

The Church of Sweden and the Sami – a White Paper Project

BACKGROUND, ASSIGNMENT, ORGANISATION AND RESULTS

Background to the White Paper Project

The White Paper Project on the Church of Sweden and the Sami should be seen against the background of the reconciliation work between the Church and the Sami undertaken during the past quarter century.¹ Inspired by international ecumenical efforts, this work was initiated in the Church of Sweden in the early 1990s. In both the northern dioceses and in the central organisation of the Church of Sweden, work was begun to provide better opportunities for integrating Sami people and Sami experiences into parish and church service activities. A national Sami council in the Church of Sweden was created in 1996 and Sami work groups were formed at diocesan level. Conferences were arranged, reconciliation services were held and a cooperation was established with The Church of Norway. In his article in the project's scholarly anthology, former bishop Karl-Johan Tyrberg describes in detail how this work developed.²

A commission appointed by the Church Assembly in April 2005 marked an important milestone in the Church's work on Sami issues. The commission's terms of reference took as a starting point the position that the Church had committed wrongs against the Sami:

The Sami are an indigenous people. Starting back in the days of colonisation and far into the 20th century, injustices have been committed against the Sami population. The Church of Sweden was complicit in these injustices.³

The commission's report *Samiska frågor i Svenska kyrkan* ['Sami issues in the Church of Sweden'], published in November 2006, concluded that the Church bears an historical responsibility:

Like other churches, the Church of Sweden was part of a colonising power in areas where there was an indigenous population. One aspect of the oppression was the wish to prevent the expression of Sami historical characteristics, special traditions and culture. Sami identity could not be reflected in church services and other areas of church life.⁴

1 The initial sections of this text are a shortened and re-edited version of Daniel Lindmark & Olle Sundström "Svenska kyrkan och samerna – ett vitboksprojekt: Presentation av projektet och antologin", in Daniel Lindmark & Olle Sundström (eds.), *De historiska relationerna mellan Svenska kyrkan och samerna: En vetenskaplig antologi* (Skellefteå 2016) pp. 21–39.

2 Karl-Johan Tyrberg, "Försoningsprocessen mellan Svenska kyrkan och samerna: Initiativ och insatser 1990–2012", in Lindmark & Sundström (2016) pp. 43–78.

3 *Rapport från Sägastallamat, en konferens om samerna och Svenska kyrkan, i Kiruna den 11–13 oktober 2011* (2012), <www.svenskakyrkan.se/default.aspx?id=899745>, 30/5 2015, p. 3.

4 Sören Ekström & Marie Schött, *Samiska frågor i Svenska kyrkan* (Stockholm 2006) pp. 9, 83.

The report concluded with a number of proposals, one of which was that the Theological Committee of the Church of Sweden should arrange a hearing on Sami identity in relation to the creed of the Church of Sweden. The hearing, entitled *Sågastallamat* [‘dialogue’, ‘listening’], was held in Kiruna on 11–13 October, 2011. Among the participants were representatives of the political parties of Sametinget (the Sami Parliament) and the Sami work groups in the Härnösand and Luleå dioceses.

During the hearing, demands were made that the Church of Sweden should assume responsibility for the wrongs that the Church had inflicted on the Sami at various times in the past. A deeper knowledge of the Church’s injustices against the Sami was seen as a prerequisite for a continued reconciliation process. Following the hearing, a plan of action was drawn up by the Theological Committee, in close cooperation with the Church’s Sami Council. One of the proposals in the action plan was to draft an “historical documentation of injustices against the Sami”. The need for such an account was motivated as follows:

A basic prerequisite for a continued reconciliation process between the Church of Sweden and the Sami is that the wrongs inflicted by the Church be acknowledged by the Church. This, in its turn, requires that the past actions of the Church vis-à-vis the Sami be elucidated.⁵

The action plan also contained proposals for additional efforts, for example the setting up of a theological discussion group on Sami spirituality and a project aimed at documenting Sami people’s experiences of the nomad school system. In the spring of 2012, the Board of the Church of Sweden decided that the action plan should be implemented, and in November 2012 the White Paper Project “The Church of Sweden and the Sami” was embarked on.

