The Sámi people in the context of European perceptions of exotic cultures in the 17th and 18th centuries

◊Andreas Klein

Introduction: A Captive in Astrakhan

Astrakhan, not far from the shores of the Caspian Sea, close to today's border between Russia and Kazakhstan: the year is 1715. A man by the name of Nicolaus Örn sends a letter to King George of Great Britain (1660–1727). He writes of his ordeal in captivity among Tatar and Kalmyk heathens, and begs the King to send a plea for his life to the Russian Tsar. When King George's diplomat at the court of Peter the Great (1672–1725) approaches the Russian authorities to comply with the wish of the captive, he is informed that this is no longer necessary since "this Oera who would be a very unsettled and evil man had in the meantime managed on his own to flee Astrakhan and therefore one would not know where he was" ("[…] dieser Oera, der ein sehr unruhiger und böser Mensch wäre, sich mittlerzeit selbst Raht geschaffet hätte, aus Astrakan zu entwischen und man also nicht wüste, wo er wäre").[1]

◊ Andreas Klein, independent scholar, Tromsø, <akl037@uit.no >.

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There is a point to this short tale from the edges of Europe, which connects it to the topic of this article, i.e. early modern depictions of the Sámi people as manifestations of European perceptions of exotic cultures. I shall return to the story of the prisoner in Astrakhan later on. Let me first introduce the key term of this article: exotic.

Early Modern Definitions of the Exotic

What does exotic mean in the context of the 17th and 18th centuries? Etymologically, the word stems from the Greek 'ἐξωτικός' (*eksotikos*), which literally means 'from the outside'. In 1728, Ephraim Chambers' (c.1680–1740) *Cyclopædia*, or: *An Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences* defines 'exotic' as

> a Term properly signifying *foreign* or extraneous, *i.e.* brought from a remote, strange Country: In which sense we sometimes say *Exotic* or barbarous *Terms*, or *Words*, &c. But *Exotic* is chiefly applied to Plants which are Natives of Foreign Countries, particularly those brought from the *East* and *West-Indies*; and which do not naturally grow in *Europe*.[2]

A similar, but more concise definition can be found in an entry in Denis Diderot's (1713–1784) and Jean le Rond d'Alembert's (1717–1783) *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* from 1756, which states that: "exotique se dit d'une plante étrangere, d'un fruit".[3] Johann Heinrich Zedler's (1706–1751) *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexicon Aller Wissenschaften und Künste* contains an article on "Exotica Peregrina" and defines these as follows:

> ausländische Dinge, werden alles dasjenige genannt, was bey uns ungemein seltsam, unbekannt, oder von der Natur auf unsern Grund und Boden nicht hervorgebracht worden. Also hat man in *Regno animali* ausländische Thiere, und was von denenselben kömmt, als Löwen, Tieger, Elephanten, das *Rhinoceros*, den Bezoar-Stein und Bisam. In *Regno minerali* die orientalischen Edel-Gesteine, *Borax etc*. In

[1] Weber, Friedrich Christian, *Das veränderte Rußland*, 3 vols, Hannover, Verlegt von seel. Nicol. Försters und Sohns Erben, 1721–1740, II (1739), p. 166. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

[2] Chambers, Ephraim (ed.), *Cyclopædia: or, an Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences*, 2 vols, London, Printed for J. and J. Knapton [*et al.*], 1728, I, p. 367.

[3] Diderot, Denis/d'Alembert, Jean le Rond (eds.), *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, 28 vols, Paris, Chez Briasson [*et al.*], 1751–1772, V (1756), p. 274.

> *Regno vegetabili*, alle fremde Gewächse, als die *Aloës Americana*, *Yucca gloriosa*, *Genista Hispanica etc.*[4]
>
> [Foreign things is named all that which is considered extraordinarily strange and unknown among us, or that which has not been brought forth on our soil and land naturally. Thus, there are in the animal kingdom foreign animals and that which comes from them, such as lions, tigers, elephants, the rhinoceros, the bezoar stone and musk. In the mineral kingdom oriental gems, borax etc. In the plant kingdom, all foreign plants, such as aloes americana, yucca gloriosa, genista hispanica etc.]

Related to this, the *Universal-Lexicon* lists exotic drinks such as "Thee, Caffee, Chocolade, Tisane, Scherbet" and others.[5] Yet, the exotic could also extend to other areas of life, as the concise entry on "philosophia exotica" shows: "by this is merely understood the kind of philosophy, which can be encountered among other peoples outside of Europe" ("durch diese wird nichts anders verstanden, als diejenige Philosophie, welche bey andern Völckern ausser Europa anzutreffen ist").[6] Furthermore, it also concerns language as "vocabula exotica" are defined as "words that are not Latin, Greek, Hebrew or German, but French, Italian, Spanish, English and so on" ("Wörter so nicht Lateinisch, Griechisch, Hebräisch oder Deutsch, sondern entweder Frantzösisch, Italienisch, Spanisch, Englisch, u[nd] s[o] f[ort] sind").[7]

