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in the Long Nineteenth Century and Beyond

State Making and the Swedish Politics in the North

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State Making and Swedish Politics in the North

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Abstract

Recently the 19th century as a formative period of both states and the state system has received more attention by IR scholars, historical sociologists, and historians. A highly generalized argument that this diverse literature has in common is that the state became more state-like, and the international system denser, and therefore more system-like, in the 19th century. The modern world has its roots in the 19th rather than the 17th century, in other words. One little studied aspect of the 19th century transformation is the relationship between states and nomads. In this paper I study the long 19th century transformation of the relationship between on the one hand, the Swedish state and, on the other, the pastoral nomadic Sami people. The paper will show that whereas state-nomadic relations at first were essentially characterized by disinterest, the Swedish state intervened and interfered more and more during the 19th century. In the paper, I argue that the literature has overlooked the global trend towards increasing “stateness” in the second half of the 19th century, as a necessary component of any appreciation of Swedish Sámi politics

I Introduction

The relationship between states and nomads has long been troubled. States have discriminated and mistreated nomads in a range of ways such as ethnic cleansing, dislocation, forced sedentarization and in general denied them their most basic cultural characteristic: mobility. In this paper I will show how the Swedish state at the long turn of the 19th century certainly mistreated the Sáme population of northern Sweden but, unexpectedly, *created* or *enforced* nomadism rather than the opposite. I will argue that racist, cultural hierarchic, and economic ideas all contributed to this discriminatory politics, but that a wish or need to make the Swedish land and population more “readable” (Scott 1998) was a stronger underlying cause as global transformations in the 19th century prompted states to become more state-like (Buzan and Lawson 2015).

In the first section of this paper I give an overview of extant research on Swedish Sáme politics.¹ I claim no originality here. Swedish historians and political scientists have generated a large literature on Sweden’s Sáme politics – mostly in Swedish – and I do not pretend to make an empirical contribution to the literature. In this literature, there is no agreement on whether racist, cultural hierarchic or economic ideas and imaginations best explain Sweden’s politics. I grant all three strands of thought causal influence, but in the third part of the paper I argue that the literature has overlooked the global trend towards increasing “stateness” in the second half of the 19th century, and first half of the 20th, as a necessary component of any appreciation of Swedish Sáme politics. Western elites “knew” they were marching at the head of progress and “tribal ways of life” were under assault in much of the world (Osterhammel 2014). Many states practiced different forms of internal colonialism (i.a. Sabol 2017), and Sweden’s Sáme politics is an instantiation of this pattern. In this particular case, however, the process led to enforced nomadism rather than enforced sedentarization.

¹ I discuss Swedish politics towards the Sámi; not the Sámi’s own politics. This paper is decidedly Swedo-centric and state-centric, but not normatively so.

II Research on Swedish Sáme Politics: Chronologies and Themes²

Sámi and non-Sámi have had contacts at least since the middle ages, primarily through trade in fur (the Sámi) and metal, salt, flour, and alcohol, and later tobacco and coffee (the Swedes). Throughout the middle ages Swedish, Norwegian and Russian rulers made sporadic attempts at taxing the various Sámi populations that lived in northernmost parts of what is today Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. The boundaries between these states were not clearly defined, and no state could successfully claim overlordship over Sápmi – which is what the Sámi call the territory they inhabit. By the beginning of the 17th century the Swedish state was able to tax the Sáme population, and in return granted trading privileges and control over the natural resources – such as fishing, hunting, grazing – of their lands. The Swedish population of the north was concentrated to a range of coastal towns but Swedes and Sámi interacted regularly, not least at the marketplaces to which the state attempted to concentrate trade. By now the Sámi were Christianized – at least by name – and the state began to extend its juridical reach into Sáme land by way of setting up courts. These courts were significantly staffed by Sáme officials, however, and were to apply Sáme customary law to the fullest extent possible. Far from all Sámi were reindeer herders; many made their living from fishing and or hunting. Moreover, reindeer husbandry was typically intensive rather than extensive. That is, a family would typically own only a few reindeer and use these for milk – and they would not even necessarily move these few reindeer around. Due particularly to the large size of the Swedish army, however, the demand for reindeer meat and fur/leather increased dramatically, and reindeer herds grew significantly. In order not to overgraze, these herds would have to be moved around, and their caretakers with them. With this development came a sharper distinction between on the one hand mountain Sámi, who owned large herds and led nomadic or semi-nomadic lives, and forest Sámi who were more sedentary and combined several kinds of economic activities. The forest Sámi were significantly poorer than the mountain Sámi, although also individual mountain Sámi would continuously be forced to leave the

² I draw mainly on Ericsson (2016: ch 4) in this section. I cite only specific arguments and disagreements.

industry as their herds died or were bought by wealthier Sámi. The agricultural lowlands and the coastal towns saw a significant amount of Sámi trying to make a living as day laborers or begging.

This description, this snap-shot, of the early 17th century is uncontroversial. It is basically a description of a state that is not particularly interested in a resource-poor and unproductive periphery of its territory, other than as supplier of a rather small tax income and, probably more importantly, of meat and fur and skins. Over the next 350 years, the state would, to the contrary, with a steadily increasing intensity become very concerned with the Sámi and their land. Historians Roger Kvist (1992) and Martin Ericsson (2016) have formulated two rather different characterizing periodizations of these 350 years. Neither is fully satisfactory, but I will present them here as they still – especially together – gives a sense of the changing character of the Swedish state’s Sáme politics.

