

Aspects of Migration and Urbanization

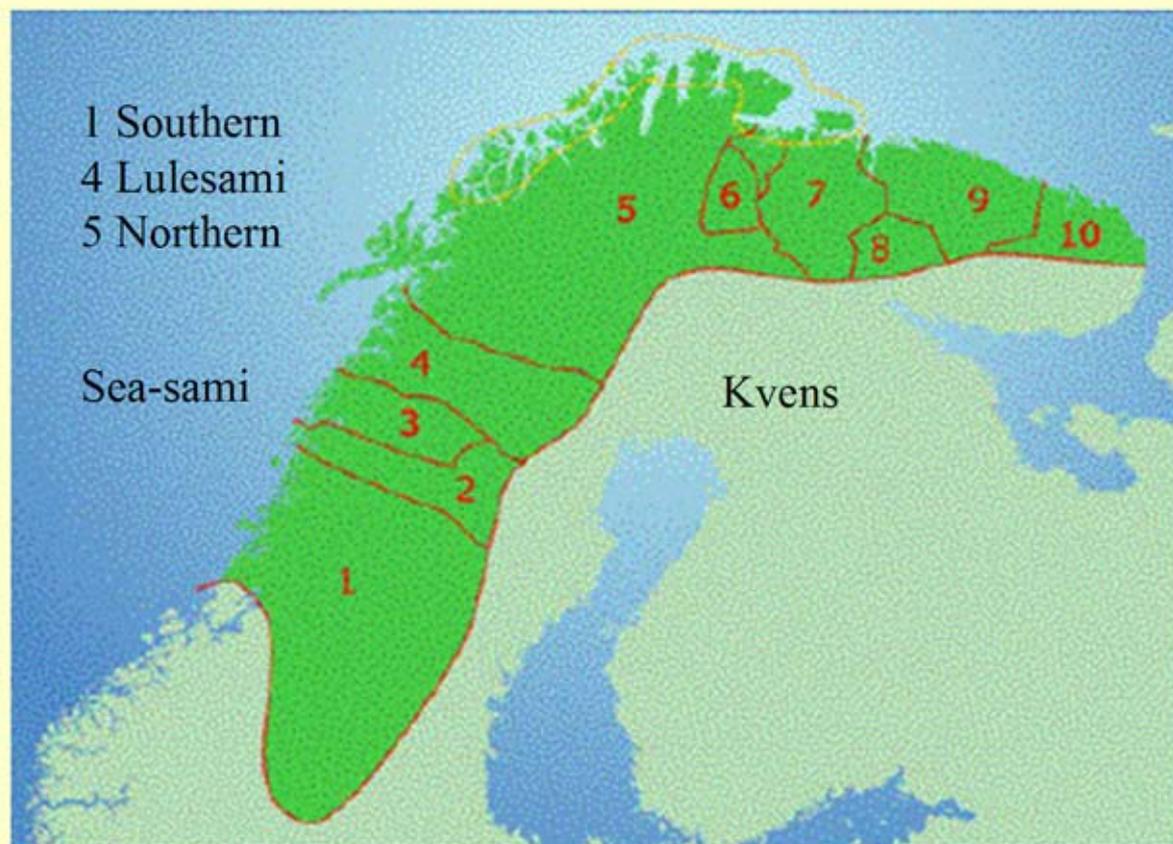
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A Sea Sami's story. From fishing-farmer to miner, from "Sea-Sami" to "Norwegian"?

We are going now from Guatemala to Scandinavia, specifically to Norway. This story is going to be quite different from what you have heard, to a great extent it has been a success and almost without exception it has been a peaceful history or peaceful process.

This story is about the Sami people. When we are talking about success and the Sami history it depends on where you focus your attention. Success here is measured in broad terms as a people or an ethnic group that over time has been ethno-politically and/or ethno-culturally visible or has become visible through a process of revitalisation. In such a context we could say that the success of the Sami started as a process in the inland and in the north of Norway. It was like a wave that went forth from the north, but also in the Lule Sami area—and to some extent in the Southern Sami area. Then the wave started to move out to the coastal Sami areas and again first in the north, then in the south.

