Chapter 4: Northern Fennoscandian Politics and Spatial Belonging

4.1 Introduction

Despite sometimes being described as “desolate” and “remote” (especially clear in the *terra nullius* colonialism exercised by the Scandinavian nation states in early modern times), the northernmost parts of the Fennoscandian landscape complex are described as inhabited in several medieval texts.¹ The texts assert that the far north of Fennoscandia was a special and supernatural place.² Somewhat paradoxically, these areas are also described with normalcy and depict habitual interactions. This is also the case for landscapes further south, with the Upplönd region appearing in the source material as a hub for both normalised Saami encounters and mysterious happenings connected to a group of Others. Medieval Scandinavian writers narrating Norse-Saami affairs view the Saami as both separate to and a part of the “Norse” spatial area and the texts often contradict themselves on the matter. Medieval texts highlight Saami presence in a wide spanning area reaching from as far south as the Oslo region to the Kola peninsula in the northeast, opposing the tendency to exclusively associate the Saami with distant and northern snowscapes.³ As I will elaborate in section 4.4 and chapter 7, the historical landscape is not always as “northern” in spatial distribution as typically assumed. The emphasis in the saga material and other medieval texts of a spatially diverse and multifaceted Saami presence across Fennoscandia is accounted for below.

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4.2 Northern Nóregi: Within and Without

4.2.1 Finnmork

Finnmork is the landscape most frequently associated with the Saami in medieval texts. Appearing across the saga material in varying contexts, Finnmork material-
ises as the home of Saami people,\textsuperscript{4} a place to visit,\textsuperscript{5} harrying grounds,\textsuperscript{6} an area of mysticism, and supernatural beings,\textsuperscript{7} a pit-stop on the way to Bjarmaland,\textsuperscript{8} a source of riches, and as tax-land.\textsuperscript{9} It is always associated with the Saami, directly or indirectly. The landscape is traditionally and most often associated with the north (of Norway) and areas east of the Hålogaland coast (into modern day Sweden). This is reflected by the travel descriptions in the text which focus on journeys either “nórðr” [north] or “á fjáll upp” [up in the mountains].\textsuperscript{10} Since it is rarely demarcated, medieval writers relating Saami affairs view the Saami and Finnmørk as both internal and external to the “Norse” spatial area. The texts often contradict themselves on the matter, such as Oddr Snorrason’s Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar which states that “norðr frá Nóregi er Finnmørk” [north of Norway is Finnmørk], in addition to “En landit er greint ok kallat þessum heitum: Vík, Hørðaland, Upplønd, Prónðheimr; Hålogaland, Finnmørk” [The land (Nóregi) is divided into the regions called Vík, Hørðaland, Upplønd, Prónðheimr; Hålogaland, Finnmørk].\textsuperscript{11} Historia Norwegie portrays a similar stance, stating that:

\begin{quote}
Es\textsubscript{[t terra]} nimir sinusosa, innumera protendens promunctoria, III [habita]bilibus zonis per longum cincta: prima, que maxima [et] maritima est, secunda mediterranea, que et montana [dicitur], tertia siluestris, que Finnis inhabitur; sed non aratur.
\end{quote}

Full of fjords and creeks, it is a country that pushes out countless headlands, and along its length encompasses three habitable zones: the first and largest is the seaboard; the second is the inland area, also known as the mountain region; the third is wooded and populated by the [Saami], but there is no agriculture there.\textsuperscript{12}

The Saami here form part of Norway, which is also the case when the text later discusses Hålogaland as one of four legal districts within the coastal zone, stating that the inhabitants of the area lived with and frequently dealt with the Saami.\textsuperscript{13} However, in the following chapter of the text, the immense wilderness bordering Norway is described, dividing the country along its length and only inhabited by

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{4} Stst, 638. Ket, 120–23.
\item \textsuperscript{5} Hkr 1, 324–26. Hkr 2, 344–45.
\item \textsuperscript{6} Órv, 174.
\item \textsuperscript{7} Hkr 1, 325. Órv, 161, 241.
\item \textsuperscript{8} Órv, 174. Hkr 1, 135. Saxo, 601.
\item \textsuperscript{9} See section 5.2.3.
\item \textsuperscript{10} Sv, 6. Eg, 36.
\item \textsuperscript{11} Odds, 203.
\item \textsuperscript{12} HN, 51–52.
\item \textsuperscript{13} HN, 55–56.
\end{itemize}
Saami people. Lars Ivar Hansen has examined the somewhat contradictory view offered by the chronicle and argues that the focus on the Saami as living in the wilderness bordering Norway is the author’s attempt to convey Germanic notions of the delimitations of political land. According to Hansen, pre-Christian Germanic ideology utilised a “wilderness tactic” which saw the benefits of being surrounded by widespread wilderness that functioned as a border as well as guarded against hostile attacks from outsiders. I would suggest that it is also likely that the descriptions involving notions of wilderness and wasteland reflect diverging sociocultural conceptions of landscape and spatial awareness.

In toponymical terms, Finnm ork suggests a defined geographical area, as perceived by the Norse. Consisting of the components “Finn” meaning Saami, and “mørkr” denoting a border, forest, border forest, or periphery, the toponym in turn defines the area as ascribed to Saami groups or on the periphery of Norse culture. In Sverris saga, first written in parts between the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, King Sverrir Sigurðarson relates his dream of becoming a bird so big his beak covered the eastern parts of the country and his tail feathers “norðr í Finnbúin” [north where the Saami live], with the wings covering the whole country. Helgisaga supports this view, assuming the traditional area of Finnmork as internal to Norway when describing the length of Norway as reaching from Egðafylki and Gautelfr in the south to Vegistafri; an area possibly referring to contemporary Murmansk, in the north. However, and possibly more in line with the toponym, the Saami are elsewhere perceived as inhabiting a fringe area: bordering Norway.

When King Hákon góði allegedly built beacons of war on the high mountains inland all over Norway, Fagrskinna relates that it took a week for the war summons to reach the northernmost community in Hålogaland. Hålogaland is here therefore perceived as the far end of the country, on the fringe of something else and bordering something other, exemplified by the return of Þórir hundr as related in Helgisaga: “kom Þorer hundr norðan af Finnmork til Noregs” [Þórir

14 HN, 58–59.
16 Store norske leksikon, “Sverres saga,” snl.no, 04.03.21 https://snl.no/Sverres_saga.
17 Sv, 6.
18 Helgisaga, 21.
19 Fsk, 83.
hundr came from the north from Finnmörk to Norway].\textsuperscript{20} The Icelandic treatise *Rímbegla* from the end of the 1100s notes that “fjörðr er Málángr heitir; hann skír Finmörk við Búmenn; fyrir sunnan Málángr stendr kirkja er heitir í Lengjuvík” [the fjord called Malangen separates Finnmörk from the búmenn; south of Malangen stands the church called Lenvík].\textsuperscript{21} The term *búmaðr* has been heavily debated in both scholarship and public debate, but is generally agreed to mean settled farmers.\textsuperscript{22} It is not an ethnic divider but a cultural one, and delineates traditional Norse and Saami areas on agricultural terms. It does not separate the areas on Saami versus Norse terms but based on the cultivation of land. It has been noted that archaeological finds indicate that there was a farming population farther north than Malangen early in the medieval period, for example on Karlsøy, that several burial monuments on islands in north-Troms conform to Norse tradition, and worth mentioning is the “typical” Norse farm found on Loppa in Finnmark.\textsuperscript{23} These factors again point to the cultural fluidity of the region and dynamic processes of identity discussed throughout.

This “fluid spatial awareness” becomes particularly clear in the aforementioned stories relating Sígr∂r slembidjákn’s refuge with Saami boatbuilders in Northern Norway.\textsuperscript{24} While the Fagrskinna and Morkinskinna texts locate Sígr∂r in Finnmörk, with the latter specifying Ægisfjörðr (Øksfjord), the Heimskringla-version quoted above sees the royal pretender in Tjaldasund (Tjeldsund) on Hinnoya (in Hålogaland), after sailing through Ægisfjörðr (Øksfjorden).\textsuperscript{25} Since the texts state that Magnús, Sígr∂r’s (perceived) nephew who fled with him, sought refuge with the Norse chieftain Viðkunnr Jónsson to the north on Bjarkarey, I find it more likely that Sígr∂r’s Saami friends lived on Hinnoya. This indicates that Hinnoya was perceived as an area where both Norse and Saami people lived and were in contact with each other. Based on archaeological interpretations of dwelling

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\textsuperscript{20} Helgisaga, 52.
\textsuperscript{21} Arnamagnæanske samling, “AM 727 I 4to,” handrit.is, https://handrit.is/en/manuscript/view/is/AM04-0727-I. The text states that the church in Lengjuvík was the northernmost church in Norway, until Hákonar saga relates the building of the church in Tromsø around 1250; Hák 2, 155.
\textsuperscript{24} See section 3.2.4.
\textsuperscript{25} Mork 2, 193. Fsk, 333.
sites associated with the different groups. Marte Spangen and Johan Eilertsen Arntzen argue that Saami and Norse settlements existed relatively close to one another, especially on the larger islands, like Hinnøya.

