

Submerged cultural heritage and ethnicity in northern Norway: Visualizing Sami waterscapes from an archaeological perspective¹

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Changing conceptions of ethnicity within archaeology have had a considerable influence on attitudes towards the Sami and reveal pitfalls associated with the (mis)use of ethnic labels for material culture. This article attempts to highlight the importance of Sami water use and waterscapes from a long-term perspective by examining sources pertaining to both saltwater and freshwater within the multicultural context of northern Norway. Possibilities for the documentation of Sami waterscapes are explored with a focus on the challenges facing cultural heritage management. The assertion that Sami waterscapes have been neglected both within and beyond archaeology is illustrated through selected themes. These include the popular Norwegian concept of kystkultur (coastal culture) focusing on Norwegian identity in which the coastal Sami are marginalized or invisible. Another problem is ship preservation (fartøyvern) which excludes a majority of Sami watercraft by focusing on larger decked vessels. The general lack of interest in logboats and other 'primitive' watercraft within Norwegian archaeology has also had a negative impact on research into Sami boats, especially in the interior. The final section of the article looks at the need to develop a Sami maritime perspective and improve documentation of Sami use of inland waterways.

Ethnicity and waterscapes

It is generally accepted that the Sami emerged as a distinct ethnic group in northern Fennoscandia during the Early Iron Age about two thousand years ago (Hansen and Olsen 2004). However, ethnic labels such as 'Sami' or 'Norse' must be treated with caution and attempts to isolate 'pure' ethnic categories are both pointless and counter-productive. As Olsen (2004) points out, a significant problem facing Sami archaeological research is adherence to an ethnographic 'master narrative' based on written sources that establish a template for interpreting the Sami past. The 'official' narrative presents a reified image of the Sami as egalitarian reindeer pastoralists in which aspects of coastal Sami settlement are less visible. This has led to what Olsen calls 'checklist archaeology' in which a predetermined list of Sami traits are used to classify cultural evidence. Such an approach leaves little room for the modification of conventional truths and handi-

¹ This article is a revised version of a paper originally presented at the symposium 'A circumpolar Reappraisal. The Legacy of Gutorm Gjessing', October 2008, NTNU, Trondheim that is being published in the BAR International Series. Some of the themes were also presented at the seminar 'Samisk båtbygging og båtbruk. Status i dag og aktuelle problemstillinger for videre arbeid', March 2007, Gratangen.

caps the exploration of themes such as Sami waterscapes which I will be pursuing in this article.

Expressions of ethnicity tend to be more pronounced along ethnic boundaries. This is also the case in the boundary zone between Norse and Sami populations in the northern part of Troms County, North Norway (see Hansen and Olsen 2004 for a detailed discussion). Material expressions denoting ethnic boundaries include concentrations of slab-lined pits (Norwegian *hellegroper*) for the extraction of marine mammal oil which also served as territorial markers for the Sami during the Iron Age. The distribution of metal hoards (Norwegian *sølvskattefunn*) containing objects displaying western and eastern influences during the Viking Age to Early Medieval Period also appears to cluster along this ethnic boundary.

Sami waterscapes as cultural heritage

The centrality of cultural landscapes in terrestrial archaeology has a long history and is particularly well established in Scandinavia. Landscape archaeology has also been applied to the maritime sphere with the maritime cultural landscape concept initially put forward by Westerdahl (1993) and subsequently expanded upon by many others within the field of maritime archaeology. I have chosen to employ the term waterscapes in this paper to emphasize the overall importance of the aquatic element in a more comprehensive fashion. The boundaries we envision between water and land are too often based on artificial dichotomies constructed through narrow academic interests and historical traditions. The pervading lack of communication and integration between maritime archaeology and mainstream archaeology exemplifies this problem.

The need for a more holistic archaeological perspective regarding the role of water and waterscapes is even more acute for our understanding of Sami waterscapes. I wish to focus here on the role of Sami waterscapes as expressions of cultural heritage and more specifically within the framework of cultural heritage management as it is practiced in Norway. Sami waterscapes represent a broad spectrum of both tangible and intangible cultural manifestations within a complex network of coastal and inland waterways. The corpus of material expressions associated with Sami waterscapes remains poorly documented for a variety of political, academic and bureaucratic reasons that I will attempt to explore.

The most prevalent and widely recognized component of Sami waterscapes is both direct and indirect evidence of watercraft. The potential for direct material evidence includes physical remains of vessels ranging from simple logboats and rafts to a variety of wooden boats and larger seagoing craft. These remains can be found in diverse contexts including wrecks on land and underwater, stray finds, boat building sites, boat graves and other burial contexts as well as ritual contexts such as offering sites. Indirect or proxy evidence for vessels includes rock art depictions and other graphic representations, boat shelters and boathouses. Some examples of archaeological remains that can potentially be linked to Sami water-based activity include bridges, landing places, moorings, navigation markers (cairns, graves, etc.), portages and fords, transshipment and transfer points, fishing installations, migratory pathways for wild game and slab-lined

pits for the production of marine mammal oil. Sacred sites, offering locations and other places of ritual importance are also central elements within Sami waterscapes.

