



East and West, North and South in Sápmi – Networks and Boundaries in Sámi Archaeology in Sweden

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East and West, North and South in Sápmi – Networks and Boundaries in Sámi Archaeology in Sweden

Carl-Gösta Ojala

ABSTRACT The aim of this article is to explore aspects of the construction of entities, networks, and boundaries in archaeological research, focusing on the notions of Sápmi and Sámi archaeology primarily in Sweden. Sápmi, as a geographical as well as an ethnic, cultural, and political concept, can be seen as an interesting example of the interrelations between identity, politics, and the writing of the past in northernmost Europe. In the article, I discuss the notion of Sápmi and some of its historical and contemporary, political, and scientific contexts, and examine some of the debates and controversies concerning prehistory in Sápmi. What is the importance of archaeology in Sápmi, and what is the importance of Sápmi for archaeology?

KEYWORDS

Sámi, Sápmi, archaeology, heritage, indigeneity, repatriation, reburial

Introduction

In this article, I discuss several contexts and controversies involving Sámi archaeology and the notion of Sápmi, and also some of the challenges that archaeologists and other cultural heritage workers face when dealing with the representations of Sámi history and prehistory and the management of Sámi cultural heritage. These discussions raise many important issues, with relevance beyond the boundaries of Sápmi, about the construction of entities and boundaries in archaeology, archaeological ethics, and the role of the notion of indigeneity in archaeological and heritage discourses.

The starting point of the article is that Sámi archaeology is a complex and contested phenomenon, and that it is important to recognise and explore the power dimensions involved in the archaeological mapping of the past in the northern areas, as well as to recognise that there are many different ways of studying,

representing, and understanding the past. Sápmi, as a geographical as well as an ethnic, cultural, and political concept, can be seen as an example of the interrelations between identity, politics, and the writing of the past – and as a challenge to critically examining representations of past and present geographies in northernmost Europe.

Sápmi – and boundaries of Sámi archaeology in time and space

Sámi archaeology and Sámi prehistory have often been considered as controversial topics in archaeology in Sweden. Throughout most of the history of archaeology, Sámi prehistory has been conceptualised as the “Other” in opposition to the idea of a Swedish identity and history. There are, however, no clear definitions of



Figure 1. Sápmi – the present-day “traditional” settlement and cultural core area of the Sámi population – as it has commonly been represented in the literature. What do these boundaries represent and how have they been constructed? How does this image influence our understanding of Sámi history and prehistory? In more recent maps of Sápmi, the coastal region of the Gulf of Bothnia in northern Sweden is often included, reflecting a wish to expand the notion of Sápmi and show a more inclusive view of Sámi culture and history in Sweden (map from Ojala 2009:68, with additions).

Sámi archaeology and Sámi prehistory (for research-historical perspectives and discussions on Sámi archaeology, see, e.g. Hesjedal 2001; Hansen & Olsen 2004; Olsen 2004; 2007; Ojala 2009).

A map of Sápmi (see **Fig. 1**) might serve as a starting point for a critical discussion about “Swedish” and “Sámi” archaeology and the complex connections between past and present in the northern areas. Sápmi could be described as the present-day “traditional” settlement and cultural core area of the Sámi population, and **Figure 1** shows Sápmi as it has been

commonly represented in the scientific and popular literature.

Sápmi stretches across the present-day state boundaries between Norway, Sweden, Finland, and the Russian Federation – boundaries which have, to a large extent, formed and delimited the images and understandings of prehistory in the area, but at the same time created new boundaries and oppositions. What do these boundaries really represent, and how have they been constructed? What is “inside” and what is “outside”? And what kind of space is Sápmi?

This map of Sápmi is of course a simplification of a much more complex and multi-layered ethnic, cultural, and political situation involving classifications, self-definitions, and administrative decisions on many levels by different actors at different times. It should be underlined that Sápmi is not an official administrative region with any fixed boundaries. In fact, many of these boundaries have been contested in different ways. The picture is further complicated by the fact that Sápmi is part of the historical and political contexts in four different countries, having different meanings and connotations in the different countries.

