Chapter 7: Saami in the South: Sources and Societies

7.1 Introduction

Saami presence further south than the traditional northern Fennoscandian landscapes discussed in sections 4.2 and 4.3 is portrayed surprisingly often across medieval texts. While Saami presence in more southern landscapes should not be surprising,\(^1\) the failure to mention this prevalence in the secondary literature is. Despite the prevalence of Saami actors in southern contexts, the exclusive association between the Saami and the far north has often been adopted by scholars focusing on the Saami in Norse society, leading to the overall assumption that Saami people of the medieval period were foreigners confined to “exotic arctic snowscapes” who did not contribute to Norse society.\(^2\) This assumption leads to a lack of attention to the sources mentioning Saami people in the south, in addition to a scholarly inability to challenge the colonial claim that the Saami were not present in southern Scandinavia until later in the early modern period.\(^3\) Through this interpretation, the dichotomy between the Norse and the Saami is fully realised, visible in the tendency to neglect the Saami in historical research as well as in more direct statements like Jeremy DeAngelo’s interpretation:

The *Finnar* [Saami], for their part, appear to be especially allergic to the areas in which the Norse subsist [...] they are never associated with towns or southern locales in the sagas, but rather remain in the dark forests of the north and east.\(^4\)

Following the initiation of the *Sörsamiska projektet* led by Inger Zachrisson in 1984, archaeological research has increasingly pointed to the continuous presence of Saami people or people with Saami ties in what today forms the traditional

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\(^3\) Håkon Hermanstrand et al., eds., *The Indigenous Identity of the South Saami: Historical and Political Perspectives on a Minority within a Minority* (New York: Springer, 2019), 50 – 51.

South Saami area, as well as south of this, from before the Viking Age.\(^5\) Regardless of the archaeological and historical material pointing towards a culturally diverse southern Fennoscandia, the overall academic community\(^6\) and the general public still tend to uphold the association between Saami people and the far north, sometimes directly disregarding the evidence that point to Saami presence in the south prior to the early modern period. In this chapter, I challenge this commonly perceived “exclusive” historical association by focusing on the archaeological and textual material that indicate Saami presence in the south in the medieval period. Before going into this material, however, the intricacies of the politics concerning Saami presence in southern contexts will be problematised.

### 7.2 Politics, Pre-History, and the South Saami

The common perception of the South Saami (Indigenous) area today stretches from Saltfjellet in Nordland county to northern Hedmark on the Norwegian side, and in Sweden, most South Saami people live in Västerbotten, Jämtland, Härjedalen and Dalarna (figure 6).\(^7\) The South Saami group differs from other Saami groups on linguistic grounds, in ornamentation and traditional clothing, building customs and other cultural expressions, as well as in subsistence strategies.\(^8\) From a state point of view, the South Saami geographical area is defined by people speaking South Saami (Åarjelsaemien). Language is not the most considerate identity marker, since only a fraction of South Saami people today master the language and Åarjelsaemien is listed as “severely endangered” on UNESCO’s list of languages in danger.\(^9\) Recent political and cultural campaigns focused on the preservation and continuation of the Saami languages, particularly South Saami, have, nevertheless, fostered some increase in the amount of South Saami speakers.\(^10\) Because South Saami peoples have lived and continue to live in a wide area, South Saami peoples have been seriously subjected to colonising strategies like forced assimilation into Norwegian or Swedish majority society and to external stress factors like the fram-

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6 *I.e.*, historians or archaeologists not preoccupied with matters relating to the Saami.

7 Hermanstrand et al., *South Saami*, 6–7.

8 Hermanstrand et al., *South Saami*, 23–24.


rykningsteori discussed in section 1.2, which rejected South Saami presence and historicity prior to the 1500s. This subsection will quickly summarise the politics of South Saami pre-history, since it is crucial to be conscious of colonial remnants still lingering in the narration of Saami history in southern contexts today.


Being a minority within the minority, the telling of South Saami history is inherently political and claims to historicity are intertwined with legal and cultural protection within a given area. From the end of the nineteenth century to the end of the twentieth century (1980s), aforementioned factors like Social Darwinism and Yngvar Nielssen’s accepted framrykningsteori presupposed that the Saami were a static people and that the South Saami population had been early modern settlers in the regions south of northern Trøndelag in Norway and adjacent areas in Sweden.¹¹ As Hege Skalleberg Gjerde poses, South Saami pre-history was therefore for

a long time seen as contradictory within both historical and archaeological research.\textsuperscript{12} As mentioned in the introduction, a significant factor behind the marked change in interpreting and narrating the medieval history of Saami peoples, especially in southern contexts, was a result of the debate between Knut Bergsland and Jørn Sandnes in Historisk Tidsskrift throughout the 1970s.\textsuperscript{13} The most significant factors in this discourse were Bergsland’s argument that both Norwegian and Swedish medieval documents referred to the presence of Saami peoples in southern contexts, and Sandnes’ support of the \textit{framrykningsteori} and his understanding that there was no proof of any “Finnmørk” south of Hålogaland.\textsuperscript{14} While their discussions were significant and led to the development of historiography, it in no way settled the debate on Saami historicity in the south.

The idea that the South Saami people were early modern or modern settlers in regions south of Trøndelag is unfortunately still a prevailing cultural notion, also within historiography. This prevalence contributes to the exclusion of Saami history in large regions, since Saami history prior to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is not viewed as relevant for these areas. The reluctance felt by both researchers and others to acknowledge Saami historical presence south of northern areas have “served as support for colonialism,”\textsuperscript{15} and has also been used in court decisions regarding Saami rights to land such as the Norwegian Trollheimsak in 1981 and the Swedish Härjedalsdomen in 2002. In 2007, the Norwegian Official Report put forward by Samerettsutvalget II (Saami Law Committee)\textsuperscript{16} used historical and archaeological research to clarify Saami nature use and judicial situation from Hedmark to Troms.\textsuperscript{17} The committee found that the \textit{framrykningsteori} was “very hard to support based on the [historical and archaeological] evidence.”\textsuperscript{18} The theory is, nevertheless, still weighted heavily in the cultural debate, particular-

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{Gjerde} Gjerde, \textit{Sørsamisk eller fôrsamisk}, 15.
\bibitem{Hermanstrand} Hermanstrand et al., \textit{South Saami}, 50.
\bibitem{SamiLaw} The Saami Law committee is a state-appointed committee tasked with clarifying the relationship of the Norwegian state to Saami culture and legal status. The committee was first appointed in 1980 as a response to the Alta controversy in the late 1970s, and secondly in 2001 to clarify Saami rights to land and water south of the county Finnmark.
\bibitem{Nou} NOU 14, 42.
\end{thebibliography}
ly in areas where rights to land and water are contested. The inclusion, or lack thereof, of Saami people in the three-volume history of the Trøndelag region published in 2005 is also worth mentioning since the controversy around the compilation illuminates the problems surrounding nation-state historiography that unconsciously or consciously neglects the Indigenous population. The compilation received criticism from academics and Indigenous communities, both prior to publication and after, based on the neglect to include the South Saami in the *longue durée* history of Trøndelag and the resistance to include alternative Saami histories. Leiv Sem emphasised the ideologies behind the decisions to disregard the South Saami in the history-telling of the region:

The fundamental limitation of the depiction of the Saamis in the text as a whole is not a question of sources. Rather it is a question of the narrative and rhetorical structure of the text, and by extension: of the ideologies of the discourse of the historical community.

Sem emphasises the power within considering the presence of a marginalised group and then choosing to ignore or neglect it, rather than finding alternative ways of narrating this group's history. Jostein Bergstøl and Gaute Reitan made a similar remark in 2006, when they requested more focus on South Saami history as a wholesome and fully valuable entity in itself, so that not every piece of work on the topic has to use up big parts of the content “just” to argue for Indigenous presence.

It is worth discussing the aforementioned view that treats the appearance of Saami people in southern contexts in texts from the 1500/1600s as indicative of a sudden shift in Saami population patterns (the *framrykning*). Rather than questioning this “sudden” emergence of Saami people in the south, we should question why there was a sudden need to write about Saami peoples in these areas. As Bergsland has noted, the early modern texts often treated as proof of the *framrykning* of the South Saami people are predominantly legal in nature and related to complaints regarding land conflicts and hunting rights. These complaints, Bergs-

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19 Tore Østby, Hanne Magga and Sara Kristine Bransfjell, “Hva var rasistisk ved Selbu Utmarksråd sitt møte?” *Rørosnytt*, 09.06.2019 https://rorosnytt.no/hva-var-rasistisk-ved-selbu-utmarksrad-sitt-mote/?fbclid=IwAR2h7DZVLzqmS6pFsvGkAwIm32TG50UZ67sx96haYC7R2mML5LiZdiabmQ.
23 Sem, “Om framstillinga,” 143.
land argues, should be seen as reflections of the popularisation of firearms among Norwegian farmers in the early modern period which led to an increased usage of mountainous resources. In turn, the use of firearms led to a conflict with the Saami people who were already present in the region, who had previously been the primary appropriators of the mountainous resources. This clash was then reflected in legal texts relating the complaints of farmers wishing to appropriate resources previously dominated by the Saami. I find this theory persuasive, especially since the medieval texts discussed in section 7.4 indeed indicates the presence of Saami peoples in southern regions prior to the early modern period.