Issues in the documentation of Sami aquatic cultural heritage

The documentation of Sami submerged and water-related cultural heritage in Norway has faced longstanding challenges from within society at large as well as the archaeological community and heritage management system. Ongoing challenges linked to cultural heritage management practices and a general lack of focus on inland waterways are discussed below.

The protection and management of submerged cultural heritage remains marginalized to some degree within the existing Norwegian cultural heritage management system (Gundersen 2007). This reflects a more general lack of integration and collaboration between archaeologists engaged in the documentation of submerged cultural resources and terrestrial archaeologists. I would also argue that the documentation of Sami submerged cultural heritage has been marginalized within underwater archaeology thus giving it a double handicap. The organizational structure of Norwegian heritage management in which the Directorate for Cultural Heritage administers policy from a southern center to the northern periphery is a significant factor contributing to this situation. The lack of coastal Sami settlement and perceived absence of inland Sami settlement in southern Norway until recently have also contributed to a regional model where the Sami are a nonentity. This model is reflected by the agenda of the maritime museums in southern Norway which are dominant actors in the management of submerged cultural heritage.

Over the past decade, there has been a considerable upsurge in interest relating to what has been termed 'coastal culture' (Norwegian *kystkultur*) in Norway. The impetus for this trend can be traced in part to dissatisfaction with the romanticized image of the Norwegian farmer and inland agrarian lifestyle as the hallmark of Norwegian culture in contrast to coastal settlement and maritime culture. This image has also permeated our interpretations of past settlement, even in northern Norway where the role of agriculture has always been less significant than marine resources. Unfortunately, it appears that the increased focus on coastal culture has in turn contributed to a new mythology in which the maritime prowess of the (Norse) Norwegians is celebrated while the role of Sami coastal culture is neglected within this framework. Coastal culture networks have been formed, conferences held, and government funding liberally dispersed to projects that support a tacitly approved official version of coastal culture in which the coastal Sami have a limited role and visibility².

The Norwegian Cultural Heritage Fund (*Norsk kulturminnefond*) was established in 2002 and currently has NOK 1.4 billion in capital. Interest from the capital is allocated to the fund through the Ministry of the Environment for funding of projects involving

² Networks include the National Museum Network for Coastal Culture (Nasjonalt museumsnettverk for kystkultur) established in 2006 and the Network for Fishing History and Coastal Culture (Nettverk for fiskerihistorie og kystkultur). An annual coastal culture conference sponsored by the Directorate for Cultural Heritage, Norwegian Coastal Administration, Ministry of Fisheries and Coastal Affairs and the Norwegian Archive, Library and Museum Authority (ABM-utvikling) has been held since 2002. Much of the focus here has been on fisheries and the development of coastal resources seen in relation to cultural issues.

cultural heritage in private ownership. A recently published review of the fund for the first five years of operation provides some interesting statistics (Engen 2009). A total of 634 projects has been financed for NOK 113.8 million during this period (Knutson 2009). Coastal culture has been one of the funding priorities with 190 of 620 project applications approved, accounting for 31% of total financing from the fund. A significant proportion of this funding has been allocated to the *verdiskapningsprogram* (Value Creation Program) *Den verdifulle kystkultur i Nordland* (The Valuable Coastal Culture in Nordland) begun as a pilot project in 2005 (Løvdaal 2009). The program has financed 16 projects and included more than 60 subprojects from Lofoten and Vega. Of the 64 projects financed by the Cultural Heritage Fund in Nordland, ranking it third of all counties in Norway, none appear to apply directly to Sami cultural heritage. This also appears to be the case for Troms (34 projects) and only a handful of the 33 projects in Finnmark.

The Norwegian association *Kysten* was founded in 1979 with the goal of strengthening the identity of coastal people, maintaining and developing traditional knowledge, and improving the standards of protection of coastal culture (Forbundet Kysten 2009). Their success has been substantial with a current membership of about 9,000 in 110 local branches. However, the overall emphasis and motivation for the founding of *Kysten* was the preservation of Norwegian coastal culture and the coastal Sami are not explicitly recognized in the original mission statement. The demographics of *Kysten* membership within northern Norway by county appears to support this emphasis with a total of 14 local branches in Nordland and 11 in Troms but only three in Finnmark (one of which is newly established).