One should also ask how this map influences the understanding of “Sámi” and, for instance, “Swedish” prehistory? Is there, for instance, a Sámi prehistory along the coast of the Gulf of Bothnia (outside the area mapped as Sápmi), or is Sámi prehistory only to be found in the interior areas of northern Sweden? And what about the areas further south of the southern border of Sápmi? And what about, for instance, the Karelian coast along the White Sea in Russia?

In connection with the opening of the new permanent Sámi exhibition, called “Sápmi”, at Nordiska Museet in Stockholm in 2007, a new, alternative map of Sápmi was produced by Samiskt Informationscentrum (see further Sápmi 2007). On this map, the area along the coast of the Gulf of Bothnia is included in Sápmi, and the southern boundary of Sápmi stretches a bit further to the south. However, it can be noted that the boundaries of Sápmi remain the same in Finland and in Russia in the new map (for discussions on the wider distribution of Sámi place names in Finland and North-western Russia, see, e.g. Saarikivi 2004). It can be interesting to ask how this alternative way of mapping Sápmi affects our understanding of Sámi prehistory in Sweden, in comparison with the more conventional map.

Images of Sámi prehistory have earlier often been quite simplified, homogeneous, and static, and often strongly influenced by the ethnographical and historical source material from the 17th and 18th centuries and onwards, ignoring the variation and dynamics in time and space. In recent years, however, historians and archaeologists have started to more seriously recognise and explore the variation and dynamics within

the Sámi historical communities and in the interaction and exchange with other communities. Another important development in recent years is the growth of cross-boundary projects and networks stretching across the state boundaries in Sápmi, involving archaeologists from the different countries and an exchange of knowledge and experiences between different research traditions.

The two most common themes in the earlier archaeological interest in Sámi history, in the Nordic countries as well as in Russia, have been defining the origins of the Sámi population and establishing the earlier extent of their settlement areas (see further Ojala 2009). In my view, at least part of this interest can be connected with the interests of the majority populations and the states in defining, delimiting, and containing their “Other”. The concept of “authenticity” has also been central: Sámi prehistory must be “pure”, “true”, and “authentic”; otherwise, it is *not* Sámi prehistory. The same demands of purity and authenticity, however, have not been applied to the notion of Swedish prehistory.

Sámi archaeology and indigenous archaeology

Potential for conflict is at the core of Indigenous archaeology, since this involves working with a living heritage in which other people have rights and responsibilities. That Indigenous groups have their own values and priorities immediately creates a working situation of complex interactions and potentially competing agendas. (Smith & Wobst 2005a:5)

The concepts of indigeneity (see, e.g. Niezen 2003; Minde *et al.* 2008) and indigenous archaeology (see Smith & Wobst 2005b; Watkins 2005; Atalay 2006; Bruchac *et al.* 2010) are relatively new in archaeology. They are becoming more and more influential in global archaeology, and are also increasingly referred to in discussions of Sámi archaeology and prehistory.

Indigenous archaeology has often been conceptualised in contrast and opposition to “ordinary” archaeology, which has often been represented as na-

tionalist, colonialist, and Western in character. Indigenous archaeology has been promoted as a decolonising and democratising practice, for instance by the World Archaeological Congress (Smith & Wobst 2005b; cf. Atalay 2006). It is often described as a means of empowerment, self-expression, and emancipation, and as a way of reclaiming the history of an indigenous group and making one's own voice heard. One understanding of indigenous archaeology, in the words of anthropologist and archaeologist Joe Watkins, is "archaeology done by and for Indigenous peoples" (Watkins 2005:442). In his view, indigenous archaeology is a means of promoting indigenous voices in the practice of archaeology and allowing alternative interpretations of the archaeological material. But it should be noted that there are also other ways of understanding indigenous archaeology.

