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# MINORITY CULTURES AND THE MAKING OF CULTURAL HERITAGE ARCHIVES IN FINLAND

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The article analyzes the logic behind the archival policies concerning language and ethnic minorities in Finland, drawing examples from three minority groups: the Sámi, the Finnish Roma (*the Kaale*), and the Finland-Swedes. We base our discussion on the documented descriptions, manuscripts, questionnaires, and fieldwork activities dealing with language and ethnic minority groups archived by the Finnish Literature Society (Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, SKS) and the Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, SLS) from the beginning of the nineteenth century until early twenty-first century. Viewed from a historical perspective, the establishment of archives in Finland was inextricably connected to the societal power enjoyed by certain ethnic and language groups seeking to preserve their heritage.

*Keywords:* archival practices, ethnicities, minorities, nationalism, Finland

Since the nineteenth century, cultural heritage materials in Western countries have been collected and stored in archives in which they later have become signified as national legacies. Within archive practices, however, questions of heterogeneous cultural identities have been mostly overlooked (see e.g. Daniel 2010: 84). Archives were long seen only as a means of promoting the representative characteristics of the national (majority) and of serving the nation-state project. Archives as entities endowed with institutional power thus have not only been depositories of collectibles but active agents of inclusion and exclusion (e.g. Anttonen 2012: 328).

Furthermore, it has been argued that archives for folklore and ethnographic materials have not only been used to create an idealized and polished picture of the past but that they also have participated in the erasure or minimization of conflicts (see e.g. Skott 2008: 21).

In Finland, the collection and uses of folk tradition have played a part in the construction of the nation. Folklore, in-depth descriptions of everyday life, and customs were seen to represent the very core of the Finnish-speaking rural peasants, who, in turn, were regarded as the embodiment of the idea of “the folk”. The materials were expected to repre-

sent “authentic” Finnishness, which meant the oral traditions of the rural and peasant population. As a result, the collections were used to augment an image of a unified “nation” with no severe internal ethnic or cultural tensions. From the beginning of the twentieth century onward, this influenced the work of historians, who studied and interpreted the country and its citizens as an exceptionally homogeneous and ethnically integrated entity (Tervonen 2014). Yet there were several ethnic and cultural minorities within the territory of Finland with their own distinctive linguistic, ethnic, or religious characteristics, and irrespective of the disregard of scholars and archivists, many of them wished to maintain this distinctiveness (Blomster & Mikkola 2014; Raento & Husso 2002: 151).

Because the history of cultural heritage archives is often a history of national homogenization, we examine how minority languages and ethnic policies were put forward in the cultural heritage archives in Finland from the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twenty-first century. In this article, we base our analysis on the documented descriptions, manuscripts, questionnaires, and fieldwork activities dealing explicitly with the language and ethnic minority groups in Finland archived by the Finnish Literature Society (Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, SKS, est. 1831) and the Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, SLS, est. 1885). Historically, both archives belong to institutions that have constructed and maintained a shared understanding of the core of nationhood.

Therefore, this article draws attention to the archives as subjects – not sources – for ethnological study. The framework of our perspective is the archival turn, a phenomenon coined by the anthropologist Ann Stoler (2002a, 2002b). This phenomenon has inspired researchers from different fields to focus on the origins of the materials they study: what happened before the materials ended up in the archives, and what has happened to them in the archives (see Ketelaar 2017: 234)? The article analyzes the logic behind the archival policies concerning language and ethnic minorities in the history of these two archives until present-day, drawing

examples from three different groups: the Sámi, the Finnish Roma (*the Kaale*), and the Finland-Swedes.<sup>1</sup>

## Minorities and Ethnicities

This article focuses on how ethnicity and languages played a role in the formation of folklore or oral history collections in the two main Finnish cultural heritage archives and further traces the evolution of the early efforts by these archives to document these groups as part of Finland’s history. We understand ethnicity as the cultural practices and perspectives of a given group of people that set them apart from others. Members of ethnic groups see themselves as culturally distinct from other groups in their society and are also recognized thus by those other groups in return. Characteristics that usually serve to distinguish ethnic groups are language, religion, history or ancestry (real or imagined), and styles of dress (e.g. Giddens 2001: 246). Often, ethnic distinctions are made in terms of selected cultural differences deemed significant by the actors, that is, the two Finnish cultural heritage archives in question. Practically, as Fredrik Barth has argued, these differences fall into two categories: overt signs people look for and exhibit to show identity and basic value orientations (Barth 1969; Salo 1977).

From the viewpoint of ethnicity, the Finland-Swedes form a specific group. The group is seldom defined as an ethnic minority although many features could suggest this. The concept used to describe the group is often “Swedish-speaking Finns”, which reflects the specific feature of the language minority. The use of this concept can be justified historically with the fact that Swedish- and Finnish-speaking Finns do not constitute two historically separate groups, and the boundaries between them have been flexible in both directions. During and after the time when Finland was a part of Sweden, many originally Finnish-speaking Finns changed their language, for example through education, and during the language disputes in the nineteenth century the opposite was done for political reasons by many Swedish-speaking Finns. The concept of Finland-Swedes came into general use considerably late, only in the 1910s; before, they were referred to as

Swedes in Finland (Engman 2016: 240–241). In this article, we use both the term “Finland-Swedes” and “Swedish-speaking Finns”. With the former, we refer specifically to the cultural identity of people whose mother tongue in Finland is Swedish; the latter we use when referring to the linguistic characteristics of this group. In this article, we use the term minority to describe groups that with their distinctive native language and cultural features make up a substantially smaller demographic group than the majority. By the term, we do not address discussions related to civil rights or minority rights. It is worth noting, however, that for example both the Finland-Swedes and the Sámi have, for various reasons, regarded their minority status with some skepticism.