These definitions show that in the 18th century, the exotic evoked a number of related ideas. In essence, they all describe something that is not from here, but from there. The exotic was recognized through its perceived otherness from that which was familiar. More often than not, the exotic was regarded as non-European, as was the case with philosophy or with plants, but it could also be a European other, as the definition of exotic words shows. The question is to know where here ends and there begins, as notions of elsewhere, outside and far away hinge on one's own geographic situation and mobility. In addition, the exotic often had something to do with climate: some of the exotic plants required specific treatment to survive in England, needing "the

[4] Zedler, Johann Heinrich (ed.), *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexicon Aller Wissenschaften und Künste*, 64+4 vols, Halle, Zedler, 1731–1754, VIII (1734), col. 2342.
[5] *Ibid*., XXXVIII (1743), col. 925.
[6] *Ibid*., XXVII (1741), col. 2008.
[7] *Ibid*., L (1746), col. 3.

Warmth of their own Climates; whence the Use of hot-Beds, Glass Frames, Green-Houses" as Chambers' *Cyclopædia* notes.[8] Climate as a significant factor in discourses of the exotic has survived until today, as we can see in the Cambridge Dictionary where it is equated with "unusual and exciting because of coming (or seeming to come) from far away, especially a tropical country".[9] While ideas of the exotic are changing constantly, a common reaction is to commodify, romanticize or fetishize it. Such practices are commonly referred to as exoticism.[10]

Indians of the North?

It is possible to perceive someone or something as exotic by association. In February 1671, in a letter addressing a group of scholars in Uppsala, Sweden's Chancellor of the Realm Magnus Gabriel De la Gardie (1622–1686) added the following postscript:

> Skulle Mons. Ahrenius eller någon annan willia skrifwa något de vita et moribus lapponum, sålunda at 1) Quid antiquis fuerit cognitum om dem och det landet vthwijstes 2) Natura Cœli et soli på den ohrten 3) Vita et mores gentis och 4) hwadh Swerige för tienst af dhem in bello eller elliest hafwer at betaga dhem tankan, at Lapparna constituera magnam partem Exercitus Sueticj, der doch een lapp och een Indianer nestan lijka rare äre j Swerige att skåda, tyckes migh det icke wara illa.[11]
>
> [Should Mister Ahrenius or someone else want to write something on the way of life and customs of the Lapps, in such a way as 1) What the ancients knew about them and the land, is reported, 2) the nature of the sky and the sun in this place, 3) the way of life and customs of the people and 4) what service Sweden has of them in war or otherwise, to remove the thought that the Lapps constitute a great part of the Swedish Army,

[8] Chambers (*op. cit.*), p. 367.

[9] *Cambridge Dictionary*, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/exotic>, accessed 19 January 2021.

[10] See for instance Aravamudan, Srinivas, 'Response: Exoticism beyond Cosmopolitanism?', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 25, nº 1 (2012), p. 227–242; see also Nordin, Jonas M./Ojala, Carl-Gösta, 'Collecting, connecting, constructing: Early modern commodification and globalization of Sámi material culture', *Journal of Material Culture*, 23, nº 1 (2018), p. 58–82.

[11] Cited after: Schück, Henrik, *Kgl. vitterhets historie och antikvitets akademien, dess förhistoria och historia III, Antikvitetskollegiet II*, Stockholm, Almqvist & Wiksells, 1933, p. 12. Today, the pejorative designation 'Lapp' is thankfully obsolete. Whenever I employ this or other demonyms in this article, I do so because these are the technical terms used in sources I do not want to whitewash.

for after all, a Lapp and an Indian are almost equally rarely to be seen in Sweden, this would not seem bad to me.]

De la Gardie's commission resulted in the first-ever monograph entirely devoted to Sápmi and the Sámi people, *Lapponia*, written by Johannes Schefferus (1621–1679), professor of political science and rhetoric at Uppsala University, and published in 1673 in Latin in Frankfurt. Versions in English, German, French and Dutch followed over the course of ten years. The commission quoted above might be understood to signify that Sámi people indeed were a rare sight in 17th-century Sweden. While this could have been so in some regions of the Swedish Empire, it was not the case for the northern tracts and Jonas Nordin suggests that neither was it so in the centres of power in Stockholm and Uppsala.[12] Sámi merchants came to the two towns on a regular basis and there were individual Sámi students in Uppsala in the 17th and 18th centuries. This does of course not imply that they were regarded as a familiar sight either. De la Gardie's underlying presumption that Sámi people are always recognizable through their outward appearance is worthy of note. The topicality of this presumption stands out when taking into consideration a text by the physician and traveller to India François Bernier (1620–1688). Published anonymously in the *Journal de Sçavans* in 1684, *Nouvelle division de la terre* is regarded as a foundational text for the classification of the world's peoples into races. Bernier identifies four races, with type 1 comprising the majority of Europeans, Indians, Americans, North Africans, people from the Middle East and some parts of Asia. Type 2 includes all sub-Saharan Africans, type 3 all remaining Asians. Regarding the fourth type, Bernier has nothing nice to say:

