



## Religion embedded in the landscape

### – *Sami studies and the recognition of otherness*

In archaeological settings Sami cultural features have often been neglected or omitted completely, in comparison with Nordic cultural features. Nordic features on the other hand are seen as the norm and consequently specified whenever they are detected. Changes in attitudes which meant not neglecting the obvious only became more commonly expressed after the publication of the paper *Var de alle nordmenn* (Schanche & Olsen 1983). The formulation of analogies based on Sami ethnography in studies of the past represents a more recent approach. This approach was for a long time almost absent in archaeological research, an exception being the works by scholars like Gutorm Gjessing and in particular his writings from the 1940s.

This paper also includes a discussion of ethical considerations, which are vital in hermeneutic approaches and consequently in the writing of any ethnically-oriented culture history. Schanche and Olsen's paper forced archaeologists to recognise ethnocentrism, but it did not mean that all acted accordingly. Eventually this led to a shift in paradigm, particularly in north Norwegian archaeological research, and studies where ethnicity was explicitly expressed became a general approach (Kleppe 1977; Odner 1983; Olsen 1986; Mulk 1994; Schanche 2000; see also Hansen & Olsen 2004). Odner has pointed out that ethnicity does not explain and embrace all aspects of traditional life, and he suggested that 'great tradition' – a concept that embraces Gjessing's circumpolar tradition – should be reintroduced.

A presentation of the culture history of northern Fennoscandia is included in this paper. This is meant as a pointer towards biases and influences from western archaeological thinking, including the generally accepted outline of culture historical changes in southern Scandinavia. The archaeological record shows cultural continuity throughout prehistory in the northern areas, and cultural meetings are well documented. From which point in time it is justifiable to speak about the people in question as Sami is a separate question, but a shared tradition is well documented. There is general agreement that people associated with asbestos pottery (1800 BC to AD 400) and those people using the latest offering sites, are one and the same, and they are the ancestors to the Sami of today.

Any lack of culture historical focus in heritage management is liable to result in the *emic* dimensions of archaeological evidence being neglected. By 'emic' we mean the insider view. The emic approach seeks to describe another culture (Sami in this case) in terms of the categories, concepts and perceptions of the people being studied. The *etic* approach, the outsider view that heritage managers all too often adopt, uses only the categories and concepts of modern,

western discourse to describe the culture under analysis. We argue that both approaches ought always to be present. We demonstrate this argument through the example of Lapland, which clearly shows that to understand better what is constructed today as 'heritage' requires that both 'great tradition' and ethnicity be made explicit. Integrated emic/etic insights into Sami world view and ideology in relation to Sami material culture can only be obtained through further research. We need to investigate in more detail meanings in traditional Sami society, in particular their prehistoric religion and ritual practices.

It is clear that Sami religion permeated most of the everyday activities in traditional Sami life, but only recently have archaeologists begun to recognise this, even though this is well-established by the research of historians of religion. We think it timely that more explicit and more all-embracing presentations of the traditional Sami animistic religion and their rituals be studied, so that archaeologists can move beyond the use of single ethnographical examples which somehow are regarded as representative for all cases within the etic categories of classical anthropology – for instance the way that the !Kung San have been used to represent all so-called 'hunter-gatherers' (Lee & DeVore 1968). The traditional life of Sami people was closely linked to their perceptions of time and place and the landscapes in which they lived. Sami ideas about time prior to the introduction of Christianity to the Sami area provide another focus in this paper. Another is the changes that took place due to political and economic interferences from the governments of the respective nations. These are important to bear in mind when interpreting source material of more recent date.

## **Definitions**

Only recently have analogies based on the ethnography of the Sami and other Finno-Ugrian peoples been commonly used in archaeology (e.g. Bradley 2000). We argue that major similarities in cultural form within the northern area have been shaped not just by ecological and economic preconditions, but also through religion with roots in a shamanistic tradition. Our intention is to awaken an awareness of how sacred landscapes and items of material culture might have communicated social relations including relations to the deities, ancestors and spirit world. Such insights may be fruitful for formulating adequate hypotheses for particular case studies.