Assignment and aims

The Church of Sweden set the White Paper Project a task that was both relatively open and fairly limited. The introductory section of a memorandum prepared by the Church stressed the importance that “the actions of the Church of Sweden vis-à-vis the Sami be elucidated” and referred to the demands in this respect presented at the *Sågastallamat* hearing. With regard to the aim and focus of the White Paper, the memorandum advanced the views of an expert scholar concerning areas on which it was particularly important to shed light. One such area was the religious trials that took place from 1680–1730, when harsh measures were taken against Sami religious expressions. The second area concerned the segregating educational policy pursued in the decades around the turn of the 20th century whereby Sami children were placed in special schools of inferior quality compared to municipal schools. Following an account of these two areas, the memorandum laid down that

a summary should be made of what is known about these injustices. In addition, the project should identify any areas where there may be a need for further clarifying research into these periods or other times in history.

⁵ “Förslag till åtgärder med anledning av en hearing om samerna och Svenska kyrkan, *Sågastallamat*.” Underlag för beslut i Kyrkostyrelsens AU 2012-03-29, § 40. Svenska kyrkan, Kyrkokansliet, Uppsala. The memorandum was drawn up by Göran Möller, Kaisa Syrjänen Schaal och Kaisa Huuva.

It was also stated in the memorandum that “positive efforts on the part of the Church should be identified in the historical documentation”. As examples of such efforts, the memorandum mentioned the Church’s work to create written languages and literature for the different Sami language varieties.

The steering committee for the White Paper Project adopted a fairly broad interpretation of the assignment. In the project plan, the aim was formulated as follows: “To acquire a deeper knowledge of the relations between the Church of Sweden and the Sami throughout history”. The aim was specified further in the following manner:

The project is to document, present and discuss the impact – good or bad – of the Church’s activities on the Sami. Special attention will be paid to problematic elements, i.e. decisions, actions, activities and structures that have resulted in the Sami having been subjected to various kinds of degrading treatment, irrespective of whether these come under the heading of coercion, oppression, discrimination or racism. At the same time, the project should strive to provide a fair picture of positive efforts made by the Church and its representatives on behalf of the Sami and their culture throughout history.⁶

Thus, the aim, as formulated in the project plan, is in line with the wish expressed in the memorandum for the presentation of a balanced picture, even though the main focus would be on problematic aspects. The religious trials from 1680–1730 and the educational policy around the turn of the 20th century were not expressly prioritised in the plan, even though several of the articles deal with these periods. Instead, the White Paper Project, both in the project plan and its practical implementation, aimed to provide a broad and comprehensive picture of the relations between the Church and the Sami throughout history.

In connection with the presentation of the project’s aims, the plan also stressed the need for Sami participation in the project, as it was considered important that the project per se signalled an attitude compatible with the reconciliation work.

This means that Sami representatives will have great influence over the design of the project, from the planning stage to the implementation and reporting stages. They will be active participants and be substantially represented in the project steering committee. Research ethical considerations will also be given high priority so that the individual integrity and cultural identity of the Sami are duly respected.⁷

This aim resulted in a majority of the members of the steering committee being people from a Sami background, regardless of which organisation they represented. While consideration of research ethics is not explicitly addressed in the individual texts, all authors were informed about the aim of the project, and the peer review of the articles in the scholarly anthology included ethical aspects.

6 “Plan för ‘Svenska kyrkan och samerna – ett vitboksprojekt’”, unpublished memorandum, Department of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies, Umeå University (2013).

7 “Plan för ‘Svenska kyrkan och samerna – ett vitboksprojekt’.”

The project's self-understanding

What, then, is a white paper project? The term *white paper* is often used about document collections compiled by authorities and organisations with a view to clarifying controversial matters. It might be objected that the use of this term in connection with the current project is questionable, as white papers are often criticised for being one-sided and wanting to remove a troublesome matter from the agenda once and for all. However, this definition does not always reflect the genuine ambition behind the production of a white paper, especially not in this case. It is true that the term *white paper* can be said to signal more limited ambitions as regards concrete measures to rectify a situation and less independence than is afforded to so-called truth and reconciliation commissions. However, the White Paper Project concerning the historical relations between the Church of Sweden and the Sami had the advantage of a very loosely formulated mandate. In fact, it was the project steering committee that drew up the project plan and discussed and arrived at a reasonable level of ambition. In these discussions, the focus was not on terminological considerations but rather on theological considerations of reconciliation.

