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THE SAMI AND THE LAPPS: PROBLEMS OF IDENTIFICATION

Abstract

The origin of the Sami is recognized as a clue to the history of the peoples of northern Europe. The solution to this complex and intricate problem is hampered by a series of objective and subjective factors.

The analysis of archaeological evidence supports the view that the Sami have their origins in the Palaeo-European population that settled in northern Fennoscandia in the Early Holocene epoch. After having found themselves living under extreme conditions, going through alternating periods of boom and decline and being more than once on the verge of physical disappearance, they were compelled to choose a distinctive pattern of development which permitted them to preserve their ethnic consciousness and certain elements of their traditional culture.

The theories about the former wide distribution of the Sami (the Proto-Sami) and their involvement in the ethnogenesis of other peoples are doubtful. The Lapps of the territories farther south had other ethnosocial roots and were presumably not a single ethnic formation.

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