However, an overly generalised and simplified concept of indigeneity that is applied everywhere in the world – especially in the field of prehistoric archaeology – can be problematic. There is much variation in the ways in which different cultures and histories have been constructed, as well as in the histories of colonisation and assimilation in different parts of the world. What methods and theories are accepted as being indigenous archaeology, and what is denied access to the field? What does it mean to be an indigenous archaeologist, in-between academic and indigenous traditions and values (cf. Nicholas 2011)? What does it mean in the Sámi context? What is indigenous archaeology, and who is an indigenous archaeologist, in Sápmi?

In this context, it is important to remember that the politics of Sámi identity – who is Sámi, and who decides – are by no means an uncomplicated issue for people today, who are trying to cope with divisions imposed from the inside and the outside, such as between reindeer herders and non-reindeer herders, as well as challenges connected with, for instance, upholding an indigenous identity in non-traditional contexts in a modern world (cf., e.g. Amft 2000; Beach 2007; Sápmi 2007; Åhrén 2008). There is also a long history of Sámi cultural and political struggles for recognition, respect, and cultural, linguistic, and economic rights (the Sámi ethno-political movements aiming to unite different Sámi communities have been explored

in several works, see, e.g. Lantto 2000; Lehtola 2004; Nyyssönen 2007). The different states have in various ways affected, influenced, and controlled definitions and representations of Sámi identity. Therefore, in the discussion of Sámi archaeology, it is important to consider the colonial histories in Sápmi and the consequences for the understanding of Sámi history, culture, and identity today:

What is the substance of indigeness, and who are indigenous people? What arguments are given for their positive discrimination with respect to resources? And how do these arguments in turn come to affect the indigenous peoples who inevitably must construct their own identities in relation to public opinion, state legislation, and international conventions? (Beach 2007:4)

North and South in Sápmi

In archaeology in Sweden, there has been a general division between the southern and the northern parts of the country. It has been pointed out by several researchers that the national self-image of Sweden by and large relates to the southern regions in the country, in many ways ignoring the northern dimensions of Swedish history and identity (cf. Broadbent 2001; Loeffler 2005; Ojala 2009; Hagström Yamamoto 2010). The relation between north and south in Sweden has often been described as a centre-periphery relation, entailing a view that most or all innovation and progress have originated in the south and spread to the north.

Many archaeologists have, in recent times, emphasised regional variation in northern Sweden, opposing the idea of a homogeneous historical development in the north. Per H. Ramqvist, for instance, has suggested a division of northern Sweden into five regions in the 1st millennium AD, with their own historical developments, but with interactions and contacts with other regions within and outside northern Sweden (Ramqvist 2007). Researchers such as Charlotte Damm have focused on complex networks of contacts and identities across the present-day state boundaries, trying to overcome simplified and dualistic models

of northern prehistory (see, e.g. Damm 2012). Other issues have concerned, for instance, the relationship between inland and coast in northern Sweden, an old and much debated problem connected with dualistic models of culture, economy, and identity in the prehistory of northern Sweden, and therefore also connected with ideas on the emergence and development of Sámi culture and identity (see, e.g. Bolin 1999; Forsberg 2012).

One especially controversial field of study in Sweden and Norway has been the South Sámi area – a region located closer to the “heartlands” of Sweden and Norway, and therefore also closer to the boundary between what is considered as Sámi and what is considered as Swedish or Norwegian.

In this region, conflicts over land rights have been especially difficult in recent decades, and archaeologists have taken part as expert witnesses, using archaeological arguments, in several court cases concerning the rights of Sámi villages to reindeer grazing lands. One example is the so-called Härjedalen case, in the province of Härjedalen, which started in 1990, when a number of land-owners in Härjedalen sued five Sámi villages, claiming that the Sámi villages did not possess traditional rights to practice reindeer herding on their lands, and which continued until 2004 in the court system of Sweden (see Zachrisson 2007; Ojala 2009:155ff.).

