. The expression “den finske fare” (“the Finnish threat”) has been used to characterize the Norwegian authorities’ fear.<sup>23</sup> In order to reduce this threat a minority policy was gradually introduced which was intended to “Norwegianise” both the Kven and the Sami. The Norwegianisation policy was based on a combination of security policy-based, nationalistic and educational ideological motives.

### **The Post-war period**

The Norwegianisation policy softened for the first time after the Second World War but the Kven were still perceived for a while as a threat to the security policy.<sup>24</sup> The Norwegian authorities’ view of the northern Norwegian region was now influenced by concerns relating to the Cold War, the region’s common border with the Soviet Union and the dangers of espionage over the border. During the 1950s, Finnish immigrants and their descendants were perceived as a potential ethno-economic threat, which also implies a fear of cultural infection.<sup>25</sup> This attitude was a result of the fact that sections of the Finnish population sympathised with the communist movement and was also due to Finland’s particular position regarding the Soviet Union after the war. The security service felt that the Kven, together with recent Finnish immigrants to Finnmark and Troms, might constitute a threat because of their sympathies for communism and the Soviet Union.<sup>26</sup> Because of this, a so-called Finn register was set up by the Norwegian security service in 1955.<sup>27</sup> Perceptions of “the Finnish threat” and fear of the Russians was of great significance regarding the way in which the Kven population and Finnish citizens in northern Norway were viewed. In 1957, specific passport regulations were introduced for Nordic citizens wishing to travel to Troms and Finnmark, whilst all the other Nordic regions had enjoyed passport freedom since the early 1950s.<sup>28</sup> It was only with the abolition of these specific passport regulations in 1975 that “the Finnish threat” was really dispelled.

### **The 1970s**

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<sup>23</sup> Eriksen, K. E. and Niemi, E. (1981) *Den finske fare*, Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 350; Bergh and Eriksen (1998) *Den hemmelige krigen*, Vol. I–II, Oslo: Cappelen Akademiske forlag.

<sup>25</sup> Tjelmeland, H. (2003) “I globaliseringens tid. Del I. 1940–1975”, in Kjeldstadli, Knut (Ed): *Norsk innvandringshistorie*, vol 3, Oslo: Pax forlag, pp. 89–91; Bergh T. and Eriksen K. E. (1998) *Den Hemmelige krigen*, Oslo: Cappelen Akademiske forlag.

<sup>26</sup> Tjelmeland (2003) *op. cit.* p. 91.

<sup>27</sup> Bergh and Eriksen (1998) *op. cit.*

<sup>28</sup> Tjelmeland (2003) *op. cit.* pp. 89–95.

Since the 1970s, Norwegian society has developed in a more open fashion with regards to ethnicity and the minority question.<sup>29</sup> During this period, the Sami struggle for identity has taken place, with discussions concerning the question of indigenous people, the development of and encroachment upon nature in Sami areas, and consciousness-raising with regard to cultural issues.<sup>30</sup> During this period the Kven people too were the target of new and positive awareness from many sides – among them the Norwegian authorities. In the autumn of 1970, NRK (Norsk Rikskringkasting [Norwegian Broadcasting Authority]) inaugurated *Finskendinga*, radio transmissions of the news in Finnish; although the transmissions were of less than ten minutes' duration a week, it was at any rate something.<sup>31</sup> Some years later, in 1976, Norwegian-Finnish cultural relations began to be subsidised by Norsk Kulturråd (Arts Council Norway).<sup>32</sup> Within the field of Norwegian research Kven culture was also starting to become a new topic of research during the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>33</sup> The state minority policy was nevertheless mostly characterised by silence and an almost non-policy attitude towards the Kven until the 1990s.<sup>34</sup>

### **Changes in society – new museums**

During the period prior to the 1970s, Kven culture and history was more or less absent from museums in Norway. Nevertheless change, when it came, occurred in many places throughout the 1970s: amongst other things, the number of newly established museums increased considerably after 1975.<sup>35</sup> One reason for this was change in Norwegian cultural policy, with a particular emphasis on decentralisation, self-generated activities and cultural democracy. Among other things, better financial conditions, with a strong increase on subsidy, took place at museums.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Niemi (1991) op.cit. p. 135.

<sup>30</sup> Bjørklund, I. (2003) *Sápmi – en nasjon blir til*, Tromsø: Tromsø museum Universitetsmuseet, p. 28.

<sup>31</sup> Mellem, R. (1998) *Kvenane – minoritet i motbakke*. Tromsdalen: Norske Kveners Forbund/Ruijan Kveeniliitto

<sup>32</sup> Eriksen and Niemi (1981), op. cit., p. 350; Norsk kulturråd (1976) *Innstilling om norsk-finske kulturforhold*, Oslo.

<sup>33</sup> Niemi, E. (2000) "Kvenforskningen: Et forskningshistorisk perspektiv", in Ryymin, T. and Karikoski E. (eds): *Kvensk forskning, rapport fra kvenseminaret ved Universitetet i Tromsø, mai 2000*. p. 17.

<sup>34</sup> Eriksen and Niemi (1981) op. cit, p. 350; Niemi (2000) op. cit. p. 17.

<sup>35</sup> *SSBs ukestatistikk* Nr 35 (1996): 8, cf. Nilsen, G. (2004) "Nord-Troms Museum 25 år", in Nilsen, G. and Sundelin, R. (eds) *Kultur møter i Nord-Troms*, Jubileumsbok for Nord-Troms museum, Sørkjosen 1978–2003, p. 215.

<sup>36</sup> This was partly the result of the county authorities gaining responsibility for establishing the framework for the economic subsidies, Gjestrum, J. (2001) [1993] "Fra folkemuseum til Økomuseum. Økomuseumsbegrepet – en fornyelse av museumsinstitusjonen og et viktig instrument for lokalsamfunnet", in *Nordisk Museologi* 1–2, Umeå, p. 43.

The foundation of the museums for Kven culture and history coincides with area development in the northern Norwegian regions, a process that was both based on and gained significance for northern Norwegian identity and self-comprehension. Prior to the 1970s, regional development had been particularly concerned with the Norwegian authorities' attempts to integrate northern Norway within the nation, with the help of modernisation and industrialisation (regionalisation). By accentuating the significance of this area on development at a national level, it was reckoned that the worth of the regions would be evident. The interest in local history in its own right only really commenced during the 1970s, and was the result of a process where each region strove to develop its own identity (regionalism) through the mobilisation of its own forces.<sup>37</sup> This led to a new interest in northern Norway, where the focus was on what was unique to the region, at the same time as questions were asked about the project of modernisation.<sup>38</sup> Nor, during the period prior to about 1970, had any notice been taken of the fact that this was a region of multiple ethnicities: both the Kven and the Sami were practically excluded from this process.<sup>39</sup> Throughout the 1970s, this ethnic aspect of the region gained its place in historical writings about the region of northern Norway. This decade has also been characterised as a pioneering era for local history in northern Norway and interest in ethnicity and minorities also increased through local history writing.<sup>40</sup> The period from 1970 to 1990 is considered to be the *identity phase* in northern Norwegian regional development. Whereas the period before this had been distinguished by a focus on growth and modernisation (for example, the reconstruction of northern Norway after the Second World War), local commitment and the struggle against centralisation now became stronger.<sup>41</sup> This resulted in various outcomes, including the foundation of the local history association, the teaching of local history at school and the founding of Hålogaland teater (Hålogaland Theatre) in 1971.

