

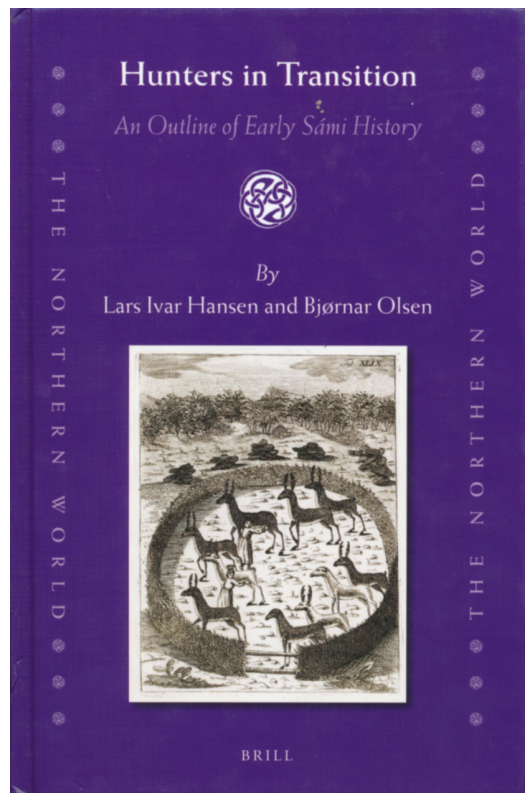
Lars-Ivar Hansen & Bjørnar Olsen: *Hunters in Transition: An Outline of Early Sámi History*. The Northern World, Vol. 63, Brill, Leiden & Boston 2014. ISSN 1569-1462. 402 pp.

The book *Hunters in Transition: An Outline of Early Sámi History* is written by an acknowledged Sámi historian Lars Ivar Hansen and Bjørnar Olsen, who is an archaeologist specialized in the archaeology of northern Fennoscandia and the post-structuralism theory. This work is an updated version of *Samenes historia fram til 1750*, published in Norwegian in 2004 (translated edition in Swedish in 2006). New results concerning the Sámi prehistory and history are discussed in the book, however, the theoretical frame is the same as in the earlier edition.

Both authors have specific areas of interest, yet this book is a joint effort, where no separation is made between parts written by different authors. This is a good choice; the different kinds of records usefully supplement each in a more effective way when they are not separated in this study. It is rare that archaeological records and written historical sources are combined in such a seamless way as in this publication.

Writers state that before 1970 there was no history of the Sámi. The Sámi were studied by linguistics and ethnography. The writers do not appreciate ethnography. They say that it described the Sámi as primitive and immutable, as halted on the early stages of human development. This is an unjust argument. They do not differentiate between the limitations of ethnographic record and racism. Without ethnography, we would have lost enormous amounts of information about the Sámi and countless other groups in the world. The ethnographic record has its limitations, but the same applies to archaeology and history as well. Different kinds of records can illuminate only a fraction of the reality.

Perhaps there was no historical writing about the Sámi in Norway. In Finland, for example, Helmer Tegengren's *Utdöd lappkultur i Kemi Lappmark*, based primarily on written docu-



ments, was published in 1952. The authors mention this publication, but hardly ever refer to it in their book, although its main subject is the acculturation process of the Sámi in the pressure of the Finnish population.

Next, we can proceed to the broader question about representativeness of the presentation. Both writers are working in northern Norway, yet the Sámi area extends also to Finland, Sweden and Russia. We have to ask, then, whether they had northern Norway in focus at the expense of other areas where the Sámi have been living. I can see that they have realized the problem and tried to avoid it, although the area of Norway is favoured in the book.

There is a bigger problem, however, concerning the language of the studies the authors have referenced. The studies written in Scandinavian languages and English are quite well represented, but Finnish and Russian texts are not taken

into account. For example, J.J. Kortessalmi's studies (1996; 2008) about the origin and development of reindeer herding, published only in Finnish, are not mentioned. There are also new and very important studies about the Sámi language written in Finnish and English, which are not included.

SUMMARY ABOUT THE CONTENTS OF THE BOOK

The book begins with an elaborate overview about the history of the study of the Sámi, and especially about the origins of the Sámi, seen as a part of nationalistic ideology. From the mid-17th to the mid-19th century, the Sámi were seen as the original population of northern Scandinavia. In the middle of the 19th century, different kinds of migration theories were proposed. These were prevalent until Povl Simonsen suggested in 1959 that Sámi had not migrated to the area. According to Simonsen, the question was wrongly posed. We should ask 'At what time did a concept arise that we can permit ourselves to call Sámi'. Before approaching this question any further, I shall introduce other relevant themes of the work.