Kvist proceeds from what the state’s main purpose was. From 1550-1625 the main purpose was to claim territorial “sovereignty” and to tax the Sámi. This they had to do in competition with Russia and Denmark-Norway (Finland was at the time part of Sweden). Having reached an equilibrium with Denmark-Norway and Russia, and having established taxation capacity, the state focused on primarily silver mining in the period 1635-1673. This was not very profitable, and the period 1673-1846, Kvist argues, instead saw a focus on getting Swedes to break new land for farming, in the areas where the Sámi fished, hunted, herded reindeer, and lived. The next period, 1846-1913, was a period of assimilation, according to Kvist, and the Sámi were supposed to become Swedes and the Sámi languages eradicated.³ The final period, 1913-1971 is for Kvist instead a period of segregation, and the Sámi are encouraged and/or forced to remain Sámi.

Ericsson instead proceeds from how he argues the state viewed the Sámi, which identity the state ascribed to them. In this periodization, the Sámi were first of all taxable objects, and providers of certain economic resources, ca 1500-1650. From about 1650 to about 1750 the Sámi were primarily religious subjects that were to become proper Christians as the increasingly fundamentalist church defined this faith. From about 1750 to the 1830s the Sáme land was primarily an underused economic

³ There are three, mutually incomprehensible, Sáme languages in Sweden, each with several dialects. The Sáme languages are part of the Finnish-Ugric family.

resource, and it should be colonized by farmers, miners, and the developing timber industry. From the 1830s to the 1880s the Sámi were seen as in the possession of an inferior culture, and the Swedish state had a patriarchal responsibility to protect them. At the same time, reindeer herding was being considered the only way to utilize the mountains economically. In the next to last period, the 1880s to the 1930s or 1940s, the Sámi were thought of as an inferior race that was biologically fit only for nomadic reindeer pastoralism. After this, in the last period, the Sámi are slowly developing, in the state's reading, into a sector of the economy that should be supported and rationalized, at the same time as they are becoming defined as a national minority and an aboriginal group.

Both historians are well aware that their respective periodization should not be reified, that they are simplifications that hide within-period variation, that purposes and imaginations partly survive from period to period, and that there is much more to be said about each period. Still, both periodizations give a sense of the state's increasing reach into Sápmi and the slow shift from disinterest to intense interference. Over the next paragraphs I will describe in some detail a few aspects of this shift. First, I will describe how the state church intervened in the spiritual life of the Sámi. I will then describe how what had previously been Sáme land, that they paid tax for, became state land and private non-Sáme land. I will, third, then describe the development of that particular politics, or policy, that in Swedish was called the "lapp skall vara lapp".⁴ Within that policy, I will focus on the three most well studied sub-policies: the state church policies, the school system and housing.

III Reaching for souls, then land

In the 17th and first half of the 18th centuries the Swedish state, as such, paid little attention to the Sámi population. The state church, however, was a different matter. While it was increasingly concerned with the

⁴ "Lapp" is a derogatory term for the Sámi. I have not been able to ascertain whether it was derogatory at the time. Given that the term was used in a cultural hierarchical and/or racist context, however, it certainly had derogatory implications. "Lapp skall vara lapp" translates as "Lapp shall be lapp".

religiosity of the Swedish population in general – and not just the Sámi – Ericsson (2016) identifies five areas in which the church targeted Sámi religious practices. First, the church began to identify certain practices as witchcraft, whereas before these had been white magic or folk tradition. It is known that two Sámi were sentenced to death for witchcraft, of which one sentence was carried out, in 1693. In *Scandinavia* as a whole about 2000 people were sentenced to death during the witchcraft processes period (Ankarloo 2007: 118). Second, a crucial part of Sámi shamanism was the use of certain drums. This practice was forbidden and drums were destroyed or collected and sent to the capital. Third, individual priests travelling in Sámi land would sometimes destroy and burn down sites of worship and sacrificial sites. Fourth, a major problem in making the Sámi true Christians was that few priests were willing to learn any Sámi language, or even to live where the Sámi lived. Both the state directly as well as the church therefore established schools in which they attempted to educate Sámi youths in Christianity and reading and writing. The hope was that these young men would influence the rest of Sámi society, and also work as teachers for others. The fifth and final area that Ericsson identifies is pre- and extra martial sexual relations. There was clearly a sharp disjuncture between what the Swedish church, on the one side, and Sámi tradition, on the other, understood as marriage and betrothal, and what was immoral and decent behavior in relation to these understandings. The church was fairly successful in its violent campaign against Sámi religion and culture, and by about the 1770s Christianity seems to have been “the only game in town.”

Neither the Church, nor the state was until then interested in land use in Sapmi. The Sámi paid taxes and enjoyed the same sort of property rights to their land as other Swedish subjects.⁵ Land was, in this sense, owned by individual families and to this ownership the rights to graze their reindeer, to hunt, fish, and fell trees were attached. The property holding family could allow, or not, other Sámi or Swedes to use part of the land for certain purposes. Towards the end of the 18th century this began to change. Contrary to the local courts, set in place earlier by the state, the relevant regional governments (*Länsstyrelser*) began to argue that the Sámi actually did not hold property rights to their land, that this land was state land, and that it was underused and this failure to make the land contribute its full potential to the national economy was to be

⁵ Uniquely in Sweden, the Sámi were not conscripted, however.

