Some Aspects on the Lappish Population and Economic Life in Northern Finland, Norway and Sweden

Erik Bylund*

First of all I will declare, that I am not at all an expert in the Lapps and their culture and economic life. I have only in second hand been in touch with problems concerning the Lapps in Sweden. In connection with a research work, a dissertation work more than 20 years ago, dealing with the swedish colonization of the northernmost province in Sweden, called Lappland, I have also been interested in some features of the history of the Lapps in Sweden. And today I have had occasions, and reasons to think a little bit about the recent situation of the Lapps in connection with some research works concerning actual planning problems in sparsely populated areas in Northern Sweden.

Thus I have mostly to collect my material for this lecture from other authors' works, among others especially professor Israel Ruong, himself a lapp, professor in the lappish language but with a basic education in geography as well. I will only present to you an overview description of some traces in the development of the lappish settlements and their economic life.

The whole number of Lapps is about 34-35,000. About 10,000 of them live in Sweden, nearly 3,000 in Finland, 20,000 in Norway and nearly 2,000 in the Soviet Union.

The settlement region of the Lapps you can divide into 4 different geographical subregions.

1) The forest region in N Sweden and N Finland and the Kola Peninsula.
2) The coasts of the Atlantic and Arctic Ocean.
3) The so-called Finnmarksvidda—the high Finmark plateau in N Norway with its undulating landscape of low mountains and hills and valleys, covered with birch forests.
4) The high mountain range with its “promontories” to the East and the low mountains with its adjacent forest regions which reach into the deep mountain valleys. In the mountains more to the South at the boundary between Sweden and Norway they are split up into more or less isolated smaller high mountains.

* Department of Geography, Umeå University
Information about the Lapp, in books, papers etc., concerns mostly the Mountain Lapps, those who are living in region 4 and even region 3. Much has been written and said about their migrations and old life in Lapp-tents or conelike huts. But as a matter of fact the Mountain Lapps migration or transhumance in its more extreme form is a relatively young type of economic life—it means from the 16th and 17th century. The most original, very old, type of lappish husbandry is hunting and fishing in combination with having a few tame reindeer, and they were mostly used for transporting cargos. This very old type of Lappish husbandry in the wilderness in its more pronounced form has existed up to our days at the Skolt Lapps in the boundary region between Finland and the Soviet Union.

Generally you can say that the so-called Forest Lapps in region 1, that means the vast forest region in N Sweden and N Finland, live more close to this original stage, besides the fact that these Lapps, anyway in Sweden, earlier than other Lapps have been in contact with the modern industrialized society and today they are very much influenced by this modern society.

The Forest Lapps are hunting and fishing, but nowadays it is not a question of hunting wild reindeer but forest birds and elks (mooses). Hunting is today not very important and is not to be allowed but during rather limited seasons, which is stated by central authorities. That is why hunting today is not a main means of earning a living, instead fishing is very important. And in that respect the Swedish and Finnish Mountain Lapps do not differ very much from the Norwegian Lapps in region 2 at the Atlantic coast. Of course one difference is that the Norwegian Lapps are fishing in salt water at open sea, whereas the Swedish and Finnish Lapps are fishing in rather small inland lakes with fresh water; and so do the Mountain Lapps as well.

Concerning the reindeer, that the Forest Lapps are breeding, they are of a different type or race then the mountain reindeer. The Forest reindeer are a little bit bigger than the mountain reindeer and, more important, they are grazing within rather limited regions in the forest inland area only within about 10–20 km². The mountain reindeer on the contrary have an instinct to move around very long distances: from the coastal regions near the Bothnian Gulf, where they are during wintertime, up to the high mountains 300 km from there during summertime.

In this connection I will stress the significance of the tree limit in the high mountain region for the mountain reindeer. They have namely their mate places upon the bare mountains just above the tree limit. Above this limit the ground always become bare early in spring upon the hills there, from where the snow has been blown away. On these bare ground places not far from the birch belt the calving usually takes place.
This migration of the mountain reindeer, due to seasonal variations, has distinguished the culture of the Lapps and even our imagination of the Lapps as an ethnic group. As I said before the Mountain Lapps have been “devoted” many books. But the Forest Lapps have not been paid attention to in the same way. Their reindeer breeding is also of a modest size; each family can have 20–a hundred deer, but a wealthy Mountain Lapps can be an owner of thousands of reindeer.