A definition of the concept of analogy is required. We subscribe to Wylie's distinction between 'formal' and 'relational' analogy which has gained general acceptance. 'Formal' analogy is a point-for-point assessment of the degree of similarity between source and subject. It is based on the principle that the patterns of association observed among properties in familiar contexts hold for all contexts. 'Relational' analogy is established on the background knowledge of causal or functional connections between source and subject (Wylie 1988:134 pp).

Insights into traditional Sami culture and religious practices are considered to be fruitful for formulating more refined arguments, about how we can understand material culture as socio-cultural communication. As discussed above, the distinction originally made by Harris (1968) between etic and emic approaches is helpful. In order to incorporate the emic perspective we use an ethnoarchaeological approach combined with studies of written sources mainly from clergymen, and oral traditions derived from interviews where these also provide useful insights. Ethnoarchaeology has been defined as "the direct observation field study of the form, manufacture, distribution, meaning, and use of artefacts, and their institutional setting and

social unit correlates among living, non-industrial peoples for the purpose of constructing better explanatory models to aid archaeological analogy and inference” (Stanislawski 1974:18). This definition covers our use of this research strategy. It implies that archaeological field techniques are used on the combined source material considered relevant to the individual case study. The oral tradition concept embraces “all verbal testimonies which are reported statements concerning the past” (Vansina 1965:200 p), an approach that creates the source material for oral history.

### The usefulness of the concepts great tradition and ethnicity

The concept of great tradition was initially introduced by Robert Redfield among others in the 1940s in connection with his research into Maya culture. Redfield had noticed a series of local peasant communities with independent cultural traits, but linked together through their faith, the Roman Catholic Church. This shared belonging he classified as a great tradition. Through studies by Barth, Odner has applied the concept in entirely different settings. Odner saw that other aspects of socio-cultural tradition than religion could make a great tradition in his own research both in East Africa and in northern Fennoscandia. The great traditions we deal with here are the Circumpolar and Indo-European traditions. Structural and organisational features are presented through Odner’s summary of differences between the two great traditions (Odner 1992:99; Kleppe 2005:239 p).

	<b>Indo-European</b>	<b>Arctic/Boreal Circumpolar</b>
Social and cognitive organisation	‘Tripartite’	Egalitarian
Ideology	Separate value codes for the three social strata	Value codes are established through interaction
Communication about knowledge	Strata specific and strata maintenance mediation  Open and decontextualised in the upper social strata  Key person: <i>skald</i> (English: court poet)	Essentially contextualised  Standardised  Ritualised mediation about basic values  Implicitly decontextualised with shamanism  Key person: Shaman (Sami: <i>noajdde</i> )

Culture similarities and differences are underlined; this certainly adds a further dimension to our understanding of ethnicity. Odner has pointed out the fruitfulness in using the two concepts ethnicity and great tradition together. His discussion of differences in great traditions we consider fruitful in the interpretation of culture history, as related to ethnic groups of northern Fennoscandia (Odner 2000). The prehistoric hunter gatherer societies in northern Eurasia show many shared cultural traits, and their cultures were embraced as one tradition, “the circumpolar tradition”, a term introduced by Gutorm Gjessing (1944), but not generally accepted as a research strategy.

No evidence supports immigration into northern Fennoscandia at any stage later than the immediate Post-Glacial. People who identified themselves as Sami were always there and

it was in meetings with outsiders that it became important for them to signal their ethnic affiliation. But we think such meetings were rather rare over the major part of the prehistoric era in northern Fennoscandia. Consequently there was generally no need for signalling ethnic affiliation. Whether a Finno-Ugric language was in use we do not know, and this question is for linguists to answer. When the awareness of being Sami became important is also ambiguous (Hansen & Olsen 2004:42 pp). Language and ethnicity may very well have changed gradually over a rather long time-span, i.e. some thousand years.