The new and increasing interest in all things local to a particular region was influential to the awareness and interest in ethnicity in the region of northern Norway. It also influenced the foundation of new museums, which may be viewed in turn as links in the regional

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<sup>37</sup> Niemi, E. (2004) "Region, fortidsforestillinger, etnisitet", in Berg, B. A. and Niemi, E. (eds) *Fortidsforestillinger. Bruk og misbruk av nordnorsk historie. Rapport fra det 27. nordnorske historieseminar, Hamarøy 27.–29. September 2002. Speculum Boreale* Nr. 4, Tromsø, p. 175.

<sup>38</sup> Tjelmeland, H. (forthcoming) "The making of a Sub-Arctic region: Northern Norway, 1900–2000", p. 12.

<sup>39</sup> Niemi (2004) op. cit. p. 190.

<sup>40</sup> Niemi, E. (1987) "Nord-Norsk lokalhistorie – kulturaktivitet, vitenskap og politisk redskap", *Heimen* Nr 24, pp. 58–72; Niemi, E. (1989) "Norsk lokalhistorie på 1970- og 1980-tallet – paradigmeskifte eller kontinuitet?", *Heimen* Nr 26, pp. 195–204.

<sup>41</sup> Niemi (2004) op. cit. p. 181.



development. The effect of local history and culture on these museums thus contributed to identity development in the region and local community.



Figure 2. Tuomainengården in Vadsø, 1973. Photo: Håvard Dahl Bratrein, Tromsø University Museum.



Figure 3. Alf Tuomainen and his horse, 1973. Photo: Håvard Dahl Bratrein. Tromsø University Museum.

### **Foundation of Vadsø museum/Ruija kvenmuseum**

In the county of Finnmark, local museum work achieved a breakthrough for the first time during the 1970s, and this included work relating to the Kven.<sup>42</sup> The Museumslaget (Museum Association) in Vadsø was founded in 1971, also considered as the year that the museum was founded. In 1975, a semi-public museum was established in Vadsø, but the museum itself did not open until 1980. Behind this establishment there were several local actors who were heavily engaged in Vadsø acquiring its own museum. The municipality of Vadsø, Norsk-finsk forening (the Norwegian-Finnish Association, NFF) and several central figures of Kven origin in the local community were involved in discussions and preparatory work. In Vadsø municipality at that time there were two properties that were regarded as especially important with regard to the preservation of the town's history and culture. From several quarters the desire was expressed that these properties should become part of a local museum. Vadsø municipality bought one of the properties, Esbensgården, a Norwegian business house dating from c. 1850, from its previous owners. The other property, Tuomainengården, was a Kven farm from the same era (Fig. 2, 3). There are several reasons why that particular farm became a Kven museum. The farm owners, Ida and Alf Tuomainen, who were brother and sister and lived in the house until their deaths in the 1980s, had had a strong desire for their childhood home to become a Kven museum. They bequeathed the farm as a gift to Vadsø museum in the 1970s with the intention that it should become a memorial to Finnish immigration.<sup>43</sup>

Tuomainengården was regarded as an exceptional farm. In the year of architectural preservation, 1975, there was an article about the farm in the local newspaper, *Finnmarken*, where it was described as follows: "Today, Tuomainengården is an attraction in Vadsø. It is the only one of the old Finnish farms that remains intact. Very little has been changed here over the years. All the surroundings here radiate tradition and authenticity".<sup>44</sup>

Tuomainengården was situated in the area of Vadsø where the first Finnish immigrants settled. Geographically, the town of Vadsø is central within an area along Varangerfjorden, traditionally consisting of three districts: Indre kvenby (Inner Kven Town), Midtbyen (Nordmannsbyen) (Middle Town, Norwegian Town) and Ytre kvenby (Outer Kven Town).

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<sup>42</sup> Niemi, E. (1979) "Museumsarbeid i Finnmark", *Museumsnytt* Nr 3, Oslo, p. 99.

<sup>43</sup> *Finnmarken* 29.10.1975; *Finnmarken* 26.04.1976.

<sup>44</sup> *Finnmarken* 09.07.1975, by Einar Niemi.

Tuomainengården was in Ytre kvenby – an area that has also been described as a kind of “Kven ghetto”, where the Kven language and culture were dominant.<sup>45</sup>

Tuomainengården was also central to an expression of the Finnish-speaking immigrants’ significance for Vadsø and the county of Finnmark when the Innvandringsmonumentet/Kvenmonumentet (Immigration Monument/Kven Monument) was built in 1977. The unveiling of the monument bestowed honour upon Tuomainengården and its owners. The Finnish President, Uhro Kekkonen, who was visiting Vadsø in connection with the unveiling festivities during the summer of 1977, visited the farm, apparently on his own initiative, with Ida and her brother Alf Tuomainen as host and hostess.<sup>46</sup>

The foundation of the museum in Vadsø was the outcome of the objective of preserving the town and region’s history. The museum was to assume particular responsibility for collecting and documenting Kven culture in the Vadsø area but also focus on the multicultural history and culture of Varanger. This was expressed in the museum logo (Fig. 6), in which four different symbols represented four cultures in the local community: Sami, Norwegian, Kven and Russian.<sup>47</sup> In 1995, Vadsø museum’s area of responsibility was expanded when the museum attained the status of a regional museum with responsibility for Kven culture and changed its name to Vadsø museum/Ruija kvenmuseum. The year 2005 marked another important milestone for the museum, when the Kulturdepartementet (Ministry of Culture) awarded 30 million kroner for the construction of a new museum.<sup>48</sup> In March 2007, an architectural competition was launched for the new building and work has begun on the new exhibition for the museum, which is scheduled to open during the autumn of 2009.

### **The founding of Nord-Troms Museum**

Like the museum in Vadsø, the founding of Nord-Troms Museum is an example of how community commitment and interest in local history and culture during the 1970s precipitated a chain of consequences. During a seminar given by Nord-Troms historielag (the Nord-Troms History Association) in Kvænangen in 1978, the idea of a museum in Nord-Troms was taken

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<sup>45</sup> Niemi (2003) op. cit., p. 140.

<sup>46</sup> Aarekøl, L. (forthcoming) ”Monument og minne”.

<sup>47</sup> The four symbols are: fishing tackle (Norwegian) a samovar (Russian), *badstulim* (birch twigs used in a steam sauna; Kven) and a bone carving (Sámi).

<sup>48</sup> <http://www.museumsnett.no/vadsomuseet/> (accessed 19.3.2007).



up.<sup>49</sup> The history association was particularly interested in the museum's potential function in local communities. The idea of a museum was also supported by the county curator in Troms, Jens Storm Munch, who felt that this could become a "modern museum".<sup>50</sup> He was of the opinion that there was a great need for such a museum, since so little of the material culture in the area had been preserved following the withdrawal of the Germans from the region at the end of the Second World War and the "scorched earth policy" they employed during their retreat.