The earliest history of Sámi

In the Early Metal Age (1800–0 BCE) there were contacts between the peoples living in northern Fennoscandia and middle Russia, as indicated by iron artefacts, bronzes and casting moulds. In the same time, during the first millennium BCE, when these contacts were waning, the inhabitants had contacts with agricultural societies in southern Scandinavia. The authors propose that the Sámi ethnicity appeared in the last millennium BCE. They do not indicate any material records to identify this, but propose a process instead. They argue that the Sámi ethnicity emerged as a result of the interaction between the agricultural inhabitants and hunting societies, which were proceeding towards the north.

The production of Kjelmo ceramics terminated in the beginning of the Common Era. The last examples were found in ritual contexts in scree graves in Varanger. After the period of 300–800 CE, there are very few signs of habitation in northern Scandinavia. From that time,

only three graves in the Varanger area with grave goods are known.

The area was not entirely empty. There are slab-lined pits (No. hellegrøper) on the coast. The oral tradition links them with Russians, but they can be dated from c 200 CE to 1000 CE. The writers regard to them as pits where blubber was smelt and see them as evidence of new contacts with the Germanic farming communities.

In recent years, circular house foundations with the Sámi kind of the division of space (as in the historically known Sámi tents or huts) have been found in the same areas as slab lined pits. The oldest of these date to the first century CE.

It seems that the settlement pattern was more mobile than before in the interior of northern Fennoscandia after 1500 BCE. Reindeer took the place of elk as the most important game.

In the interior of Norway and Sweden, and the historical south Sámi area, there are so-called mountain graves or lake graves from 200 BCE onwards, which have counterparts also in the Finnish area. These structures resemble the German Iron Age graves, but are situated in hunting grounds. In Norway, most of them date to the Viking age, whereas in Sweden they were used until the 13th century. Recovered artefacts represent both eastern and western types.

The so-called scree grave is a very interesting type. They were built of loose, jagged stones on natural fields, moved to make stone cists or chambers. There are a couple of dates for them before the Common Era, few before the Viking Age, all of them located in the Varanger area. After 1000 CE, they spread out to nearly everywhere where the Sámi people were living in the historical times, except Finland and Russia. The bulk of the graves, over 200 cemeteries with 1200 graves, are still in the Varanger area. Scree graves form real graveyards detached from settlements. Before the scree graves, graves were located near settlements and there were only a few graves in one place.

In the Viking Age, the *Stallo* sites appear above the tree-line. According to the Sámi legends, these sites belong to the giants. Most of them have been in use in the Viking Age. They have been regarded as sites of Norse habitation, or the Sámi summer or autumn sites, in connection with reindeer hunting or sites related to the beginning of reindeer nomadism. Their division

of space resembles the Sámi tents of the later times. Inger Storli associated the Stallo sites with reindeer nomadism. Olsen and Hansen do not deny the possibility, but do not regard it as a likely explanation.

The scree grave custom was spreading at the same time as other ritual practices, such as the bear graves and sacrifices. Twelve metal deposits are known in northern Sweden, metal artefacts dating to 900–1200 CE. After 1200 CE, there are no metal artefacts in depots, but antler and bone are found instead. The authors connect these sacrifices to the local community, *Siida*. Bear graves in Norway are dated from 200 to 1700 CE.

Sámis and reindeers

The question of the origin of the half-domesticated reindeer and reindeer nomadism has generated much discussion. The oldest written document of reindeers is in Ohthere's account of his voyage in northern Norway c 890 CE. Ohthere tells that he owned 600 reindeers, six of them being decoys. Ohthere mentions that the Sámi were hunters and trappers, who had decoy reindeers. On *Historia Norvegiæ*, c 1150 CE, the Sámi are also described as hunters and trappers, who have reindeer as draught animals.

In the inland sites of Norrland, there is a change in the faunal material in the Late Iron Age. In the Iron Age contexts, fish scales are found, whereas in the Viking Age and Middle Ages, the amount of reindeer and moose increases, while fish disappears about 1300 CE. The location of the sites seems to change from lake shores to places where there are pastures. This is interpreted as a change towards a society which increasingly based its livelihood on reindeer pastoralism.