### Outline of cultural history in northern Fennoscandia

Archaeological research in northern Norway has proved that northern Fennoscandia was first colonised more or less at the same time as the southern part of Scandinavia. Recent archaeological excavations have shown that these early settlements are present in the inland area of northern Sweden, not just on the coast. However, new strategies for a somewhat new investigation had to be developed, as land uplift has proved to be a complicating factor in this geographical area. The newly discovered sites amount to more than sixty and ten of these are Mesolithic. The oldest radiocarbon dating is 8630±85 BP and comes from the Dumpokjauratj site near Arjeplog where more than 3500 objects were recorded (Fig. 1). These new results open up entirely new perspectives on the cultural dynamics of the area, as the pioneer settlement began only a few hundred years after deglaciation (Bergman *et al.* 2003:5 pp). We will add that there is nothing that goes against claiming cultural continuity ever since this earliest habitation.

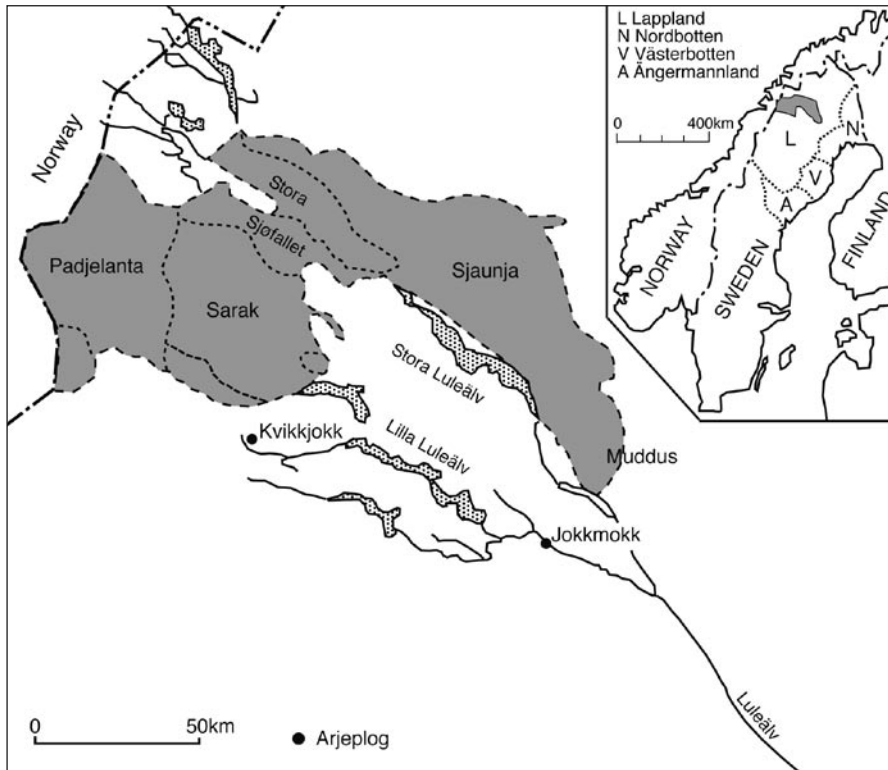


Figure 1. Map of the Lapponia World Heritage area. (Drawing: I.-M. Mulk & E.M. Hoff).

Animal husbandry and agriculture were introduced in southern Fennoscandia much earlier than in the northern areas. This shift from a hunting/fishing/foraging adaptation to an adaptation based on domesticated animals and farming is regarded as signalling a shift towards the Indo-European tradition. It has been interpreted as creating new relationships to place and time. The “neolithisation” is associated with the expansion of Indo-European culture into northern Europe, and after this expansion had been identified it was generally thought that it influenced all aspects of culture history. It has, however, generally been ignored – or forgotten – that contact with Indo-European culture did not take place in all parts of the geographical area we are dealing with, including Fennoscandia. Some features were adapted in some areas, and other features in other areas. This led to an enormous variation in patterns of subsistence economy, and it also influenced religious life.

Animal husbandry and agriculture were not introduced to northern Fennoscandia before the early Metal Age. It was, however, not until the first millennium AD that this economic adaptation was fully established in the north, and then mainly in coastal areas. It is undeniable that after a certain stage in history, during the Bronze Age in southern Scandinavian terminology, the Indo-European tradition did influence indirectly all people living in northern Europe, including Fennoscandia. However, a large part of the population in the northern areas continued to pursue their traditional ways of living as hunters, gatherers and fishers and there are no indications in the archaeological record that they changed ideology. The distribution of asbestos ceramics has been interpreted as a marker for the geographical range of the northern hunter-gatherers during Younger Stone Age and Early Metal Age (Jørgensen & Olsen 1988). Exchange of goods with people of northern areas is well-documented through the ages; in northern Sweden it was particularly important between the 8<sup>th</sup> and the 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. Such cultural transactions have been interpreted as barter or trade relations associated with seasonal or occasional markets, but not necessarily actual market places.