It was primarily Tore Johnsen's theological reasoning on reconciliation that influenced the project's understanding of the assignment and its delimitation.⁸ The model advocated by Johnsen comprises four phases. The first phase in a reconciliation process is *acknowledgement*. The truth must be told about what has happened. The victim's story must be heard and the offender must listen. It is also essential that the person responsible for the injustices suffered by the victim starts to tell the truth about the past events. In Christian terms, it is a matter of confessing one's sins. *Repentance* is the second phase in Johnsen's reconciliation model. This phase, too, is deeply rooted in theological tradition. The offender becomes concerned about the way in which his actions have affected the victim. Johnsen sees this as a more subjective phase than the acknowledgement phase, which involves admission of past events in a more objective sense. The change of mind that this second phase results in leads to a need to ask forgiveness and set things right. The third phase in this process is *restoration*. While the acknowledgement phase concerns the past, the restoration phase is focused on the future. It is about providing a basis for a common future by rehabilitating the victim and restoring the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim. Johnsen points out that the problem is that restoration is expensive and that the offending party frequently tries to get off cheaply. However, restoration is an absolute requirement for true reconciliation to take place. The fourth phase in Johnsen's understanding of a reconciliation process is *forgiveness*. While repentance results in the offender seeing the human face of the victim, forgiveness is about the victim seeing the human face of the party that abused him. Only when the victim's dignity has been restored can forgiveness be granted, as forgiveness cannot be forced. The timing must be right so that it is not seen as a demand but as something that can be given freely.

Seen against Tore Johnsen's reconciliation theology, the White Paper Project "The Church of Sweden and the Sami" has an obvious limitation: it is focused only on the first phase of the reconciliation process, i.e. the acknowledgement phase, as the aim was to expose the truth about the past history. It is of course to be hoped that the White Paper will create conditions for the parties to proceed to further phases in the process, but the steering committee deliberately refrained from proposing an action plan or road map for a continuing process. In this respect, too, the

⁸ Tore Johnsen, "Erkänd historia och förnyade relationer: Perspektiv på försoningsarbetet mellan kyrkan och samerna", in Daniel Lindmark & Olle Sundström (red.), *Samerna och Svenska kyrkan: Underlag för kyrkligt försoningsarbete* (Möklinta 2017) pp. 101–129.

committee was influenced by Johnsen’s reasoning, which emphasises that reconciliation is a relational concept. It is about re-establishing a relationship between parties that have been separated as a result of a conflict. A painful past must be overcome so that a new attitude towards the other party, and the requisite conditions for future relations, can be established. It was important for the project steering committee to bear in mind that reconciliation is a process involving two or more parties. It is essential to recognise that it is the parties themselves that jointly own the problem and that it is their decision whether, how and when they wish to engage in a common reconciliation process.

Organisation

The White Paper Project was financed by the Research Unit of the Church of Sweden, with additional resources provided by Umeå University, where the project was led by Professor Daniel Lindmark. The official starting point was the first meeting of the steering committee in November 2012. The committee was set up at the very beginning of the project and comprised representatives of Umeå University, the Church of Sweden and the Sami community.⁹

The steering committee met on twelve occasions. In addition to drawing up the project plan, which was adopted in October 2013, the committee’s tasks included discussions about the content and form of the project’s two publications – a scholarly anthology and a more popular scientific summary. The members contributed to identifying relevant themes and possible authors. Their networks within both the research community and the Sami community proved extremely useful to the project.

The steering committee also read and commented on texts of key importance to the project, in particular those included in the project’s popular scientific book (see below). Various experts were also invited to attend committee meetings to speak on their areas of specialisation. These invitations were intended to provide the steering committee with a basis for the continuing work on the project. Other guests also attended the meetings, specifically holders of central positions at the National Church Office in Uppsala. Their presence helped to establish a closer link between the project and central functions at the National Church Office, which facilitated communication and coordination.

Publications

From the very outset of the White Paper Project, the aim was to produce two different publications, an anthology of scholarly articles written by experts and a popular scientific summary intended to explain the scientific results in a brief and comprehensible way to the general public. The anthology *De historiska relationerna mellan Svenska kyrkan och samerna: En vetenskaplig antologi* [‘The historical relations between the Church of Sweden and the Sami: A scholarly anthology’] was published in two volumes in April 2016 and consists of 33 articles and introductory and concluding texts, a total of 1,135 pages. The popular scientific book *Samerna och Svenska kyrkan: Underlag för kyrkligt försoningsarbete* [‘The Sami and the Church of Sweden: A basis for church reconciliation work’] was released at a seminar held

