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Department of Social Anthropology

The Return of the Sami

- The Search For Identity and the World System Theory

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Bachelor Thesis: SANK01, 15 hp

Spring Semester 2010

Tutor: Ulf Johansson Dahre

Abstract

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The Sami people have a long history of colonization, discrimination, marginalization and prosecution in their past. My thesis deals with how the Sami identity is created and reproduced today and how it has been shaped in the light of the history of the Sami people and the policies pursued by the Swedish government through times, and also why the search for identity, heritage and roots has had such a revival in recent years. The purpose of this thesis is to make a contribution to the ongoing discussion about the Sami identity and why it has made a “return” the last few decades, why more and more people has started to bring out their previously toned down or completely hidden or unknown heritage and identity. It is also to increase the understanding among non-Sami to why the Sami society, culture and identity are shaped and look like they do today. I have conducted a short fieldwork in a southern Sami village in Dalarna in Sweden why the work also consists of empirically collected material in addition to the theoretical. The world-system theory is the main theory that I have used, but other theories such as stigma and ethnicity theories have also been a vital part in my analysis and conclusions. My conclusions are that the Sami identity today is in much part the result of historical and political contexts through times, but also that it is a subject to constant and dynamic change, explained by the world-system theory and the fragmentation of the hegemony of the West. Why people chose to seek their Sami heritage now is a result of a crisis in the center or core of the world-system, which leads to fragmentation and people looking to the emerging peripheries and the diverse rather than integration or assimilation to find coherence in their realities, as a sort of survival strategy in a cultural sense. This also results in a status related evaluation of different symbols and cultural expressions which can create stigma and ethnocentrism in turn, and thus influence the creation of identity among people belonging to the same ethnic group.

Key words: identity, world-system theory, modernity, ethnicity, culture, Sami politics, historic approach, stigma, and ethnocentrism.

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1. Introduction

Many indigenous peoples around the world have been exposed to the most brutal and merciless treatments one can imagine: colonization, persecution and oppression, displacement and even murder. Although the Sami people were subjected to colonialism, discrimination and oppression among other things, it was far from being as brutal as European colonialism in Africa, for example. Yet the Swedish colonization of the Sami areas in the northern parts of Sweden made a deep and lasting imprint in the Sami life, culture and society. Many Sami were assimilated into Swedish society and has moved to big cities, have regular jobs and drive the Volvo like other Swedes, while only about 10% of the Sami living in Sweden subsist on reindeer husbandry (<http://sametinget.se/1035>, 2010-01-09). But do you really have to herd reindeers, know the Sami language and wear a Sami *kolt* (custom suit) to be considered a "real" Sami, or is it just enough that you feel like a Sami to call yourself that? According to *Sametinget*, the Sami's own elected parliament, you either have to believe yourself to be Sami, speak or have spoken the Sami language at home or have at least one parent who was previously registered in Sami Parliament electoral register (<http://www.sametinget.se/1060>, 2010-01-09). But even if you can legally identify yourself as Sami, it does not automatically mean that other Sami will accept you as a member of the Sami community or as a Sami at all.

The title of this thesis is in this sense somewhat ironic, since it indicates that the Sami people has "disappeared" from society for some time, but that they have now "returned" as a people. It might seem like this is true from a Swedish (or non-Sami) perspective, but this is not what has happened at all from a Sami point of view. The Sami people have always been "there", even though it seems like they and their "genuine" culture with *kåtor* (Sami tents), troll-drums, *jojk* (traditional Sami folk singing) and blue hats with red tassels on have not been very visible to the rest of the society. Just as any other culture, it is dynamic and changing in interplay with the rest of the world, which is why it might seem like the "genuine" and original Sami culture has disappeared for some time. More and more people have also come forward in recent years, claiming to be Sami and wanting to be a part of the Sami community, and thus it might seem like the Sami people and culture has made a "comeback" in society again, after being absent for some time. But from a Sami point of view, the Sami people has not "returned", since they have always been there all along.

This paper will among other things look into the conditions and criteria for being Sami and what the Sami identity really looks like today and why.

1.1. Purpose and Hypothesis

The purpose of this paper is to examine the Sami identity from many different perspectives; its terms, conditions and criteria; how and why it is constructed the way it is; the importance of definition, and what really characterizes the Sami identity. I have chosen to focus primarily on the identity of the southern reindeer-herding Sami, since it appears to be a significant difference between the Sami people from different parts of the areas inhabited by Sami, but also between reindeer-herding and non-reindeer-herding Sami. I will also study what impact the historical and political circumstances have and have had in the formation of the Sami identity, and how and why it is reflected in the Sami identity today. Since there is not an overwhelming amount of literature or information regarding the Sami identity in particular, it is also my objective to add a contribution to the ongoing discussion concerning this topic, but also to increase a understanding among non-Sami about how and why the Sami society, culture and identity looks like it does today.

My issue is, therefore, *how the Sami identity stands today in the guise of the Sami history and the policies as implemented by the Swedish authorities through different times*, and, more importantly, *why it looks like it does today*. Other questions I will look into are:

- *How is the Sami identity created and reproduced today?*
- *Are there certain criteria for what is considered as “genuine Sami” today?*
- *Why has seeking your Sami identity and heritage had a revival in recent years?*

1.2. Previous Research

In 2008, Christina Åhrén at Umeå University presented her dissertation "Am I a real Sami? An ethnological study of young Sami's identity work", which has provided both inspiration and valuable information for my essay. In her thesis, Åhrén discusses young Sami's identity work, and different ways to be and feel Sami in Sweden today, and she also discusses relevant and updated facts and theories about stigma and ethnocentrism and how it affects the identity work, which is why I used a lot of her data to complete and analyze my own on these subjects. Lennart Lundmark's book "Så länge vi har marker" (1998) has contributed with much factual and historical information about Swedish Sami policies, identity and ethnicity. This has been very useful since I have been interested in the policies conducted by the Swedish authorities through times and how this has affected the Sami society. For a more

comprehensive explanation of and to obtain a wider knowledge about the Sami history and the Sami community, I have used other literature such as Israel Ruong's "Samer" (1975), but since this book is 35 years old it does not always agree with today's understanding of the facts, why it has rather functioned as a more fundamental knowledge base while the more recent literature has functioned as a more updated source of facts and information. Per Guttorm Kvenangens book "Samernas historia" (1996) have also contributed with somewhat new insights and knowledge from a greater perspective on the Sami history.

Ebba Olofsson's collection of articles "Trolldomsprocesser, myter, helande och modern samisk identitet" (1998) has contributed to some different perspectives on the Sami identity and what it is like to be Sami. The authors of the articles come from various disciplines and deal with various aspects of Sami culture, which gives the reader a broad perspective on Sami history and present (Olofsson [eds.] 1998: iv). Patrik Lantto has also issued a number of books about the Sami and Sami culture and politics that I have used, such as "Tiden börjar på nytt" (2000), "Befolkning och bosättning i norr" (2004). The first book describes the ethno-political mobilization that took place among the Sami in Sweden between 1900-1950. The second book deals with ethnicity and the Sami identity in the light of history. Erving Goffman's book "Stigma" from 1965 has also been a valuable source of information concerning theories of stigma and identity, especially theories about group stigma such as ethnic origin, which can be applied to groups such as the Sami.

Jonathan Friedman's book "Cultural identity & global process" (1994) and his articles "Global system, globalization and the parameters of modernity" (1995), and "Narcissism, roots and postmodernity: the constitution of selfhood in the global crisis" (1992) I have used to explain the world-system theory and global systemic processes, which are the main theories and explanations that I have employed in my thesis. Friedman draws on comparisons of different examples such as fishermen in Hawaii, the *La Sape* of Congo and cargo-cultures in Melanesia. Kajsa Ekholm Friedman's book "Catastrophe and Creation" from 1991, dealing with the breakdown of the Congo society and the creation of a new culture through the European colonization of Africa has also helped me understand the world systemic processes and how different cultures interact and the outcome of that.

But what really gave life to all literature and provided me with important empirical material for my thesis is my fieldwork in a southern Sami village in a reindeer-herding family. It is very easy to draw conclusions that feel logical based on the literature you read, but when you come out in the real world you quickly realize that reality is not always as simple and logical as it seems in the literature. The information gathered in the literature I have used are rather

brief and general, why the life histories, discussions, interviews and experiences I have taken part in during my fieldwork has given life and a much more nuanced view of literature and history.

