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INTRODUCTION

The Project

Meeting the Sami

The Sami are an indigenous people of northernmost Europe. They have also been known by other names. Norwegians used the term Finn but perhaps best known is the term Lapp, used especially in Finland, Sweden and Russia. The indigenous word for the area of Sami settlement is Sápmi. For the Sami, the term Lapp carries pejorative connotations and its use has become less frequent. However, the terms Finn and Lapp are still found in place names, so that the area of Sami settlement in northern Sweden bears the name Lappmark and in the northern province of Norway, Finnmark. In addition, there are maps that designate the entire area of northern Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia as 'Lapland'. The Sami are historically a dispersed and culturally divided people. Today the Sami number approximately 70,000, and are a minority group within Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. The Sami population has its highest concentration in the province of Finnmark, Norway.

My interest in the Sami culture stems from 1993 and led to the present research project that explores Sami healers. At that time, I was enrolled at the C.G. Jung Institute in Zürich for Analytical Psychology and also finishing my Master of Arts degree, having studied texts on early Chinese Alchemy. I was intrigued by comments made by researchers that suggested a possible relationship between Chinese Alchemy and early Chinese shamanic practices. I had already probed literature in the English language on shamanism, and I was looking for an opportunity to meet a shaman. Therefore when the opportunity arrived, I was ready to pursue it. This came as an invitation to take part in a fieldtrip offered by a visiting lecturer to the C.G. Jung Institute, Professor Jens-Ivar Nergård, at the Institute for Social Sciences, Tromsø University. The fieldtrip was to be to the most northern province of Norway, Finnmark and would possibly include meeting a Sami who was said to be a shaman by Dr. Nergård. The field trip, comprised of three people, Dr. Nergård, a family member of his and myself, took place in September 1993 and included meeting Mikkel Gaup who indeed acknowledged he was a shaman, and a woman who referred to herself as a healer/helper, Nanna Persen. Dr Nergård had visited these people on previous fieldtrips, and he indicated that it had taken him a considerable time to locate them. The meetings were highly interesting. At the time I was impressed by Mikkel's and Nanna's apparent lack of concern to be validated by my fellow travelers

and myself, but on the other hand, the apparent readiness and willingness to be of help. Our questions and presence as we sat around the dinner table in each of their homes appeared to be viewed by them as due to *our* need. The position of someone in need was most clearly demonstrated during the visit to Nanna. During the visit I was 'diagnosed' by Nanna. This took place while I sat at her kitchen table with the others present. She 'looked' directly into my eyes for a period of twenty minutes. During this time she did not speak or move. After these twenty minutes, which I found difficult to endure, she told what she had 'seen'. Her 'diagnosis' was striking in its correctness.

The literature on shamanism often contains the suggestion that a shaman was possibly emotionally unstable, so one of my questions concerned the mental stability of the shaman. Mikkel and Nanna both had stable constitutions. The question of a charlatan is also contained in the literature; mention is made of the suggestibility of the shaman's public, and the playing of visual tricks or slight of hand. At the time, my assessment could only be subjective. It did not feel that Mikkel and Nanna were posturing and it appeared that the help they gave was regularly employed. Another question I had (prior to the fieldtrip) concerned the relationship of the Sami to what may be called the re-invention of shamanism. Scholars in the history of religion have written on Sami shamanism. Their view was that Sami shamanism was in practice up until the middle of the 18th century in the Scandinavian Sami areas and among the Russian Sami up to the middle of the 19th century (Hultkrantz 1962-1963, 342). In a publication on the Sami shaman drum, I read that the Sami were reconstructing or establishing new forms of traditional local shamanism in workshops and courses (Sommarström 1991, 163). After the fieldtrip and having met Mikkel and Nanna, who were both in their late 80s, placing their activities in the context of a reconstruction of shamanic practice appeared untenable. I presented my impressions of the fieldtrip to my then mentor, Dr Kamstra (Municipal University of Amsterdam), and he encouraged me to pursue a research project. This led me to return to Finnmark on a regular basis. The frequency of these visits increased after I graduated from the C.G.Jung Institute in 1998.