Increasing interest directed towards the South Saami people in public history narratives like Leif Braseth’s *Samer sør for midnattsola* (2014), the multi-authored *The Indigenous Identity of the South Saami: Historical and Political Perspectives on a Minority Within a Minority* (2019), and the funding for a new and modern building for the South Saami museum and cultural centre *Saemien Sijte* in Snåsa (commenced in 2020) contributes to the strengthening of South Saami historicity. Similarly, the launch of the website *Gaavnoes.no* (“that which exists”) in 2018 forms part of the attempt to digitise South Saami history and make it more accessible to both Indigenous communities and others.

As will be elaborated below, archaeological excavations of possible Saami material cultures in southern Fennoscandia have been paramount in the strengthening of South Saami historicity, since it has helped illuminate the likelihood of pre-early modern presence of Saami people in the south, especially in areas where a (perceived) lack of historical sources has been used to reject Saami presence. Section 7.4 challenges this perception by emphasising the source material listed in chapter 2 that alludes to Saami presence in the south. It is, however, important to accentuate that while the archaeological material record and the textual material may not be based on direct historical portrayals of the people known today as South Saami, these portrayals could form the early roots of what later developed into the South Saami identity. Whether or not the material can be successfully “categorised” as pre-Saami, South Saami, Saami, culturally fluid or Norse, it is nevertheless important that as academics, we are conscious of the inclusion of Saami people in southern contexts in our narration of history today, since it directly impacts current political debates and notions of Indigeneity.

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7.3 A South Saami Archaeology?

The archaeological bias, whereby there has been a tendency to overlook the Saami archaeological record on the grounds of lingering colonial structures, has been particularly relevant in southern contexts. However, archaeological source material became an increasingly important tool in the telling of a South Saami pre-history from the 1980s with Inger Zachrisson’s excavations at Vivallen in Härjedalen (Sweden). The interdisciplinary Norwegian-Swedish project Sörsamiska projektet initiated in 1984 sought to answer whether there were Saami people in Jämtland, Härjedalen, and Hedmark early in the medieval period, with the excavation of Vivallen and Zachrisson’s interpretation of it as part of a South Saami settlement between 800–1200 being particularly important. Zachrisson noted similarities between the burials at Vivallen with early medieval Saami burial traditions in northern Sweden (particularly stone settings, inhumation graves, and birch bark swaddles), and declared the paradox that had the graves at Vivallen been found in the north, they would have undoubtedly have been categorised as “Saami.” The project culminated in the co-authored 1997 publication Möten i gränsland: Samer och germaner i mellanskandinavien. Since Zachrisson’s excavations of Vivallen, several archaeologists have started focusing on premodern Saami presence in southern regions, through new excavations and finds as well as reinterpretations of older finds as Saami. This material and its research tradition has been summarised and discussed elsewhere, notably in Hege Skalleberg Gjerde’s 2015 doctoral thesis. In this section, I will review some of the archaeological material in light of my own analysis.

As mentioned in section 6.3.1, Norse and Saami archaeological categories can be helpful for “identifying” cultural affiliations in the archaeological material. With increasing acknowledgement of medieval Saami presence in southern contexts and a growing distancing from colonial strategies, archaeological finds falling within the Saami archaeological category in the south have been increasingly identified or reinterpreted as representing medieval Saami presence. Archaeologists excavating possible early Saami material in southern contexts have primarily em-

29 Gjerde, Sørsamisk eller førسامی, 14.
30 NOU 14, 39.
32 Gjerde, Sørsamisk eller førسامی, 14.
33 Gjerde, Sørsamisk eller førسامی, 15. One previous interpretation was that rather than representing Saami historical presence, the material with similarities to Saami archaeological categories represented an otherwise unknown Germanic/Norse hunting society.
phasised birchbark swaddles, eastern ornaments (especially pendants) or decoration, the so-called (and much debated) hunting-ground graves, trapping systems for hunting, hearth row sites, and sacrificial sites, amongst other archaeological interpretations of recognisable Saami “elements.” The “sensational” discovery of several hearth rows dated between years 700 – 900 at Aursjøen in Lesja (Norway) in 2006 was interpreted by Jostein Bergstøl as a Saami settlement site. Similarly, Hege Skalleberg Gjerde interprets some twenty circular foundations found in Hallingdal (Buskerud, Norway) as traces of possible Saami settlement sites, eleven of which have been dated and span from the year 600 to 1450. Gjerde bases her interpretation on the circular foundations’ floor systems, and links them to the traditional Saami organisation of floor space that can be traced to historical Saami settlements. She also emphasises that the organisation and structure of the circular foundation sites differ from typically Norse buildings, and emphasises the clear cross-cultural situation evident in southern Norway. Inger Zachrisson and Elisabeth Iregren also read the traces of settlements surrounding the graves at Vivallen as Saami hearth row sites due to the similar floor organisation to older Saami settlement sites found in northern Sweden. One of the most significant Saami elements for Inger Zachrisson was that some of the buried individuals at Vivallen had been swaddled in birchbark. Another fascinating pointer to Saami affiliation at Vivallen could also, in my opinion, be reflected in the seemingly equal distribution of men, women, and children in the graves, a common feature of medieval Saami burials, as noted in section 6.3.1. Asgeir Svestad notes that some of the pre-medieval (Vendel period) and early medieval burials at Vendel and Valsgärde also contain birchbark, with one grave (Vendel 7) containing a birchbark mat showing significant decorative similarities to a birchbark swaddle found in a Saami grave from

38 Gjerde, “Samiske tufter?,” 208.
40 Zachrisson, Möten i gränsland, 54–60.
Varanger in Finnmark. More curiously, Svestad mentions three burials at St. Clemens cemetery in Oslo, dating from the late 900s to early 1100s, that contained individuals swaddled in birch bark. These graves, according to Svestad, are seemingly demarcated in the cemetery, and he therefore interprets them as representing a specific type of people, either Saami people or people from a fluid Norse-Saami milieu. Single loose finds found in southern contexts like z-shaped leather scrapers, a specific ski-type (Bothnian skis), arrowheads, and jewellery or ornaments with eastern origin, are also often assigned Saami affiliation due to their prevalence in Saami graves in the north. These loose finds are not unproblematic, and while they certainly demonstrate Saami affiliation, they should not always or unquestionably be read as indicating Saami identity. They do, however, indicate clear social meaning as associated with the Saami, and the usage of what must have been perceived as “Saami jewellery,” for example, either by people identifying as Saami, culturally fluid, or Norse, indicates some Saami influence in these southern areas. As Gjerde writes, the presence of these Saami elements is hardly random.

While Zachrisson repeatedly stresses the South Saami affiliation of the aforementioned material, other archaeologists have demonstrated more scepticism in categorising the material as “only” Saami, and instead focus on the fluidity expressed by the southern material. Camilla Olofsson, for example, claims that the antler deposits of elk and reindeer found at two pre-medieval gravefields in Härjedalen (Krankmårtenhögen and Smalnäset), which Inger Zachrisson has interpreted as representing South Saami burial tradition, are illustrative of:

the strategies of people who identified themselves just as living on the intersection point between, and interacting with, more distinctively defined Saami and Germanic ethnicities.

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42 Svestad, “Skjoldehamnfunnet,” 142.
45 Gjerde, Sørsamisk eller førsamisk, 183.
Within this intersection, Olofsson sees the first signs for a dawning South Saami identity.\(^4^8\) Personally, I find Olofsson’s interpretation of the later development of South Saami identity within this intersection of more pronounced Norse and Saami cultures particularly useful, especially given the prevalence of culturally fluid characters in and around the same landscapes as expressed in the textual material discussed below. I therefore agree with Hege Skalleberg Gjerde, who emphasises that:

> The [fluid] archaeological material can in fact also contribute to the telling of a South Saami pre-history by multiplying it, for example by demonstrating the variations of “Saaminess” in time and space.\(^4^9\)

Jostein Bergstøl writes that the attempts to “reduce the material so that it can be assigned to one or two known ethnic groups can contribute to the simplification of the complexity and dynamic present in ethnic processes.”\(^5^0\)

A good example of the benefits of reading items categorised as either Norse or Saami in light of more dynamic cultural relations, is the famous *viejtere* found in Rendalen in Hedmark (figure 7). A *viejtere* is a typical Saami object similar to a hammer used for beating on the *gievrie* (South Saami for ritual drum) by a ritual performer during ceremonies, as mentioned in section 3.2.1. The traces of iron on the Rendalen-*viejtere* have been dated to the 1400s, but the hammer itself is assumed to have been made between 1160–1260. The object is often used as the archaeological epitome of Saami presence in Østerdalen in the medieval period.\(^5^1\) Gjerde has emphasised the uncertainty of the find context and the ambivalence of the object itself, but she does highlight the significance of the clear Saami ritual usage of the object, in addition to the mixed decoration of the hammer.\(^5^2\) The mixed decoration is thought provoking since it illustrates a sort-of Norse-Saami “cultural dialogue” as the hammer is decorated with geometric ribbon ornament that is common in Saami ornamentation from the 1050s onwards,\(^5^3\) and the typically “Norse” Ringerike-style on the other, common in Norse contexts like early

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\(^4^8\) Olofsson, “Regeneration,” 111.  
\(^5^1\) Gjerde, *Sørømsisk eller førsamisk*, 167. It even features on the cover of *Möten i gränsland*.  
\(^5^2\) Gjerde, *Sørømsisk eller førsamisk*, 168–70.  
\(^5^3\) The ribbon ornament was typical on many Norse objects (pre 1050s), but became a Saami style later: See Gjerde, *Sørømsisk eller førsamisk*, 172–73.
churches and on runestones in the tenth and eleventh centuries.⁵⁴ The third side has an otherwise unknown geometric pattern, and the fourth side has not been carved, suggested as representing a space left for future generations to carve with symbols relevant to them.⁵⁵

Figure 7: Vietjere from Rendalen, by Erik Iregren, “C26831: runebommehammer,” KHM (CC BY-SA 4.02).