According to historical sources, reindeer herding was quite modest still in the 16th century. The reindeer counts in King Karl IX time from 1605 were small. The northernmost *Siida* where herding was practised was Rounala in the junction of the Finnish, Swedish and Norwegian borders. In Finnmark or Kemi Lappmark, there were no herding at that time.

Hansen and Olsen do not regard that the Sámi got the domestication from the Scandinavians, although their terminology concerning the meth-

ods of animal keeping derive from the Scandinavians. This does not sound valid. The earliest information about reindeer keeping is from Ohthere's account. Ohthere was a Norse chieftain. He spoke about his reindeer flock. It is better to keep the concepts of keeping domesticates and reindeer nomadism apart. The Sámi did not invent keeping domesticates, but they invented nomadism in northern Fennoscandia.

Contacts, transactions, tributes and taxes

Hansen and Olsen present that the Sámi had economic, social and religious contacts with other peoples throughout the Iron Age and Early Middle Ages. They regard the character of the contacts mainly complementary or symbiotic, although there were asymmetrical features. They suggest that this was not trade-related and happened only when the Norwegian state (not the chieftains) started the taxation of the Sámi, as is mentioned e.g. by Ohthere.

Of course, we do not have records or sources to solve this issue. Knowing the habits of the time, however, from written sources from the southernmost parts of Europe, and the meeting of lower and higher technology peoples during the later times, this seems to be an attempt to whitewash the German or Norse elite.

We know that the Sámi had metal offerings in their graves and depots, but quite little compared to the Scandinavians. The fact that the Sámi were dependent on Scandinavians, or later Finns, for their metal supply, does not prove that the quality of the relationship was symbiotic.

Colonization and church

From the middle of the 13th century, the Norwegian colonization was accelerated. Norwegian peasants began to use the areas of fjords, which were earlier reserved to the Sámi. In the same time, the local chieftains had lost their control over the areas to the state. A little bit later began the colonization of West Bothnia. Finnish farmers were settling to the Torne River valley.

Clerical organization was expanding to the northern areas of the Sámi at the time. The church of Tromsø was founded in mid-13th century, Church of Vardø in east Finnmark in 1307.

In the Late Middle Ages, many of the fishing stations on the Finnmark coast got their own church, and by the year 1589 there were 17 churches. On the Russian side, there were established Orthodox monasteries, which were also economic centres. The first was founded on the mouth of Dvina River in 1417, followed by the monastery of Solovetsky, which was the primary power centrum for a long time.

The new religion had only a slight impact on burial customs at first. Crucifixes are found in the graves. In the Late Middle Ages, however, the number of the scree graves started to decline, especially in the Varanger area. A reverse influence can also be seen. The number of offerings was growing. It seems that the circular sacrificial sites were also in use in the Middle Ages. The Sámi were baptized and given Christian names. No medieval Sámi names have been preserved in the sources. The priests regarded them as heathen and did not allow them to be used.

At home, they made new rituals to 'wash-off' their given name. It seems that the Sámi could secretly practise quite well their own religion, although witchcraft trials were more common against the Sámi than any other people in Europe.

Pietism began in the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries. It demolished the possibilities of the Sámi to practise their own religion. For pietism, superficial signs of religion were not enough, and personal religious consciousness was important. Pietistic priests were destroying old offering places, *Seidis*, and burnt shaman drums. On the other hand, some priests began to learn the Sámi language and study the Sámi religion.

The question about the origin of the Sámi

Povl Simonsen was the first to challenge the migration paradigm of the origin of the Sámi in the 20th century. It was a hypothesis of Simonsen, not a theory. The first non-migration theory was formulated by Knud Odner (1983), who based his ideas on the theory of ethnicity by Roland Barth (1969). He tried to explicate the social processes behind the formation of the Sámi ethnicity. According to Odner, neither Sámi nor Germanic people migrated to the area, but the

people living in there represent both Germanic and Sámi ethnicity.

Hansen and Olsen approve the model of Odner, but underline one weakness. It presupposes conscious actors, who deliberately choose Sámi because of its economic advantages. The writers say that they expand and nuance the model according to the theories of Bourdieu and Giddens, so that the decision is not individually motivated but happens as if behind the backs of the actors. Yet in practice, their theory is still the same as that of Odner's. The question remains about the people who are already living in the area and 'find' their ethnicity by building borders. In Odner's theory, people who had no ethnicity chose their ethnicity, in the Olsen and Hanses model, they choose it unconsciously. What is the difference, then?