I returned to Finnmark in the summers of 1995 and 1996 and, via translators and hand-written notes, interviewed both Nanna and Mikkel. Upon my return in the summer of 1997, I was informed that Mikkel had become senile. From 1997 onwards I lodged at the Persen Farm, located in the small settlement of Stabbursnes, and conducted interviews with Nanna Persen. After 1998, I was in Stabbursnes four to five times each year. My stays varied in length from one week to three weeks. My translator for the interviews with Nanna, from 1997 onwards, was the son of Nanna, Sigvald. Beginning in April 2000, I recorded the interviews with a video camera. The interviews were conducted in Sami and the translation into English was a joint

project undertaken by Sigvald and myself. We viewed the filmed interviews and worked together on an English translation. The interviews themselves were conducted at Nanna's kitchen table; Sigvald was the interviewer and I attended to the camera. Sigvald has become a close friend. The scope of the research increased by events that took place during the research: Nanna bequeathed her healing gifts to Sigvald and I witnessed the transition. Nanna passed away at 93 years of age on February 26, 2002. From then on Sigvald became my main informant. The many interviews with Sigvald have been alternately recorded on video film or as hand-written notes. The language is English. Further, interviews were conducted with local people, the interviews were video filmed and the same procedure was followed as with Nanna. Sigvald interviewed in Sami and later we viewed the film together and translated the interviews jointly into English. The method gave room for discussion and I often asked Sigvald to elaborate or clarify what had been said in the interview. I am not fluent in Norwegian, which explains why I did not choose the Norwegian language for the interviews.

Central Questions

Mikkel and Nanna were individuals helping others in their community and it appeared that they had a definite position within the Sami environment. Nergård employed the designation 'shaman', but in the course of my investigations I have found the appellation 'shaman' to be problematic. The questions that its use raises are diverse, not least of which is the question of continuity between past pre-Christian practice and present day practice. Shamanism was an ingredient of pre-Christian Sami culture. One could call this the classical period. The Sami perspective during the classical period valued the knowledge of the ancestors. With the coming of Christianity, God and the devil were introduced. Current perspectives reflect new values of progress and democracy. Today Sami are caught in various ambiguities concerning the past. Some Sami will view the valuing of practices from the past as tantamount to being primitive, while others are convinced of the value of practices considered to be traditionally Sami. Within research circles I encountered two positions that were held on the question of continuity. One was from the discipline of the history of religion by Hultkrantz. He posited that when Christianity entered the Sami area, shamanism eventually retreated. The other was from the discipline of social science posited by Nergård that shamanism did continue past the Christianizing period, and shamans are still present among Sami people. This raises the question if Sami shamanism, or in a broader sense the old Sami religion, is, by now, entirely extinct or if there are still some traces present in modern times. Do we find continuity of concepts and practices from olden times into the present ideas and practices of Sami healers? For this part of my research I consulted literature about the Sami pre-Christian religion and about Sami mythology, while I also questioned my informants about religious concepts and mythical

beings. A thorough identification of past and present practices seems ill advised. To substantiate the relationship hard data would be required and the available data do not support such a massive identification. The Sami have undergone many changes in their society as well as in their discernment of their own cultural ingredients. Moreover there are long standing regional cultural differences. Authors on Sami religion do not always indicate the different Sami groups and some specifically deal with the nomadic reindeer herding Sami. My fieldwork was limited to a small part of the Sami environment. It was carried out among a group of Coastal Sami in the area of the Porsanger Fjord, in the Norwegian province of Finnmark. Coastal Sami lived from fishing and small farming. Subsequent to my interest in the question of continuity, my interest concerns ideas about healing practices and the worldview of people – healers and patients – as the context in which healing functions. Therefore my research deals with questions of continuity and worldview related to healing and healing practices among Coastal Sami in the area of the Porsanger Fjord in Northern Norway. I explore practices of healing and the cultural and historical connections that shed light on current beliefs and practices in which the healers are embedded.