1.3. Demarcation

As previously mentioned I have chosen to concentrate on southern Sami who grew up with and still is engaged in reindeer husbandry. This has several reasons. First of all, I have personal contacts with Sami who live and work in a southern Sami village in Dalarna in Sweden, which made the fieldwork that I wanted to do among reindeer-herding Sami realizable in the short amount of time I had, even though I purposed my request for fieldwork rather late. Second, the variations in different aspects and perspectives of the Sami is relatively large, so I think it would be too sweeping and generalized to write an essay about the whole Sami population, identity and culture, given the time frame I had to conform to. "A Sami coming from a reindeer-herding family have different values and norms than a Sami with a different background," as Christina Åhrén also writes in her dissertation (Åhrén 2008:30, auth. transl.). It would certainly be interesting to explore all the different aspects of the Sami identity, to examine how the identity of hunting- and fishing Sami or the forest reindeer-herding Sami identities looks like and are created, or how the "sidewalk-Sami" who have moved to the bigger cities looks upon their Sami heritage. But then again, the time frame and the size of the essay limit the possibilities to explore such aspects. Accordingly, the results and conclusions I have reached are my own subjective and interpreted from my own background and experience in this specific part.

1.4. Disposition

In the first part of the thesis I have accounted for my purpose and the questions I intend to examine, previous research and demarcation for my thesis. I have also chosen to include a section on the most basic facts about the Sami people in the introduction to give a brief factual foundation, as a basis for the rest of the paper, which will follow right after the disposition.

In the second part of the thesis I describe the theories and concepts I intend to use to base my essay on. First I will present the world-system theory, which is my main theory, but also clarify and define the context of important concepts such as identity, ethnicity, stigma, and ethnocentrism. The same section includes my method statement since I think it is closely

linked to the theoretical part, and therefore may be under the same section. I will also present my fieldwork in this section under “Method”.

In section 3 I will present relevant aspects (for the thesis) of Sami history until today, to give a picture of the circumstances and the history underlying the Sami society, culture and identity since I think it is essential to understand how and why the Sami identity looks the way it does today.

This is followed by an analysis of my material in part four, in which I will analyze and try to answer the questions that I have purposed. In the last section I will summarize the conclusions that I have reached and end my thesis with a short final discussion. Last, the bibliography and attachments.

1.5. Basic Facts About the Sami

The Sami are one of the world's indigenous peoples, and their ancestors are believed to be bearer of the Komsa culture from approximately 9000 years BC (Guttorm Kvenangen 1996:11-12). *Sápmi* is the name that the Sami people themselves use to name the area that has been inhabited since ancient times by the Sami. The area extends over four different countries, including the Kola Peninsula in Russia, northern Finland, northern Norway's coastal and inland, and the inland of northern Sweden. It is estimated to be about 70 000 Sami in total today. Most Sami live in Norway, about 40 000. In Sweden the number is about 20 000, 6 000 in Finland, and in Russia about 2 000. Nearly 10 000 of all Sami subsist on reindeer husbandry. In Sweden, the figure is about 2 500 (http://www.eng.samer.se/servlet/GetDoc?meta_id=1536, 2010-02-15). The Sami language is divided into several dialects. The largest is the Northern Sami dialect, spoken north of the Big Lule Kungälv's valley in Sweden and in northern Norway. In Jämtland and Västerbotten in Sweden the spoken dialect is Southern Sami, which differs strongly from the Northern Sami dialect. In between are the Pite Sami and Lule Sami dialects. In northeastern Finland and the Kola Peninsula there is five spoken Eastern Sami dialects (Lundmark 1998:11).

The Sami have their own parliament called *Sámediggi* (Sami Parliament), one each in Norway, Finland and Sweden. The Swedish *Sámediggi* consists of 31 elected representatives of the Sami in Sweden. There is 51 Sami villages in Sweden scattered over the interior of the northern parts of Sweden. The Sami flag was introduced in 1986 and the Sami “national” festival takes place on February 6 of each year and is called the Sami People’s Day. The official religion of the Sami is Christianity. The traditional Sami garment is called *kolt*, and is

mainly used in formal contexts.

Reindeer herding is divided into the mountain-reindeer herders and the forest-reindeer herders, where the mountain-reindeer herding is the dominant in Sweden. The mountain-reindeer stay in the high mountains in the summer, in the woodlands in winter and in areas in between in spring and autumn (Lundmark 1998:11). There is also hunting and fishing Sami who mostly live by hunting and fishing if living in *Sápmi*, but also on other economic activities.

2. Theories and Method

There is doubtlessly a wealth of interesting theories and perspectives that one might use to explain and explore how the Sami identity is created and shaped, and why it looks like it does today. However, I have chosen, based on previous research and my empirical material, to focus on a number of theories and concepts that I believe are relevant for my work. I have assumed a historical approach because I believe it is necessary to account for the history of the Sami people to understand the relevance of the theories that I have used and to be able to draw any conclusions from them.

2.1. World-system Theory

I have chosen a world-system theoretical approach to culture, which is principally developed by the anthropologists Kajsa Ekholm Friedman and Jonathan Friedman. The father of the original world-system theory, however, is Immanuel Wallerstein, an American sociologist influenced by Marxism and the Dependency school among other things. The theory is based on an understanding of the contemporary world as global systemic processes, that all countries of the world are interconnected in a global system. It is based on a center/periphery-structure, in which the western nations, often the Western European nations and also North America, have long been in the center, while other countries (or people, ethnic groups, regions, “ideas”, etc) are in the periphery.

“The global system involves the articulation between expanding/contracting central “sectors” and their emergent/disappearing peripheries. This articulation is one of decisive transformation of life forms in the broadest sense of the word. It is, moreover, a long-term historical process that can only be adequately understood as such.” (Friedman 1995:75)

The global system is thus also closely related to historical processes, which is why I opted for a historical approach to explain my results with the help of the world-system theory.

In Wallersteins' more economically oriented world-system theory, the wealth and surplus from the periphery is carried to the center as a one-way communication. In a more culturally orientated version, one wants to integrate people into the idea of the lifestyles of the western and "civilized" people, often through the assimilation of different peoples or ethnic minorities. Stable hegemonic phases in global systems are characterized by strongly hierarchical relations between dominant centers and their peripheries (Friedman 1992:333). When societies in the center are facing a crisis and a fragmentation of the "idea" of their society, people lose their sense of coherence and context that leads to a search for identity and a new coherence to "fit" into, because the idea about the western society and culture are no longer as attractive or give meaning and coherence to life. Thus, diversity and multiculturalism and the idea of the "other" take the place of assimilation and monoculture in both society, culture and identity of the centers. It becomes attractive to seek your roots and heritage, to have an "identity" and find some kind of coherence in the world, often based on either religion, ethnicity, nationalism, fundamentalism, etc.

"Crisis for the larger society implies a weakening of the power and identity of the dominant groups, and thus a potential strengthening of formerly repressed cultural identities. The response in this case is emancipatory cultural movements, the attempt to re-establish previous forms of existence, rather than reinforce the flows of wealth in the system" (Friedman 1992:359)

2.2. Identity

The definition of the concept of identity is as widely differing and complex as the number of authors trying to define it. The term that I use for the concept of identity is the same as Christina Åhrén use in her thesis; "... the different ways that people define and position themselves on the basis of cultural beliefs about, for example, nation, ethnicity and region" (Åhrén 2008:14, auth. transl.), and as Åhrén I see identity from a constructivist perspective, meaning that "identity is created and continuously reshaped in the interplay with the environment around them. No one has a stable, unchanging self-image" (Åhrén 2008:16, auth. transl.). In addition, I also agree with Åhrén of that identity is two-fold:

"The first is a form of internal monologue, a personal definition of who the individual is and how the individual perceives himself and the other is a form of social identity. Identity is

created here by the exclusion and the establishment of boundaries in relation to others. It is defined and constructed in contrast to what people believe themselves to be or not be.” (Åhrén 2008:15, auth. transl.)