Historically, the Sámi, the Finnish Roma, and the Finland-Swedes are significantly different from one another. When Finland became independent in 1917, the constitution guaranteed everyone equal rights of citizenship. However, unlike the Finnish-speaking majority and most of the Swedish-speaking population engaged in agriculture, fishing, and logging industries, the Finnish Roma were mostly itinerant. They lived in small family-based bands and combined a wide variety of low-capital economic activities with geographic mobility to make their living through services that were socially stigmatized (Tervonen 2016: 93). The Sámi livelihoods differed considerably from the sedentary based agricultural ones since they practiced nomadic occupations such as reindeer herding in northernmost Finland. Unlike the Swedish-speaking Finns who were active in the makings of the Finnish nation state, both the Roma and the Sámi history in Finland is a history of maltreatment and stigmatization from the systematic institutionalization and assimilation of their children in the twentieth century (e.g. Lehtola 2015; Pulma 2006).

Following the argument of Terry Cook and Dominique Daniel, who maintain that to understand archival collections and to comprehend their scope as well as their silences and biases, scholars need to historicize the production of archival collections (Cook 2009; Daniel 2014), we aim to identify power processes, even instances of supremacist

thought, that occurred in the archives in question. This point of view has emerged through using these materials in our previous research (Olsson & Stark 2014; Blomster & Mikkola 2014, 2017; Stark 2014). As such, we do not examine their formation from the viewpoint of an archive professional but from the perspective of observers of specific collections who have come to understand their varying emphases and possible missing pieces. This is not to place blame on the historical archivists but rather to point out the power mechanisms the cultural heritage archives in question have had over the course of time.

### **Archives in Focus**

The Finnish Literature Society was founded in 1831 in the context and impact of Romantic nationalism that derived from recent history and the political situation at the time. After hundreds of years, first as a part of Sweden, then as an autonomous part of the Russian Empire, Finland was perceived as a cultural hinterland, with the only authentic Finnish culture to be found among the poor peasants in rural districts of Finland and Karelia. The most important step was to collect and publish the surviving Finnish folk tradition; by doing so, the Society promoted the position of the Finnish language in a country where the language of administration and of the learned classes was Swedish. Romantic nationalism thus relied upon the existence of a historical ethnic culture that corresponded to the romantic ideal of folklore. The emphasis was on the role of the nation as a single entity that had evolved from the creation of the heroic distant past (Anttonen 2012: 337–338). From the perspective of the scholars, who often worked as archivists in the Finnish Literature Society, collecting work was urgent because they believed that the way of life regarded as “old” and “authentic” was vanishing and the spread of literacy was threatening to destroy the treasures of oral tradition. Today the archive houses extensive collections of folklore, folk songs, and oral history recorded from the populations of the nineteenth century as well as from the present-day.<sup>2</sup>

Compared with other minorities in Finland, the Swedish-speaking Finns had an early awakening re-

garding the importance of documenting their own cultural heritage – a heritage that they themselves viewed as distinct from that of the Finnish-speaking majority population. As a minority, the Finland-Swedes have enjoyed a special place in Finnish society with their own institutions, such as schools and congregations, for example. Nonetheless, this language parity has not led to establishing entirely smooth and unproblematic relations between Finnish- and Swedish-speaking Finns (Lindqvist 2001: 203–205).

The establishment of the Society of Swedish Literature in Finland in 1885 took place in a historical context in which the status of the Finnish language was becoming stronger and the culture and traditions of the Swedish-speaking Finns were in danger. The Society became one important actor in the process of constructing a specific Finland-Swede identity. Different standpoints were discussed within the Society that highlighted either the bilingual Finnishness or the joint Swedishness between the Swedish-speaking Finns and the Swedes living in Sweden. However, emphasis was given to the viewpoint that underlined the specific ethnicity of the Finland-Swedes and the originality of their culture (Engman 2016: 158–161).

The original main aim of the Society of Swedish Literature in Finland was “to collect evidence about the Swedish culture and its origin and development in Finland.” This focus was interpreted in the Society’s bulletin in 2004 as cultural heritage concerning the Finland-Swedes, their history and various forms of cultural expression. From the outset, folk songs, stories, and folklore were given a focal position in the archival work; furthermore, the first collection for the archive was received as early as 1885, in the first year of its operation. The collections were increased by scholarly fieldwork and contributions sent by lay collectors and private citizens. It must be pointed out, however, that ethnographic descriptions were left out of the Society’s work in the early years. It was only in the beginning of the twentieth century that a proposal was made to add ethnographic themes in documentation (Ekrem 2014: 28–29, 33, 76; Korhonen 2004: 3; Storå 1992: 90–91).

Although this article explores both archives independently, it is worth noting that they also have a history of cooperation. The joint circulation of certain questionnaires was thus aimed to establish as comprehensive an understanding as possible. By doing this, the archives have implicitly constructed an idea of a national entity made up of both Finnish- and Swedish-speaking communities. Both of the societies are still today independent actors, and they have a stable economy based significantly on donations; however, they also receive funding from the state because of their substantial scientific importance.<sup>3</sup> This factor cannot be overlooked when analyzing the work they do. As a part of the public funding mechanism, they are seen as important social actors, and the way they carry out their public role tells us about society in general.

### **The Power of Archives**

According to Fredrik Skott, who has specified the national and political aims in documenting folklore practices, the materials have been used to process changes, to create a sense of community, or to legitimize certain ideas (Skott 2008: 269). As such, the power of the archives is layered in myriad ways and throughout the archiving process, from the collecting stage to the accessibility and use of archive material. Archives are not static repositories but a procedure in which knowledge is made legible by modes of power. Through the ways in which they organize information, archives create what is knowable and unknowable about a given historical moment and groups of people. It has been argued that the ways in which objects are presented in the archives follow certain rules, and that these rules in turn represent the limits and possibilities of the creation of this knowledge (see Foucault 1969). Consequently, we argue that, instead of defining power as acts of domination or coercion by individual archivists actively involved in making the decision of what to collect, we understand power as dispersed and pervasive. The cultural heritage archives in question, therefore, should be considered as “the regime of truth” that pervaded society.