rectified (Lundmark 2002: ch 4).⁶ The general idea of Norrland – the northern third of Sweden and the area that contain Sapmi – of the time was that it was the land of the future. It was Sweden’s America, that was supposedly rich in resources such as minerals, timber, and later water driven electricity plants and with a fertile land – all of which was underutilized (Sörflin 1988). The local governments wanted to let lumber and mining companies exploit the land, and they wanted Swedish settlers to break new land for agriculture. Having redefined the former Sámi tax lands as Swedish state property, they could proceed to partition out land to settlers and companies. This caused two sorts of conflict with the Sámi. First, the reindeer herding was pushed out of important winter grazing land. Come winter, the herds would move down from the mountain ranges to graze in the forested lowlands. There they would cause agricultural damage, not least to newly planted timber. Second, when Swedish settlers got entitlement to new land to farm, they would also get entitlement to the hunting and fishing rights in those lands. A majority of Sámi actually did not own great herds that they moved around with, but instead lived permanently in the lowlands living off just a few reindeer, hunting and fishing, and they were now pushed out of their traditional lands and were left without any means of subsistence. They would then move down to the coastal towns trying to survive as day laborers and beggars.⁷

In turn, this development where fewer and fewer Sámi were able to support themselves as nomadising reindeer herders, awoke the fear that not only might the reindeer industry disappear but that also that the Sámi population as such might succumb. At this stage the national government, or the state, began to take a more prominent interest.

In his dissertation Ulf Mörkenstam (1999) maps and analyses the increased interest in Sámi affairs in the Swedish parliament. Several issues were debated – the takeover of the regional authorities from the local courts, settlements, schooling, the reindeer industry, and so on.

⁶ I will not go into the details here, but there seems to be at least a weak consensus amongst academics, but not legal courts, that the contemporary courts were right, and that the take-over of the land by the regional governments was unlawful. The issue is not settled yet. As late as 1998 a large group of farmers sued three reindeer-herding collectivities for grazing their herds in the farmers’ (allegedly) forest properties (The Nordmaling case). In 2011 the Supreme Court judged in favor of the herding communities. I refrain from writing Swedish farmers and Sámi reindeer herders, for the issue is not as clear cut as that at all.

⁷ A common albeit slightly old-fashioned expression for a very poor person in Swedish is “fattiglapp” (fattig lapp), where “fattig” means poor. This expression goes back to a classification of the Sámi, where they were divided into mountain Sámi, forest Sámi, fishing Sámi, this poor Sámi, and some other categories (SAOB).

One particularly important theme was weather the reindeer herding mountain Sámi would perish if they were not protected against encroaching modernization. Three main underlying themes informed the debates: racism, cultural or civilizational hierarchies, and economic utility (ibid.). Towards the mid-1800s a state policy began to form in broad parliamentary consensus. This policy was to govern Swedish Sáme politics until WWII, although it reached its height – in the sense that it was at its most unrelenting – at around the turn of the century.

IV *Lapp skall vara Lapp*: Defining the Sámi

The new state policy, or rather policies, did not carry a particular name, and it was formulated in a long series of decisions in various policy areas such as schooling and housing, amongst others. The academic community, focusing on a quote from one of its strongest proponents, has named the policies “lapp skall vara lapp” or in modern English, the “Sáme shall remain Sáme.” This “slogan” was coined by vicar Vitalis Karnell in an interview in 1906, and it represents the strange mixture of racism, civilizational hierarchical thinking and “benevolent” patriarchal thinking that underwrote the new policy (Lundmark 2002: 70).⁸ It might be worthwhile quoting Karnell at length:

When the lapp start forming associations and have their own newspaper, when they start acquiring higher education, then they are entirely finished as lapps and they then will become the most miserable people imaginable. [...some Sáme...] even started to build houses and become sedentary. Please favor the lapp in all ways in their business, make them moral, sober and rudimentarily educated, but do not let them taste civilization further (from Lundmark 2002: 70).⁹

This part of the paper will develop the constituent ideas of the “lapp skall vara lapp policies”, and the subsequent two parts will investigate in further detail the two particular policy areas.

The first carrying idea of the new policy is best described by historian Patrik Lantto (2012). The three regional governments that dealt

⁸ Karnell was instrumental in the formation and implementation of the schooling policies during the first two decades of the 20th century.

⁹ This is my own translation, and the comment in the brackets is my own.

with the Sámi shared the view that they were on the verge of extinction, as a people. Sometimes this extinction was seen as inevitable. The march of progress and civilization could not be halted, and there was no room for nomad reindeer herders in the future. More often the fear of extinction was combined with a call for the state authorities to hinder or at least postpone this process. At the same paradoxical time the regional governments were clearly aware that the actual number of Sámi individuals was not really decreasing; rather, it was the number of reindeer herders that were decreasing as more and more Sámi were moving over to agriculture or poverty. Hence, it must really have been the reindeer industry, rather than the Sámi community as such, that worried the regional governments. While the race argument, according to Lantto (2012: 74) was only rarely used, the increased contact with the Swedish culture was identified as the culprit. The Sámi were getting used to more comfortable, sedentary lives in houses and this was incompatible with proper reindeer herding. And therefore, the reindeer industry was problematic. This was the core problem. As a background, the reindeer industry had long been considered both marginal and more of a nuisance for agriculture than a profitable industry in its own right, but towards the 1880s the industry was seen in more promising light.¹⁰ This, however, was true only for the “pure” nomadic mountain reindeer herds. The mixed economy of the forest Sámi, combining a few reindeer with hunting, fishing, and some agriculture was understood to be inefficient (ibid.: 74). The upshot was a policy that was one part protection and one part control. The reindeer industry (the nomadic mountain reindeer industry) was to be protected through a limit for agricultural expansion and through the legislation that only Sámi were allowed to own reindeer and to practice herding. At the same time the Sámi were to be encouraged, but not coerced, to remain Sámi particularly through adjacent policies in schooling and housing.

