

Culture



Nils-Aslak VALKEAPÄÄ, *Greetings from Lappland: The Sami — Europe's Forgotten People*, Translated by Beverley Wahl, London, Zed Press, 1983, 128 pages. In Canada: Between The Lines Press, Toronto. \$9.95 (paper), \$22.00 (cloth)

Ludger Müller-Wille

Volume 4, Number 2, 1984

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1078287ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1078287ar>

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Publisher(s)

Canadian Anthropology Society / Société Canadienne d'Anthropologie (CASCA), formerly/anciennement Canadian Ethnology Society / Société Canadienne d'Ethnologie

ISSN

0229-009X (print)

2563-710X (digital)

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Cite this review

Müller-Wille, L. (1984). Review of [Nils-Aslak VALKEAPÄÄ, *Greetings from Lappland: The Sami — Europe's Forgotten People*, Translated by Beverley Wahl, London, Zed Press, 1983, 128 pages. In Canada: Between The Lines Press, Toronto. \$9.95 (paper), \$22.00 (cloth)]. *Culture*, 4(2), 91–91.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1078287ar>

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By Ludger Müller-Wille
McGill University

During the last ten years, in fact since the First Arctic Peoples Conference in Copenhagen in 1973, representatives of northern peoples have effectively used communication media to voice their concern over territoriality and sovereignty as indigenous inhabitants of their homelands. By 1984, the predicament of northern peoples in the western circum-polar world is well known in the polar states between Alaska and Finland — Sami, Inuit and Indians visit back and forth and support each other politically and culturally. This recent era of international aboriginal communication has raised public awareness internationally, but has overshadowed at times internal and regional developments important to individual ethnic groups. Therefore the English translation of Valkeapää's *Greetings from Lappland* is welcome, although the original text predates the recent wave of ethnic politics. The book, including additions to this English edition, does try to put the Sami as an ethnic minority into the context of the political status of indigenous peoples world-wide.

Valkeapää is a representative of the Northern Reindeer Herding Sami of northwestern Finland. Since the 1960s he has emerged as a versatile musician combining traditional Sami "yoik" and modern music, a poet and a painter (with six books and seven LPs). Since the 1970s, he has projected his artistic performances onto the international level — touring Nordic countries, North America and the Soviet Union. In doing so, he stressed the strong cultural identity of indigenous peoples versus majority societies.

Greetings from Lappland was written for the Finnish majority in Finland (Terveisä Lapista, Helsinki: Otava, 1971). In thirty brief essays, he tells the Finns about the Sami's feelings as a disadvantaged minority. In 1978, a translation into New Norwegian was made and published with a few revisions to adapt to Norway, where most of the Sami live in northern Fenno-Scandia and conflicts between minority and majority have been more pronounced (Helsing frå sameland, Oslo: Pax, 1979). The third linguistic filter — the translation

from New Norwegian into English — includes most of the original essays, but with the addition of "Translator's Foreword" and "Author's Introduction". Both of these try to update the essays by referring to the most recent events around the Sami's fight against major developments in their land like the Alta Hydro-electric Complex in Norway. The text is illustrated by maps and, in particular, by photos taken by Nils Somby during the clashes between Sami demonstrators and Norwegian authorities in 1982.

In order to present a complete picture of Sami — Nordic relations, Valkeapää does not pretend to be purely scientific in his topical discussions. Rather, he is concerned with the preservation of a particular philosophy of life, inherent in people who depend for their survival on a strong man-earth relationship. He makes an explicit plea for more compassion and understanding between the "industrialized" and "underdeveloped" societies — "For we live and dwell on the same Earth." (p. 7).

This translation will contribute to better understanding of the Sami's situation in the English speaking world. Still, it is unfortunate that the author, together with the translator, did not take advantage of this opportunity to revise, correct and update the book significantly for the English version, and thus make the case of the Sami more well-known to the world at large.

Karen Eriksen PAIGE and Jeffery M. PAIGE, *The Politics of Reproductive Ritual*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1981. 380 pages, appendices, index. US \$8.95 (paper), US \$25.00 (cloth).

By Janice Boddy,
University of Toronto

Until lately, ethnographic works were inclined to portray women as valuable pawns in power struggles among men, as reactors — not actors — in the political arena. Recent fieldwork has reversed this trend; studies conducted among women have shown that they, like men, work actively to maximize their positions in the effort to attain legitimate political ends. Unfortunately, the authors of this book wholeheartedly embrace the earlier view; it is one of its premises and, in my opinion, a weakness. Despite this, Paige and Paige present a thought-provoking argument, one that deserves attention from anthropologists concerned with gender, ritual, and social organization.