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# Not Enough Sami? The Affects of Postcolonial Identity

*Ugnė Barbora Starkutė*

The article explores how people identify with their ‘Samianness’. To understand this better, discourses of affects and emotions around the topic are analysed, particularly shame and inadequacy. They show how people ‘measure’ Samianness in relation to ‘proper’ Sami. I investigate here if this is a fault of a discursive dichotomy between modernity and tradition – the depiction of a traditional indigenous group forming in opposition to a coloniser’s modern identity.

Key words: *Sami, indigeneity, modernity, tradition, identity.*

Straipsnyje tyrinėjama, kaip tapatinamasi su samiškumu. Čia analizuojami su samiškumu siejami afektų ir emocijų diskursai, tiksliau, gėda ir nepakankamumo jausmai, kurie atskleidžia, jog žmonės „matuoja“ savo samiškumą lygindamiesi su „tikru samiu“. Straipsnyje atskleidžiama, kad tai yra vyraujančių modernybės sukurtų dichotomijų pasekmė, kai kolonizatorius siejamas su modernybe, o autochtoniškumas – su tradicija.

Raktiniai žodžiai: *samiai, autochtoniškumas, modernybė, tradicija, tapatybė.*

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## Introduction

The Sami<sup>1</sup> people live in the very north of Norway, Sweden and Finland, and on the Kola Peninsula in Russia. After a long period of internal colonisation (see Lehtola 2015 for a critical discussion of the colonialism of the Sami people in Finland) and assimilatory policies, when being a Sami was something shameful, to be hidden, the strong cultural revival of Sami people in the Nordic countries started in the 1970s. ‘And suddenly it was good, not that bad to be a Sami’ (Interview 2018-08, Interlocutor A), a friend once explained to me. Samianness was

<sup>1</sup>I use the names Sami and Sapmi without *á*, as they are written differently in different Sami languages. However, I have left the original forms in quotations.

shaped into a new modern political identity. From 'localized village-centered identities [it] has been articulated into a new collective Sami identity that reaches across borders and is marked by the symbolic construction of a Sami nation [and] Sapmi [Sami land]' (Pietikäinen 2008: 183). The Sami identity became desirable (Valkonen 2014: 210). But who a Sami person is, is still a debated question in Finnish Sapmi (Lapland). It has been not only a legal question (as only legally defined Sami people are eligible to vote in elections to the Sami parliament, an additional governing body in the national political structure), but also a question in the communities among the people. 'Who is a Sami is an essential question politically, socially and emotionally' (Valkonen 2014: 211).

According to Jonathan D. Hill and Thomas M. Wilson, negotiations between the group and all kinds of structures (nation-state, international movements and corporations) could be understood in a two-directional way. In the first case, as top-down political projects: identity politics. In the second case, as bottom-up grassroots movements: the politics of identities. And these two are in constant dialogue, but not necessarily possessing the same power (Hill, Wilson 2003). While this brings our attention to the difference in the power to influence the discourse around identities, we should see the ethnic process not only as a dichotomy of a nation-state's power and an oppressed ethnic group's voice, but as heterogeneous mutually influential systems. Recent historical research studies into postcolonialism try to find new ways to discuss it, and avoid the Marxist approach of dichotomous perceptions of colonised and colonisers, while seeing it in a more complex and multi-level manner (Lehtola 2015; Hokkanen, Särkkä 2008, cited from Lehtola 2015). We may now see that 'colonialism also brings about response and resistance, which may significantly influence the self-image and strategies of communities' (Lehtola 2015: 31–32).

I did my fieldwork in Finnish Sapmi, in the village of Inari (Inari Sami: *Aanaar*). There are three Sami groups living in Finland: Inari Sami, Northern Sami and Skolt Sami. The village of Inari is the centre of Finnish Sapmi, where many Sami institutions, like the Sami parliament and the Sami cultural centre (Sajos), are situated. However, even with Inari being the Sami cultural centre, Sami speakers make up around 6 per cent of the whole municipality of Inari. But these numbers are very approximate, as they indicate only mother-tongue speakers, while many people are from mixed backgrounds.

During the fieldwork, I tried to understand the ways people navigate between their Finnish and indigenous Sami identities. I have noticed many times a multiplicity of people's ethnic identity(-ies). During nearly seven months of fieldwork, conducted during three visits between 2016 and 2018, when I was living in families and working in the Sami cultural centre, I little by little went deeper into the topic, which seemed very complex. I collected a lot of ethnographic

material, had many informal conversations, and conducted nine life story interviews (in English). Two of them were non-Sami; most of the others come from a mixed background of Finnish and Sami families. And so the topic of feeling 'not enough' Sami revealed itself clearly in these conversations. Interestingly, my interlocutors have doubts about their identity, whether or not they fall into the legal definition of Sami. This article discusses how Sami identify with Saminess, and how narratives about affects such as shame and inadequacy reveal the discourses around the indigenous Sami identity. This affective side of the identity is just one of a number of facets of the postcolonial Sami identity as a product of more complicated politics of identity. The purpose of this article is to explore how and why people speak about the indigenous Sami identity in affective and emotional terms.