Cultural heritage archives express their power both explicitly and implicitly. For many decades,

Finnish scholars viewed rural storytellers only as bearers of tradition, that is, carriers of lore that was believed to be handed down from previous generations. The archives exemplified this kind of power: scholars, who were outsiders to the culture, defined and objectified rural, uneducated people and their vernacular culture, divesting these people of their subjecthood, the chance to act as protagonists and to interpret their own culture. Often this top-down relationship surfaced in the letters, questionnaires, and instructions sent to the collectors (Lilja 1996: 189–191). Nonetheless, according to Agneta Lilja, there is evidence of more or less overt resistance to this uneven relationship – for example, in implicit information in the responses, which often becomes comprehensible only upon reading between the lines (Lilja 1996: 202; see also Mikkola 2009: 130–133, 2013a: 147–148).

According to Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook, the role of archives is to create understanding about ourselves as individuals, groups, and societies. The questions of identity – which clearly represents one of the most important questions when analyzing the work of cultural heritage archives – have been re-phrased as questions of “memory” and “heritage” (Feng 2016; Schwartz & Cook 2002: 2). Margaret Hedstrom has described archives as constantly serving as the interface with the past. In this metaphoric definition, it is the archivist who constructs different kinds of interfaces between the past and the present and who exercises power over the evidence that will be safeguarded for the future. Hedstrom argues that ideally, the archivist should leave as many traces as possible about the interpretive frames that are operating at the organizational, professional, and individual level (Hedstrom 2002: 25–26, 34; see also Brothman 2001: 80). Cook and Schwartz have suggested that this is the way to make processes in the archives more transparent and less self-evident (Cook & Schwartz 2002: 173–174). These traces are what we aim to bring to light in our article – although in retrospective. We understand the work done by the archives in question as something that has both reflected and produced power relations and hierarchies. Such relations and hierarchies are invariably

produced by discursive and material intersections. In these processes the individual, institutional, and structural levels are in interaction. By analyzing the history of scholarship and archival principles from an intersectional viewpoint, we hope to make visible the role of archives in the power structure and production of knowledge (De los Reyes & Mulinari 2007: 8–10).

### **From Serendipity to Minority Policy: The Sámi and the Finnish Roma**

Within the population of Finland, the Sámi people and the Finnish Roma have represented a small minority and have often suffered from discrimination and subordination. For a long time, these minorities at the levels of both local and state government, not to mention in everyday life, tended to be ignored or stigmatized as different from the norm, as well as in the archive collections from the nineteenth well into the early twentieth century. One could ask, is this culture of silence traceable in the archives in focus?

As a term, archival silences refer to gaps in a body of original documents. According to Ulla-Maija Peltonen, silences in the archives can emerge in at least four different ways: 1) in the archive’s acquisition policy and how the actual collecting is being carried out; 2) in screening, that is, how private materials have been screened before accepting them into the collection, and how they are screened in the collections; 3) in archival descriptions and catalogues, that is, which things are presented in the descriptions and indexes; and 4) in the use of archival material. The last depends on the possible restrictions in using the material as well as on the research interests that might or might not be directed toward the material and the perspectives they reveal. Ultimately, if a historical and cultural matter or phenomenon such as a minority language has been excluded from an archive, or if its existence has not been even realized while compiling the collection, the only thing remaining in its place is silence (Peltonen 2015: 186).

If we consider the practice of collecting folklore in Finland, the position of the Sámi tradition has been profoundly affected by the fact that the Sámi have been regarded as a kindred people to the Finns and

that the Sámi languages belong to the Uralic languages, as does the Finnish language too. Defined as *a kindred people*, the Sámi were thus not counted as “Finns”. Nowadays, the territory of the Sámi covers areas from four independent states (Finland, Norway, Russia, and Sweden). Officially speaking, in Finland the home region of the Sámi is in the northern part of Lapland although many Sámi nowadays live in the Helsinki metropolitan area. Defining who is a Sámi is a highly-fraught and controversial question. Depending on the definition, the approximate number of the Sámi varies between 80,000 and 100,000, of which approximately 9,000–10,000 live in Finland (see Seurujärvi-Kari 2011: 13–14).

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, researchers were especially interested in Sámi languages, folk religion, and music, particularly the joik singing which has been a common practice among the Sámi. Examination of the old Sámi materials reveals that the people commonly providing the information for the Finnish Literature Society were very seldom Sámi themselves. During the period of autonomy, however, one individual stands out: Pedar Jalvi (1888–1916, also known by the pseudonyms Lemehaš-Biehtár, Piera Klemetinpoika Helander, and Pekka Pohjansäde), who was known as the first Sámi author in Finland, sent some fairy tales and other folklore he had collected from his home region Utsjoki, in addition to descriptions of local courting and wedding customs. The collection consisted of both Sámi and Finnish materials. At that time, Jalvi was one of the few Sámi to pursue an education; he graduated from the teacher seminar in 1915, but died of tuberculosis the next year (Huuskonen 2011: 275).<sup>4</sup> The Sámi materials have never been prioritized in the collection policies of either the Finnish Literature Society or the Society of Swedish Literature in Finland. Nevertheless, over the decades, some materials concerning the Sámi have ended up in archives, especially in the Finnish Literature Society’s collections, although they are scattered and incidental. Some of these materials have been collected in Sámi languages, some in Finnish.