Thus, in the social identity, one defines oneself in relation to others. By one group emphasizing the difference between themselves and another group, they create a social identity (Goffman 1972; Åhrén 2008:15). You can therefore consider yourself to be Sami, a Social Democrat, a fashion expert or Swedish, which is a more explicit form of identity where you separate yourself from others who do not belong to your group and where you, depending on how others defines themselves in their social identity, can also identify you. For example, the Sami hardly identified themselves as "Lapps", Sami or its equivalent before they came into contact with people who belonged to other ethnic groups, because there was no need to identify and distinguish themselves from other groups of people before that moment. But; “[t]he identity demands conditions, often in form of history” (Åhrén 2008:16, auth. transl.), why the history is so important from a world-systemic point of view, if one wants to explain identity with the help of the world-system theory, for example.

Modernity is another notion frequently used when talking about identity and culture. “In the era of modernity the identity become more and more mobile, multiple, personal, reflexive and also changing and innovative” (Kellner 1992:141; Åhrén 2008:21, auth. transl.), which means that identity is no longer a given or fixed notion in most societies and that this requires the individual to search and re-evaluate oneself through reflexivity of the own identity, more or less involuntarily throughout the whole life. Modernity is also closely linked to the world system theory in many ways, since the modern society and development today would probably not look the same if it would not have been for the interconnectivity and global processes that exists today. Without the interconnectedness and the influence of other people’s ideas, trends, projects and agendas that we have in our world today, different cultures, peoples and groups would probably be rather well preserved and “untouched”, since societies do not easily change unless they are in some way threatened or in need to change in order to survive.

Åhrén also talks about the notion of “life forms” in her thesis, and how this affects the way people considers their own and others’ realities and life conditions. By life form she draws on Thomas Höjrups explanation of the concept, and means that it creates an understanding of the Sami people as a non-homogenous group, even though they have a similar material standard, common institutions and a common “Sami way of living” (Åhrén 2008:22). But because I’m

only focusing on reindeer herding Sami, I will not go into much detail on the different life forms of Sami with different backgrounds and such.

2.3. Stigma and Ethnocentrism

Another aspect of the Sami identity, which certainly can also be found in many other ethnic and minority groups, is stigma. I here use the definition of Erving Goffman, who defines stigma as "a deeply discrediting attribute of an individual and reduces the individual to be only that which the stigma itself symbolizes" (Goffman 1972:112, Åhrén 2008:14, auth. transl.). To be a Sami can be seen as a discrediting attribute that reduces an individual to "just" a Sami and is thus deprived of all the other "human" characteristics of a person who does not live under a stigma. Stigma can also lead to ethnocentrism within a group, since there is a risk that people living under a group stigma such as ethnicity tend to carry on and apply this ethnocentric view of their own group or people, by looking at certain characteristics and attributes as "better" than others. In the Sami community, the impact might be that individuals give different Sami symbols separate values. The result is a prevailing ethnocentrism built on a "culture ladder" where the original and genuine is the most valued (Åhrén 2008:20). Mountain herding Sami might consider forest herding Sami as inferior, and forest herding Sami might consider hunting- and fishing Sami as inferior, and so on, because of the stigma applied to the Sami as a ethnic group. Thus ethnocentrism is reproduced through stigma even within the own group.

Ethnocentrism, in turn, can be explained as "individuals putting their own culture in the center and considers and evaluates the world according to their own position and experience" (2008:20 Åhrén, Davie 1971, auth. transl.). The reason I chose to employ the concept in my thesis, which often has a very negative connotation, has to do with both my own ideas about the Sami society and culture, but also with the perspective I have chosen to assume, that is, a historical and political perspective. Before I conducted my fieldwork and my interviews, I had an idea of the Sami society as deeply ethnocentric and full of contradictions, and that there was an inevitable hierarchy among the Sami as reflected in, among other things, politics, history, traditions and media. However, I want to emphasize that the concept of ethnocentrism is here used as an explanation and a reason why the Sami society, culture and identity looks the way it does today, and not to imply in any way that specific groups or individuals possess this vision.

2.4. Ethnicity

“Ethnicity can [...] be defined as a social identity (based on a contrast towards others) characterized by an imagined or fictive kinship”, Christina Åhrén writes and means that ethnicity arises through the social contact between groups whom consider themselves as a specific group (2008:19, auth. transl.). This is closely related to culture and also social, historical and political processes, since “[i]t is when the cultural differences is regarded as important and is made to be social relevant in the contact with other groups that ethnicity arises” (Åhrén 2008:19), and thus, the socially active cultural characteristics that is used as ethnical boundary marks are important, although these can be altered when the social situation changes. That is why I have chosen to regard ethnicity from a constructivist perspective, which means that I consider ethnicity as an aspect of social organization and not as an aspect of culture, after Fredrik Barth's interpretation of the concept. “This [is] a shift in the perception of ethnicity from a static to a more procedural approach where there is interaction between the groups” (Barth 1969, Åhrén 2008:18, auth. transl.). The opposite of this is an essentialist perspective, which means that one considers ethnicity as something inborn, which means that you have a solid ethnicity that cannot be altered. The way I use the notion of ethnicity here means something that occurs in social interaction between different groups in which cultural features are particularly obvious. Therefore, ethnicity is not something static but rather something changing because culture is something dynamic and changing. Ethnicity is not something inborn that has always existed in a group of people with a common culture, but occurs in contact with other groups of common cultural characteristics. It is when people start to define themselves as a group distinct from others, which may arise only in social interaction with others, that ethnicity arises. The relationship between different ethnic groups should, therefore, from this perspective be understood as dynamic social processes in which the group's self-identification change in social, historical and political processes (Åhrén 2008:19).

2.5. Method

I have based my thesis on both literature studies and a short fieldwork in a Southern Sami village in Dalarna in Sweden for a week in early December 2009. After having acquainted myself with the literature, I realized that a field work seemed necessary since most of the literature I had chosen (or could find) was generally between 10 and 40 years old, so the

results could therefore be at risk of becoming dated and arbitrary for the present situation, which is why a short fieldwork seemed quite reasonable.

2.5.1. My Own Relation to the Sami

"It is essential as a researcher to be conscious of your background, and that regardless whether you, like me, is Sami doing research on the Sami community, or if you as a Swedish researcher do research on the Swedish society," writes Christina Åhrén (Åhrén 2008:30, auth. transl.). I am neither Sami doing research on the Sami society nor Swedish doing research on the Swedish society (*per se*), but I still have a relationship to the Sami community, which I believe is necessary to "declare" for the sake of the interpretation of the results. It may give a more nuanced picture of the results I got and why I got those results. If anyone else had done this work using the same methods and theories that I did, the results and interpretations would most likely not be the same as mine.

I have Sami relatives in the family whom I stood near throughout my childhood. Their Sami heritage is nothing that I have really reflected upon; it has always been there as natural as any other attribute. In recent years I have not spent as much time together with my relatives as in the past, but when it was time to write my bachelor thesis, it soon became quite clear that it was about the Sami people I wanted to write about. I also wanted to conduct a fieldwork, albeit rather short, and so I asked my Sami relatives if I could come and stay with them for a week or so to conduct a fieldwork in their Sami village. Thus, my fieldwork has been carried out among people to whom I have a previous relationship with, which is why I think it is important for the result's interpretation to clarify it. I got the opportunity to participate in Sami activities in which I would maybe not have been allowed or able to if I had not had a previous relationship with the Sami. Moreover, it can also be problematic about how to act in the field if you have a previous relationship to the field and to informants. I believe that since they might regard me as a relative rather than as an anthropologist, it almost certainly influenced the result and the experience I got out of the fieldwork. Perhaps I got to participate and take part in activities as a relative, which I might not have had as an "independent" anthropologist. At the same time, it can also create complications regarding what I can and cannot write. Of course it is important to be careful not to write things that may be too personal or harmful to anyone, while it may also be difficult to make such a decision. I mentioned several times during my fieldwork that if it was something that somebody wanted me not to write, they

would have to tell me that specifically. In addition to that, I have mostly done a personal assessment about what is appropriate to include or not.

