

The Sámi People: Traditions in Transition. By Veli-Pekka Lehtola. (Translated by Linna Weber Muller-Wille, Aanaar-Inari: Kustannus-Puntsi, 2002. Pp. 136, ill., ISBN 952-5343-11-1.)

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Volume 25, Number 2, 2003

Language and Culture / Langue et culture

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/008058ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/008058ar>

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Publisher(s)

Association Canadienne d'Ethnologie et de Folklore

ISSN

1481-5974 (print)

1708-0401 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Diamond, B. (2003). Review of [*The Sámi People: Traditions in Transition.* By Veli-Pekka Lehtola. (Translated by Linna Weber Muller-Wille, Aanaar-Inari: Kustannus-Puntsi, 2002. Pp. 136, ill., ISBN 952-5343-11-1.)]. *Ethnologies*, 25(2), 242–246. <https://doi.org/10.7202/008058ar>

been the same since the CanRock renaissance and to recommend that anyone interested in listening to and reading about that era should unhesitatingly obtain this book.

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The Sámi People: Traditions in Transition. By Veli-Pekka Lehtola. (Translated by Linna Weber Muller-Wille, Aanaar-Inari: Kustannus-Puntsi, 2002. Pp. 136, ill., ISBN 952-5343-11-1.)

Among the relatively small number of English language monographs on the culture of the Sámi people of northern Scandinavia, this book is not only the most up-to-date, but also admirable for its interpretation of history, contemporary social issues, and cultural achievements from a Sámi perspective. This book is a substantial update of the Finnish language edition, *Saamelaiset — Historia, Yhteiskunta, Taide* [The Saami — History, Society, Art], published in 1997. A significant aspect of the update is its dedication to the memory of cultural icon, writer, and musician Nils Aslak Valkeappa, who died unexpectedly in 2001, and about whom the final chapter of the book is written. The rapid mythologizing of Valkeappa before and especially since his death is evident even in the slightly renuanced title with its future-oriented emphasis on “transition;” similarly, Valkeappa’s work is frequently cited for its emphasis on “bridge-building” and “border crossing,” metaphors that permeate the text.

Lehtola emphasizes points of change, offering something like a Foucauldian genealogy of significant historical moments in order to demonstrate Sámi adaptability. He places a high value on creative work, referencing literature, art, music, theatre and film, as well as the media of newspapers and radio. Evidence of this is the integration of a rich

array of images that constitute an intertext. The cover itself encapsulates important themes in the book, with an image of a Laestadian Sámi preacher, one of the Sámi flag in the context of an Alta River demonstration, and a piece of silver work by a contemporary artist. The book manages to balance the ongoing tension between the Sámi as one people, yet internally diverse and externally diversified by the varied socio-legal contexts of the four nations where they reside. The cultural distinctiveness as well as the threats to language and lifeways of various groups of Sámi, especially the more easterly groups including the Aanaar (Inari) Sámi, the Skolte Sámi, and the Kola peninsula Sámi, are recognized. The importance of transnational links both historically and in present alliances with, for instance, the World Council on Indigenous People is a theme that runs through the volume.

The book has four chapters. The first, “Multifaceted Sámi” introduces the theme of diversity within, clarifying names and groupings and challenging the perception of all Sámi as reindeer herders. Lehtola describes lifeways and symbols of this diversity: clothing design and environmentally related language differences, in particular. He explains the stereotypes of the “primitive” that marked early Lappish literature by both Sámi and non-Sámi writers that was oriented to southerners.

In “Milestones of Sámi History” the emphasis is on change and response to both natural crises and outside contact. This chapter challenges the stereotype of Sámi as a people in isolation by demonstrating social interactions at least as early as 2,000 B.C. Lehtola offers a remarkably clear picture of the numerous shifts in national borders, state interests in the north, and the consequent impact on the annual herders’ migrations as well as the social organization of the Sámi *siida*, defined as a “community of family groups who share and govern a jointly owned territory,” (88). The influence of missionization on the “mental landscape” of the Sámi is sensitively nuanced. Unlike some studies that have demonized the rigid tenets of Laestadians, Lehtola traces Laestadius’ Sámi roots and the influence of the ecstatic *’uorvvut* movement on his church. The tensions over land rights and the Norwegianization policy that was most intense from 1870 to 1914, as well as the twentieth century political and cultural “awakening” of the Sámi are described succinctly but without reducing the complexity of divergent views.

Chapter three, “Participants in Modern Society” largely focuses on the post-World War II period. He describes issues faced by the most threatened groups, the Aanaar Sámi, the Skolt Sámi in Finland, and Kola Sámi. He introduces the Sámi renaissance of the 60s and 70s, a period marked by intense organization, the revival and trademarking of *duodji* (handicrafts), and initiatives that fostered inter-group and transnational solidarity. Some of these initiatives were activist resistance as in the case of opposition to the Alta River damming (one of 60 northern dams that were built by 1970). Others were solidarity oriented, political initiatives, such as the Sámi conferences, convened every three years since 1971, that led eventually to the creation of Sámi Parliaments (1989) and the establishment of a Joint Parliamentary Council (1997). In this chapter, Lehtola articulates his approach to identity as an ongoing, fluid process. But at the same time, he acknowledges the demands for “measures” of identity that have been made in the contexts of debates over cultural self-government. Even the criteria for being enumerated as Sámi vary from one country to another (and provide fascinating contrasting reference points for analogous debates in Native American contexts); in most cases, self-identification and one’s own, one’s parent, or grandparent’s knowledge of the Sámi language are the terms of definition. He draws a clear distinction between control-oriented, industrial or agricultural civilizations and the adaptable and respectful Sámi culture that is “linked with nature.” This section seems to vacillate between older “essentialist” identity constructs and newer constructivist ones, but it undoubtedly reflects the tensions within the varied discourses that are part of the contemporary Sámi political struggle.