The landscape of Finnmørk is sometimes used as the geographical boundary between Norway and Sweden. In my opinion, this portrayal is particularly valuable, since it indicates that Finnmørk as a geopolitical area stretched from the traditional associations of Finnmørk in the north, down the Scandinavian mountain range. The portrayal of Finnmørk as on the border between Norway and Sweden indicates that the Saami were associated with being present also in the more southern areas of the mountain range. *Egils saga* states that:

Finnmørk er stórlig víð; gengr haf fyrir vestan ok þar af firðir stórir; svá ok fyrir norðan ok allt austr um; en fyrir sunnan er Nóreg; ok tekr mørkin náliga allt it efra suðr; svá sem Hálógaland it ýtra. En austr frá Naumudal er Jamtaland, ok þá Helsingjaland ok þá Kvenland, þá Finnland, þá Kirjálaland; en Finnmørk líggr yfir fyrir ofan þessi òll lónd, ok eru víða fjallbyg-gök upp á mørkina, sumt í dali, en sumt með vötnum. Á Finnmørk eru vötn furðuliga stór ok þar með vötnunum marklond stór; en há fjöll liggja eptir endilangri mørkinni, ok eru þat kall-dír Kilir.

[Finnmørk] is a vast territory, bordered by the sea to the west and the north, and all the way to the east with great fjords, while Norway lies to the south of it. It extends as far south along the mountains as Hålogaland does down the coast. East of [Naumudal] lies [Jamtland: Jämtland], then [Helsingjaland: Hälsingland], Kvenland, [Finnland] and [Kirjálaland]. [Finnmørk] lies beyond all these countries, and there are mountain settlements in many parts, some in valleys and others by the lakes. In Finnmørk there are incredibly large lakes with great forests all around, while a high mountain range named [Kilir: Kjølen] extends from one end of the territory to the other.

Describing the area á fjöll upp as separated from Norway but stretched to the east of it as far as the Hålogaland coast following the mountain range (the geological border between Norway and Sweden), the text emphasises the large lakes and great forests of the territory, also including the detail that the area is not uninhabited. The inhabitants of these settlements are later described as Saami.

An increasing focus on the establishment of churches and fishing villages in the northernmost “frontier” on the long Finnmark coast was undertaken by
both Norwegian central authorities and the Novgorod city-state in attempts to exert power over traditional Saami settlement areas. These attempts were grounded in the prospect of colonisation of the northern areas and the benefits offered by the conversion of the Saami such as papal recognition (from a Norwegian point of view), but more so in the increasing importance of geopolitical dominance over disputed areas in the north.\(^{32}\) These areas were rich in natural resources such as fish, sea mammals, small and big game, with a population competent in the extraction of these resources. As far as I am aware, the earliest (Norse) placename known from Finnmørk is Geirsver (Gjesvær; figure 3) and appears in Heimskringla’s Ölafs saga helga as the landing stage to or from Bjarmaland (figure 3).\(^{33}\) Although the placename is most likely Norse and there is no Norse-Saami meeting in the one source that mentions the place, Geirsver is located in an otherwise ar-

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32 Lars Ivar Hansen and Bjørnar Olsen, *Hunters in Transition: An Outline of Early Sámi History*, The Northern World 63 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 158. The establishment of the church in Vardo in 1307 and the building of Vardøhus during King Hákon Magnusson’s reign (1299–1319) is connected to these developments.

33 *Hkr* 2, 155.
chaeologically Saami area and would therefore indicate that close contact between the groups must have occurred.

As stated previously, one of the strategies used by the Norwegian central authorities to gain geopolitical dominance in the north over other authorities such as Novgorod, was to establish fishing villages and churches along the northern coast. Geirsver might be such an establishment, and the text mentions a harbour and that the men “settled in,” meaning that there was a perception that other people able to accommodate them were already present in the village. The distribution of goods acquired in Bjarmaland leads to the culmination of a conflict based on diverging loyalties between the two sailing parties, ending with the death of the royal retainer Karli. Karli’s kinsman Gunnsteinn flees south to Lengjuvik (Lenvík; figure 3), where a woman “fjölkunnig mjök” [very knowledgeable in magic] helps him hide. Loyal to King Óláfr; Gunnsteinn’s refuge in Lengjuvik may be contextualised by the late twelfth-century account of Rimbegla claiming it to be the location of the northernmost church in the world (which it also will have been when Heimskringla was compiled in the early thirteenth century). The church in Lengjuvik should also be seen in connection with the establishment of institutions associated with the central and royal ambitions to expand their geopolitical dominance over Saami settlement areas in the north. Since Gunnsteinn, unlike his rival Þórir; was loyal to King Óláfr; seeking refuge in Lengjuvik was a tactical strategy as it most likely was a place with loyalties to the king. However, Gunnsteinn receives help from a woman knowledgeable in magic, and this may perhaps point to the cross-culturalism of the area’s inhabitants, also attested by placenames and archaeology which point to varied societies utilising the same landscape.

A silver hoard from around the year 1000 found in Botnhavn, a nearby village on Senja, accentuates the earlier cross-cultural ties of the area. Depositions of silver hoards in northern Norway from early in the medieval period are most often found on the margins of both Norse and Saami settlement areas and have been interpreted as symbolic expressions of liminality at a border or meeting place between Norse and Saami groups. Since these deposits usually contain both Saami and Norse elements, Marte Spangen interprets them as expressions of a dual

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34 Hkr 2, 232.
35 Hkr 2, 233.
37 Hansen and Olsen, Hunters, 74–75.
Norse-Saami identity actualised on the margins or border areas between more traditional Norse and Saami settlement areas. Whether or not this is the case, the depositing of these objects indicate the prevalence of a mutual ritual performed by Norse and Saami people together for a joint purpose. Since one of these hoards was found not far from Lengjuvík, it is likely that Norse people were in contact with Saami people in this area. Although not articulated, the Saami presence is also evident in these sources, potentially as the woman knowledgeable in magic helping Gunnsteinn flee from Þórir; but particularly evident in the archaeological material emphasising both Norse and Saami presence.

Although Finnmørk as a traditional landscape á fjall upp and norðr is very much associated with the Saami across the textual material, it is not the only area where the Saami appear. Unlike the common assumption that the Saami “in reality lived (and in most cases still live) in the extreme north of Europe, in settlements in Finnmark and the Kola peninsula into northern Russia along the coast (Bjarmaland), and in the forested interior of Scandinavia,” Finnmørk as a sociocultural concept encompassed a larger area than traditionally assumed. As a spatial concept connected to Saami people, it does not stand out as the epitome of the far north but rather, and in line with the toponym, as areas where Saami people lived.

With regard to the discussion in section 2.4.1 and chapter 7, I argue that it is productive to have a twofold understanding of the general term Finnmørk in order to allow for more dynamic readings of Saami characters associated with the landscape(s). The term “Finnmørk” is therefore here understood as the geopolitical landscape associated with the area north of Hálogaland but stretching as far south on the Swedish-Norwegian border forests as Hálogaland does along the coast (and potentially further south), according to Egils saga. The term “finmarkr” on the other hand, appearing in the Borgarþingslög and in other texts discussed in chapter 7, should be understood as a sociocultural concept associated with Saami belonging in southern contexts. This allows for a more dynamic reading whereby the increasing Norwegian political and governmental presence of the northern landscape Finnmørk later in the medieval period is acknowledged. Knut Bergsland has analysed a réttarbót [law amendment] found in the Frostþingslög, reportedly put forth by King Sigurðr jórsalafari and his brothers in 1115 and directed at “Háleygium öllum” [all of Hálogaland], that supports my suggested two-fold reading of

39 DeAngelo, “North,” 257.
40 Eg, 36. NGL 1, 389–90.
41 See section 7.4.1.
the landscape. The amendment enforces the royal monopoly of finnkaup (see section 5.2) and confirms the taxation on the fishing industry in Vágar (Vågan, Lofoten), in addition to providing the Hálogalanders with:

all the “commons” which they had in the days of Óláfr Haraldsson, both the outer and the upper, to the south and to the north. But only the King has the right to purchase [or collect] the fur-products north of Umejarsund.