> Les Lappons composent la 4. espece. Ce sont des petits courtaux avec de grosses jambes, de larges épaules, le col court, & un visage je ne sçay comment tiré en long, fort affreux & qui semble tenir de l'Ours. Je n'en ay jamais veu que deux à Dantzic; mais selon les portraits que j'en ay veus & le rapport qui m'en a esté fait par quantité de personnes qui ont esté dans le Païs, ce sont de vilains animaux.[13]

[12] Nordin, Jonas M., 'Samer i imperiets mitt: samiskt liv i det tidigmoderna Stockholm – en glömd historia', in Götlind, Anna/Lamberg, Marko (eds.), *Tillfälliga Stockholmare: människor och möten under 600 år*, Stockholm, Stockholmia, 2017, p. 45–71.

[13] Anonymous [François Bernier], 'Nouvelle Division de la Terre', *Journal de Sçavans*, XII, 24. april 1684, p. 133–140 (p. 136).

Apart from the harsh content of Bernier's classification, two things are worthy of note: his claim to have seen two Sámi individuals in Danzig, and the mere fact that such a classification came into existence. In general, the 17th and 18th centuries saw increased efforts to classify everything and to put the world into order. Bernier's taxonomy does that by postulating four human races with different physiological characteristics. This correlates with the botanical and zoological efforts of the time. It is uncertain whether the two Sámi in Danzig were there by their own will or whether they had been recruited or abducted to be presented as living curiosities.[14] All of the above are within the realm of possibility.

We should regard De la Gardie's statement setting the so-called "Lappar" and "Indianer" side by side in light of Sweden's colonial project. New Sweden along the Delaware River had recently fallen into the hands of the Dutch. The promise of new riches provided through mining in the mountains of Central and Northern Sweden, areas where many of the Sámi lived, was more than welcome to the ruling circles. As to the presence of "Indians", a term which at that time could refer to the populations of South Asia or of the Americas, it is difficult to pinpoint how many people from those parts of the world there were in Sweden.[15] Although an intriguing topic in its own rights, the actual rarity of Sámi, American or Asian people in Sweden is not the point of De la Gardie's rhetoric. Instead of taking his statement literally, I suggest it to be one of the many instances of polemic exoticization which we can find in that period. An anonymous English author had for instance written a few decades earlier: "we have Indians at home – Indians in Cornwall, Indians in Wales, Indians in Ireland…".[16]

[14] Living exhibitions of Sámi people were not exclusive to the early modern era and continued long into the 20th century. See Baglo, Cathrine, *På ville veger? Levende utstillinger av samer i Europa og Amerika*, Tromsø, Universitetet i Tromsø, 2011, doctoral dissertation.

[15] On Sweden's colonial entanglements with the Sámi people and the Lenape, see Fur, Gunlög, *Colonialism in the Margins: Cultural Encounters in New Sweden and Lapland*, Leiden and Boston, Brill, 2006.

[16] See Williamson, Arthur H., 'Scots, Indians and Empire: The Scottish Politics of Civilization 1519–1609', *Past & Present*, 150 (1996), p. 46–83 (p. 56).

Quotes like this one or that from De la Gardie's commission are sometimes understood to confirm that what Edward Said described in the concept of Orientalism as a Western sense of superiority towards the Orient can also be observed in the early modern era. Yet, some important distinctions are to be made which call into question the applicability of Said's Orientalism in the case at hand. In her criticism of Said, Allison Coudert highlights China's domination of global trade and the enormous wealth of Japan and India at that time, compared to which the Netherlands, the technologically most advanced European country of the late seventeenth century, appeared mediocre at best. Furthermore, the European perception of Islam did not solely consist of fear of the Turks and of North African pirates: there was also admiration for the powerful Ottoman Empire. As Coudert writes, "[f]ew people realize how terrifying and threatening, but at the same time how awe-inspiring, Islam appeared to early modern Europeans".[17]

The principal idea in Said's *Orientalism* is that Western hegemony over the East resulted in Western stereotypes of the East.[18] In light of Coudert's argumentation, it seems to be difficult to apply this idea to the early modern era, even more so since the topic at hand has so much to do with the North. The related concept of Borealism, which was introduced by Gunnar Broberg in discussions concerning the Sámi, has become an established term describing the outsider's gaze on the North.[19] The concepts of Orientalism and Borealism not only hint at the dichotomy between centre and periphery, they also imply notions of what is normal and abnormal or, regarding climate, temperate and hot or cold. Referring to Rudolf Capell (1635–1684) from Hamburg, who in 1678 published a book titled *Erfahrung und Vorstellung des Norden* ("experience and perception of the North"), Sumarliði Ísleifsson notes that it was at that time still disputed by some whether Greenland was an island or actually the land mass connecting "Lapland and the

[17] Coudert, Allison P., 'Orientalism in Early Modern Europe?', in Classen, Albrecht (ed.), *East Meets West in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times: Transcultural Experiences in the Premodern World*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2013, p. 715–755 (p. 718).

