

UDC 323.1+304.2+39

DOI: 10.17238/issn2221-2698.2017.27.117

Perspectives on Sámi historiography



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Abstract. The article focuses on Sámi history and historical methods. The main results and central aspects of Sámi history, in its relational context, are gone through. What effects and consequences — regarding both methodology and narrative styles — these aspects have had, and ought to have, for the processes of doing research on and writing Sámi history? The focus is on the politics of Sámi history and research. The issues, who is “allowed” to write Sámi history and the way Sámi research is demanded to stand in the service of different societal-

cultural needs of the Sámi is dealt with. This expectation of applicability concerns Sámi history in general, and the more delimited efforts of presenting situated accounts of Sámi cultural practices, traditions and experience with relations to other folk groups. Finally, methodological considerations and recommendations of Sámi history are presented, in which a number of methodological competences and in-depth usage of numerous source categories are called for.

Keywords: *historiography, Sami history, relational approach, methodology*

Introduction

In this article I will first present some main dimensions which in my opinion stand out as central aspects of Sámi history through the centuries, in its relational context. Then I shall discuss what effects and consequences — regarding both methodology and narrative styles — that these aspects have had, and ought to have, for the processes of doing research into and writing Sámi history.

After giving a brief sketch of some basic dimensions of Sámi history in its interaction with the histories of the other peoples of Fennoscandia, I shall dwell on some basic urges and needs for having Sámi history written — both as viewed by Sámi proponents, authors and scholars, and as part of the complex, compound history of Northern Fennoscandia. This concerns both the wish for having Sámi history written in general, and the realization of more delimited efforts of presenting situated accounts of Sámi cultural practices, traditions and experience with relations to others.

But the multi-cultural context which the encompassing states have imposed on the Sámi, has also led to other challenges: On the one hand to a need for making explicit, describing and analyzing historical processes and effects which for a long time, through several centuries have been silenced or suppressed, as a result of various state policies for assimilation and integration. (This also includes efforts of documenting or analyzing former Sámi customary or legal rights, which may have bearings also under the present conditions, — and it will include measures for correcting and supplementing the histories of the encompassing states, in order to make such

accounts more totalizing and comprehensive, than they traditionally have been.) And on the other hand, to an ever stronger demand from the Sámi vis-à-vis the majority populations, to influence them to acknowledge and recognize that research into Sámi affairs, social institutions and cultural phenomena carried out by non-Sámi belonging to the majorities, constitutes a real “inter-ethnic relation” in itself, where the asymmetrical power relationships traditionally has played a decisive role for the “monopoly of interpretation” held by scholars of the majorities.

Finally, I will present some more precisely formulated methodological considerations and recommendations, that would seem appropriate given the basic and throughgoing characteristics of Sámi history, and the challenges posed.

It should be emphasized that I do not have any pretensions of being able to give a full overview over the extensive field of works relating to Sámi history, nor being representative on a Fenno-Scandinavian basis, when it comes to the selection of works and books cited. Apart from some few references to classical works on Finnish and Swedish side, I have almost exclusively referred to works published on Norwegian side, to illustrate my main points under each topic of discussion and find examples that would fit in with the categories presented. Chronologically, I have concentrated the discussion primarily to Sámi history between the Early Middle Ages and the last part of the nineteenth century.

The relational history of the Sámi

In our days, it should probably not be perceived as controversial to ascertain that the history of the Sámi to a great extent stands out as a relational history, so far back in time as it is possible to trace separate ethnic or cultural entities in Northern Fennoscandia at all. To the extent that we may follow the lines backwards, the Sámi seem to have been heavily engaged in contacts, exchange and interaction with other social/ethnic groups in their surroundings. Such contacts and interplay even seem to have played a central part in the process leading to the formation of a particular Sámi ethnic identity, and which had its earliest beginnings during the middle of the 2. millennium B.C., and stretched until the beginning of our era [1, Hansen L.I. & Olsen B., pp. 26–38]. During the last millennium before BC/AD, when some of the presumably heterogeneous hunter-gatherer groups along the coasts of Northern Fennoscandia gradually replaced their hunting occupations with farming, other societies of hunter-gatherers, situated in the interior and northernmost areas, carried on and specialized their hunting-based economy, while simultaneously establishing closer contacts to metal-producing communities in the south-eastern regions. This dawning economic and social dualism would turn out to be decisive for the later cultural and ethnic divide in northern Fennoscandia [1, p. 351].

Such a view upon Sámi ethnogenesis — as a product of a protracted interactional process involving several groups, and simultaneously, through the very same process, leading to the establishment of other separate ethnic identities (North-Germanic and early Finnish) — owes much to the dissemination of the viewpoints first held by Fredrik Barth in the 1960's, viz. that the construction and maintenance of ethnic identity should not be considered as primarily a product of long-time isolation, absence of contacts and cultivation of “own culture features”, but rather as a form of organizing the interaction between diverse groups. As such, it would be seen as resulting from contacts and communication, whereby the consciousness and identity of ones own group in relation to others, is perceived and expressed [2, Barth F., passim]. The first scholar who adopted such an approach upon the development of ethnic identities of northern Fennoscandia, was the anthropologist and archaeologist Knut Odner in his book “Finner og terfinner, etniske prosesser i det nordlige Fenno-Skandinavia” (1983) [3, passim].¹

According to such an approach, the more concrete contours of a separate Sámi ethnic identity seems to have emerged during the last millennium B.C., due to a cultural diversification process among various heterogenous groups of hunter-gatherers in northern Fennoscandia. This development seems to be part of a mutual identification process involving intensified interaction with other groups who at the same time evolved a separate North Germanic identity in the west, and groups identifying themselves as Hämäläiset and Suomalaiset — the predecessors of the later Finnish population — in the east [1, p. 126].

