

# Visual construction of the indigenousness

## Finnish Lapland travellers' photographs of the Saami people and culture

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### Abstract

Visual has always played an important role in representing cultures and ethnicities. "Us", "them" and ethnic relations are constructed through visual representations in great part. This article focuses on active Lapland travellers' photographs of the Saami people and culture. Aim of the study to which this article bases on, is to trace visual orders and gazes that are present in travellers' photographs. The main question is how photographs identify the Saami people and their culture? Photographs and their connotations are analysed against the representations of the Saami in the Finnish Lapland travelling industry and historical travel literature. Active travellers' photos do not simply repeat the gazes, representations and connotations, which are present in tourist industry and old travel tales. They also imply connotations, which break the old stereotypes and transmit "atmosphere of understanding" between the Saami and Finnish travellers.

**Keywords:** Cultural identity, gaze, Lapland, photograph, representation, stereotype, the Saami, tourism, visual

## Introduction

The beautiful and somewhat desolate nature of Lapland and exotic Saami people has played an important part in the tales and narratives of Lapland travellers since the very beginning of their documentation. In *Germania*, Cornelius Tacitus (98) had already described the people who lived according to the rules of nature and had their own exotic religious ways and humble lifestyle. After Tacitus, the next written sources about the Saami can be found in some Viking sagas. For instance, Ottar and Öyvind Skaldesiller have written about the poor and wild people – especially those with a hunter-gatherer lifestyle – living in the merciless wilderness (Lehtola 1999, 17). One thing common to all of these early descriptions, is the way in which the Saami are seen as people without property and lacking civilization. In most of the descriptions, the Saami are those who belong to the underclass of the archaic Nordic societies. A rather similar representation is repeated in Johannes Schefferus' *Lapponia*, dating back to 1673, which can be thought as the founding book of Lappology. *Lapponia* is one of the clearest historical documentations of the Saami life and culture, but it creates a romantic view of the Saami as primitive, harmless, and peaceful in their nature. This description partly justified and made way for the Nordic states to conquer the living environments of the Saami and deepen state control in Lapland.

This picture of the Saami as exotic peripheric people has endured for centuries in the Finnish, Nordic, and European travel literature. Scientific lappology and popular travel books formed their own catalogue and lexis, their own discourse consisting of certain types of words, utterances, and pictures. Subsequently, this created a mythical picture of Lapland and the

Saami, which became an important cultural mirror in the building process of Nordic nations. This mythical picture leaned greatly on the “logic of negativity” (Lehtola 1999, 16). The Saami were those who lacked almost everything: civilization, property (such as cattle), permanent and proper dwelling places. The Saami became cultural “others”, against which the Finnish national character, for instance, was textually and visually build and emphasized. This was especially so after the strengthening of the nationalistic Fennomann movement in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. In Fennomannic discourse, the Finns were seen as hard-working, aiming at civilization and, furthermore, as those whose artistic and cultural (e.g. language) features were more highly developed on the scale of cultural evolution than other Finno-Ugrian people. This “othering” of the Saami started to formulate truth-discourses about them and their culture in the eyes of the Finns and such discourses remained present in the developing Lapland tourism, which became common during the 20th century. Actually, this discourse was at that time one of central launching pads of Lapland tourism in Finland and continues to be so today. Lapland was and is sold through notions about its exoticism, romanticism, wilderness/wildness, primitiveness, and cultural difference; as an “ultima thule”. (Lehtola 1997, 47-60; Lehtola 1999; Länsman 2004, 22, 146-157; Saarinen 1999; see also e.g. Topelius 1876.)

In the last twenty-five years or so, Lapland tourism has increased dramatically; mainly as a result of the work of Finnish businesspersons. At the same time, its significance in relation to the regional economy has become of primary importance: tourism is the main source of economic income and field of employment (see third chapter). Although the historically constructed primitive, exotic, and romantic stereotypes of the Saami and Lapland are still very much alive in tourist marketing, the representations and narratives of Lapland and the Saami have multiplied. First of all, the Saami have ploughed their way through to the tourist industry and many of the

places of accommodation and tourist resorts are provided by the Saami. Secondly, as the tourist mass has increased, it has also become more heterogeneous. There are people who travel to Lapland for spa and hotel holidays, hiking, alpine and cross-country skiing, and to visit the cultural and archaeological sites. Thus, the expectations, demands and preconceptions about Lapland and the Saami have also diversified. The same can also be said about the interpretations and representations that tourists and travellers make of their visits to Lapland.

Although some theorists argue that the visuality and gaze have not always been significant in the travel memoirs and literature, and it has gained its importance along the development of modern tourism (e.g. Adler 1989), I argue that in the Lappish travel literature and “western” descriptions of Lapland visual has played an important role through the printed history. Already Tacitus’ *Germania* swarms stories of visual perceptions of the Saami, their everyday lives and living environment. During Tacitus’ times, the Saami were called as the Finns.

*The Finns are earthly wild and despicably poor. They do not have weapons, horses, nor houses. They have plants as nutriment, leather as clothes, and earth ground as bed. Their only property is their arrows, which they made out of bones because of lack of iron. Hunting provides maintenance for both men and women. The latter follow men everywhere and hunt part of the game. Their children’s only shelter from wild animals and storms is some sort of canopy of sticks. (Tacitus 1976, 75-76; translation MP.)*

In Schefferus’ *Lapponia* actual pictures are in crucial role: the gaze and the mediation of what was seen in Lapland are as important part of the construction of knowledge in the book as is the text. The great part of the pictures in *Lapponia* present weird and exotic religious patterns of the Saami, which deviate from the ones of Europeans.

The significance of visual in how travelling and travel literature have illustrated and taken over the peripheries has only increased after Lapponia, especially during the era of modern tourism. The catalogue of old travel literature has not, however, disappeared, but its position has strengthened. The old visualisations have transferred to modern travelling and their reproduction has expanded through modern media. This old catalogue is still important part of how Finnish travellers visually perceive Saaminess, both when they have not actually seen the Saami or their patterns and symbols, and when they perceive and interpret what they have actually seen and documented during their travels. Traveller's gaze is constructed through different signs. These signs mirror broadly shared and historically constructed images of some particular area, culture and people (Urry 1990, 3.) In the Lapland tourism, these signs come mainly from the old travel literature.