In order to do so, in the first section I present the internal colonisation of the Sami people, and contemporary issues of Saminess. The second section shows how people identify with their Saminess. The third discusses the affects of shame and inadequacy. In the last section, I explore how these affects emerge from the broader indigenous identity discourse. This case study analyses the situation in one village (Inari) in Finnish Sapmi; but taking into account complex postcolonial identity issues, it might be relevant to other indigenous communities.

### **Assimilatory past and contemporary struggles of Saminess**

Sapmi, the region where the Sami people, live is multi-ethnic, and has been for centuries. Interest in Sami lands has grown since the 15th century, and in the 18th century, clear national borders of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia were drawn. Colonialism in Finland was different to the other Nordic countries. It was less strict and intolerant. There was no straightforward legislation on the assimilation of the Sami, but 'In Finland, it took place through new decrees, land surveys, development of traffic connections, and reinforcement of administration. The development resulted in gradual dismantling of local structures' (Lehtola 2015: 28–29). A lot of new people came to the region, as colonisation was programmed by governments, sending people to live and develop agriculture in northern parts (Kuoljok, Utsi 2015; Lähteenmäki 2017). With the growing industrial projects, more people came to the northern parts from the south. For example, a wave of Finnish migration took place in the 1920s and 1930s, and the Sami became a minority. By 1940, in the municipality of Inari (Inari Sami: Aanaar) only 30 per cent were Sami. The rest were Finns (Nahkiaisoja 2003a: 173, 2003b: 226, cited from Olthuis, Kivelä, Skutnabb-Kangas 2013: 25). However, today regions are very different in their Sami population, and it may affect the way people also understand Saminess. For example, the Utsjoki (Northern Sami: Ohcejohka) municipality is the only one in Finland with a majority Sami population.

The minorities policies of the 20th century were harsh. With the growth of the welfare state and the introduction of compulsory school education, cultural normalisation had a strong influence on Sami culture. In Finland, children were punished for speaking Sami, or *yoiking* (a Sami way of singing). Hostels were built, and children who lived five kilometres away were forced to live in them, returning home only a few times a year (Olthuis, Kivelä, Skutnabb-Kangas 2013: 32–33). This policy also led to the loss of the language. People did not want to teach their children Sami, thinking that they would adapt better to society speaking Finnish as a mother-tongue. Although today Sami languages have an official status in the Sami homeland, a generation of speakers was lost, and they could not teach their own children Sami. Many people do not know the language, and learn it as adults, or as a mother-tongue as children in special day-care centres.

After the Sami movement in the Nordic countries started, and Sami parliaments were established (in Finland in 1996), there emerged a need to define who a Sami person is. In Finland, it is defined in the Act on the Sámi Parliament 974/1995 (*Act on the Sámi Parliament* 1995), and based on the following aspects: self-identification; language (at least one grandparent learned Sámi as their first language); ancestors (one is a descendant of a person who has been entered in a land, taxation or population register as a mountain, forest or fishing Lapp); or the parents had the right to vote in the Sami Delegation (the predecessor of the parliament) or the Sami parliament (Sami in Finland 2019). The definition is quite broad. On the other hand, there has been much debate and disagreement about it. Roughly, the questions have been whether Saminess is more about ‘roots’ or ‘living culture’, about self or collective-determination.

The ‘roots’ question has been debated the most. For example, the aspect of ‘roots’ or ancestors’ was debated in 1995 as the previous language-based definition was extended. Those with descendants who identified as ‘Lapp’ (the term ‘Lapp’ is now considered derogatory) in the earlier land, taxation or population registers could apply for the right to vote. This decision was opposed by the Sami parliament, claiming that it would include people already assimilated into the majority Finnish population. In 1999, the Supreme Administrative Court of Finland made changes to this new rule, and limited ‘Lapp’ ancestors no more distant than grandparents (Finland. Sami 2019). Another controversy took place in the 2015 parliamentary elections. Hundreds of people applied for the right to vote and to be considered as Sami. The parliament rejected many applications, and nearly 200 people appealed to the Supreme Administrative Court, which decided that 93 of them should have the right to vote. Applicants welcomed the decision. Nevertheless, it was met with great discontent by a lot of Sami people, and by the parliament, arguing that it is not only about individual self-deter-

mination, but also a collective one. In 2018, the UN Human Rights Committee decided that Helsinki had violated the indigenous people's right to self-determination. These are examples of some public disagreements about who are Sami people. At the same time, it led to the formation of new categories of Saminess: the (neo) Lapps, the forest Sami and non-status Sami, people who feel indigenous, but who are rejected and not accepted as Sami by the Sami community. The (neo) Lapps have descendants identified as 'Lapps' in the previous land, taxation or population registers; they have lived in the region for a long time, and often practise livelihoods. The forest Sami are thought to be historical Sami people who disappeared. Descendants of the revived culture of the forest Sami seek recognition of their Saminess (Valkonen, Valkonen, Koivurova 2017: 533). Lastly, in 2012, Erika Sarivaara published a dissertation called 'Sámi without a Status' about non-status Sami who have learned a language once lost by their families, and use it now as their mother language, but regardless of their Sami roots and the language, they are not official members of the Sami community (Sarivaara 2012).