⁹ The members of the steering committee were Ellacarin Blind, Carl Reinhold Bråkenhielm, Urban Claesson, Lisbeth Hotti, Kaisa Huuva, Peter Sköld, Sylvia Sparrock, Krister Stoor, Sagka Stångberg och Kaisa Syrjänen Schaal. In addition, Olle Sundström and Daniel Lindmark took part in the committee work as secretary and chair, respectively.

in Stockholm on 23 February, 2017 attended by Archbishop Antje Jackelén. This book comprises of two sections, the first containing six chapters summarising the themes around which the articles in the anthology are grouped, and the second, three chapters dealing with theological, political and ethical aspects of reconciliation. The fact that the summary was supplemented with texts on various aspects of reconciliation reflects an ambition to make the book useful in future practical reconciliation work in dioceses and parishes.

Research integrity was safeguarded in various ways. The scholars invited to submit articles to the anthology were free to choose their own issues and perspectives. While they were informed about the project and its ambitions, they were given a free hand to design their investigations as they thought fit and to draw any conclusions they considered scientifically motivated. Prior to publication, the articles were also peer-reviewed by expert scholars. Thus, the individual scholars did not have to address the reconciliation process to which the project as a whole was intended to contribute. Similarly, the authors of the chapters in the summary were free to present their own reflections and perspectives on the Church's relations with the Sami and the Sami's position in the Church. Unlike the articles in the scholarly anthology, however, the texts in the summary are more directly focused on matters of responsibility and reconciliation.

Since all the authors were given a great degree of freedom, their contributions differ not only in choice of perspectives and degree of attention to present-day issues but also to a certain extent in length and style. A guiding principle in the editorial work, however, was that all articles should be relevant both to those directly concerned with the subject matter and to an interested public. This ambition applies particularly to the texts in the summary, which were written to function as a gateway to an in-depth reading of the scholarly articles. In order to make the text in the two publications freely available, they were published online as a free download, courtesy of the authors and the publishers.¹⁰

The historical picture presented in the project publications is far from complete or definitive. In fact, it is somewhat fragmented. However, it is hoped that the White Paper Project and its publications will inspire further research based on other sources and perspectives that in time might result in a more comprehensive and detailed picture.

Overall results

It is not an easy task to give an account of the project's overall results. The project covered a history spanning some 500 years and the historical writing produced for the anthology comprises more than 1,000 pages. Thus, there are many different results and conclusions that could be highlighted, depending on one's own interests. As stated above, an essential point in this connection is also that it is now primarily up to the parties in the reconciliation process to draw those conclusions they consider most important. The project produced the anthology and the popular scientific book as a basis for further dialogue. These publications represent a contribution from the research community to the reconciliation process, a process that is now owned by others.

As mentioned previously, the White Paper Project makes no claim to provide a complete or definitive description of the relations between the Church and the Sami.

¹⁰ <https://www.svenskakyrkan.se/vitboken>

However, in their summary of the scholarly anthology, historians Björn Norlin and David Sjögren state that they believe the research findings presented should be sufficient to allow the Sami and the Church to engage in a process which will hopefully result in new forms of social intercourse and emancipation from historical colonial power relations.¹¹

Even though it is now primarily up to the Church and the Sami to draw their own conclusions and identify those results they see as being the most urgent to discuss, it might be useful to point out some important conclusions that may ensure that future dialogues will be based on a fair and balanced picture of the past history.

Probably the most obvious general conclusion to come from the research conducted within the framework of the project is that the relations between the Church and the Sami can be characterised as colonial power relations. As an integral part of the historical colonial power, the Church has had a paternalistic attitude towards the Sami. According to the dictionary of the Swedish national encyclopaedia (*Nationalencyklopedins ordbok*), *paternalism* means ‘a relationship between a (more) superior and a (more) subordinate party, characterised by a protective (and thus often passivising) attitude on the part of the stronger party’. The term is often used pejoratively about attitudes, views etc. one is critical of. *Paternalism* comes from the Latin word for ‘father’, *pater*, and denotes the relationship between a father and his children, in a patriarchal structure. The Church assumed the superior role and acted as a guardian while the Sami were assigned the subordinate role in the relationship and were seen and treated more or less as minors not entirely capable of controlling their own development. Like a patriarchal father, the Church imposed its will on the Sami. However, it should be said that, in most cases, church representatives acted with the best of intentions in so far as they usually had what they believed to be the good of the Sami in mind. This is another aspect of the paternal role and the attitude referred to as *paternalistic*.