The second carrying idea of the “lapp skall vara lapp” policy was the double egged belief that the Sámi were only able to fruitfully practice reindeer herding – to all other occupations they were unfit – at the same time as the Sámi were the only ones fit for reindeer herding – non-Sámi were not sufficiently hardy. Two brief quotes, at the time mutually

¹⁰ The profitability of the reindeer industry was partly premised on climatic conditions as well as epidemics. Reindeer primarily eat lichens, and the supply and accessibility of lichens is heavily dependent on snow conditions.

compatible, can serve as an illustration: “[...] as the reindeer is made for the lapp, and the lapp for the reindeer” and “The feats they every day perform in all whether on the mountain and in the forest bear witness of trained athletes with sinews of steel rather than a substandard and doomed people” (quoted in Lundmark 2002: 63 and 72 respectively).” Also here arguments from economic utility and racial and/or civilizational hierarchies supported each other.

The economic utility arguments were two (Mörkenstam 1999: ch 4). First, the only profitable economic use that it was possible to make of the mountains, was to herd reindeer on them. To the (large) extent there was no ore or rivers to use for mining or electricity, the mountains are economically useless, bar the reindeer herds.¹² Thus, not to maintain and encourage reindeer herding would be to underutilize Swedish lands. And since reindeer herding required that the herders were nomads, it was imperative that the Sáme remained nomads, if the mountains were not to be left barren. Second, and perhaps more importantly, since the Sáme were “unfit” to practice other occupations, the result of a break down in the reindeer industry would be a large amount of poverty stricken Sámi that would have to be supported by the public.

Supporting these two arguments was the argument that reindeer herding required a significant amount of hardiness and disinterest in the comforts of sedentary modernism, and that only the Sáme possessed this. Lundmark (2002) suggests that racism was important, but not singularly so, foundation for this argument, Mörkenstam (1999) and Lantto (2012) puts more emphasis on cultural hierarchical thinking. The disagreement is one of degree rather than kind, though. Next to a discourse about the Sáme as weak, irrational, short-sighted, prone to overindulgence in alcohol, and so on as per the standard colonial discourse,¹³ there also developed a romanticizing discourse about the Sámi, reminiscent of the Noble Savage discourse (Lundmark 2002: 72-3).¹⁴ According to both discourses, however, the Sámi needed to be

¹¹ The first quote is from a Governmental motion to the parliament, 1908 (Motion no 163, app. 10, p.4). The second quote is from a 1908 article by K. B. Wiklund, Uppsala professor of Finno-Ugric languages, and the author of the first textbook for the specific nomad school.

¹² The Swedish mountain ranges are predominantly above the tree-line. Thus the lumber industry had no economic interest either, in the land where the mountain Sáme kept their herds over the summer.

¹³ E.g. Blaut (2000: 200-202).

¹⁴ This second discourse has deep historical roots. For instance, Olaus Magnus’ 1555 *Historia om de Nordiska Folken* (History of the Nordic Peoples) is a formidable ode to the Sámi, and a depiction of the “Noble Savage” long before his/her time. For an intriguing history of the general Noble Savage discourse, see Ter Ellingson (2001).

protected from civilization. In the first, the savage Sáme could still profitably survive, if practicing herding guided and supervised by the civilized Swede. In the second, all that was “noble” about the Sámi would be corrupted by too much contact with civilization – such as houses with furniture, for instance.

Again the upshot is a paternalistic policy made up of one part protection and one part control or “encouragement.” While other non-Swedish minorities (e.g. roma, travelers) at the time were identified as threats, the Sámi were not. They were instead vulnerable to the darker temptations of civilizations, but valuable citizens of Sweden when they stayed in the environment and economic activities they were particularly suited to. As I will describe later, this meant in particular that state schooling and housing policies were directed at the dual purpose of a) not enticing the Sáme to leave their nomadic life while at the same time b) be sufficiently “modernized” as to be good Christians and citizens, and efficient reindeer herders.

The protect and control/encourage policies had led to some already mentioned privileges for the reindeer herding Sámi. Only they were allowed to own and care for reindeer, there were clearly defined geographical limits to the extension of agriculture, and the Sámi had particular rights to hunting and fishing. As only the Sámi were in possession of these rights, it became paramount to have a definition of who was, and who was not, Sáme. During the “lapp skall vara lapp” years, the Swedish state used a number of different, at times contradictory, definitions, sometimes simultaneously. The three main ingredients in any definition of the Sámi, in this period, was economic activity, language and race or lineage. What we can observe, according to Lundmark (2002:145) is a change over the period so that previously “it had been necessary to be a lapp to be a reindeer herder, now you had to be a reindeer herder to be a lapp.” In other words, first the Swedish state restricted the reindeer herding economy and life to Sámi, although not all Sámi were reindeer herders, and in a second move, some 30 years later, turned this around and denied those Sámi that were not reindeer herder, their Sáme-ness. However, the Swedish state never did obtain the clear-cut demarcation between Sámi and Swedes they sought after.