The complicated colonial past produces disagreements and different forms of identification with indigeneity. But not all identifications are accepted as real Saminess. There is a great fear of being assimilated into the dominant Finnish culture, and so these debates are often followed by arguments that too many people who have tenuous claims to 'Saminess' might be accepted as Sami. This leaves many people unhappy and unaccepted as Sami by the community. One of the research participants expressed disappointment at not being fully accepted into the Sami community:

I guess today I am in a good place with myself, I mean. But earlier about Sámi identity or not Sámi identity here, like, I saw a colleague today [...] she has called out to people to tell who is of families that have lived in Lapland for a long time and do not have Sami blood. And there are very few. You know, all, almost all, all the people here are mixed races, if you could say. And so what I do not like [...] that it rules out so many people and leave them scarred, because of that; that they do not belong into this great Sami group and heritage and the bloodline. And that has been a little hurtful for me, and, I think, for many many many others too [...] Actually, I have never applied to register as Sami, and some people have encouraged me to do so, but I do not want to, like, put myself, you know, on the plate to pick and choose if I am Sami enough or not. I'd rather stay not in the register. That's my decision [...] (Interview 2018-08, Interlocutor A).

Defining what 'real Sami' might be, produces hurtful feelings in those who do not fulfil the criteria, being provoked by a feeling of misrecognition, new categories of Saminess emerge.

## Setting the boundaries of the Sami ethnic identity

The concept of ethnicity is based on the assumption that a group shares common traits. As a result, it is essentialising and homogenising. However, ethnic identifications are individual and collective projects, which are constantly negotiated within the group, including and excluding people, constructing the members and the non-members of the group. Ethnicity is a process in which ethnicities emerge, and ethnic groups define and redefine themselves in the given time.

For Frederik Barth, ethnicity is a social, not a cultural phenomenon: it is 'the ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses' (Barth 1969: 15). This ethnic boundary emerges through contact, and so ethnicities and identities are relational and interactional. Thomas Hyland Eriksen explains that 'group identities must always be defined in relation to that which they are not; - in other words, in relation to non-members of the group' (Eriksen 2010: 14). Only when groups understand themselves as distinctive do the cultural aspects become a tool to emphasise this distinctiveness, and so 'consider themselves and are regarded by others as being culturally distinctive' (Eriksen 2010: 5), while also 'authentically remaking' culture (Clifford 2004) according to emphasised aspects.

In the postcolonial world, identities are hybrid and situational, multiple, partial and pluralistic (Bhabha 1994; Eriksen 2010; Smith, Leavy 2008), although the Sami people are often presented as being between two cultures, Finnish and Sami. The Sami are a distinctive group, but making a boundary between Sami and Finns is interesting 'since many modern Sámi are not always very different – or are not different at all – from the majority population in their way of life, culture and language' (Valkonen 2014: 210). While in Norway and Sweden, the Sami people were understood as a very different group, it was not the case in Finland. Sami and Finns have the same Finno-Ugric background. The Finns adopted agriculture, the Sami continued hunting and gathering. This change in livelihood separated the groups, and separate Sami and Finnish languages formed. The Finns also adopted the livelihoods of the Sami people, such as reindeer herding, unlike Norway or Sweden, where reindeer herding became the livelihood only of the Sami, and so the Sami were seen as a very different group (Lehtola 2015: 27–28). Even though it is most important that the group defines itself as distinct, it is complicated to make a very clear boundary between the Finns and the Sami, as it was never very clear ethnically, linguistically and livelihood-wise. But people choose and navigate these two identities, especially those who are from Sami and Finnish backgrounds. Identifying with Saminess often becomes a matter of choice:

But I totally identify myself more as a Sami than a Finnish, but I'm still proud of, proud of being both. I think it's easier to understand the Sami's

current situation in Finland, because I know both of the cultures well. I guess everybody knows, because we are living in the Finnish-driven society [...] (Interview 2018-08, Interlocutor B).

A mother shared with me the way she raised her children, and what she told them about their identity, who come from a Finnish and Sami family:

There is no such thing as half, and that's how I've been saying to my sons too, that, you know, you are Sami and you are Finnish. But if you want to be only Sami, that's fine, you just Sami and you don't feel Finnish [...] (Interview 2018-08, Interlocutor C).

However, this could also go the other way, making people not feel Sami at all. It happens that relatives in one family feel either Sami or Finns, regardless of whether or not they are officially considered Sami. The same interlocutor commented about their relatives:

[...] The official definition says what it says and then it's another thing, that whoever feels like. [Name] and [name] cousins and who are my age [...] they would not say they are Sami. But, although, they are exactly the same. Like, they have exactly the same grandmother and heritage. But they feel themselves Finns [...] (Interview 2018-08, Interlocutor C).