2.5.2. Field Work and the Empirical Material

The fieldwork was carried out as mentioned during a week in early December 2009 in a southern Sami village in Dalarna in Sweden, where I was staying with my Sami relatives. During my week, I got to participate in reindeer butchery, listen to and participate in many and fruitful talks and discussions of the Sami community, take part of a lesson in the Sami language for 9th graders at school, watch for poachers and predators tracks, ride snowmobile, and many other things that is part of the Sami life. During the entire stay, I took notes and kept a field diary, and I also made four formal interviews with informants, which was recorded and transcribed. The interviews lasted approximately for an hour, and I used a few standard questions but I also asked more personalized questions. The informants all have a background in reindeer herding and lives in *Sápmi*. Ages varied from 14 to 53 and I interviewed two female and two male. The goal was to allow informants to talk as freely as possible about various topics with as few interruptions from me as possible. But the fieldwork also consisted in large part of informal interviews, conversations with different people with different relationships to the Sami community, which, in a way, gave more details and insight into the Sami life than formal, stilted and recorded interviews. My goal was to allow informants to talk as freely as possible so that the interviews would not be so controlled by me. But of course it can be difficult to speak freely if you are aware that everything you say is recorded and can be used in a way that perhaps was not intended when saying it. Moreover, the informants themselves might not have reflected upon certain things that they regard as obvious or fundamental in their own lives. It can also be difficult to answer a question based on concepts or considerations that are not compatible with the informant's outlook on life, language or culture. Questions like "do you feel different because you are Sami" or "how important is the Sami language to you as a Sami" might not be so easy to answer if you have not reflected upon if there is any difference or not, or if the Sami language has a personal significance just because you happen to be Sami but may not know the language. In other words, you have to choose your words right to ask the right questions! The fieldwork resulted nonetheless in a valuable and important experience and insights into the Sami community, which I will include and analyze further down in the thesis and apply the theories and concepts that are the basis of my work.

3. The Sami Through A Historical Perspective

There are many interesting aspects of the Sami history that would be exciting to immerse in. Unfortunately, there was neither time nor space to examine all these aspects which is why I've chosen the most basic of the Sami history and especially their relationship to the Swedish government, which strongly characterized the Sami society, culture and identity. This might be a quite sweeping and generalized account of the Sami history, but it gives an idea of how the Sami society and culture has developed through times and in relation to the Swedish society.

3.1. The Sami and Their Relationship to the Swedish Authorities From About 1350 to the 17th Century

The Swedish Crown established its contacts with the Sami people through so-called Birkarls, Finns from Pirkkala who descended from the surroundings of the current Tampere [in Finland] (Guttorm Kvenangen 1996:19). In 1358 King Erik Magnusson ratified the Birkarls privileges by granting them the right to trade with the Sami in Lapland, against a fee paid to the Swedish Crown. Documents from the 15th Century have been found, where the Birkarls complain that other traders encroached on their turf, which indicates that each Birkarl had "their" Sami that he traded with (Lundmark 1998:19). But they also had the right to raise taxes from the Sami, which has led some to think that the Birkarls was cruel tax collectors who threatened the Sami to life if they did not pay tax. But this seems unlikely since they would be undermining the entire trade with the Sami if they scared them away from the trading venues where the tax was raised (Lundmark 1998:19).

When Gustav Vasa started to tighten up the taxes in Sweden, he soon discovered the wealth in Lapland that was to be collected (Lundmark 1998:25). In 1553, he sent out the bailiff in Västerbotten to make an individual tax orientation that had previously been made among peasants in the rest of the country, and the bailiff came back with much more than what the Birkarls paid in taxes in order to trade with the Sami. The Birkarls lost their right to collect taxes from the Sami, but they still had the exclusive right to trade with them. The Crown took over the taxation of the Sami, and bailiffs were established in Lapland in order to collect taxes from the Sami. Despite the more stringent requirements on tax collections, the Sami became wealthy because of how much food they got for the skins they traded. The fur prices rose sharply in Europe from the mid-1500s (Lundmark 1998:30), and although the Sami only

received a fraction of what the skins were worth on the European market, they still became rich since the Crown paid with butter and flour to the Sami for the skins. This is clearly demonstrated in the tax rolls, where the tax-imposed Sami increased in numbers, the population grew. But the Sami gradually became dependent on food that they did not produce themselves, and the consequences of the rapid population growth would eventually lead to a shift from a hunting society to “reindeer nomadism” during the 1600s.

3.2. Reindeer Nomadism, Labor Work and Conversion

In 1607 a new tax policy was introduced, where the tax consisted of food instead of furs in order to provide the Swedish soldiers with food, whom was at war with Poland during Charles IX's reign. The new tax policy hit the Sami hard when the fur trade also stagnated, and some of them did not manage to pay the tax, which consisted of reindeers and dried fish among other things. The solution was to expand the limited reindeer herd to try to live on reindeer meat, since the Sami could no longer support themselves solely on hunting and fishing because the Sami population had grown so large. And once that process was initiated, there was no way back (Lundmark 1998:40).

In 1634, silver was found at the Nasa Mountain, northwest of Arjeplog in northern Sweden. Just as the Spaniards extracted riches out of South America, so the Swedish Crown hoped to have found an own source of wealth in Sweden. The Crown hired Sami to handle shipments in exchange for tax relief and other privileges and benefits. For farmers in Sweden, the 1600s was a miserable time, with the 30 Year War raging in Europe and many men were forced into the army, which the Sami were excepted from. Neither did they have to pay extra taxes for the wars. The only thing that fell upon the Sami during this difficult time was to manage transportation in connection with the Crown's mining operations (Lundmark 1998:44). But the Sami were unable to support themselves when they were forced to stay in one place or to be out on transportation commissions on behalf of the Crown, as it could not be combined with reindeer herding. Unlike the peasants, the Sami were not dependent on land and they could easily flee, as many did, and cross the border to Norway. The authorities were thus forced to resort to increasingly violent methods to get the Sami to handle the shipments of mines. The treatment was cruel and sometimes pure torture, but the Sami continued to flee. Eventually, the entire system had to be revised and the shipments were allocated to all Sami instead of just some, as in the previous system. This system worked better, and the Sami began to gradually return around the 1690s as reflected in tax rolls. In order for the Sami to

not be so tied up in contract work for the mining and utility service, the governor of Västerbotten suggested that the northern parts of Sweden should be colonized by settlers (Lundmark 1998:50). Although the original idea was of a good nature, it would later prove to have serious consequences for the Sami and their land.

Before the Sami was converted to Christianity they had their own faith, a nature religion where the sun and nature had an important place. They worshiped various gods and the *nåjd* was a kind of shaman. When the Sami eventually were baptized and officially became Christians at the turn of the 17th - 18th Century, many of them retained the old Sami gods but incorporated the Christian God as a god amongst others in their own religion, which is evident from the images on preserved fortune-telling drums (Lundmark 1998:52).

The Christianization of the Sami, however, was far from being as brutal as it was in other places in the world, perhaps primarily because there was a fear that the Sami would again flee to the Norwegian side of the border if too violent methods were used. There was only one execution for idolatry among the Sami that took place in 1693, as a result of the on-going witch-hunt in Sweden and Europe from the late 1600's to early 1700's. Instead, missionaries tried to split the Sami belief from within, by learning as much as possible about their religion and then discuss it in private conversations and come up with credible arguments to convert them to Christianity. Churches were also built in the larger market places in order to thereby encourage the Sami to go to church. From the 1770s and onwards it seems that the Christian religion were completely dominant among the Sami (Lundmark 1998:58).

3.3. The Colonization of Sápmi

During the 16th Century, Sami families owned so-called “Lapps katteland” (Sami Tax Lands), areas where they could hunt and fish and that was their own private property that they could manage as they wished. The governor of Västerbotten suggested in the late 17th Century to establish a register of all the Sami-owned tax lands, as had been previously established of the farmers' lands (Lundmark 1998:59). Once such a register was established, the authorities could ensure that the new settlers settled in areas where they did not interfere with the Sami. The governor considered the Sami's and the settlers industries to be so essentially different that they could be pursued in parallel in *Sápmi* without conflicts (Lundmark 1998:60).

By the mid-1700s, there was a monetary crisis in Sweden, and after 1745 it was strictly forbidden to bring silver and copper coins out from Stockholm (Lundmark 1998:64). But the Sami accepted no other payment than silver, and thus got it in silver. It would be bad to lose

the important trade with the Sami, since they could easily cross the border to Norway and bring the trade with them if the conditions were not good enough. Authorities and commercial bourgeoisie was at a disadvantage and could not do much else than to spread stories about how badly and careless the Sami managed all their silver. In this way, the Sami were seen as causing the country a financial loss (Lundmark 1998:65). In 1751, the border with Denmark/Norway was also settled with an addition of a codicil on the Sami's ability to move across the border and that some jurisdictions among the Sami would be handled by the Sami themselves. The evidence suggests, therefore, that the Sami had a relatively strong position in society. But as the newcomers settled down in Lapland and Jämtland-Härjedalen, the Sami became fewer and fewer of the population and the socio-economic importance of reindeer herding decreased in line with other industries developing. The Crown favored agriculture and the Sami's old inheritance rights to land and water began to be taken away from them. This led to displacement of the Sami and they eventually began to be regarded as a social problem.