Ulf Mörkenstam (1999) has made the most thorough research on how the Sáme was understood and defined in Swedish Sáme politics. In the first part (1886-1917) of the “lapp skall vara lapp” era the fundamental criterion for who was Sáme was a cultural argument. Those who lived according to the alleged traditional Sámi lifestyle were Sámi, and the

traditional lifestyle was nomadising reindeer herding. The law mentions genealogy – if your parents or grandparents had had this lifestyle, you were also a Sáme even if you at the moment practiced another lifestyle. When in doubt, language would tip the scale so that if you spoke Sámi at home you were very likely a Sáme. On the other side, those who did not practice the traditional lifestyle, and had started to speak Swedish or Finnish were not Sámi.¹⁵ This distinction laid the foundation for a two-pronged policy against the Sámi communities – most clearly seen in housing and schooling. On the one hand, the “real” Sámi – those who were so defined by law – were to be protected/encouraged so that they could and would continue being real Sámi and make the mountains profitable with their reindeers. The other Sámi, however, were not justifiably included in this protection, and should instead become Swedes proper.¹⁶ Mörkenstam (1999: 110) concludes that in “...and through legislation a contradistinction is created between that which is Sámi and that which is Swedish, which are incompatible, which means that Sámi are either nomads, or Swedes.”

In the second period, however, legislators had begun to understand more. By the previous definition far too many people were Sámi, and they could not all be included in the set of special rights, as that was seen as unfair to those who happened not be Sáme and therefore had a more limited right to hunting and fishing. Centuries of mixed marriages, and bilingualism, created too much confusion and there was a great deal of arbitrariness in the final decision on who was, and was not, Sáme. A new definition was needed. Mörkenstam (1999: 141pp) shows that genealogy and language are now the fundamental criteria for who should be counted as Sáme, but that these criteria were insufficient. The new criterion that is brought to the fore, and legislated in 1928, is whether or not you make your living from reindeer herding. It was still argued that only the Sámi had the right to own and care for reindeer. But now you also needed a right to use that right, and that right you acquired by being a member of a Sáme village (Sámeby). A Sáme village was not a village in the sense of a concentration of houses where people live permanently, but rather a corporate entity, consisting of a range of Sáme families, that had a *collective* right to use a defined area for grazing, hunting and

¹⁵ Finnish was, and is, a common language in large parts of northern Sweden, both among the Sámi and the non-Sámi.

¹⁶ This of course implied that the Sámi could be assimilated. Clearly, the foundation here is not a blatant biological-racist belief system.

fishing. Sámi who were not members of any such village, whose ancestors had left the reindeer industry, had no right to the Sámi rights. A woman who married a man who did not belong to a Sáme village lost her Sámi rights, but a man who married a non-village woman did not. If you yourself did not handle reindeer but your parents did, you were still a member, but not your grandchildren. The right to enjoy the rights was collective, but ownership of the herds was still private, and you could be a member of a Sáme village without owning any animals – laborers and widows, for instance. The Sáme village, supervised by a non-Sáme civil servant¹⁷, was somewhat self-regulating in affairs such as how many animals its land could support, hunting and fishing quotas, small-scale conflict resolution, and admittance of new members. While the situation was somewhat absurd in the sense that of two siblings one could be Sáme and the other not, and the non-Sáme sibling's children could be Sámi, while the Sáme sibling's children could lose their Sáme-ness, at least the state had a working definition that allowed it to, on the one hand, limit the amount of people who could enjoy the Sámi rights, while at the same time, on the other hand, make sure the mountains were put to productive use.¹⁸

V Sáme schooling and housing

Definitions of Sáme-ness and legislations and regulations regarding reindeer herding was one side of the state's attempt to reproduce and reinforce the nomadic lifestyle of some of the Sámi, while making some other Sámi Swedes. But by and large the Swedish state at the time was, at least on the surface, fairly non-despotic and prided itself on being enlightened. Swedish citizens, Sámi or not, could not be *coerced* to be nomads. If a Sáme family sold their reindeer, bought a piece of land to farm, and lived in a house, they could not be evicted and forcefully dragged back to the mountain. The carefully defined grazing lands were not reservations. The state needed a complimentary strategy to maintain the distinction. This complimentary strategy found its tools in a range of

¹⁷ A Sáme bailiff, or “lappfogde.”

¹⁸ It is important to underline that this was show the *state* saw things. In *society*, everybody “knew” who was a Sáme and who was not, and everyday discrimination and “banal racism” was rampant.

institutions, most prominently in the school system and somewhat less prominently in housing and allotment policies. Other examples, which I will not further discuss, include special Sámi elderly care homes and the non-conscription of “real” Sámi, for instance.

The main targets for the state housing policy were the “real” Sámi those that owned and cared for reindeer. Those Sámi that had left the reindeer industry were left to their own devices for better or worse. The issue at stake was the following, as discussed by Lundmark (2002). Several Sámi wanted to erect houses on the grazing land, or the land of the Sáme village, and, further, sometimes complement reindeer herding with small scale agriculture and/or the keep of a few livestock. Although there was considerable debate in the Swedish parliament regarding this, the winning argument was they should in principle not be allowed to do this. There were two reasons. First, good reindeer husbandry required close and frequent proximity to the herds. If the Sámi were allowed to build houses, the women, first, would choose to stay home in comfort where they would “drink their coffee by the hearth, and smoke their pipe, and for the rest do little else (Lundmark 2002: 104, quoting a governmental proposition). Soon the men would become envious, and stay home as well, and the herds would be left on their own. To be a good reindeer caretaker was to live in a “kåta.”¹⁹ Second, although the Sámi were as made for the harsh life on the mountains, they were allegedly not strong and patient enough to toil the earth. To allow the Sámi to complement reindeer herding with agriculture would be to invite ruin for the individual Sáme family, and that did not rhyme with the paternalistic responsibility the state had assumed over the Sámi.