While the Sámi have long been considered a vanishing kindred people, the Roma, who have lived in

Finland since the sixteenth century, have been classified as distinctly separate from the Finnish people. Since the 1500s, the Finnish Roma (*the Kaale*) arrived in Finland in several waves from both east and west. Based on the language and customs of the Finnish Roma, researchers believe that the oldest layer of the Roma population probably came from the west, and was comprised of the German Sinti subgroup (see Granqvist 2012: 273; Viljanen 2012: 416). Within Finland’s population of 5,5 million, there are currently circa 14,000 Kaale, of whom 4,000 live in Sweden although they have Finnish citizenship. However, no exact numbers are available. Up until recently, the Kaale have remained somewhat isolated from other European Roma (Grönfors 2001; Roman 2017). The Kaale are regarded as the only national Roma community of Finland; that they are referred to as the Finnish Roma in policy papers, media and general descriptions attests to this status. Today, the Finnish Roma not only have their own traditions, but they also share language and religion and a great deal of cultural knowledge with the majority, for most of the families have lived in the country for centuries (Blomster & Mikkola 2014: 15).

Despite the long coexistence between the Roma and the majority society, it took more than one hundred years before the Finnish Literature Society demonstrated any interest in preserving Roma traditions.<sup>5</sup> Up until the 1960s, the materials concerning the Roma in the collections of the Finnish Literature Society mainly constituted folklore from the perspective of non-Roma: Roma appear in the collections as topics of folklore where they conform to stereotypes about “Gypsies”.<sup>6</sup> For example, one of the most popular narrative motifs deals with the Roma figure as a thief (Stark 2016).

Nonetheless, the official archival policy does not always tell the whole story: the archives also contain surprises. These unexpected items are often a result of “spontaneous collection”, in other words, material that has not necessarily been actively sought. Surprises are provided by the collectors who have explicitly or implicitly challenged the archival policy either by collecting different material than was expected or by answering to questionnaires in

an unforeseen way. For example, in the 1950s, the non-Roma manual laborer Matti Simola, on his own initiative, sent his own collection of folklore by the Roma to the Finnish Literature Society. There the material was regarded as strange and eccentric as it did not correspond to the categories and themes of Finnish folklore (Blomster & Mikkola 2014: 26).<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, the Roma were often accepted as legitimate informants if they could narrate oral lore regarded as Finnish folklore. For example, the collections and catalogs of Suomen Kansan Vanhat Runot (the ancient poems of the Finnish people) – that contain the majority of the original sources of Kalevala-type poetry materials – consist of at least sixteen Roma informants (Blomster & Mikkola 2017). This number includes only those cases in which the Roma background of the informant is expressed in some way. The total number of Roma informants in the Finnish Literature Society folklore collection is likely far greater than we can ascertain.

As Risto Blomster and Kati Mikkola have pointed out, the inclusion of Roma materials in the Finnish Literature Society's archives in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was not due to an official archival policy; instead, the preservation of Roma traditions can be traced to the enthusiastic collecting efforts of a few amateur collectors. At the same time, the reluctance of the Roma themselves to reveal their culture and folklore to non-Roma contributed to the lack of archived materials. Indeed, it was a question of the Roma seeking to maintain cultural distance and remain outsiders to the mainstream society. From the point of view of the exercise of power, the Roma population's rationale for protecting themselves is obvious. Past experiences of sharing information about themselves with outsiders had often backfired, with the information being then used against their group, thus making cultural secrecy understandable (Blomster & Mikkola 2014: 31, 35; Viljanen 2012: 379).

A definitive breakthrough in documenting the aspects of the Roma culture happened in the latter half of the 1960s, when the Finnish Literature Society began to actively collect Roma folklore. Indeed, this decade witnessed an ethnopolitical shift both in

folklore collecting and in minority policies in general. The process can be seen as a part of a larger, international development, where scholars and the public started expressing new interest in the history of ethnicities (Daniel 2014: 176). In Finland, Roma activists went public, drawing attention to discrimination against the Roma, for example in terms of housing, education, and job opportunities. Additionally, the change in modes of livelihood among the Roma raised their concerns about the oral transmission and preservation of their distinctive culture for future generations. It was thus a more opportune moment to collect Roma folklore due to the attitudes of the Roma themselves. In addition, collection was enabled by the open reel tape recorder becoming more widely available, which made the collection of audio recordings easier and less expensive than before (Blomster & Mikkola 2014: 31–32; Viljanen 2012: 379–380).

Noteworthy is that most of the material concerning the Roma in the Finnish Literature Society has been collected in Finnish, not in Romani language. Studies have estimated that in the 1950s approximately 70 percent of adult Roma people still spoke the Romani language, even if most used Finnish as their primary conversational language (Vehmas 1961). In the 1990s, the Romani language was spoken only by the elderly Roma (Kopsa-Schön 1996). During the last two decades, there has been endeavors to revive the Romani language, for example by investing in teaching the language. Although the Romani language has the official status of a minority language in Finland, most Finnish Roma do not speak it or use it in their everyday lives.

Only until recently have the Finnish Roma and the Sámi minorities devised their own solution to the problem of establishing their own cultural heritage archives and collections. Unlike the Swedish-speaking minority that historically has not only had a position of power, but also, since the end of the nineteenth century, has had the opportunity to decide what to collect and preserve, the two other minorities have been both powerless and unheard. They therefore took different paths in establishing their own archives. From the nineteenth century onward, the



Sámi languages were recognized as belonging to the same language family as Finnish although the minority's semi-nomadic way of life differed from the sedentary majority's smallholding life. The language connection rendered the Sámi interesting in terms of familiarization and exoticization, thus relegating them to the status of intriguing *other*. The twentieth century saw an increased growth in Sámi activism, with demands for improved land rights and the right to safeguard and manage their own distinctive cultural heritage. In order to preserve and display Sámi cultural customs, the Sámi open air museum with a range of Sámi dwellings, hunting, and fishing methods in Inari was established in the early 1960s. The founding members were Sámi themselves. The call for governing their cultural heritage was put into effect in 2012 when the Sámi Archives were established under the National Archives of Finland. The materials are preserved in Inari, the center of the Sámi area in Lapland.<sup>8</sup> In addition to this, the Saami Culture Archive, which is a part of the Giellagas Institute at the University of Oulu, concentrates on collecting and preserving Sámi materials.<sup>9</sup>