This article focuses on those people who travel to Lapland for nature and cultural experiences, stay there for longer periods, have done so many times, and most of whom belong to the association of active Lapland and outdoor devotees. This article examines the visual representations of the Saami people and culture made by these travellers. I analyse how their photographic representations engage with classic and romantic stereotypes of the Saami. Do they strengthen them, lean on them, or perhaps challenge them?

This article uses a collection of 182 photographs as its research material. The first photos are from the year 1930 and the last ones from 2003. I have collected them from eight different travellers and one archive of the Tunturilatu (Felltrack) association, which was formed by active travellers living in Central Finland. I have collected photographs from the different and multiple trips that each person has made. My attempt was to collect all of the pictures that in some way related to the Saami and/or their culture from each traveller, or at least one picture from every recorded encounter between the travellers and the

Saami who they had photographed. The purpose of this data collection was to approach the change(s) in the photographic gaze that take(s) place when a person gets to know the Lappish nature/countryside, cultures, and people, as the number of travels increase. All photos are used anonymously by request of the photographers/travellers.

## **Theory and methodology**

It is said that tourism and photography are two of the salient characteristics of (post)modern human experience and essence (e.g. Bauman 1996; Garlick 2002; Kaplan 1998). On the one hand tourism – as a form of travelling – is something that locates, relocates and dislocates cultural features, as well as one significant metaphor of (post)modern identity. On the other hand identities get their form and content in representations and one of the most powerful ways of representation has been photograph through the last century. The theoretical background of the article derives, thus, from present cultural studies, tourist studies and anthropological studies on visuality and photographic representation.

I do approach identity as something pertaining to the essence of a human being or group, but rather to its visual, oral, textual, or other representation (e.g. Dyer 1993; Hall 1997a; Hall 1997b). This approach emphasizes the notion that cultural identity is flexible, hybridized, and changes according to the context in which it is used. The meaning of identity is contextually produced in different representations in a particular way, by a particular person, for a particular person, and with specific means. Much more than ‘essence’, the pressing question regarding identity is the way(s) in which it positions people in representations. This is a political question par excellence: groups and people struggle over and negotiate the positions from which they produce representations about themselves and ‘the others’, as well as the form and content of these representations. Repre-

sentations produce, reproduce, and change power relations between social and cultural groups. Sometimes representations produce and strengthen the conceptualizations of ethnic minorities as others; those, who are culturally inferior to the Western "us". Sometimes, however, representations decline and change these stereotypes. The form of influence that 'the other' has here depends on the context of representation, its subjects and objects, and their relationship. If it is possible for the target of the representation to influence the representation, it is usually less "othering" than if this possible does not exist. Representational approach to identity means that I do not chase for authentic identities or visual representations, but the question of authenticity is also political. What becomes acknowledged as authentic is a matter of power relations and political struggles. Those with the right media and legitimate positions can "authenticate" identities and representations. In the case of Lapland tourism, these are usually big tourist companies and state travel services.

Authentic identities are myth. The researcher can not perceive the world and the reality as pure, but through significations produced from particular perspectives and positions. Along this "guideline", I do not tend to present "authentic", "real" or "pure" research story about the visuality of the Saami. It is also crucial to emphasize that I do not compare the representations of Finnish travellers as secondary to "authentic" representations of the Saami themselves. This article is about Finnish travellers' visual mentalities, which crystallize in their photographic gaze. It is a journey to critical understanding of the cultural framework, which has impacts on our perceptions and comprehensions about the Saami and Lapland in the context of travelling. This approach has of course its potential pitfalls. One might criticize that the voice of the Saami is absent in it. On the one hand, this is of course true, but as I have said, I do not try to chase authentic representations, but to direct the research gaze towards the Finnish representations, which construct both the

Saaminess and Finnishness – the case is about ethnically Finnish researcher studying ethnically Finnish travellers. I am also aware of the danger that someone interprets my writings as an attempt to “speak on behalf of the Saami”. That is by no means my intention, but to open up new perspectives to the Saami – Finnish relations. In the spirit of Foucauldian genealogy, I do not try to tell truths, but try to make way for critical reinterpretations and perspectives to Lapland tourism and ethnic relations it bears. My writing is one representation among others – although academically constructed one. (About these discussions see Hovland 1999, 38-42; Clifford 1986.)

Photographs have been very important in anthropological research through its modern history. On the one hand, photographs have been taken by anthropologists for documentation of situations and people during the ethnographic field work. According to Elizabeth Edwards (1992, 5) anthropological photos have often constructed the exotic “otherness” of foreign cultures as they were used as evidence of western race theories and justifications of colonial power in the turn of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. At that point, and also later on, photos were used as “recorded expressions of truth”. Edwards (emt.) says that this framework of objective and seemingly benevolent anthropological recording is what present anthropology needs to decode and move the perspective of observation from truth to the power relation between anthropologist and research subjects.

*While this relationship was in many cases tempered at an individual level with a genuine desire for a sympathetic understanding of people in human terms, such intentions were inevitably confronted by the intellectual difficulties of such an endeavour, and the unequal relationship was sustained through a controlling knowledge which appropriated the ‘reality’ of other cultures into ordered structure. Photography was in many ways symbolic of this relationship. It represented technological superiority harnessed to the delineation and control of the physical world,*



*whether it be boundary surveys, engineering schemes to exploit natural resources, or the description and classification of the population. [...] Through anthropology the power of knowing was transformed into a rationalized, observed truth. (Edwards 1992, 6.)*

On the other hand, photographs taken by the people under study have been used as memoir data and researched as one way of their meaning production. "Photography is a valuable tool for field research in part because it highlights the way in which persons construct their reality through visual documents" (Stark-Arola 2000, 5). Whether a photograph is taken by research subjects for private purposes or an anthropologist for research purposes, it provides a tool for a dialogue (ibid.). In the case of this article, this dialogue is two-fold: on the one hand the photographs I use as data include the dialogue between traveller/photographer and the photographed/the Saami, on the other hand the dialogue between me/researcher and the photographer/traveller is also present in the research process. It is crucial that everyone in the process understand that photographs are "extremely important personal objects which signify above all person's interconnectedness to other persons, and thus their identity at the nexus of a system of interpersonal relations" (ibid., 6). This is present in the ways that the Saami people and culture are represented in the each photo and the situation that it is taken. According to the photographers from whom I collected the pictures, photographed people sometimes wanted to dress in a certain way for photograph situation and sometimes photographers asked them to pose in the certain way. Thus, these cultural, personal and situational elements are something, which influence on the photographic representations, and they have to be kept in mind while reading my interpretations. I have tried to approach these "emic meanings" through discussions with the photographers in data collection situations and through reading of their journals, but also

tried to fulfil them with “etic meanings” through approaching them against visual discourses represented in the tourist industry and travel literature.