Reindeer herding had previously been considered to be the most effective way to exploit Lapland, but farming had now taken over this role. Unless the Sami could prove that their reindeer herding was threatened or in any way harmed by settlers settling down on their tax lands, they could do so unobstructed (Lundmark 1998:69). "They took no account of the Sami rights [and] the areas were regarded as wasteland and stray country" (Guttorm Kvenangen 1996:82, auth. transl.). Some of the Sami tried to take up settlements themselves, but when they did not meet the requirements to engage in full time farming, they had to give way to other settlers. Eventually, this led to some of the Sami abandoning reindeer husbandry in order to subsist on agriculture instead, which meant that they would no longer be identified as Sami and was written into the tax rolls as farmers, particularly in southern Lapland.

Furthermore, settlers who had settled on Sami land often referred their actions, such as to intrude on Sami fishing waters or shoot reindeer when they tore down piles of hay, to self-sufficiency or agriculture. Thus, they could circumvent the law and win the case when it was brought up in court. The Sami gradually lost their ability and will to speak up against the inequities in society. From the late 1700s and onwards the settlers won practically any legal disputes by referring to agriculture or livestock. In a Royal Decree in 1789, the Crown also assured the farmers settled on Crown lands the right to inherit their homesteads. The Sami Tax Lands were not affected by these rules (Lundmark 1998:74). In connection with erosion of the farmers lands, the legal status of the Sami was further weakened when the Crown partitioned the forest lands to settlers in order to strengthening them economically. Sweden

thereby exceeded the Laplandish Soil Border (*lappmarksgränsen*) established in 1751, when they discovered treasures prone to Swedish society beyond the border, which was on Sami territory. A new border was established further inland in 1867, the so-called Cultivation Border (Guttorm Kvenangen 1996:84). The Sami became more and more repressed, and they had also sent a letter to the Royal Highness in 1829, requesting a continued use of the pastures where their ancestors had grazed their reindeers (Lundmark 1998:74). The Crown land that was left at this time would not be enough for the Sami to continue their reindeer herding to the same extension as before though, and thus, the Crown decided to allocate so-called "Tax Mountains" for the Sami, where they could also graze their reindeers. But the right to the Tax Mountains was eventually also repealed.

3.4. Racism, Cultural Darwinism and the Reindeer Pasture Law of 1886

"The Swedish Sami policy in the 19th Century is often described as racist and vulgar-Darwinist. That is true from around 1880 and onwards, but the decades before there was a strong opinion for the Sami cause" (Lundmark 1998:76, auth. transl.). What might easily be misread as vulgar-Darwinist is mainly the argument often used to argue for the Sami cause: that they were about to die out as a people, and therefore it was important to prevent it as long as possible. Namely, there was a cultural nationalist spirit in the contemporary politics at the time.

Racism is to ascribe ethnic groups innate characteristics that make it inferior to others in any respect (Lundmark 1998:86). This was exactly what was done during the late 19th Century to justify the seizure of the land that originally belonged to indigenous people worldwide. Thus, it was not just in Sweden that the racist prejudices abounded.

The Cultivating Border had as mentioned above been established in 1867, beyond which the farmers and peasants were not allowed to cultivate the soil, but it was not respected and was also much higher up the mountains than the previous Laplandish Soil Border. There was a notion that there were different cultural stages, where Sami "in the original order were roving in loosely tied together groups", why one so easily could legitimize the seizure of the lands with the explanation that the Sami were not originally tied to any particular land, but wandered aimlessly about with their reindeers. There was much talk about "lower" and "higher" culture stages, and in particular that the Sami people were either not willing or not able to get away from their nomadic lifestyle. Still in the 20th Century, they were sometimes said not to belong to the "civilization" (Lantto & Shield (eds) 2004:241).

In 1886, the Swedish parliament adopted a new reindeer herding policy. In adopting this policy, the Sami finally lost their Sami Tax Lands. The Reindeer Act of 1886 stated that the Sami had no lands of their own, but they had the right to keep their winter grazing lands outside the Lapland and the Tax Mountains, which were the areas where the Sami had grazed their reindeers "by custom" (Lundmark 1998:95). But it also guaranteed the Sami, whose lands were now divided into "Lap Villages" (*lappbyar*), i.e. larger land areas where reindeer herding would be conducted so that each family had their own reindeers but the pasture was state property, exclusive rights to reindeer husbandry. To monitor the Sami, a system of government bailiffs was established, called the "Lap System" (*lappväsende*). The Lap System was the authority that, at regional and local level, would implement decisions concerning the Sami taken by governments at the central level (Lantto & Shield (eds) 2004:283). With the bailiffs the Sami was therefore being put under guardianship, and these bailiffs would also represent the Sami in front of the authorities, which meant that the Sami also lost the right to conduct their own proceedings and speak for themselves. This system of bailiffs consisted until 1971.

3.5. "Lapp skall vara Lapp"

At the turn of the 20th Century, a new idea concerning Sami policies took form, the so-called "*Lapp skall vara lapp*" policy, or, in English terms, "Laps should be Laps". It had its roots in the late 19th Century cultural Darwinism, and it was the common opinion that the Sami would die out sooner or later as a people, but that this should be prevented for as long as possible. One solution was to "preserve" the Laps as they were and to not let them get in touch with the higher forms of civilization that sooner or later would lead to their death. As evidence, some referred to the forest-reindeer herdsman, which was considered to be "degenerated" mountain-reindeer herdsman, and meant that they had become too comfortable and settled, unlike the superior and nomadic mountain-reindeer herdsman. It appeared to be of utter importance to preserve the Sami as reindeer herders, and this could only be done by segregating and isolate them from the surrounding Swedish society with its negative influences (Lantto & Shield (eds) 2004:280). A nomadic school was also established, where the teachers followed the Sami walks for three years and taught them in Sami tents (*kåtor*) now and then, until it was time for the children to attend permanent nomadic schools. "In a public notice in 1916, it was determined that the children would live and be fed in Sami tents even at the permanent nomadic schools" (Lundmark 1998:100, auth. transl.). Previously, the children had lived at

boarding schools or with boarders of residents, but the state commissioned the nomadic school-inspector, a Swedish reverend, to draw the Sami tents the children would live in. They turned out to be unfit for housing, of course, since they were designed by someone with absolutely no knowledge of the construction of Sami tents. Yet the Sami children were housed in these tents, despite loud protests from the Sami. Textbooks and teaching aids was also designed so that the Sami children would not obtain too much knowledge or get tempted to leave the mountains and reindeer herding.

One problem with the Reindeer Herding Act introduced in 1886 was that it did not make any attempt to determine who was Lappish, and therefore whom the law really concerned. "The word was considered to have such a specific meaning that it did not need any definition" (Lundmark 1998:108, auth. transl.). But ever since the large-scale tame-reindeer herding had an impact in the 17th Century, there had been Sami without reindeers that wandered around and begged or went to town looking for work, and others had focused on Sami handicrafts. Some had also begun to take up new settlements, which created confusion about how to define Sami who took up settlements since the settlers were subject to other laws and regulations than the Sami, concerning the use of lands and such. But since politics was largely characterized by the above-mentioned notion of "Lap should be Lap", it was considered that all Sami not engaged in reindeer herding should be considered as "other inhabitants". In 1928 however, a new Reindeer Herding Act was accepted, and the guidelines drawn up in the Act still govern the reindeer herding in Sweden today. In 1917, there had been a proposal that the Sami who had not herded reindeer for two generations would be "deprived of their Sami identity in a legal sense". This proposal was now accepted, and the non-reindeer herding Sami was no longer regarded as Sami. In this way, the authorities caused a split among the Sami people (Guttorm Kvenangen 1996:93).

"Despite some cosmetic changes, the Swedish Reindeer Herding Act is still characterized by the 1920s, when the racist "Lap should be Lap"-policy had a strong influence on the Sami politics. The important thing in the new law of 1928 concerned the reindeer grazing rights and the relationship between reindeer herding and non-reindeer-herding Sami." (Lundmark 1998:113, auth. transl.)