However, it is possible to detect local variations within northern Fennoscandia and the northern tradition, here seen as an expression of the circumpolar great tradition. The material manifestation of the northern Metal Age differs profoundly from the southern Scandinavian Bronze Age. Around the time of the birth of Christ Sami societies had barter or trade relations with people in north-eastern Europe and Siberia as well as in Fennoscandia. Odner (1992) has argued that it was tradition in its general meaning and not ethnicity that was centrally important to the processes documented in the culture history of northern Norway during the later half of the first millennium BC. Ethnicity became very active in the cultural processes after 300-400 AD in northern Norway (*ibid.*:102), and we argue that in the interior of northern Sweden Sami hunting society was also influenced by similar processes.

One of our arguments is that the landscape always has been important for understanding Sami tradition including religion. This suggestion is based on evidence from Sami ethnography. Before we present the argument it is necessary to comment on later trends in the culture history of the geographical area under review.

### **The last four centuries: changes in Sami economy and foreign influences**

Major parts of the coastal areas in northern Fennoscandia were colonised by Germanic, Finnish and Russian people at an early stage. The interior was colonised by these groups much later, and it was not before the beginning of the 1600s that these areas were claimed to be parts of the Nordic nations or Russia. The post-medieval transition from hunting, gathering and fishing adaptation to reindeer herding, animal husbandry and farming made an impact

on the Sami social organisation. Parallel changes in people's attitude to specific landscapes and to social space were implied in these changes, not least because of entirely new settlement patterns and the integration into a market economy.

Roman Catholic missionary activities had started already in early Medieval times, and the mission among Sami was intensified by the Lutheran Church in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The direct impact of the Lutheran Church was increased after 1605 when King Karl IX through a decree established regular market places in the interior. Before that time different Sami winter villages had functioned as market places and trading centres (Hultblad 1968; Mulk 1983, 1994:254). Sami culture history in later times is strongly influenced by outsider intrusions, and these intrusions are important to bear in mind when dealing with source material from this later time-span of Sami culture history.

### **Sami perception of landscape - visible and invisible features**

Generally Sami people have a feeling of belonging to their landscape. Four different and intermingled dimensions were important to them and were embedded in their landscape: history, magic, myths and politics (Schanche 1995:40 pp).

In this way landscape and identity are tied together in Sami culture. The environment inhabited by Sami people includes woodland, river and lake landscape as well as mountains, fjords and coastal landscapes. Except for the seacoasts all these types of landscape are found in the Lule river valley, and the different landscapes are important for the Sami at different times of the year and on different occasions. These issues we return to below.

The historical landscape is generally not identifiable with specific ethnic groups on the basis of archaeological evidence on its own, as already pointed out by Kleppe (1977:46). Schanche's conclusion was as follows: "Even if the early prehistoric cultural traces in Sápmi [the Land of the Sami] cannot be defined as Sami in the meaning that their human ancestors with certainty called themselves Sami, they may nevertheless be a part of the Sami prehistory" (Schanche 1995:42, *our translation*).

The magical or religious landscape is closely linked to the practice of shamanism. This connection is well documented at cult places and offering sites as well as at collective burial sites and in connection with individual graves. "Depending on social, cultural and historical circumstances the landscape is given a cultural interpretation that does not depend on the actual, physical expression embedded in the landscape" (Schanche 1995:43).

The mythical landscape is - according to Schanche - related to shamanism, but not so much associated with specific places as with special features in nature such as special stones or rock formations interpreted as live beings. These may be earthly or supernatural and for special reasons these are believed to have been petrified. These beliefs may be documented in myths; this is, though, not a study for archaeologists on their own, and it is beyond the scope of this paper. Magical and mythical landscapes may easily be confused, but the distinction is - of course - important in order to get closer to the emic past. Outsiders, i.e. non-Sami people, may find it difficult to identify magical and mythical landscapes. The historical landscape may also be included in magical as well as mythical landscapes. Political landscapes refer to power relations, but Schanche (1995:45) has also interpreted landscapes to embrace how knowledge about the history of the landscape including symbolic content is used strategically in culture-

political exchanges of ideas. She sees direct links to one, two or even all three of the other types of landscapes.