The role of coastal culture within the constellation of museums in Finnmark County is also thought provoking. As part of a nationwide process of museum reform involving reorganization and consolidation, the number of museum administrative units in Finnmark has recently been reduced from twelve to five. Three of these are run by the County Authority (*fylkeskommune*) and two by the Sami Parliament (*Sametinget*). The Museums for Coastal Culture and Reconstruction in Finnmark (*Museene for kystkultur og gjenreisning i Finnmark*) represent the most widely spread museum division under county administration and is comprised of five coastal museums. In the website presentation for these museums (Kystmuseene 2009), there is an expressed focus on the development of coastal fishing villages (Norwegian *fiskevær*) and the opportunity to experience 'authentic coastal culture' (*ekte kystkultur*). On the other hand, both of the museum units run by the Sami Parliament include museums that actively mediate coastal Sami culture, including the Kokelv Sjøsamiske Museum (Kokelv Coastal Sami Museum) and the Varanger Samiske Museum (Varanger Sami Museum). The separation of the Sami museums from other museums in Finnmark is longstanding and I will not go into the pros and cons of this arrangement. However, the fact that one group of museums view themselves as mediators of coastal culture seen from a Norwegian fishing village context while others focus on Sami coastal culture illustrates to me the inherent bias of the coastal culture concept as it is currently used in Norway.

Another sphere in which the Sami have been neglected is the management of 'floating' cultural heritage (Norwegian *fartøyvern*) administered by the Directorate for Cultural Heritage since 1989 in part through two national ship preservation centers in

southern Norway and a third in northern Norway. Although the official goal of ship preservation as presented in the Directorate for Cultural Heritage website is to preserve a representative sample of ships from the entire coast of Norway, in practice only decked vessels over 12 meters in length have been candidates for preservation. The exclusion of smaller open boats from the current preservation framework has been criticized by a variety of sources including those working within ship preservation (see Arisholm and Schrøder 2009 for a recent critical review). A new national preservation plan for ships (*nasjonal verneplan for fartøy 2010-2014*) is currently being written by the Directorate for Cultural Heritage and is scheduled for completion by the end of 2009 (Wahl 2008). The association Kysten was asked to comment on the plan and has raised a number of critical points. These include the recommendation that the word ships be changed to boats in the plan title and that open boats should not be treated as a separate category (Foldvik 2009).

A fundamental problem with ship preservation policy is a lack of concern with the cultural context in which vessels are built and used and lack of integration within a broader cultural heritage management framework. In the Directorate for Cultural Heritage's budget for 2009, the post for ship preservation was increased to NOK 42 million and the allocation to the ship preservation centers increased to NOK 6.5 million. This represents an increase of 31% and 84%, respectively, for these posts since 2008³. Arisholm and Schrøder (2009: 102) claim that the increase in funding will be wasted without a shift in thinking and focus within the existing ship preservation system.

The current ship preservation framework has contributed to the underrepresentation of boats from Sami contexts as reflected by the minimal number of protected vessels (only three) in the northernmost county of Finnmark. Of the c. 200 existing protected vessels found in Norway today, 55 are owned by museums. Mathisen (2008a) discusses the current conflict between the goals of museum work which emphasizes the dissemination of knowledge and ship preservation which focuses on documentation. She also criticizes the lack of interest in preserving original boat parts which are most often discarded when a vessel is rebuilt during the 'preservation' process. The need for an increased focus on the preservation of Sami boats was recently raised in a parliamentary report addressing cultural heritage (Ministry of the Environment 2005). This in turn motivated a preliminary project initiated in 2007 by the North Norwegian Ship Preservation Center. The project has included the two seminars that are the source for this publication and has led to fruitful interdisciplinary discussions between boat builders, archaeologists, historians, heritage managers, members of the Sami community and other interested individuals addressing these themes (Mathisen 2007, 2008b).

It can be argued that the single most significant problem in the documentation of Sami waterscapes is inadequate archaeological survey and excavation connected to inland waterways and submerged cultural heritage in freshwater. Unlike coastal locations where there is a heavy concentration of recreational diving activity leading to the discovery of archaeological remains, diving in freshwater lakes, ponds and rivers is commonly viewed as monotonous and generally unattractive. The low level of diving

³ As a point of comparison, the budget post for funding to the maritime archaeological museums has been reduced over the past several years with a total of NOK 4,395,000 for five museums in 2009.

activity in the interior has had a significant impact on the number of reported finds in locations where we can anticipate a significant level of Sami activity in northern Norway. A more serious problem has been poor underwater archaeological survey coverage in freshwater due to underreporting of development activity and the low priority given such locations compared to the coast by cultural heritage management authorities. The lack of information on interactions between coastal and inland Sami populations along waterways reflect this problem. The situation has improved considerably over the past few years as the Directorate for Cultural Heritage has become increasingly aware of the problem although most inland waterways, at least in northern Norway, remain uninvestigated. A series of collaborative archaeological projects recently initiated by maritime museums that explore the potential for submerged cultural remains in freshwater has also heightened awareness of this issue (see Elvestad et al. 2004, Tuddenham 2005, Nymoén 2007).