In 1979, Nord-Troms Museum was founded and, as its name suggests, it was intended to serve as a museum for the northern part of the county of Troms. Its foundation has also been described as the result of "the desire to be part of the remoulding of society that resulted from the opposition to the EEC at the beginning of the 1970s."<sup>51</sup> Since its inauguration, Nord-Troms Museum's sphere of action has been based in six municipalities (which also come under the authority of the regional council): Storfjord, Lyngen, Kåfjord, Nordreisa, Skjervøy and Kvænangen. In each of these six municipalities cultural-historical sites have been established, all of which are designated as being of a special character, and which together offer a cross-section of the region's cultural history.<sup>52</sup> The Nord-Troms region has also been described as a museum in its own right, and as the museum's fundamental exhibit. Today, the museum continues to focus on the region, with particular emphasis on the Sea Sami and Kven cultures, at the same time as working with "cultural changes in the present and meetings/refraction between the old and new cultures in Nord-Troms."<sup>53</sup>

### **Kven culture and history at the eco-museum**

Like other museums, the Kven museums represent specific values and practices, formed by different political relationships and development characteristics in society. For these museums, the so-called eco-museum came to be of great significance. The foundation procedures for Nord-Troms Museum and Vadsø museum/Ruija kvenmuseum have several factors in common and both were a child of their time. In a period of significant change in the museum sector, at both national and international levels, the eco-museum movement

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<sup>49</sup> Nilsen (2004) op. cit., p. 8.

<sup>50</sup> Munch, J. S. (1978) "Et moderne museum", *Menneske og miljø i Nord-Troms, Årbok*, p. 106.

<sup>51</sup> "den vilje til å være med i samfunnsomforminga som motstanden mot EEC resulterte i, i begynnelsen av 1970-åra", Hauglid, A. O. (1988) "Nord-Troms", in Gjestrum, J. A. and Maure, M. (eds) *Økomuseumsboka – identitet, økologi og deltagelse*, Gjøvik, p. 167.

<sup>52</sup> [http://ntrm.no/forsiden/museet/museets\\_historie](http://ntrm.no/forsiden/museet/museets_historie) (accessed 19.3.2007).

<sup>53</sup> "kulturelle endringer i samtiden og møter/brytninger mellom de gamle og nye kulturer i Nord-Troms", [http://ntrm.no/forsiden/museet/formaal\\_og\\_visjon](http://ntrm.no/forsiden/museet/formaal_og_visjon) (accessed 19.3.2007).

established a good foothold in the region of northern Norway. This model has also been labelled “a principal characteristic of regional-local museum collaboration in the whole of northern Norway.”<sup>54</sup> Whereas Nord-Troms Museum was established according to this model, Vadsø museum/Ruija kvenmuseum may be said to be a museum that operates according to such a principle, even though there was no such specific strategy at the outset. The eco-museum model was an argument for the foundation of the Kven museums and was strongly influenced by the ideas that this model represented. This model may be said to be characteristic of its time. I shall look more closely at the development of the eco-museum model because this was of great significance regarding the way in which the museums’ narratives concerning Kven culture and history were put together and imparted.

The development of eco-museums during the 1970s and 1980s has been regarded as a critique of the traditional museums, but also as an expansion of their role.<sup>55</sup> The critique was closely affiliated to societal developments and political trends at that time. Towards the end of the 1960s many people considered that the traditional museums were in a state of crisis and efforts were made to redefine the role and character of museum institutions.<sup>56</sup> In both Latin America and the U.S.A., the social role of museums and their principle of equality were significant in the foundation of, respectively, “integrated museums” and “neighbourhood museums”.<sup>57</sup> However, it was the eco-museum movement in France that was of special significance for museum development in Norway. The expression *eco-museum* was launched during the International Council of Museums’ (ICOM) general conference in France in 1971 by Hugues de Varine – one of many who noted the need for museum renewal. The definition and criteria for eco-museums was structured and presented at an international ICOM symposium the following year.<sup>58</sup> The main criteria were that this type of museum should tackle the environment question and that they should specifically have the local community as their field of work. This implied that the museums were to focus on a series of initiatives: an interdisciplinary approach, embracing both cultural and natural relationships; establishing collections about and documenting the local environment; ensuring a collections policy that

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<sup>54</sup> “et hovedkarakteristikum ved det regionale-lokale museumssamarbeidet i hele Nord-Norge”, Gjestrum (2001) [1993] op. cit., p. 44.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., pp. 40–41.

<sup>58</sup> This occurred as part of an international symposium co-ordinated by ICOM in collaboration with the French Department of the Environment in 1972, at which meeting the first three eco-museums in France were also founded. See Varine, H. (1988) ”Om økomuseet”, in Gjestrum, John Aage og Marc Maure (eds) *Økomuseumsboka – identitet, økologi og deltagelse*, Gjøvik: Norsk ICOM Tromsø museum p. 107.

was representative of the local environment; documentation to be made available and accessible; those living in the local environment to be encouraged to play an active part; and contact to be initiated both within and outside the museum.<sup>59</sup> To a great extent, these criteria are split between the need for a foundation in the local community and for an interdisciplinary focus. In 1984, the Norwegian experts involved in the eco-museum idea presented their findings at an ICOM seminar, “Økologi og identitet; nye veier i museumsverdenen” (“Ecology and identity: new ways in the museum world”).<sup>60</sup>

The eco-museum model was of significance to the practical, local and physical creation of the Kven museums. One of the main principles in this model was that the buildings included should not be moved or centred in specific locations, as many folk museums and open-air museums had done in the past. One reason for this was that the collective positioning and reconstruction of old buildings at traditional folk museums was deemed to be the result of specific interpretation, and thus worthless as primary source material.<sup>61</sup> By not moving the buildings from their original sites but preserving them *in situ* the museum’s building stock and environment were perceived as more authentic. This principle has been followed by both Vadsø museum/Ruija kvenmuseum and by Nord-Troms Museum.

### **The construction and exhibits of Vadsø museum/Ruija kvenmuseum**

Today, Vadsø museum/Ruija kvenmuseum consists of seven different sites all around the municipality of Vadsø. Two of the sites, Bietilæanlegget and Tuomainengården (Fig. 2, 3), which are both listed buildings, are used for the purpose of narrating Kven history and culture at the museum. Bietilæanlegget is being restored and will have a particular focus on Kven maritime culture, while Tuomainengården is described as the most central part and the very “heart of the Kven museum”.<sup>62</sup> As we have seen, Tuomainengården was unique in its relationship with most of the surrounding buildings in Ytre kvenby but at the same time it is reckoned to be a traditional Kven urban farm. The farm is an example of what is termed a “Varangerhus” (“Varanger house”), with combined functions and an internal link between the living quarters and the barn.<sup>63</sup> The farm was built in about 1850 by Finnish-speaking

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<sup>59</sup> Varine (1988) op. cit., p.107.

<sup>60</sup> Gjestrum (2001) [1993] op. cit. p. 42.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid p. 35.

<sup>62</sup> “Kjernen i kvenmuseet”, Skarstein, S. (2000) *Vadsø museum – Ruija kvenmuseum. Et museum blir til*, Vadsø: Vadsø museum/Ruija kvenmuseum.

