

It speaks to you – Making Kin of People, Duodji and Stories in Sami Museums

Institutt for kulturstudier og orientalske språk, Universitetet i Oslo

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Liisa-Rávná Finbog

What is a system of knowledge? How do such systems implicate museums and cultural heritage institutions? And how, if at all, has the relation between museums and epistemology influenced the negotiation of self and Indigenous sovereignty. These are just some of the questions discussed in Finbog's dissertation.

On the basis of a large pool of oral material as well as multiple Sámi museum collections, this dissertation examines the connection between Sámi identities, duodji, sovereignty and Sámi heritage objects in museums. Traditionally, duodji has been defined as Sámi "craft", but in her work Finbog demonstrates how this definition is the result of a historical devaluation, caused by multiple colonial strategies, amongst them assimilation as well as the brutal missionary politics that from the 16th century onwards were inflicted on the Sámi. Following her demonstration, Finbog goes on to redefine the practice of duodji as an important Sámi epistemology of aesthetics and *muitalusat* [stories].

The language of kinship – the act of making your relations kin – is a basic principle in many Indigenous philosophies, expressing that the world is

made up of an infinite web of relationships that expand beyond the human-centric; generating ties that apply to everyone and everything, to things and objects, to land, to waters and other-than-human beings. Indigenous knowledge systems [epistemologies] and concepts [methodologies] materialize from this system of kin as ways of being, knowing and doing. In her dissertation, Finbog discusses the importance of the Sámi paradigms and analytical tools created from this system when engaging with processes and expressions of Sámi Indigenous identity and sovereignty within the context of museums and cultural heritage institutions.

Using the practices, materials, and relations of Sámi duodji as a lens, this dissertation thus provides new insight into the role of Sámi museums as Indigenous institutions, and furthermore how such institutions have come to provide an important component of Sámi epistemologies. By way of multiple conversations as well as museum visits with various *duojárat*, which is a common denomination for people that practice duodji, Finbog also looks into the relation between museums, duodji, and Sámi source communities, showing how such relations have a massive impact on Sámi identities and perceptions of sovereignty.

As such, the dissertation provides a far more complex picture and understanding of museum collections, Sámi museums as cultural heritage institutions, and the multiple and diverse processes that are initiated in the connection between a process of negotiating Sámi identities and Sámi museums.