Methodologically, I approach the rhetoric of the travellers’ photographs by analyzing their denotative and connotative messages. First, I have done a classification of the photos according to their denotative messages, i.e. what do they portray. Second, taking a lead from Roland Barthes (1977), I try to understand and interpret the myths hidden and “working” in the photographs. Myths can be approached through the symbolic, cultural or, as Barthes rather calls it, connotative message of the photo. There are different kinds of cultural, aesthetical and practical knowledges stored in every photo. Their expressions and classifications form the rhetoric of image. It mediates the myths and ideologies “hidden” in the photos, and that is what I mainly try to analyse here.

One noteworthy dimension of the photographic message here is also the linguistic one. Usually either captions or texts in some objects of the photographs (e.g. product labels) conduct the interpretations which could be made out of it. In my data, two kinds of linguistic forms are present: On the one hand the oral stories, which travellers told me while I visited their homes. Those have influenced on my interpretations of the photos. On the other hand the captions, which travellers have written next to the photos in their albums or which are used in the journal of the travellers association, did guide me to watch the photos in a certain way and let me know, where the photos are taken and which is their “iconic message”.

Analysis of the connotative messages of the photos links to the analysis of “visual orders” encoded in the gazes of the travellers.

*Structures and orders are part of the visual. Visual orders exist both in physical environment, world of objects and in forms and contents of illustrated representations. [...] They are part of in-*

*teraction happening in gaze. To gaze at something is action, which is normative and transmits meanings. [...] Visual orders include established and shared cultural meanings. (Seppänen 2002, 34-36.)*

Visual order is thus culturally structured set of regularities, which conduct the ways, how we visually perceive, represent and interpret something. It is the “common” and “normal” way of representing things and horizon of expectation for the interpretations of representations. There is, for instance, a particular visual order in representing the Saaminess in tourist industry – consisting of certain symbols in certain order – and it contains a limited repertoire of possibilities for decoding the messages in representations. When visual orders are analysed, it must be also observed what is not shown in representations. When television commercials on cosmetics represent beauty, they use certain looking young people and elderly, disabled and weighty people are absent, for instance. Visual order and gaze links to construction of facts and truths – their visual dimension. Especially photographs are crucial in this, because they do have a reputation of being authentic representations of reality. However, this does not mean that photos are free from imaginary and subjective features. Photographic gaze mirror images of the photographer and her/his ways of visualising them. Photograph is a mean of social interaction, which functions within the dimension of cultural signification system. As an ideological practice, photograph draws principles from cultural contexts where it works – in this case Lapland tourism and travelling. (Ibid., 13, 34; Edwards 2001a; Edwards 2001b; Barthes 1977.)

Gazes are crucial for visual orders. Through gaze we fit something that can be visually perceived to visual orders. We also fit ourselves into the visual orders through others’ gazes – when we try to satisfy the demands written into them. In other words, eye does not only transmit, but also receive. “The gaze is

continuously reforming process, where earlier images, cultural experiences and situated interaction bind together" (Seppänen 2002, 97). Gaze does always contain power, and between two or more subjects it is a power relation. In gaze one evaluates other and puts her/him into certain place in ones own socialized cultural settings. This other on her/his behalf regulates own actions according to this gaze, whether it is actual or simulated. (Cf. Foucault 1979, 200-201.) Tourist gaze or traveller's gaze is also socially organised and systematised, and impregnated with power. Through gaze travellers organise the reality they perceive and classify people perceived in relation to themselves as members of particular ethnic and social group. (Urry 1990.)

## Who are the Saami?

The Saami are the only indigenous people in Europe. Most of them live in the northernmost parts of Norway, Sweden, and Finland, and on the Kola Peninsula in Russia. Altogether, there are approximately 75 000 Saami people and they speak ten different languages. In Finland, there are 8000 Saami people who speak three different languages: Northern Sámi, Inari Sámi, and Skolt Sámi. The traditional living environment of the Saami is a region that consists of three northern municipalities in Finland. However, only 55 % of the Saami currently live there. (Kulonen et al. 2005, 5, 176-177.)

According to the definition made by Saami Thing (representative organization of the Saami in Finland) and the Act of Sami Thing for the Saami person, *Saami means a person who considers her-/himself a Saami, provided: 1) that she/he her-/himself or at least one of her/his parents or grandparents has learnt Sámi as his first language; 2) that she/he is a descendent of a person who has been entered in a land, taxation or population register as a mountain, forest or fishing Lapp; or 3) that at least one of her/his parents has or could have been registered as an elector for an election to the Saami Parliament or the Saami Thing.*

Next I will look through some of the details of historical development of the Saami population and their governance in Finland, because “a deeper, contextual understanding (of photos and gazes) is dependent on a network of encoded structures in representation” (Edwards 1992, 5). My intention is to contextualise the gazes of travelling with the historical development through reading of some recent historical observations, made by researchers with the Saami background and/or critical slant on stereotyping nature of Finnish historical Saami studies. Through clarifying the background of the Saami and power structures between Saami and Finnish state, I try to offer means for reader to critically appraise the exoticizing gaze of the historical travel literature.

The first sources about the Saami traditionally state that the livelihoods of the Saami have been based on hunting, gathering, and fishing. The Saami lived for most of the year as family units in temporary accommodations because they followed the seasonal circulation of game. During the winter times, they gathered in villages based on the kin relationship of the dwellers – so-called *Siidas*. For the Saami, significant means of income and products came from the fur trade, which they practiced with other Fenno-Scandian, Baltic, and Eastern groups. (Tacitus 1976; Schefferus 1979.)