Hansen and Olsen make a summary of the theories of the history of the Sámi language, but language is not a part of the core of the concept of ethnicity, this is true also for Barth's and Odner's theories. In those theories, language is an epiphenomena. People use a language, but it has nothing to do with their ethnicity. They see that there were no ethnic groups before steady contacts with other people, whose economy had a different basis, agriculture, rather than hunting-fishing. It is surely true that ethnicity is a relational concept. If there were only one ethnic group in the world, there would not be any ethnic groups or the concept of ethnicity.

But what is wrong here, is the idea that only economic differences create ethnic boundaries. The strongest motivation behind labelling ethnic groups is and has been language. Hansen and Olsen do not explicitly try to overturn the language argument, but implicitly try to weaken it by saying that when people have no fixed settlements, it is easier to maintain linguistic unity than in sedentary communities. This contradicts, for example, Kai Donner, a linguist, who spent time in Siberia among the Samoyeds little more than 100 years ago. He said that every yurt has its own dialect. Differences were so great that Samoyeds living nearby each other had to use Russian as lingua franca because they did not understand each other (Donner 1979: 78). Language families are estimated to cover an area of 250000–500000 km² in the Neolithic Europe.

There would have been 20–40 language families and languages many times of that number in Europe (Anthony 2007: 80).

The concept of Sámi ethnicity is intentionally linked with the concept of being part of the Sámi language speaking community, therefore, the meaning of being a Sámi is associated with the ability to speak the Sámi language. Common language is crucial also for the common symbols because of the meaning of symbols is mediated by language. One ethnic group can be very diversified in terms of economic processes it is involved in. Common language is the nominator by which the common symbols are also shared. Jews are not a counter example. Although they had different languages in their everyday life in different areas, their religious language, Hebrew, has kept them as an ethnic and religious group for 2000 years.

Odner's, Hansen's and Olsen's theory leads to very strange consequences. Economic transactions do not create languages. If non-ethnic northern Scandinavian population would have chosen the Sámi language without migration, they should have learned the proto-Sámi language somehow nevertheless. In this scenario, some populations went to the east, had a course in the Sámi language and then returned to teach it to other non-ethnic populations in the area. This is, of course, an absurd idea. Aikio (2012: 66) has remarked the same problem in criticizing Hansen's and Olsen's previous work (Hansen & Olsen 2006). He says that their theory is like a stool where one leg is missing. He approves, as do I, that the social and economic processes they propose are plausible, but the Sámi language is missing.

Genetics

The writers consider also the question of the origin of the Sámi according to genetics. They state that genetic studies are based on an assumed connection between the genetic and linguistic affinity. This is a misunderstanding. The units, or the subjects, in genetic studies are genes in chromosomes, unique to every individual, but which can be grouped together according to the ancestry. The connection is the result of the studies, not the starting point. In general, the result have shown a surprisingly good genetic fit between

the same languages and genetic inheritance (e.g. Günther et al. 2015), but nearly no fit at all for example with the Uralic language family (Wiik 2007). Because of their treatment of the genetic studies of the Sámi, it is deficient that I make a short summary of the topic taking into account also publications published after 2010, and also older studies.

The first genetic studies of the Sámi were based on haplogroups of the mitochondrial DNA. According to these studies, the Sámi had no eastern inheritance (Tambets et al. 2004). They were not really western, either. They were outliers in relation to other Europeans, a group of their own, yet this finding is untouched by Hansen and Olsen (Lahermo et al. 1996; 1999). The most common mtDNA haplogroup U5b is nowadays known to be the type of the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic Europeans (e.g. Haak et al. 2010). Using statistical methods, Häkkinen (2012) has calculated that 80% of the genetic inheritance of the Sámi are of the Mesolithic type (actually Palaeolithic, because the Sámi are not descendants of Mesolithic, but Palaeolithic continental Europeans).

The Y-haplogroups of the Sámi are very different compared to those of Scandinavians. In the Finnish and Sámi populations, the most common haplogroup is N1c1a. This is the most common group in eastern Siberia (of Yakuts, 91% represent this haplogroup), but high proportions of also Finns (about 60%) and Sámi (about 40%) are its representatives. In Norwegians, the presentation is about 5%, mostly in northern Norway (Wiik 2007: 228–30, Table 2).