In the background, there is an idea, the so-called *fremrykningsteori*, which was formulated in the late 19th century, that the Sámi population came to the present-day South Sámi area late in historical times, perhaps only in the 17th century, from the north, and that the Sámi population gradually expanded or advanced from the north towards the south. According to this view, there simply does not exist a Sámi prehistory in the present-day South Sámi area. However, this view has been criticised in recent times by many archaeologists in Sweden and Norway, partly based on new archaeological discoveries (e.g. Bergstøl 2007; 2008; Bergstøl & Reitan 2008; Gjerde 2010; cf. also Ljungdahl & Aronsson 2008).

In the 1980s and the 1990s, archaeologist Evert Baudou, former professor in archaeology at Umeå University, formulated a hypothesis about a cultural and

ethnic border in the northern parts of the provinces of Jämtland and Ångermanland, separating Upper Norrland from Middle Norrland. This border would have emerged from around 800 BC, when an early Sámi ethnicity would have developed north of this border, and an early Nordic or Germanic ethnicity south of the border. In his view, this border would have been rather stable for many centuries and relevant also in the Iron Age (see, e.g. Baudou 1995).

In contrast, archaeologist Inger Zachrisson, one of the most prominent researchers investigating South Sámi prehistory, has presented another image of Central Scandinavia as a border, contact, and meeting zone in the 1st millennium AD with both Sámi and Nordic influences (Zachrisson *et al.* 1997). It is also worth noting that Zachrisson sees Sámi influences in the archaeological material from the Iron Age further to the south of the present-day South Sámi region, all the way to northern Svealand, northern Uppland and Bergslagen.

One of the categories of ancient remains that has been much discussed in this context is the category of so-called hunting-ground graves (earlier often called forest graves, lake graves, or mountain graves) dating from the Iron Age and the Early Middle Ages (see, e.g. Zachrisson *et al.* 1997; Fossum 2006; Bergstøl 2008; Welinder 2008; Olofsson 2010; Sundin 2011). The core distribution area of this group of graves covers the South Sámi region and adjacent areas in central Sweden and Norway. These graves and burial grounds exhibit traits that point to both the “Nordic” and the “Sámi” cultural spheres. Some of the sites that have been discussed include the burial grounds Krankmårtenhögen and Smalnäset, both in the province of Härjedalen and dating from the Pre-Roman and Early Roman Iron Age, the Viking Age and Early Medieval burial ground Långön in the north-western part of the province of Ångermanland, and the burial ground and settlement site at Vivallen in Härjedalen, dating from the Viking Age and the Early Middle Ages. The discussions have largely concerned the ethnic interpretation of these sites, most often from a dualistic perspective: are they Sámi or Nordic?

In part because archaeology in the South Sámi region has been controversial – and has really mattered

to people in their everyday lives – it has also created a lot of interest in archaeology as a way of exploring local history. There have been several initiatives of what could be called community archaeology, and several projects, especially survey projects, have been carried out in collaboration between professional archaeologists and local populations (see, e.g. Ljungdahl 2003; 2010; Ljungdahl & Norberg 2012).

Another related discussion has concerned the presence of Sámi culture in the Iron Age along the coast of the Gulf of Bothnia in northern Sweden. Archaeologist Noel Broadbent has argued that archaeological remains along the outer coastline in northern Sweden, including, for instance, hut remains and stone constructions of different kinds, such as labyrinths, should be seen as part of a Sámi cultural landscape in the Iron Age (Broadbent 2010). However, in a recent response to Broadbent, archaeologists Lars Liedgren and Per H. Ramqvist object that the empirical data is too limited to make the kind of conclusions that Broadbent does concerning Sámi cultural landscapes along the coast in northern Sweden (Liedgren & Ramqvist 2012).

Discussions of which archaeological remains and sites can be described as belonging to a Sámi prehistory do not occur only in the southern parts of Sápmi and in the coastal regions, but also further to the north and concerning earlier periods.