So, coming from both Finnish and Sami backgrounds, and living in Finnish-driven society, as the research participant expressed, people choose their identities how they like: self-identification is embodied through feeling one's identity.

But then, what does it mean to be Sami? How do people decide if they feel Sami or not? Being Sami might be emphasised by different aspects, which could be practised, and often called 'living culture', which are part of their *habitus* (Bourdieu 1977), group culture and personal history shaping body and mind, as well as by present actions, thoughts and feelings. For some people, it is the language that is the most important:

Does it matter if someone is Sami? When you just focused to the language, you don't need to know [...] And years and years Samis have been like this wanderer people, so we have so many mixed bloodlines, and also you can't even ... if the blood is the most important one thing for being Sami, so it's a silly thing, I think [...] that's not the way for me (Interview 2018-08, Interlocutor D.)

Others would emphasise livelihood and traditions, and as a culture rather than a language, which have been lost in this case:

It's more important that I try to learn from my own culture. Just my past. Well, my grandpa spoke Skolt Sami as his mother language, but he never taught it to his children [...] didn't want to show culture. But, I think, the way of living has still, like, he kept on ... all the fishing and all the berries and the live from the nature. I think that has still stucked to me through my father. So,

that's the way for me to live the culture, even though I don't have the language. I think that nowadays, it's been more, em, more important for me to try to learn the culture (Interview 2018-07, Interlocutor E).

Saminess is understood through practice, which is usually language or traditional livelihood, and other traditional things like skillsets, as I show later. This is what Sunna Valkonen names an ethnic body, created through performance, and in this way setting the boundary between Sami and Finnish ethnicities (Valkonen 2014).

But to consider oneself and feel a Sami, as well as practising the language or traditional activities, is not enough, as non-Sami could also practise similar livelihoods, as well as speak Sami. A person has to be enculturated and accepted by the community as a Sami. People narrate the aspect of 'roots' or family line as being important to transfer the culture. A friend once explained to me why having Sami great-grandparents would not be enough for somebody to claim Saminess (today's official definition requires that at least one of the grandparents should have spoken Sami as a mother tongue). The person explained that one would not have enough contact with the culture, as people rarely get to meet their great-grandparents, and so the culture could not be learned (fieldwork notes, 2016 08, Interlocutor F). A similar insight was provided by Sunna Valkonen in her research about embodied Saminess: 'Basically, only a non-native child adopted into a Sámi family can (through acceptance) become socialised as Sámi and thus become a member of the Sámi ethnic group' (Valkonen 2014: 216). This is also what I have been told in the village, that one has to learn the culture, be enculturated, or you or your parents or grandparents should speak Sami (fieldwork notes 2018 07, Interlocutor G). So this enculturation is where *habitus* is formed. However, taking into consideration the colonial past, the loss of the language, and mixed family backgrounds, this enculturation is complicated. People feel not enculturated enough and not Sami enough, even though they match the Sami definition.

### **Shame and inadequacy: not enough Sami?**

In talking to people, I noticed that many who are considered Sami have doubts about their Saminess. To be Sami and feel Saminess does not look like an easy task: 'In addition to self-identification, the sense of ease comes from surviving in the Sámi community, and meeting the expectations of others, both Sámi and Finns. This can nevertheless be preceded by various feelings of constraint, obligation and shame' (Valkonen 2014: 218). During the fieldwork, I noticed that some of them expressed a feeling of inadequacy, and even shame. Z. Bauman suggests that individual identity could be understood as a project. It is a process

of becoming, a self-project (Bauman 1996: 22). In this case, it is a project of performing and embodying Saminess well, by using the language, and practising livelihoods and traditional activities. The problem of becoming is that it means not being enough at a given time, and becoming something more in the future, which is 'dissatisfaction with, and denigration of, the here and now' (Bauman 1996: 22). For Sami, it means that they can always know the culture and embody Saminess better, and so they feel 'not enough' Sami at a given time. And this is always negotiated with the group, as one's identity has to be accepted within the group.

One thinks of identity whenever one is not sure of where one belongs; that is, one is not sure how to place oneself among the evident variety of behavioural styles and patterns, and how to make sure that people around would accept this placement as right and proper (Bauman 1996: 19).

Therefore, identity is an individual and collective process. Identity is 'measured' in relation to other members of the group. Affects are the consequence of this process and interaction between individual and collective.

Once, during the annual Skábmagovat indigenous movie festival, I was having a conversation with a local acquaintance. During the festival, some people wore their traditional clothes, and so this was probably how we came to the topic. This person was recalling the previous year's festival, telling me how it was hard to convince a friend to put on traditional Sami clothes for the festival's evening party in the village. The person elaborated on the topic, saying that some of the person's friends felt ashamed to wear Sami clothes, because they did not speak the Sami language well. The person explained to me that this is because of the people who are very active in Sami culture, who know the Sami languages well. Others do not feel Sami enough to wear the traditional clothes, especially if they do not speak Sami, but they are Sami (paraphrased, field notes 2018-01, Interlocutor H).