In my opinion, it is unquestionable that the main function of the hammer belonged within the field of Saami ritual performance. The mixing of otherwise “separate” cultural categories is nevertheless significant, and I would propose that the object should be read as representative of being a connector between Norse and Saami cultures, or created for the people on the intersection of these. Either way, the object shows a kind of intimacy in the integration of the Norse and Saami. With that in mind, it is also possible that the adoption of Norse ornamentation on the otherwise Saami object symbolises a welcoming gesture to Norse neighbours or family members to participate in Saami rituals. I would argue that this strategy should be understood as parallel to the identity strategies reviewed in section 6.3.2, whereby

⁵⁵ Gjerde, Sørsmisk eller fœsamisk, 174.
Norse or Norse-Saami peoples could more increasingly associate themselves with Saami traditions in order to maintain their pre-Christian identity and thereby avoid the stress of conversion. The Christianisation of the inner forested parts of eastern Norway is comparable to that of Hålogaland and Finnmørk, and took longer than in more central parts of Norway. Either way, the viettjere could signify several different things, but the overall fluidity clearly demonstrates that Norse and Saami people living in Hedmark in the medieval period were in close contact. It should also be noted that the viettjere’s assumed dating is consistent with that of the composition of the Eiðsivapingslög, which would have incorporated the find context and forbids participation in Saami ritual performance.

As discussed by both Hilde Rigmor Amundsen and Jostein Bergstøl, the main archaeological patterns and inherent processes of change suggest that the inland area of southeast Norway was one of several regions constituting both borders and contacts between early Saami and Norse groups. Despite the conspicuous increased Norse influence on the region of Hedmark in the period before the Viking Age according to the archaeological material, finds that are typically ascribed to either Saami or Norse-Saami traditions like hunting-ground graves indicate that contact with Saami-affiliated groups continued. Jostein Bergstøl interprets the hunting-ground graves as a product of an independent fluid complex, precisely because they often include a mix of both Norse and Saami cultural identity markers. This is reinforced by the interpretations of Hilde Rigmor Amundsen, who states that in the meeting of Norse and Saami culture in early medieval shared cultural landscapes, “some people could choose to hold a mix of Saami and Norse identities and worldviews.”

Joint Norse-Saami ritual performance may also be visible in the remains of what has been interpreted as a sacrificial tree found under the church at Frösön in Jämtland. The birch tree had received regular animal sacrifices until it was cut down and a church building was constructed on top of it, and the

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56 See section 6.3.2.
58 Bergstøl, Østerdalen, 188–89.
The island of Frösön represents the northernmost inland extension of agrarian society in Sweden in the early medieval period, and the end of the sacrifices by the tree correspond with the erection of a runestone claiming the Christianisation of Jämtland by a so-called Austmaðr, dated between 1060 and 1090. Surrounding the island is a mountainous area inhabited by Saami people today. The animals sacrificed and buried surrounding the tree stump consists of both domesticated animals as well as wild game like elk, squirrel, and bear. This mixing of both wild and domesticated animals in the sacrificial tradition has been interpreted as a reflection of the area’s cultural fluidity, where “Norse agrarian religion mixed syncretically with Saami hunter-gatherer livelihoods and religious traditions.” Particularly important for this reading of the sacrificial site is the large prevalence of bear among the wild game deposits, and the fact that the bear was buried anatomically correctly in ways reminiscent of the Saami bear burials discussed in section 3.2.3.

While we should be careful of drawing conclusions based on the dichotomy between hunting and agriculture, I would argue that the fluid symbolism evident in the sacrificial deposits should be read as a reflection of a joint ritual space shared by Norse and Saami peoples. In my opinion, this shared ritual is comparable to the silver hoards discussed in section 6.3.1 and 4.2.1 as expressions of a dual Norse-Saami identity actualised in interface areas. However, the erection of the runestone declaring the Christianisation of the area coinciding with the concluded use of the sacrificial tree indicates that the possible Norse-Saami ritual ceased in this specific locality, as opposed to the silver hoards that are interpreted as a response to conversion. Regional variation is not surprising and shared rituals probably continued after the conversion but was expressed differently. Regardless of whether scholars agree that the sacrifices were deposited in a context involving Saami, culturally fluid, or only Norse actors, it is refreshing to see, as well as significant, that possible Saami influence is discussed. Again, these inclusive interpre-

62 Magnell and Iregren, “The Old Norse blót,” 241. Notably, Adam of Bremen writes about a people possibly identifiable with the Saami in the same region in the same period (mid-to-late eleventh century), see section 2.3.2.
63 Ryynänen, “Karjalen,” 38.
tations are significant since they emphasise the long historical Saami ties in areas where Saami presence is contested on the basis of e silentio conclusions.

The archaeological material discussed previously indicates that people belonging to two cultural affiliations, Saami and Norse, used the same areas and shared landscapes in southern Norway and mid-Sweden in the medieval period. Due to the current political and cultural debates regarding Saami historical claims and thereby rights in southern areas, discussing Saami presence in the south is not unproblematic. In addition, the mixed cultural expressions of the archaeological material often make it problematic to assign certain finds as either Norse or Saami, and there has been an increasing effort from archaeologists working in southern contexts to emphasise the culturally fluid expressions of the material. Narrating Saami history in southern contexts through interpretations of the archaeological material is therefore complicated, and it is precisely in this complication that I believe the value in continuing to emphasise the evidence supporting medieval Saami presence in these areas lies. Having moved away, at least in most academic environments, from having to solely justify Saami presence and oppose Nielsen’s theory, it is now the ways in which the Saami identity in these areas have formed through historical processes that lie at the heart of the debate. I would argue that the archaeological material clearly demonstrates a society where both Norse and Saami actors contributed, and that these actors had varying degrees of contact or distance to and from each other. Within this situation, there was room for identity negotiation that enabled so-called “both and”-peoples and culturally fluid societies. An emphasis on fluidity does not take away from either Norse or Saami cultural expressions, but rather, adds to it.

7.4 Saami Characters in Southern Contexts

While the sources associating the Saami with the north are in the majority, they certainly do not stand alone, and several texts mention Saami people in connection with more southern regions. Despite this, when the southern presence of the Saami in medieval texts actually is discussed, the discussion is more often than not based on the premise that the Saami are literary tools of monstrosity or Otherness or that the depictions represent Norse claims to Saami land (which in itself, presupposes Saami presence). In an already small field of studies concerning the Saami in Norse society, the discussion of Saami characters in southern contexts is still a

66 See section 6.2.1.
topic rarely examined. Nevertheless, Else Mundal asserts that the Saami may have been in the majority in some regions and that “even in Southern Norway, in the mountainous districts and in the inland areas less densely populated by Norwegians, the two peoples may have been more equal in number than we usually think.”

I agree with Mundal’s sentiment, but I do not necessarily think that the geographical prevalence of Saami people always have to be founded on a “lack of Norwegians” (or Norse people). Rather, I support the approach taken by some of the archaeologists referred to previously in which material with Saami identity markers in otherwise Norse contexts can be interpreted as signifying Saami or fluid identity affiliation within these contexts. Moreover, the interpretations of some of the archaeological material as culturally fluid can, I would argue, also be transferred to some of textual portrayals of people with Saami ties in southern contexts. In the following section I provide a systematic overview of the medieval textual portrayal of Saami people in southern contexts, followed by a reading of certain portrayals of characters with associations with the Saami Motif-Cluster as possible representations of fluid Norse-Saami societies. I have adapted Hege Skalleberg Gjerde’s method of exposing the fragmentation and inconsistency of the archaeological material that makes supporting a uniform and common interpretation of it difficult, in my reading of the textual source material.

7.4.1 Fíñmarkr and Saami Dwelling Spaces in the South

While Finnmørk is traditionally associated with the north and northeast of Fennoscandia, it is important to emphasise the points stressed in sections 4.2.1 and 4.4. Here, I argue that the sources indicate that the landscape stretched further south than the traditional northern landscape, and that socioculturally, the concept stretched down the Scandes mountain range all the way south to Eiðskogar and the adjacent areas of Vermaland in Sweden. The spatial concept Finnmørk (fíñmarkr) should then, in my view, be understood as referring to any areas where the Saami lived, rather than as an isolated northern landscape. As will be elaborated here and in section 7.4.2, I therefore assert that certain incidents involving Saami characters located in Finnmørk but otherwise conforming to southern contexts should be understood as occurring south of the traditional northern geo-

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69 See sections 4.2.1 and 4.4.
graphical landscape. Prøndaløg, the Upplönd region (Valdres, Dótn, Haðaland, Hringaríki, Dofri, Guðbrandsdalr; Eystridalr; and sometimes Heiðmørk and Rauðmaríki) in present day Norway, and Helsingjaland, Härjedalen, Jamtaland, Järmberaland, and Vermaland in present day Sweden, are landscapes either connected to Finnmørk or to Saami characters. These areas coincide with both present day South Saami cultural and political landscapes as well as areas interpreted by certain archaeologists as including culturally fluid and/or Saami material cultures in the medieval period.