[18] Cf. Said, Edward W., *Orientalism*, New York, Vintage Books, 1978.

[19] Broberg, Gunnar, 'Lappkaravaner på villoväger: Antropologin och synen på samerna fram mot sekelskiftet 1900', *Lychnos* 1981–1982, p. 27–86. See also: Briens, Sylvain, 'Boréalisme. Le Nord comme espace discursif', *Études Germaniques*, 71, nº 2 (2016), p. 179–188.

new world".[20] Thus, three peripheries, the new world, Lapland and Greenland, were believed to come together by means of a Northern connection.[21]

De la Gardie's mention of "Lappar" and "Indianer" underlines that he regarded the Sámi people as foreign to Sweden. In the same spirit, Schefferus, who was originally from the town of Strasbourg, noted in the preface of *Lapponia* in reference to his qualification to write such a book:

> For I must not even hope that this would be done fully, since I am a foreigner in these lands, in which the Lapps are foreigners, it has become so difficult for me to investigate the customs and nature they have.[22]

The origin of peoples was a topic of great interest to many scholars. The *Lapponia* project has to be regarded in light of this, too, especially since Schefferus was part of the so-called *Antikvitetskollegium*, a state-funded learned society researching Sweden's past on behalf of the crown. This was the very group De la Gardie had commissioned to "write something on the way of life and customs of the Lapps". The foreignness of the Sámi, their supposed origin somewhere outside of Europe, was also touched upon in Georgius Hornius' (1620–1670) book on the origins of the Americans from 1652, where notion of the Sámi people ("Lappones") appears in a group comprised of "Phoenicians, Scythians, Huns, Turks, Tatars, Cathayans, Mongols, Lapps, Samoyeds, Japanese, Chinese and other Asian nations" ("Phœnicum, Scytharum, Hunnorum, Turcarum, Tatarorum, Chatæorum, Mogolum, Lapponum, Samojedarum, Iaponiorum, Sinensium aliarumque Asiaticarum nationum").[23] Given

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[20] Ísleifsson, Sumarliði R., 'Images of Iceland and Greenland in the Late Seventeenth and First Half of the Eighteenth Century', *Sjuttonhundratal*, 12 (2015), p. 55–72 (p. 55–56).

[21] The second Dutch adaptation of Schefferus' *Lapponia* from 1716, *Het Vermaak der Tover-Hekzen van Lap- en Fin-land* ("The entertainment of the witches of Lap- and Finland") reflects these connections as well. The editor Jan Klasen added Dithmar Blefken's popular yet inaccurate description of Iceland and Greenland. See Klasen, Jan (ed.), *Het Vermaak der Tover-Hekzen van Lap- en Fin-land*, Leeuwarden, Jan Klasen, 1716.

[22] Cited after Klein, Andreas, *Early Modern Knowledge about the Sámi: A History of Johannes Schefferus' Lapponia (1673) and its Adaptations*, Tromsø, UiT The Arctic University of Norway, 2021, doctoral dissertation, p. 52.

[23] Hornius, Georgius, *De Originibus Americanis Libri Qvatvor*, The Hague, Adriani Vlacq, 1652, præfatio.

such suppositions, it is not surprising that Schefferus analysed in *Lapponia* the linguistic relationship of the Sámi and the Tatars whose languages he found to have nothing in common.

This brings us back to the prisoner in Astrakhan who in 1715 begged King George to help him out of his captivity among Tatar heathens. Nicolaus Örn wrote in his letter that he had already been imprisoned for five years. During that period, he had learned the Kalmyk, Tatar, Turkish and Arabic scripts in addition to the Russian language. He also mentioned the languages he knew from before: these would be Swedish, Latin, French, German, and Italian, beside his "Laplandic mother tongue" ("Lapländische Muttersprache"). The letter was signed "Nicolaus Öra de Lapponia".[24] Yet, this was not the end of the story.