According to some archaeological and anthropological interpretations, the hunter-gatherer Saami already practiced small-scale reindeer herding and owned a few reindeer per family unit as cattle. As such, reindeer herding became a significant source of livelihood for the Saami during the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The reason expedition of spread of reindeer herding as a common source of livelihood was two-fold; on the one hand, due to external pressures coming from the ongoing formation of the Norwegian, Swedish, and Russian states, and on the other hand, the growth of Saami communities, the spread of new ideas concerning sources of livelihood, and the fall in the amounts of game. The transition to reindeer herding and a no-

madic lifestyle changed the nature of Siidas: they got bigger and the distance between the winter village and summer villages increased. This change also gave birth to private ownership among the Saami. Nowadays, the Saami sources of livelihood have diversified. Many of the Saami have been forced to abandon their nomadic lifestyle, because of economic pressures, cultural assimilation, border politics of the Nordic states and exploitation of the Saami land for the mining and hydro-electric production, for instance. Presently, very few of the Saami get their main income from reindeer herding, but it is still seen as symbol of the Saami culture. For instance, if there is a Saami art exhibition or documentary about the Saami made or organized by the Saami, the reindeers are almost unexceptionally very visibly positioned. Today, in addition to reindeer herding, important professions for the Saami are tourism, handicrafts, trade, culture, media, and education. (Lehtola 2002, 23-27; Horn 2004.)

States and the Catholic Church started active work in Lapland during the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This meant increase in missionary work, the introduction of taxation, and the systematic creation of colonies with ethnically mainstream inhabitants. Smaller-scale missionary work had, however, already started in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, but it now became systematic and the animistic and shamanistic religion of the Saami was forcefully diminished bit by bit. The missionary work was not without its political intentions. For instance, the Swedish state started to claim Saami lands as its own while the missionary work proceeded. At the same time, the political organization of the Saami villages was forced to change. Traditional village court sessions were replaced by public governance procedures (e.g. a so-called people's court was held during the annual market) and the leadership of the Saami villages was taken care of by royal bailiffs instead of the village elders. (Lehtola 2002, 30-37.)

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, state ethno-politics towards the Saami culture in Finland can be divided into three phases in accor-

dance with the concept taken from the John Berry's (2000) theory of acculturation. The first phase can be referred to as segregation and it lasted through the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, continuing in some forms until the end of the Second World War. At this time, there was no special state interest in interfering with the Saami culture, although many legislative acts and governance procedures influenced the Saami culture. These were, for instance, changes in the state borderlines, border policies, and the Reindeer herding act (1932), which gave legal power to everyone – not just the Saami – to herd reindeers in Lapland. In the fields of literature, research, and cultural policy, Saami cultures were mainly seen as archaic, needing to be segregated from the western influences so that they could remain “authentic”. This led to the “museumizing” of the Saami and their culture along the features, which were considered to form the essence of the Saami culture. If some Saami wanted to practice ways of life, which were not “authentic” for the Saami, they were seen as not genuine and degenerated. Whether authentic or not authentic the Saami were seen as “culturally inferior”, and this justified the political, social and economic domination and repression of the Saami and their land. (Lehtola 1999.)

The second phase of the ethno-politics started at the end of the 1920s and lasted until the 1960s. This can be referred to as the phase of marginalisation and assimilation. On the one hand, the Saami were marginalized politically and culturally: the interests, demands, and representative organisations and delegations of the Saami were not taken into consideration. Still the Saami culture and languages were seen as ancient relics. It was required that people should be displaced from their cultural roots in order to give them the possibilities to succeed in the inevitable modernization process. The flipside of this was the need to culturally assimilate the Saami into the Finnish mainstream culture in the name of their survival. The central administration tried to teach the Saami the Finnish language and

modern lifestyle, mainly through the educational system. Saami children were taken into boarding schools and they were not allowed to speak their native languages. The common idea of ethno-politics at that time was that, as cultural relics, the Saami were bound to become culturally extinct, and so this assimilation process was seen as beneficial for them. (Kulonen et al. 2005, 24-25; Lehtola 2002.)

The third phase started during the 1970s, after the “ethno-genesis” of the Saami. During the early phase of the period associations and movements of the Saami strengthened, and there were remarkable rise in publicity of the Saami artists. This period can be called as the period of integration, although elements of marginalisation and assimilation still remain in the governance of the Saami people. In this phase, the Saami have their official, recognized representative bodies (The Saami Parliament), which negotiate with the central administration about the issues relating to Saami cultures. There is also legislation that secures the position of the Saami languages and cultures. The basic governmental rationality is that the Saami have the right to maintain their cultures at the same time as there is a desire for the Saami to be an active part of a multicultural Finnish society. However, questions relating to land ownership and use have shown that the administrative good will towards the Saami concerns only some parts of their culture and heritage, and not those which can be seen to have more profound economic consequences. (Eriksson & Karppi 2002; Kulonen et al. 2005, 24-25; Lehtola 2002.)



## Lapland travelling and tourist industry

Many researchers, administrators, churchmen, and adventurers travelled in Lapland between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries; however, modern Lapland tourism started in the 1920s and 1930s in Finland. At this time, transportation (busses, cars, trains) and traffic connections improved to the point – mainly because of the road from Rovaniemi via Ivalo to Petsamo – that large-scale tourism became possible. It was at this time that the Finnish traveller's association (Suomen Matkailijyhdistys) was established and it built the first hotels and bed and breakfast accommodation in Lapland. During this time, the tourism focussed on nature experiences (hiking) and understanding and perceiving the scale of the fatherland and its peripheries (so called national romanticism). The second wave of the Lappish tourism took place during the 1960s and 1970s, when road connections and means of transportations were further improved. Another reason for this second wave was the construction of large modern tourist centres with hotels, restaurants, shops and slalom slopes. Although the classic hiker type still remained common among the travellers, the number of "holiday tourists" increased strongly. The third phase of Lapland tourism took place after the mid-1990s, when tourism started to recover after the economic recession at the beginning of the decade. The building of tourist facilities by private companies, and not the state, is typical to this new phase. Subsequently, tourist centres have expanded fiercely and the hiker and holiday tourist have been joined by a new traveller type, namely the experience seeking tourist. This new type of traveller seeks safe experiences in events that take place, for example, near tourist centres or are organised by them. These kinds of events are snow mobile and creep safaris, short cross-country skiing trips, gyms and spas. (Lapin ympäristökeskus 2004; Länsman 2004, 50.)