It is particularly the central Norwegian-Swedish border forests between the landscapes above that stand out in the textual material, with the previously mentioned description of Norway in Historia Norwegie being a good example of this: “tertia siluestris, que Finnisi inhabitur; sed non aratur” [the third is wooded and populated by the [Saami], but there is no agriculture there]. The text does not comment on latitude and we should therefore not assume a northern connection on the basis of this description. Instead, the lack of agriculture and the population of Saami people in what is referred to as the wooded habitable zone is emphasised. The previously mentioned landscape description in Egils saga also alludes to the presence of Saami people in southern borderscapes with a description of Finnmørk as stretching from the north down the Scandinavian mountain range. Similarly, the two eastern Norwegian law codes discussed in section 2.4.1, the Eiðsivaþingslög and Borgarpingslög, both suggest that Saami people lived in the areas the legal texts covered and the landscapes mentioned above. The laws were most likely employed prior to their composition, with initial composition for the Eiðsivaþingslög suggested as taking place in the mid–1100s, and the same for Borgarpingslög, but can only be securely found as remnants in King Magnús lagaböeti’s reworked landslov from 1274. Covering the Oppland and Viken regions respectively, the law codes prohibit travelling to the Saami to ask for divination or participate in Saami rituals. As Hege Skalleberg Gjerde notes, the prohibitions against believing in and seeking out Saami people in these areas are therefore clear testimonies that there was a Saami population that it was or had been very common to receive “magical” help from. The usage of the term finmarkr in the Borgarpingslög supports this. Indeed, as Mundal writes, the legal codes are thus the hardest sources to discount when the medieval Saami presence

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70 HN, 51–52. The literal translation from the original Latin is that the area in which the Saami live is “not ploughed.”
71 Eg, 36.
72 NGL 1, IX.
73 NGL 1, 372, 389–90.
74 Gjerde, Sørsamisk eller fòrsamisk, 48–49.
in southern Fennoscandia is debated. In addition, it should be emphasised that while the legal texts prohibit Christians from seeking out Saami people in these regions for non-Christian purposes like participating in Saami rituals or for divination, neither legal text prohibits seeking out the Saami for other purposes. In my view, this is a strong indication that other more normalised activities such as trade, participation in cultural affairs, communication, and the initiation of personal relationships between Norse and Saami people were common in these areas, at the time of first recorded composition and earlier. It should also be noted that in a significant part of inland eastern Norway (and parts of the same landscape on the Swedish side) the Christianisation process was slow. This slow conversion of the region opens up possibilities for frequent cultural overlap due to shared sociocultural features and identity negotiation between Saami, Norse, and culturally fluid people, as argued in section 6.3.2. The prevalence of Saami characters or allusions to the Saami in this region may therefore be a result of this cultural overlap.

On the Swedish side, a border agreement between Norway and Sweden from between 1268–73 relate the “landamoere [...] mellim Jœmtalandz ok Finnmarkar ok Hœlsingalandz” [border between Jämtland, [Finnmarkar] and Hälsingland] and states that Finnmœrk was between Jamtaland and Helsingjaland, and that some people from Jamtaland had rights to hunt in certain areas of Finnmœrk. The concept of Finnmœrk should therefore be understood as adjacent to both Jämtland and Hälsingland, which would also suggest the normalised presence of Saami peoples in these regions since borders rarely function as absolute delineations in the landscapes. Knut Bergsland analysed an early fourteenth-century Swedish border agreement, repeated in the Swedish law of Hälsingland in the 1320s, that points to the northern part of Jämtland still being regarded as Saami territory at this time. Having also investigated placenames with Saami roots in Swedish legal documents from the same period, Bergsland asserts that on these grounds, Saami people must have been present in Jämtland also prior to the fourteenth century. The previously mentioned Tälje-stadgan decree ordered by the Swedish-Norwegian King Magnus Eriksson in 1328 demonstrates that hunting rights in Saami areas had become a conflict in Helsingjaland, stating that neither Birkarlar nor Hälsingar should obstruct the Saami in their hunting. As discussed in section

76 As far as I am aware, the first church to be sanctified in Østerdalen was Tynset (1211).
77 NGL 2, 490.
2.3.2, Adam of Bremen also attests the presence of a people commonly interpreted as the Saami (Skrítefangi) in Hälsingland and also possibly further south in Värmland (the Fenni). Adam’s statement is significant, since it ties Saami presence in these regions back to the 1060s.

Finally, the Härjedalen/Herdalar debate mentioned in section 4.3.2 should be repeated. An instance related in Heimskringla’s Ölafs saga helga describes King Óláfr Haraldsson’s harrying expedition in the Baltic and states that on his return, he harried in Finnland. However, King Óláfr’s court poet, Sigvatr Þórðarson, confuses the narrative by mentioning “Herdala,” alongside direct references to the Baltic Sea (Eysýsla and Bálagarðssíða) and the placename Finnland. Since “Herdala” is a toponym predominantly associated with the mid-Swedish landscape Härjedalen, Inger Zachrisson has consequently suggested that the instance must have taken place in Härjedalen and not Finland. Erik Norberg builds on Zachrisson’s suggestion and claims that “Saint Olav’s third battle was an attack against the Saami living in Herdalir – Härjedalen.”

As stated in section 4.3.2, I disagree with Zachrisson’s interpretation because the description emphasising a starting point sailing in the Baltic Sea, alongside the toponyms, makes it more feasible that the meeting occurred on the coast of Finland rather than in western Central Sweden. However, the term Herdalir is associated with Härjedalen in other sources, where Saami presence in the area is alluded to. Sverris saga relates how King Sverrir Sigurðarson travelled with the birkibeinar through Vermaland, Järnbéraland, Herdalr (sic), and Jamtaland before reaching Þrólðland in 1177, with the text calling the area now known as Härjeland for Herdalr. The text emphasises that the area belonged to the Swedish king, was filled with great forests, and that the people there were not Christians. These non-Christians could have consisted of people conforming to either or both Norse and Saami cultures.

In the early fourteenth-century Ölafs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta, Eiríkr hlaðajarl Hákonarson’s retinue during the battle of Svólðr is related:

Þar var þá ok með jarli norræn maðr; sá er nefndr er Finnr Eyvindarson af Herlóndum; sumir men segja, at hann væri finzkr; svá er sagt, at hann væri fimaztr við boga ok heinskeyttaztr allra manna í Noregi.
With the Earl there was also a northman, Finnr Eyvindsonr from Härjedalen [Herlöndum], who, some say, was of Saami descent. He was reckoned the most skilful archer and the best marksman in Norway.

Herlǫnd is commonly understood as Härjedalen, and the instance therefore associates the Saami with the area of Härjedalen. At the time of conscription then, Saami presence in the area was expected. Consequently, while I do not agree with Zachrisson and Norberg that the harrying undertaken by King Óláfr Haraldson on his return from the Baltic was interpreted by a medieval audience as taking place in Härjedalen, I agree that Härjedalen is associated with the Saami in other sources, suggesting Saami medieval presence in the area. Considering the archaeological material presented above, this textual association between the Saami and Härjedalen can contribute to present-day political debates concerning land-rights and heritage in the area. It should also be mentioned that other archaic toponyms consisting of the compound finn could also in some instances reveal Saami presence in southern contexts in the medieval period. These toponyms have been thoroughly analysed by historian Leiv Olsen in his book Sørsamisk historie i nytt lys and will not be repeated here. However, Olsen’s final conclusion should be stressed, claiming that the occurrence of these toponyms should be read as indicative of large-scale Saami presence in southern Scandinavia in the time leading up to the early medieval period.

Medieval landscape descriptions suggest Saami presence further south than often assumed in historical research. The emphasis on regions like Upplönd and the adjacent Swedish areas correspond to present-day South Saami cultural and political landscapes, as well as areas interpreted by archaeologists as consisting of Saami and Norse-Saami fluid material cultures in the early medieval period. I would therefore argue that it is not surprising that Saami characters often appear in scenes occurring in southern locations, despite other scholars claiming the opposite. The spatial concept of Finnmørk 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. The usage of the toponym in southern contexts is therefore significant since

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87 Leiv Olsen, Sørsamisk historie i nytt lys, Senter for samiske studier, skriftserie 17 (Tromsø: Senter for samiske studier, 2010), 23–49 (192).
88 DeAngelo, “North,” 272.
it has implications for the reading of these instances, and I would argue that the evidence should be read as representative of actual Saami dwelling spaces in southern contexts.

### 7.4.2 Saami Characters in the South

The appearance of Saami characters in southern contexts across the texts is occasionally discussed by historians, who predominantly relate the stories concerning King Hálfdan svarti in Haðaland and the meeting between King Haraldr and Snæfríðr in Dovre. Lars Ivar Hansen and Bjørnar Olsen, for example, in addition to emphasising the eastern Norwegian law codes, state that:

> the extent to which the sagas mention (or state the presence of) “Finns” in areas far outside what is traditionally assumed to have been the Sámi settlement area is remarkable. In the Saga of Harald Fairhair, we meet Svåse, King of the Finns [Saami], who has a turf hut not far from the king’s estate at Dovre. In the Saga of Halvdan Black, the Sámi are referred to in the form of a [Saami man] skilled in sorcery in connection with a Christmas feast at Hadeland.