Chapter four, “Sámi Art. New and Old Limits” continues to emphasize border crossing — among different media, between modern and traditional lifeways, or among cross-cultural influences. Valkeappa’s leadership is acknowledged and celebrated, with reference in particular to his epic saga, *Ruoktu vaimmus* (1985) and his melding of joik with poetry structure, jazz, and contemporary popular idioms. In the work of Valkeappa and others of his generation, the alienation experienced in boarding schools (the equivalent of Native American residential schools) is highlighted as a driving force for the artistic renaissance. Art functioned as a means of releasing and healing the pain. Lehtola sees a shift in more recent works that place less emphasis on struggle and more on inner feelings. He offers observations about the

“incompleteness” that he regards as a Sámi characteristic and on hero figures who have faults and are not self-assured. The blurred boundaries between fiction and history, biography and documentary, are noticeable in the publications he cites. Academic studies that established principles of Sámi land ownership (especially an influential dissertation by Korpijaakko) are referenced alongside Valkeappa’s inclusion of historical photographs in the Sámi edition of his well-known book, *The Sun, My Father*, interpreted as a gesture of repatriation. New developments in the yoik which continues to “remove distance” and bring people together, developments in visual arts where materials dictate form, in theatre which is described as “the most distinctive Sámi art form,” and in film are selectively outlined. In contrast to many publications that emphasize artists on the Norwegian or Swedish side, Lehtola gives priority to artists on the Finnish side.

The final chapter briefly celebrates the “two lives” of Nils-Aslak Valkeapa, one as something of a misfit in a reindeer herding family, and one after a devastating accident in 1996 that caused amnesia. His first life partially serves as a review of the historical issues in earlier chapters. As a child, his fascination with such things as the moon seen through the smoke hole of the tent (an image associated with shamans or noaidi), or with the grain of the wood on the underside of a table, marks his special talents as a creator. Like many of his generation, he was taught by Sámi catechists and in boarding school, eventually attending a teaching seminary but never actually working as a teacher. He is represented as a man with no borders: with ancestors in different countries, a migratory life style, artistic practices that encompassed writing, music, visual art, and theatre; later serving as an international ambassador as a touring artist. The book’s dedicatee, then, becomes the book’s primary metaphor — the epitome of the transitions and border crossings that reveal the adaptability of the Sámi people.

This English edition is one of several Finnish-Canadian editorial collaborations, in this case with translator Linna Weber Muller-Wille and consultant-bibliographer Ludwig Muller-Wille. Linna Weber Muller-Wille explains that she wanted “to use Sapmi,” that is the land of the Sámi people. Hence she retains Sámi place names throughout, undoubtedly evoking extra layers of meaning for Sámi readers who understand the references more deeply. She offers a Glossary of these names with the Finnish, Russian, Swedish, and/or Norwegian equivalents

at the end of the book. She also offers a map but with only a small subset of the place names. I would have liked a more detailed map.

There is a certain amount of redundancy in the book. The Alta River crisis is discussed in several chapters for instance. But perhaps this is the very means by which certain historical turning points are consciously imbued with symbolic currency. While Lehtola is clear about his opinions, he is careful to acknowledge divergent views. Occasionally, he offers a questionable generalization. The one that disturbed me, as much for its lack of clarity as its excess, was the statement that the yoik was the “most aboriginal of musics.” What could that mean?

Overall, however, this book was a succinct exploration of well known events but the presentation of these events was remarkably nuanced by the acknowledgment of diversity within the community and by the clear presentation of contentious issues. Furthermore, the important role of expressive culture as a means of mediating tradition and modernity, indeed a means of denying that these are polarized, is given not only a nod but a lively examination. The bridge building that Lehtola achieves here would, I think, be heartily applauded by the remarkable compatriot, Nils Aslak Valkeappa, whose memory it celebrates.

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The Annotated Classic Fairy Tales. By Maria Tatar, editor and translator. (New York & London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2002. Pp. 448, ISBN: 0-393-051-633, hardcover.)

My eight-year-old son, Callum, and I enjoy reading together. We have eclectic taste and over the years have read most of the children’s classics and lots of popular culture titles. Callum’s recent preference for nonfiction has taken us in many new directions, from biology to volcanoes to trivia. However, one genre we have not explored together is fairy tales so when I saw the announcement of Maria Tatar’s new collection *The Annotated Classic Fairy Tales* I jumped at the opportunity to return to a group of well-known fairy tales and to share them with Callum. I have a clear memory of my own father reading me Grimm’s fairy tales when I was about his age and I’ve drawn on those stories