<sup>63</sup> Bratrein H. D (1980) ”'Varangerhuset'”. En foreløpig presentasjon av nordnorsk hustype med konsentrerte gårdsfunksjoner, *Norveg* Nr 23; Niemi (2003) op. cit., p. 146.

immigrants and in all it comprises a bakery, forge, sauna, barn and living quarters.<sup>64</sup> The entire farm site is built on approximately half a *mål* (roughly corresponding to an eighth of an acre) of land in the town, and is therefore a compact site. The interpretation of the Varanger houses is that they are Kven, as the result of the immigrant culture, with an emphasis on both Finnish and Russian building styles.<sup>65</sup> Tuomainengården has undergone several reconstructions, and by all accounts is a testimony to the previous owners' lives but it also depicts the environment and life in Ytre kvenby at the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>66</sup>

The living quarters, stable, sauna and workshop are central to the farm's history.<sup>67</sup> The importance of the stable is emphasised because it symbolises that the Kven introduced the keeping of horses to a greater extent than had been the custom in Varanger. Through the horse, the Kven are presented as innovative farmers.<sup>68</sup> There are no horses at the museum, but the stable building and the harness equipment that remains represent the horse's significance. The sauna on the farm was originally a *røykbadstu* (a steam sauna heated using a wood-burning stove). Until 1932 it was used as a public sauna in Ytre kvenby, where neighbours would meet in the sauna once a week.<sup>69</sup> During the 1930s the sauna was rebuilt as a workshop and forge, and today it accommodates old tools and other items. The lack of sauna was probably a loss to the farm, for in 1968 the barn was rebuilt as a new sauna and this is still used by the townspeople. A large wood-fired oven, which is not to be found on all farms, has also been reconstructed on the farm. Over a twenty-year period, from the 1930s to the 1950s, the oven was hired out to a baker, which is how the building became known as the bakery. In the main, however, the oven was used by the occupants and neighbours from Ytre kvenby who came regularly to bake their bread there. Everyone would bring a little something in payment and happily leave a loaf as a form of thanks.<sup>70</sup> There were probably several reasons for this practice, including the fact that ovens with facilities for baking were not commonly found in most homes until well into the twentieth century. Besides, providing wood for the sauna stove and the baking oven used up a lot of resources in an area where wood was scarce. At the same time, both the sauna and the bread baking served a strong social function as a meeting-place in the local community.

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<sup>64</sup> Skarstein (s.l.); Tuomainengården, Vadsø museum/Ruija kvenmuseum (2004).

<sup>65</sup> Niemi (2003) op. cit., p. 146.

<sup>66</sup> Tuomainengården, Vadsø museum/Ruija kvenmuseum (2004).

<sup>67</sup> Skarstein (s.l.); Tuomainengården, Vadsø museum/Ruija kvenmuseum (2004).

<sup>68</sup> Malliniemi, H. (2007) "Kvensk påvirkning av den materielle hestekulturen i Varanger", *Håløygminne* Nr 2.

<sup>69</sup> Tuomainengården, Vadsø museum/Ruija kvenmuseum (2004).

<sup>70</sup> Skarstein (s.l.); Tuomainengården, Vadsø museum/Ruija kvenmuseum (2004).

Today, the wood-fired baking oven and sauna still serve an important function as equipment forming part of the museum's effects. The baking oven is fired up in conjunction with events at the museum and used for cooking bread, pastries, salmon and meat. Vadsø museum/Ruija kvenmuseum is an important actor in the local community and arranges activities that are intended for the local population in general not for any particular ethnic group. These events provide the means for new cultural expressions, such as photo exhibitions, Christmas coffee mornings and cookery. During the annual cultural week in 2006, for example, the baking oven was used to make *pirog* (a Russian pie), pizza and a Somalian chicken dish (Fig. 7).

### **In a small side room**

A small side room in Tuomainengården houses the museum's exhibition "Kven i går – kven i dag?" ("Kven yesterday – Kven today?"), which is the sole permanent core exhibition in Norway that focuses on Kven history and culture. The exhibition is, as its location implies, extremely small. Nevertheless, the aim of the exhibition is to supply Kven history documented by Tuomainengården.<sup>71</sup> The exhibition is in a traditional idiom and shows "the lives and history of the Kven through pictures, objects and written documents".<sup>72</sup> The exhibition uses a lot of space, especially in the form of text, to explain about the background to the Kven, the origins and use of the expression "*Kven*", who the Kven are, and about the immigration and the emigration to America. Here, too, is a description of Læstadianism, which gradually gained a firm foothold among the Kven.<sup>73</sup> The exhibition focuses on both negative and positive aspects of the history and the lives of the Kven in this area. Here they are depicted as hard-working farmers, adept at handicrafts and industrious workers. The exhibition is also concerned with the Norwegianisation policy adopted towards the Kven and the fear of "the Finnish threat". The modernisation of northern Norway as a region after the Second World War is portrayed as being all the more effective because significant components of the Kven culture, such as primary industries and the language, partially disappeared.

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<sup>71</sup> Tuomainengården, Vadsø museum/Ruija kvenmuseum (2004), p. 2.

<sup>72</sup> "Kvenenes liv og historier gjennom bilder, gjenstander og skriftlige dokumenter", Tuomainengården, Vadsø museum/Ruija kvenmuseum (2004), p. 2.

<sup>73</sup> A conservative Christian revival movement, prominent in northern Scandinavia and North America, founded by Lars Levi Læstadius in Sweden during the mid-nineteenth century.



The title of the exhibition indicates that it has a dual focus on the past and the present. In terms of the contents of both the exhibition catalogue and the exhibition itself, however, it is the past that is particularly emphasised.<sup>74</sup> The present is described by means of present-day challenges and issues linked to identity and focuses on contemporary immigration from Finland.



Figure 4. Tørrfoss in Nordreisa, 1984. Photo: Stein R. Mathisen, Tromsø University Museum.



Figure 5. Tørrfoss in Nordreisa, 2004. Photo: Ola Solvang. Nord-Troms Museum.

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<sup>74</sup> For example, pages 1–19 of the exhibition catalogue are concerned with the period before the Second World War, whereas pages 20–27 are concerned with the post-war period.

## The site of Nord-Troms Museum

Nord-Troms has several large and small sites scattered around the six municipalities served by the museum but only two of them are specifically concerned with Kven history. At the old market place in Skibotn (Storfjord municipality), the old market booths bear witness to trade and encounters between ethnic groups. Markets have been organised here since the sixteenth century, with the participation of the Sami, Norwegians and the Kven.

It is principally at Tørfoss Farm in Reisadalen (in Nordreisa municipality) that Kven culture is evident (Fig. 4, 5). The farm is singled out as being both special and a typical Kven farm in an area where the first Kven population settled during the eighteenth century. The farm site was cleared during the 1750s and consists of a farmhouse that was built in 1931, outbuildings dating from 1936, servants' quarters, *røykbadstu*, plus three sheds: a tool shed, a cold store for meat and another one for cheese and clothes.<sup>75</sup> There is a focus on the fact that “the Finnish influence is reflected in traditions such as tar-burning and the steam sauna culture, and in their tools and building methods”.<sup>76</sup> The building practice of using tar kilns shows how the Kven made use of woodland and its resources. Woodland provided both tar and timber, which in turn provided a financial income. The *røykbadstu* was built in the Finnish style, using notched logs, and represents the sauna culture which it is assumed the Kven brought with them; it is one of the few saunas of this type that has been preserved in northern Norway. In this area it was usual to build the sauna first and then live in it until the main house was ready.<sup>77</sup> In addition, the building methods used for the farmhouse and the bread-baking oven are presented as a representation of Kven culture. The bread-baking oven is still used by the museum and is the only one in the area that has been preserved (Fig. 8). The oven is built of granite and clay from Reisaelva, and there is room to bake around twenty loaves of bread at once. Bread has thus acquired a central position and on the museum's Internet site there is a recipe for bread baked called “tjærebrennerbrød”.<sup>78</sup>

Like Tuomainengården, the buildings at Tørfoss have acquired a primary focus. The farmhouse burned down and was built anew during the 1930s, as it now remains. The design

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<sup>75</sup> <http://ntrm.no/forsiden/museet/hovedanlegg/toerfoss> (accessed 16.3.2007); Grepstad, O. Torheim, K. M. and Dahl, G. (2003) *Fotefar mot nord. En kulturhistorisk reise i Nord-Norge og Namdalen*, Oslo: Forlaget Press, p. 630; Nilsen (2004) op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>76</sup> “[d]en finske påvirkningen gjenspeiles i tradisjoner som tjærebrenning og badstukultur, og i redskaper og byggemåter.” Grepstad, Torheim and Dahl (2003) op. cit. p. 630.