Some time later, another person expressed similar opinions about the subject, saying that it is very hard to claim Saminess if one does not speak the language:

For me and what I understood and what I experienced and what I talked to people, it's the language that makes the difference. It's very hard to claim your Saminess, or even feel that you're Sami if you don't know the language. Very hard. Maybe you can, but you wouldn't even publicly say that you some kind of ashamed of your, not be a proper Sami, because you don't know the language. Once you have it, the language, even if it's kind of not perfect, you you can start wearing the costume and then you can be kind of one (Interview 2018-08, Interlocutor C).

So, identity is measured in relation to others and might not be performed: people would not put on traditional clothes, as they feel 'not enough' Sami, because they do not possess some aspect of Saminess like language, which is an important part of sensing Saminess. But for many families, the language was lost during assimilatory times, and they do not speak it as their mother-tongue, and so there is always an extra effort to take it back.

However, language is not the only reason people feel 'not enough' Sami. It also comes from not knowing enough about the culture, or not practising it enough. For example, there is very little about Sami people in the Finnish education system, and that might cause a feeling of shame:

Cause there is so much, so many historical people and events that we don't learn at school, so we kind of have to learn it ourselves, like, you go to university or you read a book, but it's like not the part of the Finnish history education [...] And at the same time you kind of feel ashamed for not knowing all of this information [...] (Interview 2018-08, Interlocutor B).

Quite often, interlocutors expressed doubts about not practising enough traditional activities or not having some skills. One research participant told me about young Sami people coming to live in the north from the southern part of Finland. They want to find their roots again and live in the community, but what they face is the great number of different skills and practices they have to know and seek to acquire to be 'proper' Sami:

Can they fish, can they, like, butcher reindeer or and make the soup in the right way and then sew some winter shoes for the family. And, like, they should know all these. And then they should be very, they should be able to feed their families, like, go to the daily work, and they should, of course, manage the language perfectly, and they should be able to translate books and and do everything [...] they want to be proper Samis [...] (Interview 2018-08, Interlocutor C).

More conversations revealed this lack of 'properness'. One of the interlocutors, who grew up in the area, and who is from both a Finnish and Sami family, expressed doubts about not being 'proper' Sami, as in her opinion she was not doing enough traditional things and was not engaged in activism:

I actually feel more Finnish than Sami. Because I grew up in a very Finnish family. So I grew up, like, and I sometimes say, I don't even feel like I'm proper Sami, because I'm not doing traditional things, I barely speak the language any more, I, and I'm not an activist or something. I feel like I should be doing something more to be a proper Sami [...] (Interview 2018-08, Interlocutor I).

Although activism and tradition were expressed as criteria to be a 'proper' Sami in this conversation, another interview revealed an interesting detail on the topic. It was very surprising to hear similar doubts and thoughts from this

person, who is somebody I would consider a Sami activist, a person working for Sami culture:

I also many times notice myself thinking that I'm less in the way when I think about me being half Finnish and half Sami, and sometimes I feel less, because I can't *yoik* [the traditional way of singing], or I don't have reindeer, or I can't make my own *gákti* [traditional clothes]. So, it's kind of internalised. It's not only the people around you, but it also can be planted in your mind (Interview 2018-08, Interlocutor B).

These examples show that identity is narrated as the feeling of not being 'enough' Sami, or even shame by people who are Sami and match the Sami definition. People measure their identities in relation to 'properness'. This 'properness' is understood as having enough language proficiency skills, knowledge about the culture, and engaging in traditional activities and activism. In a way, people's identities are always in a process of becoming, as Bauman emphasises, and could become something more in the future, could be improved, and so are never enough at a given time, sensed with a feeling of inadequacy or even shame.

In gender identity studies, Jonathan A. Allan discusses a similar issue of affects and identity in his text 'Masculinity as a Cruel Optimism', who adapted Lauren Berlant's concept of cruel optimism, which according to her 'exists when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing' (Berlant 2011: 1). The author analyses shame, fear and dread, feelings which emerge from not being able to achieve 'ideal' masculinity (Allan 2018). Masculinity, as the author suggests, is seldom achievable and usually fails. 'One can be never masculine enough' (Allan 2018: 175). In the case of the Sami identity, people do not feel Sami enough and measure it against ideal Saminess, imagined 'proper' Sami. What Allan also suggests, commenting on M. Kimmel's ideas, is that this failure is accompanied by shame, which is a fear of being unmasked as a fraud (Kimmel 1994: 131, cited from Allan 2018: 178). From what I have noticed talking to people, Saminess is often questioned and put under examination when others try to find this fraud, which understandably creates questions and uncertainty about people's own identity and perpetuates questions around it. This is evident in different ways, for example, people checking and correcting each other's language:

All the reporters at the Sami radio always say that they never get the feedback of their stories, and they get feedback every day about their language. Like the language and the words they use at the, in the news and the stories (Interview 2018-08, Interlocutor C).