By the same token Sámi had a differentiated access to allotments. Throughout the late 19th century and the early 20th century, the Swedish state tried actively to increase agriculture in the valleys and lowlands between the mountains. It was relatively easy for Swedish settlers to receive cheap loans and land leases, leases that they after 15 years could convert to property at a small charge. In these land leases, the use of forest for household lumbering and hunting and fishing rights were included. This in spite of the fact that often forest Sámi already lived there and needed the forest for their few reindeers, and were entirely dependent on hunting and fishing for their livelihood. However,

¹⁹ A “kåta” is a tent-like, or a yurt-like construction that was temporary or movable, built in varying materials but usually involving turf stacked on wooden frames.

Sámi of whichever kind were as a rule not eligible for these favorable loans and leases (Lundmark 2002: 99-100). In this way the state attempted to keep the Sámi in the reindeer industry, as nomads, by making it difficult for them to make their living in any other way.

Already in 1723 the Swedish state made it a law that all parents had to have their children learn to read. This law was fairly ineffectual, but in 1842 there was a general duty and right for all children in Sweden to attend school. In 1882 mandatory school attendance was 6 years, and in 1936 the number of compulsory school years were 7. None of this concerned the Sámi children who were exempt from the general school system.

But the Swedish state, as well as the church, was nonetheless rather interested in the education of the Sámi children and school policy was perhaps the area where the state intervened the most in Sámi life, and where the “lapp skall vara lapp” policy took its clearest and strongest expression (Lundmark 2002: 76). Sten Henrysson and Johnny Flodin (1992) have usefully surveyed Sámi historical schooling. As already mentioned, the church set up Sámi schools already in the 17th century. The purpose of these schools was to teach future Sámi church staff to read and the fundamentals of Christianity. In the 18th century, when the church thought the Christianization of the Sámi went slow, 7 “lapp” schools were built in proximity to the more prominent churches in northern Sweden. These were financed by the state, and the state also paid for the salaries of the teachers, the upkeep of 6 children at each school, and so on. For two years the children were taught Christianity and reading, and the hope was that they would spread their knowledge amongst the Sámi. This did not work very well and in the first half of the 19th century the main emphasis was instead on better educated catechists that would follow the wandering groups of Sámi. This did not work very well either, as the catechists themselves were not sufficiently educated. In 1846, therefore, the old “lapp” schools were resurrected, but in a new form. The education was to be 5 years long, with two semesters of 3 months each. Many more Sámi children were expected to participate, and they were also expected to pay for their own keep.²⁰ The language of instruction was Sámi. In some areas, in particular in the very far north where the Sámi moved more, the catechists remained to some extent. During the same period, beginning in 1839, private charity

²⁰ These schools were of necessity boarding schools.

missionary schools were being built. These had a broader curricula, and added writing and arithmetic to the main emphasis of Christianity and reading.

Still, the authorities were concerned that rather few Sámi children received any education at all, and many of those that did, participated rather sporadically, as their families for long periods would reside with their herds far away from any school. A new reform, in 1877, delegated the responsibility for Sámi schooling to the municipal school boards, instead of the church, and instead of priests doing the teaching, regular pedagogically educated teachers were hired. The old catechists' system was enlarged and reformed. Nevertheless, by the turn of the century, only about half of all Sámi had at all attended any kind of school (Henrysson and Flodin 1992: 11).

In 1908 a range of parliamentarians had argued for a major review of the situation for the Sámi, and a series of inquest committees were appointed. One of these, led by Bishop Bergqvist was to review the Sámi school situation. Bergqvist recruited Vitalis Karnell who coined the expression “lapp skall vara lapp” to the committee. They began with identifying the four major problems with the current system (ibid: 16). First, that the Sámi children stayed in school half the year for 5 years resulted in them becoming weak and unused to the harshness of the nomad life. After having tasted the luxuries of sleeping in beds with linen, and staying in houses, they would be both unfit and unwilling to return to nomadic life. Second, the existing schools had failed to attract a significant amount of nomad children. Third, the catechists' school form was underused and the catechists were not sufficiently competent. Fourth, a large amount of Sámi children had not received any education at all as a result. Bergqvist and Karnell set themselves two tasks, that they thought were difficult to reconcile. On the one hand both the quality of the teaching and the amount of children who received it should increase. On the other hand, the new school system was to keep the same Sáme. The children should not be enticed away from the nomadic life.²¹ The result was the “kåta” school system, sometimes called the nomad school system, and in many ways this epitomized the “lapp skall vara lapp” politics.

There were two parts to the nomad school system. Children in grade 1-3 were to be taught in nomadic schools that followed the herds. The

²¹ The children of non-nomadising Sámi should attend the ordinary Swedish school.

school house was a turf “kåta” or a tent, which could easily be moved. The children would live with their families. In addition to the standard fare, the curriculum should include “nomad and mountain knowledge.” The language of instruction should be Sáme. Grade 4-6 were boarding schools, where the children ate, slept and lived in a specially designed “kåta” made of wood, and spent the school hours in another such “kåta.”²² The school year should be something between 3 and 4 months, depending on the movements of the herds. The language of instruction should in principle be Sáme, but in practice it was difficult to find teachers who spoke Sáme at all, much less the adequate branch or dialect. In addition, no textbooks or other written material existed in Sáme. While many Sáme families were unwilling to send their children to these schools (as they preferred the missionary schools (or sometimes no schools at all) they were in fact mandatory, as well as closed to non-nomadising families. It was a sharp distinction between Sáme and Swede, and in the many cases of doubt, the Sáme bailiff had the final word on who was a Sáme and who was not (Lundmark 2002:82).