Introducing the Coastal Sami

Social Developments among the Coastal Sami¹

Sami culture has often been associated with reindeer herding, but it was only after the 16th century that some Sami specialized in reindeer herding. Other Sami combined fishing with traditional occupations. Therefore the Sami speak of Reindeer Herding Sami or Mountain Sami and Coastal Sami. The 16th and 17th century Coastal Sami life-style is posited by Gjessing to have been semi-nomadic. A Sami group that worked and lived together was called a *siida*. The whole *siida* resided at the head of the fjords during the winter and during the summer months households moved more freely from each other residing at the mouth of the fjords. According to Gjessing, the Coastal Sami *siida* organization was influenced during the 17th century by the use of the coastal areas by Mountain Sami who were more and more engaging in reindeer herding and were extending their summer migrations down to the coast. Already during the 16th century the Norwegians occupied some of the best fishing locations, which restricted the annual migration cycles of the Coastal Sami. By the early 19th century the Norwegians also

1 My main sources are the works of three anthropologists who have specialised on the Coastal Sami: Gutorm Gjessing, Robert Paine and Harald Eidheim, and in addition, historian Einar-Arne Drivenes and anthropologist Nellejet Zorgdrager. My interviews (hand written) in 2005 with two Coastal Sami are employed. My informants Sigvald and Solveig are both in their late fifties, and therefore they were born shortly after WWII.

entered the inner part of the fjords. During these centuries the Danish Norwegian civil administration was built up² and commencing in 1716 the College of Missions organized the Christianizing of the Sami (see Gjessing 1954, 37-38). Prior to the introduction of Christianity the Sami religion included special features of shamanism and a bear-cult. Sacrificial sites were used either by the *siida* or individually within the home or out on the land. Many of the sites are distinguished by striking natural features such as an unusual rock formation or a colorful place on a lake due to a stream of water entering the lake from the bottom of the lake (Sami have called this a double-bottomed lake). The drum was consulted to determine the most propitious offerings and was an instrument of divination. For example, it was consulted to guide the prospective hunt. The head of the family consulted the drum, but on more special occasions, the shaman was asked to officiate, as for example in a case of illness.

In Norway the Sami were Christianized during the 18th century. In this period Norwegian settlements increased in the traditional Sami areas and the Coastal Sami began stock farming. The traditional Coastal Sami dwelling was a turf-and-wooden hut, called *lavdnjegoahiti*, but commonly referred to by the Norwegian name *torvgamme*. A family group would have several dwellings, one at each of the seasonal locations. The form of the *torvgamme* was circular or oblong. The house had the appearance of a large rounded hillock, covered by turf and supported underneath by a wooden frame. In its original form it was a one-room dwelling, in which people and animals lived side by side. By the beginning of the 19th century there was often a partition between the people and the livestock. Since the last part of the 19th century the Coastal Sami had often only one home instead of one for each of the seasonal activities. It was still customary for women and children to take the cows and sheep to the summer pasture some kilometers up a valley, while the men were away for several weeks fishing. The men would scythe the grass at midsummer, making hay that would feed the livestock during the winter. This would include outlying rough fields further from the homestead. According to Paine's research of a small fjord close to Hammersfest, in 1875 the average number of cattle was three and the average number of sheep was twelve per household. The emphasis was on fishing and no household was recorded as having a corn crop or vegetables (see Paine 1957, 64). Social values and organization strongly emphasized collaboration. Sami means of subsistence were based on the exploitation of the natural environment. For the successful exploitation of the territory, by hunting, fishing and reindeer herding, cooperation was required. For example, I have visited in the Stabburs River valley a series of pits lined with stones (undated). It is clear

2 The border between Norway/Denmark and Sweden/Finland was determined in 1751, and the border between Russia and Norway in 1826.

from their form and location that reindeer were driven so that they fell into these pits. Fishing expeditions required a well functioning crew. Today the reindeer herding Sami are still organized within a *siida*.