'Primitive' watercraft and Sami identity

There has been a lengthy debate within Scandinavian maritime archaeology on whether the ancestry of the clinker boat building technique can be traced to skinboats or logboats. Danish archaeologist Ole Crumlin-Pedersen has been a vocal advocate of the expanded logboat theory for over thirty years (Crumlin-Pedersen 2006). As noted by Nymoén (2008:8), his linear technological evolutionary perspective has had a significant influence on the prevailing attitude that the logboat represents a primitive evolutionary starting point of little interest. More recent research has demonstrated that logboats are technologically refined watercraft adapted to a wide variety of uses in both coastal and inland environments (Arisholm and Nymoén 2005, Nymoén 2008). The flexibility of logboats is attested to by the presence of handles and other specialized details potentially designed to aid in portaging or use as sleds in winter (Nymoén 2008:12). The fact that logboats have retained their essential form since the Stone Age also attests to their utility. It is noteworthy that, apart from burial contexts, it appears that all of the logboats currently registered in Norway were found by chance rather than as a result of archaeological investigations. This points back to the problem of inadequate underwater survey along inland waterways.

An important point that I want to make regarding logboats and other 'primitive' watercraft is the implicit link to Sami use of such vessels that can be summarized in the equation primitive=static=Sami. In northern Fennoscandia, the use of logboats by the Sami is well documented during the historic period and can be assumed to have considerable antiquity. The pervasive attitude relegating logboats to the lowest rung on the evolutionary ladder has thus had negative consequences for research relating to Sami watercraft. A more nuanced view of logboats and other inland watercraft (log rafts, river boats, etc.) should increase the visibility of Sami vessels that have suffered from neglect due to the implicit equation fostered by a simplistic technological evolutionary perspective.

The difficulty in attaching ethnic labels to watercraft and disentangling ethnic contexts can also be illustrated in the case of logboats. One example is the only documented prehistoric logboat from northern Norway. This boat was found in 1938 during

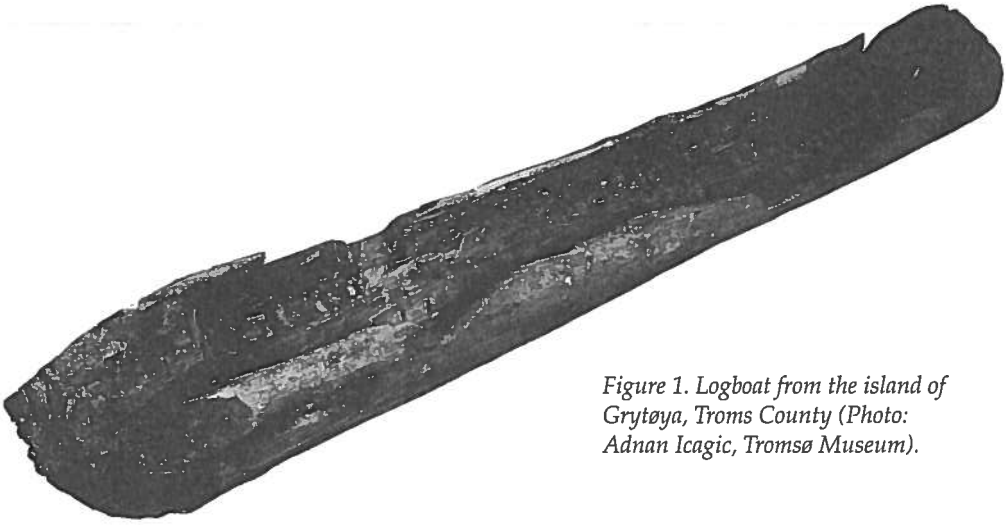


Figure 1. Logboat from the island of Grytøya, Troms County (Photo: Adnan Icgagic, Tromsø Museum).

peat removal in a bog near Lundenes on the island of Grytøya in Troms County and subsequently given to Tromsø Museum. It was found at a depth of c. 1m in a 3 m deep bog at an elevation of 130 m above sea level and at least 600 m in a straight line distance from the coast. The remains of a paddle blade were reportedly found about 25 m from the logboat but this find has not been preserved. The extremely well-preserved logboat is made from a pine log with a total length of 3.1 m and interior length of 2.45 m. Width varies from 40 cm on the exterior to 32 cm in the interior with a depth ranging from 43 to 51 cm on the exterior and 29 to 34 cm in the interior (Fig. 1). The elevation of the find location and distance from the coast suggests that the boat was constructed from a tree felled nearby and purposefully deposited in the bog which was already several meters thick at this time.

After being ignored for many years at Tromsø Museum, the Grytøya logboat was recently examined by the author and a sample of bark from the exterior surface radiocarbon dated to the Early Iron Age (1765 ± 75 BP, calibrated to AD 80-430 at 2 sigma). To my knowledge, this is the earliest dated logboat made of pine in Norway. Apart from its age, the boat has several unusual features. A considerable amount of bark is present in the bow section which was located near the base of the tree and little effort was invested in modifying the exterior surface of the log. The general appearance of the log indicates that the boat was finished but never used. The upper margins of the sides appear to have been crudely hacked and chopped after the vessel was finished suggesting intentional damage. Both willful damage and intentional placement in a bog are potential indicators of ritual activity.

