C. Nooteboom

Sketch of the former religious concepts of the Asele Lapps (the southern Lapps)

In: Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde 117 (1961), no: 1, Leiden, 118-140

This PDF-file was downloaded from <http://www.kitlv-journals.nl>

SKETCH OF THE FORMER RELIGIOUS CONCEPTS OF THE ASELE LAPPS

(THE SOUTHERN LAPPS)

The origin of the Lapps and their history

The origin of the Lapps, their kinship with other peoples, their arrival in Fennoscandia and their cultural history have been the subject of very many publications. Theories and hypotheses have followed one after another. In spite of a great wealth of data, firm conclusions have not yet been reached on these points.

As early as 1673 Schefferus appeared with a theory¹, which was followed by many more, some of them very bold. It is outside the scope of this article to discuss these theories at length. I think it will suffice to sum up the present situation regarding these questions; for this I make use of a résumé put at my disposal in April 1960 by E. Manker.

On the basis of the results obtained from prehistoric research in the last decades, and the further study of those results, this Swedish scholar arrives at conclusions which are paraphrased as follows:

1. When the ice-masses melted after the last ice age, and the reindeer herds moved into Fennoscandia from the southeast, they were followed by people whose principal means of subsistence lay in the hunting of these herds.
2. They came from the east and southeast, from the region of the Urals. They passed through Finland and reached the northernmost point of the Baltic and the Scandinavian Peninsula at a time when water and ice still blocked the way from the south of Scandinavia.

¹ J. Schefferus, *The History of Lapland*, Oxford, 1679.

3. These people found still earlier inhabitants in Scandinavia, the bearers of the so-called Komsa culture, who had already reached the region — very soon after the end of the ice age in fact.
4. The new immigrants spread, as fishers and hunters, along the coasts of the Arctic and Atlantic Oceans and became the ancestors of the later coastal Lapps. A number of them followed the annual migration of the reindeer across the country and lived mainly from hunting.
5. Gradually, and probably starting at a relatively late date, the reindeer hunters became nomadic herdsmen. There is evidence that this change in the means of subsistence began around 800 A.D.
6. For about two thousand years the Lapps in Finland have been subjected to pressure from Finnish farmers, who have gradually gained possession of the land. In Sweden this process began in the 17th century, when the Swedes started to colonise the northern regions. According to Gutorm Gjessing of Oslo, it has been started still earlier on the Atlantic coast through colonisation by Norse traders and fishermen.)
7. Christian missionary work had begun in the Middle Ages, but met with no success until the 17th and 18th centuries, when Lutheran and Roman Catholic missionaries converted the Lapps officially to Christianity. The old religion, specifically characterised as shamanism, completely disappeared as a consequence of this.
8. The nomadic way of life persisted until the beginning of this century, but since then a revolution has been brought about by recent developments in every-day existence. Reindeer keeping is now practised in accordance with up to date methods. The nomadic life has largely been replaced by permanent settlement, made possible by new expedients. Only a few small groups are still completely nomadic. It is probable that within a few years they too will settle, and that only the herdsmen will follow the herds.

The education provided in the schools for the Lapps in Sweden is on an equal footing with that provided for the Swedes. The way to further intellectual development is open for the Lapps, and is followed by many of them.

9. There is hardly any racial discrimination. The Lapps are distinct from Finns and from Scandinavians. They are somewhat Mongoloid in appearance, though not strikingly so. It would be difficult to classify them as Scandinavians, as Finns or as Mongols. Some research workers think that they can see in the Lapps a remnant

of an extinct paleoarctic race which must have been related both to the European and to the Mongolian races.

Sources of our knowledge of Lapp religion — the Magic Drums.

So far this article has been a paraphrase of Manker's résumé. At this point we must turn to the subject of this study — the now completely lost religion of this people.

The material on which our knowledge of Lapp religion depends is diverse. The original written sources are mainly reports by Scandinavian missionaries of the 17th and 18th centuries, and the records of judicial proceedings in which Lapps were prosecuted for the crime of adhering to the religion of their forefathers. Apart from a résumé by Schefferus in the 17th century,² it is only recently that these sources have been available to workers without a command of the Scandinavian languages. Translations and summaries of this early material have become available in recent decades in the so-called modern languages in publications by T. I. Itkonen, Rafael Karsten, Olaf Pettersson, Gustav Ränk, and above all by Ernst Manker.³ Another source of knowledge is Lapp tradition, which later research workers were able to take down, and which often usefully supplements the earlier reports.

In addition, modern archaeological research brings to light many facts connected with the old religion. Ranking first in importance in this field is the study of the seventy or more magic drums which have

² J. Schefferus, *The History of Lapland*, Oxford, 1679.

³ T. I. Itkonen, *Heidnische Religion und Spätere Aberglaube bei den finnischen Lappen* (*Mémoires de la Société finno-ougrienne*, vol. LXXXVII), Helsinki, 1946;

R. Karsten, *The Religion of the Samek; ancient Beliefs and Cults of the Scandinavian and Finnish Lapps*, Leiden, 1955;

a) E. Manker, *Die Lappische Zaubertrommel I und II* (*Acta Lapponica* vol. I, 1938, vol. 6, 1950); b) E. Manker, *Lapparnas heliga Ställen* (*Acta Lapponica* 13, 1957);