The breeding of tame reindeer in the western part of the Forest Lapps region in N Finland seems to have developed more evidently first after the start of the colonization during the 18th century—that means after Finnish people has been settled down in this region. Reindeer breeding was formerly not very much developed—hunting and fishing were dominating; the Lapps did not even milk the deer; that did the Swedish Forest Lapps at the same time.

At the Skolt Lapps in the Northeast of Finland, however, a little bit more developed and intensive reindeer breeding developed. The reindeer was a significant part of their husbandry.

The nuclear area of the Skolt Lapps was formerly the very lake rich frontier region between Finland and Russia. After the second World War Finland had to give up a large land area to the Soviet Union and that is why the Skolt Lapps were moved to the vicinity Northeast of the Lake Enare, a landscape which to some extent is a remembrance of the old lost country. The new boundary divided the Skolt Lapps region into two parts and thus cut off all communications between the Finnish and Eastern parts and caused serious troubles for the Lapps. So the reindeer stock, owned by the Finnish Skolt Lapps has diminished to less than a fourth of the 8,000 heads before the war.

By studying the old Skolt Lapps and their history one has gained knowledge about the Lapp life and organization during ancient times. Thus the name sita has been known as a very old conception, which cover the cooperative society of the Lapps. The concrete reality behind this conception can vary somewhat but the most usual meaning is a migration team, consisting of more than one family with their reindeer—sometimes only one single reindeer owner with his family, when the whole reindeer herd could be guarded from the family tent as the base. This meaning of the sita is the predominant one within the Lappish region in Sweden, anyway within the Forest Lapps region. There exist as well in a larger sense a conception named Lapp village, not a place but a region within which a collective group of Lapp families are organized and are running their economic life. The so-called Lapp villages imply the basic organization for the Swedish Lapps.

In Finland, N Norway, and in Sweden the original sita organization broke up
when mountain nomadism developed as a monoculture, a means of livelihood based entirely or almost entirely upon individually owned herds of reindeer. When the herds grew bigger it was not possible as before to keep the so-called winter village together where the different migration team lived together, as the bigger herds needed a more frequent change of grazing grounds also in wintertime. The name of the old *sita* winter village, *talvatis*, are still found in Sweden. The Lapp names for the so-called church villages of Jokkmokk and Arvidsjaur are precisely *talvatis*.

For the Mountain Lapps—rather different conditions apply as regards the Forest Lapps—the breeding of mountain reindeer implies a change in direction of higher frequency of migration.

Reindeer-breeding may probably be said to have reached its most extreme *total nomadic* development during the hundred years 1750–1850. But even when the frequency of migration was at its highest, there were certain maximal durations of settlement on the migration route. The maxima are found in the three main parts of the migration area: the summer country or fields in the alpine region, the autumn and spring country in the subalpine region and the winter country in the forest region. The maximum duration of settlement is highest in the intermediate region, owing to the circumstance that the reindeer have their mating and calving grounds there and for this reason are most "home-bound" in this region. It is also connected with the fact that the nomad here changed from winter equipment to summer equipment in the spring, and from summer equipment to winter equipment in the autumn, which at an early stage made it necessary to erect solid buildings for the storage of the equipment during the period when it was not in use.

When with the change in the structure of the reindeer-breeding during our century—from independent husbandry to a money economy, from a more all-round use of the domesticated reindeer for purposes of transport, for milking and for slaughtering to raising it chiefly or solely in our days for slaughtering, from a more individual type of reindeer-breeding to a more collective type again—a tendency to more permanent settlement once more manifests itself; it is interesting to see how the development has gravitated towards a type of settling, more and more emancipated from the migrations of the reindeer. The equipment for the summer migration and the Lapp tent has today nearly disappeared. And now nearly all Lapps, anyway in Sweden, live in ordinary houses. Today it is only the reindeer herders—when they are driving the herds—who then are living in tents or coneshaped huts of old type. The old colourful costumes and certain customs and habits are used at solemn and ceremonal occasions: at wedding, when they are visiting the church and often when visiting markets and fairs. Many a tourist in the North surely are disappointed, when they can not have a look upon Lapps in bright colours what the tourist brochures promise. For them the Lapps therefore are very difficult to recognize and
separate from "ordinary people".