The traditional relationship that was maintained between the reindeer herders and the Coastal Sami is called in Sami *verdde*. The relationship was reciprocal between nomad and sedentary people. It could involve help provided by the Coastal Sami by lending and manning boats, which were used for the safe crossing of the reindeer over the Sound during migration and reciprocated with reindeer meat. Notable for the relationship was the delay of the exchange, which fostered continuity, and the social protocol of a chat with coffee (see Eidheim 1971, 37).

The Coastal Sami life-style that is within recent memory was characterized by small settlements of from eight to fifteen homesteads, scattered along the fjord and occupied year round. Farming and fishing were combined. The rivers, lakes, fjords and open sea were fished. Before 1940 farming may have included reindeer owned by the farmer that were herded by Mountain-Sami during parts of the year. Cattle, goats and sheep were held on farms, and an important product was the yearly hay. Hunting and gathering (wood and berries) gave additional products just as handcrafts traded and sold at regularly held markets. The combination of these activities made the life-style viable. Alternatives and challenges to this life-style came with Finnish and Norwegian immigration. Finnish (Kven) immigration into Northern Norway was already occurring at the beginning of the 18th century and increased during the 19th century. The Kvens were the pioneers of the first agriculture in Finnmark and were also enterprising in local trade and commerce. The Norwegian authorities saw Finnmark and Troms as a backward region during the 19th century. Colonization by Kvens and farmers from southern Norway was seen as a positive development. The Kvens were considered skilful and productive colonizers, whose intensive form of agriculture was preferred by the authorities to the mobile and more extensive resource exploitation of the Sami. A special feature of some fjords became the separate neighborhoods of Coastal Sami, Kvens and Norwegians. In some areas of Finnmark, Kvens rapidly adopted the Sami way of life. For example during the 19th century, in what is present day Kautokeino and Karasjok, the second generation Kven spoke Sami, wore Sami dress and some became wealthy reindeer-owners (see Paine 1957, 68). The relative ease of assimilation may have been facilitated by language affinity, as the Finnish and Sami languages both derive from the Proto-Finno-Permic branch of the Uralic language family.

From the middle of the 19th century until the middle of the 20th century the orientation of government policies were towards assimilation policies, or, as it is often called, Norwegianization. These policies were directed to the Kvens as well as the Sami. After 1860 the authorities were increasingly concerned about a pro-Finnish

movement among the Kvens (see Paine 1957, 70). Government policies favored the Norwegians and served the objective of increasing the percentage of Norwegians in Troms and Finnmark. Settlement projects, in the 1870s and 1900s and 1930s, recruited Norwegian colonizers from the south. A law was enacted in 1902 that land could only be sold to Norwegian citizens who used the Norwegian language, a condition that made it difficult for Kvens and Sami to obtain land. Measures were also taken to control agricultural labor recruitment, and an attempt was made to limit the presence of Kvens in the Sydvaranger Ltd's iron ore mines in eastern Finnmark (Kven immigrants included miners). A policy of discrimination was also followed in certain occupations such as border guards, foresters, police officers and teachers. The clergymen of the Lutheran Church in Finnmark were Norwegians and Danes (see Drivenes 1992, 208, 213). The tempo of the Norwegian colonization of Finnmark during the 19th century can be illustrated by some data on population growth. There were approximately 290 Norwegian fishing families in Finnmark in 1805; by 1891 the total Norwegian population had reached 13,921. By mid 20th century the Sami had become a minority population in Finnmark. By 1930 the population of Finnmark almost doubled. Between 1891 -1930 the Sami population did increase, but the increase was only a few thousand (see Paine 1988, 164). After 1930, no census was made in which ethnic or linguistic distinctions are made. Today the total population of Finnmark is approximately 73,000.