Umejarsund has not been properly identified, although Vennesund just south of Brønnøysund (Norway) and the lake Över-Uman on the border between Sweden and Norway have been suggested. Either way, the law amendment seems to define the sole royal privilege to trade (presumably with the Saami) north (and east) of Rana in Norway. This definition, alongside the granting of common rights to the Hálogalanders in “hit ytra oc hit øfra, sunnarla oc norðarla” [the outer and the upper, to the south and to the north], is especially intriguing since it seems to imply a two-fold understanding of Saami areas. Indeed, Bergsland suggested that this differentiation in the rettarbót should be read as indicative of a medieval understanding of two kinds of Finnmørkr, with one being the region north of Rana where the king had monopoly to the Saami fur trade and a southern one, south of Hálogaland, where others could trade with the Saami and where other Saami people lived. I would therefore argue that the extract above, and Bergsland’s interpretation of it, demonstrate the productivity of employing my suggested two-fold understanding of the term Finnmørk/finnmark, since the spatial designations most likely were understood in this multidimensional way in the medieval period. Understanding the designation “finnmark” as being associated with Saami people in southern contexts not (necessarily) connected to the northern geopolitical landscape allows for less constrictive readings of the Saami in southern contexts, as further examined in section 7.4.1. It should nevertheless be mentioned that both terms effectively mean the same thing, and indicates geographical spaces associated with Saami people. Another important factor which should be stressed is that

42 Knut Bergsland, “Om middelalderens Finnmarker,” Historisk tidsskrift 49, no. 4 (1970): 365–409 (377). The amendment was not confirmed until the 1130s; NGL 1, 257–58.
43 NGL 1, 257.
45 Translation based on Bergsland, “Finnmarker,” 373–76.
46 Bergsland, “Finnmarker,” 373–76.
47 Bergsland, “Finnmarker,” 408.
up until the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries, there were no fixed borders for
the area north of what is presently Troms county.⁴⁸ This indicates that a significant
proportion of the northern Fennoscandian regions discussed here were not incor-
porated into the Fennoscandian nation states until later in the early modern peri-
od, and more importantly, that these regions were understood as, or at least asso-
ciated with being, Saami land prior to this.

The Saami settlement area encompassed a wide-stretching landscape, from the
Kola Peninsula in the east to the coastal area around Lyngen and mid-Troms in the
west, down the Scandinavian mountain range and southwards into Upplönd and
Jamtaland. The landscape of Finnmørk was imagined by the Norse and dependent
on the sociocultural and geopolitical experiences of the Norse. This is strengthened
by the textual material which is written from a Norse perspective, but we should
nevertheless not neglect and remove the agency of medieval Saami groups and
their ability to negotiate the delineation of areas perceived as “theirs.” However,
interpreting the place in terms of a border, margin or periphery between the
Norse and the Saami can be unhelpful since it introduces the risk of falling
back on a simplistic understanding of the area and its inhabitants as something
more static than dynamic.⁴⁹ Instead, it has been suggested that the term should
be perceived as a frontier, a liminal space where colliding worldviews interfere
and norms are challenged, in turn dissolving stricter cultural identities and creat-
ing space for more culturally fluid identities.⁵⁰ I would like to add that the question
posed should not necessarily be where Finnmørk was but rather where it was
when. In my opinion, viewing the area of Finnmørk as adjacent to Norse settle-
ment areas proves more helpful, with some places being clearly delineated in
the landscape or simply distant, and others as closer, sometimes directly linked
to and part of Norse societies (or vice versa), with meeting spaces, shared land-
scapes, and culturally fluid communities. We also need to determinedly remind
ourselves of the regional and chronological variation evident in the medieval writ-
ten, toponymic, and archaeological sources, that are often absent from discussion.

⁴⁸ Lars Ivar Hansen, “Fra Nöteborgfreden til Lappekodisillen ca. 1300 – 1751: Folkegrupper og stats-
dannelse på Nordkalotten med utgangspunkt i Finnmark,” in Grenser og grannelag i Nordens his-
torie, ed. Steinar Imsen (Oslo: Cappelen Damm Akademisk, 2005), 362 – 86.
⁴⁹ Eleanor Rosamund Barraclough, “Arctic Frontiers: Rethinking Norse-Sámi Relations in the Old
4.2.2 Hålogaland

Hålogaland is the medieval landscape most often associated with the Saami after Finnmørk, and generally coincides with the coastal strip north of Prøndaløg (Naumdøela) to a culturally fluid frontier with Finnmørk somewhere in the north. Archaeological material also suggests the cultural complexity of the region and so the presence of Saami peoples in Hålogaland in Norse texts is not surprising. The conceptualisation of the region changes throughout the medieval period with Norwegian expansion extending northwards. These changes are reflected in the saga material which gradually moves its focus from conflicts with powerful Hålogaland chieftains, portrayed as occurring in the eleventh century, to the introduction of religious and political institutions of the Norwegian kingdom, portrayed as appearing from the twelfth century onwards. The rise of the Novgorod republic and its increasing appropriation of the eastern fur trade changed the dynamics of Saami societies that had previously almost monopolised the European fur trade, and also affected the Swedish areas of interest.

The saga material portrays Hålogaland as a landscape similar to Finnmørk as both within and without Nóregi. The stories relating King Haraldr hárfagri’s acquisition of land and “unification” of Norway in the late ninth century claim that he also took possession over Hålogaland, described as north of Prøndaløg and the land all the way north to Finnmørk. Subsequently, the stories following this narrative always include Hålogaland as a Norwegian province from a geopolitical perspective. However, Hålogaland characters traditionally disagree with this delineation, and are often portrayed as unwilling to associate themselves with the central authorities. Conversion to Christianity is presented as the main issue. In Heimskringla, King Óláfr Tryggvason is portrayed attempting to convert the northern Norwegian province, but the Hålogaland chieftains Hårekkr ór Æjóta, Bórir hjørt from Vágar, and Eyvindr kinnrifa, with their Saami entourages, gather armies in the fight against him, leading to the king’s retreat.
plies that: “ek ætla mér i sumar at koma norðr þannug ok vitja yðar Háleygjanna. Skuluð þér vota, hvárt ek kann refsa þeim, er neita kristinni” [I am intending to come there to the north and visit you men of Hålogaland. You will then find out whether I know how to punish those who refuse Christianity].\(^59\) Later in Heimskringla’s *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar*, the Salpti-chieftain Rauðr inn rammí refuses to convert to Christianity, and King Óláfr kills him by forcing a snake down his throat.\(^60\)

In the eleventh century, *Gesta Hammaburgensis* relates that:

> Alii dicunt, Halagland esse partem Nordmanniae postreman, quod sit proxima Scritefengis, aperitate montium et frigoris inaccessibilis.\(^61\)

> Others say Helgeland [Hålogaland] is part of farthest Norway, lying very near the Skritefengi and inaccessible by reason of the rugged mountains and the cold.\(^62\)

Hålogaland is here described in relation to the Saami, a notion also supported by the twelfth century *Historia Norwegie*.\(^63\) Eleanor Rosamund Barraclough argues that even though the sociocultural ties between the Norse and the Saami were not always clear-cut, Hålogalanders, given their location, emerge as the principal Norse players on the liminal borderland stage.\(^64\) Others have claimed that their association with the Saami led to the negative portrayal of the Hålogalanders in Norse texts, with Jeremy DeAngelo stating that the Saami were victims of the “detrimental effects” of the colder climate in the north and that:

> The very presence of the Finnar [Saami] in Halogaland would reflect negatively on the area, and the fact that they mingled with Norwegians on the frontier placed any Håloglander under suspicion since one never knew what kinds of distasteful foreign habits were picked up while there.\(^65\)

DeAngelo’s analysis is based on medieval ideas of mental geography and asserts that Saami characters were purposefully negatively portrayed by medieval Icelandic authors in order to distinguish the Saami as the “northern uncivilised group” and avoid these connotations for Iceland and Norway.\(^66\) I find DeAngelo’s state-

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\(^{59}\) Hkr 1, 322.