In the county of Norrbotten, there have been many controversies concerning the ethnic interpretations of prehistoric sites and finds, involving not only the question of Sámi history but also the history of the Meänkieli-speaking minority population in the eastern part of Norrbotten, a population that is by some actors self-defined as Kven. Within the Kven ethno-political movement, claims for indigenous status and accompanying cultural and land rights have been put forth. Several archaeologists have been witness to conflicts around the old issue of “who was first, us or them” and the sometimes difficult task of working as an archaeologist in the region (see, e.g. Wallerström 2006; 2008; Hedman 2007).

The Tornedalen region constitutes a kind of borderland in Sápmi, with Finnish, Swedish, and Sámi cultural and linguistic influences and contacts over several hundred years. Tornedalen has also been an

arena for conflicts over state assimilation policies and minority rights, particularly concerning the right of school children to speak their native Meänkieli language in the first part of the 20th century. Although Meänkieli today is an official minority language in Sweden, there are still many controversies surrounding its status in the region and the claims of Kven identities and rights.

Another example of a contested site in Norrbotten is the Stone Age settlement site in Vuollerim, which has been at the centre of controversies since it was discovered in the early 1980s. Here, the discussions have concerned the representations of the people living at the site in the Stone Age, especially at the local museum “Vuollerim 6000 years”, as Sámi or non-Sámi (see further Mulk & Bayliss-Smith 1999; Hagström Yamamoto 2010:116ff.). The village of Vuollerim is located very close to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Laponia (see further Green 2009). While the Laponia World Heritage Site, which is a mixed natural and cultural heritage area, has been strongly manifested as a Sámi landscape, the Vuollerim museum portrayed prehistory from an ethnically “neutral” point of view, which was interpreted according to the national norm as distinctly non-Sámi. It led to protests from groups of the Sámi population, who felt that they were excluded from their own prehistory. The case of Vuollerim shows that not even the Stone Age is apolitical in the northern areas. Furthermore, the case of Vuollerim also demonstrates some of the political dimensions of archaeology in general, dealing with power over representations of the past and the connections between past and present – challenges that all archaeologists, not only those working in Sápmi, must deal with.

East and West in Sápmi

The “Iron Curtain”, which has cut through political and archaeological landscapes in 20th century Europe, has been one of the most important boundaries delimiting and separating histories and visions of identity and heritage in Europe. Its legacy is still of importance in today’s political and scientific contexts. In Swedish archaeology, “the East” has in many ways been seen as

something different, foreign, and unknown, in contrast to “the West” and “the South”. The “Iron Curtain” can serve as a reminder of how important contemporary and modern history is for the understanding of the past. The border between East and West has also been, and still is, one of the most important boundaries in Sápmi.

Twenty years after the fall of the Soviet Union, knowledge of archaeological research in the Russian Federation and the Soviet Union still remains very limited among archaeologists in Sweden. In my view, there is a great need for studies focusing on the similarities, differences, and relationships between Western European and Nordic and Russian/Soviet research traditions, as well as the conceptualisation of archaeological cultures, ethnicity, nationalism, and indigeneity.

The Sámi population in Russia is also part of the context of the indigenous peoples of northern Russia and Siberia, which are often called “the small-numbered peoples of the north” (see further Slezkine 1994; Donahoe *et al.* 2008). Among these population groups are, for instance, the Nenets, Khanty, and Mansi, which belong to the Uralic language group (of which the Finno-Ugric languages are part). There is also a large and interesting ethnographic material from the northern areas of Russia and Siberia, which could be very relevant in the study of the history of the northern parts of Sweden. However, the barrier between East and West has also in this respect cut northern Sweden off from this northern Eurasian perspective, although there have been some researchers in Sweden who have strived to explore Russian and Soviet ethnographical research and use it in their own studies (see the works by Kerstin Eidlitz Kuoljok, e.g. 2009).

In recent years, there have also been debates among Russian archaeologists concerning Sámi history, the origins of the Sámi population, and the extent of the earlier settlement areas. Some of the debates have centred around archaeological remains, for instance, different kinds of stone structures and graves, which have been discovered along the Karelian coast and on the islands of the White Sea. The question has been whether or not these remains should be seen as part of a Sámi cultural landscape by the White Sea. Some researchers have promoted this idea (see, e.g. Man-

jukhin & Lobanova 2002; Price 2002), while others have questioned or rejected it on the basis that there is not enough evidence to support an interpretation of these remains as being Sámi (Shakhnovich 2003; 2007; Kosmenko 2007; 2009).