At least from the first centuries of our era, the Sámi therefore stand out as an indigenous people of the north, inhabiting the northern and central parts of Fennoscandia. The approximate extension of their habitation area in historically and traditionally known times, can be seen on the map, figure 1, which depicts the localization of the various Sámi dialects or languages, all belonging to the Finno-Ugric language family. It should be emphasized that the Sámi dwelling area in the Middle Ages and the beginning of Early Modern Times stretched further to the south and south-east, in the central part of present-day Finland and along the western shores of the White Sea.

¹ Odner K. Finner og terfinner, etniske prosesser i det nordlige Fenno-Skandinavia [Finns and Ter Finns. Ethnic processes in Fennoscandia] (Oslo Occasional Papers in Social Anthropology; v. No. 9), Oslo 1983. The concept of ethnicity was studied in: Jones S. The Archaeology of Ethnicity. Constructing Identities in the Past and Present, 1997, also in: Banks M. Ethnicity: Anthropological Constructions, London & New York, 1996. Main ideas shown in: Hansen L.I. and Niemi E. Samisk forskning ved et tidsskifte: Jens Andreas Friis og lappologien — vitenskap og politikk, Vitenskap, teknologi og samfunn. En innføring i vitenskapenes teori og praksis/ed. Seglen, E., Oslo, 2001, p. 350–377.

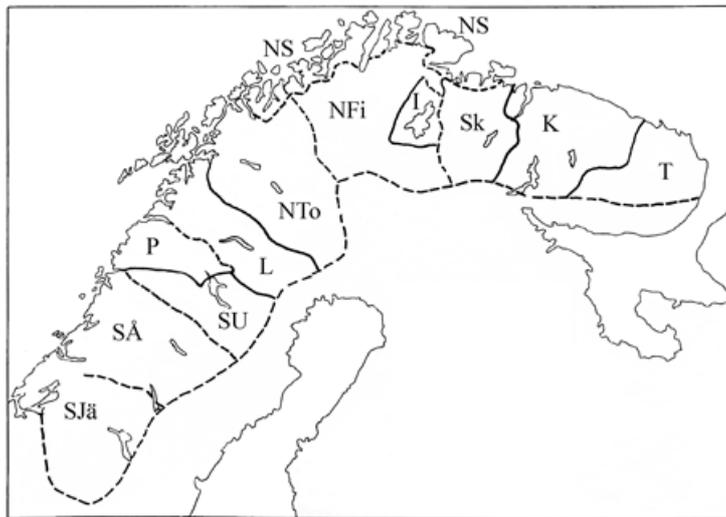


Figure 1. Localization of Saami languages and dialects. Sjä — Southern Saami; SÅ — Ume Saami; P and SU — Pite Saami; L — Lulle Saami; NTo, NFi и NS — Northern Saami; I — Inari Saami; Sk — Skolt Saami; K — Kildin Saami; T — Ter Saami.

Korhonen M. Johdatus lapin kielen historiaan. Suomalaisen kirjallisuuden seuran toimituksia 370, Helsinki, 1981.

Complex and varied relationships to neighbouring groups

During the first millennium of our era and into the early phase of the Middle Ages — before the emergence of more organized state units among their neighbours — the Sámi appear to have had complex and varied relationships to other population groups both in the west, to the south and to the east. These relationships seem to have been both of a more symmetrical and asymmetrical nature [4, Hansen L.I., pp. 35–37; 5, Hansen L.I. et al, pp. 42–48]. The relations with other groups in Fennoscandia seem to have encompassed extensive barter and exchange relations, as well as reciprocal service-rendering to a certain extent, similar to the ones that have been observed between various groups of Sámi in modern times (e.g. so called ‘verdde’ relations between reindeer herding inland Sámi and coastal Sámi).

To the east, both ethnological evidence, special linguistic terms and toponymic studies seem to substantiate that the Sámi have had rather symmetrical exchange and barter relations of an institutionalized character with Baltic-Finnic population groups in present-day Finland and on the Karelian isthmus, such as the Hämäläiset and Suomalaiset [6, Itkonen E., passim; 7, Valonen N., passim; cf, 4, passim]. In early Medieval times (i.a. during the twelfth century), extensive exchange network stretching further eastwards appear to have secured regular and institutionalized contacts with Baltic-Finnic peoples situated at the great lakes of Ladoga and Beloozero and in the Vaga river basin [4, pp. 43–35].

To the west the Sámi had contacts and partly extensive exchange relations with the more hierarchical Norse societies, which were organized in a series of separate but cooperating

chieftainships that had emerged during the Migration Period (A.D. 370–570) and Merovingian times (A.D. 570–800). These chieftainships probably functioned as so called “redistribution systems” where different kinds of surplus production was channelled to the chieftain, who could then redistribute part of it and keep the rest for himself and his retainers. Some of the Sámi seem to have been attached to these redistribution centres in their capacity as specialized hunters — who on the one hand enjoyed voluntary exchange of products within such a system, but on the other hand also were obliged to yield certain compulsory contributions to the chieftains.

Also to the south did the Sámi keep relations with local elites settled around the northernmost coasts of the Gulf of Bothnia, who both carried out trade with the Sámi and exacted tribute-like contributions. In the early Middle Ages these elites mostly appear to have been Kvens, a people speaking a finno-ugric language, but due to colonising efforts during the high and later Middle Ages the settled regions were supplemented with both Swedes and Finnish-speaking peasant from the southern parts of Finland [1, Hansen L. I. and Olsen B, pp. 152–155].