Until today, the Finnish Roma have not had a special place or means for documenting and preserving their distinctive cultural traditions and worldviews. In practice, individual members of the Roma community have kept photos, letters, memoirs and diaries in private homes, whereas immaterial culture, that is, singing, storytelling and oral histories have persisted as a living tradition. The Roma population has traditionally regarded authorities with suspicion; moreover, their fears of outsiders using their knowledge against them may have been one reason for preventing serious attempts at establishing any kind of Finnish Roma archive until recently. Finally, in 2016 the National Advisory Board on Romani Affairs in collaboration with the Finnish Literature Society and the National Archives of Finland were able to launch the project Romani Cultural Heritage: Archiving, Valuation and Research (2016–2018), which establish the cultural heritage collection called The Roma Archives of Finland – Finitiko Kaalengo Arkiivos. It is not a separate archive, but a catalog that contains information about the archival materials considering

the Roma people in the Archives of the Finnish Literature Society and the National Archives of Finland. This achievement was made possible thanks to the long personal acquaintances between the researchers and a number of Roma activists.<sup>10</sup>

### **Heritage Work Based on Language Identity: The Finland-Swedes**

Unlike the Sámi or the Finnish Roma, the Swedish-speaking Finns have historically formed a dominant minority, that is, a minority group that has enjoyed political, economic, and cultural dominance in the country, even though they represented only a small fraction of the overall population. In this matter, the Swedish-speaking minority refers to the groups of people who have Swedish as their mother tongue. In the 1880 population census in which language groups were for the first time classified, the number of Swedish-speaking Finns was 294,000, which was 14 percent of the then total population (Lönnqvist 2001: 16). Currently the actual number of Swedish-speaking Finns is almost the same (289,540 in 2016), but their percentage value has decreased to less than 6 percent.<sup>11</sup> After Finland achieved independence (1917), the Finnish constitution (1922) set Swedish as the second national language alongside Finnish, which, according to Bo Lönnqvist, defined the position of Swedish-speaking Finns as a state within a state (Lönnqvist 2001: 17).

Whereas the Sámi and the Finnish Roma were the objects of interest in folklore collection, either by inclusion or exclusion, the Swedish-speaking Finns were strongly represented as initiators and promoters of the collection project of both Finnish-language and Swedish-language culture already from the beginning of the nineteenth century (Ekrem 2014: 24–25; Storå 1992: 85–87). In the nineteenth century, a considerable number of the Finnish national elite spoke Swedish as a mother tongue, although some of them opted to speak Finnish for political reasons. They were strongly represented as active advocates of folklore collecting within the Finnish Literature Society. However, as the name suggests, the Society was founded to promote the status of the Finnish language, folklore, and literature, thus excluding the

Swedish-speaking tradition from the collection project. This meant that the nation's Swedish-speaking tradition was in danger of not being thoroughly recorded at the same time as the position of Swedish was perceived to be under threat (Hakala 2014). From the disciplinary viewpoint, the Swedish-speaking ethnologists sought inspiration from the Scandinavian perspective while Finnish-speaking ethnologists referred to the Finno-Ugric perspective (Storå 1992: 85).

Nonetheless, it has been argued that even up to the 1880s, Swedish-speaking Finns did not form a unified linguistic, cultural, or political group: the urban upper class and the civil servants across the country had little in common with the coastal farmers and fishermen. Indeed, it was only during the years 1890–1920 that a specific idea of a population of Swedish-speaking Finns began to evolve (Lönnqvist 2001: 16–18). Part of this process involved documenting the culture and its traditions, a task which was organized by the Society of Swedish Literature in Finland, a Society founded in 1885 in honor of the national poet of Finland, Johan Ludvig Runeberg, a Swedish-speaking Finn himself.

When assessing the archival collections both at the Finnish Literature Society and the Society of Swedish Literature in Finland, it is necessary to keep in mind that the guiding principle has been to safeguard tradition expressed with the specific language. Since collection activities were limited either to material in Finnish or Swedish, the language-specific focus thus limited the overall picture of the given folk culture. For example, everyday bilingualism goes largely unseen in the material. For example, Maria Österberg (1866–1936), a lay collector, sent the Finnish Literature Society songs in both Finnish and Swedish, adding that in her bilingual home region these were sung by turns. Aware of the archive's collection policy, Österberg stated her wish that the Swedish-speaking songs would be passed on to those who were interested in them (Mikkola 2013b: 370).<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, the songs have yet to be sent to the Society of Swedish Literature in Finland. Instead, they remain in the collections of the Finnish Literature Society where they deemed exceptional material be-

cause of their language. These kinds of examples not only remind researchers about the serendipity involved in the creation of archival materials but also underline the significance of archival policies: only a small number of collectors, such as Österberg, sent materials in a language other than what had been requested and expected by the archive.