Sami dialectes/languages/groups



The Southern, the Lule and the Northern are the three main Sami areas. I also included the Kven, who are another minority in the Northern part of Norway who today are struggling to be accepted, maybe as an indigenous group, or to have their rights and their own culture be visible. I will take you back in history and up through today, and the coastal Sami area will mostly

be used in my examples. How did modernisation processes in the society in general influence the story of the Sea Sami? I will be looking at the Sea Sami people and the history of how they became invisible and how today they are becoming visible again.

Special Sami allodium rights, 1700-

Starting with the 17th and 18th centuries, the Sea Sami peoples in the areas south of Tromsø had a special Sami allodium right to land. This allodium had to do with taxes; they did not have to pay the same amount of taxes that the Norwegian farmers had to pay. This shows that the Sea Sami were indeed a visible society. These special tax rights were later taken away in the 18th century by the national authorities.

To me, as an historian, that means that because they had this special allodium one can find them in the historical sources and then when the allodium was taken away, we can no longer find them in the sources. Back in the 18th century another thing happened to these Sami people, there was a Christian mission coming up from the south into the northern areas, which was especially directed towards the Sami people; they were then Christianized. Of course they had been Christian earlier, at least by name, but this was an intensive Christianization. I will not go into that, but I will mention that after the missionaries had left a lot of effort was put into teaching the Sami how to read from the Bible. In one sense this can be seen in a positive way, because they had a higher education than the others. On the negative side, after this the Sami language was weakened.

In addition to being small-scale farmers, people were living off fisheries. In the fisheries there was a seasonal migration that had been going on for a long time. During some of the winter months the men went up to the Lofoten islands to fish cod and during the springtime they went to fish in Finnmark. There was a pattern of seasonal migration in the population.

Norwegianization, 1850-

In the 1850s, the Norwegianization policy was introduced and directed towards the Sami and the Kven. This was quite harsh; it was an assimilation policy. However, if you go to the area that I am focusing on, the official policies were not enforced. That is, they were allowed to speak Sami in the schools, they were allowed to have teachers that spoke Sami, but of course, there were no schoolbooks in the Sami language. A lot of the teachers were Norwegian and did not have a command of Sami. There was an official nation-wide assimilation policy, but in this area it was not as strongly enforced from the local authorities. Nevertheless this policy did lead to the language eventually going out of use in the Sea Sami area.

Back in the 1900s, some researchers tried to get back to this language and write it down. Some words were found and there was an attempt to write it down in a book, but we really do not know a lot about their language. Their clothing was also out of use sooner than any other group of Sami in this area which we have also tried to find. As you may know, the Sami clothing varies and it shows where you come from geographically. We have not been able to find any Sea Sami clothing from this area in the sources or in old pictures.

The photo below is a picture of a Sami in an urban area and it is called “curiosity.” As you can see there are men sitting on the stairs curiously looking at us and also at the Reindeer Sami here. We do not know if any of them were Sea Sami decedents (slide 6).



Slide 6



Slide 7

So what I want to tell by showing you this photo is that it was quit common that the Sea Sami and Reindeer Sami and the Norwegians interacted with each other, it was much more seldom to see a photographer in the city street than it was to see this reindeer herding man. On the topic of interaction, we of course also find a great deal of inter-marriage.

Industrialisation, 1900-

The photo below (slide 7) is of a woman named Gelotte from Sørfold in Nordland County. In the census from 1900 she is registered as an ethnically mixed person. We do not what her mixed background was from this record: she could be Kven, Norwegian, *Lapp*, or *Finn* (Norwegian names for the Sami people). But going into her family history, by using genealogy, and going back to the lists of the Sea Sami allodium rights we can find that several of her relatives going back to the 18th century were Sea Sami, so we know that her mixed background has something to do with being Sea Sami. She was living during the period of industrialisation in this area, when mining sites and other industrial sites were established and eventually mining cities and more dense societies developed. A large workforce was needed leading to migration into urban areas in the modern industrial societies.