Thus, from the end of the Iron Age and well into the beginning of the Medieval Period, the Sámi maintained relatively stable and mutually binding, institutionalized relations with several of their neighbours. In addition to the above mentioned trade and barter, these relationships seem to have been established and maintained by reciprocal exchange of gifts and to a certain degree marriage partners, as well as partaking in some of same cosmological notions, on themes where Sámi, Finno-Ugric and Norse religious conceptions possibly shared a common ground [1, pp. 348–349]. This does not necessarily mean that the interaction was symmetrical, stable and alike throughout the entire period. On the contrary, there seem to have occurred varying types of specialization and changing contact routes and circumstances of cooperation. In line with this, a certain regional variation also seems to have prevailed with regard to how the Sámi cultural identity was shaped and expressed within the Sámi settlement area. Regional traditions and various groups of “others” to relate to caused this identity to take on different expressions. The language, though, could have functioned as a unifying factor among the hunting communities and contributed to contrasting them relative to surrounding, especially Germanic people. Sámi language apparently has great time depth in all later known Sámi regions, and probably extends back to the last millennium BC.

These various forms of interaction were altered when the more organized statehoods in the North did appear, accompanied with ever more systematical efforts of Christianizing the population — first the neighbouring peoples but then successively the Sámi. The Norwegian kingdom was the one first to be consolidated in the southern part of Norway during the eleventh

century, and tightened its control over the north-western coast during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Secondly, the city republic of Novgorod — first mentioned in the 9th century — developed and established during the tenth and eleventh centuries widespread trade networks and fortified, administrative strongholds along the rivers of the north — well into the territories of finno-ugric-speaking hunter-gatherers [8, Martin J., *passim*; 9, Koht H., *passim*; 4, pp. 52–57]. And from the south, the Swedish monarchy went through a consolidation and strengthened during the thirteenth and especially the fourteenth century its administrative and economic control over inland territories in northern Fennoscandia — in good understanding and cooperation with the Swedish church [5, pp. 54–57, 71–74]. In this way, the chieftainships along the western coasts were replaced by the unified Norwegian monarchy, who took over the claims for exacting tax and tribute from the Sámi [10, Hansen L.I., *passim*], and a little later officials from Novgorod established themselves in the easternmost parts of the Sámi area, and demanded tax from the Sámi living there (along the western shores of the White Sea and on the Kola peninsula) [11, Lukjančenko T.V., *passim*]. A peculiar feature that occurred, was that parts of the Karelian population also expanded as settlers into Sámi areas in the east, and took on a special role as tax collectors and traders acting on the behalf of Novgorod [12, Storå N., *passim*; 4, p. 56; 13, Hansen L.I., *passim*; 14, Hansen L. I., *passim*]. They kept on to this role throughout most of the Middle Ages and into Early Modern times, travelling all over northern Fennoscandia, even to greater parts of the coast in the north and west. But from the south, the tax demanded from the Sámi was still collected by private tradesmen, acting only on behalf of themselves, and keeping on an extensive trade with the Sámi.

The ensuing result was that the northernmost parts of Fennoscandia during the late Middle Ages became divided into common, or mutual overlapping taxation districts, where two and two states claimed the right to collect tax from the Sámi. In the north, a common, mutually overlapping Russian-Norwegian tax district was stretching from the Lyngen fiord and Målselva river in the west, to the easternmost point of the Kola Peninsula (the location of the Sámi village ‘Pyenne’), and further southwards and along the southern shores of Kola until a river named ‘Velega’ (probably identical with ‘Vieljoki’/‘Vjala’, a tributary to the river Umba) [5, pp. 62–68; 13, p. 32; 14, p. 300]. At the same time, the greater part of the interior of Northern Fennoscandia was covered by a common, overlapping Russian-Swedish taxation area. Both this overlapping taxation districts seem to have been established during the third decade of the fourteenth century [4, *passim*; 14, pp. 298–303; 15, Hansen L.I., *passim*].

This common taxation regime lasted until the end of the sixteenth century. But long before this time the surrounding state authorities had launched various offensives, in order to have the

Sámi habitation area divided between them according definitive, mutual excluding, territorial borders. The states sought to promote their own sovereignty or “rights of hegemony” over as great districts as possible by a series of measures: By taxing the Sámi as regularly as possible, by establishing local administrative and jurisdictional institutions in the Sámi areas, and by organizing a defence organization. The erection of churches and missionary activity vis-à-vis the Sámi also played an important role. Thus, the more indirect control that the states had earlier exercised over the Sámi areas through taxation and trade, should now be replaced with direct control. This policy led to several wars between the states during the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries. For most of the Sámi areas, these conflicts got their final political solution with a peace agreement and border drawing in 1751, after The Great Northern War. Apart from some of the East Sámi siidas, the majority of Sámi communities pertaining to more than one state, were then either distributed among the states, or became divided by the new border) [13, passim]. The exact border between Russian and Norwegian territory, distributing the territory of the East Sámi siidas, was first established as late as 1826 [16, Aarseth B., passim; Cf. 17, Johnsen O.A., passim; 18, Hansen L.I., passim]. The most first and foremost effect of this definitive division and unambiguous subjugation to the respective surrounding states and their new governmental agencies in the Sámi areas, was that it undermined the basis for autonomous Sámi systems. The Sámi became subject to secular and religious jurisdiction from the outside. Not only did this policy have great consequences for legal jurisdiction and the administration of resource management. It also had grave repercussions on the religious level. Towards the end of the seventeenth and during the first decades of the eighteenth century, a decisive offensive against the Sami religion was launched, through intensified missionary activity. The Christianization intervened in Sami culture in a decisive manner, and established new premises for how Sami identity should and could be articulated) [1, p. 353].