Between 1880 -1959 the Norwegian school policy decreed that schoolchildren must be taught in Norwegian, and large boarding schools were built after 1905 to facilitate this policy (see Zorgdrager 1999, 185). Some Sami concealed their Saminess in their dealings with Norwegians, and Sami parents sometimes thought it better to speak Norwegian to their children. By the 20th century, some outer signs of Sami identification were also considered as signs of poverty when used by Coastal Sami, such as turf houses and Sami summer shoes. In the fisheries, after the 1900s the Sami vessels could not keep pace with the large expensive motor vessels used by the Norwegian fishermen. Earlier the Coastal Sami had had times of advantage over the Norwegian fishermen. The Pomor trade was such a situation. The trade grew from the middle of the 18th century to include the coast of Finnmark and Troms. Every summer, Russian farmers and sea captains from the Kola Peninsula and White Sea area brought flour, timber, iron tools and other products in exchange for fish. During this period, the Norwegian fishermen were compelled to deliver their fish to the commercial houses in Bergen. The Pomor Trade made the Coastal Sami less dependent on the Norwegian trading houses and they were in this way more economically independent than were the Norwegian fishermen. The Pomor Trade ended with the coming of the Soviet Union (see Gjessing 1954, 38-39). Finnmark suffered a financial depression after the withdrawal of the Pomor Trade.

Introduction

The impact of World War II as related by my informants

World War II was a pivotal period in the lives of my informants. Notable elements of the Sami culture such as turf houses, Sami clothes, and language were already undergoing some change prior to World War II with the influx of a monetary economy and Norwegianization. But the War years had a particular impact on the fabric of Sami life. During 1940 –1944, German forces occupied Finnmark. This brought new job opportunities to the area and thereby also for the Coastal Sami, and the men found that they were more easily employed when they wore modern Norwegian attire. Solveig from Kolvik remembered her parents' accounts and the change from Sami to Norwegian attire during the occupation:

During the War men wore Norwegian clothes. To be Sami was connected to poverty. To be employed by Norwegians, it was easier to get work when wearing Norwegian clothes. My parents told that the Sami knew the Nazi ideas and knew that they were not Aryans and therefore not the accepted race. Also the Norwegians looked down on the Sami in terms of race.

Solveig's family pictures demonstrate the change in the men's clothing during this period. As mentioned, the men donned Norwegian clothes to better their employment opportunities.



Two men in modern Norwegian dress and two women in Sami dress in front of the Lakselv boarding school having attended a baptism, 1943.



*Solveig's father and uncle in 1940.
They wear Sami dress.*



*Solveig's grandmother's funeral in 1941: Her
father and uncle wear Norwegian dress. Her
grandfather wears Sami dress and hat, and the
women are all in Sami dress.
We can note that her father and uncle changed
their attire from 1940 to 1941, but that the
women did not change, nor did an elderly man.*

In October 1944, during the retreat of the German forces a scorched earth policy was applied, and many buildings in Finnmark were burnt. The English destroyed the city of Kirkenes (which is close to Russia) due to the large presence of German forces, and it was devastated further when the Germans retreated. The Russian troops pursued the retreating occupying forces up to the Tana River. Their pursuit left no time to apply the scorched earth policy to the area between Kirkenes and the Tana River, which is the Varanger peninsula. The German forces then continued their application of the scorched earth policy as they retreated westward. Along the way they reached Stabbursnes, located on the Porsanger Fjord and the Stabburs River, some two hundred kilometers west of the Tana River. The occupying forces informed the local population that they would be burning all the buildings as they withdrew. Sea transportation was provided to transport everyone to a 'safe' port further south in Norway, Trondheim. The Sami were not eager to leave, and many tried to avoid transport. Solveig related that during the evacuation Sami men returned to their Sami clothes (the expediency was reversed, prior to the evacuation they had donned Norwegian clothing for employment) because the Germans refused boat entry to a man dressed in Sami clothes. She said, "If a man came in Sami clothes the German said, 'you can stay.' So the men put on their Sami clothes in order to stay. They were not sure what the boat would bring, but staying they knew. The Sami took this advantage to stay."