Presently, the significance of tourism in Lapland is of primary importance. In 2003, the tourist industry in Lapland

directly employed 3472 people and the income from tourism was 377 million euros. It is clearly the most significant means of livelihood in Lapland. The growth from the 1990s is remarkable. For example, in 1995 the turnover of programme services (businesses offering events packages), the safari business, and travel agencies was 10 million euros. In 2003, the amount was 56 million euros. The number of labour years in the aforementioned branches of the tourist industry has risen from 183 to 476. At the same time, the tourist industry has “internationalized”, although the domestic tourists still constitute the majority. 59 % of the overnight tourist stays were domestic and 41 % foreign in the northern parts of Lapland (the so-called Saami home area) in 2003. (Lapin liitto 2004.)

Exact figures conveying the output of the Saami as tourist service providers are not available, but according to various media sources and discussions with informants and researchers, the number has increased. It is, for instance, rather typical that families who practice reindeer herding organize small-scale farm tourism (accommodation, activity programmes, catering). The Saami have also gained ground as full-time tourist service providers and in the semi-public tourist service organizations (e.g. nature centres maintained by the Finnish Forest and Park’s Service).

Although the actual presence of the Saami agents is rather small in the wider field of the tourist industry, their symbolic presence is far more expansive. The Saami and their culture (e.g. colourful clothing, reindeer herding and joik music) is exploited by the tourist industry in many ways: Tourists can buy dolls looking like the Saami children from the Santa Claus Park in Rovaniemi, hear joik music in nature centres and museums, and see people with copies of Saami clothing and reindeer standing outside tourist resorts. A large proportion of the organized Finnish tourist industry sees the Saami as an exotic group and culture that can be taken advantage of when marketing experiences and images of Lapland to tourists. The tourist

industry makes good use of Saami images originating from the descriptions of old travel books at the same time as reproducing them in modern contexts. These external representations are sometimes described as “cultural over-exploitation”: rarely so they match the representations that the Saami would give off themselves and their cultures, and they are produced without hearing the opinions of the people they concern. (Aikio 1999; Länsman 2004, 14, 22; Saarinen 1999.)

This drawing below represents the most blatant exploitation of the Saami culture in tourist industry. It is taken from the book called “The Lighter Side of Lapland for Businessmen” which purpose is to tell enticing story about the exotic Lapland for the private entrepreneurs. In this picture many of the stereotypical features of representation are present: the Saami man has double-edged tongue as a metaphor of unreliability; big breasted naked woman dances on the fire as a metaphor of wild and natural sexuality of the Northern women; the Saami man sleeps while sitting on the wood with *kuksa* (wooden cup) as a metaphor of imagined alcoholism of the Saami; white reindeer, birds and fell are part of the man and *visa versa* as a metaphor of primitiveness of the Saami.



*Picture 1. Example of exceptionally rancid way of representing the Saami and Saami culture in tourist industry (Uuttu-Kalle & Anikari 1997, 4-5).*

Postcolonial research on tourism emphasizes that tourism has major impacts on cultures it deals with. As far as tourism has become the main economic power in many of the areas which might be called exotic from westerners' point of view, it has influenced heavily on those "exotic cultures" (e.g. Kupiainen 2000). The most explicitly tourism changes the structures of means of livelihoods within the communities it concentrates. Implicitly it influences mobility of populations and other demographic features, symbolism, arts and crafts, people's identities and so on. According to postcolonial research tourism can be seen as a reproducer of colonialist power structures and

as the (post)modern form of colonialism. Especially when tourism is in the hands of western businesses or private owners, who do not have backgrounds in the areas to which tourism concentrates, it easily advances the division of western rulers and "ruled natives". As such, it also reproduces image of civilized western cultures and exotic "others", whose cultures only reasonable use is to entertain westerners. On the other hand, tourism can function as a resource for indigenous people (e.g. Kupiainen 2000). For some it is the context where old traditions can be maintained, because they would not otherwise do so. People produce arts and crafts and teach youngsters how to do them, because they are sold for tourist purposes (e.g. Sami Duodji label among the Saami). For some indigenous people the tourism is also direct source of income. The Saami with their own resorts and products can also use tourism in representing their cultural features for westerners from their point of view.

Tourism is irreversibly visual activity (Urry 1992, 172). Even without any technical means (video recorder or camera) tourist visually observe environment and record sights into her/his mind. Already before particular travel takes place, the visual plays important role in travelling: tourist decides her/his destination or travel route according to the images appropriated from tourist guides and/or travel descriptions. The catalogues and "pre-gazes" include and create images about the destinations, which conduct traveler's attitudes and emotions towards environment, people and locations in destination. Images cause excitement, anticipation, fears and so on in the mind of traveler. Susan Sontag (1977, 10-14) has argued that having camera transforms person into active participator, makes she/he the subject in relation to object of the photographic activity. She claims that photographic activity gives photographer priority to see and have knowledge of objects in the way that they themselves never can see or have. In the case of the travelers' photographs in my data, this is true in some cases, but in many cases the travelers take their photographs with them,

when they visit the people they have photographed again. Many of them have shown their pictures for the objects of the photos and heard their experiences. So, photograph is not simply just a way to capture the right to visualize the object, but also a mean for communication about visuality.

Photographs have great significance for memory and retrospection of the photographer/traveler. Through this kind of visually mediated remembering travelers construct their identities within the frameworks of time and space. Through watching photos and remembering the events, situations and people in them, travelers create self-narratives with the timeline and reference to locations, where the photos have been taken from. At the same time, they construct their identities in relation to the people in photographs, their objects, the "others". "Other" does not refer necessarily to the negative connotation of the word here, but to the somewhat Freudian conceptualization according to which one's self-identification always occurs in relation to the constitutive other. (Garlick 2002, 296.)

As Sontag suggests, I do not approach tourists and travelers as passive receivers of the messages expressed in different contexts of their travels, but as active producers and decoders of meanings. Travellers do not necessarily adopt the views and representations offered as such, but rather, fit them into their existing cultural interpretation systems – or conceptual maps – and in this way give new meanings to the things they experience. Travellers who do not know about the Saami cultures and people closely might receive and interpret the tourist industry images of the Saami as reindeer herders and somewhat primitive people as truths, whereas those who know them better, look these images critically.