The ritual placement of boats in peat bogs is well documented during the Iron Age although there is no previous evidence of this being done with a logboat in Norway to my knowledge. The island of Grytøya and Lundenes in particular were central locations for Norse Iron Age settlement but there is evidence of Sami settlement as well. The social context of this boat and its provenance is unclear. If the boat represents a ritual offering, who was responsible and why was a logboat rather than a clinker-built boat

used? Does the presence of a logboat suggest Sami influence? These unanswered questions illustrate the complexity of 'primitive' watercraft and highlight the need for increased knowledge of logboats.

A Sami maritime perspective

Both archaeological research and attitudes within the Sami community itself have been responsible for insufficiently communicating the importance of maritime culture for Sami (pre)history. The coastal Sami are generally less visible than their reindeer herding counterparts, especially in Troms and Nordland counties, due in part to extended contact with Norwegian populations and the adaptation of a similar mixed economy combining fishing and farming at an early date. Although the maritime component of Sami waterscapes has been neglected within North Norwegian archaeology, there is a range of evidence from prehistoric Sami coastal settlement that can be used to piece together a more complete picture of maritime activity.

Although direct evidence of prehistoric Sami coastal vessels is lacking, indirect sources can provide insights into this cultural arena. There are two items of material culture in particular that are both abundant and have considerable potential in this regard; boat-houses / boat shelters and slab-lined pits for the production of marine mammal oil. Boathouses are generally described as Norse although, less formal trench-like depressions recorded in northern Troms and Finnmark have been interpreted as Sami boat shelters (Bratrein 1995). Slab-lined pits appear to be an exclusively Sami feature in use throughout the Iron Age (Henriksen 1996, 2004). Slab-lined pits and boat shelter features commonly appear together, often in linear clusters along former shorelines. This evidence suggests that the features were contemporaneous components of a Sami maritime cultural landscape during the Iron Age. Unfortunately, no boat shelter features of this type have been excavated to date and their chronology and potentially associated artifact assemblages remain undocumented.

Despite the growing sample of excavated slab-lined pits, few of these features have been totally excavated or have more than a single age estimate and our knowledge of their long-term development both at the micro and macro level remains limited. This is of particular importance in tracing the transition from small scale domestic production to large scale production of oil for exchange with the Norse population that appears to have taken place between the Early and Late Iron Age (Hansen and Olsen 2004:69-75). The transformation in orientation toward maritime resources reflected by this process must have had a significant impact on Sami coastal settlement, including aspects of seasonality and permanence, of which we remain largely ignorant. A related issue is the degree to which the Sami engaged in whaling and other forms of sea mammal hunting. The presence of slab-lined pits by AD 100-200 demonstrates Sami proficiency in sea mammal exploitation at an early stage with probable intensification marked by a dramatic increase in these features from AD 600-900. It is most parsimonious to see this as an internal process and there is no need to assume that the whale blubber processed by the Sami was supplied by Norse whalers as Hansen and Olsen (2004:73) speculate.

Interethnic relations between the Norse and Sami within the maritime sphere also had a significant influence on coastal settlement during the Iron Age and Medieval Period,

particularly in the boundary zone between Sami and Norse settlement in northern Norway. The importance of slab-lined pits as an ethnic boundary marker has been mentioned and boathouse remains also appear to reflect a certain degree of hybridization in this zone. An ongoing research project by the author and Gørill Nilsen (Wickler and Nilsen 2005, Nilsen *this volume*) seeks to shed light on the nature of boathouses during the Iron Age and Medieval Period in contexts where both Sami and Norse influences were present. Excavations of two boathouses in northern Troms County have provided evidence of hybridization in form and construction details that defy simplistic labeling of boathouses as a 'typical' Norse feature.

The dearth of archaeological evidence for Sami maritime activity from the Iron Age and Early Medieval Period has led to a disproportionate reliance on the handful of written documents from this period. The most influential of these is the late ninth century account of Ohthere's voyages reported to the West Saxon King Alfred in which maritime relationships with the Sami from a Norse perspective are touched upon. The shortcomings of this text are discussed in a recent comprehensive review (Bately and Englert 2007) and will not be elaborated upon here. Another oft-cited source is Snorre Sturlasson's saga account of events from the twelfth century (Snorre Sturlasson 1975). This contains an account of how the Sami built a boat for Sigurd Slembe along with more general references to Sami boatbuilding. Both of these sources represent narrow, biased Norse perspectives on the Sami that have become deeply embedded in the public consciousness and color our perception of Sami maritime activity. However, written records can also provide reliable evidence from unexpected sources. A case in point is the *Passio Olavi*, an account from c. 1170-80 written by archbishop Øystein in his collection of legends connected with Saint Olav, which confirms that the coastal Sami participated in commercial fishing in Finnmark as equals with the Norse fishermen from Nordland (Bratrein 1998).