<sup>77</sup> Haga, I. (1997) ”Rester etter kvenene sin byggeskikk i Troms”, *Fortidsvern* Nr 3.

<sup>78</sup> <http://www.ntrm.no/> (accessed 16.3.2007).

of this house is unique and is influenced by several different building styles. The two balconies up on the first floor and the veranda along the ground floor form the most eye-catching feature, probably the result of the carpenter having been to the USA. As an indication that this is nonetheless a Kven house, the design of the windowsills inside the house is brought up. The windowsills slope downwards, with a runnel underneath to catch the water from the condensation on the plain glass windows, but because of this there was no room for any flower-pots (this type of window sill is also found in the bakery at Tuomainengården).<sup>79</sup> The existence of the Tørfoss site has been traced a long way back in time by the fact that the farmstead was probably cleared by the first immigrants who came to the area. Nevertheless, it is as though time has stood still as far as this presentation is concerned. There are few indications of any activity, other than that the various sheds were built during the period between when the farm was cleared and when the new farmhouse and workplace building were constructed. The history of what happened in the meantime or how life on the farm has progressed is absent, other than that we are told that the people on the farm have chopped wood, burned tar and baked bread.

Tørfoss is mainly open for the duration of a short and hectic summer season, and is occupied with various arrangements and activities. Traditional food is served here; there is bread baking and various courses in handicrafts such as weaving bindings for *komager* (soft boots made of reindeer hide) and making vegetable dyes.<sup>80</sup>

### **Kven culture and history at other museums**

In addition to Vadsø museum/Ruija kvenmuseum and Nord-Troms Museum, several other museums exist that may be characterised as local or regional museums, which also have the preservation and narration of Kven culture as a main aim.

Porsanger Museum is a local museum for the municipality of Porsanger and has a tricultural approach to the area's history. The municipality also has a trilingual profile and the museum therefore has a different name in each of the three languages: Norwegian, Sami and Kven.<sup>81</sup> The museum has small exhibitions around the municipality; in particular, these give an

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<sup>79</sup> <http://ntrm.no/forsiden/museet/hovedanlegg/toerfoss> (accessed 16.3.2007), Grepstad, Torheim and Dahl (2003) op. cit. p. 630–631.

<sup>80</sup> Nilsen (2004) op. cit. p. 13.

<sup>81</sup> Respectively, Porsanger Museum, Porsáŋgu Musea and Porsangin Myseymmin.

account of the Sami shaman Johan Kaaven, the tradition of tar burning in the area and local living conditions during the Second World War.<sup>82</sup>

Sør-Varanger museum also focuses on the multicultural history of its geographical area, and the main contribution was made during the 1970s in terms of building conservation.<sup>83</sup> Today, the museum is presented as follows: “we present the unique natural and cultural history of the borderland between East and West”.<sup>84</sup> One of the sites has Kven culture as its theme. This site comprises a farm, consisting of a detached house, Labahågården in Øvre Neiden, which was cleared by someone who had emigrated from Finland in 1871.

Tromsø Museum is a university museum, established in 1872, and has worked with Kven culture primarily in the form of assembling documentation. At the beginning of the 1970s, comprehensive fieldwork was initiated, *Varangerprosjekt 1973-1974*, in the area around the Varangerfjorden, with a particular emphasis on documenting daily life, language and culture. The starting point, however, was not primarily to document Kven aspects in particular, but sprang from an interest in local history in Varanger.<sup>85</sup> This was an area in Finnmark that had not been burnt by the Germans at the end of the Second World War and it was regarded by researchers as a piece of “pre-war Finnmark”. In an attempt to “save as much as possible of the evidence of this distinctive area”, ethnological studies were initiated.<sup>86</sup> This fieldwork was gradually extended to a new project, *Kvenprosjektet 1984-1985*, primarily in the same geographical region. The material from both projects was later incorporated into the museum’s construction of a Kven archive, but it did not result in any significant museum effect.

Further analysis of these museums may contribute to an expanded analysis of Kven history and culture in museums but I have chosen not to present these or their exhibitions in any more extended form for reasons of space.

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<sup>82</sup> <http://www.karport.no/porsangermuseum/> (accessed 26.3.2007).

<sup>83</sup> Niemi (1979) op. cit. p. 103.

<sup>84</sup> “[v]i forteller om den unike natur- og kulturhistorien til grenselandet mellom øst og vest”, <http://www.sor-varanger-museum.no> (accessed 20.6.2007).

<sup>85</sup> Interview with Professor Emeritus Håvard Dahl Bratrein who was the project leader for both these fieldwork studies, 20.12.2005.

<sup>86</sup> “redde mest mulig av viten om det særpregede området”, *A magasinet* Nr 21 (1974), by Asbjørn Klepp.

### **New minority policies – new voices?**

At the turn of the new millennium remarkable changes to the state minority policy took place. Now the framework of reference for the handling of minority questions within national borders was becoming characterised by international trends from the global community.<sup>87</sup> In 1999, the Norwegian state ratified the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, which entailed the Kven, Forest Finns, Jews, Roma (Gypsies) and the Romany people (Travellers) being recognised as national minorities in Norway.<sup>88</sup> The recognition of these national minorities in 1999 was a turning point in relation to thinking and practice regarding these groups. The process leading up to the ratification had taken several years and led, amongst other things, to an increased awareness of Kven culture.<sup>89</sup> Now, minorities with lengthy experience within the national borders were raised up from local and local history levels to national and international levels. The ratification of the framework convention placed an obligation on the Norwegian state to make arrangements for the national minorities to preserve and develop their culture, (see Article 5).<sup>90</sup> This obliged the Norwegian authorities to promote the conditions necessary for the Kven to be able "to maintain and develop their culture, and to preserve the essential elements of their identity, namely their religion, language, traditions and cultural heritage".<sup>91</sup>

The national minorities have, traditionally, had a minor role in the Norwegian museum world. In reports to the Norwegian Parliament dated 1999-2001 it was ascertained that the multicultural element had been poorly represented in Norwegian museums and that cultural multiplicity was rendered visible to only a limited and poor extent, especially with regard to the national minorities.<sup>92</sup> "It is also worth noting that when Norsk museumsutvikling published its *Norsk museumsformidling og den flerkulturelle utfordringen* report (*Norwegian Museum Development and the multicultural challenge*), this did not cover museum

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<sup>87</sup> Bjørklund (2003) op. cit.

<sup>88</sup> The Sami were not integrated in the ratification of this convention as the Sami Parliament wanted to preserve their status as an indigenous people through the ILO Convention (No. 169) concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries; Niemi, E. (2006) "National Minorities and Minority Policy in Norway", in Sia Spiliopoulou Åkermark (ed) *International Obligation and National Debates: Minorities around the Baltic Sea, Åland*, p. 430.

<sup>89</sup> Niemi, E. (2006) op. cit., pp. 429–430.

<sup>90</sup> *The Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities* (1995), Article 5, <http://conventions.coe.int/treaty/en/Treaties/Html/157.htm> (accessed 16.3.2007).