In 1919, Sweden and Norway also agreed on a new reindeer grazing convention that regulated the Swedish Sami's rights to let their reindeer graze in Norway. This meant that the Sami lost large areas of their summer grazing land, which put great pressure on the already strained land access for all Sami in northern parts of Sweden. This led to the displacement of the Sami

people from Karesuando-area to more southerly areas of Sápmi. This was carried out more or less involuntarily from the Sami's side, and the Karesuando Sami are now scattered across the whole of Sápmi (Guttorm Kvenangen 1996:97).

3.6. Resistance, Organization and Ethno-Political Mobilization

There are plenty of cases of resistance and organization incurred as a reaction to the treatment of the Sami people, however. “The first Sami Association of Sweden was formed in 1904 ... [and] worked to improve the Sami's position in society at large” (Guttorm Kvenangen 1996:107, auth. transl.). In 1918, the first Sami National Congress convened in Östersund in Sweden and in 1919, the Sami People's Newspaper (SET) was founded. The Swedish Sami Association (SSR) was formed in 1950 at a congress in Jokkmokk and is now an important part of the Sami society. SSR's main role is to enforce the Sami interests against other interest groups (Guttorm Kvenangen 1996:110). But, “[w]ith the formation of the SSR [...] reindeer husbandry status was reinforced as the common denominator of the Sami, since the association primarily was based on the Lap Villages and thus had the character of a business organization (Lantto & Shield (eds) 2004:289, auth. transl.). As previously mentioned, the political issues concerning the Sami often dealt with issues related to only the reindeer-herding Sami during the early 20th Century, much due to previous policies that only reindeer-herding Sami was considered as "real" Sami, and thus, no attention was focused on the non-reindeer-herding Sami. But during 1960 to 1980, more and more previously “un-known” Sami began to bring out their descent in the open, that had previously been toned down or completely denied, and require some of the rights which previously only included the reindeer-herding Sami. One of the most prominent advocates of non reindeer-related questions were Israel Ruong, who took over SET and SSR in 1960. Ruong had more of an overall picture; he wanted to highlight the Sami outside the reindeer herding community and involving them as well (Lantto & Shield (eds) 2004:290). But since the Sami have exclusive rights to reindeer herding in Sweden, reindeer husbandry has always had and will continue to have a special status within the Sami culture and society. Following the rejection of race ideologies however, policy became more focused on economic interests, why reindeer husbandry often had to stand aside for the greater economic accumulating activities such as water and wind power, as well as tourism and forestry. In 1971, a new Reindeer Husbandry Law was accepted in Sweden however, which is still in use today. The changes made from the Reindeer Pasture Law of 1928 are primarily the abolition of the Lap System, and also that the

Sami got to be represented in the government-funded Lap Fund, which was also renamed the Sami Fund, and the Lap Villages was renamed to Sami Villages. Except from this, it is still the basic principles of the 1928 Reindeer Pasture Law.

Other issues where legal conflicts still often arise today are, for example, the Customary Law, which means that the Sami must prove that they and their reindeers has lived and worked on the lands for a long time before the formation of the nation-state, for them to continue to live and work there. And even if they get the right to graze their reindeer on the lands that has been used since time immemorial, they still have no legal title to the land, why so many Sami who has ceased with reindeer herding has been forced off “their” lands. “To cease the reindeer husbandry often means that the family also is forced to leave the area they previously utilized, since they were only recognized the right to graze their reindeers there, but lacked title to the land” (Lantto & Shield (eds) 2004:284, auth. transl.). The issue of the right to fish and hunting of wild game was, and still is, another problem for the Sami Villages, which previously decided together with the County Administration Board as to who got to hunt on the reindeer grazing lands. But in 1993, on the same day as the Sami Parliament inauguration, the Sami were deprived of control over small game hunting and it is now open for anyone to buy fishing and hunting license and hunt in the reindeer pastures.

Other issues discussed is if the Sami Villages should be transformed into “open” Sami Villages where non-reindeer-herding Sami are welcome to join as well, and also if Sami subsisting on reindeer herding may engage in other economic activities outside of reindeer husbandry as well. The Swedish government’s ratification of ILO Convention no. 169 on Indigenous Peoples is another constant discussion, because it would provide significantly enhanced land rights for the Sami. In 1977 the Swedish government recognized the Sami as an indigenous people, but this was never inscribed in the Constitution, why the Swedish government today does not consider itself obliged to ratify the ILO 169. Since Sweden has been one of the pursuing countries in the development of the Convention, Sweden has endured much criticism both nationally and internationally, since they are not willing to ratify the Convention they had participated in developing themselves.

4. Analysis

Here follows an analysis of my material, which I have decided to divide into different parts to give it a clearer structure for the reader to interpret. I will use the theories explained in the beginning to analyze these questions in order to come up with an answer and also explain how the world-system theory can explain my arguments, since it is the main theory that I am using. I will also incorporate statements and quotations from the informants that I have interviewed in my analysis in order to further emphasize the relevance of my arguments and theories. The different parts will deal with the impacts of history, stigma, ethnocentrism and the expression of identity and culture, and also how the world-system theory is connected to these topics.

4.1. The Impact of History

Without any doubt, the policies pursued by the Swedish authorities through times has affected the Sami people and identity beyond imagination. The Sami were subjected to colonization during the 1800s as many other indigenous peoples around the world at the time, although the colonization of the Sami might not have been as deadly as for many others. Colonization of one people by another often follows a general pattern as described in Ekholm Friedman's book "Catastrophe and Creation" (1991) including three phases. In the first phase, the two societies interact with each other on equal terms. In the second phase, the colonizing society is in an advantageous situation towards the indigenous society, and this will eventually lead to a catastrophe, which is the third phase. To cope with the catastrophe, societies either fall apart or find a way to deal with this catastrophe by creating a new kind of society. The similarities to the Congolese colonial society that Ekholm Friedman describes in her above mentioned book might not have too much in common with the Sami colonial society, but the patterns can still be observed. The Sami had a quite strong position in society for some time, basically before Swedish settlers started to colonize *Sápmi*, and before the Sami got into a disadvantageous position in the trade with the Swedish Crown, and started to become more and more dependent on trade goods that they did not produce themselves. This disadvantage forced the Sami to take up large-scale reindeer herding in order to be able to feed their growing population, and after that there was no way of going back to their "original" way of living. Thus, when the Sami people came into contact and interacted with the Swedish society, a new culture and society was created, as a result of the "clash" between the two cultures, although it might not have been as violent as many other "clashes of cultures". In addition, the Swedish authorities and its policies was also the ones who more or less

“decided” what was to be considered as Sami and what was not, and by deciding that only reindeer-herding Sami was to be considered as “real” Sami, they more or less “created” a Sami culture, where the reindeer was to be considered as the main expression of the Sami culture, even though the Sami themselves probably did not regard the reindeer herding as the main expression of their culture to begin with. When I asked what it means to be Sami and what the characteristics of the Sami are to one of my informants in an interview, I was told that "if you say the word “Sami”, the first thing you come to think of is Lap tents and reindeer, but since we don’t live in Lap tents any more, it’s only reindeer now" (female born 1994, auth. transl.). Although it might not be a universal truth, it seemed the answer was very aptly, considering the structure of the Sami society today. When the Reindeer Husbandry Act of 1928 came into effect and all the Sami who were not engaged in reindeer husbandry was deprived of their identity in the legal sense, the reindeer received extraordinary importance and were thus largely the main symbol of the Sami culture from that point onwards. When I interviewed my reindeer-herding Sami informants it was quite evident that this was also a common opinion among them as well. One of my informants told me that “if the reindeers disappear we won’t have anything in common anymore” (female born 1990, auth. transl.) and meant that the Sami society might decline in a cultural and socioeconomic sense if the reindeers disappear, and another one told me that for him, his whole Sami identity was revolving around the reindeer husbandry, and that he would not feel as Sami without his reindeers (male born 1989, auth. transl.). Another informant told me, however, about the political complexity surrounding the reindeer, and meant that if reindeer husbandry is to be considered as a cultural expression only, it would open up for all Sami to get a couple of reindeers and herd them “just for fun”, and that this might lead to a questioning to why the Sami would need so much lands if they are not dependant on the reindeer husbandry for their livelihood and that this might lead to the end for the reindeer husbandry as an industry. And it might also lead to a decline in the Sami culture, and perhaps even to the end of it (male born 1956, auth. transl.).