Since 1945 the economic development of Finnmark has been State-planned and financed. The area was rebuilt after World War II, and integration within the Norwegian welfare state meant further breaks with the past. All together this led to a shedding of Sami identity in the public sphere of interaction (see Zorgdrager 1999, 185-186). Most people in Finnmark now live in two-story houses that have cemented foundations. Paine stated that not until after World War II were Norwegians in Finnmark prepared to include Coastal Sami into their society. However, they were willing to include them as Norwegians and not as Sami (Paine 1988, 164).

The shedding of Sami identity in the public sphere can be noted in the following pictures that illustrate the change in the woman's clothing. Prior to and during the War women wore Sami attire, during the evacuation period many women changed to modern Norwegian dress and after the War modern Norwegian attire dominated.



Solveig's mother and aunts, 1930, in Sami dress.

Sigvald commented on a significant lack of recognition from Norway for the Sami's participation in World War II resistance. He thinks that this lack of recognition is still felt by local people as unfortunate and effectively alienating. He attributes this silence to suspicion by Norwegian officials as well as their distrust of Sami sympathies that would invite Soviet, Finnish, and communist influence. Additionally, he refers to a Norwegian national pride. He concludes that the ongoing nature of this distrust is shown by the fact that pro-Sami movements were, until recently, monitored:



From Solveig's album, the visit to Lakselv of King Olaf V and Princess Astrid in 1960. One woman wears Sami dress and the rest are in modern Norwegian dress.

There has not been recognition of the Sami resistance during World War II. There is a feeling about all this War activity [the resistance] that there is silence when it concerns people in Finnmark. It is not told and not spoken about. So when you speak to old people it is obvious that there is a need to write that history because they were really participating. For example, there was a front at Narvik, I think the Norwegian 6th battalion needed a lot of good skiers. It would have been almost impossible without Sami skiers. Also, there was a lot done by Sami along the coast following the traffic – the traffic crossing the ocean here. It concerns all partisans participating and giving support and this includes both Sami and Kvens. There is the feeling that the history is not written and what is written concerns only the Norwegian part – what was going on south. When we talk with older people, this subject comes up very soon and is still important for many people. Why this history is not yet written? It would appear that Norwegian nationalism plays a role. The whole population here was involved, they had to leave [the population was evacuated] and everything was burned. There is a feeling here, it is not cleared up, it is not told. [Another possible reason why the history has not been written is that] there was a fear of Russia after the war that Russia would take over. And of course what started was suspicion, because traditionally people in Finnmark have contact

with Russia, and a lot of people from Finnmark also lived in Russia. It looked like Norway was a bit scared of this situation – too many people in Finnmark had a good relationship with Russia. So what was started was an anti soviet attitude and communist fear. After the War there were jobs in the rebuilding and also with the military activity. If you were communist or had relationship to communism, you could not get these jobs. And what has happened even up until today is that the secret service keeps records. I think it was this year that you could apply to see your dossier, if you thought that the secret service was keeping track of you. Because they were monitoring all the Sami activities, like during the Alta demonstration. It was all mapped.

Sigvald does not have a positive view of Norway's role in the reconstruction following the evacuation; the government did not heed the wishes of local people:

After World War II and the evacuation, the Norwegian government had an idea where people should live, to be more efficient. But what happened, after the peace came, people started to move back to the area where they had always been living. The government was planning some few villages – it was known – it was not allowed for people to move back to Finnmark and a travel permit was required to travel back. But all these plans the government had, the people could not accept. And people just traveled back and had the life they knew. What they came back to, it was just ashes. And they started to build up. The help and organization for rebuilding came very late from the Norwegian government. The first help was for only provisional houses – small houses. The next program was for permanent houses and Swedish help came, like my house, the timber in my house is Swedish.

According to Sigvald, Norway has been negligent in acknowledging the Sami's positive role during World War II, and after the War the Sami were excluded from a positive role in the decision making for the rebuilding of their communities.