As previously mentioned, users of the mainstream tourist industry (so called holiday tourists) are not the only kind of travellers in Lapland, although they are the majority. There are still a large number of self-motivated travellers, who do not use organised tourist services such as hotels, safaris, and restaura-

rants. They participate alone or in groups in long hiking and skiing trips and sleep in tents or the modest wilderness cabins found throughout the area. These kinds of travellers have closer connection to nature, the local people and their cultures than "holiday tourists". They are "relatives" - often even in the strict sense of the word - of those who started their travelling in Lapland after the war. At the time, there were no hotels or tourist services, because all of the buildings had been burnt down by German soldiers during Lapland War 1945. Travellers had to seek help from local people if they wanted, for instance, to sleep indoors or use a boat. In the case of many travellers this started a long-lasting friendship and periodical host-guest relation between them and the locals. (Länsman 2004, 49-80.)

Like holiday tourists, these self-motivated travellers seek peace with nature and cultural experiences from Lapland, yet it can be said that they do so in a deeper sense than the first ones. They seriously want get to know the local people, habits, and nature. Most of them have many friends among the local people in Lapland, many of them who are Saami. These are the travellers, whose photographs I analyse in this paper. Most of the people from whom I have collected my data, belong to the previously mentioned Felltrack association. The purpose of the association is to maintain its members' enthusiasm towards Lapland and its local cultures by publishing a magazine and organising meetings, seminars, and hiking and skiing trips to Lapland. Felltrack was established in 1946 and since then, its members have travelled to Lapland again and again with the purpose of getting to know the Saami culture better and to appreciate the close connection between the Saami and the Lapland nature. (Tunturilatu 1999.) This desire for knowledge and experiences has inspired many of the association's members to photograph and document their trips. Many of the travellers have had exotic and romantic expectations of the Saami culture to begin with; however, these expectations and views have changed during their many trips.

## What do the travellers' photographs portray?

I have categorized the travellers' photographs according to what they portray. The categorization constructs six categories, many of which are subsequently divided into subcategories. First of all, the data includes a lot of photos about *the Saami dwelling places and buildings*. These photographs can be divided into two "subcategories": those which portray traditional and historical dwelling places, and those which portray the present and modern dwellings of the Saami. Common to both subcategories is that dwelling places are set in the natural environment; small villages in the middle of the fells or lonely cabins in the forest. They are pictures, which help travellers to remember where they have been and what they have seen, but at the same time this way of portraying the everyday living environment of the Saami, can be interpreted to place them into the "traditional catalogues", which represent the Saami as exotic, distant, poor and "natural" people. When the travellers represent the Saami life as part of the Lappish nature, they reproduce the images of the Saami culture's authentic side and do not emphasize the recent changes taking place in their culture. It is kind of a visual metonym of the Saami way of living: although the ways of dwelling of the Saami have diversified remarkably since 1960's, travellers gaze them still as something sequestered by choice – similarly as the tourist industry have done for decades.





*Photo 1. Photo from the historical Saami dwelling place in Saariselkä area.*

The second category consists of photos of Saami people. There are first of all photos about people, who travellers do not know, but whom they have identified as the Saami because of their clothing or some other external identification mark. These photos are typically from the travellers' first trips to Lapland, when they did not personally know the Saami people in the pictures. If the companions of photographers are present in photos, they do not communicate with the Saami, but wonder about their appearance. These photos (see the example below) are typical tourist photos, and to which fits well Susan Sontag's and Roland Barthes' argument on photographing as an activity of capturing the right to produce visual knowledge about its object. Photos are not taken back to their objects to evaluate and tell their interpretations of them. They do not change stereotypical visual orders of travellers concerning the Saami, but reproduce and strengthen them. These photos function as evidence for the traditional visual orders, which base on differentiating "us" from the Saami "others".



*Photo 2. Family wondering the Saami man with traditional clothes from a certain and safe distance in Inari in the beginning of 1960's.*

There are also photos about the Saami people in their everyday life-environment, doing their everyday tasks and routines. This group of pictures connotes a close relationship to the Saami and requires the cultural competence necessary to identify people as Saami without any identification marks. The travellers have taken these pictures after they have got to know the Saami personally. These photos represent different perspective to the travellers' gaze than the previous and what Sontag argues to be natural for photographic activity: the Saami are not passive objects of the photographic activity, but actively influence on the scenes in which photographs are taken and have usually chance of discussing about the interpretations and knowledge of the photos with the photographers later on. The third subgroup of people photographs consists of those portraying a familiar Saami person(s) posing for the photographer. These photos bear similar connotations about the travellers' gazes as those taken from everyday life situations. Here, it is normal that the Saami pose with their traditional clothes on and in their traditional living environment, but one can immediately sense a more profound connection between the photographer and their objects from these photos than from the "tourist photos" mentioned earlier: In these portraits one senses respect for

their objects, but in the "tourist photos" one senses wondering about and exoticism. While taken these photos, the Saami in them have been able to decide what kinds of clothes they wear and how do they pose. Many of the travellers from whom I collected the data told me funny stories about these situations and the situations where they showed these pictures for the photographed people. It happened very often that the Saami persons changed their clothes several times before the photographers were allowed to take pictures and afterwards they wondered how they should have wore something else and posed in other positions. The fourth group of people's photos are those that portray the travellers themselves or their companions with the Saami in the moments of encounter between the travellers and the Saami. They are also usually taken in everyday life situations and reflect good relationships and long lasting contact between the photographer and the photographed.



*Photo 3. Pierra-Juuso posing for the traveller with his celebration clothes on by his own request.*

The third category of photos consists of those portraying the Saami *sources and means of livelihood*. The photographed livelihoods vary depending on the photographer's experiences and knowledge of the Saami. Those travellers who visit Lapland for the first time and do not have personal connections with the

Saami pick up working Saami from the tourist centres and road banks. The first sub-group of photographs consists of images about tourist and souvenir shops, in which there are either actual Saami or people who wear similar clothes while working. Connotations these photos bear, relate to the myths of the Saami which are historically constructed in travel literature and industry: Saami wear celebration clothes all the time; they live surrounded by artefacts made of reindeers and ancient religious equipments such as shaman drums; the Saami live and work for tourists to wonder them. These photos represent somewhat one-sided way of seeing the Saami livelihoods through the framework of tourism and serving travellers. It does not open up the reality of reindeer husbandry, for instance, but represent the relation of the Saami and reindeers as something entertaining.