Hansen and Olsen, alongside Else Mundal, are among the scholars who contextualise the southern location in the saga material and assert that the presence of the Saami in southeastern medieval Norway was common. Despite their assertions, however, Hansen and Olsen do not present additional saga material to the stories involving Haraldr hárfragri to strengthen their claim. Similarly, Mundal has on several occasions emphasised the prevalence of Old Norse sources confirming Saami presence south of Trøndelag but neglects to specifically refer to these texts. This is unfortunate since citing these other and apparently numerous mentions of Saami people in southern contexts in Old Norse texts could have significantly strengthened Saami historicity in the south. As argued throughout, the incidents

89 Ágr, 4. Hkr 1, 91–92.
91 Hansen and Olsen, Hunters, 99.
92 Else Mundal, “Coexistence of Saami and Norse Culture: Reflected in and Interpreted by Old Norse Myths,” in Old Norse Myths, Literature and Society: The Proceedings of the 11th International Saga Conference, 2–7 July 2000, University of Sydney, ed. Geraldine Barnes and Margaret Clunies Ross (Sydney: University of Sydney, 2000), 346–55: “Quite a lot of Old Norse texts [...] place Saamis in this area [south of Trøndelag],” 347; “Sieidis”: “we know from Old Norse sources that Sami people lived [...] in this district,” 12.
involving Saami people in Heimskringla’s *Hálfdans saga svarta* and *Haralds saga hárfragr* are, the way I see it, frequently interpreted by other scholars as literary tools of Othering or as symbolic of the ideologies of the nation state rather than as historical sources for Saami presence in the south. So, while these instances are often discussed within other theoretical frameworks, I would argue that it is also important to emphasise the spatial context offered by the texts. Establishing a foundation for Saami characters in the south, the discussion of the spatial contexts offered by *Hálfdans saga* and *Haralds saga hárfragr* will be succeeded by an overview of cases in which Saami characters appear in southern contexts across the source material. As far as I know, the following overview will be the first revised list of Saami characters in southern contexts, as represented by medieval texts.

King Hálfdan is described as receiving a Yule banquet in Haðaland in Heimskringla’s *Hálfdanar saga svarta*. Today, Hadeland is a district south of the Randesfjord and is located some 50 km north of Oslo, and during the medieval period it was included in the jurisdiction of the *Eiðsivaþingslög*. During the banquet, the food mysteriously disappears, and a Saami man is brought to help:

> En til þess at konungr mætti viss verða, hvat þessum atburð olli, þá lét hann taka Finn einn, er margfröðr var, ok vildi neyða hann til saðrar søgu ok þóði hann ok fekk þó eigi af honum. Finnrinn hét þannug mjölk til hjálpar, er Haraldr var, sonr hans, ok Haraldr bað honum eirðar ok fekk eigi, ok hleypði Haraldr honum þó í brút at óvíljja konungs ok fylóði honum sjálfir. Þeir kómu þar farandi, er hóðöningi einn helt veizlu mikla, ok var þeim at sýn þar vel fagnat.

But in order that the king might ascertain what was behind this event, he had a [Saami man] brought who had knowledge of many kinds, and tried to compel him to tell the truth and tortured him and yet got nothing out of him. The [Saami man] turned insistently to Hálfdan’s son Haraldr for help, and Haraldr begged for mercy for him and it was not granted, and yet Haraldr got him away in spite of the king’s opposition and himself went with him. They came on their travels to where a nobleman was holding a great banquet and they were apparently given a good welcome there.

There are several important points to take from this incident. I would argue that the most significant point is undoubtedly the outward normality associated with the presence of a Saami man in Haðaland, at least textually, here in Heimskringla dating to the early thirteenth century. The presence of Saami people in Haðaland is also evident in the previously mentioned *Eiðsivapingslög*, which elaborately de-
scribes Saami ritual performance and prohibits Christians participating in these rituals. 

Interestingly then, King Hálfdan inviting the Saami man to the court under the presumption that the Saami man will conjure back the stolen food using magic, is prohibited in the Christian law code of the region, potentially in use early in the twelfth century (and earlier) but at least in writing from the late thirteenth century. In my opinion, both texts should be read as indicative of the normalised and stated presence of Saami people in the area, with Hálfdan’s invitation of the Saami man potentially showcasing the motivation behind criminalising such behaviour in the legal text. With this in mind, it could be argued that Hálfdan seeking out the Saami man specifically for help connected to pre-Christian beliefs was used as a literary tool to reflect the dangers of such behaviour. However, this argument does not hold ground, since Hálfdan’s son Haraldr is portrayed as helping the Saami man. In fact, the text implies that Hálfdan’s treatment of the Saami man is wrong. Indeed, Mundal directly associates the king’s death with his poor treatment of the Saami and states that “in all the literary texts in which the Saami are badly treated, those guilty of such bad treatment are the villains in the story or are being punished for their crimes against the Saami.”

Hálfdan is unquestionably portrayed in a negative light following his poor treatment of the Saami man, represented in the welcoming nobleman visited by Haraldr and the Saami man’s revelation that:

> Furðu mikit torrek lætr faðir þinn sér at, er ek tók visst nökkuða frá honum í vetr; en ek mun þer þat launa með feginsǫgum. Faðir þinn er nú dauðr; ok skaltu heim fara. Muntu þá fá ríki þat allt, er hann hefir átt, ok þar með skaltu eignask allan Nóreg.

An amazingly damaging loss for himself your father made out of it when It took some food away from him last winter, but I will compensate you for it with joyful news. Your father is now dead, and you must go home. You will then get all the realm that he has ruled, and in addition you will gain all Norway.

Here, the nobleman reveals that it was in fact himself that had taken the banquet food, and that the king had been wrong to punish the Saami man for a crime he had not committed. Haraldr is never sanctioned for helping the Saami man, with the events directly leading to his succession as king. It should be mentioned that Haraldr under no circumstances is depicted as participating in Saami ritual performance but interacts with the Saami man socially. Another point to take from the

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96 NGL 1, 389–90. See section 2.4.1.
97 Mundal, “Perception,” 106.
98 Hkr 1, 92.
99 “Hkr 1,” 53.
extract above is that both Haraldr and the Saami man are “vel fagnat” [given a good welcome] when they appear at the banquet. In my opinion, this should be read as indicative of the Saami man having high social standing similar to Haraldr; and that the Saami’s appearance at the nobleman’s banquet was not deprecated. Although the cultural affiliation of the nobleman is never mentioned in Heimskringla, some scholars read him as Saami.¹⁰⁰ This is probably due to the elaboration of the story in the late fourteenth-century Hálfdanar þáttir svarta, where the nobleman Dófri is released by Haraldr from King Hálfdan’s imprisonment in a very similar manner as the Saami man was in Hálfdans saga, using a “precious” knife given to him by another unspecified Saami man.¹⁰¹ Dófri then hosts a banquet for Haraldr; similar to the nobleman in Heimskringla, and fosters him for five years. Dófri is never directly described as Saami, however, but is rather described as a “troll” [troll],¹⁰² and I am therefore wary of identifying him as a Saami “representation.”

Haðaland is also later tied to Saami presence, with Ágrip and Heimskringla’s Haralds saga hárfagra relating that Rognvaldr reykill, one of King Haraldr’s sons with Snæfríðr, lived in Haðaland where he practised seiðr.¹⁰³ In addition, Haðaland is, as previously mentioned, also included in the regions inherited by King Haraldr’s sons with Snæfríðr as related in the abovementioned Haralds saga, which I would suggest strengthens the Saami connection with the area.¹⁰⁴ In light of the above, I would maintain that at the time these sources were written, Saami and fluid Norse-Saami people were associated with and lived in Haðaland and the surrounding vicinities.

The stories relating the marriage between King Haraldr hárfagrí and Snæfríðr Svásadóttir, as already extensively discussed, state that the events occur at Þoptar (Dofri). Also happening during a Yule feast, Haralds saga hárfagra states that “Haraldr konungr fór einn vetr at veizlum um Upplǫnd ok lét búa sért il jólaveizlu á Þoptum” [King Haraldr went one winter to attend banquets through Upplönd and had a Yule banquet prepared for himself in Þoptar].¹⁰⁵ Þoptar was a crown estate during the medieval period and is strategically located just before the Dovre mountain passage on the important trading trail connecting Trøndelag to the southeast and later becoming a common stop as part of the pilgrim route to Niðarós. The Dovre region also materialises as consisting of Saami and fluid

¹⁰¹ HálfdSv, 173. This may be Dófri, but the text is unclear as to who this “finnrinn” is.
¹⁰⁴ Hkr 1, 137.
¹⁰⁵ Hkr 1, 124, “Hkr 1,” 72.
Norse-Saami material cultures in the archaeological record, and it is therefore not surprising that a Norse-Saami meeting is depicted there. Nevertheless, both *Haralds saga hárfragra* and Ágríp emphasise that Svási, Snæfríðr’s father, explains that he was “þann Finninn er hann hafði ját at setja gamma sinn annan veg brekkunnar á Þoptyn” [the Saami man whom the king had allowed to set up his hut on the other side of the hill at Þoptyn]. The Saami, at least Svási, while close to the crown estate (Harald and his men later visits Svási’s hut), are described as being on the other side of the hill/mountain slope, which indicates some form of differentiation in spatial belonging. However, the dwelling space of Snæfríðr and her father is in fact described in detail and belongs to the same spatial context as that of the king’s farm, making it known, visible, and as such, part of a shared landscape.