Connecting Past and Present – identity, heritage, and “the right to one’s own past”

In recent years, the dominant national histories have been challenged by several ethnic and cultural revitalisation movements on local, regional, and interregional levels. Demands for greater self-determination in the field of cultural heritage management have been put forth by Sámi groups, often with reference to discourses on human rights and international law.

These demands are part of the international movement of indigenous peoples, seeking the right to self-determination, self-definition, and what is often called the right to “one’s own past”. In these discussions, the question of control over and repatriation of cultural objects of special importance, in particular the repatriation and reburial of human remains, has been an especially important symbolic and emotional issue. Although these questions have been discussed for a long time, during several decades, in many parts of the world, such as in the USA and Australia, they have not attracted much attention among archaeologists in Sweden – that is, until the last few years (see Duodaris 2002; Edbom 2005; Gabriel & Dahl 2008; Harlin 2008; Ojala 2009; 2010).

Archaeologist Liv Nilsson Stutz, who has studied the repatriation and reburial debates in the USA, Israel, and Sweden, has pointed to several critical aspects and problems that must be considered. She has argued that in these debates, archaeologists are often, incorrectly, portrayed as grave plunderers and that the views related to archaeology and anthropology that are put forth by many actors in the debates are outdated, ignoring new methods, theories, and critical discussions in the academic world. The risk of being portrayed as a grave plunderer or racial biologist might lead to self-censorship among archaeologists and cause archaeologists to avoid controversial and contested topics in their research. Nilsson Stutz has

emphasised the responsibility of researchers to uphold a critical humanistic perspective:

[---] we need to reserve the right to remain critical of all kinds of appropriation of the past. This does not mean that repatriation is always problematic, or even worse, wrong. However, the challenge is to strike a reasonable balance between people's basic human right to their past and identity, and the potential abuse of this past and this identity to the detriment of others. (Nilsson Stutz 2009:161)

The Sámi artist and poet Rose-Marie Huuva has been one of the strongest voices in Sweden demanding the reburial of Sámi human remains. In a letter to the Sámi Parliament in early 2007, she requested a more active engagement from the Parliament:

Behind each piece of bone, there is a human being. It is the skulls of our ancestors that are exhibited in museums and it is their skeletons that are stored in the depositories of the research institutions.

It is not worthy of us as a people, in the 21st century, to allow the "Sámi human osteological material" to continue to be at the disposal of research and racial biology. Other indigenous peoples have demanded and have retrieved the remains of their ancestors from Swedish museums and institutions.

[---] We have an obligation towards our ancestors to make sure that their remains are once again placed in consecrated ground, from which they were once robbed [---] I am of the opinion that it is the Sámi Parliament that should demand that all of the Sámi human remains at present in the possession of the Swedish State should be repatriated. (Huuva 2007:1f.; my translation)

In 2007, the Sámi Parliament in Sweden decided, after requests from Sámi cultural workers and activists, to demand, firstly, a complete survey of all Sámi human remains in state collections and how they

have become part of these collections, and secondly, a repatriation and a dignified reburial of the human remains (Sametinget 2007). The decision of the Sámi Parliament started a rather lively debate in Sweden in the mass media and on the Internet, with many participants, Sámi activists and politicians, archaeologists, osteologists, and museum workers, which made this issue known to the public in Sweden, engaging people in different ways. The demands from the Sámi Parliament naturally raise many questions about the boundaries of Sámi history in time and space, as well as about the ethics of archaeology and the professional roles of archaeologists. Osteologists in Sweden have asked for clearer guidelines and rules concerning the treatment of human remains in collections and the questions of repatriation and reburial, which are lacking today, and have also requested that the Swedish State should assume greater responsibility for providing structures and financing in cases of reburial (Iregren & Schramm Hedelin 2010).