*Photo 4. Man and woman wearing Saami clothes and standing in front of their souvenir shop in the road bank between Hetta and Kilpisjärvi in the early 1960's.*

The second subgroup of livelihood photographs links to the previous one, but is more contradictory. It is formed of photos portraying reindeer herding and husbandry. Some of these photographs are taken during the first trips to Lapland, but most of them are taken after having visited several times already. The difference between these two is that first-timers' pictures are taken from the cars or are in other senses distant; they have not been taken from within or near the actual reindeer herding situation. Whereas the photographs taken by those travellers who have visited Lapland several times and know the herders have a certain kind of intimacy in them, the photographs concern events inside the reindeer fence or portraits of the herders. However, both groups visualize the Saami according to their traditional and "authentic" way of life. Most of the photos do not have modern machinery such as snowmobiles in them, although they are widely exploited in modern reindeer husbandry. Those few photos that include machinery mirror the travellers' acceptance of the modernisation of the Saami ways of life.



*Photo 5. Man and boy ear-marking a reindeer during reindeer extraction near Vuotso village in 1990.*

The third group of livelihood photos consists of those portraying arts and crafts or people practicing handicrafts. This

subcategory can be positioned between the tourist photos and those with a more interactive atmosphere in them: On the one hand such photographs are taken because the Saami are typically known for their handicrafts. On the other hand, there is a clear and conscious tendency to separate the practices and products of these handicrafts from those of the tourist handicrafts. As such, the photographs are taken out of appreciation for authentic Saami handicraft, in order to portray their uniqueness and beauty and the hard-working artists behind them. This signification is given to the portrayed crafts by those travellers who have visited Lapland several times and feel deeply interested in Saami traditions and arts. In other words, photographic gaze at handicrafts draw both from catalogue of tourist industry visualisations where the Lapland is seen as area of cherishing traditions without separating the actors of the handicrafts, and from the representations that the Saami give about themselves as active producers and revisers of handicrafts, and who combine modern and traditional features. There are also few photographs about the Saami researchers, teachers, and artists. These photographs are taken by travellers who know Saami culture and actors well and know how to get into the events in which they can be seen. These photos break the myths of the Saami livelihoods and do not fit into the stereotypical catalogues of the tourism. They represent the Saami as active actors in the areas of modern knowledge production and cultural policies.

The fourth category consists of travellers' photographs about *religious places and objects*. This can again be divided into two sub-categories. Firstly, there are pictures about the ancient Saami religious symbols, patterns, and sites (see below). These are taken both by travellers who visit Lapland for the first or second time and are there more or less in the role of tourist, and by those who have visited Lapland several times and know the Saami culture. For the former group, these sites are kind of a curiosity. As such, their representation and idea draws from the

ones of tourist industry. Travellers photograph these sites, because of the knowledge adopted from tourist brochures and advertisements. This gaze, thus, strengthens the stereotypical view of the archaic and natural religious essence of the Saami. For the active travellers, these objects symbolize respect for the old Saami tradition. They can also reflect travellers' critical attitudes towards the present religious beliefs of the Saami and the gaze of signifying natural religion as an important part of real Saami culture. Both groups photograph these sites because of the mythical narratives related to them in the Finnish ethnographic studies, stories and tales, which are the main sources of travellers' knowledge about them. The second subcategory of religious photographs concerns Christian religious symbols, patterns, and sites. These photographs are taken by both active travellers and first-timers. First-timers take these pictures because of the conduct of the tourist guides, but active travellers often shoot them, because their Saami friends have told them to be significant for them or for the whole local Saami culture. This whole category of religious motifs reflects the commonly held Finnish belief that the Saami have a strong relationship to religion: earlier in history this was a relationship to the natural religions, shamanism, and animism, and after the forced Christianization of 13<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries, to Christianity. As such it can be interpreted to include reflection of "othering" view on Saami, according to which "they" are more religious oriented and ethno-cultural than us "westerners".



*Photo 6. Famous Ukonkivi island in Lake Inari used to be the sacrificial place for the Saami people up till beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century.*

The fifth and final group of photographs consists of images focusing on the *nature of the Saami land*. First of all, there are pictures of animals such as reindeer, typically associated with Saami cultures in Finnish literature and/or cinematic narratives about the Saami. One animal that is particularly represented in pictures is the white reindeer, which is a mythical ancestor-like animal for the Saami and represented as one shamanic form in a very famous Finnish movie (*White deer*) made in the 1950s. Objects like white reindeer connote with the traditional visual order concerning the Saami, where they are represented as indelibly connected to nature, with animistic beliefs and other exotic and even un-civilized features (cf. picture 1). The second aspect of these nature photographs relates to the mythical nature sites of the Saami land. These are either sites to which some important Saami narratives are attached or which are important for the Saami people for some historical reasons, or they are sites to which Finnish narratives about the Saami or local cultures are attached. For example, there is a photograph portraying a small lake that reminds people of a human foot-



step and stories have been spread among the travellers that the local Saami consider this to be the footstep of an ancient giant. However, there is no folkloristic evidence as to whether the Saami people have told this story or not. These photos are usually taken by the active travellers who know the Saami tales or tales about the Saami natural sites, but they tell more about the imagination and interest of the travellers themselves in the mythical beliefs than the ones of the present Saami.



*Photo 7. Mythical white reindeer.*

### **Myths revisited: Tourists and vagabonds**

According to Roland Barthes (1977) photographs have three message dimensions: the linguistic, denotative (coded iconic), and connotative (uncoded iconic) message. In my analysis, I have concentrated on the two latter ones. When stereotypes and myths are considered, the most interesting dimension is the connotative one. It is what Barthes also refers to as the cultural message because it is based on shared cultural ways of representing things and interpreting those representations. The Finnish Lapland travellers, for instance, have been more or less socialized into particular ways of thinking about Lapland. This includes a certain way of seeing what Lapland

and its people are – the cultural gaze of Finns towards Lapland and the Saami. This “visual order” has been formulated in the synergy of newspapers, school books, documentaries, and fiction movies, tourist guides, experiences from earlier travels, stories and photos of other travellers, Lappology studies, and old travel literature.