This shared landscape may also be referred to in the stories about the journeys of the Faroese cousins Sigmundr Brestisson and Þórir Beinisson across the Dovre mountain passage, as related in *Færeyingasaga*, believed to have first been written in its extant form in the early thirteenth century but only surviving in later fragments. The cousins, twelve and fourteen years old, decide to seek service with Jarl Hákon of Hlaðir, and travel to Norway. Beginning their journey in Vik they travel to Upplánd and go east across Heiðmork, before heading north and reaching Dofrafjöll, where they get caught in a snowstorm at the start of winter. After some initial difficulties attempting to cross the mountain passage during the storm, the cousins find an isolated farm located in a depression of the mountain where they are taken in by a farmer’s wife and her daughter. The farmer himself is later introduced as “mikill vexti ok í hreinbjálfa ok hafði hreindýri á baki” [large of build and in a reindeer-skin coat and he had a reindeer on his back]. In *Óláfssaga Tryggvasonar en mesta*, the farmer explains that the cousins had come off the public road passing through Dofrafjöll, and that dwellings were hard to come by on the mountain side. The cousins are later taken in by the farmer, Úlfr, staying with the family for six years while they are taught archery and other skills, and continuously warned not to enter the forest north of the farm. Naturally, the cousins decide to explore the mysterious forest, where they encounter a bear. In a scene resembling the bear hunt episodes analysed within a Saami ritualistic framework in section 3.2.3, the cousins kill the bear by spearing it. However,
fearing their foster father Úlfr’s reaction that they had gone against his wish, the boys lift the bear upright, fastening its mouth with a pole so that it looks jerked open and ready to attack, similarly to Oddr’s strategy in Órvar-Odds saga. The cousins then ask Úlfr for help, pretending the bear is still alive. While Úlfr quickly sees through the cousins’ trick and reprimands them for fooling him, he later congratulates them on the slaying of the animal. Following this, Úlfr reveals that he is in fact the hunter and archer Þorkell Þurrafrost (dry frost) from Heiðmörk, and that he had been outlawed.¹¹ Although Þurrafrost is never directly mentioned as being Saami in the text, I would argue that the overall allusions to the Saami Motif-Cluster, including the reindeer, the bear hunt, the allusions to winter weather called forth by his nickname, and the pronounced emphasis on his skills, may be indicative of him being portrayed as Saami or affiliated with the Saami. This Saami affiliation is strengthened by the locations Heiðmörk and Dofri, that appear as Norse-Saami meeting places throughout the textual and archaeological material.

Again, it could also be argued that Þurrafrost forms part of the portrayals of characters with fluid Norse-Saami affiliations in Norse texts, which is further discussed in section 7.4.3. Regardless of whether he should be understood as one or the other, I would argue that the allusions to the Saami Motif-Cluster in the portrayal of the character in addition to the locations enable the possible reading of the character as being associated with the Saami.

Other texts also point to the normalised presence of Saami people in southern contexts in the medieval period. Before going into more southern localities however, I would like to discuss Saami presence as suggested by the textual material in the area around Trøndelag. Given the overall location of the area as south of Hålogaland (and Naumudalr), bordering Jamtaland on the Swedish side and forming parts of Sápmi today, I find it baffling that there are not more mentions in the texts of Saami characters associated with this area. However, I strongly disagree with the common notion that the first written source mentioning Saami people in and around the area of Trøndelag can only be traced to the 1500s. This notion has unfortunately been used to ensure the continuation of refusing Saami presence and Saami rights in the region today on the grounds that their presence is not historical.¹¹⁵ As Knut Bergsland notes, the area encompassing the Frostapingslog “naturally must have included Saami people.”¹¹⁶ His reksbøgn-theory mentioned in section 2.4.2 is therefore very interesting, and it should also be noted that the

¹¹³ Fer, 27.
¹¹⁴ Fer, 31–32.
¹¹⁵ See section 1.1.2. This notion fails to acknowledge that Indigeneity in Norway is not defined by historical presence, but by ILO 169.
Norwegian-Swedish border agreement cited in section 7.4.1 (Jämtlands landskrå, 1268–73), will have also included significant parts of present day Trøndelag.\footnote{Bergsland, “Synsvinkler,” 21–22.}

In my analysis of the source material, I could only find one instance directly associating and locating Saami characters in Trøndalag. In Oddr munk Snorrason’s late twelfth century Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar, King Óláf is depicted as visiting a Saami man living in a dwelling in the mountains of Bjálfahellir, an otherwise unmentioned placename located not far from Agdenes at the entrance of the Trondheimsfjord.\footnote{Odds, 187–90: “finnr einn á hér byggð í fjálli þessu” [a Saami has his residence here in these mountains].} While it in some ways stands alone, it is an important observation associating Saami people with the Trøndalag region in a source significantly earlier than the 1500s. Nevertheless, there are other allusions to Saami presence or connections to the region of Trøndalag that contribute to challenging the notion that Saami people were early modern settlers in the region. Primarily, I would argue that the overall location of Trøndalag with Hålogaland to the north, its spatial proximity to the mountainous area on the border to Sweden coinciding with descriptions of Finnmork as well as bordering the Dovre mountain range to the south, is consistent with Saami medieval presence. Bearing the spatial context in mind, incidents involving characters portrayed using references to the Saami Motif-Cluster should in my opinion be read as Saami characters or characters connected to the Saami in one way or another. In Heimskringla’s Magnus saga Erlingssøn, the description of the Birkibeinar—ally Þorfinn svarti af Snös (Snåsa) may carefully suggest Saami identity or cultural affiliation, which his name (finnr here meaning Saami) and the location of Snös in northern Trøndalag could imply.\footnote{Hkr 3, 414–16. These suggestions are not the strongest allusions to the Saami Motif-Cluster, but the significance lies in accepting the possibility that the people that characters like Þorfinn were based on may have been Saami (or that the characters themselves were understood as Saami).} The connections between the jarls of Háðir and Saami descent should in my opinion to some extent be read as consistent with Saami presence in and around Trøndalag in the medieval period. The skaldic poem Háleygjatál written by Eyvindr skáldaspíllr towards the end of the tenth century to honour his patron Hákon hlaðajarl Sigurðarson, traces the lineage of the jarl back to Óðinn’s son with Skáði, called Sæmingr.\footnote{Russell Poole, “(Introduction to) Eyvindr skáldaspíllr Finnson, Háleygjatal,” in Poetry from Kings’ Sagas 1: From Mythical Times to c. 1035, ed. Diana Whaley, Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), 195–96.} As discussed in chapters 3 and 6, the skiing deity Skaði is often associated with the Saami. The name of Skaði’s son with Óðinn, Sæmingr, is thought provoking on the same grounds as the sensveinar dis-
cussed in section 2.6.1. Mundal, amongst others, links the name to the endonym “Saami,” and argues that the portrayals of Sæmingr in Old Norse sources should be read with the understanding that he represents Saami people. Albeit quite circumstantial given that the jarls originally hailed from Hålogaland, I would nevertheless argue that the expression of Saami descent in the lineage of the jarls and their connection to the Brøndal region minimally suggests some associations between the Saami and the region.

_Hálfdanar saga Eysteinssonar_, a _fornaldarsaga_ dated to the fourteenth or fifteenth century, also traces the lineage of the protagonist Hálfdan to Sæmingr. In addition, the introduction of the saga emphasises northern localities like Hålogaland and Naumudalr, which alongside the connection to Sæmingr strengthens the allusions to the Saami. The main story of the saga takes place in southeastern Norway, with the genealogy of Hálfdan’s parents supplementing the evidence for Saami dwelling spaces in southeastern Norway discussed in section 7.4.1. Here, the toponym Finnmörk is directly associated with areas in Uppland:

Eysteinn giftist ok fekk dóttur Sigurðar hjartar, er Ása hét. Hannar móðir var Áslaug, dóttir Sigurðar orms í auga. Eysteinn fekk med henni Finnmörk ok Valdres, bóttn ok Haðaland.

Eysteinn married Ása, the daughter of Sigurðr hjartar. Her mother was Áslaug, the daughter of Sigurðr “snake in the eye.” Eysteinn got from Ása’s dowry the provinces of Finnmörk, Valdres, bóttn, and Haðaland.