The critique of the system was harsh, both amongst Sámi and amongst a minority of parliamentarians. The use of the “kåta” in particular was condemned: they were cold and draughty, the children slept close to each other on birch twigs and pelts on earthen floors and infections and diseases spread easily, there was insufficient light for school work, and the absence of chairs and tables did not make for a good studying environment. In addition, the idea that sleeping in houses in beds with linen, and eating with fork and knife would be detrimental to efficient and good reindeer herding was not only ludicrous, but outright “misanthropic to these lapp children” (MP quoted in Lundmark 2002: 80). Although a new school commission found many faults with the Bergqvist and Karnell system in 1925, the nomad school was not finally discontinued until the 1940s and 1950s.²³

The going explanation for the “lapp skall vara lapp” policy and its various manifestations is, as I have attempted to describe, a combination of the search to make the mountains economically useful and a

²² Vitalis Karnell himself designed this “kåta,” believing he had the experience and expertise to do so. In reality, they were faulty to begin with. The wood rotted, when cold outside, the “kåta” was too hot near the oven, and draughty and cold near the walls. Several Sáme matrons that cared for the children and also lived in the “kåta” developed rheumatism.

²³ The history of the Sáme school system is much more complex than this, with several commissions and reforms. I have focused on the major shifts however, and not the minor adjustments.

paternalistic cultural hierarchic attitude. Patrick Lantto (2012) and Ulf Mörkenstam (1999) emphasize the economic side, without denying the paternalism. Lennart Lundmark (2002) perhaps emphasizes the paternalistic side, and affords also biological racism a minor role, without being blind to the economic arguments.²⁴ In the next section of this paper I will argue that this economic utility/paternalism explanation needs to be situated in a larger, international or Western, context in order to make sense. The two main constituent parts of this context is an ideology of progress and intensified state making.

VI Leviathan 2.0²⁵

There are two major problems with the economic utility and paternalistic cultural hierarchy explanation. The first problem is that it affords us no understanding or explanation of why the intensified intervention in Sámi affairs took place when it did? Of course, I am here not asking about specific years or much less dates, but why did the Swedish state become so interested in a small and remote population in the second half of the 19th century? A population it had previously left by and large to its own devices, religious matters paternalistically aside? Why did it *now* want to economically utilize the mountains, and why did it *now* want the Sámi to be able to read, write, and do basic arithmetic? The second problem of this in the literature dominating explanation is that it posits economic utility and paternalistic cultural hierarchy as two *different* explanations. While both components are necessary, there is in the here cited literature a balance between them. More economic utility means less paternalism and vice versa in the explanation. I will instead suggest that this is *one* argument for increased intervention; there is no zero-sum game going on. To protect the weak and in-danger-of extinction Sámi was to give them economic opportunities, and educate them was to make them economically viable contributors.

Two rock-bottom processes had been going on for quite a while at the time of the inauguration of the “lapp skall vara lapp” policy, and

²⁴ In my discussion, I have ignored the large literature on biological racism against the Sámi. The reason is that racism seems to have influenced Sáme government policy in a quite limited way. This is not to say that society in general and the world’s first race biological research institute at Uppsala University in particular was not racist. Maja Hagerman (2006) is an excellent popular introduction

²⁵ I borrow this expression from Charles Maier (2012).

transformed at least the Western world: demographic explosion and industrialized modernization. In 1750 Europe had about 130 million inhabitants, 266 million in 1850, and 400 million in 1990 (Leonhard 2009: 138). The figures for Sweden, the same years, are 1.8, 3.5 and 5.1 million, in spite of an emigration of 1.4 million between 1850 and 1930 (Statistics Sweden). Osterhammel (2014: 323) points out that never before had so much land been used for agriculture. Moreover, Osterhammel suggests that in the nineteenth century, the opposite extreme of the “city” was no longer the “country” but the “frontier,” which he defines as the “moving boundary of resource development.” (ibid: 322). It was, Charles Maier argues “perfectly possible to ‘civilize’ not only barbarians and different faith groups but also flora, fauna and landscapes” (2012: 828). Growing populations needed growing agriculture, and the vast areas of northern Sweden provided a huge potential for expansion. Allotments to settlers, as well as to reindeer herders, would order or civilize wilderness, and productivity would increase. The mountains, that could not be sown, could still yield resources such as meat and skin.

Industrialized modernization, in turn, can be subdivided into at least two interlinked sub-processes, for my purposes. First, it consisted of a commodification of the countryside (Maier 2014: 55). As with industrial production, agricultural production could be rationalized and made more efficient and profitable if peasants were transformed from “downtrodden, ignorant workers” into an “agricultural middle class” that would “respond to market incentives” (Maier 2014: 62). Certainly, the Swedish state’s policy of giving land ownership to Swedish farmers settling in the north is an attempt at creating an agricultural middle class, but also the keen interest the state took in improving reindeer herding must be seen in this light. The Swedish state, and its local representatives, as we have seen, did not believe good and efficient reindeer herding could take place if the herders did not live in proximity with the herds. The good reindeer herder was a nomad, if a “middle class” nomad.²⁶

The second aspect of industrialized modernity, for my purposes, was, in the words of Maier, that the world of the 1870s had been transformed by “strong leaders, realists who believed in railroads, property, economic development, and national power, and the inevitability of conflict and

²⁶ Indeed, the nomadizing reindeer herding Sámi were significantly more “affluent” than non-reindeer herding Sámi.

competition” (2014: 148). In other words, the [European] world had been transformed by a second great wave of state making.²⁷ For these states “the recipe for governing was to develop their territory” (ibid: 149). Indeed, by the late nineteenth century “most regimes throughout the world are attempting to control closely defined territories [...] and tax and utilize them in a coherent way” (Bayly 2004: 247). This was underpinned, argues Barry Buzan and George Lawson (2015: 24, 35, 41) by an overarching “ideology of progress” shared among liberalism, socialism, nationalism and “scientific racism.” Their overall assessment of this overarching ideology is worth quoting at length:

Taken together, liberalism, nationalism, socialism, and ‘scientific’ racism had three major effects: first, they challenged the basic framework for how societies were ordered; second, they rationalized vast programs of social engineering, including industrialization, and third, they legitimized both rational state-building and the extensions of Western power around the world (2015: 101).