One of the difficulties Schefferus encountered when writing about the Sámi and their land was that, unlike Nicolaus Örn, he had never seen the region for himself. Many of Schefferus' contemporaries who wrote about faraway regions and their inhabitants were or claimed to be travel writers. He was not and did not claim to be one. In spite of or maybe because of this disadvantage and with the help of eyewitness accounts of clergymen and other locals (among whom there were at least two Sámi) who knew the regions where most of the Sámi lived, the so-called *lappmark*s, *Lapponia* turned out to be a relatively factual monograph adhering to the scholarly standards of the time. Schefferus' detailed commentary on and depiction of all kinds of Sámi objects he had acquired certainly contributed to the success of the book. For collectors of curiosities all over Europe, this sparked an interest in all things Sámi. *Lapponia* rectified some of the wrongful depictions found in Olaus Magnus' (1490–1557) seminal *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus* (History of the Northern peoples) from 1555, but contributed to the perpetuation of the idea that the Sámi people were notoriously inclined to sorcery. At the request of the Royal Society, it was published in English as early as 1674, only a year after the Latin original. The *History of Lapland* had a new preface, giving us some insight into how the work was marketed in England:

> Military Action, and those public murders in which other Histories triumph, have no share here. Hunger, cold and solitude are enemies that engage all the fortitude of this People: and where so much passive

[24] Weber (*op. cit.*), p. 165–166.

> valor is necessary, we may dispense with the want of Active. Amidst the barbarity and darkness which reign in *Lapland*, there appear structures of light, which will entertain the eie of the most knowing observer; as the Stars are no less remarkable then is the Sun it self. However the Reader will not fail to meet here with what may gratify his curiosity. Warmer Climates having all the comforts and necessaries of life plentifully bestowed upon them, are but a more distant home; where we have little else talk'd of, then what we daily see among our selves: but here it is indeed, where, rather than in *America*, we have a new World discovered[.][25]

We do not know exactly which works the anonymous author of the preface had in mind when alluding to the trope of the new world. Examples of accounts describing North and South America and the Caribbean are numerous at that time. They were composed in a way that was designed to raise curiosity among the potential readership in the colonies' respective motherlands. This is exemplified in Edmund Hickeringill's (1631–1708) account of Jamaica from 1661, as the full title suggests:

> Jamaica viewed: with All the *Ports*, *Harbours*, and their several *Soundings*, *Towns*, and *Settlements* thereunto belonging Together, With the nature of it's *Climate*, fruitfulnesse of the *Soile* and its suitablenesse to *English Complexions*. With several other collateral Observations and Reflexions upon the Island.[26]

Among other things, the account claims to answer the question as to whether Jamaica was an island suitable to English complexions, that is whether someone from England could live there comfortably. The exotic is conjured up through descriptions of nature and climate. Only a few years earlier, Charles de Rochefort (1605–1683) had made it a point to show that his *Histoire naturelle et morale des iles Antilles de l'Amerique* was "enriched with many beautiful illustrations of the most considerable rarities described therein. Together with a Carib vocabulary" ("Enrichie de plusieurs belles figures des Raretez les plus considerables qui y sont

[25] Scheffer, John, *The History of Lapland*, Oxford, At the Theater, 1674, preface. For a study of the reception in Britain, see Burnett, Linda Andersson, 'Translating Swedish Colonialism: Johannes Schefferus's Lapponia in Britain c. 1674–1800', *Scandinavian Studies*, 91, nº 1-2 (2019), p. 134–162.

[26] Hickeringill, Edmund, *Jamaica*, London, Printed for Iohn Williams, at the Crown in St. Paul's Church-yard, 1661.

d'ecrites. Avec vn Vocabulaire Caraïbe").[27] This was supposed to attract a larger readership and inspired collectors of such rarities to acquire them. In my doctoral dissertation, I argued that the frontispiece of *Lapponia* depicting several Sámi objects on shelves functioned as a kind of purchase list for the scholar and diplomat Lorenzo Magalotti (1637–1712). He addressed Schefferus in 1674 telling him which objects he still needed to acquire in order to complete the collection of the Duke of Tuscany, Cosimo III (1642–1723).[28] Collecting was a highly significant practice in the early modern era, which coincided with the development of the scientific method and of taxonomical principles. The systematic collecting of plants in botanical gardens, of books and manuscripts in libraries, of all known knowledge in encyclopaedias, and of so-called curiosities in cabinets of curiosities, attests to this. The practices of collecting, sorting and ordering intertwined naturally with perceptions of exotic cultures. The desire of collectors and scholars to have their very own Sámi drum speaks of an exoticist approach to Sámi culture.

The 'new world' motif appears also in the French revised version of *Lapponia*, *Histoire de la Laponie*. The preface states that for the readers: "il sera difficile de ne pas s'imaginer que Monsieur Scheffer ne nous ait plûtost donné une description d'un nouveau monde, qu'une relation d'une partie de nostre Continent".[29] This has significant implications, as it on the one hand exoticized the Sámi people by suggesting they seem to belong to the new world. On the other hand, by insisting on the fact that the Sámi people lived in a part of the European continent, the preface de-exoticized them and simultaneously turned Europe into a place that could also be exotic. Mainly based on the French version, the Dutch adaptation *Historie van Lapland* appeared in 1682. Its preface shows what kind of literature on the exotic the readership in the Netherlands was presented with: "All the time something new comes forth out of Africa; but no lesser horn of plenty does the North Pole give to us" ("Altijds pleeg uit *Africa* iets nieuws voort te komen; maar geen