The first case of an official reburial of Sámi human remains that has taken place in Sweden concerned the so-called Soejvengeelle's grave, or the grave of the "Shadow man", in Tärna in the county of Västerbotten. This grave was excavated in 1950 by Ernst Manker from Nordiska Museet in Stockholm. Manker promised the local population, in writing, that the human remains would be reburied after the excavation, but this did not happen. After requests from a local Sámi organisation, the remains were reburied in 2002. However, before the reburial act, the grave was re-excavated and documented. The human remains were analysed by the researchers, and new datings of the burial were obtained, showing that the burial was from the 15th century, much earlier than expected (Heinerud 2002; 2004). After the reburial, the grave was reconstructed. The case of Soejvengeelle, I believe, points to the possibilities of having a dialogue and reaching agreements between archaeologists and the local population combining scientific analyses with respect for the wishes of the local population.

In the summer of 2011, another reburial of human remains took place in the northern part of the county of Jämtland, near Frostviken. The human remains came from a grave that had been discovered and

excavated in the 1980s. The reburial was carried out following demands from the local Sámi village. In this case, the skeletal remains were also analysed before being reburied.

In recent years, the most discussed case in Sweden has concerned the churchyard in Rounala, in northernmost Sweden near the border to Finland, which was excavated in 1915. The skeletal remains from this site were brought to the Anatomical Institution at Uppsala University, and in the 1990s some of them were transferred to the Historical Museum in Stockholm. Recently, it was discovered that there were more human remains from Rounala, which had been part of the old anatomical collections, at Uppsala University. Furthermore, it was discovered that the collections contained Sámi human remains from northern Norway, and quite a lot of human remains from the Kola Peninsula, which had been excavated (or rather plundered) by the Swedish archaeologist Gustaf Hallström during his travels in the Kola Peninsula in the early 20th century. At present, the staff at Museum Gustavianum at Uppsala University is examining the content of these anatomical collections (Ingvarsson Sundström & Metz 2012).

In 2009, the Sámi Parliament put forth demands that the human remains from Rounala should be repatriated and that the control over the remains should be transferred to the Parliament, underlining that the question was of great symbolic significance. The administrative director of the Sámi Parliament in Sweden, Ulla Barruk Sunna, wrote that for the Sámi people, the crania from the cemetery at Rounala "... represent the unsettled colonial past of Sweden against the Sámi population, in which the racial biological research used Sámi crania in order to measure the inferiority of the Sámi race in comparison to the Nordic population" (Sametinget 2009; my translation).

On the other hand, however, some archaeologists have conducted research on the material from Rounala. Preliminary results have indicated that the burials might be considerably older than what was earlier believed, possibly from the Middle Ages, which would make this cemetery the earliest known cemetery with Christian burials in the region – and, therefore, very valuable for research on the medieval population

in the area. Further complicating the issue, some actors from the Kven ethno-political movement have claimed that the people who were buried in Rounala are *their* ancestors and should not be a primary concern for the Sámi Parliament (see further Ojala 2009:257ff.). The question is whether the remains should be available to new research and new analyses in the future or whether they should be repatriated and perhaps reburied in Rounala. The issue has been heavily discussed, but it is still uncertain exactly what will happen.

In recent decades, there have also been some cases of reburial of Sámi human remains in Norway (cf. Schanche 2002a; 2002b) and Finland (cf. Lehtola 2005). There is an interesting case in northern Norway, concerning the human remains from the Skolt Sámi churchyard in Neiden, close to the border with Russia. This orthodox churchyard was excavated in 1915 in order to find genuine Sámi skulls and skeletons for the anatomical collections in Oslo, and a large number of human remains were taken from the site to these collections, although there were strong local protests against the excavations. In recent years, there have been demands for the reburial of the human remains from the churchyard, for instance from the Sámi Parliament in Norway. However, different opinions have been raised among the inhabitants of the local Sámi community. Some community members did not want to rebury the remains, at least not at once, as they wished more research to be done on their local history. However, the human remains were finally reburied in Neiden in September 2011. The example of Neiden illustrates how complex these issues are – there is not just one Sámi view or just one Sámi interest in these matters – and it underlines the importance of open and thorough debates, in which different voices are allowed to be heard in the discussion of repatriation and reburial questions.