These links between landscape and knowledge may just function for the Sami as ways of referring to historical knowledge. Alternatively they might be used as instruments in nation building, in the recognition of identity, or in revitalising culture. They could also be used to support mutual cultural understanding with other indigenous groups, and as the basis for future political choices.

### **On Sami religion and ritual life**

Sami religion is classified as a north-Eurasian hunting religion, but it developed its own form during the long period of time when the Sami people lived as hunters, gatherers and fishers. The Sami world-view was communicated through myths, stories, songs, dances, pictures and rituals with or without embedded symbols or signs. Killing and death meant discontinuity in the social and cosmic ordering, but for the hunters it also meant a precondition for life. Such beliefs explain the present here-and-now and also provide promises about the future.

Rituals are associated with subsistence activities and settlement patterns. The Sami world-view and their concepts of time were conjoined, and they were confirmed in ritual practices. Sacred mountains, water and places associated with the underworld were tightly linked with everyday activities, including people's movements in the landscape. The Sami view on the cosmos was shared with other people in the northern area and was a central feature in the circumpolar great tradition. People were considered to be an integral part of nature, while a common feature was the division of the world into three sections: heaven, earth and underground. The sacred and the profane were closely linked in this world-view, and the three were united through a world-tree or a pillar, the pillar being associated with the northern star.

This religion was animistic, and the natural world and everything within it was considered to be animated. There were important rituals associated with the yearly cycle, carried out both by local groups and by individual members of society. Many rituals were connected to seasonal opportunities for hunting and fishing. The most important seasonal ceremonies were those carried out at the sacrificial sites in connection with the collective reindeer hunting in the autumn (Mulk 2005a, 2005b). Of special importance were rituals connected with bear hunting (Bäckman 1981:45 f).

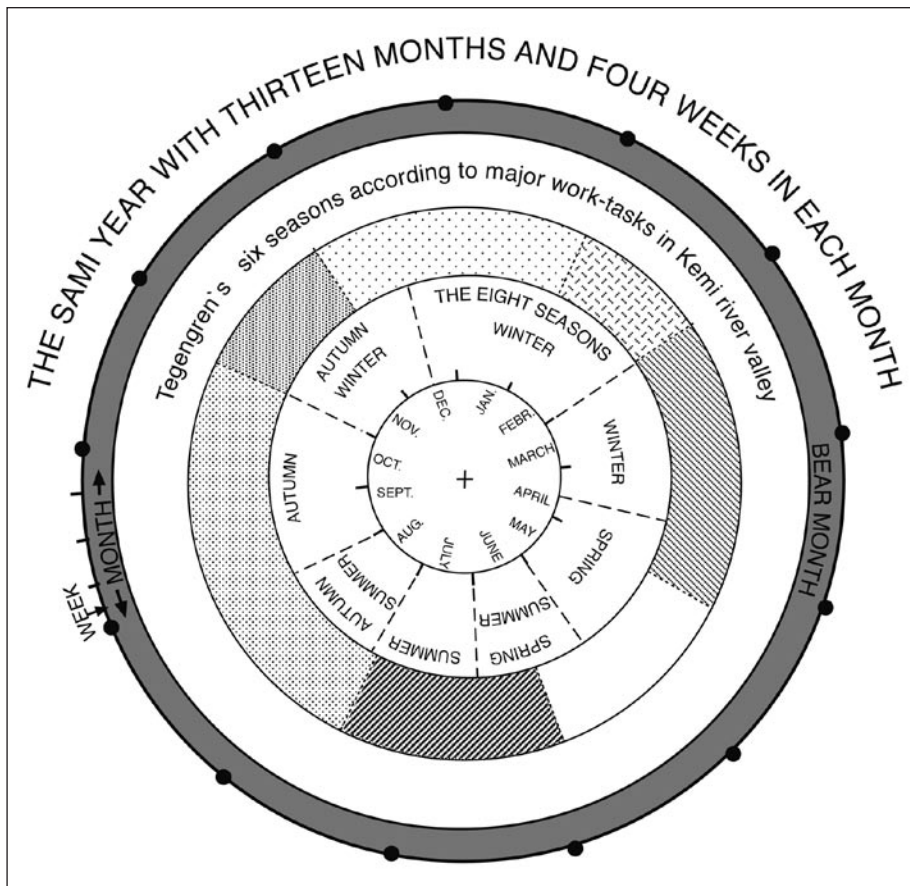
Various ritual acts were closely connected with Sami concepts of time: this includes linear and cyclic as well as mental time. The connection between cyclical time and seasonal subsistence activities may be represented on the Sami drums of the 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries, and some drum motifs may also have served as a star map for astrology when particular constellations came into view in the night sky (Sommarström 1987). Concepts of time were partially documented by some ethnographers, in particular Ernst Manker (e.g. 1950, 1957, 1961). We need to investigate these sources further, to establish the connection between the Sami perception of time and their use of everyday and ritual landscapes. Our comments here should be seen as an initial contribution.