Since Finnmörk here is coupled with the landscapes of Valdres, bóttn, and Haðaland, I strongly argue that the landscape in this case should be understood as adjacent to the other areas mentioned, rather than being read as located in the more traditional northern landscape of Finnmörk. Furthermore, my interpretation is complemented by the _Borgarpingslög_ mentioned above, which also provides evidence of the term _fínmarkr_ being used to describe Saami dwelling spaces in southeastern Norway. In addition to this, the aforementioned _Eiðsifapingslög_, which these areas would have fallen under the jurisdiction of, also asserts Saami dwelling spaces in the area, again strengthening the southeastern location of Finnmörk given to Hálfdan from his wife’s dowry. Another indication that reinforces my

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reading, is the aforementioned partition of King Haraldr’s realm to his many sons, granting his Saami sons precisely these areas in *Haralds saga*:

Snæfríðarsonum gaf hann Hringaríki, Haðaland, Þótn ok þat, er þar liggir til.\textsuperscript{124}

To the sons of Snæfríðr he gave Ringerike, Hadeland, Toten and all that belongs to them.\textsuperscript{125}

In my opinion, *Hálfdanar saga Eysteinssonar* and *Haralds saga hárfagra* complement the eastern law codes and should be read as clearly associating these areas with actual historical Saami dwelling spaces, in the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries, and possibly both prior to and after this. This association becomes clear in the descriptions of the “stereotypical Saami” character Finnr or Fiðr litli in Heimskringla’s *Ólafs saga helga*:

Maðr er nefnd Fiðr litli, upplenzkr maðr; en sumir segja, at hann væri finnskr at ætt. Hann var allra manna mínstr ok allra manna fóthvatastr; svá at engi hestr tók hann á rás. Hann kunnr mana bezt við skíð ok boga. Hann hafði lengi verit þjónostað Hrøreks konungs ok farit opt ørenda hans, þeirra er trúnaðar þurfti við. Hann kunnr vega um Óll Upplönd. Hann var ok málkunnigr þar mógu stórmenni.\textsuperscript{126}

There is a man called Fiðr litli [the small], a man from Upplönd, [and] some say that he was [Saami] by descent. He was the smallest of all men and the fastest runner of all men, so that no horse could catch him up when running. He was the most skilled of men with skis and the bow. He had long been a servant of King Hrørek and often gone on errands for him that needed to be confidential. He knew the routes over the whole of Upplönd. He also knew many important men there to speak to.\textsuperscript{127}

Finnr litli is here unmistakably portrayed using images from the Saami Motif-Cluster, with both his name, descent, and abilities associating him with the Saami. Finnr’s connection to Upplönd is emphasised twice, and I find the claim that “hann kunnr vega um Óll Upplönd” [he knew the routes over the whole of Upplönd] and that he knew many important people across Upplönd particularly interesting. While there is no direct evidence of it, I would suggest the possibility of some of these stórmenn being leaders or significant contributors to the Saami dwelling spaces or societies in Upplönd, in addition to also consisting of important men from more typical Norse societies. That Finnr is described as knowing the routes across Upplönd, in addition to having Saami descent or being Saami himself, would indeed indicate that these routes included the Saami settlements of the area. Fur-

\textsuperscript{124} *Hkr 1*, 137.
\textsuperscript{125} “Hkr 1,” 79.
\textsuperscript{126} *Hkr 2*, 120.
\textsuperscript{127} “Hkr 2,” 77.
thermore, it should be noted that Finnr was in the service of King Hrœrekkr, a petty king of Heiðmørk, which once again sees the Saami connected to this landscape, as well as associated with Norse royalty. Similarly, the fornaldarsaga Sturlaug’s saga Starfsama, most likely first composed in the fourteenth century and with the earliest surviving manuscript from c. 1400, relates the presence of “Finnr ein” [a certain Saami] in jarl Hringr of Heiðmørk’s retinue. In my opinion, both extracts demonstrate a commonly shared assumptions that there were (or had been) many possibilities and opportunities for Saami people in southeastern landscapes of Norse society. Following Finnr IólI’s description, Óláfs saga helga relates that Hrœrekkr had been taken captive by King Óláfr and was kept in Túnsberg (Tønseberg), with Finnr by his side, indicating the normalised presence of Saami people in southern contexts. Túnsberg lies at the south of the Oslo fjord and was included in the jurisdiction of the Borgarpingslög, again pointing to why Saami presence in this very southern area is not questioned in Ólafs saga.

The frequency in which the textual source material portrays Saami characters in southern contexts should, I argue, be read as indicative of widely shared assumptions among the compilers of these texts between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries that there was or had been Saami presence in these areas. Interpretations of archaeological material from the same period in the same area support this interpretation of the saga material and demonstrate the importance of actively searching for Saami characters across saga genres. The apparent normality associated with the majority of these Saami characters is striking and demonstrates an intimate social awareness that is not (necessarily always) grounded in mythical portrayals or economic transactions, but rather based on inhabiting a shared interface area over a longer period of time. The sources mentioned above mainly provide more or less normalised, albeit somewhat mysterious, depictions of Saami characters. Since magic is one of the most common textual tropes associated with the Saami however, the pronounced association between the Saami and abilities associated with pre-Christian beliefs is not surprising, and the eastern law codes and Hálfdans saga svarta demonstrate that this association was also a genuine anxiety at the time of writing, at least from more high standing and ecclesiastical perspectives. Nevertheless, on more mundane societal levels as portrayed in the texts, this anxiety was not always pronounced and opportunities for Saami characters in Norse society seem to have been multifaceted. Overall, however, I would argue that the most telling outcome of this section is the highlighting of a

129 StSt, 613. See section 3.2.1.
130 “Hkr 2,” 77.
direct association between the toponym Finnmørk and the areas of Valdres, Þótn, and Haðaland as suggested by Hálfdanar saga Eysteinssonar. This association, supported by other, notably earlier, texts associating Saami characters with the Upplønd region in particular and specifically Haðaland, stands out to me as the most significant indication that the Saami were perceived as dwelling across these southern landscapes in the medieval period. I would therefore argue that the Upplønd region should be understood within the same framework of the fluid spatial awareness appropriate for Hálogaland (and to some extent Finnmørk) suggested in chapter 4.2.1. Adopting this framework would allow for an interpretation of the Upplønd region as consisting of both Norse and Saami societies in the medieval period, minimally in its earlier stages, with varying degrees of contact and separation. I would suggest that to some extent, within the Upplønd region, a variety of societies may have existed, such as

- societies that were geopolitically and socioculturally “Norse,” but with ties and connections to the Saami people living close by

- societies that were socioculturally Saami but still geopolitically connected to the Norse, or potentially based on an amalgamation of Norse-Saami societies (i.e., more culturally fluid societies)

- societies that were both geopolitically and socioculturally “Saami,” but with ties to Norse people living nearby (on both the “Norwegian” and “Swedish” sides)

This interpretation should also be read in conjunction with my proposal in section 6.3 that Norse and Saami cultures can be understood as a spectrum, with room for both distinctly different cultures as well as cultural overlap, depending on context, degree of contact, and levels and nature of interactions. Overall and in conclusion, Saami people appear in southern contexts stretching from Þróndalög and the Do-frifjöll in “the north,” through the Upplønd region including landscapes such as Hríngaríki, Haðaland, and Þótn, all the way south to Túnsberg. These portrayals demonstrate a culturally diverse southern Fennoscandia.

7.4.3 Fluidity and Saaminess

Returning to the framework suggested and adopted in section 6.3, the following section will analyse the possible portrayals of fluid Norse-Saami characters in southern contexts. This framework sees the Othering of certain characters as a literary tool to portray fluid identity expressions, rather than as a way of alienating the Saami in the texts. As demonstrated in the sections above, Saami presence in the south is not at all surprising and it is therefore also not surprising that textual
portrayals of blended social milieux may be traceable in southern landscapes associated with both Norse and Saami peoples. Characters portrayed with allusions to the Saami Motif-Cluster may therefore be textual representations of individuals from societies founded on the intersection of Norse and Saami traditions.

I would argue that the stories concerning the mysterious Arnljótr gellini, who offers aid to abducted agents of King Óláfr helgi in Jamtaland, should be read with such an intersection in mind. When escaping their Swedish captors, Heimskringla’s Óláfs saga helga relates that the agents cut off the foot pieces of some reindeer skins they found hanging in a storehouse and tied them backwards around their feet and fled.¹³¹ After travelling all night through uninhabited areas, they arrive at the small farmstead of the fashionably cloaked Arnljótr, who helps them flee back to Norway:

Steig hann [Arnljótr] á skíð. Þau váru bæði bréða ok lóng. En þeigar er Arnjótr laust við geislinum, þá var hann hvar fjærri þeim. Þá beð hann ok mælti, at þeir myndi hvergi komask að svá búnu, bað þa stíga á skíðin með sér þeir gerðu svá [...]. Skreið Arnljótr þá svá hert sem hann færi lauss.¹³²

Arnljótr fastened his skis. They were both broad and long. When Arnljótr pushed away with the ski-poles, he was far ahead of them. So he waited for them and said they would get nowhere like that, telling them to step onto his skis with him. They did so [...]. Arnljótr slid along [on his skis] as if he was alone.¹³³

Seeking shelter for the night in a hut somewhere in Jamtaland, the men encounter a vicious troll woman whom Arnljótr kills. While Arnljótr is never directly stated as Saami, his portrayal as being an exceptional skier ties into the Saami Motif-Cluster. Supported by the anecdotes about the reindeer skins and the troll woman, and the overall Othering of the landscape introduced in the text, the usage of features recognisable as belonging to the Saami Motif-Cluster should, in my opinion, be read as portraying a landscape inhabited by people with connections to Saami societies. These connections may have been based on the mixing of Norse and Saami cultures, and I think it likely that the distinct portrayal of Arnljótr and the landscape of Jamtaland should be interpreted as reflections of fluid societies, rooted in knowledge, reports or even rumours, made by the compilers to emphasise the blurring of cultural lines in this area. Similarly, the descriptions of the hunter Átti inn døelski, related by two Gautar at the court of the Swedish king, in the