[27] de Rochefort, Charles, *Histoire naturelle et morale des iles Antilles de l'Amerique*, Rotterdam, Chez Arnould Leers, 1658.
[28] Klein (op. cit.), p. 254–257.
[29] Scheffer, Jean, *Histoire de la Laponie*, trans. by Augustin Lubin, Paris, Chez la Veuve Olivier de Varennes, 1678, preface.

minder hoorn van overvloed geeft ons de Noorder Pool").[30] The motif of the horn of plenty is known from Greco-Roman antiquity where it represents the abundance of a rich harvest. This underlines not only how readers of *Historie van Lapland* were thought to regard Africa, but also how they ought to consider the northern lands described in the book. Through their two international trade companies, the Dutch East India Company and the Dutch West India Company, the Netherlands established in the 17th century numerous settlements and trading posts in Asia, Africa and the Americas, turning them into a powerful colonial and trading empire.[31]

On their journeys through distant lands, Europeans did not only encounter exotic people, animals, plants and objects, they also became acquainted with new languages and worldviews.

The search for similarities between languages such as Tatar, Sámi, or Hebrew, following reasoning that might appear strange today, eventually resulted in the identification of language families. Tatar, the Sámi languages, and Hebrew all belong to different language families. When in 1701 Olaus Rudbeck the Younger (1660–1740) published his treatise *Nora Samolad Sive Laponia Illustrata*, it also contained a "Lappish dictionary with the title the Hebrew Lapp from the North" ("Glossarium Laponicum […] cum inscriptione Lapo Hebraizans in Septentrione").[32] A former student of Schefferus who had also been involved with the *Lapponia* project, Laurentius Norrmannus (1651–1703), wrote a panegyric in praise of Rudbeck's arguments for connections between the Jewish and the Sámi people, specifically pointing out the foreignness of their respective customs and their purportedly mixed languages:

> Qui Genus? Unde Domo LAPPI? Quo sanguine creti? | Relliquias Tribuum credin' OLAVE Decem? | Mira fidem promissa levant. Quæ caussa remotas | Quærendi sedeis, frigidaque arva, viris? | Libertas, nequidquam alibi quæsita: sub Arcto | Hospitibus tandem tuta reperta

[30] Scheffer, Johann, *Historie van Lapland*, Amsterdam, Jan ten Hoorn, 1682, Voorreden aen den leser.

[31] For an introduction, see chapters 2, 3 and 4 in Koekkoek, René/Richard, Anne-Isabelle/Weststeijn, Arthur (eds.), *The Dutch Empire between Ideas and Practice, 1600–2000*, Cham, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

[32] Rudbeckius, Olavius, *Nora Samolad sive Laponia Illustrata*, Uppsala, Rudbeckius, 1701.

novis. | Sacra quidem & ritus patrii periêre: nec ullus | Librorum miseris usus apexque manet. | Nulla Iacobææ-ne igitur vestigia stirpis | Nunc superant? Mores. Sabbata. Læta Quies. | Sessio. Tecta. Greges. Habitusque. Humilisque Figura. | Et Color. & Sermo mistus Hyperboreo. | Credimus? an dubitamus adhuc? hærentibus istum | RUDBECKJ nodum docta machæra secat.[33]

[What is their origin? Whence is the home of the Lapp? From whom has their blood come forth? Can they be believed to be the remains of the tribes of Olav the tenth? Wonderful promises raise the faith. Why should we ask about their remote settlements, and their cold fields, their strength? Freedom they sought for elsewhere in vain: at last, among Northern strangers they were safe again. The worship indeed and the ancestral habits vanished: neither the books worthless of use nor the hat remain. Do none of the Jacobaean marks of origin remain now? The customs. The Sabbath. The happy repose. The sitting. The houses. The communities. And the disposition. And the short stature. And the colour. And the mixed hyperborean language. Shall we believe this or remain in doubt? By persisting, Rudbeck's learned sword cuts off that knot.]

This comparison of Sámi people and Jews brings up the question of religion. Religious otherness in itself was exotic. This was also the case in *Lapponia* where some Sámi rituals were shown to represent the ancient, first religion of the Sámi, while Christianity was understood to be their second religion, and the one that would ultimately prevail. In light of this, Schefferus also devoted one chapter to the topic of paganism, "Concerning the many remains of paganism among those at this time" ("De Reliquiis nonnullis paganismi apud eos hoc tempore"), and to the deities they worshipped.[34]

This was very much in line with the descriptions of other peoples who were the targets of Christianization, as Bernhard Varen's (1622–1650) book *Descriptio Regni Iaponiæ* from 1649 exemplifies.[35] There, the Jesuit missions to Japan are discussed in detail. Like Schefferus, Varen had never been to the region about which he wrote. A significant distinction between these two cases is of course that the earliest contact of the Sámi with Christianity must have taken place during the High

[33] Norrmannus, Laurentius, 'In Novum Hodoeporicum', in Rudbeckius (*op. cit.*), unpaginated.
[34] Schefferus, Johannes, *Lapponia*, Frankfurt, Wolffius, 1673, p. 86–94.
[35] Varenius, Bernhardus, *Descriptio Regni Iaponiæ*, Amsterdam, Elzevir, 1649.