As a minority the Lapps have of course great difficulties to vindicate their characteristics within a greater society. Their culture is to a high degree distinguished by the nature influenced economic life, by the reindeer breeding. But they are not numerous they who are occupied by the reindeer. I can only mention figures from Sweden: there no more than 2,500 Lapps at the most of the 10,000–15,000 Lapps in Sweden are gaining their livelihood from reindeer breeding. That means a very small minority of the Swedish society with more than 8 million citizens. The other Lapps are nowadays more or less integrated in the Swedish society and as a matter of fact most of the people with Lappish origin outside Norrbotten, the northernmost country in Sweden, are living in the Stockholm region.

Even those Lapps, who are not dealing with reindeer try to organize themselves to certain extent, that is true, but it is very difficult for them as they are split up geographically, and only their ethnic background is of common interest for them. Besides they are in a certain contrariety to those who are reindeer owners; these are the only who possess the privileges, which are combined with the reindeer ownership. I ought to have said it before. It is so that in Sweden the Lapps have an exclusive right to deal with reindeer; the same in N Norway but not in Finland, where others than Lapps have right to have reindeer herds. A certain number of so-called tended reindeer—that means that they are tended by Lapps—can be owned by others than Lapps also in Sweden but the number is maximized to 20 and only Lapps are allowed to tend them. And the Lapps must be paid for the tending.

In ancient times up to the end of the 17th century the Lapps were nearly the only inhabitants of N Sweden and N Finland. They experienced competition only from the Norwegian fishing people at the Atlantic and Arctic Ocean coasts. Since then the Lapps have been successively forced out of their ways and pushed to an overtime narrowing region in the West and Northwest and are nowadays nowhere alone in their settlement region. Swedes, Norwegians and Finns are all over inhabiting old Lappish land, and as a rule—the exception is upon the high plateau in N Norway, the so-called Finnmarksvidda—the Lapps are a minority people even within rather limited areas.

This development includes many conflicts, which to nature and contents have changed over time, but which of course in a comprehensive meaning can be said to imply a competition concerning land use. I will a little bit more say something about the development in Sweden, that I know best.

In Sweden it was first during the end of the 17th century and first of all after the midst of the 18th century when that province called Lappland began to be
Some Aspects on the Lappish Population and Economic Life

colonized by Swedish settlers. The Swedes started with agriculture and was residential after an initial time of fishing and hunting journeys into the inland areas. Here and there one started mining, rich of minerals as it is, Lappland. The Swedish state encouraged this settling down. Its aim was to create residential settlements; first of all to vindicate the Swedish supremacy over the northernmost part of the country. Its boundaries were not confirmed until 1751. And so the state wanted to have tax objects. The taxes were a kind of ground taxes and were laid upon the individual farms and that is why the state wanted the establishment of more farms even in this northernmost part of Sweden.

I will stress that the state from the beginning not at all neglected the Lapps and their industries from a principal point of view. The idea was that the land areas in the far North were so vast that both the Lapps and the colonists could get on well together in Lappland and that the Lappish nomadic life and the Swedish industries practised by the residential colonists, principally were so different that they without disturbing each other could exist side by side. The basic idea for this principal opinion of the Swedish state was however based upon a series of illusions about the possibilities for a competition free state of things in this part of the country between its inhabitants, the Lapps and the Swedish colonists.

These illusions can be systemized in the following scheme:

- **Lapps**
  - Vast areas for the economic life
  - Wide grazing grounds for reindeer
  - Very long distance migration for grazing
  - Wide hunting and fishing
  - Nomads

- **Colonists**
  - Limited small areas for agriculture
  - Limited grazing ground for cattle
  - Limited hunting and fishing (restrictions by law)
  - Residential farmers

An explanation to these wrong ideas about two distinctly separated ethnic groups of people with separate ways of earning their living must be the deficient knowledge about the Forest Lapps and their economic life, a state of things, that—as I have already mentioned—still today is a fact. It is the Mountain Lapps with their old pronounced nomadic life who dominate the ideas about the Lapps, all types of Lappish people.