### Sami perceptions of time

The Sami world-view and their concepts of time were conjoined and confirmed in ritual practice. In most societies concepts like year, months, weeks and days are not only connected to the annual cycle of subsistence activities and to the landscape, but also have links to the spiritual world. Our knowledge about the Sami concept of time reckoning is very fragmented, but certain deductions can be made from linguistic evidence as well as from small signs and symbols, for example those that represent the sun, moon and stars (Turi 1910). Ritual acts performed in relation to the yearly cycle were closely associated with cults relating to the sun and the moon while rituals associated with the sun, *biejuve*, primarily took place at midwinter, spring, autumn and midsummer.

There are indications that the Sami year in the past was divided into 13 months, each month consisting of four weeks (Wiklund 1897; Grundström 1950; Granlund & Granlund 1973:26, 97 p). This division of time into weeks still operates, and each week has its own Sami name (Susanna Angéus-Kuoljok, *personal communication*).



**Figure 2.** Chart of the Sami yearly cycle showing possible correlations between the thirteen months calendar, the division of a year into six seasons according to major work tasks, the calendar dividing the year into eight seasons; all visualised in relation to the Gregorian calendar. (Drawing: E.J. Kleppe & E.M. Hoff).



However, the impact on Sami culture of the Catholic Church was strong in the early Medieval period. Among other things we can see that the introduction of the Julian calendar influenced the Sami concept of time, imposing a shift to a year consisting of twelve months (Fig. 2). The Sami now had to keep records of feast days and saints' days. To do so they devised a new kind of runic calendar, *rijbme*. It is important to bear in mind that the Sami calendars – introduced in the 14<sup>th</sup> century – were adjusted to the Sami recognition of the yearly cycle and these calendars also include information about other Sami concepts and ways of life.

Beliefs about when the New Year should start seem to have varied geographically. According to Juha Pentikäinen the new year started in the spring, probably in April, with the month named after the bear (Pentikäinen, *personal communication*). According to the informant Assa Mickelsdotter Viltok from Sörkakitum *sameby* (Swedish) in the Lule river valley, the 13<sup>th</sup> month in the traditional Sami calendar was named *miesskamánno* (Sami Lule), *rötmånaden* (Swedish), which means the month of rotting (Wiklund 1897:7 pp). *Basádismánno*, the sacred month, was a period of intensive ritual activities, but the actual name for the month is generally taken as an example of a name which is later than the introduction of Christianity (Susanna Angéus-Kuoljok, *personal communication*).

In source materials from the 1600-1800s on history of religion dealing with Sami matters there is plenty of information about sacred places and rituals associated with the yearly cycles of time and subsistence. Consequently rituals can be studied in relation to time as well as space. Time is important from the linear, cyclical and mental perspectives. Integrating time with space will generate insights into the locations of ritual acts, their topography as well as their geography, so that we can physically locate in the landscape the places in which beliefs were enacted about separate cosmic worlds.