Medieval Period, while in Japan Christian missionaries had only arrived in the sixteenth century. With Christianity the norm all over Europe, even in the regions controlled by the Ottoman Empire, it is not surprising that non-European religions and worldviews should have been depicted as heretic, superstitious, and false. An example for this is Hans Egede (1686–1758), born in Harstad in Northern Norway, who worked as a missionary in Greenland. In 1729, his book *Det gamle Grønlands Nye Perlustration* (A new perlustration of old Greenland), which was also published later in a couple of other languages, appeared in print.[36] Egede's theological discussion in the chapter on "the religion or rather superstition of the Greenlanders" ("Grønlændernes Religion eller rættere Superstition") presents the Inuit as atheists since "they would not conceive any other idea about everything that is than that all things are by themselves, and would not know of any main cause or origin" ("de giøre sig ikke andet Begreb om alt hvad som er, end at det er saaledes af sig selv, og kiender ingen Hoved-Aarsag eller Oprindelse").[37] They would also not believe in the resurrection of the dead. Naturally, Egede rejects these beliefs as superstition.

Overall, clergymen have to be regarded as significant contributors to European perceptions of exotic peoples. In the case of Schefferus' *Lapponia*, a group of priests that served in the *lappmark*s sent their accounts to Uppsala. These manuscripts would form the basis of *Lapponia*. Many of the rituals performed by adherents of religions or worldviews other than Christianity were categorized as superstition, and in many cases as sorcery and witchcraft. Categorizations like these are also evident in *Lapponia*. They are key concepts perpetuated in further receptions.

When in 1674, only a year following the publication of *Lapponia*, the polyhistor Erasmus Francisci (1627–1694) presented an excerpt of it in German, it appeared as an appendix to a new version of a popular narrative which was read and adapted all over Europe: the tale of Doctor Faustus. To curious readers in 17th-century Germany, Erasmus Francisci's name had a certain ring. He was extremely productive and known for his entertaining works which could be seen as textual cabinets of curiosities. Beside many other works, he published a three-

[36] Egede, Hans, *Det gamle Grønlands Nye Perlustration*, Copenhagen, Paulli, 1729.
[37] *Ibid*., p. 54–58 (p. 55).

volume anthology of stories titled *Acerra exoticorum*. Here are parts of the full title of the first volume:

> Acerra Exoticorum: Oder Historisches Rauchfaß, Darinnen Mancherley fremde Fälle und Geschichte, nebens andern Erzehlungen, als etlicher Kunst- und Natur-Wunder, alter Pracht-Gebäue, wie auch einiger Meldungs-würdiger Sitten, Gewonheiten, so wol als andrer anmercklicher Sachen außheimischer Völcker an Weihrauchs statt gestreuet, und auß Sina, Cochinchina, Tunchin, Persien, Türckey, America, Africa, Rußland, Spanien, Franckreich, &c. Theils auch von dem alten Rom, zusammen gesucht.[38]
>
> [Incense cask of the exotic, or Historical incense cask, wherein many foreign instances and histories, along with other stories, such as several wonders of art and nature, old magnificent buildings, as also some noteworthy customs, habits, as well as other remarkable things of foreign peoples, are scattered instead of incense, and brought together from China, Cochinchina, Tonkin, Persia, Turkey, America, Africa, Russia, Spain, France, etc. Partially also gathered from ancient Rome.]

Unlike in the other above-mentioned definitions, here the exotic is more clearly connected to foreign peoples and their cultures. An author like Francisci would naturally show interest in a book like *Lapponia*. We can assume that Francisci's translation of the excerpt of *Lapponia* in the book on Faustus had a large number of readers. Five reprints appeared over the course of the following fifty years. In all likelihood, the number of readers who read Francisci's excerpt exceeded by far the number of readers of *Lapponia* or of its German-language adaptation *Lappland* from 1675. Francisci's choice of topic is worthy of note. The first half of his text is a translation of chapter eleven of *Lapponia* "concerning the magical rites and sorcery of the Laplanders" ("De Sacris magicis & magia Lapponum").[39] It is the longest chapter of *Lapponia* in terms of page numbers and the one containing the highest number of illustrations, mostly of Sámi drums. The second half of the appendix is very much in the spirit of Francisci's other writings. Having discussed the sorcery of the Sámi, he looks towards the wider world of witchcraft, writing about Egyptian protection spells, American, African, and Chinese sorcerers,

[38] Francisci, Erasmus, *Acerra Exoticorum*, Frankfurt, Schiele, 1674.

