

Module 9

Sami Media, Arts, and Literature

Developed by Vuokko Hirvonen, Saami University College,
Kautokeino/Guovdageainu, Norway

Key Terms and Concepts

- Sápmi
- indigenous people
- Norwegianization
- assimilation policy
- *duodji*
- *juoigan* and *luohi*
- oral tradition
- the politics of representation
- decolonization

Learning Objectives/Outcomes

Upon completion of this module, you should be able to

1. describe and discuss the Sami¹ media, arts, and literature in Sápmi.
2. list the similarities and differences between the three main fields—media, arts, and literature—and how these have been a means for the Sami people of defining and redefining themselves.
3. discuss the value of self-esteem and the mother tongue.
4. list, describe, and explain the main factors that are crucial for improving the Sami people’s possibilities of developing their culture and identity as an indigenous people, and as an independent partner of the nation states, by means of media, arts, and literature.

¹ There are many different spellings of the name Sami, including Sámi, Saami, Same, and Sabme. For the purposes of this course, “Sami” is used for general purposes in English context. Other spellings are used in proper names and titles, as appropriate.

Student Activity

Read an article at the [Indigenous Media Network](#) website about the Sami journalist Jan Rune Maasoe, who describes his situation as an indigenous and Sami-speaking journalist. What challenges do Sami or indigenous journalists and journalism face today? What challenges will they have in the future?

Overview

This module focuses on Sami media, arts, and literature, especially in the three Nordic countries. It tells of the birth of these Sami expressions of indigenous and minority culture and identity. It also describes the social and political changes that have occurred in the Nordic countries and tells how the attitudes towards the Sami people have changed during the past century.

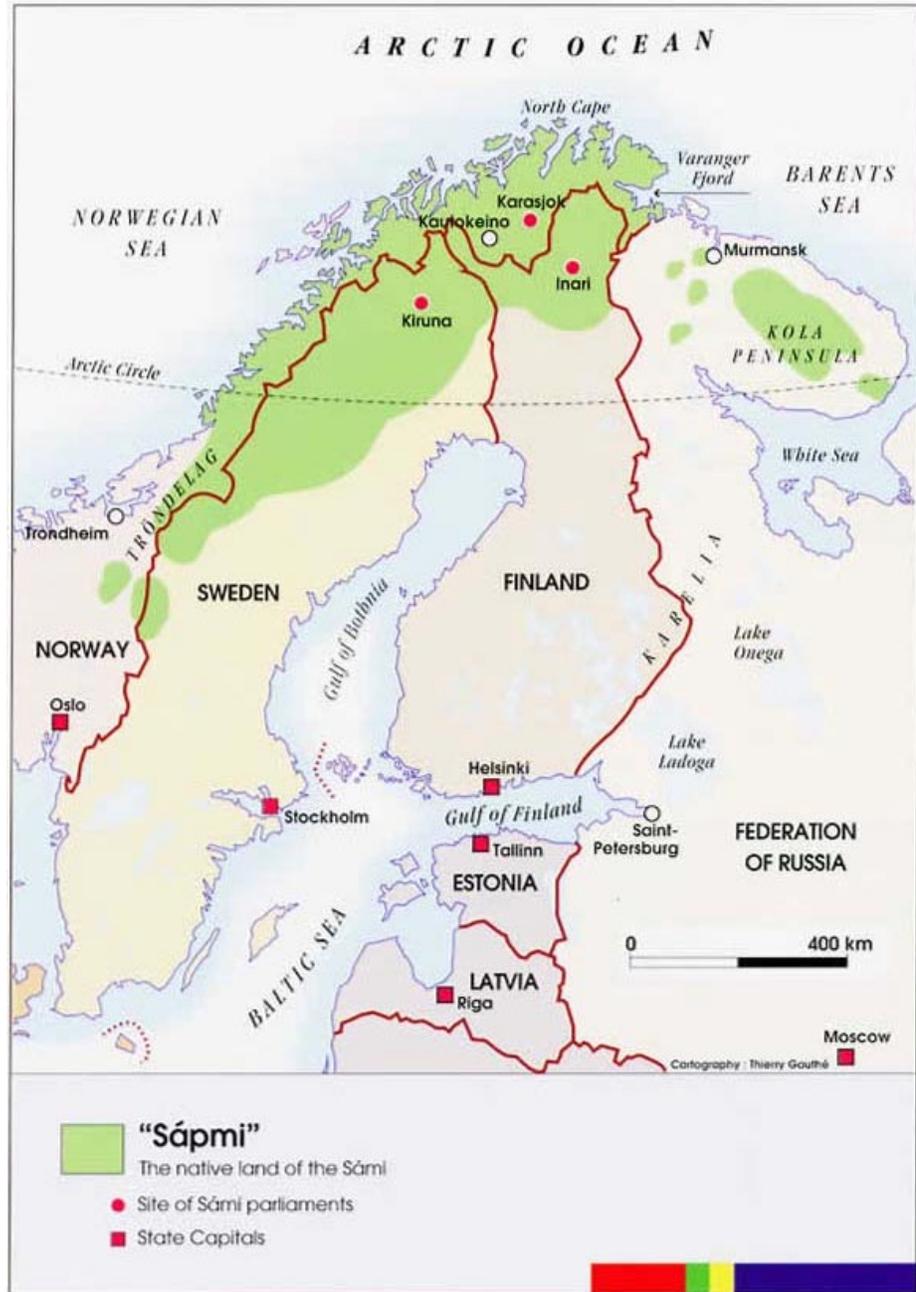
Sami self-determination is gaining momentum, and it is important for minority and indigenous peoples to determine their destiny and to manage their own affairs through various media—and through literary and art forms, too.

Lecture

The Sami People: An Ethnic Minority and an Indigenous People

The Sami people are an ethnic minority who can trace their ancestry at least back to the Stone Age. When speaking about the Sami people, one also has to bear in mind that they are not a homogenous group. They live in a large area—called Sápmi—which extends from the Kola Peninsula to central Scandinavia and in which the environmental and living conditions are very hard.