Or simply examining and questioning other people's Saminess through their skill sets. One interlocutor told me how another person questioned the interlocutor's Saminess just because the person asked for help to put on a traditional scarf:

I asked the women like can you put the, because that's what we do where I am from, normally you don't put it yourself. Somebody else puts it because it's easier, I guess, I don't know. And then I asked her to do it, and then this girl, who wanted to be mean to me, said that I don't even like, you have to ask her how to put the scarf. And it's like, you know, small things that she wants to like she says by what she wants to show that I don't, I am not enough Sami and I don't speak Sami and you have lost the language (Interview 2018-07, Interlocutor F).

Also, people question others' ethnic backgrounds. People who come from Sami and Finnish-background families (which many of the families in the village of Inari are), have experienced this doubting of their identity quite often, somebody not taking them as fully Sami. One of the research participants in her 20s told me:

But I've experienced here in Inari, like, my mum is Finnish and my dad is Sami and, yeah, it's been like the kids from the same age didn't think that I was Sami, because I have a Finnish mum. And then even later, I remember that somebody came up to me saying that some people back in the day when I was a child thought that it was unfair that I was in Sami-speaking kindergarten (Interview 2018-08, Interlocutor B).

Moreover, identity could be questioned by the act of others performing their Saminess. A friend once explained to me that some people feel more Sami than others, and they have to emphasise it all the time (paraphrased, field notes 2016-11, Interlocutor J). During one interview, another interlocutor explained to me that being in the middle is probably the hardest, which means neither being outspoken activists, nor leaving a place (paraphrased, Interview 2018-08, Interlocutor C).

So, doubting Saminess not only happens at an individual level but also by people in the community. And this causes individuals to doubt their own identity, narrating it being sensed with shame and inadequacy when not being able to fulfil expectations of being 'proper Sami' Moreover, it seems that this narrative of feeling 'not enough' Sami, is actually what it feels like to be Sami in the postcolonial present.

### **Tradition and modernity in postcoloniality**

These Sami identity questions can be analysed in many different ways, but understanding the postcolonial context of indigenous discourses might help to explain why people narrate their experience of Saminess. Talking about the postcolonial identity, it is impossible to go without mentioning the widely used concept of cultural hybridity, currently mostly associated with Homi K. Bhabha. He uses this concept to explain the situation in which a type of culture forms, a hybrid culture (Bhabha 1994). However, Bhabha's hybridity theory is often criticised for essentialising cultures and identities. Keri E. Iyall Smith emphasise the

role of false dichotomies, which form this hybridity. 'A hybrid identity might form as a result of a false dichotomy, where an identity that seemingly only has the capacity to occupy two forms is actually shown to encompass another form' (Smith 2008: 6). So Smith expand Bhabha's approach by suggesting that cultures and identities are more complex. They also explain that identity in the context of hybridity 'encompasses partial identities, multiple roles, and pluralistic selves' (Smith, Leavy 2008: 5). But this more complex picture of postcolonial identity often stays unrecognised. The coloniser and the colonised are understood as two different or even opposite cultures and identities. This dichotomy emerges through the interactional ethnic identification process when a group defines themselves in opposition to another group. I argue here that it is where the dichotomy of tradition and modernity emerge, making Sami feel not enough if they do not practise traditional things, which when practised legitimise the existence of the group and the culture according to Western expectations of the indigenous 'other'.

The image of indigenous peoples as traditional and something very opposite to Western cultures was born as early as the 18th century. Indigenous people were seen as 'noble savages', innocent and free of corruption, living in peace with nature (Conklin, Graham 1995). This is no exception in the case of the Sami. In the 19th century, with rising interest in collecting ethnographic data, the perception of Sami people as traditional and very different from the modern world grew. Eva Silvén, in the text 'Constructing a Sami Cultural Heritage: Essentialism and Emancipation' (Silvén 2014), analyses Western stereotypes and exoticisation in the exhibition about Sami people in the Nordiska Museum, Stockholm, Sweden.

Ernst Manker (1893–1972) was an ethnographer who collected a lot of data about the Sami people, and in 1939 became curator and director of a Sami exhibition that was shown for 30 years. The exhibition represented mostly exotic nomadic reindeer-herding families. Stuffed reindeer, traditional religious objects, caravans pulled by reindeer and Sami people in the sledges became traditional elements of exhibitions (Silvén 2014: 67). These discursive images became the norm. In these standardised images, different categories or differences between groups disappeared, and left a place only for this essentialised image of Saminess (Silvén 2014). The Sami politician Per Mikael Utsi states that data gathering was directed towards selecting exotic and different aspects of Sami culture (Utsi 2007: 69, cited from Silvén 2014: 67). In this time and context, many laws were formulated, and in Sweden and Norway, reindeer herding became a livelihood which could be practised only by Sami people. Reindeer herding became a symbol and an identity, not only in Sweden but in other countries and for the outside world. For quite a long time, other groups of Sami who are fishers, hunters and small farmers have been perceived as less Sami. Even though in Finland reindeer herding could be practised by both Finns and Sami, these discursive images are

also evident. A friend once told me about her wanting to be more like reindeer-herding Sami to be a 'proper' one:

[...] the west [...] they are generally the wealthier and the reindeer herders. I remember when I was a child, I wanted to be, I always wanted to have the Kautokeino dress, because [...] then you are more like Sami, then you are proper Sami, you know, it's like this [...] And it's, of course, also in the south, because that's the dress people recognise more (Interview 2018-08, Interlocutor H).