Until the turn of the 21st century, the Church of Sweden was a government authority. Throughout their history, the Church and the state have been authoritarian and have more or less unilaterally imposed their rule on the population. There has been a lack of reciprocity in the relations between the Church and the state on the one hand and the Sami on the other. Further back in history, it would seem that church or state representatives did not reflect much on this lack of reciprocity, as the current social order was seen as normal, natural or God-given. In the 17th century, the King, or the Queen, was considered to be God’s foremost representative in the country and it was the monarch’s responsibility to ensure, via the Church and other government authorities, that the population, including the Sami, conformed to what the powers considered to be God’s order.

These attitudes have of course changed. Today, we have entirely different expectations regarding reciprocal relations between the state and its citizens and the Church and its members. In this connection, it should be remembered that while many church representatives participated in the colonial and paternalistic policies of previous centuries, some also contributed to the development of more reciprocal and democratic relations, especially in the second half of the 20th century. This is, for example, pointed out by Lars Elenius in his article in the scholarly anthology.¹² However, old structures of superiority and subordination may still remain to some extent today in the relations between the Church and the Sami, as well as between

¹¹ Björn Norlin & David Sjögren, “Avslutande reflektioner: Lärdomar från den vetenskapliga antologin”, in Lindmark & Sundström (2017) p. 98.

¹² Lars Elenius, “Stiftsledningen och minoritetspolitiken”, in Lindmark & Sundström (2016) pp. 490–505.

the state and the Sami. This is one of several aspects that Sylvia Sparrock, in her reflections on the results of the White Paper Project, believes the Church, together with the Sami, must now consider and process.¹³

A complex history

It should be noted that the picture of the Church of Sweden's relations with the Sami is a complex one. To bring more nuance to the depiction of their historical relations, it is important to state that the Church never strove to fight the Sami and Sami-ness generally. Nor is it always possible to identify a clear dividing line between the Church and the Sami. A few examples from the anthology will illustrate this:

- Siv Rasmussen's article on Sami clergymen from the end of the 16th to the 19th century shows that the Church made fairly strenuous efforts to recruit Sami ministers who could speak Sami to their parishioners. There was a fair number of Sami ministers during this period, especially in the 17th and 18th centuries. The first one, Gerhard Jonsson (Gerhardus Jonæ) was ordained as early as 1581. For some time, he was chaplain to King Johan III, but chiefly worked as a minister in Skellefteå. Incidentally, one of Gerhard's sons, Johan, was later appointed County Governor of Västerbotten and took the family name Graan after being knighted. Johan Graan's brother Anders also came to belong to the upper ranks of Västerbotten society in his capacity as Mayor of Umeå.¹⁴
- Daniel Lindmark's article deals with the comparatively early efforts to provide education for the Sami. The reason behind these efforts was that the Church wished to train Sami ministers and so-called catechists, i.e. people who assisted the minister in teaching the Christian faith. These efforts were focused not least on Sami girls. As early as the 1740s, Sami girls received schooling, long before most non-Sami girls had access to the same level of education. This special focus on Sami girls was due to the Church's belief that women would be better suited to spreading education – and Christendom – in their homes since they spent more time there with their children than men did.¹⁵
- The efforts to provide education for Sami girls had some noticeable results. For example, Håkan Rydving shows that a 23-year-old Sami woman by the name of Ingri Månsdotter was appointed chief catechist in 1779, which meant that she was not only the head of all the other catechists in her parish, Arjeplog, she could also take on several of the minister's duties in his absence. Rydving points out that Ingri Månsdotter achieved this almost minister-like role nearly 200 years prior to the ordination of the first woman minister in the Church of Sweden.¹⁶
- Olavi Korhonen provides an account of how the Church, as early as the beginning of the 17th century, focused on developing a written Sami language and producing literature in Sami (an ABC book and a service-book). This work continued in the

13 Sylvia Sparrock, "Vågar framåt: Från kolonisering till försoning", in Lindmark & Sundström (2017) pp. 180–183.

14 Siv Rasmussen, "Samiske prester i den svenske kirke i tidlig nytid", in Lindmark & Sundström (2016) pp. 283–314.

15 Daniel Lindmark, "Svenska undervisningsinsatser och samiska reaktioner på 1600- och 1700-talen", in Lindmark & Sundström (2016) pp. 341–369.