The size of the Sami population is between 60,000 and 100,000, and the cultural and linguistic differences between the Sami groups are obvious. (See fig. 3.1.) The Sami people consider themselves an indigenous people (ILO C169 1989) and they have a different way of living than the majority people in the area. For centuries Sami have struggled to maintain their language, culture, and social rights (Seurujärvi-Kari et al. 1997, 4–6).



Source: Cartography by Thierry Gauthé, reproduced from Seurujärvi-Kari et al. 1997, 5

Fig. 3.1 The Area of the Sami People and Sami Languages

The language spoken in the area, Sami, is a minority language. The Sami language belongs to the Uralic family of languages, and its nearest relatives are the Baltic-Finnish languages (e.g., Finnish, Estonian, Karelian, and Veps). In Finland, three Sami languages are spoken: North Sami, Inari Sami, and Skolt Sami; in Russia, four: Ter, Kildin, Akkala, and Skolt Sami; in Norway, three:

North, Lule, and South Sami; and in Sweden, four: North, Lule, Pite, and South Sami (Sammallahti 1998, 1–2). See figure 3.2.



Source: Cartography by Thierry Gauthé, in Seurujärvi-Kari et alii 1997, 23

Fig. 3.2 Geographic Distribution of the Different Sami Languages

North Sami is the most used of the ten Sami languages; it is spoken in the northern parts of Norway, Sweden, and Finland. There are between 25,000 and 30,000 Sami speakers. (Of these, around 80–90 per cent speak North Sami.) That means there are that many potential readers of Sami literature; but not all Sami people can read or write their native language, or speak it. One reason for

the poor Sami language skills is that, from the latter part of nineteenth century until the beginning of 1970s, the Sami language was non-existent as a medium of instruction or as a subject in the education system, and the use of Sami was discouraged and even punished.

News from the Indigenous World

The importance of mass media is pointed out every now and then when one wants to stress the relationship between national identity, culture, and the mother tongue—in the cases of nation states, minorities, and indigenous peoples alike. Over time, the status of mass media has grown; it is even referred to as the fourth estate. In addition to the traditional elements of the mass media—the press, radio, and television—there are new media, such as the World Wide Web, which is one of the best examples of globalization.

What does the mass media offer for the Sami people? and how can small-numbered peoples move in tandem with the globalization process without losing their languages and cultures? This question has been of such importance that UNESCO, too, has paid attention to it and has organized a special program for promoting media for indigenous people at local and global levels (see <http://www.unesco.org/culture/indigenous>).

The History of the Sami Press

In Sweden and Norway, the establishment of Sami newspapers dates back to the period when Norwegianization, or assimilation policy, became more intense. The aim of the Norwegianization policy was to turn the Sami- and Finnish/Kven-speaking people (the descendants of Finnish immigrants to Norway are called Kven) into Norwegian-speaking and Norwegian-minded people. The first Sami periodical was published in Norway as early as 1873–75, but after these years the printing presses fell silent for nearly 30 years. Periodicals were published again at the turn of the twentieth century, both in Norway and Sweden. Only one of those early religion publications, *Nuorttanaste* [1898, The East Star], still exists (Solbakk, Aage, 1997, 195; and Solbakk, John Trygve, 1997, 177.)

The most important Sami newspaper at the beginning of the 1900s was *Sagai Muittalægje* [The Bearer of News], which came out in northern Norway from 1904 to 1911. It had a very clear aim: to encourage the Sami people and to increase political awareness. Anders Larsen was the editor-in-chief, and he had many contributors—for example, Isak Saba, the national poet and the first Sami member of the Norwegian parliament, the Storting (1906–1912). The newspaper was a real Sami channel: there were heated discussions on the language and education policies of the State, and ordinary readers were taking part in discussions. The *Sagai Muittalægje* had an outstanding status in the field

of Sami literature, too. It published the *Sámi soga lávlla* [The Song of the Sami], written by Isak Saba (in 1906) and a part of the then-forthcoming short novel *Beaiveálgu* [1912, Daybreak], written by editor-in-chief Anders Larsen. The *Sámi soga lávlla* was chosen as the official national anthem of the Sami in 1986.

The birth of the Sami press goes hand in hand with the birth of Sami association activity. For example, the first Sami newspaper ever founded in Sweden, *Lapparnes Egen Tidning* [1904, The Sami's Own Newspaper] was owned by the national association of the Sami, *Lapparnes Centralförbund*. The newspaper discussed questions concerning the issues of Sami land rights and, at the same time, it wanted to give correct and true information to the Swedish people about the living conditions of the Sami. In Sweden, a periodical was founded as early as 1919, although it got a new name in 1961; this periodical—*Sámefolket* [The Sami People]—still exists. (Jernsletten 1999, 12–18.)

The history of the Sami press in Finland is shorter and more restricted than in Norway and Sweden. The first periodical in Finland, *Sápmelaš* [The Sami], later *Ođđa Sápmelaš* [The New Sami] from 1993, was founded in 1934; the entire magazine was published in Sami until 2002, when it was closed down because of economic problems. For decades, it was an important magazine for the Sami people in Finland: it was not only a provider of news, but was also educational; above all, it was the first forum in which many authors could publish their writings.

Many of the early Sami newspapers or magazines were short-lived; their activity often ended because of a lack of money or because of anti-Sami circumstances. Also, the press of a linguistic minority came to be perceived as a menace to the ruling culture and a threat to the unity of the State. The history of the *Ságat* newspaper is a good illustration. It was founded in 1956 and was first published in Sami, but quite soon its language of publication was changed to Norwegian. For its first 20 years, the paper enjoyed an undisturbed run; but after the paper hired a Sami editor-in-chief who wanted to change the editorial policy to incorporate a stronger Sami stance and to have Sami associations participate in the administration of the newspaper, the paper was caught in dissension. The editor-in-chief was removed from the post, and a Norwegian majority was elected to the new editorial board. In the late 1970s, *Ságat*'s anti-Sami policy became harsher when the demands for Sami autonomy increased and the Sami people demonstrated against the building of a hydroelectric plant on the Alta–Kautokeino river system. During this “Alta conflict,” *Ságat* defended the interests of the Norwegian State. After the establishment of the Sami Parliament in 1989, however, its policy has become friendlier to Sami matters. Today, it receives the same financial support as do the newspapers that come out in Sami, and Sami readers support it equally (Solbakk, Aage, 1997, 289–290; Solbakk, John Trygve, 1997, 176–177; and Lehtola 2002, 91–92).