New genetic studies make it clear that the ideas of so-called processualism, strong continuity of European population from the Ice Age, are untenable. Agriculture arrived with new populations. The genes of the Mesolithic European population are not common in the continental Europe nowadays. Also, the genes of the central European Linear Band ceramic population have hardly survived because of the Indo-European newcomers (Haak et al. 2005). Genetic analysis has, for example, revealed that the TRB culture was brought by newcomers in southern Scandinavia. The population of the Pitted Ware culture has no continuity in Scandinavia (Malmström et al. 2009). Three quarters of the Corded Ware culture people descended genetically from

proto-Indo-European Yamnaya culture from the steppes (Haak et al. 2015).

Tambets et al. (2004) stressed that the western attributes of the Sámi genetic inheritance, emphasizing especially the difference between the Sámi and Samoyeds. New studies do not refute this main idea, but indicate that there is eastern influence also in the Sámi genetics. The Asian haplogroups Z1a and D5a3a of the Sámi are virtually absent in Europe. According to Johansson et al. (2008), the Sámi of Sweden inherited about 13% of their genes from Asia.

The age of Z1a, it split from the Asian stem Z1 about 2700 years ago, fits well with the coming of the Sámi language to the west (Ingman & Gyllensten 2006; Häkkinen 2010). There are still many problems with the interpretation of the results of the genetic studies. The idea that prehistoric populations were tied to their local areas like serfs, however, has been refuted. There is no need to consider the word ‘migration’ as a taboo in archaeological literature, as has long been the case. How much continuity there is, and what is the role of migration, must be solved case-by-case. It is interesting to note, that the main ideas of V.G. Childe (1950) about prehistoric migrations have turned out to be nearly correct.

New linguistic studies

During the last years, the linguistics have enlightened the history of the Sámi language, by showing areas where it was spoken on different levels, and by giving approximate absolute chorology for these levels.

It was recently concluded, for example, that the Sámi arrived to northern Scandinavia at a time when there were already people who were speaking the proto-Germanic or -Scandinavian language. There are many toponyms in the Sámi language which are loans from those levels of language, for example, Magerøy, Mákkar-awjo which were loans of the north-western Germanic language (NwG **auj*, island) (Korhonen 1981: 47; Häkkinen 2010: 59; Heikkilä 2011: 68–9). The name of the mountain Kebnekaise is the first lend from proto-Scandinavia to Sámi and then from Sámi to the Scandinavian language (Korhonen 1981; Heikkilä 2011).

We can now take forward the basic problem formulated by Simonsen. According to him, the

question was incorrectly posed. We should ask ‘At what time did a concept arise that we can permit ourselves to call Sámi’. According to linguistics, the problem is solved. Their endonym *Sápmi* or **sāmē* goes to the proto-Sámi language before it has diverged. The language was spoken before the Common Era (Häkkinen 2010: 56). It had been an endonym of the Sámi people before they migrated to the northern Scandinavia. Hence, the Sámi people really did migrate to northern Scandinavia as Sámi. They were speaking the proto-Sámi language, which later on began to split to different dialects and later to different Sámi languages.

Although the same language came to northern Scandinavia with migrating people, these peoples did not come to an uninhabited land. In the Sámi language, there are abundant words and toponyms which have unknown etymology. They have been loaned to the Sámi language after their divergence has begun, after the beginning of the Common Era from an unknown, disappeared language, which has got very a general name ‘Paleo-European language’ (Heikkilä 2011: 74–5).

Substrate vocabulary is about the names of birds, fish, sea- and land mammals. The ending *-ir* ~ *-Vr* of those etymologically unclear words are connected to mountains, *skiehč* to watersheds etc. (Aikio 2004: 21–4). About one third of the Sámi words are potential loans from this disappeared language (Aikio 2012: 85). What is the percentage of the original inhabitants in relation to the newcomers is a question to which linguistics no more than archaeology can give a precise answer. Genetic studies of living people give some approximates, but better information can be gained only by genetic analysis of bones, if there are enough of them from the period 500 BCE–800 CE, which is crucial.

It was clear that the earlier population and the newcomers were able to distinguish themselves from each other on the bases of language, which has been the foundation of ethnic identification. It is also clear that the Sámi two thousand years ago were very different than the Sámi known from the historic or ethnographic records. The book by Hansen and Olsen well describes this complicated process, and economic and social developments connected to this change. Archaeological data as such tells very little, if anything,

about the linguistic and ethnic histories. Linguistic and genetic data cope better in this task. It is a mistake not to take them into account.

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