The Sami concept of time had in the past, in addition to its cosmological associations, links with subsistence activities such as hunting and fishing. In Helmer Tegengren's description of the Sami hunting society in the 1500-1700s in the Kemi river valley, we find that work in the subsistence economy was organised according to a division of the year into six seasons. This specific perception of the year was centred round times for the hunting of wild reindeer and the trapping of beaver (Tegengren 1952:127 p).

### **Conflicts over Sami culture heritage management**

The Lapponia World Heritage area (Fig. 1) is included in this discussion as an example of different and conflicting views about the Sami cultural landscape and its historical origins. Lapponia was included in the UNESCO list after lengthy discussions that had strong political undertones. After much debate the area's nomination was as a 'mixed' site, based on the values of its natural landscape as well as its Sami cultural heritage. Before Lapponia was nominated in 1996, a programme of consultation and research was carried out jointly by the Environmental Protection Agency and the National Heritage Board (Mulk 1996, 1999, 2000).

UNESCO argued that Lapponia should also be seen as a *cultural landscape*, with its own long history as an area of material value and symbolic meaning for the Sami people. This history continues up to the present, since Lapponia continues today as a grazing land integrated in the seasonal life style of Sami reindeer herders. The decision of UNESCO to specify both cultural and natural values within Lapponia showed a recognition that these mountains, plateaus, rivers and lakes were not really the 'wilderness' that some people in the Environmental Protection

Agency in Stockholm wanted them to be (Löfgren 1996). The right of the traditional users, i.e. the Sami, to define the past as well as the present-day was one of the fundamental issues under discussion in the 1990s. To qualify as 'world heritage', UNESCO's criteria for a site or area to be included are its outstanding quality as (1) a natural heritage site, or (2) a cultural heritage site, or (3) cultural landscapes, or (4) so-called 'mixed sites' that include more than one aspect (Mulk 1999; Mulk & Bayliss Smith 1998; Dahlström 2003).

According to Åsa Dahlström it was this latter criterion that was decisive for the final choice of Lapponia, and it meant a shift in paradigm from an emphasis on lost cultural traditions towards a preservation of living cultures (2003:228 pp). She found - with reference to practice within the World Heritage Committee - that the differences between natural areas and living cultural landscapes were differences in degree, rather than in kind. Nomination to the World Heritage list was done by national authorities (*ibid*:235), and in the debate around the inclusion of Lapponia it ought to be mentioned that opinions of local people and the ongoing political conflict about land-rights were included very late in the process.

In the ten years since Lapponia's nomination conflicts have emerged about the truth of the statement made by the UNESCO committee in 1996, that the regions included within Lapponia's boundaries have been a Sami "homeland for hundreds of years and are marked by their culture and reindeer herding" (*ibid*:245). This statement might seem as obvious to an archaeologist as to a Sami reindeer herder, apart from some minor doubts among some archaeologists about the term "reindeer herding", which might instead be "herding and hunting". However to many local people in northern Sweden, the idea of long-term continuity of Sami land use have proved to be controversial and even unacceptable. According to Dahlström (*ibid*:245) most non-Sami residents of the north believe that all statements about the time people first immigrated into northern Sweden, their use of the Lapponia area, and their Sami ethnic identity, are political questions and not matters to be resolved by academic debate or UNESCO decree.

This mismatch between 'expert' and popular discourse is thought-provoking, and points to a sad failure in communication. After all there has been a rather intense discussion on ethnicity in northern Fennoscandia in social and cultural anthropology as well as in archaeology since the 1970s (cf. Barth 1969; Kleppe 1977; Mulk 1996, 1999, 2000; Mulk & Bayliss-Smith 1998). Despite this academic debate many local people seem to have inherited - or perhaps acquired through schooling - a very different world view.

The ongoing conflicts over the management of Lapponia since 1996 do not explicitly concern the archaeological heritage, but they do exemplify the strength of the wilderness lobby, for example in protecting predator species. At present it is the reindeer herders who bear the main costs of the protection of bears, wolves, lynx, wolverines and eagles.