The realization of Sámi livelihoods from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries

The conditions for practicing and developing various Sámi ways of livelihoods, were therefore quite altered from the seventeenth century and onwards, due to the tighter administrative, judicial and ecclesiastical control with the Sámi districts from the surrounding states. At the same time, central parts of Sámi society underwent fundamental transformation processes. In the first place, it is from the early part of this period that there exists well documented evidence about the Sámi social organization in the form of siida units. Siida was the traditional local Sámi community or co-operative organization, consisting of several families or household units, who controlled a common resource territory and used it jointly for seasonal migration, hunting and the exploitation of various resource niches. As such, the concept of siida

connotes both a unit of social organization and the spatial extension of the corresponding usufruct territory [10, *passim*; 19, Vorren Ø., *passim*; 20, Vorren Ø., *passim*; 21, Helander E., *passim*]. The study of tax registers and taxation principles implemented for the Sámi both confirm this kind of community organization over great parts of the interior of Northern Fennoscandia, but also makes it clear that the social organization in the coastal regions varied to a great extent. In some coastal regions, a sort of *siida* organization must have existed, but it may have been of varying extent and composition, while the Sámi settlement in other parts seem to have been basic on single farms or dwelling sites [22, Vorren Ø., *passim*; 23, Holmsen A., *passim*; 24 Holmsen A., *passim*; 25, Bjørklund I., *passim*; 26, Grydeland S.E., *passim*; 27, Grydeland S.E., *passim*; 28, Hansen L.I., *passim*]. Furthermore, a more detailed analysis seems to give at hand that while the *siidas* to a high degree were used as basis for the taxation in those districts where they existed, the taxation system that was implemented (as the “tax land” institution on Swedish side) could also have served to support and confirm this way of organizing the social units [1, pp. 279–293; 29, Korpijaakko K., *passim*].

During these centuries, fundamental and decisive transformation processes related to the Sámi's use and exploitation of the reindeer populations also occurred, with the further development of reindeer pastoralism, and finally full-scale reindeer herding or ‘ranching’ [30, Ingold, T., *passim*]. Together with an intensified population pressure and settlement urge from the other populations of Northern Fennoscandia, this led to restructuring and new constellations in wide parts of the area. Central themes are here: 1) the restructuring of the territories used by the nomads in their extended migration routes, 2) the efforts of drawing a line or border between those areas that should be open for agricultural settlement and colonization, and those who should be reserved for the reindeer nomads [Cf. “the lappmark border» — 1, pp. 288–293], 3) the transition in some areas from nomadic and semi-nomadic lifestyles to permanent farm settlements — and 4) the strife around and the delineation of the so called ‘common lands’ in the mountainous areas on Norwegian side. Together with new administrative measures and changing priorities from the state authorities, this led to a situation where the options for continued Sámi customary rights were highly varying. In some areas and aspects heavy impediments for the carrying on of Sámi traditional livelihoods were introduced, while at other places Sámi customary rights were even accepted by the jurisdiction of the states, and given a legal protection, though sometimes temporary. The space of this article does not, however, allow for a further discussion of these processes.

The writing of Sámi history: A double urge and several perspectives in interaction

This multifaceted relational situation that the Sámi have found themselves in, throughout history, has also had effects for the way Sámi history has been approached, when it comes to research, analysis and representation. In the first place, one can distinguish between an “insider-” and “outsider”-perspective: Between efforts among the Sámi themselves for giving an account and a representation of their own history, as viewed and experienced from their own position and geographical situation (“place”) on the one hand — and Sami culture and history as an object of research for traditional academic disciplines in the fields of humaniora and social sciences on the other. From the beginning and middle of the nineteenth century Westerly academic activities underwent a differentiation process, whereby the modern, separated disciplines of history, sociology and ethnography became more precisely defined, delineated and “disciplined” so to speak — in contrast to an earlier, more holistic, undivided approach to culture, society and history of different peoples. A distinction was established, whereby historical dynamism and development (“evolution”) primarily were ascribed to some peoples of Western and Central Europe as well as North America, while many peoples elsewhere were construed as showing less dynamism, lack of development and more stagnant social conditions, based on very stable, almost permanent ways of livelihood and social institutions. To a great extent the last ones became characterized as “primitive” [31, Kuper, A., passim]. And whereas the discipline history became primarily concerned with analyzing and explaining the historical development of the allegedly “dynamic” societies of the west, and seeking for historical conditions and roots of these modern “nation states”, the supposedly “primitive” and stagnant societies to a great extent became the research object of the newly independent discipline ethnography. An accompanying effect of this was that the history discipline also took on a pronounced “nation-building” function for those of Westerly states which lately had been unified or institutionalized along national lines, not least inspired by the German historian Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803) and seeking evidence and continuity for the existence and delineation of the same people or nation backwards in time [32, Iggers G.G. and Wang Q.E. with contr. from Mukherjee S., passim].

Although the Sámi in this period fell outside the basic frame of reference of the historical discipline, and thereby the academic efforts of studying the early expressions and manifestations of national culture, cohesiveness and identity, there were nevertheless some Sámi authors who endeavoured to engage in presenting accounts of Sámi history, adaptations and way of life, as well as relations to others, as they saw it, based on passed down information, conceptions and

traditions, as well as their own experiences.² Exponents for such works are Johan Turi (1854–1936) with “Muitalus sámii birra” (33, “A story about the Sámi”), Anta Pirak (1873–1951) with “Jáhttee saamee viessoom” (34, 35, “The Life of a Nomad”) and Anders Larsen (1870–1949) with “Mearrasámii birra” (36, 37, “About the Seasámi”, 1949).

A contemporary, but different approach can be found in the writings of Henrik Kvandahl (1865–1950) from Ofoten, who published three editions of the “History of the Sámi/Sámi people” in 1925, 1947 and 1950. Kvandahl i.a. presented a survey over viewpoints about the origin and early history of the Sámi, based on a broad selection of classical authors, ranging from antiquity to the eighteenth century. But at the same time he referred with meticulous detail and accuracy a long series of empirical sources, documenting the settlement and presence of Sámi in the region of Southern Troms and Northern Nordland, within a time span from the sixteenth century, and until the censuses of the late nineteenth century [38, Kvandahl H., passim; 39, Kvandahl H., passim; 40, Kvandahl H., passim; 41, Minde H., passim].

Most of these works may be said to represent various “situated approaches”, in that they present pictures and syntheses of Sámi culture, history and way of life defined by certain local or regional points of view, based on locally or regionally transmitted traditions or experiences.