The conditions for and way of life of the Forest Lapps were not very different from the life of the colonists. The area that they used was rather limited—as I said, the forest reindeer are staying all year round within 10–20 km² only. Their reindeer herds consisted of only 20–100 animals in general; and their goats were for those who had only a few reindeer almost more important for their livelihood. And the fishing in the small lakes was a question of death or life for them.
And what about the colonists in this respect? Their economic life area was not at all so limited as the authorities believed or wished. Many of the colonists moved rather long distances during one year—between different resting places for their cattle. They were practising transhumance in order to utilize the grazing vegetation of the land. And hunting and fishing they carried on more widely from the settlements than what the lawmaker could imagine.

Consequently, this means that in spite of what the authorities had planned from the beginning there aroused a hard competition between the Lapps and the colonists/farmers for the land and its utilities. Conflicts were therefore unavoidable.

Particularly there were controversies concerning fishing in the lakes. From the beginning, up to the end of the 18th century the Lapps were successful at the courts; that means as long as there was a question about fishing only.

But up to the beginning of the 19th century the colonists started to dig out lakes and moorers and dam up small streams and rivers to obtain a better haymaking result. It was necessary to get enough with hay to the cattle to live from during the long winter. In that situation the courts started to give priority to the agriculture and cattle breeding of the colonists before the interests of the Lapps. The colonists were better as tax payers from the state's point of view. So the Lapps were forced to leave many lake district in the forest area and move westward. The Forest Lapps are nowadays living in the forest land in some rather small limited areas, on their way to be fully integrated into the Swedish population—as has been said already.

The more specific Lappish ways of earning a living on the other hand, the Swedish state has been standing up for, i.e. the reindeer economy, which has been protected as a unique monopoly to the Lappish people. However it does not displace the fact that the fundamental principle has been of an ethnocentrical art and has meant a favouring of the Swedish economy to the drawback of the Lappis in conflict situations.

The principle has led to the acting of the Swedish authorities right up to modern times. The purposes have from the Swedish point of view, changed. But the Lapps have always had to give in, when, and I quote from the beginning of the 18th century: "When it is better for the state to transform the countries of the Lapps to utilities of different types". It could have been haymaking—and cultivated fields in old times, and today constructing of waterpower plants, roads, tourists establishments, mines and modern forestry.

It is about a long series of national interests, which the state authorities have prioritated during times gone and being. These priorities have of course highly
Some Aspects on the Lappish Population and Economic Life

helped to improve the conditions of living in Sweden. They have contributed in raising our standard of living, the standard of the Lapps as well. They have also gained on this development. But their possibilities to keep their characteristics, their language and their culture intact have at the same time strongly been deteriorated in spite of the fact that rather much has been done from the state side to create some guarantees, e.g. by school education, specially education in the Lappish language, so that their culture could be maintained as a living culture—that is also the main cause for the Lapps having been awarded their reindeer monopoly.

You can point out many conditions which have made that the Lapps have not been able to put forward their interests in the “great society”. They have always consisted of a small number of people. They have lived spreading out over a very large area departed from each other because of physical geographical barriers.

The ecological division depends on the differences in language, differences in tending reindeer etc. which have laid obstacles against an efficient cooperation and collective actions between the Lapps. Sometimes differences in property, often counted in the number of reindeer and different attitudes to modernizing their reindeer breeding have caused contractive opinions. You can also point out special features in the Lappish culture as traditional and conservative thinking, maybe sometimes shortage of ambitions to improve their living conditions, which all together have had a retarding effect on the enterprising spirit.

Since long ago different authors, who have been studying the Lapps, have stressed the mild and peaceful behavior of the Lapps. The longtime guardianship from the authorities, ethnological view upon the Lapps from the inhabitants of the “great society”, earlier race discriminating opinions, have created a subservient and nonenterprising character of the Lapps, which up to our days has been distinguished by a low education degree.