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> St. meld. Nr 22 (1999–2000) *Kjelder til kunnskap og oppleving*, Chapter 3.4 and St. meld. Nr. 15 (2000–2001) *Nasjonale minoriteter i Norge*, Chapter 6.6.1.

arrangements linked to indigenous people or minorities.”<sup>93</sup> In 2003, the Directorate for Cultural Heritage in Norway took the initiative to increase the focus on the national minorities, recognizing that these groups were heavily under-represented in terms of conservation work.<sup>94</sup> Two years later, in 2005, the Kven language was recognised in its own right and was no longer categorised as a Finnish dialect. In January 2006 it also became possible, for the first time, to study the Kven language at the University of Tromsø.

After the Council of Europe’s framework convention was ratified, other institutions outside museums have become involved in documentation and activities relating to Kven culture. *Kvensk institutt – Kainun institutti* (the Kven Institute) in Porsanger and Halti business centre in the municipality of Nordreisa are under construction and may contribute new or extended studies on Kven history and culture. These centres are far from complete but in the past few years much has happened en route to their realisation.

### **Kvensk institutt – Kainun institutti in Porsanger**

On the day that Crown Prince Haakon celebrated his 31st birthday in 2004, the first, symbolic spade full of earth was dug from the site where the administration building will be located in Børselv in Porsanger. Because it was the Crown Prince’s birthday, flags were flying all over Norway, and both the Mayor of Porsanger and Terje Aronsen, the driving force in Børselv, felt this was an appropriate setting for the start of the building work.<sup>95</sup> The construction and operation have been principally financed by the state but the initiative and background work on the centre have been carried forward by local forces who want the village of Børselv to have a national centre for Kven language and culture. The original plan was to build a centre that would consist of two courtyards, in addition to an administrative building, which would house offices, course and conference rooms, and an exhibition space. A friendship area was planned, with a main house, an old dwelling relocated from Tornedalen in northern Sweden, a sauna, a *stabbur* (storehouse on pillars), barn, privy and summer cowshed. It was planned to build up this local area using local materials and building traditions that were lost during the Second World War. To date, only the main house from Tornedalen and the administration building are complete.

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<sup>93</sup> Rekdal, P. B. (1999) ”Norsk Museumsutvikling og den flerkulturelle utfordringen”, *Norsk museumsutvikling*, Nr 7.

<sup>94</sup> Lampe, F. and Stranden, T. (2005) ”Fra nasjonal enhetskultur til flerkultur”, *Fortidvern* Nr 1, p. 4.

<sup>95</sup> <http://www.finnmarkdagblad.no/nyheter/article1187976.ece> (accessed 28.6.2007).



The general running of the centre has commenced to a limited extent. In December 2005, the Kvensk institutt – Kainun institutti at the centre was established and organised as an institution, and in June 2007 the building that houses the institute was officially opened.<sup>96</sup> At the turn of 2006/2007, several new appointments were made and the institute staff now totals six individuals.<sup>97</sup>

Talks have been held with Vadsø museum/Ruija kvenmuseum to establish that the museum will take on the responsibility for Kven culture in purely museum terms, while Kvensk institutt – Kainun institutti activity will be primarily linked to the documentation, preservation and development of the Kven language.<sup>98</sup> Preliminary discussions have also been arranged with Høgskolen i Finnmark (Finnmark University College), which are aimed to regulate a collaboration between these two parties.<sup>99</sup> The original visions were ambitious, aiming to commercialize Kven language and cultural activities, become a catalyst for business development, become a local beacon in tourism development terms and be a source of power in the village of Børselv.<sup>100</sup> For the time being, the institute's particular focus is on a revitalisation of the Kven language through teaching materials for schools, a total immersion language programme for kindergartens, a web site and post-education opportunities for adults.

### **Halti in Nordreisa**

The county of Nord-Troms borders parts of Finland's largest area of wilderness, incorporating Halti, Finland's highest mountain, which has been a source of inspiration for the naming of the Halti Business Park in Nordreisa. Halti will accommodate a business park, nature centre and Kven cultural centre. The first stage of building was completed and opened in 2004; it accommodates various companies, a library, tourist information and a publicly endorsed national park centre for Reisa National Park. The second stage of building is still at the planning stage; this will be a centre for Kven culture and language, with a research environment in nature and culture, and an information and attractions centre. The plans are to focus on "nature and culture in the regions generally and Reisa National Park and Kven

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<sup>96</sup> <http://www.finnmarkdagblad.no/nyheter/article1867748.ece> (accessed 14.12.2006);

<http://statsbygg.no/Aktuelt/Nyheter/Statsbygg-overleverer-Kvensk-institutt/> (accessed 28.6.2007).

<sup>97</sup> These posts are Institute Director, Information Assistant, Culture and Language Co-ordinator, Director of Administration, Director of Education and Project Co-ordinator, *Ruijan Kaiku* 18.12.2006.

<sup>98</sup> Innst. S. nr.46 (2000–2001), <http://www.stortinget.no/inns/2000/200001-046-005.html>.

<sup>99</sup> <http://www.hifm.no/index.php?ID=1032&lang=nor&displayitem=206&module=news&view=printer> (accessed 14.12.2006).

<sup>100</sup> <http://www.porsanger.kommune.no/index.php?id=164344> (accessed 28.6.2007).

culture in particular”.<sup>101</sup> Even though this is still at the planning stage, it has been criticised by several Kvens because it does not comprise any academic content.<sup>102</sup> An initial step in the realisation of the centre was the appointment of a project director who, over the course of six months, was to make Kven culture in Nordreisa a financially viable business reality.<sup>103</sup> The main aim of this position was, amongst other things, to develop opportunities for the use of Kven culture in future business development and cultural life. So far this has been concretised in the form of an annual Kven festival in Nordreisa. The first festival, Baaskifestivalen, took place from 1 to 3 June 2007 and one of the festival volunteers felt that the festival showed that “young people have the right to call themselves Kvens, even if they don’t speak the language, and even though tar kilns and wood-fired saunas are foreign to them.”<sup>104</sup>

### **Kven traditions: memorial places and narratives?**

How should exhibitions and representations at museums and institutions presenting Kven history and culture be interpreted? These museums have never had expansive budgets or locations in which to produce large-scale exhibitions. They are used for other activities instead of traditional, core exhibitions. Because of the eco-museum model, it has not been desirable to incorporate these large-scale types of exhibitions. This has defined the framework of Kven culture and history to a great extent but it has also opened up new understandings and types of exhibition. The entire Nord-Troms region, for example, with its six municipalities, was regarded as the exhibition basis for Nord-Troms Museum during the 1980s. The museum was thus viewed as a complete museum, covering both nature and culture in the region, where human activities ensured a continual updating of the exhibition basis.<sup>105</sup> Such a perspective of the whole region as a museum activity also rendered unnecessary comprehensive and permanent indoor exhibitions. This view has nevertheless changed over time and no longer prevails with regard to Nord-Troms Museum. Today, activities are concentrated on the existing main installations, but efforts are also being made to develop the exhibition areas in sections of the museum.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> “natur og kultur i regionene generelt og Reisa nasjonalpark og kvenkultur spesielt”, <http://halti.no/nh/> (accessed 14.12.2006) and <http://www.suontavaara.se/dokument/Kvenkulturcenter.html> (accessed 16.1.2006).

<sup>102</sup> See *Nordlys* 17.8.2006 and 25.8.2006.

<sup>103</sup> *Nordlys* 31.10.2006.