The monolingual sentiment has not been challenged within the Society of Swedish Literature in Finland either – or at least bilingualism has not been highlighted. Granted, the Society of Swedish Literature in Finland was established specifically to archive the knowledge of one language minority, making it understandable that the traditions of other minorities – or the majority of Finnish-speaking Finns – are excluded in the work. Yet it was not only a question of language. There were, for example Finnish Jews who chose to use Swedish as their first language. According to the collecting policy of the Society of Swedish Literature in Finland, however, these minorities did not count as “Finland-Swedes’ culture”. Of course, the archive may house material provided by a few informants from these groups, but they are difficult to find, since there is no information about their identities in the archival catalogs or descriptions.<sup>13</sup>

The archival policies of each era is clearly discernible in the collection metadata. As Dani Schrire has pointed out, there are always various meta-narratives that underlie the way folklore or ethnographic material as a subject-matter have been constructed (Schrire 2013: 209). Undoubtedly, the policies have been influenced by the research interests of the era as well as the individual choices of archival employees. To make the past comprehensible, the archives have used their power to guide the focus toward the aspects of life they have regarded as worth preserving. These focus areas did not require explicit demarcation, but throughout the history of the archives both ethnologists and folklorists appeared to have a clear grasp of who or what did and did not belong in them (see Olsson & Stark 2014). This has led to the creation of collections that emphasize certain phenomena and groups of people at the expense of others.

Among the questionnaires sent out by the Society of Swedish Literature in Finland, however, there is one example that does reflect interest in certain minorities. This questionnaire from 2017 concerns traveling peddlers (“Kringvandrande handelsmän”); the theme implicitly refers to Roma and Russians because a substantial part of itinerant traders in the past were non-sedentary Finns. The collecting focus of the Society of Swedish Literature in Finland is evident by the fact that the questionnaires were and are circulated only in Swedish (as the questionnaires in the Finnish Literature Society were in Finnish). In comparison, questionnaires were published both in Finnish and Swedish by the National Museum (later the National Board of Antiquities) and by the ethnological archive of Åbo Akademi, for example.<sup>14</sup> The themes that were viewed as important within the Society of Swedish Literature in Finland were very much in line with the emphasis in the Finnish Literature Society, too. The questionnaire activity within the Society of Swedish Literature in Finland was planned already at the end of the nineteenth century and the first experiment was carried out in 1893. The beginning of the regular questionnaire activity has been dated to the 1930s and their focus was on dialects (Ekrem 2014; Åström 1985: 14). The first questionnaire from 1937 dealt with words connected with the material peasant culture.<sup>15</sup>

It has been estimated that over the years more than 3,000 Swedish-speaking Finns have responded to the various questionnaires (Ekrem 2014: 161). During the 1960s, the archive had a network of approximately 70 respondents in different regions. This reflected a decrease in the activity compared with the earlier decades. Due to active efforts, the network has expanded, and during the 1970s the network grew to include approximately 350 respondents and during the 1980s each questionnaire received 80–100 responses (Åström 1985: 14–15).

The themes dealt with in the questionnaires essentially followed the same ideas that questionnaires directed toward Finnish-speakers (see Olsson 2014). Moreover, information about Swedish-speaking traditions was expected to come to light through questions concerning different regions, the built

environment, living traditions, and work (see Storå 1992: 92–94; cf. above, “Kringvandrande handelsmän”). The questionnaires with a competitive element started in 1957. These questionnaires have focused on themes such as immigration, different age groups, urban living, everyday chores, and yearly festivities, to name a few.

The questionnaires rarely underscore an interest in any given language group. Apparently, indication of the prerequisite of the language was evinced by the language used in the questionnaires. There are, however, some examples where the group in question was clearly mentioned and defined as Swedish-speaking Finns. One of these was a questionnaire from 1981 dealing with urban life. In the introduction the theme was presented in the following way:

The archive has an extensive network of informants across Swedish-speaking Finland, also in the cities. We now turn to our old informants while at the same time with this competition, we would like to increase our network with as many city dwellers as possible. (“Livet i staden” 1981)

Within the Swedish-speaking population the heterogeneity of the possible informants was emphasized. For example, this was explicitly stated in the questionnaire dealing with everyday chores from 1983: “We want to get in touch with as many different kinds of people as possible from as many different neighborhoods as possible. [- - -] Everyday life is something that we all take part in but it can be formed in many ways, depending on our profession, home place, our family ties etc.” (“Våra vardagssysslor” 1983). The following year, the result was deemed a success: the questionnaire received 163 responses, adding up to 1,400 pages. The heterogeneity of the respondents was considered striking: there were descriptions of the milieus of fishermen, small-scale farmers, craftsmen, entrepreneurs, civil servants but also from that of the gentry (Åström 1984: 28). Moreover, the questionnaires have focused on different age groups.<sup>16</sup> So, although the question of diversity has not been entirely neglected in the archives, the questionnaire activity reveals how the Swedish

language and assumed Finland-Swedes' folk culture have defined the context of the work.

### **Toward Diversity of Traditions?**

The roles different minority groups have had in the Finnish nation-building project have differed greatly from one another. It would be inaccurate to suggest that the Finnish Literature Society has followed a consistent minority policy while the Society of Swedish Literature in Finland's original role has been to safeguard one minority culture. It is evident that many language and ethnic minorities who have lived in Finland for centuries have been marginalized in the Finnish Literature Society's collections as well as more generally in the categories of Finnish folklore and cultural heritage. In sum, the collection of Finnish folklore has long focused on the oral traditions of the Finnish-speaking majority and any departures from this have been initiated by a certain minority group determined to preserve their own traditions.<sup>17</sup>

Nonetheless, some material concerning linguistic and cultural minorities can be found also in the Finnish Literature Society's collections, some even dating from the eighteenth century, even before the founding of the Finnish Literature Society itself. It can be said that the research and collection interests concerning Finland's traditional linguistic and cultural minorities underwent gradual changes, starting in the 1960s when the interest in traditions of minorities began to grow. Viewed more broadly, these steps taken by the archives to include the heritage of minorities formed part of the wider process in which the development of social history as an academic discipline, the civil rights movements in the West and the rise of ethnohistory deeply affected the world of archives (Daniel 2014: 176–177). Although the new interest in ethnic minorities resulted in a more dynamic view of ethnicity, archives often failed to define what made a document “ethnic” (ibid.: 179).