\(^{60}\) Hkr 1, 327–28.

\(^{61}\) *Hammaburgensis*, 185.

\(^{62}\) *Hamburg-Bremen*, 219.

\(^{63}\) *HN*, 55–56.

\(^{64}\) Barraclough, “Frontiers,” 33.

\(^{65}\) DeAngelo, “North,” 266.

\(^{66}\) DeAngelo, “North,” 260.
ment problematic since I disagree that the portrayal of the Saami is specifically negative. With regard to the above statement, I disagree since it fails to acknowledge that the sometimes less favourable portrayal of the Hålogalanders in the saga material is never due to their associations with the Saami. Instead, the portrayal is focused on their defiance connected to the emergence of Christianity and conversion, and their continued devotion to the pre-Christian belief systems. Their “mingling” with the Saami does strengthen this portrayal, but it seems to be rooted above all in their lack of Christianity rather than their association with the Saami. This is reflected in Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar, written in the 1260s, which relates King Håkon’s appropriation of important geopolitical areas by establishing Christianity in the north: “Hann lét gera kirkju norðr í Trums ok kristnaði alla þá kirkjusókn” [He let a church be built north in Troms and Christianised all these parishes].⁶⁷ Although placenames, archaeological, and written sources indicate that northern Troms fell within the traditional Saami settlement area and was a culturally fluid Norse-Saami sociopolitical environment, the Saami presence is not mentioned in Hákonar saga.⁶⁸ The main emphasis is on the fact that these parishes were Christianised, not the cultural affiliation of those converted.

From the mid-to-late twelfth century, institutions of the Norwegian kingdom were gradually introduced in the northern province and an overall review of the legal system gave Hålogaland equal status in the kingdom to the southern provinces in the 1270s.⁶⁹ Due to changing internal and external political factors, the establishments of fishing villages and ecclesiastical institutions such as chapels and churches along the northern coasts became increasingly important geopolitical tools for the Norwegian central authority. This is amongst other texts included in Morkinskinna, which describes King Eysteinn Magnússon’s reported establishment of a church in Ærundanes (Trondenes) and the church and harbour at Vágar in the early twelfth century.⁷⁰ The growing success of the fishing villages and market towns in Hålogaland for northern Norwegian and national trade is also emphasised in several of the Íslendingasögur; demonstrating the significance of the trade also across the sea.⁷¹ As demonstrated in chapter 3.2.4 and as will be furthered in chapter 5, there is evidence suggesting the heavy involvement of dif-

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⁶⁷ Hák 2, 155.
⁶⁹ Hansen and Olsen, Hunters, 143.
⁷⁰ Mork 2, 133.
⁷¹ Eg, 42. Finnb, 276. Gr; 73–78. See section 5.3.2.
ferent Saami groups in this trade and Saami participation in shared economic fishing ventures. The large-scale changes to society also affected Saami societies across Fennoscandia, and these stresses resulted in a change in overall geopolitical and sociocultural dynamics, particularly in terms of social stratification and the growth and decline of economic industries. However, these were not necessarily viewed as negative by the people experiencing them.

Later in the medieval period, northern Norwegian coastal Saami groups became intimately involved in the Bergen and Hanseatic League trade and participated in the growing dried fish industry.\(^2\) This industry would become crucial for Norwegian economy from the medieval to the early modern/modern period. In addition, adaption to or intensification of reindeer herding, farming, and participation in the defence of the northeastern border against Novgorod (Russia) and/or Karelians, could either have been conscious strategies taken by some Saami groups or seemingly random developments affecting Saami groups, as a result of the increasingly emerging state powers in the south and east.\(^3\) Changes within Saami societies took place, with regional variation depending on internal responses and processes such as social stratification, and in some cases increased homogenisation. In any case, it is important to stress that these changes were not necessarily viewed as oppressive by Saami populations and that many, both on group and individual levels, may have appropriated the advantages of change. However, we should also keep in mind that with the increased attention to the taxation of the Saami and the colonisation of Saami land, the nation states’ appropriation of the Saami settlement areas and discrimination against Saami people now had an ideological basis in the promotion of the nation state’s interests.

As has already been established, Hálogaland was a socioculturally diverse region where Norse-Saami interaction was normalised and multifaceted. Through personal, cultural, and economic strategies, with the exotic objects gained from the finnkaup boosting both their power and prestige in the Norse market trade, the Hálogaland elite were empowered by their Saami connections.\(^4\) The distancing of the Hálogalanders and their close associations with the Saami were viewed as a conflict of interest and as a direct threat to the interests of the central authorities. In Egils saga, this is particularly clear when the antagonists attempt to harm Þórólfr’s reputation by spreading false rumours about his relations with the Saami to King Haraldr hárfagri:

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72 Hansen and Olsen, Hunters, 174.
73 Hansen and Olsen, Hunters, 124, 202–3.
74 See section 5.2.1.
Hafði hann kaup òl; guldu Finnar honum skatt, en hann bæzk í því at sýslumenn yðrir skyldi ekki koma á mörkina. Ætlar hann at gerask konungr yfir norðr þar, þæði yfir mörkinni ok Hálogandi, ok er þat undr; er þér látið honum hvetvetna hlýða.⁷⁵

He took all the trade and the [Saami] paid him tribute, and gave them a guarantee that your [the king’s] collectors wouldn’t enter the territory. He intends to proclaim himself king of the northern territories, both Finnmark and Halogaland, and it is astonishing of you to let him get away with everything he does.⁷⁶

The weighted threat of the unification between the spatial power complexes encompassing the “northern territories” of Hálogaland and Finnmørk point to the area’s geopolitical and sociocultural importance. Furthermore, the instance demonstrates that, at least in the eyes of the learned elite during the composition of the saga, most likely early in the 1200s, the areas were sometimes understood together. This factor empowered the northern Norwegian elite, who cultivated multifaceted relations with the Saami and increasingly attempted to differentiate themselves from their southern neighbours, as Rauðr inn rammi attempts in Heimskringla’s Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar. As further discussed in chapter 6, Saami people most likely formed part of this elite, and their involvement in it also worked as an empowering factor for the chieftoms.

The active endeavour by the Hálogaland elite to differentiate themselves sociopolitically from the central authorities should be seen as an attempt to maintain sociocultural privileges and certain trade relations with the Saami. Saami involvement in the Hálogaland elite enabled extremely rich chieftaincies early in the medieval period, and by refusing conversion to Christianity, the multifaceted relationship, based on political, economic, personal, social, and ritual aspects, could be maintained.⁷⁷ However, through violent persuasion, colonisation of Saami land, conversion to Christianity, manipulation, the bestowment of trading privileges, and the appointment of so-called royal sýslumenn, Hálogaland moved away from its individuality, and became fully and legally incorporated into the Norwegian realm in the 1270s.

⁷⁵ *Eg*, 43.
⁷⁶ “Eg.” 50–51.
4.3 The Extreme North?

4.3.1 Bjarmaland, Kirjálaland, and Kvenland

Norse-Saami relations in northern Fennoscandia were also dependent on and influenced by interaction with other peoples in the northeast. Historia Norwegie addresses this in its introduction, stating that the areas north in Norway was inhabited by several pagan peoples from the east such as the “Kweni” [Kvens], the “Kyriali” [Karelians], and the two kinds of “Biarmones” [Bjarmians].

Throughout the source material, these groups often appear in contexts related either directly or indirectly to the Saami, and are briefly discussed below.

Bjarmaland and its inhabitants (Bjarmar) appear in approximately thirty medieval texts, the majority of which are Norse, a few are Latin and one is Old English, spanning from the ninth century to the thirteenth. As there is no corresponding people or landscape today known as Bjarmaland, its origin has been heavily debated by scholars, particularly since Othhere reportedly related at the end of the ninth century that the Bjarmians spoke a similar language to the Saami. Due to the travel descriptions following the many Norse expeditions to Bjarmaland, its location is generally agreed by scholars to include the Kola Peninsula, the White Sea, and the lower part of the Dvina river valley. While Saxo and the fornaldarsögur portray a distant and Othered Bjarmaland with inhabitants such as giantesses, the remaining sources mainly relate trading and harrying expeditions. These expeditions surprisingly often involve royals and harrying in Bjarmaland seems to have been a journey connected with high status. The journeys usually end with hostilities, however, and the relationship between the Norse and the Bjarmar is portrayed as tense. Before he reportedly trades with them and they share stories, Oththere is reluctant to go ashore in Bjarmaland due to hostilities. Later, in Heimskringla’s Óláfs saga helga, Þórir hundr’s trading trip to Bjarmaland is depicted.