Alongside this trend, Sámi culture and history were — as we have seen — very early taken on as an object of research by certain academic disciplines analyzing culture and forms of social organization, even if these approaches were biased by the dichotomy of the construction of “primitive” vs. “developed” societies, as mentioned above. At first, Sámi material and immaterial culture, history and social organization were made the object of the study of such disciplines as ethnography, ethnology, folkloristics and geography, and then — only at a later point of time — by history and archaeology. A certain number of Sámi were also recruited to these disciplines pioneering in the study of Sámi social and cultural features and conditions, and the result was a series of work written from a scholarly — but at the same time — a specific Sámi point of view. Within this kind production one can observe works of a more local character and point of view, dictated by the standpoint and interests of the author, but still representing scholarly investigations. An outstanding exponent for this trend is Israel Ruong (1903–1986), who published

² Of course, many Sámi — like for instance Samuel Rheen and Olof Sirma — had at a much earlier date been engaged as informants or provided well documented reports about Sámi cultural traits, ways of living and livelihoods, to serve as basis or preparatory material for the more totalizing, ethnographic descriptions written by various authors from the end of the seventeenth and on through the eighteenth century, like Johannes Schefferus and Knud Leem. Cf. *Berättelser om samerna i 1600-tallets Sverige, faksimileutgåva av de s.k. prästrelationerne m.m.*, Umeå, Kungl. Skytteanska Samfundets Handlingar Nr. 27), 1983. But as these efforts precede the differentiation of scholarly authorship concerning Sámi history that I have described above, they will not be discussed further here.

both deep-going analyses of more delimited social processes [42, passim; 43, passim] and broadly conceived syntheses, like “Samerna — i historien och nutiden” [44, passim]. Other Sámi scholars who might be said to follow up this trend in later times, are Samuli Aikio [45, passim], Sverre Fjellheim [46, passim; 47, passim], Johan A. Kalstad [48, passim; 49, passim] and Åge Solbakk [50, passim; 51 passim]. — Other specific investigations from recent times have been carried out by Oddmund Andersen (the emergence of reindeer nomadism), [52, passim; 53, passim] Thomas Andersen (the combination of livelihoods among the “outlying field Sámi” of Southern Troms) [54, passim], and Leif Elsvatn (the livelihoods and resource exploitation among the settled South Sámi population in certain communities) [55, passim].

More specific goals and challenges posed by the multi-cultural situation

Though we can observe a series of central works on Sámi culture and history published by Sámi scholars, it cannot be concealed that the situation within this field is highly complex and characterized by different viewpoints and contradictions, precisely due to the relational and multi-cultural position which has characterized the context of Sami cultural and social development.

On the one hand, one may observe a legitimate demand for the strengthening of Sámi ethnic identity, and using the conceptions and accounts of earlier social and cultural processes relating to Sámi society in an effort of building a separate, own identity alongside with the other peoples of Northern Fennoscandia. This would amount to a justified effort for making explicit, describing and analyzing historical processes and effects which for several centuries have been silenced or suppressed, as a result of various state policies for assimilation and integration.

But in this context there is also a deeply felt need for implementing research along more specific lines and investigating more specific matters, which may be shown to imply great repercussions, or have a strong potential, for safeguarding and giving legal protection to the present-day or future position of Sámi culture, social institutions and way of life in society of today. In this context, investigations into — and the meticulously charting of older legal conditions pertaining to various Sámi ways of livelihood and forms of resource management, have shown to be of great value. Not least the very task of demonstrating and verifying Sámi presence in various regions during older times, has been very significant, as an endeavour to counter and refute the picture mediated by the “silencing techniques” of earlier times. Also many non-Sámi scholars have been engaged in, and contributed to this field. Classical works are Väinö Tanner’s investigation of East Sámi social organization and way of life from 1929 [56, passim] and Erik Solem’s studies into Sámi legal traditions from 1933 [57, passim]. Some of this perspective was followed up with Helmer Tegengren’s study of the history of Kemi Sámi through the centuries (1952) [58, passim], but a more stringent

continuation of the legal historical approach came with Sverre Tønnesen's investigation into the legal effects of the construction of the so called "un-matriculated" state property of Finnmark (1972) [59, passim]. A monumental study of the sedentarization process and the growth of farm settlement among the Sámi in Lule lappmark on Swedish side, is Filip Hultblad's treatise from 1968, with its in-depth reconstruction of kinship relations situated in a geographic-topographical setting [60, passim]. In the same perspective must be mentioned the charting of traditional local practices and customary law regulating Sámi resource exploitation in the inner parts of Finnmark county, undertaken by Ørnulv Vorren, Johan Albert Kalstad and Dikka Storm and published 1978 by the state commission "Ressursutvalget for Finnmarksvidda" in an official report [61, passim]. This approach was followed up five years later with a cultural-historical presentation of the criteria that were considered when evaluating the need for preservation of various kinds of cultural remains (1983).³ In the years that have followed, there has been published a series of more specific investigations into the conditions and histories of more specific Sámi groups, defined either regionally or thematically by habitat or by way of livelihood. Among these studies may be mentioned Astri Andresen's study of reindeer nomads of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Torne lappmark [62, passim], Allan Kristensen's study of the traditional, customary rights of the Varanger Sámi during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries [63, passim], Lars Ivar Hansen's study of the Sámi allodium institution of the seventeenth century [64, passim], and Dikka Storm's investigation of the settlement and resource exploitation of the "outlying field Sámi" (markasamer) in the southern part of Troms county [65, passim, 66, passim]. An investigation into the practices and customs regulating the use of common land resources in a valley with predominant Sámi habitation in North Troms has been published by Bjørn Bjerkli and Trond Thuen [67, passim]. A lot of these research results and viewpoints from later years has also been summarized, referred and published in the official reports serving as preparatory evidence for the work of the State appointed committees commissioned with the task of clarifying and making suggestions for the implementation of Sámi resource rights — both within Finnmark county and in the areas south of Finnmark as well.⁴ What kind of particular rights the sea Sámi might have had traditionally, relating to various kinds of fisheries, has also been deliberated by specially appointed committees.⁵

³ Kulturminner og vassdragsvern, utredning fra Styringsgruppen for vurdering av kulturverdiene i 10 års vernede vassdrag oppnevnt av Miljøverndepartementet 30. juni 1978, NOU 1983:43.