<sup>104</sup> “de unge har rett til å kalle seg kvener, selv om de ikke behersker språket, og selv om tjæremile og vedfyrt badstu er fremmed for dem”, *Nordlys* 5.6.2007

<sup>105</sup> Hauglid (1988) op. cit., pp. 169–170.

<sup>106</sup> [http://www.ntm.no/forsiden/museet/formaal\\_og\\_visjon/rammer/viktige\\_tiltak](http://www.ntm.no/forsiden/museet/formaal_og_visjon/rammer/viktige_tiltak) (accessed 25.6.2007).



Activity at the museums still, even today, mostly takes place with the help of farm installations and a small permanent exhibition in the small side room at Tuomainengården. The farm installations focus particularly on material objects. With the help of material items, for example, it is possible to see how greater or lesser events in society have been expressed, and how macro-society is reflected at a micro-level.<sup>107</sup> Material remains have exemplified the practice of communal saunas and bread baking at Tuomainengården, but it also represents the re-establishing of traditions. In this way, buildings, material practices and traditions have forged a link with a fragmentary past. Material things also have several functions, in addition to their practical use. The physical world may function as a frame of reflection; we can both recollect and think about things.<sup>108</sup> Material things do not simply constitute physical surroundings, but are also symbols of culture, such as, for example, the stylised drawing of a *badelim* (birch twigs used in a steam sauna) in the Vadsø museum/Ruija kvenmuseum logo (Fig. 6). As a symbol, this is intended to create a recognisable sign of Kven culture. The drawing of the *badelim* is a picture of an object with a concrete function and represents handicraft knowledge of how this should be made in the correct fashion.<sup>109</sup> At the same time, however, this is also a symbol of how the Finnish-speaking immigrants introduced the sauna tradition to northern Norway and how, as a result of this, they were regarded as being more hygienic than other ethnic groups in this part of the country. Former director of Nord-Troms Museum, Rune Sundelin, has observed that “when Kvens and Kven society have sought symbols and expressions of their own culture in the past, they have often adopted the woodlands, farming and the sauna.”<sup>110</sup> These expressions of culture have become almost icons in museum representations, at the same time as they help to strengthen stereotypical concepts of culture and tradition.

When activity at the Kven museums is particularly based on material culture, especially in the form of buildings, what is narrated – not unexpectedly – is the past. Through the buildings, the visitor gains entry to the past. The buildings selected express a specific distinction from both Norwegian and Sami culture but also from the present day. Tuomainengården, for example, was already recognised as distinguished and exotic long before it formally became a museum. It already had a museum-type usage and served almost a museum-type function

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<sup>107</sup> Palmköld, A. (2003) ”Om tingens betydelse”, *Rig* Nr 2, p. 80.

<sup>108</sup> Larsen, P. (2002) ”Tingenes tale. Meditationer over en brødmaskine”, *Bergen museums skrifter* Nr 12.

<sup>109</sup> See for example *Ruijan Kaiku* 10/2006.

<sup>110</sup> “Når kvener og kvensk samfunn har søkt i fortiden etter symboler og uttrykk for egen kultur, har en ofte tatt til skogen, jordbruket og badstua.” Sundelin, R. (2005) ”Kvenenes arv”, *Fortidvern* Nr 1, pp. 20–21.

while the owners were still living on and working the farm. Even today, the last owners have left their mark on the farm activity. There are no biographical details concerning the Tuomainen siblings' life on the farm but, with the help of photographs, possessions, texts and physical traces of their lifelong work on the farm, the visitor gets the impression that they are still there. The narrative is also concerned with a life lived on the farm and the Finnish-speaking immigrants' adaptation to the area they had reached.



Figure 6. Logo.

The form of the buildings also has a tendency to signal to the outside world the category to which they belong.<sup>111</sup> The wooden buildings at the Kven museums signal that these are special places, and this is further strengthened by the fact that so few pre-war wooden buildings have been preserved in these areas. They are mostly of an old-fashioned character and serve many functions in addition to housing administration offices and shops. The houses both set the scene and contain exhibitions and are utilised when the public takes part in various arrangements. The narration of the buildings' histories testifies to the changes and alterations to a building's function, outlook and reconstruction. However, the buildings also limit the museum narration of Kven culture because this focuses particularly on the past and contains little about how material matters have changed over time.

Ideology concerning activity based on the eco-museum model has influenced how Kven culture and history have been narrated, especially with regard to consideration of the public. The main aim has been to activate the public and one particular target group has been the population in the local community. This has been in stark contrast to the general message imparted by the old, traditional museums. At the eco-museums local people were to be actors in their own present within a specific geographical area, and this would contribute to

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<sup>111</sup> Berkaak (2005) op. cit. p. 146.

strengthening the collective and individual memory.<sup>112</sup> In the case of both Vadsø museum/Ruija kvenmuseum and Nord-Troms Museum, the local population has been an important target group and both museums have their own programme of school activity (Fig. 7).<sup>113</sup> The museums may thus be viewed as places that contribute to establishing and maintaining both individual and collective memories in the local community. When traditions are activated at the museums, this also influences knowledge and memories of the place and of people's past.



Figure 7. Immigrants at the adult education programme, Tuomainengården 2006. Photo: Vadsø museum/Ruijan kvenmuseum.



Figure 8. Bread-making, Solveig Tørrfoss, Tørrfoss 2006. Photo: Nord-Troms Museum.

<sup>112</sup> Gjestrum (2001) [1993] op. cit., pp. 40–41.

<sup>113</sup> Nilsen (2004) op. cit. p. 13, <http://www.ntrm.no>; <http://museumsnett.no/vadsomuseet/> (accessed 25.6.2007).

Local museums such as Vadsø museum/Ruija kvenmuseum and Nord-Troms Museum have, as Kenneth Hudson has also observed, gained a function in their immediate area as cultural centres that particularly engage participation on the part of the local population. These activities appeal, like the results of Barbro Klein's studies, to other senses than just language and sight. Both physical practices and handicrafts knowledge are used at the museums when, for example, tar is burned or the sauna is fired up. Another example is the so-called Kven bread.<sup>114</sup> The bread and the baker's oven have gained a special position both within and outside the museums. Both museums bake rye bread according to an old recipe and tradition in wood-fired ovens, where the public are invited to participate in the baking or watch the process as spectators. In the first Kven film, entitled *Det tause folkets stille død?* (The Silent People's Quiet Death?), the producer searches for traces of the Kven in Vadsø and finishes up at Hildonen the baker's shop buying Kven bread. During *Barentsdagene* (Barents Days) in 2006, in Tromsø, *Norske Kveners Forbund* (the Norwegian Kven Association) took part, with an information stall where, amongst other things, they handed out samples and sold Kven bread.<sup>115</sup> Baaskifestivalen also relied on well-known forms of presentation when, amongst other things, people were invited to bread-baking sessions using wood-fired oven and butter churning at Tørfoss in June 2007.

These different activities at the museums, which are repeated on an annual basis, are of a more temporary nature and may be viewed as what Assmann has termed memory rituals, which are held to keep the museums and traditions fresh in the memory – both individual and collective.<sup>116</sup> The museums' selection of which stories and traditions are to be highlighted contributes to other traditions becoming obscured and this is in line with Jan Assmann's presentation of the way in which memories are formed. Such events generally have both a social and a local context, and need to be repeated often, such as, for example, the school week and cultural week at Vadsø museum/Ruija kvenmuseum. By viewing the Kven museums as memory places, in the spirit of Pierre Nora, they may also be perceived as a contribution to an identity-shaping process, both local and regional. In this way, as Pierre Nora has observed, the museums' function becomes both a physical place that can be visited and a symbolic place accommodating a selection of memories.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Kven bread is generally a round sourdough bread, baked using rye flour, similar to Finnish rye bread.