78 HN, 52–53.
81 OEH, 39.
82 Saxo, 601–3, 649; IllGr, ch. 6; GrL, ch. 1.
83 Eg, ch. 113; Fsk, chapters 5, 14, 31, 55; Gr; ch. 20; Hák, ch. 81; HHárf, ch. 32; ÓH, chapters 132 and 139.
84 Gormr inn gamli of Denmark and Ragnarr Loðbrók reportedly make the trip, in addition to Haraldr gráfeldr, Eiríkr blóðax and Hákon Þórisfóstri.
85 Hansen and Olsen, Hunters, 54.
maland quickly becomes an attack on the Bjarmar once the “sundr sagt friði við landsmenn” [truce with the people was declared at an end].

In contrast to the treatment of the Saami which tends to be generally positive, Else Mundal observes a code of conduct considered in Bjarmaland, where Norse people were at liberty to kill and rob as they wished. Eleanor Rosamund Barraclough suggests that this was partially due to the lack of frontier territory shared between the Norse and the Bjarmar, in turn denying cross-cultural spaces for the negotiation of identities. Another contrasting feature with the Saami, despite the observation that the Bjarmar and Saami spoke a similar language, is that the Norse are repeatedly depicted as struggling to understand the Bjarmians and need interpreters to communicate. Furthermore, the magic performed by the Bjarmians is often dramatised and fantastical, contrasting with the portrayal of Saami magic which falls under the same categories as that which is performed by the Norse. Despite their re-occurring presence in the saga material, the Bjarmians are portrayed as outside the social horizon and unlike the Saami, they are rarely present as insiders in Norse society. This does not mean that the relationship with the Bjarmar was irrelevant to the writers of the sagas or to Fennoscandian society.

As already emphasised, large-scale rearrangements of different socio-economic processes in the northeast led to marked geopolitical changes in the northern region in the mid-to-late twelfth and particularly thirteenth century onwards. With the increasingly growing central authorities and their overarching organised control of the economy, new directions for the (fur) trade and the emergence of new economies such as dried fish, circumstances in the northeast changed. The expansion of Novgorod led to increased hostilities between the city-state and Norwegian and Swedish state power in the north. Several scholars have suggested that the inhabitants of Bjarmaland became increasingly occupied with the Novgorod trade and worked as their agents, thereby gradually becoming incorporated into the city-state’s realm. The first source directly mentioning Norwegian royals’ interests in Finnmörk can be found in the Gulaþingslög from the early 1200s, stating

86 Hkr 2, 229.
89 Ørv, ch. 4. The language of the Bjarmians could have been similar to modern-day Finnish, since Heimskringla’s Óláfs saga helga claims the Bjarmians used the word “jómala” for god. “Jumala” is the contemporary term for god in Finnish.
90 Barraclough, “Frontiers,” 49–50. See for example GrL, ch. 1; HHábr, ch. 3; IlIlGr, ch. 6; Saxo, 649; Hkr 2, 229–32.
91 Hansen and Olsen, Hunters, 157.
the defence demanded by the Hálogalanders in this area against intruders from
the east. These intruders may have been the Bjarmar. A similar observation is
made in Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar from the 1260s, relating a war between
the Hálogalanders and Bjarmians, culminating with the last officially organised
Norwegian expedition to Bjarmaland in 1222, that failed. Nevertheless, the rela-
tionship between the Norwegians and the Bjarmar was not always antagonistic,
as is also emphasised in Hákonar saga: “til hans komu ok margir Bjarmar; er
flýit höfðu austan fyri ófriði Tattara, ok kristnaði hann þá, ok gaf þeim einn
fjörð, er Maláŋr heitir” [to him came many Bjarmir who had fled from the east
and the strife of the Tatars; and he christened them and gave them the fjord called
Malangen].

Unlike the predominantly tense relationship with the Norse, the Bjarmar and
the Saami are portrayed as enjoying more neutral interactions. While personal re-
lations such as marriage and fostering between the Norse and the Bjarmar are not
unheard of in the texts, they appear more frequently between the Saami and the
Bjarmar. Saxo recounts the marriage between King Helgi of Hálogaland and Thora,
the daughter of the prince of the Saami and the Bjarmar. Orvar-Odds saga de-
scribes the marriage of the high-standing Saami woman Grímhildr to King
Hárek of Bjarmaland. Unlike the Norse experience with the Bjarmar, the Saami
did share frontier space with the inhabitants of Bjarmaland, which could have al-
lowed for the negotiation of cross-cultural identities in an overlapping area with
fluid borders and societies. Furthermore, since Ohthere claims that the Bjarmar
and the Saami spoke a similar language, language similarities introduce shared
ideas and values which again would help enable relationships. The possibilities
of such neutral relationships offer new perspectives on the diversity of northern
Fennoscandian history by emphasising the agency of Saami and Bjarmian groups
independent of the Norse.

Ohthere’s account relates that prior to entering Bjarmaland, Ohthere ventured
through the land of the Terfinnas. Unlike the settled land of the Bjarmar; this land
is described as waste except for where the Terfinnas camped for fowling, fishing,
and hunting. In the poem Ævidrápa from Orvar-Odds saga, the “Tyrfifinnar” are

93 NGL 1, 104.
94 Hák 1, 252.
95 Hák 2, 266.
96 For Norse-Bjarmar relationships, see Saxo, 67 and Ldn, 150.
97 Saxo, 150–51: “Cusonis Finnorum Byarmorumque principis.”
98 Ærv, 241.
99 Hansen and Olsen, Hunters, 55.
mentioned in stanza 9 as targets of Oddr’s crew before reaching Bjarmaland. The word does not appear anywhere else in Old Norse records. The oldest manuscript containing the term dates to the second half of the fifteenth century (AM 471 4to), with the earliest manuscript of the saga dating from the early fourteenth century (Holm perg 7 4°). It has been argued that the stanzas Ævidrápa were originally earlier lausavísur about Qrvar-Oddr’s life. These were then later added into the Qrvar-Odds saga as a result of the desires of the compiler(s) to fill out the text. The recension of the saga containing the term “Tyrfifinnar” is indeed accepted as a reworking of an earlier version of the saga (notably, it is not present in AM 343a 4to, dated between 1450 – 75) that does not contain the term (the earliest version is represented by Holm perg 7 4°). Despite the chronological distance from Ohthere’s report to the first composition of the term in of Qrvar-Odds saga (minimally the fifteenth century), the linguistic similarity and proximity to Bjarmaland indicate that the Tyrfifinnar are identifiable with the Terfinnas. The term can therefore be recognised as an ethnonym for Saami people living in proximity to Bjarmaland. This identification is strengthened by present day factors. The easternmost Saami people, living on the Kola Peninsula, are called Ter Saami today, although the language and culture of the group is moribund. Furthermore, the southeast coast of the Kola Peninsula is still called the “Terskiy bereg” [Ter Coast] in Russian, and the eastern Kola Peninsula is called “Tarje” in the Kola Saami languages. Minimally, the fact that Hálogalanders called the inhabitants of the Kola peninsula by a landscape denotation in their language, indicates some levels of communication and contact.