The dichotomy of modernity and tradition could be also evident in the academic discourse. The anthropologist Pertti J. Peltto, in the book 'Snowmobile Revolution', gives a great case study of Skolt Sami modernisation in the 1960s and 1970s, which marks great changes in the division of labour and bigger structural changes in communities. Small-scale reindeer herding became not enough to keep up with life. Modernisation increased the expense of reindeer herding, as reindeer herders had to buy snowmobiles and other equipment to be able to compete with others. Also, people needed more money for new modern transport, electronic equipment; they wished to have big houses with modern amenities, rather than traditional Sami huts. This encouraged people to seek other kinds of work. The modernisation of reindeer herding also made the Skolt Sami more dependent on other commodities, like snowmobiles, petrol, cars, and other means of transport. Greater dependence on production outside the village, dependence on the welfare state, new modern houses, and employment that resulted in socio-economic differentiation, according to P. Peltto, made the Sami more Finnicised (Peltto 1987[1973], preface).

On the other hand, Finnicisation is understood through a very essentialist approach, because culture and identity are understood as static. Elina Helander-Renvall analyses the adoption of snowmobiles through the actor-network theory, which is against deterministic changes in Sami society, suggesting that people and technology are equal participants in the change (Helander-Renvall 2007). According to this actor-network theory, snowmobiles were inventions adopted in Lapland, and gradually became part of Sami and Lapland's culture. People learned to use them according to their environment, and traditional knowledge was still needed in herding with snowmobiles. While the adoption of snowmobiles could be understood as bringing social differentiation and the de-localisation resources, we could also think of it, whether we judge it as good or bad, as a change of the modern economic and technological era entering Sami society and the agency of the people themselves. And this does not suggest that Sami people were Finnicised; rather, they moved independently to a different technological and economic time as a society. Similarly, it is argued by Lehtola, stating that 'It has often been associated with a somewhat mystified contrast between the old and the new. Tradition has consequently meant something "immemorial,"

“genuine,” or “authentic,” while modernity has referred to something that is strange to Sámi culture’ (Lehtola 2015: 30), but many Sami were modernising not because of the colonisers, but because of their own interest, and so we should interpret it at multiple levels.

On the other hand, this perception of Saminess as being ‘authentic’ and different from modernity still has an important part in the construction of the modern indigenous Sami identity, and has been internalised by people themselves, as traditional livelihoods and traditional skill sets have an important role in people’s understanding of Saminess. Taking Spivak’s ideas on strategic essentialism, S. Valkonen states that ‘an essentialistic self-image can be part of a commonplace strategic essentialism in which an essentialistic self-image is an everyday emancipative strategy and new form of self-dignity’ (Valkonen 2014: 216–217), and at the same time it is a source of shame and inadequacy for being ‘not enough’ Sami.

## Conclusions

As discussed before, ethnicities and identities form in relation to another group (Eriksen 2010: 14), choosing some aspects that look important to the group, and differentiating them from non-members of the group. These aspects become a tool to emphasise distinctiveness. This ethnic boundary forms in the context of the long-lasting essentialising depiction of an indigenous group being traditional and very different from most of modern society. Saminess based on traditional practices forms in opposition to Finnish modernity. The feelings of shame and inadequacy come from these images.

To finish, ethnicities and identities are filled with emotions and are often governed by them. Feelings of shame and inadequacy reveal that whether in assimilatory times it was shameful to be Sami, today it is shameful not to be ‘proper’ enough. J. Valkonen and S. Valkonen, commenting on J. Sissons’ thoughts, explain that: ‘the requirements of authenticity [...] imposed upon indigenous peoples by settler or post-settler governments can become oppressive’ (Valkonen, Valkonen 2014), something Elizabeth A. Povinelli calls the cunning of recognition, when one has to prove indigeneity by being ‘authentic’ (Povinelli 1998). In the Sami case, this discourse is internalised by the people themselves. Being ‘authentic’ is visible in key elements that make people feel Sami: practices of language and traditional things like livelihoods and skills as the embodiment of an ‘authentic’ indigenous body, which is enculturated through family line-forming *habitus*. The indigenous identity cannot be reduced to a bloodline, but if it is ‘measured’ by culture and tradition, it might get quite essentialised and defined in relation to ‘properness’ or ideal Saminess in this case. Tradition should be emancipating, but if it becomes a struggle for one’s identity, isn’t it still an oppressed position?