The change in the editorial policy of *Ságat* in 1974 was a starting point for a new epoch in the press history of Norwegian Sami. Two leading Sami organizations in Norway started to work for the independent Sami newspaper *Sámi Áigi* [The Sami Time], which was eventually founded in 1978. Compared to the majority population's media, *Sámi Áigi* reported an alternative picture of the Alta struggle by conveying the opinions of Sami people and demonstrators on what was happening and why. (Solbakk 1997, 176–177)

Today, there are two Sami newspapers in the three Nordic countries, which are both published in Norway and come out twice a week: *Min Áigi* [Our Time] and *Áššu* [Glow]. *Min Áigi*, published in Karasjok, is a continuation of *Sámi Áigi*, which went bankrupt in 1993. In the same year, the *Áššu* was established in Kautokeino. Both newspapers, as well as the above-mentioned *Ságat*, receive financial support from the Sami Parliament in Norway (Solbakk 1997, 176–177).

The newspapers are written in North Sami, which is the main Sami dialect spoken and understood in Sápmi. Both *Áššu* and *Min Áigi* strive to be newspapers for the whole Sápmi by publishing news not only from the Norwegian side of Sápmi but also from Finland and Sweden. They have more than a thousand subscribers (according to 2004 statistics), mainly from Norway but also from Finland and Sweden. Although they serve the two neighbouring countries, they do not get any financial support from Finland or Sweden. The Nordic Sami press is a linguistic, cultural, and political bridge between the Sami in the three countries. It has also been a gateway to the lives of the Sami living in the former Soviet Union—today's Russia—as it reports about the situation of the Russian Sami.

In its 2004 annual general meeting, the *Sámi Journalisttaid Searvi* [Sami Journalists' Association] addressed the situation of the Sami newspapers, noting its concern about the fact that there is not a single daily Sami newspaper. According to the association, free and independent media are the cornerstones of Sami democracy and social development. As a nation, Sami have the right of access to the media and a wide audience, which also means access to daily Sami newspapers. The Sami Journalists' Association also points out that the Council of Europe's Charter for Regional and Minority Languages enables Finland and Sweden to support Sami newspapers. In 2001 and 2003, an expert commission of the Council of Europe examined how the charter has been implemented in Finland and Sweden. It pointed out that neither Finland nor Sweden fulfills the obligation concerning the press. According to the journalists' association, it is so important to get daily Sami newspapers that the Sami Parliamentary Council, the Sami ministers of Sami affairs, and the Sami parliaments should take up this question in their annual meetings (Måsø 2004).

The press of the majority populations in the Sami area occasionally has articles concerning Sami issues; for example, cultural events or Sami persons do get

positive attention in the papers. As concerns other issues—for example, land rights—the usual coverage in newspapers reflects the view of the majority or the State. As can be expected, the dominant society that owns the media also ultimately determines what is important and correct on the Sami issues. There are only a few Sami journalists working in the majority media, and, as a result, participating in a multicultural dialogue proves difficult; thus, the Sami voice is not heard. Writing is a form of power for the party who states the terms and from whose point of view things are told or not told.

The Sami Radio and Television: An Indigenous Voice

The national radio broadcasts began to cover the northernmost parts of the Nordic countries in the early 1930s. Soon after, the idea of radio broadcasts in Sami began to be discussed among the Sami. As early as 1935, a Sami association in Karasjok [*Kárášjoga Johttisámiid Searvi*] sent an initiative to the authorities to encourage broadcasts in Sami, but with no immediate result. The first Sami program ever heard on the air dates back to 1936: it was a church service on Christmas Eve (Hætta 2003, 20).

Regular Sami broadcasts started in Norway in 1946, in Finland in 1947, and in Sweden in 1966. In the beginning, the broadcasting time was 20 minutes per week, but today the Sami radio stations produce almost 50 hours of broadcasting per week. Sami radio stations were at first situated outside the Sami core area, but in the 1970s moved to Central Sápmi. At the same time as the stations moved to Sápmi, their status as independent units of the national broadcasting corporations grew. The main units of Sami Radio are situated in Karasjok (Norway), in Inari (Finland), and in Kiruna (Sweden). Besides the headquarters, the radio stations also have regional editorial offices. In 2003, a new Sami radio station, *Guoládatnjárgga Sámi Radio* [The Sami Radio of the Kola Peninsula], was established in Lovozero, Russia, with the support of the Saami Council, the Nordic units of Sami Radio, the European Union, and the regional administrations offices.

The Swedish Sami Radio broadcasts nearly ten hours of programming in Sami every week, and the Finnish Sami Radio broadcasts about 40 hours weekly. The Norwegian Sami Radio has the highest ratings, producing the most Sami programs, about 50 hours in total each week. Norway's staff consists of more than 70 people (from 2004 statistics), while the staff numbers are much lower in Finland and Sweden. The Sami Radios, as they call themselves in each country, have co-operated with each other since the very beginning, and, although each Sami Radio is an independent unit, they work together (the Sami radio stations in Finland and Norway, especially, co-operate intensively): most broadcasts can be received in all three countries. The main broadcasting times of Sami Radio are from Monday to Friday; on weekends, only a few programs are broadcast. The stations have approximately 50,000 daily listeners in the Nordic countries.

Both radio and television stations broadcast mainly in North Sami, but in the last 20 years, the needs of such lingual minorities as Inari, Skolt, South, and Lule Sami have also been taken into consideration. For example, the Finnish Sami Radio transmits regular broadcasts every week in Inari and Skolt Sami; the Norwegian Sami Radio, in turn, has programs in South and Lule Sami.