According to Hákonar saga, northern Saami groups did not get on with the Kirjálar (Karelians). The Kirjálar were the inhabitants of the landscape Kirjáland (associated with today’s Karelia), stretching from the coast of the White Sea to the Gulf of Finland. This conflict was seemingly rooted in stress caused by taxation and rights to land and trade, with King Hákon reportedly sending men to Novgorod in 1250 to make peace with the Novgorod prince: “settu þeir þá frið at

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100 Qrv, 303.
102 Ross, “Ævidrápa.”
106 Hák 1, 242.
sinni milli skattlanda sinna, svá at hvárigir skyldu öðrum ófrið gera, Kirjálar né Finnar, ok helzk sú sætt eigi lengi síðan” [they made peace at once between their taxlands, so that neither should raise strife against the other, Kirjálar nor (Saami), but the peace was not kept very long after]. Several scholars have noticed the disappearance of the Bjarmar from the written sources after the mid-thirteenth century and connect it to the appearance of the Karelians in the area previously associated with Bjarmaland in the same period. An Icelandic landalýsing [short description of the world] informs that by the beginning of the thirteenth century, Bjarmaland was under Novgorod rule. The Kirjálar were simultaneously drawn into Novgorod’s sphere of interest and Karelian merchants became increasingly involved as representatives of Novgorod’s trading interests in the interior of northern Fennoscandia. In addition, the Karelian settlement increasingly expanded its territory and had by the mid-thirteenth century incorporated Bjarmaland and the area around the White Sea into their sphere of interest. The Karelians and the Bjarmar shared several circumstances such as involvement in trade and Novgorod allegiance, and it has been suggested that the Bjarmar were assimilated into the expanding Karelian society. The conflict in Hákonar saga between the Saami and the Karelians should in my opinion be interpreted with this assimilation in mind, and again stresses the increasing geopolitical changes in northern Fennoscandia connected with the rise of Novgorod. However, by the early fourteenth century Karelian-Saami interactions reportedly became more neutral, as suggested by a treaty between Norway and Novgorod confirming the common taxation area of the Saami. The treaty is confirmed on the basis of an older agreement stating the rights of the Norwegian king to tax the Saami as far east as the Kola Peninsula where “halfkarelar øða halfinnøer ero, þeir sem finska moðor hafua aat” [there are half-Karelians or half-Saami who had a Saami mother]. Heimskringla alleges Swedish dominance over the area from the ninth century, and asserts Swedish claims to Kirjálaland from the thirteenth century. The assertions in early thirteenth-century Heimskringla about the Swedish claim to Kirjálaland demonstrates the interests of the emerging nation states in ex-

107 Hák 2, 155. See section 5.2.2.
110 Hansen and Olsen, Hunters, 150.
112 The treaty replaced the older agreement in 1326: NGL 3, 151–52.
113 NGL 3, 151–52.
114 Hkr 2, 115.
pansion of land, and consequently, power. However, by 1323, the peace treaty of Nöteborg/Orekhovec between Sweden and Novgorod formally included Kirjáland and its (eastern) inhabitants as subjects of Novgorod.¹¹

While the emergence of the Kirjálar in northernmost Fennoscandia certainly seems to have caused conflict with the neighbouring peoples, they were not the only eastern people involved with the Saami. In *Egils saga*, the good relationship between bórolfr Kveld-Úlfsson and a Saami group á fjáll upp from Sandnes collaborate against a common enemy, the Kylfingar:

Þórólfr fór víða um mörkina; en er hann sótti austr á fjállit, spurði hann, at Kylfingar várú austan komnir ok fóru þar at finnkaupum, en sumstðar með ránum. bórolfr setti til Finna at njósna um ferð Kylfinga, en hann fór eptir at leita þeira ok hitt í einu bóli þrjá tigu manna ok dráp alla, svá at engi komsk undan, en síðan hittí hann saman fimmtán eða tuttugu. Alls drápu þeir nær hundrað manna ok tóku þar ógrynnif fjár ok kómum aprít um várit við svá búí.¹¹

Thorolf travelled at large through the forests, and when he reached the mountains farther east he heard that the Kylfing people had been trading with the [Saami] there, and plundering too. He posted some [Saami] to spy on the Kylfing's movements, then went off to seek them out. In one place he found thirty and killed them all without anyone escaping, then found a group of fifteen or twenty more. In all they killed almost one hundred men and took enormous amounts of booty before returning in the spring.¹¹

The origins and locations of the Kylfing people are unknown but it is likely that the group was of Balto-Finnic origin. The extract establishes the importance of collaboration between the Norse and the Saami and also demonstrates the benefits of cooperation and trade. Later in the saga, the news of the collaboration reaches the Kvenir (Kvens), portrayed as seeking out bórolfr in Finnmork for similar help:

En er hann sótti langt austr ok þar spurðið til ferðar hans, þá kómu Kvenir til hans ok sagt, at þeir váru sendir til hans, ok þat hafði gört Faravið konungar af Kvenlandi; sagt, at Kirjálar herjuðu á land hans, en hann sendi til þess orð at bórolfr skyldi fara þangat ok veita honum lið; fylgði þat orðsending at bórolfr skyldi hafa jafnframt hlutskipit sem konungr; en hverr manna hans sem þrir Kvenir. En þat váru log með Kvenum at konungur skyldi hafa ör hlutskipiti þríðjung við liðsmenn ok um fram at afnám á bjóräskinn þíll ok safala ok askraka.¹¹

As he advanced farther east and word about his travel came around, the Kven people came and told him that they had been sent to him by their king, Faravid. They told Thorolf how the

¹¹ Eg, 27–28. Note that bórolfr and his retinue are portrayed as staying in Saami territories until spring.
¹¹ “Eg.” 42–43.
¹¹ Eg, 35–36.
Karelians had been raiding their land and gave him a message from the king to go there and give him support. Thorolf was offered an equal share of the spoils with the king, and each of his men the same as three Kven. It was a law among the Kven people that their king received a third of his men’s plunder, but reserved all the beaver skins, sables and martens for himself.¹¹

As an ethnonym in medieval texts, the designation “Kvenir” only appears in a few sources. The oldest source describing the group derives from the end of the ninth century with Ohthere’s account, relating that alongside the northern part of Svealand was the land of the “Cwenas.”¹² These people, according to the account, often fought with the Norwegians after entering their land by carrying small boats to lakes in the interior and from there raid villages.¹²¹ Egils saga describes Kvenland as located to the east of Norway and sometimes north of Sweden, aligned with Finnland and Kirjálaland, between Helsingjaland (Hälsingland) and Finnland (figure 4). “Kvenir” then, appears as a designation for inhabitants of the coastal area around the northern coastal landscape of the Gulf of Bothnia, which is reflected in the endonym of the people and the place, referring to the low lying marshy fields typical of this area.¹²² In Orkneyinga saga, a frequently reworked text from the thirteenth century onwards with its reputed first roots in the late twelfth century,¹²³ this link is directly stated: “Eptir þat før hann af Kvenlandi ok fyrr innan hafsvotninn, ok kómu þar, er þeir men váru, er Lappir heita” [After that he set out from Kvenland skirting the head of the Gulf, and so reached the land of the (Lappir)].¹²⁴

The incident between Þórólfr and the Kvenir in Egils saga demonstrates cooperation and alliances made against a common enemy, but also trading competition since both are described as participating in the Saami fur trade. I would argue that this trading competition may have been the background for the hostilities described by Ohthere between the Norwegians and the Kvenir. Nevertheless, it is paramount to emphasise the friendship portrayed between Þórólfr and Faravið, which

¹¹ Irene Andreassen, “Kven og kainulainen,” Kainun Institutt, http://www.kvenskinstitutt.no/kvener/kven-og-kainulainen/. From Norse “hvein” meaning lowlying marshy area or thin grass, and independently, the old Finnish designation “Kainuu” for the northernmost parts of the Bothnian bay.
is never questioned in the text. Unfortunately, the Kvenir are only mentioned a few times in the saga material, the majority of which are associated with the mythological past.¹²⁵ The last medieval source, as far as I am aware, to mention the Kvenir is found in an entry in the Icelandic Annals from 1271 stating that “Þá gjörþ Kereliar ok Kvénir mikit hervirki á Háalogalanndi” [Karelians and Kvens were participating in much plunder in Hålogaland].¹²⁶ Some scholars have argued that the emergence of the “birkarlar” in 1328 in the Tälje-stadgan decree indicate that the economic function of the Kvenir had become more important than their ethnic identity and that the birkarlar appear as a kind of “redefined” Kvenir, continuing trade with and taxation of the Saami.¹²⁷ However, the fact that the Kvenir disappear from the medieval sources does not prevent the term from reappearing through later historical processes as an ethnic identity associated with Balto-Finnish culture and relocation to northern Norway and Sweden in the early modern period.¹²⁸

Across northern Norway and Sweden,¹²⁹ the Kola Peninsula and Finland, Saami people were dependent on and influenced by other peoples in the northeast, often independent of the Norse. Saga material, chronicles, geographical records and annals relate complex relationships between the Saami, Bjarmar, the Kirjálar, Kylfingar, the Ter Saami, and the Kvenir in association with the nation states, but also independent of them. Although ethnic terms such as “Kven,” “Karelian,” and “Kylfingar” are very much still debated in scholarly research, the care attended to distinguishing these groups across the medieval textual material is noteworthy.