Did the Sami participate in migration during the period of industrialisation? I have looked at different groups, firstly, the nomadic Sami. I could not find any information to indicate that the nomadic Sami participated in migration during industrialisation. If they did they had been settled farmers for a period and then they went into industry. The Lule Sami, that I pointed out on the map who were descendents of both Sea Sami and Swedish and Norwegian nomadic Sami, took very little part in the industrialisation, so it was the Sea Sami then who participated the most in industrialisation. When I looked into the

percentages, I found that the percentage of Sea Sami participating in the industrialisation was higher than for the Norwegians.

There are a lot of myths claiming that the Sami did not participate in industrialisation– that they could not work by the clock and that they could not have gone down into the pits or mines– but that is not true. So who were these Sea Sami who were participating in the industrialisation? It was the young men who became miners and carpenters in the industrial areas and the young women became cooks and cleaners and they took care of children. Gelotte and her husband stayed in the traditional area. They belonged to the generation that did not participate in industrialisation, a pattern I could find in many places. But Gelotte's daughters and sons, they participated in the new industrial life.

I wondered about who Hilda was so I went into the censuses and could find that her father was registered as an ethnically mixed person. And again I went back to her family history and into the Sea Sami allodium lists and found that her ancestors were also Sea Sami. I checked with other couples as well and I found that this was a pattern. I asked myself if they had an awareness of or consciousness about being from the same culture or from the Sea Sami culture. Was this process conscious or unconscious to choose a partner with the same background as themselves? I have not been able to answer that, but I think that they had a common culture and that is partly why they chose their partners as they did.

Of course when they moved into the industrial areas, it meant that they had a more prosperous life, economically and in terms of their living conditions. But there was a change in their working conditions as well when they were working in the mining pits.

They did not wear any helmets or protection for the stones that fall down into the pits. However, after WWII they all would be wearing helmets to protect their heads. There were Sea Sami coming from the fishing/farming areas to work in the pits. Many of them did not enjoy this kind of life with no fresh air and no open-air fishing boats.

When reading in the historical sources from the leaders of these mining areas, we can find that when the fish came in both Sami and Norwegian miners would leave the pits to fish for the season and then in the fall be coming back.

Labour movement dominance

In this new society it was not only the working conditions that were new to them but there was a whole new system that guided their lives which was the labour movement. It was very strong in Norway especially after the Second World War when the labour party was in leadership. For example, Gelotte's grandsons were participating in the national conference of the labour party at this time.

What can this tell us about the labour movement in connection the Sea Sami? The labour movement led to better working and living conditions, and their wages increased. As I mentioned, this system was also a part of their everyday life. You can see that they were given flyers in Norwegian; they had working class literature, songs, music, newspapers and theatre. They learned how to be active leaders; they learned how to be part of the Norwegian society. According to my informants they never spoke about who their ancestors were.

The golden age for housewives, 1950-

We are coming now into the 1950s and 1960s, looking at gender at this stage, it was the golden age for housewives. The wives stayed home while the men left home for wage labour to provide for the family. So the women did not participate in this egalitarian movement in the same way

as the men. We find that women who stayed home kept the traditions and kept telling the old stories to a greater extent than the men, who were out in the public world. One person who I interviewed said: "If it was not for grandma staying home while my grandfather commuted to work in the industry, we could never have learned about our Sami history." What we see is that the husband, who is out in the official world, is turning from Sami to Norwegian and the wives are staying home and they continued to be registered in the censuses as Sami. At this stage the Sea Sami population was still a silent group of the Sami people.

Going back to the Reindeer Sami, the nomads, who lived in the same area but up in the mountains and seasonally migrating over to Sweden, they did not experience the same degree of change as the Sea Sami. They went on migrating with the reindeer, and of course there were some changes there too, but not at the same level as the Sea Sami. There has always been trade between the settled and the nomadic people. The nomadic sold meat and cheese, and they were also keeping custodial reindeer for the settled people. We see that with the development of infrastructure—roads and railways—it became easier to get food from other places than from the reindeer and the Sami. Freezer technology, which came into every household about this time, was also a factor that led to less trading with the nomads. To take this point a bit further it could be said that this caused a greater distance between the settled and the nomadic Sami.