It is clear from this brief review that research findings in northern Sweden that relate to Sami cultural history have had little impact on the debate. An obvious question to ask is how can research data be made available, so that it can contribute to a shift in people's attitudes and make them more aware of the factual and ethical basis for managing the Sami cultural heritage. The ethnicity of the people living in this region in prehistory, from the time of the earliest settlement onwards, has often been considered by non-Sami as a largely political (and therefore subjective) question. As for the Sami, their rights to separate treatment have been

encouraged by the official recognition that they are indigenous people. A persistent demand by all indigenous peoples, according to Pentikäinen, is that categories used by others about them should definitely be their 'own' (Pentikäinen 1998:86). In this situation there is little chance that insiders and outsiders will share the same view about the cultural landscape, or even agree about which group are really the insiders and which are the outsiders.

Our general argument is that the practice of culture heritage management cannot be carried out in isolation from the study of culture history. We are at a junction between academic reasoning and practical concerns in relation to the cultural heritage of indigenous peoples. What is generally accepted as Sami by those engaged in research has not become well known by the general public, policy makers or politicians, either because it has been ignored or neglected. In European nations whose whole future depends upon acknowledging and celebrating cultural and linguistic diversity, sometimes called 'otherness', the questions we have been discussing have importance in today's society, and for the future.

Management of the culture heritage is important for indigenous people, since focussing on it might undermine the abuse of political power by the central or regional authorities. We agree with Schanche that "the heritage from the downgrading in earlier times of Sami culture and identity still seems to create a scepticism towards the Sami people and to Sami institutions being able to handle the professional responsibility in an adequate way" (Schanche 2002:30; *our translation*). Some commentators have emphasised legal aspects, but we prefer to see heritage as *responsibility* rather than as property (*ibid*:31; *our emphasis*).

### **Closing comment**

Recognition of culture and insight into specific culture history is a precondition for understanding and respecting people who have cultural backgrounds that are different from the majority point-of-view. A conscious use of the hermeneutic approach may be helpful in the dialogues that must take place at various and diverging levels: between the past and the present; between etic and emic approaches to reality as we see it; and between peoples with different religious views and epistemologies, where fundamentally different cultural values may operate. Resolving these issues will be a complex matter. Ethnographic analogies have always been used in culture historical studies based on archaeological source material, and this concept has been defined in more concise terms. Ethnicity is central in the context of northern Fennoscandia, but verification of ethnic differences may only explain some aspects of culture historical differences. Other differences might imply other identities and even, at a broader level, may be associated with adaptation to similar environments, a shared ideology or a shared religion. Such explanations are associated with the notion of 'great tradition', a concept that was introduced in culture anthropological studies in the 1940s, and which lately has been taken up again and applied within the context of Circumpolar and Indo-European traditions. Both etic and emic realities need to be integrated, not just at the level of general understanding but also in specific cases, such as the management of the Sami culture heritage within the Lapponia World Heritage area or in other heritage sites.

### **Acknowledgement**

We thank Tim Bayliss-Smith for constructive comments and for improving the language.

## Summary

There has been an upsurge of interest recently in the meanings of Sami sacred landscapes, sacrificial sites, and objects that communicate religious messages during ritual. Sami studies are being invoked by scholars trying to establish analogies to explain archaeological material in Fennoscandia. We believe that studying Sami cosmological ideas and notions of time, and the Sami annual cycle of rituals, can be thought-provoking for the hypotheses we form in our research into religious life. In this paper we discuss the concept of 'Circumpolar great tradition' alongside the now well-established concept of ethnicity, and we show that both are needed if we are to interpret the continuities and divergences in Sami culture history. We show that it is important to keep in view all possible *emic* and *etic* perspectives of the various groups that use the cultural landscape, especially in relation to sacred sites. This point is well illustrated in the case of the new World Heritage Area of Lapponia, which we include as a case study of conflicting attitudes and values of various insiders and outsiders. The Lapponia case shows that culture heritage management cannot be successful if it is divorced from knowledge of culture history. Insights based on scholarly work on Sami traditions, especially religion and ritual, are needed if heritage managers and visitors are to recognise and appreciate the otherness in the Sami world-view. In this connection an emic understanding of time and seasonal movements between different places is necessary for understanding Sami attitudes to ritual space, and to appreciate the meaning of Sami activities in cultural landscapes and in uses of ritual objects.

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