What also struck me in all the interviews and discussions with informants and others with relation to the Sami community was the awareness of history and politics, and how much this seemed to affect their everyday life. Even my youngest informant of 16 years old was well aware of the history and politics of the Sami society, and had quite a lot to say about the Reindeer Pasture Laws conducted through times and about the politics of reindeer husbandry, land rights and other policies concerning reindeer husbandry and herding. It seemed that history and politics was a very vital part of a Sami’s life and also a vital part of their identity

in a very different way than for most other people that I know of. As one of my informants put it;

“We are dependent on it [the politics, auth. remark] for our existence, to be politically engaged and to work for and demand our rights and in order to keep our lands and to see to it that the children get to learn the Sami language in school. We have to fight for it all the time, and that is very important” (female born 1990, auth. transl.).

4.2. Stigma and Ethnocentrism

The answers my informants gave me above is also interesting from other perspectives, since it may reflect the inherent contradictions that exist in the Sami society. Hunting- and fishing Sami whom do not engage in reindeer husbandry would almost certainly not have given me the same answers as my reindeer-herding informants. For them, perhaps the proximity to nature and the Sami language is what characterizes the Sami culture. For the hunting- and fishing Sami whom has not been born into reindeer husbandry and thus has not had a natural place in the Sami community in a political and legal sense, the struggles and fights related to Sami issues has most likely concerned other things, such as the right to belong to a Sami Village and to fish and hunt on Sami lands and such. Since the reindeer herding Sami has generally been considered as the “real” Sami by the surrounding society but also by most of the “real” reindeer herding Sami as well, a kind of stigma is created upon both the reindeer herding and the non-reindeer herding Sami since both groups are reduced to represent only their “legal title” and ethnicity (Sami or non-Sami), regardless what they consider themselves to be. This is the kind of ethnocentrism I mentioned earlier, which is that stigma can lead to ethnocentrism and in the Sami community, the impact might be that individuals give different Sami symbols separate values. This phenomenon can most likely also be found in any other group of people living under stigma, meaning that people value things according to a “culture ladder” where the original and genuine is most valued (Åhrén 2008:20). For the reindeer-herding Sami, the most valued symbols of the Sami culture might be the reindeer, the Sami kinship and community and the relationship to the Sami lands, but for Sami living in a big city, the most important symbol might be the *jojk* (traditional Sami folk singing) or the ability to speak the Sami language. Patrik Lantto also describes the Swedish role of government in the formation of the Sami movement's own perception of themselves and the Sami.

"Throughout the investigation [1900-1960] a strong link between reindeer husbandry and the Sami were drawn by the authorities, even if the simple and clear connection made at the

beginning of the century had changed and become more complex and less clear. This dominant image, as well as the limitations of the Sami people's ability to act politically as the government's conducts implied, it also greatly affected the Sami movement, both in the case of their own self-image, rhetoric and political actions." (Lantto & Shield (eds) 2004:291, auth. transl.)

The way the Swedish authorities have looked upon the Sami culture through times has thus also affected the Sami perception of themselves. Lantto also stresses the pessimism that could clearly be discerned when there was talk about the Sami and reindeer herding, mainly among the Sami leaders and prominent figures in the Sami movement, and a reasonable explanation of why pessimism about reindeer herding was so widespread in both rhetoric and policy. "The consistently negative representation of the reindeer herding industry and its future is in part seen as a natural restraint, a kind of mental defense for reindeer husbandry's perishable nature" (Lantto & Shield (ed.) 2004:291, auth. transl.). Among the herders themselves, however, no justification has been found for why pessimism was so widespread there. But; "If the survival of reindeer husbandry facilities was threatened, so was the Sami culture, and by extension, the Sami as a people" (Lantto & Shield (ed.) 2004:292, auth. transl.). This might be an expression of self-preservation in a cultural sense, that if the Sami society falls apart, one must be prepared and be able to survive a fragmentation of one's culture by being precautionous. The Swedish Sami policy of "Lap should be Lap" has probably influenced the Sami perception of themselves far more than anyone knows. The authorities were of the strong opinion that the Sami people (meaning the reindeer-herding Sami) would die out sooner or later, and more or less that they were children that needed the authorities to protect them from themselves in order to prolong their fragile existence, since they would not either be able or willing to rise to the Swedish, more civilized, society. With this kind of stigmatism and constant threat to the survival of their people, it is not strange that the Sami eventually took on the same pessimism and rhetoric as the authorities in order to protect themselves.

4.3. The Sami Identity and Its Expressions

Another theme that recurred repeatedly in various conversations and during interviews in my fieldwork was the way in which the Sami look upon nature. Even in literature and in movies I have studied, this theme emerged as central in the Sami culture. Sami often talk about nature as something borrowed, which will later be passed on to the next generation and the need to

preserve and care for the nature in order for their descendants to live out of it. A recurrent expression was "not to leave traces behind in the wild". How fundamentally different approaches such as the Swedish and the Sami could lead to such devastating results. The Swedish approach implied here is the notion that one can own land and that land which no one has claimed is free to take. Why the Sami had not seized the land before the Swedes came seems to simply have been because they did not regard the world and nature in the same way, as something you could take or own. It was therefore perhaps not so surprising that it went relatively smoothly and undramatic when the Sami lands and areas were seized, since the Sami might not have understood what it would mean because they had a completely different world view which was not compatible with the Swedish. This expression, in combination with that they do not consider nature as something one can "own", can most probably be found in many indigenous cultures around the world. Jonathan Friedman also mentions this in his article on "Narcissism, roots and postmodernity" when talking about the Hawaiian history and the introduction of private property in accordance with the colonization and incorporation of the Hawaiian islands into the American empire (Friedman 1992:338). Today, however, many of the indigenous peoples who lost their land have started to recover them, and in many cases, governments and landowners have agreed to return the lands. This might be due to the crisis in the western hegemony and the important change in attitudes toward the state that took place in the 1970s all over the world, when people in the peripheries started to organize themselves and indulge in their own personal projects, since the project of the Western hegemony was on the decline.

Another issue concerning the expression of the Sami identity is the expression of different life forms, as Christina Åhrén talks about in her book (2008:69), meaning the different ways to be Sami (or any other identity one choose to take) and how this is expressed. Since I have mainly focused on the reindeer herding Sami, I will not go into detail on other forms of life of the Sami, but I will analyze the life form of reindeer herding Sami by drawing on examples experienced in my fieldwork. The life form of a reindeer herding Sami is clearly different from other life forms of the Sami, because most of them are born into the Sami community and thus is usually brought up with the reindeer herding as a natural part of life, which is as previously stated often the main expression of the Sami identity and culture. They have a clear and natural relation to the Sami culture from birth, and this also affects their way of interpreting and regarding the Sami society and culture. My informants were no exceptions. Ever since they were born, they had participated in Sami activities such as reindeer butchery, calf marking, herding, Sami gatherings, parties, traditions, etc. It seemed that most of my

informants had strong connections to the Sami society in their daily life and most of their closer friends seemed to be Sami or with close relations to the Sami society. One of my informants had recently been to the Sami Confirmation Camp that takes place every year and is very popular among young Sami since you get a chance to meet with other young Sami from different parts of Sápmi and tie connections, and another one told me that he did not feel the same affinity or solidarity with people outside of the reindeer husbandry. All of them also expressed a sort of ambiguity towards people who came looking for their Sami heritage and roots. On the one hand they seemed to be quite accepting and “forgiving” towards people who had previously denied their Sami heritage but whom had brought it out in recent years, but there also seemed to be suspicion of hidden agendas such as wanting to have access to hunting and fishing on Sami lands, but I could also distinguish some kind of anger. All of my informants had at one point or another in their lives been targets of teasing, mobbing or racism, and thus it is perhaps not so strange that there is a notion of anger or disappointment towards people who “chose to come back now that the worst part is over”.

All of these things seem to be a large part of my informants lives, and has been ever since they were born. They are introduced to the reindeer herding life form when born and out of those premises they create their life forms and identities in already existing context and receives a natural and given place in the Sami community, and thus, it is quite important to know your history and to be able to place people that you meet in your personal network. As one of my informants put it;

“We have a very strong family feeling among us, and if you cannot place a person, that person will probably feel very lonely. But if I say “this is my cousin’s cousin” even though no one has ever met that person before, then it’s more like “that’s her cousin’s cousin, she knows her!” and then there is no doubt that this new person is Sami and is immediately accepted by the others. It is important to be able to place people.” (female born 1990, auth. transl.)

