

The Tornedaling Lantalaiset Kven Minority

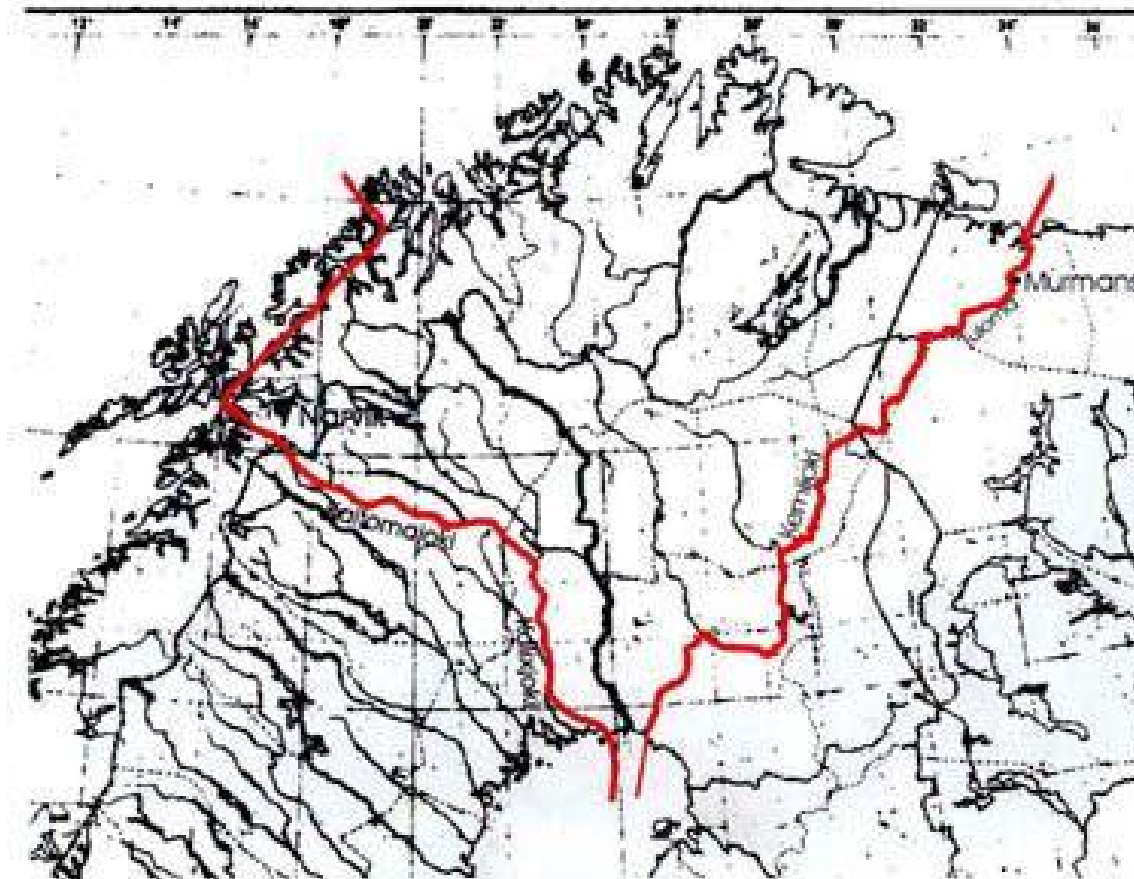


Svenska Tornedalingars Riksförbund
Tornionlaaksolaiset



- “Tornedaling” is the official designation given by the state to the minority in connection with its recognition in the year 2000.
- The Tornedaling, Kven and Lantalainen identity is the national minority that is least known to the general public.
- The designation Tornedaling is geographically linked to Tornedalen – the Torne River Valley – which gives a somewhat incorrect picture of the minority’s historical, linguistic and cultural distribution. For that reason, those who have their historical roots outside Tornedalen, in the ore fields for example, prefer to call themselves Lantalainen or Kvens.
- The map on the right shows the area today that Major Peter Schnitler, leader of a Danish-Norwegian border commission, considered to be Kvenland in the 18th century.
- The historical, cultural and linguistic Tornedaling area lies within an area closely corresponding to Schnitler’s description of Kvenland. However, the southern border extends further south and also includes Gällivare Municipality.

Kveenimaa - Kainuu - Kvenlandia





*Meänflaku (Our flag)
Creator: Herbert Wirlöf, 2013*

MEÄN PÄIVÄ!

Tornedaling Day is celebrated on 15 July. The colours of the flag symbolise the yellow sun, the winter-white expanses and a summer-blue sky.



*Kvänflaggan (The Kven flag)
Creator : Bengt Johansson Kyrö, 2009*

KVÄÄNIKANSAN PÄIVÄ!

Kven Day is celebrated on 16 March. The flag's sunflower originates in Kven folk art traditions and occurs among other things on hunting weapons, powder horns, steering oars, woven bands, knives and other utility objects.



150,000 Tornedaling, Kven & Lantalainen people

Meänkieli – a recognised minority language since 2000. The language has three varieties:

- *Tornedalen variety*
- *Lannankieli*
- *Gällivare variety*

The figure 150,000 is based on a survey of the number of Meänkieli speakers carried out by Sveriges Radio in 2005. The actual number of people belonging to the minority is in all probability much greater.

Photo: Hay barn, Doris Niva.

The minority's traditional livelihoods



The Tornedaling, Kven and Lantalainen minority has gained its livelihood by practising and combining a variety of ways to survive and obtain food. Fishing was one of the most important, particularly in the early history of the minority. Trade was vital and one of the main industries of the so-called *Birkarl* traders. Hunting small game and wild reindeer was done using snares and trapping pits. For centuries, the minority has owned reindeer for food and as pack beasts. Small-scale farming gradually became extremely important. Historically, the minority has also been involved in collecting berries and herbs. Most of the activities are still practised in various forms today and are of great cultural importance to the minority.