There remain many gaps in our documentation of coastal Sami settlement and maritime activity but some of these have been addressed by recent collaborative projects involving archaeologists and historians. Up until recently, documentation of past Sami settlement in the Lofoten archipelago along the outermost coast of Nordland County has been minimal. This is directly linked to the conventional perception of the Sami as inland reindeer pastoralists and marginalization of the coastal Sami and their role in fishing which dominates the economy of the outer coast (Nielsen 2008:195). Lofoten is also a bastion of Norse Iron Age chiefdoms and actively cultivates a Viking image supported by institutions such as the Lofotr Viking Museum where there is little trace of the Sami to be found.

Both reindeer pastoralists and coastal Sami fisher-farmers were highly visible in Lofoten up until the middle of the 1800s when assimilation rapidly diminished their presence as a distinct ethnic group. The lack of written records and archaeological survey and excavation documenting Sami settlement in Lofoten has led to an active multidisciplinary approach in which historians (Nielsen 2005, 2008) and archaeologists (Narmo 2006) have worked together to trace the roots of Sami settlement back to the Early Iron Age. Their explicit focus on coastal settlement and the importance of marine resources for the Sami in Lofoten has increased the visibility of the coastal Sami and

provides a model of maritime activity which can be applied to other coastal locations in northern Norway. This research reflects a larger trend in which ethnic relations are being approached from a historical perspective throughout northern Norway (see Hansen and Olsen 2005, Evjen and Hansen 2008).

Inland Sami waterscapes

Inland waterways have always been critically important as arteries for transport and the maintenance of networks for communication and exchange between the indigenous peoples of northern Fennoscandia, including the Sami. In addition to inland fishing, coastal fishing was also an integral part of the economy of the interior Sami and as part of the seasonal migratory pattern for reindeer pastoralists. This assumed even greater importance from the early 1600s onward when catches from the coast were transported for sale at annual winter markets in the Swedish interior (Hansen 2006:57 *this volume*). The antiquity of such networks between the coast and inland remain poorly understood and archaeological investigations focusing on the role of waterways are virtually nonexistent.

As mentioned earlier, there is a general lack of archaeological activity focused on the documentation of submerged cultural heritage in the interior which has handicapped our understanding of Sami waterscapes. Increased archaeological activity in the interior will undoubtedly necessitate a revision of current models regarding material remains and ethnic identity. One potential source of data concerning inland Sami aquatic activity is material evidence associated with the transport and storage of watercraft. This includes portages between bodies of water, landing places, and boat storage features such as boathouses and boat shelters.

Hydroelectric reservoirs in the interior of northern Norway have the potential for a diverse range of sites and features dating back to the Mesolithic. Recent archaeological fieldwork conducted by the author at Altevattn in the interior of Troms County has provided new insights into occupation since the start of the Late Stone Age about 4000 BC (Wickler 2008). This ongoing project was initiated in 2006 to document archaeological sites threatened by active erosion and conduct underwater survey to locate potential submerged sites. Limited test excavation of selected features at eroding sites within reservoir zone was undertaken in 2007 and long-term monitoring of site erosion has been initiated. Archaeological survey has focused on northeastern Altevattn where site clusters dating back to the latter part of the Early Metal Age around 600 BC were recorded (Fig. 2). Artifacts exposed by erosion found along the western bank of the Suddesgaldujukka River include asbestos tempered Kjelmøy type ceramics for the first time in the interior of Troms. A probable wall fragment from a furnace/oven for iron production was also recovered, indicating potential iron production for the first time in interior northern Norway. These finds most likely date to the Early Metal Age and point towards external contacts facilitated along inland waterways.

Excavation of archaeological features at the Politiodden 1 site confirmed long-term repeated use of a natural point of land which had easy access to both the river and the lake (Fig. 3). A date from the Early Metal Age (2378 ± 35 BP, cal. 550-380 BC at 2 sigma) was obtained from a fire-cracked rock concentration. A hearth containing burnt mammal