A few Sami programs were produced for television as early as the 1960s, especially in Sweden and Norway, but regular Sami television production started in the early 1980s (Lehtola 2002, 93). While Sweden has been the slowest one in the field of radio broadcasting, it has been the leader in TV activity (see <http://www.svt.se/sapmi>). In Sweden, the Sami television programs date back to 1982, and in Norway, back to 1990. Both in Sweden and Norway, Sami TV has its own weekly programs for children and adults.

In 1997, the websites of the Finnish Sami Radio were created, and the daily Sami news in Sami, Finnish, and English can now be received online at <http://www.yle.fi/samiradio>. In Finland, a regular Sami television broadcast—a Sami teletext—was introduced in 1997, and in Norway it is also possible to follow the Sami teletext news in Norwegian (see <http://www.samiradio.org/>).

The Nordic Sami Radios network has brought daily news about Sami issues to the television in the Sami language. TV news started in the fall of 2000, lasting at first for 10 minutes and now for 15 minutes, but there is still a significant lack of television programming in Sami. New steps were taken when a new digital pan-Sami radio channel was established in 1998, a pan-Sami news began in fall 2000, and an online newspaper started in 2001 (see <http://www.samiradio.org/>). These days, the Nordic Sami radio stations are working towards a digital Sami television system of their own.

Student Activity

1. How much of the media accessed in your community is from a non-local source?
 2. In your community, what locally produced media do you have access to?
 3. What effect on your community does the encroachment of non-local media have?
-

Versatile Sami Art

***Duodji*: The Cornerstone of Contemporary Sami Art**

The words “art” and “artist” are relative newcomers to the Sami language, as well as the phenomenon itself. Before the beginning of the twentieth century, there were no Sami artists—if we look at the issue from the Western point of view of aesthetics. But if we choose another perspective, then Sami art can trace its history back to the rock drawings of thousands of years ago, or we can see the relationship between modern Sami art and traditional handicrafts, or *duodji*, which has influenced many contemporary Sami artists. *Duodji* and craftsmanship have been developed in the course of thousands of years, while the material and practical needs have shaped the forms of the articles used daily. Sami aesthetics has preferred round shapes, as such articles are practical and long-lasting. Gunvor Guttorm, who is both an artisan and a researcher, has defined the concept *duodji* in her doctoral thesis as follows: it is handiwork and creative work, which wells up from the Sami environment (Guttorm 2001, 22).

The Pioneers of Contemporary Sami Art

When looking at Sami art from the Western point of view, consider the first Sami artist of the early 1900s, that is, author Johan Turi (1854–1936). He illustrated his book *Muitalus sámiid birra* [*Turi’s Book of Lapland*, 1966] with naive scenes from the life of the Sami. His animal figures continue the tradition of the drawings and engravings on northern Scandinavian Stone Age rocks and quartz slate, wood and bone objects, and later shaman drums, although Turi himself didn’t know about this heritage. A contemporary of Turi, Nils Nilsson Skum (1872–1951), who had also left reindeer herding just like Turi, displayed a natural talent for drawing while he was still a child. Like Turi, he was also a self-taught artist, and his classic book *Same sita—lappbyn* [Sami Siida] was published in 1938. The work includes hundreds of drawings with stories of the nomadic life of the *siida*, or village, throughout the year. The third outstanding artist of Turi’s time was John Andreas Savio (1902–1939). He attended an art and handicrafts school in the 1920s. Savio was both a graphic artist and a painter, and he is mainly known for his woodcuts that depict Sami landscapes and people (Hirvonen 1995, 124–125; see also Lehtola 2002, 116–117).

Contemporary Sami art is versatile, and there are numerous Sami artists today; in 2004 *Sámi Dáiddačehppiid Searvi* [SDS, Sami Artists’ Association] had 69 members. Like many other Sami professional associations, the Sami Artists’ Association was founded in 1979; it is organized with five other art associations under *Sámi Dáiddaráđđi* [Sami Art Council], which had 350 members in 2004. They are talented artists who draw from the rich sources of tradition. There are painters, sculptors, artisans, graphic artists, and photographic artists, and they come from all over Sápmi.

The most prominent initiators of contemporary Sami art are artisan Lars Pirak, from the Swedish side of Sápmi, and artist Iver Jåks, from the Norwegian side of Sápmi. Both were born in 1932 and are honorary members of the Sami Artists' Association SDS. Their art is well known, both in the Nordic countries and abroad, as their works have participated in many exhibitions (Hirvonen 1995, 126–127; and Lehtola 2002, 117).

In addition to Jåks, among the other members of the post-war generation who have attended art schools are, for example, craft artist and silver smith Petteri Laiti; craft artist, painter, and poet Rose-Marie Huuva; painter and textile artist Berit Marit Hætta; textile artist Britta Marakatt-Labba; painter and poet Synnøve Persen; painter and author Merja Aletta Ranttila; sculptor Ingunn Utsi; multi-artist Nils-Aslak Valkeapää; and graphic artist and author Hans Ragnar Mathisen.

Sami photography is a newcomer in visual arts; it began to develop in the late 1970s. Niillas A. Somby and Harry Johansen started their careers as photographers for the Sami press. Later, Sami photography has developed into a more artistic direction, and there are many gifted Sami artists, such as Marja Helander from the Finnish Sápmi (Lehtola 2002, 121).

Theatre and Film: A Sami Form of Expression

Theatre can trace its history back to the 1971, when the first Sami theatre group, *Dálvadis* [The Winter Camp], was founded in Karesuvanto, in Sweden. The Norwegian Sami theatre group *Beaivváš* [The Sun] was established in the late 1970s and, like *Dálvadis*, it now has the status of a permanent theatre. There are also two amateur theatres, *Sydsamisk teater* [South Sami Theatre] in the South Sami area of Norway, and *Rávgoš* [The Ruff] in the Finnish Sápmi in Utsjoki. Sami theatre troupes have not been content with merely copying their Western counterparts; rather, during the three decades of their existence, they have searched and found a particular Sami form of expression. In their repertoires, they give priority to the Sami language as well as to Sami traditions and the works of Sami writers. Those working in Sami theatres founded their own association in 1980, *Sámi Teáhtersearvi* [The Sami Theatre Association].