16 Håkan Rydving, "Samisk kyrkohistoria: En kort översikt med fokus på kvinnor som aktörer", in Lindmark & Sundström (2016) p. 328.

18th and 19th centuries with translations of psalms, Bible books and sermon books aimed at spreading Christendom. While the number of Sami-speaking ministers decreased in the 20th century, perhaps due to the fact that, starting in the late 19th century, the use of Sami as a teaching language had increasingly been abandoned, the Church still continued to publish church texts in Sami. At the beginning of the 21st century efforts to translate psalms and Bible books into the various Sami language varieties were boosted, and this work is currently ongoing.¹⁷

The original project assignment stated that it was particularly important to shed light on two specific areas, viz. the so-called religious trials from 1680 to 1730 and the segregating school policy around the turn of the 20th century, both of which manifest the paternalistic attitude of the Church of Sweden towards the Sami. Even though these two areas have no special place in the project, a presentation of some of the conclusions that can be drawn from these periods might be in order.

The religious trials 1680–1730

The religious trials at the end of the 17th and beginning of the 18th centuries were part of an intensified campaign by the state and the Church to get to grips with what the authorities saw as extensive “idolatry” and “sorcery” among the Sami. Specifically, the campaign consisted of trials against Sami people accused of practicing certain indigenous religious traditions, such as yoiking, sacrifice and, not least, the use of the ritual drums. Such practices incurred severe penalties, sometimes even capital punishment. These traditions, however, were seen by many Sami people at the time as absolutely essential for their own well-being. In these court cases, the prosecution often invoked the first commandment in the Old Testament, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me”. Indictments in these so-called “sorcery cases” were often initiated by clergymen. In addition to the trials, ministers serving in the Lappmark are also known to have destroyed Sami sacred places and seized drums on their own initiative. Several of the articles in the anthology deal with these trials.¹⁸

The hostile attitudes towards indigenous Sami traditions are closely connected to the Reformation. The Reformation and the following Reformation Wars, which divided Europe into Catholic and Protestant kingdoms, resulted in the Church of Sweden, like many other European churches at the time, becoming more zealous in dealing with what were seen as deviations from the true faith. This, among other things, led to the widespread so-called witch trials in Europe and Sweden. Thus, the religious or sorcery trials against Sami people were part of the same campaign that also resulted in the witch trials. While this campaign against Sami religious practices was intense, and while the Sami were seen as being particularly inclined to “idolatry” and “sorcery” compared to other country folk, the fact is that Sami defendants were treated more leniently by the courts than, for example, Swedish peasants. As far as we know, only one Sami man was ever executed for ritual sacrifice and using his drum. His name was Lars Nilsson, and at the turn of the year 1693/94 he was beheaded at the Winter Market in Pite Lappmark as a terrible warning to others.

17 Olavi Korhonen, “Samiskan under fyra sekel i Svenska kyrkans arbete”, in Lindmark & Sundström (2016) pp. 735–795.

18 See e.g. Gunlög Fur, “Kolonisation och kulturmöten under 1600- och 1700-talen”, in Lindmark & Sundström (2016) pp. 261–266; Olle Sundström, “Svenskkyrkliga förståelser av inhemsk samisk världsåskådning: En historisk översikt”, in Lindmark & Sundström (2016) pp. 539–552; Anna Westman Kuhmunen, “*Bassebájke*: Heliga platser i landskapet”, in Lindmark & Sundström (2016) pp. 635–638, 644–650; Rolf Christoffersson, “Svenska kyrkan och samiska trummor”, in Lindmark & Sundström (2016) pp. 657–678.

The local district courts, which included many Sami lay-assessors, imposed several death sentences in trials against Sami people, but these sentences were often repealed by higher courts. Many more death sentences pronounced in the witch trials were actually carried out.

The segregating schooling policy around the turn of the 20th century

Until the beginning of the 20th century, the Church of Sweden was responsible for the schooling of Sami children. By that time, a number of different types of Sami schools, both stationary and circulating ones, had been established. With a view to achieving uniformity in the education system, the so-called Nomad School Act was adopted in 1913. The person chosen to reorganise the Sami education system was the bishop of the then newly formed Luleå diocese, Olof Bergqvist. As Björn Norlin and David Sjögren, and also Erik-Oscar Oscarsson, show in their articles, Bergqvist was an advocate of racial ideas prevalent at the time which saw the Sami as belonging to an inferior race that risked extinction if they were given access to too much modernity and civilisation.¹⁹ In the nomad school system that Bergqvist created, the children of primarily reindeer-herding Sami were to be offered schooling specially adapted to what he deemed to be their lower educational needs, while the children of settled Sami were to attend the regular elementary school together with other children so that they could be rapidly assimilated into the Swedish culture. It was only the children of reindeer-herding Sami that were considered to be “true” Sami, or of the “purest breed” as Bergqvist put it, and they should be protected from the degrading effects of civilisation on their culture.