Photos: Kolari, Lappi. Suomen metsästysmuseum (Finland's Hunting Museum), CC BY-NC NF 4.0. Lantalainen man with draught reindeer, Borg Mesch 1905, Kiruna photo library. Ploughing fields, privately owned photo. Putting out nets in Pirttivuopio, SK-LT.



...koviters eller rutheners infall visste Olaus Magnus att berätta. I sitt
...ga epos berör han bl a 1490-talets gränskonflikter. Hösten 1592
...illasinnade ryssar genom Torne lappmark och vid Muonioniska
...ppbrände de många träskfiskande bönders fiskevånor med not,
...annat. Fiskeriet blev förstört för flera år framåt i tiden. Ur Olaus
...s II 1912:226.

Photo: The book "1617 Övertorneå storsocken under en dramatisk tid", Sture Torikka.

The early history of the Kvens

- Kvens are mentioned and depicted in very early historical sources, as early as the ninth century AD.
- Kvenland is described in at least three early independent historical sources including the accounts of Ottar (Oththere), the sagas of Egil Skallagrimsson and the writings of the German history writer Adam von Bremen. The border commission documentation of Major Peter Schnitler also describes the same district as Kvenland.
- The accounts of Oththere are of considerable value as a historical source. They were used among other things as arguments and crucial evidence when the Norwegian Sámi were given legal protection of their rights.
- In the final report of the Norwegian truth and reconciliation commission, it is stated that the migration of the Kvens into Norway took place among other things from Swedish Tornedalen in the 16th century.

Coexistence with the Sámi ethnic group



The Tornedaling, Kven and Lantalainen minority and the Sámi have coexisted and used common lands for their sustenance for centuries. The minorities share many common cultural and historical factors. Lantalainen and Sámi have lived in so-called friend-guest relations, where nomadic Sámi have been given shelter by Lantalainen during reindeer migration to seasonal foraging areas. Old and sick Sámi sometimes stayed with the host family when the demands of migration with reindeer could impact their health. Sámi children played with Lantalainen children and there was occasionally romance and marriage between the ethnic groups.



Photos: Members of friend-guest family group in Idivuoma. Nomadic Sámi at their friend-guest host's home.



Tornedaling, Lantalainen and Kven culture and handicraft

- **Since 1929**, the Tornedalen family business Kero in Sattajärvi has been manufacturing traditional beak shoes, which were previously made in Tornedalen homes. The shoes were developed from a kind of ski boot where the purpose of the beak was to stop the shoe from sliding out of the ski binding. Today, Kero beak shoes and beak boots are known worldwide and worn by different ethnic groups.
- **The Lovikka Mitten** was invented by Erika Aittamaa in 1892 in the village of Lovikka in Tornedalen. The story of the mitten is exciting, since it came about through a mistake but became a major success!
- **Knife craft, boat building and weaving rana rugs** are also traditional crafts which the ethnic group has possessed for generations.

Photo: Kero & Shop in Lapland

Kven, Tornedaling & Lantalainen cuisine

- The cuisine involves ingredients from nature's pantry.
- Traditional dishes include different species of fish, elk and reindeer meat, and reindeer blood. Stew, blood dumplings, blood pancakes, meat shavings and sausage are common Tornedalians dishes.
- Drying, salting and smoking meat and fish are methods which the minority has used down the ages to preserve food.
- Home-grown potatoes, sometimes eaten as "dopp i kopp" (cup-dip) with melted butter and raw onions) and home-baked bread – rieska – are typical ingredients on the Tornedalen food table.
- Lingonberries for jam are preferably self-picked, as are cloudberry and blueberries.

Photo 1: Doris Niva. Photo 2: Private





Wetland haymaking

Wetland haymaking and haymaking on so-called “common meadows” was necessary for supplying livestock with fodder. This cultural expression survives to this day but now features more modern implements and machines.

Photo: Privats. The Tornéus brothers on their haymaking wetland Kierunavuoma, early 1930s.



Sweden's first truth and reconciliation commission

The commission has investigated abuse and violations against the Tornedaling, Kven and Lantalainen minority in the 19th and 20th centuries. Assimilation contributed to loss of language among, and marginalisation of, the minority.


The final report, SOU 2023:68 was handed over to the government on 15 November 2023.

Examples of proposed actions for reconciliation in brief:

- The government should recognize without delay the responsibility of the state for the violations committed against the minority.
- The Government should take measures to strengthen the minority's own power and influence.
- Commission the Swedish Research Council to conduct a special research initiative on the minority.
- Increase teaching hours in Meänkieli in primary schools and teaching in Meänkieli about the minority's history, crafts, traditions and cultural heritage.
- The government should, in close consultation with the minority, set up an inquiry to investigate the minority's status as an indigenous people.



Foto: 1.Karin Keisu 2.STR-T



On 19 October 2023, STR-T submitted to the Swedish government a request for indigenous minority status for the Tornedaling, Kven and Lantalainen minority.

Why indigenous minority status?

The ethnic group meets the criteria for an indigenous people according to international standards.

It is a matter of increasing the visibility of the minority. Strengthening the culture, the language and the minority's rights.

Increasing influence and self-determination. Strengthening the minority's position in the community.

Achieving inclusion on issues and gatherings that affect the minority.

Regaining self-confidence lost in the wake of the assimilation policy.

The Tornedalen minority requests recognition as an indigenous minority



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