⁴ Cf. Samisk naturbruk og rettssituasjon fra Hedmark til Troms. Bakgrunnsmateriale for Samerettsutvalget (Norges offentlige utredninger 2007:14), Oslo, 2007.

⁵ Cf. Innstilling fra samisk fiskeriutvalg, 1993; Retten til fiske i havet utenfor Finnmark, 2008:5.

Reflexiveness

At the same time, the analysis and writing of history has through the later decades met with new theoretical challenges resulting from the renewed focus on history as narration, and its implications. Due to inspiration from postmodern and constructivistic positions, the scepticism versus “great narratives” and “one single (progressing, flow of) History” — whether it could be narrated and explained or not — has grown. For one thing, the urge for many, specified and particularistic histories has been advocated; on the other hand one observes also an attitude which tries to take into consideration that many methods or approaches may be at hand as prerequisites for analysing and understanding more general historical processes, but that these methods and approaches at the same time offer challenges or boundaries for comprehension (68, *passim*). Thus, the task of writing and constructing “one, single national history” has to a certain extent become discredited, and been replaced by an appeal for “many histories”, written from multiple positions and multiple relationships. In a way, many of the more recent particularistic efforts of analysing and describing the history of various Sámi subgroups, according to regional or adaptational delimitations, may be seen as a fulfilment of this call — intentionally or not.

However, a far more profound of critique — relating to the field of the theory of science — has been raised, about what kind of basic assumptions and notions that non-Sámi researchers have used, when approaching various parts of Sámi society in order to do research and collect data. This critique was launched in 1974 with the programmatic article “Research as an inter-ethnic relation”, written by the Sámi scholar Alf Isak Keskitalo [69, *passim*]. Here, Keskitalo launched a fundamental critique of the so called “ethno-sciences”, that is: those social sciences which traditionally had been most engaged in charting and analyzing cultural features and social institutions of Sámi societies, like: ethnology, ethnography, social anthropology and parts of sociology. He maintained that they did not pay sufficient attention to the fact that their approaches when doing field work and participant observation in Sámi local communities, as well as their methods of publishing their research results, all were embedded in the fundamental power relationships between majority and minority in society. Thus the research appeared as an inter-ethnic relation in itself, with many asymmetric aspects. Among such expressions can be mentioned: 1) The difficulties or impossibility for an external researcher to communicate in fact the real motives and methods of research, and the failure of the field-worker to grasp the complexity of the social relations within the community in question. 2) The researcher’s “upper hand” when it comes to interpreting the observed social facts of the community, and furthermore supported by the fact that the outcome of the research — which at that time most often were

published in a form and language which the studied community did not have easy access to — also might have effects or repercussions for the policy decisions taken by the state authorities vis-à-vis the group in question. This might further emphasize the asymmetry that was manifest in every aspect, and the impossibility of establishing a real, and practical reciprocity. For Keskitalo, the central question was whether “ethno-scientists [would] give up the scheme of making holistic programmes for the exhaustive theoretical understanding of the minority, thus establishing a monopoly of knowledge, to which the minority itself has to refer” [69, p. 35]. According to Keskitalo, this can only be done by replacing the anthropological universalist dogma of scientific, social and cognitive transparency — by which internal complexity is externalized as “general understanding” — with essential opacity, whereby the final theories of the minority’s own problems and relations are left to itself.

A few years before, the Nordiska Museet in Stockholm had arranged a broadly composed symposium on various research into Sámi culture and society [70, *passim*]. Many scholarly fields of research were presented at this occasion, in particular pertaining to the disciplines of archaeology, ethnology, ethnography, geography, history, demography, sociology and linguistics. Already at this event Ole Henrik Magga touched upon some of the same questions as Keskitalo later was to treat in greater depth. Among other things, this concerned the great pressure exerted by scholars and students from a great many countries to study Sámi society and culture, irrespective of what point of departure they had, and the need for recruiting Sámi scholars to these fields, in order to benefit from “inside knowledge” of Sámi relations and conditions [71, *passim*].

To some extent, the weaknesses and challenges pointed out by Keskitalo and Magga, have been mended through the last 40 years, by an ever growing number of Sámi recruited to academic professions, and not least the social sciences, while at the same time major steps have been taken in developing Sámi language into an academic language as well. The regular publishing of the Sámi academic periodical *Sámi dieđalaš áigečála* is evidence of this.

***Correcting and supplementing the histories of the encompassing states
and their “national histories”***

Apart from the urge to study into older Sámi customary and legal traditions and investigate what kind of remnants that still might exist of earlier legal or customary rights — and the demand for clarifying what kind of consequences that might be drawn on this basis — there also exists a basic need for correcting or “filling out” the “national histories” of the respective states on several points.

Thus, the actual multi-cultural and multi-ethnic foundations of these states throughout the centuries should be emphasized. As it has been shown, this involves a long, protracted process stretching from the High Middle ages and until the first decades of the twentieth century, whereby the Sámi areas in northern Fennoscandia became divided and partitioned between the various surrounding state powers. This protracted process — or rather several encompassing processes — may be said to have started with the delineation of the partially overlapping taxation areas in high and late medieval times, then developed through the more acute rivalries over land, populations and resources from the end of the sixteenth century and until 1751, and then having its final culmination with the border closings for various groups of Sámi nomads through the last years of the nineteenth century — and for some of the reindeer herders, in fact not until the first or the middle part of the twentieth century [72, *passim*].