The situation after World War II

After World War II, the State continued a policy of assimilation but indigenous people's rights became a relevant topic in European countries, and eventually also entered into the Norwegian government's concerns. After 1870, Social Darwinism had been the dominant ideology in the Norwegian policy towards the Sami. In this view Sami culture was bound to succumb to the dominant Norwegian culture, an inevitable result of the modernization

of the nation (see Zorgdrager 1999). This ideology also had its influences on the ethnographic and folklore research concerning the Sami. This research was strongly influenced by theories of diffusion emphasizing that in Sami culture and folklore much was borrowed from the Scandinavian neighbors because they were more advanced. When the social anthropologist Harald Eidheim started his research on the social situation of the Sami just after World War II, he thought the research situation concerning the Sami was disappointing. He found that “those who were active in Sami research were writing about culture and about the past. In their research they showed no real interest in the conditions of the contemporary Sami people – in post-war Norway – they were not interested in their living conditions....I had gained the impression that these scholars looked at what they called the Sami culture as certain traits that were more Sami before, and that certain traits were more genuinely Sami than others, and therefore more interesting. Cultural loans and modernization had destroyed Sami culture, Sami culture was not that Sami anymore” (Mathisen 2000, 103-119, Eidheim’s quotation Mathisen 2000, 119).

In the second half of the 20th century, political views of cultural assimilation began to change and the Sami position was finally recognized in the Sami Act of 1987 and the Finnmark Act of 2005. The need to clarify the State’s relationship to Sami culture and the legal position of the Sami people came to a head during a dispute about the hydroelectric development of the Alta-Kautokeino river system in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In Stilla on January 15, 1981, six hundred policemen cleared a Sami encampment and forcibly removed a ‘chain gang’ of demonstrators protesting against the building of the Alta Dam. During the Alta conflict the National Association of Norwegian Sami and the Sami Reindeer Herder’s Association in Norway made requests to the Norwegian government for a government commission to look into Sami land rights. World attention was focused on Norway’s treatment of its own indigenous people through protests and hunger strikes outside the Norwegian Parliament building in Oslo. The Sami Rights Committee was set up in 1980. Responding to the recommendations of the Sami Rights Committee, the Norwegian Parliament passed the Sami Act on June 12, 1987. Paragraph 1.2 states, “The Sami People shall have its own national Sami assembly, elected by and among the Sami people.” The aim of the Act is “to ensure favorable conditions to enable the Sami people of Norway to maintain and develop their language, culture and social life.” On 21 April 1988, the Norwegian parliament adopted § 110a of the Norwegian Constitution. Together with the Sami Act, § 110a recognized the Sami as a separate people with a long history of settlement in Norway. Article 2.1 of the Sami Act concerns the administrative duties, power of initiative and authority of the national Sami assembly (Samediggi, also called Sami Parliament): “The business of the Samediggi is any matter that, in view of the Samediggi particularly concerns the Sami people. On its own

initiative the Samediggi may raise, and pronounce upon, any matter within the scope of its business. It may also on its own initiative bring a matter before public authorities and private institutions. The Samediggi has the power of decision when this follows from the other provisions of the Sami Act, or is otherwise laid down” (nettredaksjonen@samediggi.no, 27.09.2001, by Pål Hivand).