In addition to the fact that the nomad school system resulted in children of reindeer-herding Sami receiving a schooling of far lower quality and shorter length than that offered to other children in Sweden, the system, together with the racist ideas it was based on, also led to a split in the Sami population. The division of the Sami into two categories, the so-called true Sami, i.e. the reindeer herders, and other Sami, who did not live by reindeer herding and who were to be assimilated, came to influence Swedish legislation and policies involving the Sami, with consequences that remain to this day.

Paternalism and ideas of cultural hierarchies, which were especially prevalent in the decades around the turn of the 20th century, also led several church representatives to assist racial biologists in robbing Sami graves and removing human remains. It would appear that those involved in these activities paid no heed to the personal integrity of the deceased and their surviving relatives, as shown in Carl-Gösta Ojala’s article.²⁰ The articles by Erik-Oscar Oscarsson and Maja Hagerman point out how some church representatives assisted racial biologist Herman Lundborg when he took measurements of and photographed Sami people in the course of his field studies from the 1910s to the 1930s.²¹

19 Björn Norlin & David Sjögren, “Kyrkan, utbildningspolitiken och den samiska skolundervisningen vid sekelskiftet 1900: Inflytande, vägval och konsekvenser?”, in Lindmark & Sundström (2016) pp. 413–423; Erik-Oscar Oscarsson, “Rastänkande och särskiljande av samer”, in Lindmark & Sundström (2016) pp. 944–951.

20 Carl-Gösta Ojala, “Svenska kyrkan och samiska mänskliga kvarlevor”, in Lindmark & Sundström (2016) pp. 994–1,005.

21 Oscarsson (2016) pp. 951–953; Maja Hagerman, “Svenska kyrkan och rasbiologin”, in Lindmark & Sundström (2016) pp. 961–992.

Conclusion

Since the memories of past violations of their integrity still remain with many Sami, since there are still Sami human remains in the collections of Swedish state museums and since the consequences of the racially-based division of the Sami into two categories are still felt today, there is a justifiable fear on the part of the Sami that both the Church of Sweden and the state, as well as Swedish society as a whole, have not been entirely successful in abandoning the paternalistic attitudes that have characterised the relations throughout history. For this reason, Sylvia Sparrock believes that the Church of Sweden now “must amend its colonial attitude towards the Sami”.²²

In our own concluding text in the anthology we make the point that, in the absence of proper assessment criteria, it is difficult for us as researchers to pass judgement in questions of individual guilt: Was it the Church or the state that was responsible for the measures taken? Was it the Church as an organisation or individual church representatives that were responsible? It is even more difficult to identify who might be to blame today: What kind of responsibility does today’s Church and its representatives have for the actions of previous generations? These are issues that the Church and the Sami can, and should, now discuss and reflect on, as questions of responsibility for historical wrongs cannot be answered by historical science. They are rather questions of a moral, ideological and theological nature.

The crucial point is perhaps what responsibility today’s Church of Sweden wants to assume for the actions of the Church and its representatives in the past, and what responsibility the Sami believe the Church should assume. In this matter, the Church of Sweden can now take a position, irrespective of who may have been responsible in the past.²³ Sylvia Sparrock argues in a similar manner when stating that the Church has contributed to the creation of some of the problems that the Sami encounter today, either together with the state or independently, while responsibility for other problems lies more with the state. However, regardless of where the blame lies, she writes, “the Church of Sweden can today assume responsibility for its colonial past and contribute to creating a better quality of life for Sweden’s indigenous people, the Sami”.²⁴

²² Sparrock (2017) p. 182.

²³ Daniel Lindmark & Olle Sundström, “Vem bär ansvar för kyrkans agerande mot samerna i historien? Några avslutande reflexioner”, in Lindmark & Sundström (2016) pp. 1,130–1,134.

²⁴ Sparrock (2017) p. 159.