Sami film is the newest area of Sami art, although Sami had already been the subject of many films by the beginning of the twentieth century. The year 1987 was an important milestone for Sami film and may be considered the birth year of Sami fiction film, as Sami researcher Veli-Pekka Lehtola points out. That year, a new Sami film, *Ofelaš* [Pathfinder], came out. The screenplay was written by the film's director, Nils Gaup, and is based on a Sami legend about the *čudđit*, or evil marauders, whose violent deeds are put to an end by the cunning actions of the main characters. The characters spoke Sami, except for the *čudđit*, who spoke an artificial language. Most of the actors were from the

Beaivváš Theatre. *Ofelaš* was nominated for an Oscar in the 1987 Academy Awards (Lehtola 2002, 124; see also DuBois 1997, 255–274).

Today, Sami film is a flourishing field of visual art, and, in addition to Gaup, there are many directors and documentary filmmakers, such as Paul-Anders Simma, Johns Kalvemo, Liv Inger Somby, Silja Somby, and Anne Lajla Utsi. Besides television, there are also other forums for Sami movies, namely, the aboriginal peoples' annual film festivals in Kautokeino (Norway) and in Inari (Finland).

***Juoigan*: The Sami Way of Singing**

One could say that *juoigan*, or yoiking—the original Sami way of singing—is the most unique and characteristic form of Sami art. In the past, Sami poetry was always recited in the form of a song, and this seems to have been true in all Sami communities. But the yoik is not just a form of singing. It is much more. The Sami writer Johan Turi has described *juoigan* as follows: “They call Sámi singing yoiking. It is a way of remembering fellow human beings. Some people are remembered with hate, some with love and some with sorrow. But the subject matter of these songs might also concern a landscape, animals, feasts, reindeer, caribou . . . And the Sámi term for this song is *luohti*.” [Turi 1910 (1987), 163]

The concept of the verb *juoigat* [to yoik] is known in the whole Sami area (see Lehtiranta 1989, 38), but there are differences between the east and north Sami ways of yoiking. Sami yoiks can be divided into profane and religious yoiks—“religious” here referring to shamanistic beliefs. Owing to the Christianization of the Sami people, which began in the thirteenth century and continued until the eighteenth century, the shamanistic forms of the yoik have become obsolete. During these years, the Christian missionaries, mostly ministers of the church, had a tendency to see many features of the Sami culture as pagan. This was particularly true with regard to yoiking, which they considered to be an invocation of the old gods. Yoiks were labelled as something almost Satanic and, therefore, prohibited. (See Aikio et al. 1994, 104–105; Hirvonen 1995, 128–129; and Gaski 1996, 12–13.) It was impossible to completely eradicate yoiking: profane forms of yoik singing have survived to the present day. However, many Sami reject this as a pagan rite today. The latest examples of such rejection in the twenty-first century come from one Sami parish in Finland, where the parish board and the minister have forbidden yoik singing in the church and in the parish hall. (For more on yoiking, see Arnberg et al. 1997).

Sami yoiking is going through a renaissance not only in Sápmi, but also beyond its borders. The yoik-based compositions of Nils-Aslak Valkeapää, Mari Boine, Áŋŋjels or Wimme Saari are examples of the powerful heritage of Sami culture and its potential to produce spiritual nourishment for modern people. (See Lehtola 2002, 106–113.)

Sami Literature: From Oral Expression to Written Forms

In the Western world, written language has been considered the measure of civilization. However, in many aboriginal cultures, the oral tradition has been and still is the main means of storytelling, as it is among the Sami people. Yoik chants, fairy tales, sagas, and stories are conveyed more easily by word of mouth than through the written word and have always been handed down by listening, imitation, and memory. This tradition of oral narratives and yoiks is still strong, as evidenced by modern Sami literature.

Writings have been published in Sami at least since 1619. The oldest known examples of Sami oral poetry—the yoiks *Guldnasaš* [Reindeer, Trot Faster] and *Moarsi fávrrot* [Song for a Bride]—were published by Johannes Schefferus (1621–1679). They appeared both in the original Sami form and as a Latin translation in his book *Lapponia* (1673). These world-famous yoiks were related to Professor Johannes Schefferus by the Sami Olaus Sirma when the latter was studying at the University of Uppsala. The artistic quality of these poems surprised Western readers, giving rise to comments such as “How can a primitive people, living in such extreme conditions, produce beautiful poetry like this?” Various translations of these two yoiks were published all over Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, including in the London newspaper *The Spectator*. These yoiks provided inspiration for many poets, such as Herder, Rowe, and von Kleist.

Pamphlets and Memoirs: The Tools against Assimilation

As mentioned earlier, social action sprung up among the Sami in the early 1900s. At that time, national romantic ideas were sweeping through Scandinavia; as a result, the self-esteem of the Sami was awakened, and they began to resist the attempts of the different states to assimilate them into the dominant population. The traditional Sami society was beginning to break down, and some Sami started to write books to describe the poor situation of the Sami people for the authorities. This political writing was clearly connected with the ethnic movement of the Sami and, simultaneously, with a new way of representing the Sami.

Elsa Laula (1877–1931, later known as Elsa Laula Renberg), the first known Sami woman writer, was one of the early activists. She wrote a pamphlet of 30 pages, *Inför Lif eller Död?: Sanningsord i de Lappska Förhållandena* [Do We Face Life or Death?: Words of Truth about the Lappish Situation], in Swedish. In it, she urged the Sami to demand their rights to land and also discussed how her people could survive the Swedish cultural assimilation policy. In her work, Elsa Laula described the situation of the Sami people as a minority wanting to change the majority’s policy to something more affirmative towards the Sami

people. Many of the issues she raised are still not completely settled. She felt that it was also important to encourage Sami women to work in support of organizations (Hirvonen 2002, 11–13).