The Sami Rights Committee set up in 1980 embarked on many years of deliberations. One of the results is the present Finnmark Act, which the Norwegian Parliament passed on 8 June 2005. The Finnmark Act became operational in July 2006. The intention behind the Act is to ensure that those who live in Finnmark have a bigger say in how the land in Finnmark is utilized. Ninety-six per cent of the land was previously state owned in Finnmark. This land has been transferred to the new Finnmark Estate to be owned on behalf of Finnmark’s inhabitants. The Finnmark Estate, effectively a private landowner, must comply with a number of laws and regulations that govern the management of natural resources. Certain aspects of the Finnmark Act are as yet unknown. The board elected for the Finnmark Estate, comprised of six members, will make choices. Further within the Finnmark Act (in the Act’s Chapter 5: “Survey and recognition of existing rights”) is the provision for the Finnmark Commission, which was appointed 1 January 2007. The Act states that inhabitants of Finnmark may have acquired a special right to use or to own a particular area by their use or occupation of this area over time. Such corresponding rights elsewhere in Norway were already recognized a long time ago. Due to the fact that the use of the natural resources in Finnmark have overwhelmingly taken the form of hunting, fishing, trapping and reindeer husbandry, a natural process of evolution of ownership and rights of usage did not take place in Finnmark. Elsewhere in Norway there is long standing recognition; agriculture was the preferred form of land usage and a natural process of ownership and rights evolved. The Finnmark Commission will look into such rights, and in cases of disagreement will refer the matter to the Uncultivated Land Tribunal (*Finnmarksloven – en orientering*. Published by Justis-og Politidepartment, Kommunal- og Regionaldepartement, 2005).

From a Sami perspective there is a long history of discrimination and experience of cultural loss most clearly expressed in the area of language. The identification of the Sami with reindeer herding is a modern construction, an essentialist assumption that a culture has a homogenized content and presents a static image, which does not do justice to the complexity of its social composition and history. Scholars of Sami culture have often focused on the study of shamanism and created another modern construction presenting a static image in the identification of Sami culture with shamanism. However, the Sami adopted Christianity a long time ago, and today Christianity is part of their cultural heritage. Additionally, Laestadianism, a

revivalist movement within Lutheranism, has been a significant factor in the lives of my informants. Present Sami healers stand in a complex cultural tradition of change and continuity.

Construction of this book

This book is a case study of Sami healers. In the first part of the book I will examine cultural traditions that organize the worldviews and practices of healers today. In the second part I discuss the beliefs and practices of two present day healers. *Chapter One* looks at the scholarly discussion of Sami shamanism and the definition of shamanism in connection to the Sami practitioner and the earlier employed epithet, *noaidi*. I am not primarily concerned with Sami shamanism in a comparative perspective; my focus is on the dynamics of Sami culture. Within this context I examine how the literary sources depict the roles and functions that have been assigned to the *noaidi*. Out of the discussion three areas emerge for further exploration, and they form the content of the subsequent three chapters. *Chapter Two* presents Christianity on the coast of Finnmark, with special attention to Laestadianism and its importance to my informants. *Chapter Three* explores the worldviews concerning various mythical beings and the world of the unseen forces. I explore if these beings and forces still play a role in the present worldview of my informants. I present stories told by local Sami, but I do not attempt to cover all Sami stories. Nor do I include earlier practices that are no longer spoken about. The current stories express experiences of ghosts, underground people, good and bad luck, the casting and releasing of spells. These experiences either directly or in relationship, organize elements found in the concepts of healing. In *Chapter Four* I examine ethnographic descriptions to show what is presently understood by the Sami term *noaidi*. To sufficiently explore the local understanding of *noaidi*, two individuals who have been so designated, and who were active during the first half of the 20th century, will be discussed. In this chapter, other 20th century healers will also be considered to show the scope and context of Sami healing practices in the area. I extensively rely on interviews that reflect the perceptions of the participants and show the variety of local opinions. *Chapter Five* presents Nanna Persen, her life and healing practices. Nanna helped many people in her environment. The chapter is exclusively based on my interviews with her and with some of her patients. *Chapter Six* presents her son, Sigvald Persen, his life and healing practices. I explore the transfer of the ability to heal and the instructions Sigvald received from Nanna. I also discuss Sigvald's establishment as healer within his social environment. In the concluding *Chapter Seven* I return to the most important questions raised. How are the concepts of healing valorized within Sami society? The assumed relationship between

Introduction

Laestadianism and earlier shamanic practices is questioned. To what extent are healers seen as coming from a Laestadian environment? Is there evidence to suggest that healing concepts may have been carried into present times through this avenue? Do healing concepts reflect (east) Laestadian categories of thought? Finally we consider the healing tradition in the wider context of the dynamics of Sami culture.