The low evaluated, low income characterized and subordinated position of the Lapps have weaken their ethnical identity compared with what the industries in the great society has been able to give, the economy of the Lapps has created a weak base for their living, in any case very unstable; also the big reindeer-owners who periodically could have been regarded as rich people have been struck very hard in bad years, when the supply with food for the reindeer during the winter has been all to scanty. So they had to leave their land and go out as beggers in many cases. This could often happen up to our modern welfare society, which gives the Lapps the same social care as to all other citizens, and this situation is the same in all three countries.

Since the middle of our century there is a tendency to a new development. The
whole Northcalotte area, especially the inner parts of N Sweden and N Finland has
turned over to an outmigration and depopulating area. The marginal small farms
are going out of running and the modern forestry is rationalized more and more,
which causes less possibilities for getting jobs.

The industrial development is too weak and the industry can not suck up the
idle workers from agriculture and forestry, who lost their jobs. Unemployment and
outmigration to the southern parts of the countries is the result.

The Lapps are included in a sparse population in a peripheral region because
they have left their old selfsustenance husbandry and are more and more integrated
in the ways of living and economic life of the modern society; they are struck in
the same way as other inhabitants in sparsely populated areas. These areas and
the small central places where most of the Lapps are living are now tending to
disappear, that means that they become entirely depopulated.

The colonization which once pushed the Lapps away is now so to say going
reverse. But the risk is that the Lapps will be included in this reversed movement.
In the future it will not be possible for the Lapps as before to stay in their ancient
settlement regions and earn their living by non-Lappish occupations.

The rejecting of the segregating and discriminating policy and the reducing of
race prejudices of individual Lapps have opened better possibilities for the Lapps
to get job as individuals and play a social role in the great society outside the
minority group. This development in combination with the deteriorated possibilities
for earning a living within the Northcalotte area contribute to the weakening of the
unique Lappish society and the unique Lappish culture.

In Sweden at least you can recognize a tendency to restrict the problems about
the future of the Lapps to a question about the reindeer breeding, but the under-
standing is growing for the fact that this question, of course a nuclear question,
includes in itself a great number of other questions, coordinated with the deeper
problems, which our modern society has to deal with today and in the future.
森林限界以上に居住する山地ラップ人と、低地の森林に居住する森林ラップ人とは、暮らし方がかなりちがっている。森林ラップ人の生活は古い時代のラップ人の生活様式を色濃く残している。ごく最近まで、森林ラップ人は狩猟や漁業（これらはラップ人の古い生活形態である）を生業にしていた。トナカイの飼育を始めたのは最近で、飼っている頭数も少なく、移動範囲もせましい。山地ラップ人が牧畜を始めたのもそれほど古いことではなく、16-17世紀である。そして、およそ100年前には完全に牧畜（移牧）だけに依存するようになった。夏には高山地域へ、冬には森林地域へ移動し、春と秋は低山帯で過ごす。移動距離は数100kmにも達している。山地ラップ人の生活基盤は牧畜業にあると考えられているが、現在では牧畜だけで生活しているラップ人の数はたいへん少数になった。スウェーデンの場合、ラップ人口のうちの7%ないし25%にすぎない。

17世紀後半には、ラップランドにはラップ人だけが居住していた。そこへ、南からの移住農民が侵入するにつれて、いろいろの問題がおこり始めた。これに対する政府の立場は、スウェーデンの場合、土地は広大であり、移住農民と牧畜ラップ人とは生活の場が異なるから摩擦は起きないであろうというものであった。しかし、現実には多くの問題が起こり、ラップ人はいつも不利益をこうむってきた。政府が長年ラップ人を保護し、生活水準・教育水準を高めてきたとはいうものの、少数民族であること、牧畜という不安定な業種に依存していることのために問題の根本解決はなされていない。ラップランドからの人口流出が20世紀半ばから始まったことによって、ラップ人がラップランドとその周辺でスウェーデン人に雇用される機会が減った。いろいろ、ラップ人に対する人種偏見は減り、ラップ人がスウェーデン社会にとけこみやすくなった。しかし、これがラップの固有文化の崩壊をはやめることになった。現在では都市で生活しているラップ人も多い。

（岩田 修二）