Elsa Laula's college teacher Karin Stenberg (1884–1969) also wrote a pamphlet, called *Dah läh mijen situd* [This Is Our Will], with the members of the Arjeplog Sami Association. This pamphlet was published in 1920. The aim of the publication was to give more information about Sami people living in Sweden at a time when social Darwinist ideas were also influencing Swedish society. These ideas were concretized as racist opinions towards the Sami, threatening the traditional living conditions of the Sami. Both Laula and Stenberg worked as social agents, criticizing both in public and in their pamphlets the rights of the majority people to rule and subordinate the Sami people. (Hirvonen 2002, 11–13) This kind of policy can be referred to as “the politics of representation,” to use a concept created by Stuart Hall. According to Hall, it means that the relation of the centre and the margin is changed. There is a need to represent marginalized people with a new status, which differs from the one in which the ruling discourse has placed its subjects (Hall 1992, 310). As we can see, these women were struggling against the ruling discourse and wanted the Sami people to represent themselves by means of their own associations, and at the same time by writing political pamphlets which were aimed at the majority. From today's point of view, we can call this post-colonial writing.

A writer of unparalleled importance in Sami literature is Johan Turi (already mentioned earlier in this module), whose book *Muitalus sámiid birra* was published in 1910. Apart from the religious books, this was the first book written in the Sami language and by a Sami. Like the pamphlets of Laula and Stenberg, this book was also intended primarily for outsiders and meant to correct the erroneous picture the Swedish authorities had of the Sami. Turi's book was widely noted outside Sápmi and was even published in a parallel edition in Danish. Very soon after its publishing, it was translated into German, English, and French, but the Swedish and Finnish translations came much later—in the 1950s and 1970s. *Turi's Book of Lapland* is truly a classic work, and it is an invaluable part of the Sami heritage, especially as the cultural values are largely transmitted by means of the written word today. The example of Johan Turi inspired many other Sami to write their life stories.

Modern Sami Literature

Compared to the literary achievements of many other European cultures, the span of Sami fiction is short. The first novel written by a Sami—by Matti Aikio—came out in Norwegian in 1904; and the first novel written in Sami—by Anders Larsen—was published in 1912. Even though the first works of literature in Sami were published as early as the 1910s, the real breakthrough did not come until the early 1970s, when an increasing number of books from

poems to novels were published. We can also compare the writing history of the two sexes: it was not until the beginning of the 1970s that the first women fiction writers appeared. Since then, Sami literature has been characterized by the strong role of women. (See Hirvonen 1999.)

In addition to Olaus Sirma, Matti Aikio, and Johan Turi, other Sami authors are also known outside the Sami world. For instance, Paulus Utsi, Nils Aslak Valkeapää, Kirsti Paltto, and Rauni Magga Lukkari are writers whose works have been translated into other languages. Poet Paulus Utsi was considered one of the most prominent Sami cultural figures during the new revitalization that began in the late 1960s (Gaski 1997, 11). Multi-artist Nils-Aslak Valkeapää, Áillohaš (1943–2001) started his career at the end of 1960s, first as a yoiker, and later as a writer, composer, painter, photographer, and cultural politician, too. His first book, a pamphlet written in Finnish in 1971, called *Terveisiä Lapista* [*Greetings from Lapland: The Sami-Europe's Forgotten People*, 1983], criticizes the Finnish policy against the Sami. With his collections of poetry, he lyrically touched the Sami's search for self-esteem, telling about the history of the Sami and the Sami way of thinking. *Ruoktu váimmus* from the year 1985 [*The Trekways of Wind*, 1994], *Beaivi áhčážan* from 1988 [*The Sun, My Father*, 1997], and *Eanni, Eannážan* from 2000 [*The Earth, My Mother*] are his most prominent works. An obvious milestone for Sami literature was the day when Valkeapää received the Nordic Literature Award in 1991 for his work *The Sun, My Father*. The first Sami female fiction writer, Kirsti Paltto (b. 1947), published her first collection of short stories based on the Sami oral tradition in 1971; this was the beginning of her versatile career as an author. Later, she also published poetry, novels, children's literature, and drama. The poet Rauni Magga Lukkari (b. 1943) is a lyricist who, from the beginning of her career, has analyzed the feelings of people, especially those of women.

Among the other contemporary Sami writers are Eino Guttorm, Ellen Marie Vars, Jovvna-Ánde Vest, Inger-Mari Aikio, Stig Gælok, Synnøve Persen, Aagot Vinterbo-Hohr, and Inga Ravna Eira. (see Hirvonen 1995; Gaski 1996; and Lehtola 2002.) The evolution of Sami literature from the 1970s to the present day reflects the changes associated with the position of the Sami as a minority and an indigenous people. In many respects, writing was an ethno-political defence of the rights of the Sami minority. For hundreds of years, there had been spheres in which it was forbidden to use the Sami language: for example, in the school (writing, reading, and learning), in singing (yoik), and in church. These restrictions provided potentially traumatic experiences in the sphere of language, and many authors have described how these events have followed them into adulthood. As an example, the artist, poet, and storyteller Kerttu Vuolab (b. 1951) describes what happened when she and other Sami children went to school:

When we began school, our language ability was suddenly zero. Our language no longer had any value. It was not even good enough to help us out. Our beautiful language was totally ignored. Our singing—yoiking—was forbidden, our phrases

and poems were nonsense, our fairy tales were not worth to take any notice of, and our history did not exist. Most of us behaved well. Most of us forgot our singing, our fairy tales, our poems and sayings. Many people from my generation even agreed to forget our own language.

This generation . . . struggles to get back the richness of our culture. We make songs and records, stories and books, pictures, plays . . . and so on. I think this is the only way to make sure that our children get to experience the richness of the Sámi culture—the same richness that our parents and grandparents passed on to us through their oral storytelling. My grandfather with his stories educated me to become an author. At the same time, my mother and my grandmother trained me to become an illustrator. (Vuolab 1992)

In her manuscript, Kerttu Vuolab describes how important storytelling and the oral tradition has been—and still is—among the Sami people. Storytelling and the oral tradition have existed for a long time and still are significant components in the formation of the collective memory, which is apparent in modern literature, too. The oral tradition has been a part of the learning history of the Sami, as it has also been for other First Nations people. Today, literacy is one of the main means of education in the formal schooling system, and teachers and educators now wonder how to get back the oral forms of learning. As the Maori researcher Linda Tuhiwai Smith puts it when describing the same phenomenon, “Numerous accounts across nations now attest to the critical role played by schools in assimilating colonized peoples, and in the systematic, frequently brutal, forms of denial of indigenous languages, knowledge and cultures” (Tuhiwai Smith 2001, 64). The revitalization of languages, arts, and cultural practices are the main projects in today’s Sami societies—as in many other aboriginal societies.