By feeling less Sami, there are fewer Sami people. And my question is whether it is not a new hidden and more subtle form of assimilation, internalised by the group and based on the tradition versus modernity dichotomy?

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## Nepakankamai samiai? Pokolonijinės tapatybės afektai

*Ugnė Barbora Starkutė*

### *Santrauka*

Šiame straipsnyje nagrinėjama, kaip tapatinamasi su samiškumu. Kas yra samis – vis dar diskutuotinas klausimas Suomijos Sapmi (Laplandijoje). Tai ne tik teisinis klausimas (nes tik teisiškai pripažinti samiai turi teisę balsuoti samių parlamentuose, kurie yra papildoma politinė institucija nacionalinėse santvarkose), bet ir pačioje bendruomenėje gvildenamas klausimas. Dažnai bijomasi būti asimiliuotiems į suomišką kultūrą, todėl neretai teigiama, kad žmonės, kurie per menkai atitinka samiškumo kriterijus, negali būti pripažinti samiais. Tačiau ne tik tie, kurie nepriimami kaip samiai, patiria nemalonius jausmus. Oficialiai pripažinti samiai, ypač iš mišrių suomių ir samių šeimų, patiria nepakankamumo ir gėdos jausmus.

Šiandien samiai dažnai apibūdinami kaip esantys tarp dviejų kultūrų – suomiškosios ir samiškosios, tačiau pokolonijiniame pasaulyje tapatybės yra hibridinės ir situacinės, daugialypės ir fragmentiškos (Bhabha 1994; Eriksen 2010). Straipsnyje parodoma, kaip žmonės naviguoja tarp samiškos ir suomiškos tapatybių ir su kokiais jausmais ir išgyvenimais susiduriama. Etninė tapatybė gali būti pasirinkta arba prarasta, gali būti tapatinamasi su abiejomis arba labiau su viena iš etninių grupių. Kaip samiškumo kriterijai dažnai nurodomos tokios praktikos kaip kalbos vartojimas ir tradicinės veiklos, pavyzdžiui, tradiciniai pragyvenimo šaltiniai, įgūdžiai. Vis dėlto, nors tapatybės gali koegzistuoti, panašu, kad būti samiu yra daug sudėtingiau. Žmonės turi įgyti įvairių tradicinių įgūdžių, taip pat susiduria ir su situacijomis, kai kvestionuojamas jų samiškumas. Būti samiu reiškia praktikuoti tradicijas, o to nedarymas siejamas su suomiškumu:

Iš tikrųjų aš jaučiuosi labiau suome nei same. Aš užaugau labai suomiškoje šeimoje. Aš taip užaugau ir todėl kartais jaučiuosi, kad nesu pakankamai tikra samė, nes nedarau tradicinių dalykų, jau sunkiai kalbu samiškai ir nesu aktyvistė. Jaučiu, turėčiau daryti daugiau, kad būčiau pakankamai same (mano vertimas, interviu 2018 08).

Žmonės jaučiasi nepakankamais samiais, nes „matuoja“ savo samiškumą lygindamiesi su „tikro samio“ vaizdiniu, o tai, be kalbos mokėjimo, siejama ir su įvairiomis tradicinėmis praktikomis, kultūrinėmis žiniomis, aktyvizmu. Tai yra interakcinis etniškumo aspektas, kai grupės tapatumas formuojasi kitos grupės atžvilgiu (Eriksen 2010: 14) pasirenkant keletą grupei svarbių aspektų, skiriančių ją nuo kitos grupės, tiksliau, nuo kitų, grupei nepriklausančių asmenų. Kultūriniai aspektai tampa įrankiu pabrėžti išskirtinumą, ir šiuo atveju tai yra samių

tradicijos ir tradicinės veiklos praktika priešinant tai Suomijos modernybei. Tai matyti ir ilgai istorijoje besitęsusiame autochtonų, kaip tradicinių bendruomenių, įvaizdyje.

Aptartas nepakankamumas ar net gėda – vyraujančių modernybės sukurtų dichotomijų pasekmė, kada kolonizatorius siejamas su modernybe, o autochtoniškumas – su tradicija. Straipsnis parodo, kaip toks diskursas internalizuojamas pačios grupės ir pasireiškia savo ir kitų samiškumo abejojimu. Asimiliacijos laikais buvo gėdijamasi būti samiais, šiandien gėdinga būti nepakankamai „tinkamais“ samiais. Tokie primesti autentiškumo reikalavimai gali tapti priespauda (Sissons 2005: 39; Valkonen, Valkonen 2014). Jeigu mažiau žmonių jaučiasi samiais, yra vis mažiau samių. Tradicija turėtų būti emancipuojanti, tačiau jeigu tai tampa kliūtimi tapatybei, ar tai nėra ta pati priespauda? Tokie samprotavimai kelia klausimą: ar tai ne nauja, subtili ir nematoma asimiliacijos forma?

*Gauta 2020 m. kovo mėn.*