In debating the requests and demands for repatriation and reburial, it is important to take into account the historical background. I believe that the contexts in which the human remains were excavated or collected should be of relevance for how we choose to deal with these remains today. Although we as modern archaeologists do not wish to be associated with these darker sides of research history, including racial

biology, grave plundering, and the trade in Sámi skulls in the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, we do have to deal with these parts of our scientific heritage today. There are also many accounts of local protests against grave diggers and of the ways in which the excavations took place, often in secrecy and with bribes (see further Ojala 2009:242ff.).

Another important aspect that must be taken into account in discussing indigenous heritage and repatriation concerns international law, including international conventions and declarations. One highly interesting document is the “United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples”, which was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 2007. The Declaration contains several statements related to the field of cultural heritage management and indigenous cultural rights. For instance, it is stated in Article 12.1 that:

Indigenous peoples have [...] the right to maintain, protect, and have access in privacy to their religious and cultural sites; the rights to the use and control of their ceremonial objects; and the right to the repatriation of their human remains.

However, how the statements of the Declaration should be applied in practice in heritage management in Sweden, and what they mean for the management of Sámi cultural heritage and Sámi historical sites in the future, still remain unclear.

Archaeologies of Sápmi with and without borders

In this article, I have discussed some aspects concerning the boundaries and networks of Sámi archaeology and the geographical and political notion of Sápmi. I hope to have been able to demonstrate some of the complexities and power dimensions involved in the mapping of past and present in Sápmi. I have also aimed to show the need for more nuanced histories in northern Sweden and on the North Calotte. “Sáminess” is, of course, not only *one* thing, rather there is considerable variation in Sámi culture, identity, and economy in historical times as well as today. Therefore,

there is not just one Sámi history or prehistory, but *many* Sámi histories and prehistories.

In my view, it is important for archaeologists to critically consider and discuss the geographies and cartographies of archaeology – what could perhaps be called the power-geometries of archaeology. What is connected and what is disconnected in time and space? Where are the boundaries of archaeology and what voices are allowed to be heard in the networks of archaeology?

The repatriation and reburial debates clearly illustrate that there are different ways of relating to the past and to the remains from the past, and archaeologists have been forced to take this into account. I also believe that these debates can be seen as an opportunity to enrich archaeology with new experiences and perspectives, as well as new forms of cooperation and collaboration.

These debates also raise many critical issues concerning the politics and ethics of archaeology – the roles and responsibilities of professional archaeologists and the relationship between archaeologists and, for instance, local and indigenous groups – as well as the power relations involved: Who has the right to describe and define cultural heritage and history? Who has the power and the right to name culture and history? And who controls and enforces the boundaries of these entities or networks?

At the same time, there are many difficult and challenging questions concerning the management of Sámi cultural heritage in Sweden, which archaeologists and other cultural heritage workers need to address and debate in the future. One challenge that archaeologists are facing when discussing these issues is how to avoid creating the kind of static images of Sámi culture and history that have been produced so often in research and other discourses in society.

History is complex and complicated. With the recognition of Sámi history and Sámi indigenous rights, history does not end. But by trying to understand the importance of history for people today, we may actually learn something important about other historical times and about history itself. There will always be a risk of new bounded and closed entities and new oppressing hierarchies being created. Therefore, archaeologists

need to continuously examine and critically discuss the ways in which concepts of ethnicity and indigeneity are constructed and used in archaeology.

To conclude, I would like to suggest that the notion of Sápmi could be important as a challenge to exploring the ways in which cultures, identities, and boundaries have been created and transformed over time – which, in turn, could inspire archaeologists and others to critically examine and try to open up the homogeneous, bounded, and separated notions of “Sámi” and “Swedish” prehistory.

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