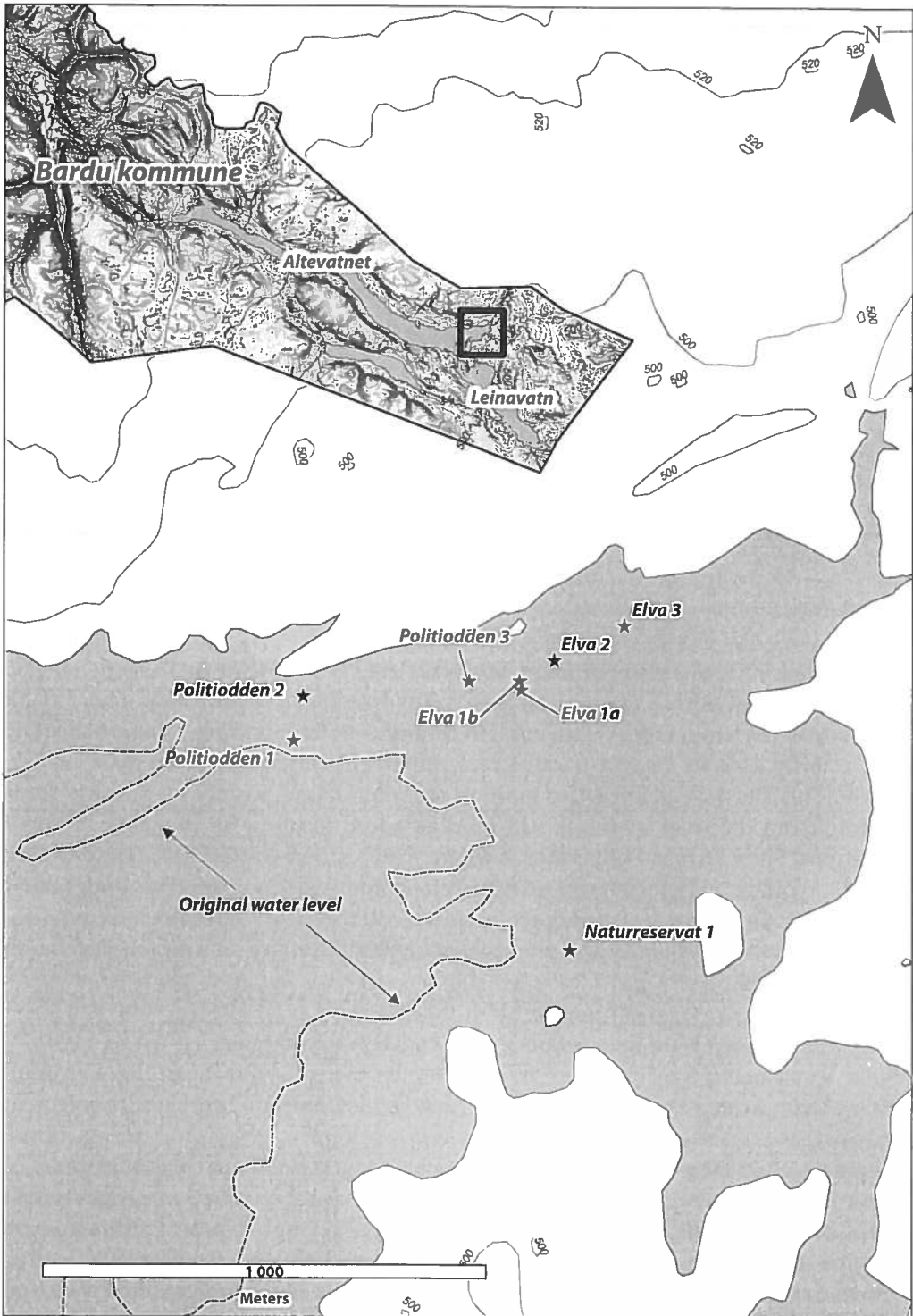


Figure 2. Map showing archaeological sites from northeast Altevatn recorded in 2007.

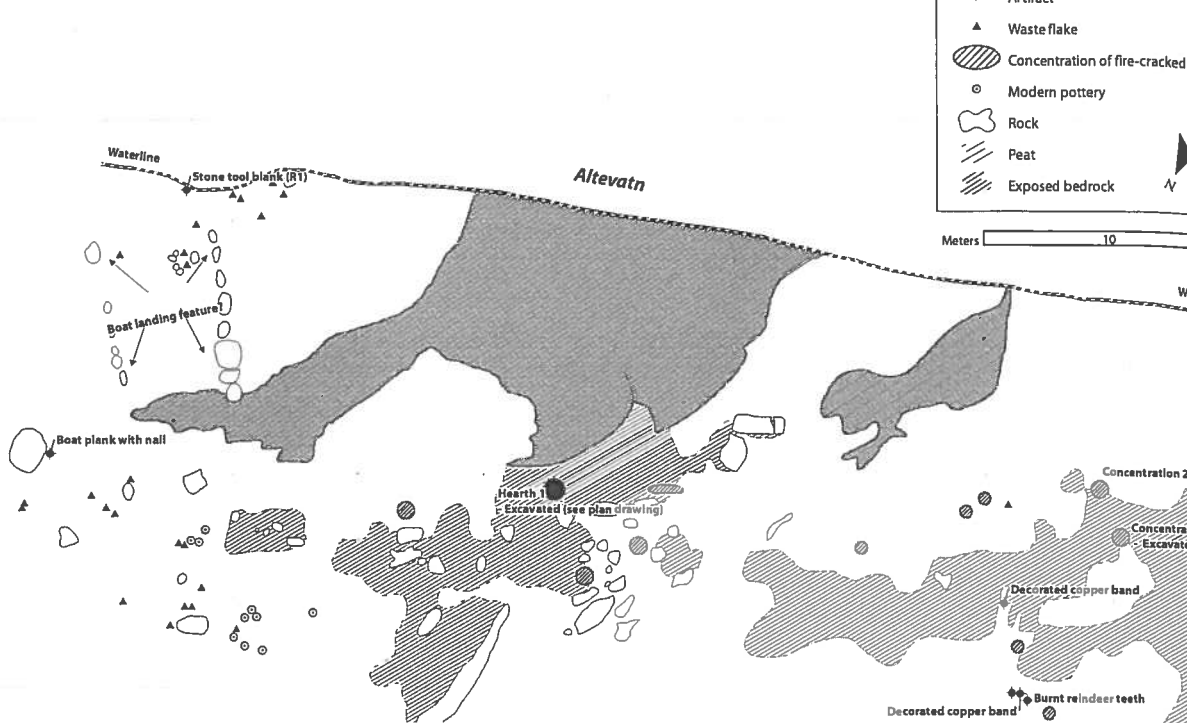


Figure 3. Plan view map of the Politiodden 1 site, northeast Altevåtn.