Sweden is no exception here. It’s leaders believed in railroads and property, and in the inevitability of competition and conflict. It does not differ much from other European states at this time (Stråth 2012: 13-33). Sweden’s Sáme politics, and how it developed during the long nineteenth century was situated in a context defined by expectations of future international conflict and competition, and by a belief that the best response to this was rational state making through efficient utilization of available and potential resources.

In most parts of the world one effect of this second wave of state making and ideology of progress was the “global offensive against tribal ways of lives” (Osterhammel 2014: 324). Maier notes that the “world of rival states was also united in its pressure on the fragmented communities at its edges, or sometimes within its territories, whom they perceived to be obstacles to progress and civilization” (2012: 151). Moreover, Bayly argues that “the lexicon of nationalism insisted that such groups should be assimilated from strategic as much as cultural reasons” (2004: 219-20). Bayly further suggest that “the creation of harder boundaries between ‘majority’ and ‘minority’ populations was the mirror image of the creation of the nation itself. It was therefore, in the late nineteenth century, when the urge to build nations was running

²⁷ The first wave being the heuristic Westphalian states.

strongly, that internal boundaries between supposed ethnicities were also reinforced” (2004: 227).

In this last respect Sweden’s Sámi politics deviates in some important respect from the normal pattern. For while Sweden certainly assaulted “tribal” ways of life, I have also shown in this paper that Sweden actually reinforced – and even enforced – nomadic ways of life. Bayly’s argument that the internal boundaries were reinforced fits – you were either a Sáme (nomad) or *not* a Sáme (sedentary). But while Osterhammel, Maier and Bayly – as well as contributors to this volume – shows how nomads and other non-state peoples were forcefully assimilated, the reindeer herding Sámi were actually forcefully kept nomadic. What accounts for this deviation? I believe three factors account for this. First, the Sámi could never have been perceived to be any threat to Swedish order, beyond a few beggars in the coastal towns of the north. Lacking a martial culture, the Sámi were also always quite few and thinly spread. Sweden has seldom noticed ethnicity in censuses, and when it did, its street level bureaucrats did it somewhat randomly, applying different criteria in different places and times. In 1975 a governmental investigation tried to count how many Sáme there were at that time, and they concluded that there were about 2400 Sámi in the reindeer industry, and 13000 non-reindeer owning Sámi. Later accounts suggest that the figure should have been the double. Be that as it may, it is difficult to see that the size of the Sámi population a century or so previously could even remotely be perceived as a threat. Second, as Mörkenstam and Lantto has convincingly showed, reindeer herding was thought to be the only way to make the mountains profitable, and herding required nomads. Thus, a small population could be allowed, and even forced, not to be included in the progressing majority population, as long as the boundaries between the two groups were hard. Also, even the nomadic group should receive at least the basic education in Swedish and algebra, so that they could become reasonably efficient, “middle class” agricultural entrepreneurs. The third reason is that at the turn of the century, an exoticism (or indeed ideology) of *borealism* is developing (Broberg 1982: 79).²⁸ Borealism is not the same as Nordic or Swedish nationalism, even if these nationalisms contain aspects of borealism. Instead, Broberg suggest that borealism is analogous with

²⁸ This essay by Broberg includes an English language summary, and has the English title Lap-troups on the continent. Anthropology, the public and Sámi exhibits at the turn of the century.

orientalism – perhaps pre-Said. It should be understood as a “longing away” exoticism; longing away from crowded, dirty smoke-filled towns, towards the free, cold and wild expanses. The almost fanatical interest in the polar expeditions, as well as in Sven Hedin’s travels in Mongolia are part of borealism, as are the new sports of alpinism – on skis or without, the foundation of Svenska Turistföreningen²⁹, and both domestic and international tourism. For instance, in 1870 Alexander Hutchinson published the English language guide book *Try Lapland* (Broberg 1982: 55; see also Hansson 2012). In borealism, the Sámi had their given elevated, if romanticized, place – or at least the mountain Sámi did.

VII Conclusions

In this paper I have argued that the Swedish Sámi politics is best seen as an example of the Europe, world, wide late nineteenth century ideology of progress and intensified state building. All available resources should be rationally utilized in the improvement of the nation and the state, not least as a preparation for future international conflicts. One consequence of this was the “global offensive against tribal ways of life.” It is no coincidence that the Swedish state started to interfere with Sámi ways of life when it did: it was a global pattern observable in Europe, in the colonized world, and in settler societies. To an extent Sweden’s Sámi politics constitute an exception to this global pattern. While most or all nomads around the world were forcefully sedentized and assimilated into majority society, some of the Swedish Sámi were actually forcefully kept in nomadism, through housing and schooling policies. This deviation can be explained with a) the Sámi not constituting a threat, b) nomadism as a necessary condition for making the mountains economically useful, and c) an ideology of borealism. I have also argued that from the point of view of state making and ideology of progress, there is no sense in making a distinction between economic and cultural hierarchical arguments for the varieties of Swedish Sámi politics in general, or the “lapp skall vara lapp” policy specifically.

²⁹ The Swedish Tourist Association. In its first decades The Swedish Tourist Association had a strong focus on the Swedish mountains; a legacy that is still robust.

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