What can be referred to as a hegemonic gaze of Lapland tourism is the one that is repeated in the mainstream tourist industry; for instance, in tourist guides, hotel brochures and the catalogues of tourist resort web-pages. Although this gaze is not unchangeable and similarly repeated in every context, it can be said to generally consist of traditional means of livelihoods (reindeer herding), colourful Saami clothes, which then closely binds Saami culture to the nature of Lapland, and the mystique and exoticism of Saami culture. The mystique and exoticism is achieved usually through the features of the old shamanistic religion (e.g. pictures and motifs of the shaman drums). (Aikio 1999; Lehtola 1999; Saarinen 1999.) Using Barthes concepts, this is the visual myth of Saaminess in Lapland travelling.

The connotative messages of photographs of active Lapland travellers do and do not draw on this mythical visual order. Some of the photographic motifs are the same as those which can be found in the organised tourist industry, and as such carry, at least apparently, similar messages to those of the tourist industry catalogues. Active travellers do, for instance, photograph the close connection of the Saami and nature. This kind of gaze comes from their own interest concerning the nature of Lapland and their willingness to see the Saami as people who still have a close and healthy relationship to nature in these modern times, when environmental problems are present all over the world. Their photos do not carry similar connotations of primitiveness as tourist industry photos. This is where the messages of active the travellers’ photos also radically differ from the Saami representations of the old travel literature. In the latter, the close nature relationship of the Saami is consid-

ered as inferior to modernized Finnish people who are more educated, have institutionalized governmental structures, and are part of the developed and industrialized “western” societies (e.g. Topelius 1876). Whereas in the travellers’ photographs, this arrangement is almost completely in contrast: the care for nature implicit to the Saami culture is valued as positive and the wasteful lifestyle of the western world as negative. Similar difference in connotations can be found from the photographs concerning livelihoods and the Saami people. Although they are often portrayed within the frame of the Saami cultural traditions, there is a strong sense of respect present in the pictures.

If I compare the change in the themes and messages of the photos from the 1930s and 1960s to the photographs of the 1980s and 1990s, the differences are surprisingly small: historical dwelling sites, religious objects, the Saami people in their homes, at work, and posing for the photographers, were as often the subjects of the photographs then as they are today. What is more important for the photographic messages than the change of period is the “personal development” of the photographer. Whereas the general travellers’ gaze towards the Saami seems to stay somewhat unchanging over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, personal gazes change depending on the numbers of travels and encounters with the Saami people. The more that close encounters occur, the more the gaze of photographer changes from the tourist-like portrayal of people, livelihoods, and clothes to a closer, warmer, and more understanding treatment of the subjects. At the same time, the role of the photographer has also changed. If the Saami are usually portrayed alone or in the Saami groups in earlier photographs, the more continuous contact that photographers have with them, the more often both travellers and the Saami are captured in the same picture.

Another change in photos of the active travellers is that the instruments of modern livelihood, as well as the machinery designed to help in everyday life, has become more acceptable

as subject matter in such photographs: although there were snowmobiles and electric ovens in use during the 1960s when many of the active travellers visited Lapland and got to know the Saami livelihoods for the first time, they can rarely be seen in the images taken. Later on, they were incorporated into the photographs as part of the Saami everyday life. The photographs of other modern means of livelihood portray the changes in Saami culture and everyday life in yet another way. Teachers, researchers, and artists at work in modern surroundings connote the photographer's acceptance of the "modernization" of the Saami culture. The pictures of researchers and modern artists can be interpreted as images of modern features and the liveliness of Saami culture; this is not the museum culture of the past, but a living and progressive culture, the members of which adapt to new circumstances through, amongst other things, new professions. In the words of Sara Ahmed (2002), one can say that the travellers' gaze is not so much attached to old stereotypes as it used to be and that they let the Saami - the subjects of their photographs - surprise them. In other words, they appear in the pictures as if they would not necessarily be expected. The myth of the authentic Saami culture with the representations of reindeer herding, fishing or hunting is, thus, declining as a hegemonic way of portraying the Saami.

As already suggested above, I have divided the messages of the travellers' photographs into two: 1) those representing the "tourist gaze" and 2) those representing the "vagabond gaze". The tourist gaze is mainly based on the catalogues and the visual orders of the tourist industry. The subjects - Lapland nature, the Saami, and their cultural symbols and artefacts - are photographed from a certain distance and they remain as exotic others, interaction with whom remains distant. Indeed, the tourist gaze approaches the Saami as objects: They do not and cannot influence the substantive quality of the photographs, at least not to any great extent. Furthermore, the tourist gaze

comes from and reproduces the perspective of genuine and unchanging Saami culture, in which man and nature live together, modernity cannot be seen, and old cultural traditions have significant value. Vagabonds are those, who travel in Lapland and photograph their objects with very few determinant preconceptions. They let the environment and especially local people surprise them. In the photographs of "vagabonds", the Saami are very much present. The photographers, or their companions, often pose with the Saami in the same picture or the joint presence can be sensed otherwise, for instance, from the eyes of the person being depicted when they look at the camera or their easy appearance in the situations in which they are photographed. In the vagabond gaze, the Saami are more (active) subjects than (passive) objects and they ascend from the position of 'the other' to the position of companions who have a reciprocal relationship with traveller and photographer.

Active travellers' photographs of the Saami, their Northern living environment, and their culture, show that myths and visual orders, which are based on old Finnish travel literature, and which are reproduced by the present tourist industry, are not matters of course among the Lapland travellers. Old myths do have certain significance, especially among the travellers who visit Lapland for the first time, but among those, who continuously visit there, the significance of these myths declines and is compensated for by the new visual order that is constructed in the constant interaction with the Saami. It does not have similar mythical structure, which determines the form and content of the photos, but is more open for alternative representations of the Saami and Lapland. By 'alternative', I mean those representations that somehow question the old stereotypes and portray the people, environment, and cultures differently. I finish this article with the photographic representation, which diffuses the roles and identities of the travellers and the Saami, photographer and photographed. It is taken from the Norwegian village called Skibotn and portrays the Saami man with

traditional clothes taking tourist photo of the filled polar bear placed in the middle of the village. Let it remind us, how photographic representation always bear contradictory and mixed connotations and can in many ways fracture stereotypical visual orders.



*Photo 8. Unknown Saami man photographing filled polar bear in Skibotn in 1960's.*

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