The oral tradition—which we find in children’s literature, remembrance literature, poetry, and stories—has certain functions, one of which is to strengthen the collective memory of the Sami people, ultimately “enabling to come home” through stories, as Kerttu Vuolab puts it. Vuolab uses the words “enabling to come home” to describe the process of decolonization: you have to claim back your cultural heritage and turn your mind. Because of the history of hundreds of years of colonization, the Sami people have to come home in many other areas, too. For example a world-famous Sami artist, Mari Boine Person (b. 1956)—a contemporary of Vuolab—has written a song, *To the Sea Sami*:

When your mother says to you:
A Sámi doesn’t amount to much,
What do you want with this Sáminess?
Don’t be surprised.
She has already lived through a lot.
You know very well where she got that from.
You know very well what she has gone through.

When your friend says to you:
Are you really going to wear that ugly *gákti* (traditional clothing),
You won't ever catch me doing anything so dumb!
Don't be surprised.
She has already lived through a lot.
You know very well where she got that from.
You know very well what she has gone through.

When your sister says to you:
Speak Norwegian to me,
I don't know that stupid language.
Don't be surprised.
She has already lived through a lot.
You know very well where she got that from.
You know very well what she has gone through. (Boine Persen, 1985)

Both Boine and Vuolab are dealing with the same questions, but from two different points of view. While Vuolab describes what happened to Sami culture, Boine points out the reasons why people are working against their own culture. Both of them explain how the colonization of our minds happened, how people lost their dignity, and how they feel ashamed about their own roots. Thus, they deal with how colonization has structured the Sami ways of knowing. Many Sami authors have been discussing these questions since the early twentieth century.

Student Activity

Who are the artists in your community? What is their art about?

Summary

When one looks at the Sami mass media, arts, and literature, and their history, it is obvious that their birth is somehow connected to the political, social, and cultural activity among the Sami people in the early 1900s. We have seen that people struggled against the ruling discourse and wanted the Sami people to represent themselves by means of their own associations, newspapers, and literature, and by writing political pamphlets aimed at the majority population.

Sami Radio is a radio station of a minority population, the listeners of which have their own language, culture, environment, and historical past. Comparing the history of the Sami press with that of the radio or television broadcasts, it is obvious that starting radio or television broadcasts in Sami required much more

unyielding and persistent activity than establishing a newspaper. There are some differences between the Nordic countries concerning the development of Sami radio and television broadcasts as well as the press, but in many respects they share a common history.

Modern Sami artists and writers belong to a generation that has gone through the bitter experience of being cut off from an otherwise secure environment by the education system: the school tore them away and alienated them from their roots. This often meant that a Sami child lost his or her native language, identity, and self-esteem. Sami authors describe these harsh experiences in words, while Sami painters express the same in pictures. In visual arts, the motifs are portrayed as symbols against the background of the landscape of Sápmi, and the works of art often attempt to express contradictory feelings concerning the past, the present, and the future, as well as the conflict between the minority and the majority.

The evolution of Sami literature, arts, and media from the 1970s to the present day reflects the changes associated with the position of the Sami as a minority population and an indigenous people. In the 1990s, the position of the Sami was recognized in many areas of society and in legislation. Sami language laws have been passed in the Nordic countries, the cultural autonomy of the Sami has been reinforced, and the international laws concerning indigenous peoples and national and linguistic minorities have been strengthened.

Study Questions

1. Is it true that people think that the radio or television has more power than newspapers? Why is this especially true for the people who belong to a linguistic minority?
2. List, describe, and explain some of the current problems or challenges concerning indigenous mass media, arts, or literature in the Nordic countries and in northern Russia.
3. Why is the Sami or a minority perspective valuable when studying issues concerning media, arts, and literature?

Supplementary Readings

- Arnberg, Matts, Israel Ruong, and Håkan Unsgaard. 1997. *Jojk.Yoik*. Sveriges Radios förlag.
- Eilertsen, Bjarne, Dikka Storm, Hege Olaussen, Nils Jernsletten, and Sigmund Nasset, eds. 2002. *Ofelaš - Iver Jåks - Veiviseren*. Universitetsbiblioteket i Tromsøs skriftserie Ravnetrykk. Tromsø.
- Helander, Elina, ed. 1996. *Awakened Voice: The Return of the Sami Knowledge. Dieđut 4*. Guovdageaidnu: Nordic Sami Institute.
- Helander, Elina, and Kaarina Kailo, eds. 1998. *No Beginning, No End: The Sami Speak Up. Circumpolar Research Series No. 5*. Published in co-operation with the Nordic Sami Institute, Finland. Edmonton: Canadian Circumpolar Institute, University of Alberta.
- Horn, Frank, ed. 1999. *Sami and Greenlandic Media. Juridica Lapponia No. 22*. Publications of the Northern Institute for Environmental and Minority Law. Rovaniemi: University of Lapland.
- Huss, Leena. 1999. *Reversing Language Shift in the Far North*. Linguistic Revitalization in Northern Scandinavia and Finland. *Studia Uralica Upsaliensis* 31. Uppsala.
- Jauhola, Satu, ed. 1986. *Oma kuva: Merja Aletta Ranttila*. Self-Portrait of Merja Aletta Ranttila. Inari: Kustannus-Puntsi.
- Lehtola, Jorma. 2000. *Lailasta Lailaan*. Tarinoita elokuvien sitkeistä lappalaisista. Inari: Kustannus-Puntsi.
- Osgood Dana, Kathleen. 2003. *Áillohaš the Shaman-Poet and his Govadas-Image Drum. A Literary Ecology of Nils-Aslak Valkeapää*. *Acta Universitatis Ouluensis. B Humaniora* 50. Department of Art Studies and Anthropology. Oulu: University of Oulu.
- Pentikäinen, Juha, Harald Gaski, Vuokko Hirvonen, Jelena Sergejeva, and Krister Stoor, eds. 2000. *Sami Folkloristics*. Publications 6. Turku: Nordic Network of Folklore.
- Persen, Synnøve. 2001. *Njuohtamat. Maleriet. Paintings 1978–2000*. Iggaldas: Idut.