These processes are of course interesting and should be studied as such, as the story about how Sámi habitat and society came to be colonized and integrated within the surrounding state structures. But the most important aspect of these incorporating and integrating processes from a Sámi point of view, and the point to be made here, is that a study of them also reveals the “darker side” of the various “nation building” measures applied by the states, and the injustices and encroachments carried out in this connection. Thus, this aspect of research into and presentation of Sámi history must also comprise a critical analysis of how Sámi ways of life, livelihoods, beliefs and cultural traits were being treated by the state administrations: Either by plainly setting them aside, and trying to define them as non-existent, i.a. by way of employing special categorizing processes — or more actively and aggressively — having them opposed and abolished, by measures like missionary activities and assimilation policies in the cultural and linguistic field (by way of education and schooling systems), as well as deliberate, discriminating legal measures in order to delimit and confine the opportunities for practicing specific Sámi ways of living/livelihoods.

Certain agendas in the political field, for instance by sorting the Sámi population into various categories constructed from the viewpoint of the states, and designed according to their political aims of establishing national borders through landed resource areas used by the Sámi, have among others been analysed by Dikka Storm and Evjen & Hansen [73, *passim*; 74, *passim*].

The missionary activities of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries stand out as a central measure in this context [75, Rydving H., *passim*; 76, Storm D., *passim*; 77, Storm D., *passim*; 78, Storm D., *passim*]. The assimilation policy and its effects have also been studied and analysed by several scholars. In fact, one of the earliest treatises, which also tried to analyse the undertakings

of the so called “Norwegianization policy” from a Sámi point of view, was made by the well renowned linguist and researcher of Sámi culture, Just Knud Qvigstad as early as 1907 [79, *passim*; cf. 80, Hansen, L. I., *passim*].⁶ During the first decades of the twentieth century this theme was raised at several occasions, also by the so called radical opposition against the Norwegianization policy, with whom Qvigstad seems to have collaborated to a certain degree [81, Otterbach, J., *passim*]. — The severe demands and sanctions vis-à-vis the Sámi in the field of Norwegianization, and the repercussions it had for cutting off their ability to control and dispose their traditional landed resources in certain parts of Norway, have been studied by Regnor Jernsletten, who focused on the so called “Jordsalgsloven” of 1902 [82, *passim*]. According to this ‘land sales act’, it was laid down as an absolute condition for those wishing to purchase land for agricultural purposes in Finnmark, that they could prove good ability in the Norwegian language. The regulations and hindrances put down by the various state authorities vis-à-vis the Sámi reindeer herding has also been widely exposed and analysed, i.a, by Nils Johan Päiviö [83, *passim*]. Evidence of more documentary character, for instance presented in the form of traditions and recollections of earlier forms of nomadic migration between various resource areas on both sides of the Swedish-Norwegian border, may also serve important functions in this respect, like the presentation of the traditional movements of the Kõnkämävuoma-Sámi by Lars J. Walkeapää [84, *passim*].

Methodological considerations

The points that have been highlighted and examined above should clearly indicate that both the research into historical processes within Sámi society, and the analytical presentation of such themes, meet with considerable and fundamental challenges. This flows not only from the source situation, and the varying ‘agendas’ and cultural perspectives of those who have produced or influenced the written sources, so that former social processes and cultural meanings and traditions may be misunderstood, misrepresented, restructured or censured. The most fundamental dilemmas and problems of interpretation are raised by the various changes and transformations that the cultural and social interaction with other groups undergo, on the background of shifting symmetrical/asymmetrical power relationships with one or the other. Under these conditions, the manifestations of Sámi ethnic identity also undergo considerable transformations through the centuries. This follows from the dynamics of ethnic signals and expressing ethnic identity under various circumstances and in different contexts: What it meant to be Sámi — in relation to, in cooperation with and in juxtaposition to others — changed in its

⁶ I wish to thank senior lecturer *Ketil Zachariassen*, IHR, UiT —The Arctic University of Norway, for having called my attention to this aspect of Qvigstad’s book.

practical, geographical and interactional context over time. And so did the way this was signalled or displayed.

The reconstruction of Sámi history in its relational and dynamic sense, seems therefore to be dependent on the attention to a number of specific methodological considerations, when approaching the social and historical processes within this field. As some sort of concluding remarks, I would like to suggest the following:

An integrated combination of several disciplinary approaches

The purpose would be to try to compensate for the variety of different, misrepresented and possibly contradicting traces of evidence which various Sámi practices have left in matters/source categories that traditionally have been focused and studied most intensively by one or a few of the cultural historical disciplines. This would for instance involve the analysis of cultural remains in relation to written sources, respectively linguistic material; arts and handicraft (duodji), folklore, and tacit knowledge (“handlingsbåren kunnskap”) [85, Dunfjeld M., passim]. The usefulness of supplementary interviews, in order to document remains of traditional knowledge or preserved bits of information, may also be relevant.

By basing oneself on such a combined approach, one could possibly make corrections for any built-in bias in one of the source categories, where empirical evidence traditionally studied by one discipline might contain information that otherwise is overlooked or not intercepted by other types of evidence. In an analysis of the probable relationships between Sámi society in South Troms and the neighbouring Norse chieftain elite during the later Iron Age and early Medieval times, L.I. Hansen has used an integrated approach, based on both toponymic studies, retrospective analysis of property relations and studies of the complex set of cultural remains in the area (86, passim]. But evidently, such an approach would also pose fundamental methodological challenges as how to draw definitive conclusions from potentially contradicting forms of evidence.