The first collection project concerning immigrant biographies was carried out by the Finnish Literature Society in 1997 in collaboration with the *Suwaitsevaan Suomeen* (“Towards a Tolerant

Finland”) project, led by the Advisory Board for Refugee and Migration Affairs and the University of Tampere. Besides Finnish, the call for material was published in Swedish, French, Russian, Albanian, Arabic, Persian, Kurdish, Vietnamese, Serbo-Croatian/Bosnian, and Somali. Respondents had the opportunity to answer in their own native language. There were 73 biographies collected from people representing 25 nationalities.<sup>18</sup>

The electronic collection platform *Muistikko* (“Memorance”) that was launched in 2016 was the next step in recognizing the multicultural and multilingual society in collecting work.<sup>19</sup> The platform marks a turning point in the collection history of the Finnish Literature Society in two ways. Firstly, it is an open electronic collection platform where people can read each other's recollections from different locations, as well as view the pictures loaded onto the platform. Secondly, it is revolutionary in its language policy: besides Finnish, it has been launched in English, Sámi, Swedish, Russian, and Arabic. Whereas the languages in the 1990s collection form were chosen to enable immigrant biographies, they now encourage people to contribute a diverse range of stories describing life in Finland, even in languages besides Finnish.

According to its strategy for 2013–2017, the Finnish Literature Society's mission was to make “Finnish culture understandable” and ensure that “Finnish people are aware and proud of their diverse cultural heritage as a part of the global culture.” At least from the point of view of collection objectives, the emphasis has shifted from seeking the “typically Finnish” to charting diversity and the interplay between cultures. Yet if we take note of the people who have participated in the collections, these objectives have not been realized very well, since people from linguistic and cultural minorities are still very rare. It is important to notice that even if the boundaries and the content of Finnishness have transformed during the two centuries of Finnish Literature Society's history, the concept still holds a central and formative place in its function. The views on Finland and Finnishness continue to determine whose tradition and folklore are included in the archival collections.

Similar changes can be seen in the aims of the Society of Swedish Literature in Finland. Its current vision states that the Society “wants to be an active and resourced partner within the fields of humanities and social sciences and work from its aims with a focus on cultural diversity and on open digital materials and methods.”<sup>20</sup> This emphasis on cultural diversity can be seen as widening the scope from purely Swedish-speaking Finns to include other minorities as well. This has been visible, for example, in the fieldwork projects supported by the Society during the 2010s. These projects have mainly dealt with questions concerning immigration to Swedish-speaking areas. One example of this was fieldwork done in Närpiö (Närpes in Swedish) where focus was set on new minorities becoming part of the Swedish language minority. The interviewees came originally from Latvia, Myanmar, Ecuador, Bosnia and Russia (Lindqvist 2014: 16–17).<sup>21</sup>

Terry Cook has argued that “there is simply too much evidence, too much memory, too much identity, to acquire more than a mere fragment of it in our established archives” (Cook 2013: 113). This is of course true when we consider the work done to document and preserve the materials concerning minorities in Finland, as well. However, the question then comes back to how and what we choose to archive. Together with Joan M. Schwartz, Cook emphasizes the role of the archivist in the process of archival performance. They urge the archivist to “self-consciously construct archival memory based on observing differences as much as monoliths, multiple as much as mainstream narratives, the personal and local as much as the corporate and official perspectives” (Cook & Schwartz 2002: 183). At the same time, they maintain that there cannot be any one or right way for an archivist to do the job. Although the power of the archives does not disappear with this reflective approach, it can change to a more transparent, negotiable, shared, and refocused form (ibid.: 185; Daniel 2010: 103–104).

The inclusion of ethnic and language minorities in the archival world has been carried out either through specific archives dedicated to them, the oldest example being the Society of Swedish Litera-

ture in Finland, or by specific interventions where ethnic and minority groups have been “given” a special focus in collection work. This has been and is an important step for the self-conscious search for and construction of archival memory. The differentiation can also be analyzed from the viewpoint of trust between the archive and the specific ethnic group (Daniel 2010: 87). Nonetheless, we face the question of how to integrate as much diversity within an archive collection as possible. The solution that has been suggested is to incorporate participatory decision-making also into the archival work (Cook 2013: 116–117; Daniel 2010: 103).

On the other hand, researchers interested in archival material concerning language and ethnic minorities confront a challenge when the existing material is typically dispersed throughout the archives and thus hard to find (see also Daniel 2010: 84). Undoubtedly, there are at least some informants mentioned in the materials of both the Finnish Literature Society and the Society of Swedish Literature in Finland, who belong to language and ethnic minorities, but whose background is hidden or uncertain. There are also some problematic ethical and juridical questions to consider. This is evident specifically in inventories that were created decades ago and are oftentimes still in use. The Finnish Personal Data Act (section 11), for example, prohibits the handling of sensitive personal data that describe or are intended to describe race or ethnic origin. It is also important to consider whether it is right from a research ethical perspective to search for representatives of a certain minority if their background has not been a primary or even a relevant factor in collecting the archival material in question. These questions have also been discussed while considering charting the history and agency of gender and sexual minorities in the literary remains of authors (see Taavetti 2016: 300). There are two ways to look at the issue: On the one hand, if a person’s actions are examined only in light of their minority identity, we get a rather one-dimensional understanding of their life. On the other hand, emphasizing a person’s ethnicity or other minority identity in contexts where that person has not mentioned it himself or herself raises ethical questions.

## Conclusion

Cultural heritage archives have been regarded as the institutional memory of people who share a common culture and identify as a cohesive group. Viewed from a historical perspective, the establishment of archives in Finland was inextricably connected to the societal power enjoyed by ethnic and language groups seeking to preserve their heritage. Wealth and education, assets generally possessed by the Swedish-speaking population in Finland, were the prerequisites for the idea of preserving common cultural knowledge. The beginning of the nineteenth century saw the Finnish national awakening thanks to the deliberate choice made by members of the Swedish-speaking upper classes to promote Finnish culture and language as a means of nation building. This choice was reflected in the establishment of the Finnish Literature Society in 1831, an organization devoted to folklore collecting activities in Finnish. Fifty years later, the Swedish-speaking population recognized the need to document folklore expressed in the Swedish language and thus established the Society of Swedish Literature in Finland.