Tuohimaa, Sinikka, Nina Työlähti, and Asbjørg Fyhn, eds. 1995. *On the Terms of Nothern Woman*. Femina Borealis Publication. Series Number 1. University of Oulu. (Sami Encyclopedia)

References

- Aikio, Samuli, Ulla Aikio-Puoskari, and Johannes Helander. 1994. *The Sami Culture in Finland*. Trans. Ellen Valle and Merja Virtaranta. Helsinki: Lapin Sivistysseura r.y.—Society for the Promotion of Sami Culture.
- Arnberg, Matts, Israel Ruong, and Håkan Unsgaard. 1997. *Jojk.Yoik*. Sveriges Radios förlag.
- Boine Persen, Mari. 1997. To the Sea Sami. *Jaskatvuoda manjá. Etter stillheten*. Norway: Hot Club Records, 1985.
- DuBois, Thomas A. 2000. Folklore, Boundaries and Audience in The Pathfinder. In *Sami Folkloristics*, 255–274. Edited by Juha Pentikäinen, Harald Gaski, Vuokko Hirvonen, Jelena Sergejeva, and Krister Stoor. Publications 6. Turku: Nordic Network of Folklore.
- Gaski, Harald, ed. 1996. In the Shadow of the Midnight Sun: Contemporary Sami Prose and Poetry. Karasjok: Davvi Girji o.s.
- Gaski, Harald. 1997. Introduction: Sámi Culture in a New Era. In *Sámi Culture in a New Era: The Norwegian Sámi Experience*, 9–28. Edited by Harald Gaski. Karasjok: Davvi Girji OS.
- Guttorm, Gunvor. 2001. *Duoji bálgát—En studie i duodji. Kunsthåndverk som visuell erfaring hos et urfolk*. Avhandling til dr.art. -graden. Det humanistiske fakultetet. Institutt for kunsthistorie. Universitetet i Tromsø.
- Hall, Stuart. 1997. *Kulttuurin ja politiikan murroksia*. Edited by Juha Koivisto, Mikko Lehtonen, Timo Uusitupa, and Lawrence Grossberg. Tampere: Vastapaino, 1992. (In English: Hall, Stuart, ed.. *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London: Thousand Oaks.)
- Hætta, Odd Mathis. 2003. *Dá lea Sámi Radio*. NRK sámegiell sáddagat 1966–1980. NRKs samiske sendinger 1946–190. Karasjok: Davvi Girji OS.
- Hirvonen, Vuokko. 1995. Sami Literature and Arts. In *Cultural Minorities in Finland: An Overview towards Cultural Policy*, 120–128. Edited by Juha Pentikäinen and Marja Hiltunen. Translation by Michael Wynne-Ellis. Unesco No. 66. Helsinki.

———. 1999. Saamenmaan ääniä. Saamelaisen naisen tie kirjailijaksi. Helsinki, SKS.

———. 2002. The Pioneers: Elsa Laula and Karin Stenberg—The first Sámi Woman Writers. In *World Libraries: An International Journal Focusing on Libraries and Socio-economic Development*. Vol. 12 (1): 11–13.

Indigenous Media Network (IMN). [Home page, online]
<http://www.indigenousmedia.org/>.

International Labour Organization Convention No. 169 (ILO C169):
Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples *in independent countries*, 1989.

Jernsletten, Regnor. 1999. Samebevegelsen.- dasgo eallin gáibida min sohtái ja mii boahtit—mii boahtit dállán! 1919–1999 Norgga beale sámiiid vuosttas riikkasearvvi 80-jagi ávvun. -selve livet kalder os til kamp og vi kommer—vi kommer straks. 1919–1999 Til 80-års markering av den første samiske riksorganisasjonen i Norge. Kárášjohka: Čálliidlagáduš. 7–26.

Lehtiranta, Juhani. 1989. *Yhteissaamelainen sanasto*. Suomalais-ugrilaisen Seuran Toimituksia 200. Helsinki: SUSA.

Lehtola, Veli-Pekka. 2002. *The Sámi People: Traditions in Transition*.
Translated by Linna Weber Müller-Wille. Aanar-Inari: Kustannus-Puntsi.

Måsø, Nils Henrik. 2004. Gábidit beaivválaš aviissaid. *Min Áigi*.

Saami Council. Home page [online]: <http://www.saamicouncil.net/>.

Sammallahti, Pekka. 1998. *The Saami Languages: An Introduction*. Kárášjohka: Davvi Girji OS.

Schefferus, Johannes. *Lapponia*, 1673. *The History of Lapland*. Translated 1971.

Seurujärvi-Kari, Irja, Steinar Pedersen, and Vuokko Hirvonen. 1997. *The Sámi: The Indigenous People of Northernmost Europe*. European languages 5. EBLUL, Brussels.

Solbakk, Aage. 1997. *Sámiid historjá 2, 1751 rájes dálá áigái*. Kárášjohka: Davvi Girji OS.

Solbakk, John Trygve. 1997. Sámi Mass Media: Their Role in a Minority Society. In *Sámi Culture in a New Era. The Norwegian Sámi Experience, 172–198*. Edited by Harald Gaski. Karasjok: Davvi Girji OS.

Tuhiwai Smith, Linda. 1999. Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples. London: Zed Books.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).
[Online] <http://www.unesco.org/>.

Vuolab, Kerttu. 1992. Oral Story-Telling: My Guide to Literature. Unpublished manuscript.