<sup>115</sup> *Ruijan Kaiku 10/2006*, 18.12.2006.

<sup>116</sup> Assmann (2006) op.cit. p. 10.

<sup>117</sup> Nora (1996) op. cit.

### **A metanarrative?**

A multiplicity of narratives is unfolding at the museums and new institutions for Kven culture and history. One of my aims has been to examine whether there exists what might be termed a Kven metanarrative at the museums. I have chosen to keep to narratives that contain what Hayden White terms *a plot* and some kind of basic structure. It is obviously problematic to group together the narratives from the various museums and institutions in what Hayden White terms a plot. One reason for this is that the narratives have not been constructed with the primary aim of creating a common narrative of the Kven or as links in forming the basis of such a narrative. The reason why I nonetheless consider this to be appropriate is because such a grouping together may offer a picture of what is aroused in the narrative in terms of Kven culture and what constitutes this culture's past, present and future. I maintain that the plot in the Kven metanarrative – based on the various museum exhibitions – may be identifiable, in spite of the fact that it will become a greatly simplified and generalised narrative.

My interpretation is that the plot's beginning is concerned with the immigration itself and the various reasons why this migration took place. The immigration itself occupies little space in the narrative, despite being a phenomenon that occurred over a long period. The course of the plot involves the Finnish-speaking immigrants' lives and work in the new land. Here, the expectations they brought with them are described as well as how they adapted themselves to a new landscape, climate, livelihood, language and culture. Its progress is then concerned with how life turned out for the immigrants, with particular emphasis on how they upheld their traditions. The Kven are depicted as industrious workers who did well for themselves despite being poor. The course of the plot also mentions the policy of Norwegianisation and modernisation, to a limited extent, to explain why this culture is in the process of disappearing. The plot ends on the day that the farmsteads became museums. The narrative concerning a living Kven culture is then refashioned to a museum account of the Kven. The Kven metanarrative may be perceived to be a narrative about immigration, adaptation, establishment, Norwegianisation, modernisation, and finally museumisation. The metanarrative is portrayed in two farmsteads and an exhibition in a small side room.

Nonetheless, it is even more difficult to fit this metanarrative into one of White's narrative categories – tragic, comic, romantic or ironic. I believe that several categories need to be used to characterise this narrative. The initial link may be characterised as a tragic narrative, which

has also dominated museum presentations of the Sami, where poverty, war and want are prominent reasons for emigration.<sup>118</sup> The ensuing and final sections, on the other hand, may be characterised as both tragic and romantic narratives: tragic, because Norwegianisation and modernisation led to a language and cultural loss; romantic, because their adaptation to the land they reached was a successful, almost harmonizing narrative. In addition, the adaptation of the Kven to their livelihood and landscape is also depicted in almost heroic terms. They brought knowledge and traditions which were passed on and further developed in the land that they reached. Although this narrative does not fit within White's four categories, it nevertheless tallies well with the positive and heroising picture of the Kven arrived at in fictional literature during the 1970s at the same time as the museums were being established.<sup>119</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The principal aim of this article has been two-fold: to show how Kven museums were founded and how Kven culture and history are exhibited and depicted by these museums.

### *Foundation*

Norwegian society and the Finnish-speaking immigrants' situation have both changed considerably since the immigration. During the period following the Second World War, the Norwegian authorities' view of the Kven underwent major changes, with a change in perception from a negative awareness (cf. the Finnish threat) to their recognition as one of Norway's five national minorities. During this long-lasting process, two milestones were of particular significance, during the 1970s and at the turn of the millennium.

A time-shift within the museum sector, at a national and international level, was very significant in terms of Kven culture and access to the museum arena. New ideological trends, linked to new financial arrangements, led to a growth in the number of museums in the region of northern Norway. The museumisation of Kven culture occurred as a combination of many factors: international trends, new museum ideology, regionalisation, local history interest in ethnicity as a subject in its own right and national objectives in the museum sector were all important. Both Vadsø museum/Ruija kvenmuseum and Nord-Troms Museum have had important roles to play in their respective local communities and in the region of northern

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<sup>118</sup> Olsen, B. (2000) "Sápmi – en nasjon blir til?", *Museumsnytt* Nr 5/6, p. 22.

<sup>119</sup> Molund, M. and Pedersen, S. (1982) *Kvenene i litteraturen*, Tromsø: unpublished thesis, p. 152, 155.

Norway as a whole. The portrayal of Kven history and culture in the museums has been clearly significant in terms of both self-awareness and understanding on the part of the majority society. The year 1999 may be viewed as a second milestone in this context. The ratification of the framework convention underlines the shift in awareness of the Kven, from little to local and regional, and now to national interest. Recognition of the Kven as a national minority was of consequence in several respects, including the fact that more money was approved for new initiatives such as buildings, language and culture. These new measures have been accompanied by new objectives on the part of the museums, with increased grants, including the new museum building in Vadsø and new centres in Børselv and Nordreisa, which will also portray Kven culture and history.

### *Exhibitions and narratives*

Museums that portray Kven culture and history have come about as the result of long-term processes in the region of northern Norway. These museums have been, and still are, local museums that primarily portray Kven culture and history through farmstead sites. The eco-museum movement and its ideology were influential in the creation and activities of these museums, and at the same time this ideology was also well suited to the sites that gradually came under the jurisdiction of the museums. Both Tuomainengården and Tørfoss were farm sites that were practically fully-fledged museums from the very instant they became museumised. These sites have undergone restoration and a reclamation of their aesthetic worth but for the most part they have not undergone significant changes since becoming museums. Here is the narrative of the farm and the material cultural history, which is depicted via the individual farm and the families who ran the farmsteads. None of these farms were average Kven farms, however, while they were in operation: each was a special case in its own locality. Nonetheless, they represent Kven culture and history. With the help of building design features, such as Tuomainengården being a Varangerhus and Tørfoss with its sloping windowsills, the farms have become an expression of Kven culture and history. Work tools tell of livelihood adaptations in the form of fishing, agriculture, livestock farming and forestry. Individual aspects of these livelihood adaptations, such as tar burning and the keeping of horses, are also illustrated as being particularly Kven in origin. In addition, other cultural expressions – most particularly those of the sauna and of bread baking – have become symbols of characteristic practice. However, these have also gained a position in the museumised narrative as traditions sustained by the museums' activities for the public. To use Hayden White's understanding of narrative, I believe it is possible to say (in a very

generalised and simplified fashion) that the Kven metanarrative may be characterised as both tragic and romantic. White's terms have not been applicable to every aspect of this narration because I believe it may also be understood as a heroic narrative. This metanarrative is not consciously produced by the museums themselves but it may be interpreted and inferred from the exhibitions already in existence.

The new centres that will deal with Kven language and culture are still in an early phase of their work and it is therefore too early to say whether their activities will be distinct from those of the existing museums. In time, however, these establishments are likely to lead to an expansion of the Kven metanarrative. At Vadsø museum/Ruija kvenmuseum a new and comprehensive core exhibition will open in a new and modern museum building. In this way, the framework for the portrayal of Kven culture and history will most likely be considerably changed; perhaps, too, the metanarrative of the Kven?

Translated from the original Norwegian by Mary Katherine Jones.