¹²⁵ See Ork, 3; Bárð, 102. These sources portray a far northern snowscape and supernatural creatures such as jötnar, troll, and one finnlfr (?).
¹²⁶ IA, 138.
¹²⁷ Hansen and Olsen, Hunters, 154. See section 4.3.
¹²⁸ Sara Hagström Yamamoto, I gränslandet mellan svenskt och samisk: Identitetsdiskurser och förhistorien i Norrland från 1870-tal till 2000-tal, Occasional Papers in Archaeology 52 (Västerås: Editas Västra Aros, 2010). It should be noted that Kvens are a contemporary ethnic group, see section 1.1.2.
4.3.2 The Finnland “Paradox” and the Lappland(s) Confusion

Relating King Óláfr Haraldsson’s harrying expedition in the Baltics (Eysýsla), Heimskringla’s Ólafs saga helga states that on his return “sigldi hann aprt til Finnlands ok herjaði þar ok gekk á land upp” [he sailed back to Finnland and harried there and went ashore]. King Óláfr’s court poet, Sigvatr Þórdarson, allegedly reports in the eleventh century that:

Hríð varðs táls í stríðri
strøng Herdala göngu
Finnlendinga at fundi
fylkis niðs en þríðja.
En austr víð ló leysti
leik vikinga skeiðar.
Bálagarðs at baröi
brimskúum lá síða.¹³¹

There on the taxing trip to Herdalar
took place the third harsh tempest
of steel [BATTLE] of the king’s descendant [Óláfr],
strong, in meeting the Finnish [the Saami].
And the sea by the shore unshackled
ships of vikings in the east;
Alongside the surf-skis’ [SHIPS]
stems lay Bálagarðssíða.¹³²

Due to their descriptions as weather magicians and skilful archers able to traverse thick forests, the Finnlendingar in the text are generally identifiable with the Saami, with most scholars agreeing on this.¹³³ However, due to the infrequency of the placename in the saga material and the geographical description, Sirpa Aalto argues that this instance refers to a meeting between the saintly king and Finnish, not Saami, people.¹³⁴ The confusion is heightened by the two placenames

¹³⁰ Hkr 2, 11.
¹³¹ Hkr 2, 12.
¹³² “Hkr 2,” 8.
Herdalar and Bálagarðssíða. Bálagarðssíða is most commonly associated with the Baltic Sea and the southwest coast of modern day Finland, but Helgisaga Óláfs konungs Haraldssonar locates it on Zealand in Denmark. As discussed in chapter 7, the landscape is associated with Saami people and/or culturally fluid identities. In my opinion, since the Heimskringla version emphasises the king’s journey to the Baltic countries, it is geographically more feasible that the meeting occurred on the coast of Finland. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the people encountered were not Saami, since different Saami groups were present and interacted with Finnish people in southern Finland in the medieval period.

Egils saga locates Finnland between Kvenland and Kirjálaland, below Finnmark, but Heimskringla’s Ynglinga saga portrays it as north of Uppsala. Saxo mentions both “Finnmarchia” and “Phinniam/Finniam” (usually translated as Finland), but does not elaborate on their differences. Already from the sixth century onwards, a continental separation between the Saami and the Finnish people is observables in the change of term for the Saami with the addition of the precursor “skiing.” According to Hansen and Olsen, this change reflects the processes of social stratification in Finland between the years 200–600 that effectively disjointed Saami and Finnish cultures. These processes included the consolidation of agricultural society, increased sociocultural affinities with Europe in southern and western Finland, and augmented utilisation of the forests for hunting in the northern interior of Finland which saw growing affinities with other northeastern communities. As in the other cultural groups, these processes eventually solidified Saami and Finno-Norse culture as diverging entities. Nevertheless, the consolida-

138 Eg, 36. Hkr 1, 28–29.
139 Saxo, 39, 335.
140 See section 2.2.
141 Hansen and Olsen, Hunters, 44.
tion of diverging entities enabled the establishment, whether consciously or unconsciously, of cross-cultural relationships and fluid societies. Perhaps then, the confusion in Óláfs saga helga in Heimskringla is based on meeting such a culturally fluid group.

Early in the medieval period, six culturally distinct regions had already evolved in Finland: northern Finland, eastern Finland, the Lake Ladoga region, southwestern Finland, Åland, and Ostrobothnia. With the accumulative ambitions for geopolitical dominance over Fennoscandian natural and human resources, the Swedish and central authorities of Novgorod become increasingly interested in Finnish landscapes from the twelfth century onwards. These ambitions are reflected in Heimskringla’s Óláfs saga helga, which presents Finnland as one of the many eastern landscapes subjugated by the Swedish king. In the 1150s, Swedish armed troops sailed into Turku as “crusaders” and declared the people living in the coastal districts of southwestern Finland as Swedish subjects. This was followed by the gradual establishment of churches and the building of Turku castle on the banks of the Aura river and were manifestations of Swedish geopolitical dominance and administration over Österlanden (the Eastlands). The early fourteenth century sees the Novgorod destruction of Turku castle, and the following treaty of Nöteborg between Sweden and Novgorod in 1323. The peace treaty effectively divided the mixed Finnish-Karelian population on the Karelian isthmus into a Swedish (Catholic) “sphere of influence” and an Eastern (Orthodox) “sphere of belonging” to Novgorod. The peace treaty rendered the majority of the northern Fennoscandian areas as shared zones where peoples from Novgorod, Swedes, and Norwegians could settle and appropriate land, in addition to trading with different Saami communities. This was also the case in the Finnish interior and northern coastal communities. An account from 1346 reflects the cultural diversity in the northern Ostrobothnian area, and describes the baptism of twenty Saami and Karelians by two Swedish bishops in Tornio. In addition, the Christian cemeteries of coastal villages in the same area display great cultural diversity represented by their grave goods, which has been interpreted as indicating cross-cultural-

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142 Maria Lähteenmäki, *Footprints in the Snow: The Long History of Arctic Finland*, Prime Minister’s Office Publications 12 (Helsinki: Prime Minister’s Office, 2017), 22.
143 *Hkr 2*, 115.
144 Lähteenmäki, *Footprints*, 22.
146 Lähteenmäki, *Footprints*, 22.
147 Lähteenmäki, *Footprints*, 23.
148 Ylimaunu et al., “Spaces,” 245.
al ties connected to Saami, Karelian, Swedish, and other groups. I find it likely that this diversity was rooted in earlier medieval interaction between several northern peoples. The emergence of the landscape “Lapland” in the thirteenth century is according to my way of thinking reflective of this diversity.

Today, Lappland and Lappi are the northernmost provinces of Sweden and Finland. “Lappmarken” was the later medieval and early modern designation for the areas inhabited by Saami people (in Sweden) and can be compared to the toponym Finnmörk. In English, the term Lapland sometimes denotes Sápmi, the self-designating term for the Saami settlement area today. The landscape appears in Saxo Grammaticus’s *Gesta Danorum*, describing the Swedish and Baltic landscapes and their inhabitants legally appropriated by the Danish King Frothi, appointing his retainer Dimar in charge of the “Provincias Helsingorum, Jarnberorum et Jamaorum cum utraque Lappia” [the Provinces of the Hålsings, the Jarnbers, the Jämts and both Lapplands]. Whether the term “utraque Lappia” refers to the people or the landscape is debated, but the consensus is that it refers to a landscape or people associated with the northwestern and northeastern areas of the Bothnian coast. This link is furthered in the mythological introduction to *Orkneyinga saga*, relating the story of how the eponymous King Nórr founded Norway:

Eptir þat fór hann af Kvenlandi ok fyrir innan hafsbótinn ok kómu þar, er þeir menn váru, er Lappir heita; þat er á bak Finnmörk. En Lappir vildu banna þeim yfirfóski; ok tösk þar hár-dagi, ok sá kraptr ok fjölkynngi fylgði þeim Nórr, at óvinir þeira urðu at gjalti, þegar þeir heyrðu heróu ok sá váðnum brugþit, ok lögðu Lappir á flóttta. En Nórr fór þaðan vestr ú Kjólu ok var lengi úti ok svá, at þeir vissu ekki til manna, ok skutu dýr ok fugla til matar sér, fóru þar til, er þeit hñigu til vestrættar af fjöllum.