Social democracy, modernisation and urbanisation, 1950-

In the 1950s there was a large migration southwards to urban areas. This included Norwegian, Kven and all kinds of Sami people. I should also mention that during the Second World War there was an evacuation of people from Finnmark and Northern Troms to the south, some were Sami and some were Kven. Those who were evacuated to the Oslo area became an urban Sami people and it was in Oslo that you find the first Sami society in Norway towards the end of the 1940s. In addition to this urbanisation, a society was growing based on the Labour party's ideas of a social democracy. Equality was one of the main pillars in this politics; this could be seen in both a positive and a negative way. A lot of researchers have been underlining that the idea of equality in policy was such that everybody was supposed to live in the same kind of houses and wear the same kind of clothes and this resulted in the ethno-cultural features eventually vanishing, at least in the official society. But on the positive side there was education, everyone had the right to an education if they wanted it, whether rich or poor, whether they were Sami, Kven or Norwegian.

So Gelotte's descendents were given the tools to have a higher education and to find a way back to their history. That became even more important in the 1960s and 1970s when the Sami ethno-political revival took place where the educated Sami could participate in it. There has been a lot of research done that demonstrates that it is often the educated elite that starts ethno-political revivals, which is also the case in Norway.

This was not the case with the Sea Sami though because they went on being silent. It was not until the 1990s that we began to see Sea Sami ethno-political organisations. It began first in the Northern parts of Norway, and only recently it has begun to take hold in the southern part of Nordland.

The Lule Sami were a success in this ethno-political and cultural revival. As the descendents of the Sea Sami and the Swedish and Norwegian nomads they took a leading part in the ethno-political revival. In 1994, in the picture below they were able to open their own cultural centre, in the presence of the king of Norway. His presence tells that the Norwegian society had welcomed this and given their economic support to build the centre (slide 16).



Slide 16

What was it about the Lule Sami that made them successful in the ethno-political revival if we compare them with the other Sea Sami groups? The Lule Sami did not participate in industrialisation, they were able to maintain the use of their language, they also kept their own clothing in spite of Norwegianization, and they had very close contact with the nomadic Sami. Contact with the nomadic Sami was an important part because they kept the traditional culture and showed this traditional culture and through interacting with them all the time it was a reminder that it was all about their own history. The Lule-Sami also had a high level of education and a strong identity, both within the area but also from the Norwegian society, who viewed them as a strong group with a strong identity.

The Sea Sami group started to be visible in the allodium tax lists, and then through Christianisation, Norwegianization, industrialisation, urbanisation and migration, they started to be invisible. More recently they have started to become visible again. The great-grandsons and great-granddaughters of Gelotte are spread out today and mostly living in urban areas. Some have a high education. I found that two of her descendents are registered in the Sami census to be able to vote in the Sami parliament elections. That brings us to numbers and the Sami people and organisation.

The first number from 1987 says that 7000 or more Sami in Oslo could understand the Sami language which was from an official report. We do question that number because it can not be verified and it seems to be quite high. The other numbers from 1995-1997 are numbers taken from a speech by the state secretary Steiner Pedersen, who in 1993 found that 200 Sami were living in Oslo and in 1997 there were 300. Here in the Tromsø area, which may be the urban area with the largest Sami population, there are approximately 500 Sami that are registered in

the Sami census. These numbers are from the Sami census lists to be able to vote in the Sami parliament.

This presumably represents only 3% of the total population of the registered Sami. It is difficult to find the exact number of Sami. I took these numbers from 7,000 down to 300 to show you that the amount of Sami is given in a rather diffuse number. There is some research going on to try to get to more specific numbers, but they have not been completed yet. So the register and the “real” number is a challenge for researchers.

If we use this Sea Sami woman Gelotte as an example, she and her husband had eight children, they had forty grandchildren and today there are 100 of their great-grandchildren living in Norway. Only two of them are registered in the Sami census.

Although the numbers are not given, the Sea Sami from Nordland today are in a process of becoming visible, partly because of the ethno political and cultural revitalisation, and partly from acceptance in the society in general of a more pluralistic population.

Thank you.