An approach that takes into consideration the changing expressions of Sámi ethnic identity and cultural practices throughout the centuries

A long range of studies have substantiated that what was regarded as particularly significant cultural features for signalling Sámi ethnicity — so called “diacritical markers” in the social anthropological terminology [2, passim] — have changed considerably from period to period. Two simple examples may be offered as illustrations: The Russian archaeologist N.A. Makarov has shown how a lot of metal pendants with “zoo-morphic” ornaments and figures which were produced by other finno-ugric peoples at central production areas in the Perm-Volga area, as

well as the areas southeast of Ladoga and around Beloozero, came to be deposited in Sámi graves in northern Fennoscandia during the eleventh — thirteenth centuries [87, *passim*]. The majority of them have forms or depict animals which can be connected to conceptions of a shaman's voyages. Evidently, these objects were considered so precious by the Sámi that they went at lengths to get hold of them, and have them deposited in the graves. In this way, they also came to serve as important ethnical markers *vis-à-vis* the Norse population and other non-Sami people in Fennoscandia. — Another feature that has been emphasized, is that certain traits of the traditional Sámi costume (*gákti*), can be identified with earlier traits in Scandinavian or Central European clothing style, which supposedly can have been borrowed and accommodated at various points of time — for instance during the early Middle Ages or during the Renaissance [88, Zachrisson I., *passim*]. — An investigation into the distribution of recorded first names among the Sámi and the Norwegians in the Southern part of Troms county from 1567 to 1661, also reveals interesting features. It turns out that both ethnic groups to a certain extent used as naming material the names of old Norse people that had been regarded as saints in the Middle Ages, or had otherwise been accepted by the church, like St. Olav and St. Hallvard. But apart from this common tradition, Sámi and Norwegian used quite different first names during the sixteenth and early part of the seventeenth century. While the Norwegians primarily used names of saints that had been very popular in Europe through the most recent centuries (late medieval times), the Sámi kept away from those name forms. In stead they used renderings of the really old Norse material, like the heathen names documented in the Saga literature. To be sure, it is only the names recorded in the official, Norwegian sources that one may study, and one cannot rule out that there might have existed a separate, non-recorded naming tradition among the Sámi, but anyhow this should demonstrate that for the names in “official use”, the two groups distinguished themselves in adopting various parts of the preserved name supply [89, Hansen L.I., *passim*; 90, Hansen L.I., *passim*]. — Various direct expressions of ethnic affiliation might also be toned down in periods, and not signalled so energetic as before, but then against brought to forefront and revitalized at other times — like experiences from the later years demonstrate.

An approach that takes into consideration the relevance and importance of social interaction with neighbouring groups and partners, encompassing both symmetrical and asymmetrical relationships

This might serve as a remedy for tracing and correcting negative and discriminating state measures towards the Sámi, as described in point “Correcting and supplementing...” — cf. the effect of special categorising efforts by one or more of the authorities involved. In addition, this could serve as an inspiration for trying to chart, document and analyze the character of Sámi

settlement in regions where the presence of Sámi people formerly has been thoroughly under-communicated due to prevailing stereotypes about the ethnic composition of the population. Alf Ragnar Nielsen's reconstruction of a considerable Sámi presence and settlement in the Lofoten islands from the beginning of the Middle Ages and on through the nineteenth century, may serve as an example [91, *passim*]. At the same time, it is based on a multi-disciplinary approach, as advocated under point about integrated combination.

In the continuation of this one might also benefit from adopting an approach that welcomes the use of all kinds of sources and material that might be brought to highlight the situation or processes concerning the Sámi. — As I see it, this would mean that one should not confining oneself only to sources that speak directly or explicitly of the Sámi, or are related to the activities of the Sámi in a directly, positive way. Relating to questions where Sámi presence or the existence of former and present Sámi rights is hard to substantiate, it would be just as rewarding — and in many instances much more rewarding — to study the sources that reflect the activities and fluctuations of the interactional partners of the Sámi, such as the Norwegians, the Swedes, the Finlanders and the Russians. In this way, Sámi presence or behaviour might be indirectly reflected by the social and demographic behaviour of the other groups.

The reconstruction of a special kind of older Sámi property rights in Troms and Nordland counties during the seventeenth century — the so called “Sámi allodium institution” — may serve to illustrate this: The central question was whether the extent of the alleged Sámi property rights were so far-reaching, that they really had “the upper hand” and could force away possible Norwegian tenants, who had occupied the original Sámi dwelling places during periods when the Sámi had moved temporarily out from them, attracted by other forms of livelihoods, like specialized fisheries. If the Sámi had no special rights, their original places should have no special status, but could be hired by Norwegian tenants on ordinary land lease conditions. Thus, the real, decisive question was whether the individual succession order on the localities followed a common order, influenced by the general demand for land, or whether the succession order revealed sudden take-overs by Sámi tenants, when they otherwise should be supposed to act on the same premises and in the same way as Norwegians. In this way, no definitive conclusion about the real effect of the alleged Sámi rights could be reached, before the succession order of both Sámi and Norwegian tenants had been charted and compared. In other words, a detailed examination of the succession order among the Norwegians was the essential, decisive methodological step, before anything conclusive could be said about the legal status of the Sámi customary rights [92, Hansen L.I., *passim*; 93, Hansen L.I., *passim*].

Conclusion: A regional and local situatedness triggered off by a relational perspective

Thus, it would seem that the analysis and narrative presentations of Sámi history take on several challenges — on quite different levels. Not only does this spring from the relational and “minority” position that has been ascribed to the Sámi since the surrounding states got control over various parts of the Sámi population and territory, and which has had great repercussions for defining both “Sámi history” and “Sámi culture” in a relational, but asymmetric perspective. Evidently this had great consequences for the way research into “Sámi affairs” was to be conceived and constructed from the “outsider” versus the “insider” perspective. But the dilemmas are not only confined to such questions on a more general level, but have also consequences for the approach to the sources and the factual engagement with them. The conditions for coping with these problems stemming from the analysis on a general level, seem nevertheless to be best, when approaching them with a locally or regionally situated investigation, where the specific singularities of the source material can be studied in full detail, while at the same time drawing on a broadest set of possible sources and given indications.

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