and fish bone as well as copper fragments was dated to the Medieval Period (766 ± 35 BP, cal. AD 1210-1290 at 2 sigma). The presence of decorated copper bands, a boat plank fragment, burnt reindeer teeth and modern ceramics on the site surface suggest historic Sami activity as does a set of parallel rock alignments interpreted as a boat landing feature. This site was an attractive location for water-based activity over nearly three millennia and the river mouth is still used as a ford location for domestic reindeer migrations. Sites such as Politiodden 1 where water access was of central importance provide a promising starting point for future underwater survey. The underwater archaeological survey conducted in conjunction with the project documented a range of factors affecting site visibility and preservation, including active erosion and deposition of eroded sediment.

Concluding thoughts on the visualization of Sami waterscapes

I have attempted to provide a brief overview of the current status regarding documentation of Sami waterscapes in northern Norway. While there are heartening signs of an increasing awareness of the importance of waterscapes and ongoing projects specifically focusing on this theme, there is still much to be done, particularly within the area of cultural heritage management and underwater archaeology. A more nuanced picture of Sami-Norse ethnic relationships also needs to emerge and replace polarized viewpoints in which rhetoric and stereotypes obscure and hinder a balanced perspective.

From a maritime perspective, it is important to recognize the shared tradition of coastal boatbuilding with Sami and Norse participation over many centuries resulting in the hybridization of boat construction and use (see Myklevold *this volume*). This also applies

to Sami coastal settlement in general where early Sami settlement is obscured by later Norse settlement and the early adoption of a Norwegian fisher-farmer subsistence base. Although the importance of Sami maritime activity has not been adequately communicated, it is counterproductive to reverse existing stereotypes in order to «correct» perceived biases that favor Norwegian (Norse) coastal culture and promote a distinct and exclusively Sami coastal identity. It is more productive to focus on the collective multiethnic contribution to coastal culture in which each of the represented ethnic groups are acknowledged. The search for ethnic traits and origins for the purpose of labeling specific watercraft is also problematic and ultimately counterproductive to understanding the shifting nexus of waterscapes and their transformations over time. There is a clear need for increased documentation of long-term Sami water-based activity in the interior and relationships between coastal and inland waterways. More archaeological research integrating underwater and terrestrial investigations and an increased focus on this type of approach within the framework of cultural heritage management is also necessary.

To conclude, I have the following suggestions for improving our current knowledge of Sami waterscapes. Firstly, make use of museum collections which have a wealth of information on watercraft and associated remains, and bog finds in particular. Secondly, an increased focus on the archaeology of inland waterways and links between coastal and inland waterscapes is needed. Thirdly, increase archaeological documentation of both submerged and terrestrial evidence reflecting maritime aspects of Sami settlement in core Norse areas such as Lofoten where Sami activity is poorly documented. Finally, there must be a more explicit focus on Sami waterscapes within cultural heritage management and a more nuanced model that reflects the northern periphery as well as the southern core.

NORSK SAMMENDRAG

Endringer i konsepter om etnisitet innenfor arkeologi har hatt en betydelig innvirkning på holdninger til samer og avdekker fallgruver tilknyttet bruk av etniske merkelapper for materiell kultur. I denne artikkelen trekkes det frem hvor viktig samisk bruk av vann og «vannskaper» er og har vært i et langtidsperspektiv ved å se på mulige kilder fra både saltvann og ferskvann i den flerkulturelle konteksten som preger Nord-Norge. Muligheter for kartlegging av samiske «vannskaper» er vurdert med særlig vekt på utfordringer innenfor kulturminnevernet. Problemer med underkommunisering av samisk bruk av vann er diskutert ved å se nærmere på utvalgte temaer. Dette gjelder bl.a. hvordan konseptet *kystkultur* brukes til å fokusere på norsk identitet uten at sjøsamiske bidrag synliggjøres. Dagens fartøyvernsystem og eksisterende praksis utelater også samiske småbåter ved å sette fokus på større dekkede fartøy. Manglende interesse for stokkebåter og andre «primitive» farkoster innenfor norsk arkeologi pga et snevert lineært evolusjonistisk tankegodt, er et annet eksempel som har hindret forskning på samiske båter, særlig i innlandet. Siste delen av artikkelen kaster lys over behovet for utvikling av et samisk maritimt perspektiv, samt forbedring av dokumentasjon rundt samisk bruk av vannveier i innland med forslag til tiltak.

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