Unlike the Finnish-speaking majority and the Finland-Swedes, the Roma and the Sámi living in Finland were not primarily the object of the collecting interest for over one hundred years. Although cultural heritage archives have in fact preserved some materials produced by the Roma and the Sámi, the materials have distinctively served to represent the majority culture, rather than the minority culture itself. Because the early decades of the archives were closely tied to nationalism and the making of a coherent nation, the majority was considered the natural representative of the totality. In this environment, the Roma and the Sámi of Finland were only tolerated as long as they remained loyal to the local and governmental authorities and showed interest in assimilating into the majority society and its dominant culture. Until the 1960s, archives paid little attention to other ethnic groups.

For a long time, both the Finnish Roma and the Sámi were located at the very bottom of the local social hierarchy. It would be no exaggeration to say that their history has been one of maltreatment or

stigmatization. The disregard for these groups led to a wide range of ideas and practices, such as assimilation policies, rendering minorities invisible to the archivists. Although awareness of ethnicity started to grow in the 1960s, it was not until the 2000s that the Finnish Roma and the Sámi were able to create their own archival solutions. To sum up, absent voices in the archives have always reflected the social inequality of a given society. The inclusion of minority voices and heterogeneity makes up a fundamental aspect of social equality.

## Notes

- 1 This article is part of the project Cultural Heritage of Differences (2013–2016) financed by Kone foundation.
- 2 Besides this, the materials of the Finnish Literature Society include literature and cultural history collections.
- 3 <https://www.finlex.fi/fi/esitykset/he/2006/20060127>. Accessed September 7, 2018.
- 4 SKS KRA Magga 2013.
- 5 Nonetheless, there were some early enthusiasts of Roma culture in Finland; these individuals, eager to educate the masses, to engage in missionary work, or inspired by romantic notions about the Roma thus managed to collect Roma folklore. However, their activities were not really connected with collecting efforts of the Finnish Literature Society. Among them were Christfried Ganander (1741–1790), Adolf Ivar Arwidsson (1791–1858), Carl Axel Gottlund (1796–1875), Klaes Johan Kemell (1805–1832), Henrik August Reinholm (1819–1883), Adam Lindh (1843–1924), Arthur Thesleff (1871–1920) and Oskari Jalkio (1882–1952, previously Johnsson) (e.g. Blomster & Mikkola 2014: 19–21).
- 6 An interesting example of the way Roma people were “included” in the archive material comes from another archive: the questionnaire circulated by the National Board of Antiquities in 1971 titled “Traveling gypsies” was directed toward the majority – not to the people of the minority (National Board of Antiquities: A-questionnaire [A-kyselyt] 1971).
- 7 SKS KRA. KV. A letter from Lauri Simonsuuri to Matti Simola March 1, 1957.
- 8 See <https://www.arkisto.fi/fi/aineistot/kansallisarkiston-aineistot/saamelaisarkiston-aineisto>. Accessed December 5, 2017.
- 9 See [http://www oulu.fi/giellagasinstitutethe\\_saami\\_culture\\_archive](http://www oulu.fi/giellagasinstitutethe_saami_culture_archive). Accessed December 5, 2017.
- 10 See <https://www.finlit.fi/en/research/research-projects/roma-archives-finland-finitiko-kaalengo-arkiivos#.WiZ16-E5QXg>. Accessed December 5, 2017.

- 11 SVT 2014=Official Statistics of Finland: [http://www.stat.fi/til/vaerak/2014/01/vaerak\\_2014\\_01\\_2015-12-10\\_kuv\\_001\\_fi.html](http://www.stat.fi/til/vaerak/2014/01/vaerak_2014_01_2015-12-10_kuv_001_fi.html). Accessed December 7, 2017. The Finnish term for the Swedish-speaking Finns, *suomenruotsalaiset* (“Finland-Swedes”), was not coined until the 1910s. Before that, it was common to refer to them as the Swedes in Finland.
- 12 SKS KRA. M. Österberg 2. 1909–1931. Letters November 23, 1925 & November 22, 1909.
- 13 E-mail from Yrsa Lindqvist August 2, 2017.
- 14 <http://web.abo.fi/arkiv/etn/tidigare.html>. Accessed December 7, 2017.
- 15 Ordamening N:o 1/1937.
- 16 E.g. “Att bli gammal” 1993; “Barnavård och barnuppföstran” 2003.
- 17 The Karelian-speaking tradition was included as Karelian was considered a Finnish dialect until the 1950s. Nowadays Karelian is classified as the closest related language to Finnish, and it became an official minority language in Finland in 2009. However, in the collections of Finnish Literature Society the Karelian material still remains a part of the Finnish folklore collection where it was originally stored.
- 18 <https://www.finlit.fi/fi/arkisto-ja-kirjastopalvelut/kokoelmat-ja-tiedonlahteet/kirjallisuuden-ja-kulttuurihistorian-2?sort=Vuodet&luettelo=keruut#.WiaM-Je5QXg>. Accessed December 5, 2017.
- 19 SKS KRA. Questionnaires on: Suvaitsevaan Suomeen, <http://muistikko.finlit.fi/>.
- 20 <http://www.sls.fi/sv/uppdrag-vision-och-strategi>. Accessed June 28, 2017.
- 21 Diversity was the theme for the membership bulletin as a whole. Other minorities have also been focused in the questionnaire activity as well as in the documentation. In 2016 and 2017, the theme was sexual minorities among the Swedish-speaking Finns.

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