4.4. The World System Theory and Its Connection to Identity

All of these different aspects can be traced back to and explained by the world system theory, and the emerging and contracting peripheries/centers that constitutes the world system. Previously, the countries of Western Europe, North America, and some other areas were regarded as the center where power was exercised from and people were assimilated into and *wanted* to become part of. Today, this strong core has started to fragment and it is no longer

as attractive to be part of the “former” center. This has also led to ethnic mobilization that can be clearly seen in particular with the Sami and other previously marginalized indigenous people. It is no longer as attractive to be assimilated and integrated, since the center is in a crisis, and about to stagnate and become fragmented. Instead, people want to seek their roots and take part of what exists in the emerging peripheries. An ethno-political movement started to gain grounds as never before around the world in the beginning of the 1970’s. Indigenous peoples around the world started to claim lands and rights that had been neglected to them for a very long time, and the governments and authorities started to give way for the demands. This would never have happened in the colonialist era of the 19th Century, but if we look further back in the history of the world, the contraction of hegemonies is not a new phenomenon. The “world-empire” of Rome, for example, was the hegemony of the world system for a long time, and different peoples were assimilated into the Roman Empire and wanted to become and take part of what was the center of the world at a time. Since the Roman Empire was an economic single unit and politically centralized, it eventually started to become “top-heavy”, since the political centralization made it very difficult to control the power on many different places, why they could never expand their empire and thus it declined. A change in this political centralization took place in the 17th Century when the European empires realized they did not need political centralization to control the power, and thus the path for colonization and imperialism was laid. This also explains why history is such an essential part of understanding how the world system works, and also the reason why I wanted to include the Sami history in my thesis, since it helps to explain why and how the Sami identity looks like it does today, and why it has had such a revival in recent decades. It is simply a part of the single unit called the world system.

5. Conclusions

As mentioned above, the Swedish government recognized the Sami as an indigenous people in 1977. This was symbolically important for the Sami, as it marked the start of a “new” era and the Sami culture got a sort of revival, since it was now “accepted” to be Sami and to be proud of your heritage. Before that, the Swedish society was strongly related to the state and the authorities, people relied on the state to take care of them and do what was best for

society, and assimilation into the modern Swedish society was almost compulsory in order to not be discriminated or disadvantaged in life. But in the beginning of the 1970s, this trust for the authorities began to diminish, and people no longer felt as strongly related or sympathetic with the state. Multiculturalism came into fashion and assimilation into the Swedish society was not something desirable anymore. As stated in the analysis, this was not a new phenomenon. Assimilation of diverse peoples into the Roman Empire was one of the reasons why it became so successful, but when the Roman society drifted into a crisis and began to get “top-heavy” because of the political centralization and the idea of assimilation was no longer as attractive, people began to look to their old heritage and to the diverse in society. The hegemony of the Roman Empire was thus in decline, and in the peripheries, the previously “invisible” and integrated was taking up their own personal projects instead of involving in the project of the Roman Empire, and thus the peripheries started to emerge. This pattern can also be seen in different parts of the world today, as indigenous peoples have gained more and more grounds in issues concerning land rights, cultural heritage and discrimination, for example. When the center starts to decline and fall apart, the former peripheries starts to emerge and step forward. Thus, it is important to contextualize the “revival” or the return of the Sami society today, as it can help to explain the current situation in the world system today, and also to be explained by it. The relevance of the World System Theory to understand why the Sami identity looks like it does today is therefore of utter importance. Yes, without the World System Theory you can probably find some kind of explanation on a micro level, but with the World System Theory, it is also possible to understand the nature and form of the Sami identity on a macro level that can be used to explain other phenomenon in the contemporary world of today.

To answer my hypothesis and questions of how the Sami identity stands today in the guise of the Sami history, why it looks like it does, how the Sami identity is created and reproduced, if there is certain criteria for what is considered as “genuine Sami” and why people seeking their Sami identity and heritage has had a revival in recent years, I would say that the Sami identity, as it appears today, is largely affected by experiences of the past, and the Sami community and culture’s integration in the world-system has thus resulted in a “new” kind of society, influenced by politics, rationality, modernity and ethnicity. Even though the old days of living in Sami tents and the nomadic wanderings are gone, it still does not mean that the genuine Sami society is gone, or that this “return of the Sami” means that the Sami society is going back to living in Sami tents or to solely speaking the Sami language and wear the Sami *kolt* on a daily basis. It just means that the Sami society has changed, and that new traditions,

customs and cultural expressions and symbols have come into play, much as it did when the Sami society took up the large-scale reindeer herding for example. Culture and societies is not something static and unchanging. It changes and is transformed in the interplay with the surrounding society and environment, and so do the identity and the perception of the self, as explained in the theory section. The Sami identity is thus in much part dependant on the surrounding environment, which means that if you do not have a “natural” place in the Sami community, it might be hard to create or reproduce an identity as a Sami, in contrast to if you are living and working in a Sami Village, are involved in the Sami community and reinforce your identity as a Sami on a daily basis.

But as discussed above in the analysis and elsewhere, there can be different ways of reinforcing an identity depending on what the personal perception of the identity is. For a Sami living in a big city without any connection to reindeer herding or the Sami community, the main expression of their Sami identity it can be to speak Sami or make Sami handicrafts, but for a Sami living in a Sami Village and sustaining on reindeer husbandry, it can be the knowledge of Sami traditions and customs or spending time with your Sami family and friends.

6. Concluding Discussion

A large part of the material that I collected during my fieldwork in the Sami Village is not included in this thesis. This means that a lot of my obtained knowledge of the Sami society, culture and identity has not been presented here. I have tried to include the informants and their views and opinions as much as possible, but the limits of the extent of the thesis and my ambition to answer my stated questions has been governing to what extent the informants are visible and prominent in my text. Yet, the knowledge and experiences I obtained and took part in during my fieldwork permeate the whole thesis, and helped me understand and interpret much of the literature in a more dynamic and “alive” sense that would not have been possible without it. Also, as fairly inexperienced with working in the field, it was quite hard to know and focus on what I wanted to get out of the fieldwork and what aspects I should be focusing on. Many times I asked myself what I was really doing there and if I was looking for answers in the right places, but after distancing myself from my empirical material when I got back home and examining and reflecting upon it from different angles and approaches, the patterns and answers slowly began to take shape, and after thorough examination I could

finally apply my theoretical knowledge on the empirical material to understand what I was really looking for. Much of the material I collected was also interesting from other point of views and discourses such as politics, economics and legally issues, but not really relevant for my own thesis, which is also a reason to why I could not include it here. All of these discourses and issues is a part of their lives and thus part of the Sami identity of course, but the details and personal opinions concerning issues that was not relevant for my thesis I chose not to include here, since that belongs to another discourse and discussion. Still, it provided me with much knowledge and gave me a larger and different perspective on my own subject, and it would certainly be interesting to do some more research into these issues, such as the socioeconomic aspects and importance of reindeer husbandry in the Sami society, to what extent the impact of media has in political issues concerning the Sami or to study gender related issues and the role of women in the Sami society.

One of my aims with this thesis was also to contribute to the rather sparse supply of literature on the subject of Sami identity. The amount of literature concerning identity in general and also on the identity of indigenous peoples is quite large, but with this thesis I wanted to contribute to literature and research on the Sami people in specific. I am aware of the sometimes quite poor referring in my analysis and elsewhere, but this is simply because of the lack of relevant literature on the subject. Thus, with this thesis, I hope to make a contribution to the expanding amount of literature on the subject, but also to encourage to further research on the area. There is certainly a vast amount of aspects in the Sami society and identity that has not been studied yet, which is why this contribution might could be seen as an entry gate and an encouragement to further research and an increasing interest in the versatile world of the Sami.

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Attachments:

Sound clips and transcribed interviews with informants is available by request from me, since the transcribed interviews were too long to be added here as attachments. Available interviews with informants are:

Female born 1995, 7 pgs. Date of interview: 2009-12-10

Female born 1990, 9 pgs. Date of interview: 2009-12-12

Male born 1989, 7 pgs. Date of interview: 2009-12-12

Male born 1956, 9 pgs. Date of interview: 2009-12-14