¹³¹ Hkr 2, 259.
¹³² Hkr 2, 259.
same text as above, should in my opinion also be read as representative of fluid Norse-Saami societies in the Swedish-Norwegian border forests:

Átti inn dœlski á Vermalandi för í vetr upp á markir með skið sín ok boga. Hann köllum vér mestan veiðimann. Hann hafði fengit á fjall svámikla grávróro, at hann hafði fyllt skiðsleða sinn, svá sem mest gat hann flutt eptir sér.¹³

Átti inn dœlski of Värmland went during the winter up into the forest with his skis and bow. We declare him the greatest huntsman. On the mountain, he had taken so many skins that he had filled his sledge to the maximum he could haul with it. Then he turned home from the forest.¹³

Here, there are clear allusions to the Saami Motif-Cluster, notably the hunting, archery, and skiing skills, in addition to the notion that he went “upp á markir” [up into the forest] to hunt. The notion is reminiscent of the trading descriptions of finnkaup as discussed in chapter 5.2.1, where Norse traders travel, during winter, á fjall upp to Saami settlement areas or marketplaces. As with Arnljótr, Átti is never explicitly identified as being Saami, however, I think the overall description of him fitting into the Saami Motif-Cluster; the location of Vermaland as well as the afore-mentioned notion of travelling upp á markir, are indicative of him being portrayed as connected to the Saami in the text. Comparably to Arnljótr, I would suggest that the portrayal of Átti in this “Saami way” is a reflection made by the compiler(s) to emphasise the blurring of cultural and ethnic lines in the forests between Norway and Sweden. The upper part of Vermaland coincides with some of the southern Saami settlement areas (finmarkr) discussed in sections 7.4.1 and 7.4.2, and it is therefore not unexpected that Átti may have been from a Saami or fluid Norse-Saami society in this area. My reading of both Arnljótr and Átti as members of fluid Norse-Saami societies is strengthened by interpretations of the archaeological material mentioned in section 7.3, suggesting a possible intersection of Norse and Saami material records and thereby fluid cultural traditions in these landscapes. This is, to me, indicative of the fact that there must have been a conscious understanding of these landscapes as what we would now describe as culturally fluid at the time the texts were written, or an understanding that these landscapes had been fluid in the past, reflected in these characters’ portrayals and the emphasis on their spatial belonging.

By extending the argument above, it is possible to read other less “pronounced” Saami episodes occurring in southern landscapes associated with both

¹³4 Hkr 2, 149.
¹³5 “Hkr 2,” 96. The story of Átti is used later in the text as a way of explaining the dangers of bravado. This function does not affect my analysis and is not included here.
Norse and Saami people, as representative of fluid Norse-Saami societies. This representation may be carefully alluded to in Heimskringla’s Ólafs saga helga, when the scattered inhabitants of the large valley Eystri-Dalr in the Heiðmork district are accused of theft by the unpopular district-overseer at a legal assembly:

Hann kallaði þá men líkligsta til slíkra hlúta ok illbregða, er sáðu i markbyggðum fjarri þórum mólnnum. Veik hann því máli til þeira, er byggðu Eystri-Dali. Sú byggðs var mjók sundralaus, byggt við vötn eða rjóð í skógu, en fastaðr stórbyggðir saman.¹³⁶

He declared the men most likely for this and [other] bad deeds were those who lived in the forest-areas far from other people. He blamed the inhabitants of Eystri-Dalr. This settlement was very scattered, with settlements by lakes or in clearings in the forest, and only in a few places were there larger settlements.¹³⁷

Following the assembly, the Rauðssynir Dagr and Sigurðr are accused of the theft but are acquitted by King Óláfr; in turn leading to the deportation of the actual culprit, the district-overseer himself.¹³⁸ The abilities of the Rauðssynir include dream interpretation, time telling, and character reading, abilities occasionally connected to the Saami Motif-Cluster. Although a short paragraph, the instance is interesting since it juxtaposes the Christian centralised regions with the scattered habitation of the inland regions, with the latter narrated as Othered in the text. Since Saami people are connected to the Heiðmork district elsewhere, and since Saami people often form a major part of the textual juxtaposition between the Christian and the non-Christian, I would argue that the extract can illuminate possible Saami influences on the inland regions of southeastern Norway. As previously argued in sections 3.2.1 and 6.3.2, I would also suggest that the destruction of the wooden effigy venerated by Guðbrandsdalr farmers also related in the same Ólafs saga helga, may be interpreted in a similar light where the farmers form part of a blended social milieu. Previously mentioned characters like Þorfinnr svarti af Snøs and Úlfr (Þurrafrost) may also be textual representations of individuals from a blended social milieu in southern contexts. I would argue, however, that the best representations of so-called culturally fluid individuals in the textual material are the Snæfríðarsynir. These are unquestionably linked to both Norse and Saami societies, reflected in their depicted abilities examined in sections 3.2.1 and 6.2.1, and the spatial belonging discussed above. The brothers undoubtedly participate in the Norse “majority” society as it is depicted, but their portrayal certainly suggests that their Saami descent was still relevant or even crucial to their roles within this society.

¹³⁶ Hkr 2, 298.
¹³⁸ Hkr 2, 299.
This section sees the benefits of using concepts of the Saami Motif-Cluster as a way of identifying characters with Saami ties in southern contexts. The textual material discussed above definitely suggests regional variation in southern landscapes, and demonstrates that at least in certain areas, the differences between Norse and Saami societies were relatively few. I would therefore assert that the texts support the interpretations of the archaeological material discussed above, establishing that some groups or individuals in southern Fennoscandian landscapes found their identity precisely in the intersection between Norse and Saami cultural affiliations. These possibilities for identity negotiation will not have been possible without the presence of both Norse and Saami groups in these landscapes, and the portrayal of culturally fluid characters therefore presupposes and validates the presence of Saami people in these landscapes.

7.5 Conclusion

With the main objective of decolonising the source material, this chapter has demonstrated the many possibilities obtainable in the material for including Saami people in southern contexts in the narration of medieval history. In my opinion, it is clear that regardless of how the source material is read, Saami people or people with Saami ties are visible in southern contexts stretching from Trøndelag, Dovre, Østerdalen, Hedmark, and even Oslo in Norway, and in Hälsingland, Jämtland (particularly Härjedalen), and potentially also Värmland in Sweden. Similar to Saami characters or interpretations of the archaeological traces of Saami people in northern contexts, the source material demonstrates great regional variation, cultural diversity, and few rigid oppositions between the Saami and the Norse.

Most fascinating, I would argue, are the several realities that are visualised across the source material, but especially the outward normality in the textual material of the presence of Saami people in these southern landscapes. I would argue that had Saami presence not assumed to be common in landscapes like the Upland region, the inclusion of Saami characters and toponyms associated with Saami people as ordinary features of southern landscapes would have stood out to informed audiences as strange. The calling of a Saami man to King Hálfdan’s court at Haðaland, the presence of “Finnr ein” [a Saami man] in a Heiðmorkjarl’s retinue, and Finnr litl’s role as loyal to King Hrœrekr and following him from Heiðmork to Tûnsberg, is never portrayed as unexpected across the textual material. Their normalised portrayal should therefore, I would strongly assert, be read as indicative of Saami presence in these southern contexts being unquestionable. The increasing focus on interpretations of archaeological material from
the medieval period containing Saami identity markers or objects connected to Saami tradition south of Trøndelag determinedly demonstrate that these textual portrayals were not based solely on literary tools relating to the mystification or Othering of a given people of the far north. Rather, I would assert that, strengthened by interpretations of the archaeological material, the texts represent an actual cross-cultural reality where both Norse and Saami people were important players. Displaying the opposite of a rigid society, this chapter has demonstrated that southeastern medieval Norway and the coinciding Swedish areas consisted of both Norse, Saami, and fluid societies with room for identity negotiation and cross-cultural meetings. I would suggest that the textual material reflects this culturally fluid situation, where some characters connected to southern areas associated with the Saami in other contexts, are portrayed using images from the Saami Motif-Cluster. As proposed in chapter 6, it is not beneficial to overly focus on the “either, or” aspects of a character or the archaeological material for that matter, but rather emphasise the prevalence of both Norse and Saami affiliations. When adding the interpretations of the archaeological material mentioned in section 7.3, the sources depict diverse societies with a wide range of different cultural expressions. Lars Ivar Hansen and Bjørnar Olsen write about medieval Saami presence in the south:

There is reason to remind those who reject and those who defend a Saami presence (here and in other areas) that, just as the Saami economy and social structure changed over time, cultural manifestations and ethnic signals have also varied in time and space. This fact means we need to understand Saami ethnicity [sic] as a dynamic process and not as a readymade category that has either always existed or one which must have arisen as a result of “migrations” [from the north].¹³⁹

It is therefore my opinion that the source material should be read as indicative of the longstanding assumed presence of Saami people in southern Fennoscandian contexts stretching as far south as just north of the Oslo region in Norway and the adjacent Swedish landscapes.

¹³⁹ Hansen and Olsen, Hunters, 100.