[39] Schefferus (*op. cit.*), p. 119–149. Cf. Francisci, Erasmus, 'Anhang Oder Kurtzer Bericht, von der Lappländer Zauber-Kunst, Hexerey, und Wahrsagerey', in Pfitzer, Johann Nicolaus, *Das ärgerliche Leben und schreckliche Ende deß viel-berüchtigten Ertz-Schwartzkünstlers D. Johannis Fausti*, Nürnberg, Endter, 1674.

and so on. In an article on Francisci's text, I argued that in this way he singled out the Sámi people as a European example of sorcerers in early modern demonological thought.[40]

Characterising Perceptions of Exotic Cultures in the 17th and 18th Centuries

I want to suggest five characteristics of how Europeans in the 17th and 18th centuries perceived 'exotic cultures' and how the Sámi people fit into these perceptions. Firstly, exotic cultures were the somewhat unfamiliar other that one could fear or desire. Secondly, exotic cultures originated somewhere else. Often, the climate and nature of that other place was perceived as extreme in some sense. The cold of the Sámi's homeland, the long days in summer and the long nights in winter naturally caused curiosity about them. Thirdly, exotic cultures and their traits needed to be set into some sort of taxonomical order to be understood. That is why in *Lapponia* Schefferus compared the Sámi people to the neighbouring Finns and studied their language in comparison with Finnish or Tatar. Fourthly, exotic cultures were the origin of material and narrative curiosities and evoked desire among collectors and readers alike. Books such as *Lapponia* aroused the desire of some collectors to own their own Sámi drum or other objects. Fifthly, exotic cultures were the target of efforts to make them part of one's own empire, religion, or trade network. Often, the *Lapponia* project is understood primarily as propaganda directed towards readers all across Europe, which it certainly was. However, the Swedish leaders also aimed to survey the area and to know how people lived there. After all, mines were to be established, Sámi people Christianized and utilized. If one wanted to rule the northern parts of Fennoscandia, there was no way around them. They knew the region, how to survive winter and how to travel fast.

[40] Klein, Andreas, 'Faust and the Arctic: Erasmus Francisci's Account of Sámi Sorcery (1674)', in Borm, Jan / Kodzik, Joanna (eds.), *German Representations of the Far North (17th-19th Centuries): Writing the Arctic*, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020, p. 172–191 (p. 186).

A "Sámi Pretender" in Astrakhan?

Let me once more return to where I started: Astrakhan. Who was Nicolaus Örn? How did he end up so far away from home? How did he come to be acquainted with the King of Great Britain?

Nicolaus Örn was born around 1683 in the small town of Råneå in Northern Sweden. From 1702 onwards, he travelled through Europe as the self-proclaimed prince of Lapland, staying at the courts of regents and entertaining them with tales about his homeland. Dressed in Sámi attire, he represented a living curiosity to those who encountered him. In 1704, he stayed in Hannover at Herrenhausen palace. There, he met Duke Georg Ludwig of Braunschweig-Lüneburg, who later became King George of Great Britain.[41] At Herrenhausen palace, Örn first published the treatise *Kurtze Lapp-Ländische Beschreibung* (Short Laplandic description), a work he set in direct relation to *Lapponia* in the preface:

> Allein mein Absehen ist nicht gewesen, denen Gelehrten etwas zu hinterlassen (sintemahln dieselbe den berühmten *Schefferum* lesen können, als welcher meines Erachtens von Lappland weitläufftig gnug geschrieben) sondern ich habe denen, welche *impatient* grosse und weitläuftige *Tractaten* durch zulesen, nur damit an die Hand gehen wollen.[42]
>
> [It has not been my intent to bequeath something to the scholars (since they can read the famous Schefferus, who in my opinion has written amply enough about Lapland), but I merely wanted to help those who are too impatient to read grand and extensive treatises.]

Unsurprisingly, Örn's text was almost entirely based on *Lapponia*. Several scholars have emphasized that Örn was not really a Sámi, but some sort of fraud who tricked his way through Europe. In her biography of Carl Linnaeus (1707–1778), Lisbet Koerner describes Örn as one of a few cases of "Sami pretenders" and a forerunner to Linnaeus who dressed up as a Sámi on his journey through the Netherlands.[43] Even without taking the question of Örn's identity into account, the

[41] A few biographical details were published in Svanberg, Ingvar / Packalén, Sture, 'Äventyraren Nicolaus Örns sändebrev till sina landsmän', *RIG*, 67, nº 1 (1984), p. 9–11.
[42] Öhrs, Nicolaus, *Kurtze Lapp-Ländische Beschreibung*, Hannover, Ammon, 1704, Vorrede.
[43] Koerner, Lisbet, *Linnaeus: Nature and Nation*, Cambridge, MA and London, Harvard University Press, 1999, p.66.

way in which he was able to capitalize on exoticist ideas about the Sámi in order to travel to 'exotic' places is fascinating. It was the desire for adventure that led him to Astrakhan. There, he escaped from prison and the archives.