Then [Nor] set out from Kvenland skirting the head of the Gulf, and so reached the land of the [Lappir] on the far side of Finnmark. The [Lappir] tried to bar the way and this led to a clash between them. But so great was the uncanny power and magic of Nor and his men that as soon as the [Lappir] heard their war-cry and saw them drawing their swords, they were scared out of their wits and ran away. From there Nor and his men journeyed on westward to the [Kjølen] mountains. For a long they saw no sign of people, and for food they had to shoot birds and deer [...] they came to the watershed where the rivers start to flow west [of the mountains].

According to *Orkneyinga saga*, the Lappir people inhabited an area west of Kvenland and behind (or beyond) Finnmörk, but east of the Keel. This locates the space

150 Saxo, 331.
152 *Ork*, 4.
associated with the Lappir in the Swedish interior, and/or the northwestern Bothnian coast. The Lappir people are therefore connected to the inner northeastern areas of Sweden by both Saxo and Orkneyinga saga, which is reflected in the usage of the term. In historical times, the term “Lapp” for Saami people was primarily used by those on the Swedish and Finnish sides and does not appear to have been used in Norway until later in the early modern period.\textsuperscript{154} It should again be emphasised that the exonym “Lapp” is regarded as derogatory by Saami people today. The Lappir people are first mentioned in a Swedish source in 1328, in the Tälje-stadgan decree ordered by the Swedish-Norwegian King Magnus Eriksson. In an attempt to quell the conflict between the inhabitants of Hälsingland and the Birkarlar, the decree states that neither Birkarlar nor Hälsingar should hinder the:

\begin{quote}
\textit{homines siluestres et vagos vulgariter dicitos Lappa in suis venacionibus nullus debeat impedire, nec eciam prefatos Birkarlaboa ad eosdem Lappa accedentes, apud ipsos commorantes [...].}\textsuperscript{155}
\end{quote}

forest and nomadic people who are called [Lappa] in the folk dialect in their hunting, nor the earlier mentioned Birkarlaboa, who travel to the aforementioned [Lappa], visit them and return from them with their property.\textsuperscript{156}

By the early fourteenth century, the term “Lappir” was associated with the Saami living in the interior of northern Sweden. The “Lappir” people were also associated with peoples living in the northern parts of the Bothnian coast and the modern Lapland landscapes. These areas are archaeologically fluid and present diverse societies on the borderscapes of the growing nation states. The appearance of “Lappir” in thirteenth-century written sources in the interior of Sweden and on the Bothnian coast helps emphasise this diversity.

The landscape Finnland might also point to diversification of medieval Finno-Ugric societies. However, Finnland appears as slightly more confusing, since the primary and secondary sources disagree about whether or not it should be associated with the Saami or the Finnish people.\textsuperscript{157} \textit{Egils saga} locates the area more or less in line with the (southwestern) modern day location of Finland and does not mention its Saami inhabitants, but \textit{Ynglinga saga} (Heimskringla) places it to the north of Uppsala and addresses the magically-skilled Saami people living

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[154]{Hansen and Olsen, \textit{Hunters}, 38. This was probably a result of Swedish dominance over Norway in the early modern period.}
\footnotetext[156]{Hansen and Olsen, \textit{Hunters}, 154.}
\end{footnotes}
there, more in line with Saxo’s northwestern “Lappia.” Since Finnland etymologically can be understood as the “land of the Saami,” I would suggest that in *Ynglinga saga*, the “Finnish” landscape has been confused with other landscapes associated with the Saami of interior Sweden. The composer of *Egils saga*, however, differentiates the Saami and the Finnish, associating Finnland with the eastern landscape in between Sweden and the Baltic. Nevertheless, this does not mean that medieval Finland was not inhabited by Saami people, and toponymic, written, and archaeological material emphasise that Finnish and Saami people lived in shared landscapes throughout the medieval period. As mentioned above and briefly in section 2.7.4, differentiating Saami and Finnish people in medieval texts discussing Finland is complicated because of the similar terminology sometimes used for both peoples (i.e., *Finns*). Similarly, archaeological material from Finland in the medieval period, especially its earlier phases, has proved to be difficult to categorise as either “Saami” and “Finnish” because the material is often culturally fluid. It should therefore be repeated that both the textual and archaeological material point to cultural fluidity in medieval Finland.

Despite their ambiguity, the emergence of Finnland and the landscapes associated with the “Lappir” on the northern Bothnian coast in written sources from the thirteenth century onwards demonstrate the complex social processes and cross-cultural interactions taking place in interior and northern Fennoscandia in the medieval period. Contemporary with the emergence of the terms, the Swedish and Norwegian kingdoms as well as the principality of Novgorod increasingly appropriated these landscapes as displays of power connected to the importance of geopolitical dominance over resources linked to Saami fur trade and taxation. These developments had social, political, and economic implications for the inhabitants of the northern areas, which resulted in more pronounced processes of social stratification within Saami societies. Interaction with other Saami people, Finnish peoples, Karelians, Novgorodians, Swedes, and Norwegians, will have coloured the realities of Saami people living in Finnland and the Lapplands, and their loyalties will have also differed. This diversity is important to emphasise and might have been based on internal structures rather than external forces.

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4.4 Saami Presence in the South

The textual material often alludes to Saami presence south in Fennoscandia. In fact, after Finnmørk and Hålogaland, the Uppland region in mid-Norway is the landscape most often associated with the Saami in the texts. The landscape traditionally included the inland districts Valdres, Ætøtn (Toten), Haðaland, Hringaríki (Ringerike), Dofri, Guðbrandsdalr; Eystridalr (Østerdalen), and sometimes also Heiðmørk and Raumaríki (Romerike). The late twelfth-century text Ágrip famously relates the meeting between the Saami “princess” Snjófríðr and King Harad hárfa-gri in Ætøptyn (Toftemo: Dovre).¹⁶² Mid-eastern associations with the Saami are also expressed by Saxo early in the thirteenth century, writing that the Saami were the inhabitants of the Norwegian-Swedish border forests.¹⁶³ This is mirrored in the saga material, which alludes to Saami presence in the Vermaland, Järnbéraland (Dalarna), and Jamtland areas on the Swedish side, and the Heiðmørk landscape on the Norwegian side.¹⁶⁴ Saami presence in the south as suggested by the source material is the main focus of chapter 7 and the discussion will therefore be continued there.

4.5 Conclusion

Medieval texts associate the Saami with a wide area, from the Kola Peninsula in the east to the coastal area around Lyngen and mid-Troms in the west, down the Scandinavian Mountains (i.e., the Keel) and southwards into the Oppland region and Jämtland. The Norse geopolitical landscape Finnmørk is always associated with the Saami, and the area is rarely demarcated, leading to its ambiguity and portrayal as both internal and external to the concept of Nóregi.

The central authorities of Norway, Sweden, and Novgorod increasingly appropriated traditional Saami landscapes in northern Fennoscandia in displays of power connected to the significance of geopolitical dominance over resources associated with Saami fur trade and taxation. Simultaneously with the negotiation of the northern borders between the growing nation states, an awareness of intricate social processes in northern Fennoscandia is reflected in the written material. Multifaceted relationships with the Bjarmar, the Kirjálar, Kylfingar, Ter Saami, the Lappir people(s), people from “Finnland,” and the Kvenir, in relation to the Saami,

¹⁶² Ágr, 4–5.
¹⁶³ Saxo, 17–19.
¹⁶⁴ Stst, 613. Hammaburgensis, 173.
the Norse, and/or Novgorod, are related across the saga material and other texts. The care attended to distinguishing these different groups indicates an awareness of the intricate social processes taking place at the time of composition. It also demonstrates the sociocultural diversity prevalent in a region where the Saami interacted with several other peoples in normalised and multifaceted ways.

Interpreting Saami spatial belonging as adjacent to Norse spatial belonging becomes a helpful decolonising tool since it allows for both regional and chronological variation and differing ideas of cultural belonging, political loyalties, and personal associations. Simultaneously, it should be emphasised that significant areas of medieval Fennoscandia consisted of both Norse, or Finnish, and Saami peoples, and so therefore, room should be given to shared spatial belonging. The fluid spatial awareness concept suggested in section 4.2.1 therefore becomes particularly useful for our understanding of Fennoscandian landscapes, since it acknowledges liminality. Geopolitically, Finnmørk becomes increasingly associated with the north and areas connected to Hálogaland in the texts, as a hub for Saami fur trade and the border with other central authorities such as Novgorod. Socioculturally, however, the textual material relates that the landscape stretched southwards and inwards to the Uppland region and the coinciding Swedish sides.