O. Pettersson, *Jabmek and Jabmeaimo* (*Lunds Universitets Aarskrift*, N. F. Avd. 1, Bd 52 (6), 1956/7);

a) G. Ränk, *Die Hausgottheiten der Frauen und das Geschlechtstapu bei den Nordeurasischen Völkern* (*Ethnos*, 1948); b) G. Ränk, *Die Heilige Hinterecke im Hauskult der Völker Nordosteuropas und Nordasiens* (*F. F. — Communications* 137, Helsinki, 1949); c) G. Ränk, *Das System der Raumeinteilung in den Behausungen der Nordeuropäischen Völker* (*Skrifter Instit. f. Folklivforskning*, 2-3, 1949); d) G. Ränk, *Zum Problem des Sippenkultes bei den Lappen* (*Archiv für Völkerkunde*, Bd. 9, 1959); e) G. Ränk, *Lapp female deities of the Madder-Akka group* (*Studia Septentrionalia*, Oslo, 1955).

been preserved in European collections, with signs painted on the drumheads which time and again give a distinctive version of the old mythology. The drums are mostly oval in shape, consisting sometimes of a framework of thin wood on which the drum skin was stretched and to which a wooden handle was attached. Other drums were carved out of solid wood like an open bowl, with holes in the bottom (thus dispensing with the handle) and with the membrane stretched over the opening of the bowl. This membrane is made from reindeer hide and painted with numerous signs and symbols. The colouring material is the sap of the alder tree, which is of an attractive reddish-brown colour, and which played a part in the ritual. This alder sap apparently served as a substitute for blood.⁴

These drums were beaten with a small striker of reindeer horn. On the membrane was placed an 'indicator' in the form of a frog made of copper or horn, or a set of copper rings. The 'indicator' was put in motion by the vibration of the membrane. The drummer went on beating until the indicator came to rest in one place on the drumskin. The sign the indicator pointed to then formed the basis for the answer to what they wanted to know.⁵ Presumably all heads of families could make use of the drums as a supernatural means of acquiring information. Only in difficult cases did they call in the help of a more skilful and above all more holy man, the *noïde*, priest and shaman.

The *noïde* could do no other things with the drum besides soothsaying. The more adept among them did not even need a drum for these other tasks. They were capable, in a state of trance, of sending their souls to, amongst other places, the land of the dead *Jabmeaimo* to redeem the soul of a sick person, so that he could be cured. If the sickness was a result of the evil influences of another witch-doctor, then the *noïde*, in a trance and with the help of one of his tutelary spirits, could fight the tutelary spirit of the other *shaman*, to put an end to the evil influences through a victory. However, should his tutelary spirit lose the fight, then the *noïde* had to bear the consequences. It could even cost him his life.⁷

As priest the *noïde* was not only the sacrificial agent who dedicated the offering to the gods in the name of others, but he was also the man

⁴ E. Manker, a, I, chaps. II, III, IV, V, VI, VII, IX, X.

⁵ E. Manker, a, I, chap. XXV.

⁶ E. Manker, a, I, p. 420, 421, 424, 425, 436; E. Manker b. p. 297.

⁷ T. I. Itkonen, p. 116 ff, p. 164; J. Schefferus p. 29.

who knew, through consultation of his drum, which god desired an offering and what offering he desired.

The drums were objects of great importance to the Lapps. Consequently, the drum has sometimes been called, by way of analogy, the Bible of the Lapps on account of its mythical representations. Indeed, every Lapp family possessed such a 'family Bible', which was held in high esteem. The magic drum was kept in a cover of (bird) skin, together with the striker and the indicator. Its place was in the sacred part of the tent, behind the fireplace, the *possjo*; sometimes outside the tent in a sledge, set upright against the rear wall close to this sacred place. Women were not allowed to come into contact with it. When the family was on the move, the drum was transported on the last sledge or the last pack-reindeer of the caravan, so that there was no chance that a woman would cross the path followed by the drum. Or sometimes the drum was transported via another route to the new camp, the better to avoid the risks of the presence of women.⁸

By studying the drums in combination with the explanations of the signs published in former centuries we are in a position to compile a survey of the old mythology. The Swedish scholar Ernst Manker has had the patience and perseverance to study and publish all known drums and all earlier explanations, with a searching analysis of the images and their connection with each other.

The second volume of his „Die Lappische Zaubertrommel" has consequently become an extremely valuable, nay an irreplaceable book for the study of this subject. Only in western Lapland, the area that falls within the frontiers of Norway and Sweden, are drums known. Drums were presumably in use in eastern Lapland as well; they were in fact of very great size. However, they have not been preserved.⁹

No two drums are alike. The symbols show differences, and furthermore the places where they appear on the drumskin differ from each other. In general two types can be distinguished, a northern and a southern type.

But if — as is clearly shown by the sources ¹⁰ — the world of the supernatural is represented on the drums, the sometimes fairly great differences between the representations occasion some surprise. Why is it that these representations, these crystallizations of what to these people was most sacred and therefore of the uttermost importance, are

⁸ E. Manker, a, I, chap XVII; G. Ränk b, p. 194.

⁹ T. I. Itkonen, p. 121.

¹⁰ particularly: E. Manker, a, II.

not more similar to each other? Was there no codification of these sacred representations? This seems inconceivable.

We must bear in mind, however, that even among peoples displaying strong social cohesion it often occurs that smaller groups within the tribal unit (clans for example) have each their own particular version of the tribal mythology. The larger groups of Lapps show scarcely any cohesion; in the social situation of today there is no demonstrable social structure above the *sida*, the social-economic unit for collective nomadic wanderings and collective care of the communal reindeer herds. Although we could surmise the existence of more cohesion some centuries ago, a powerful organic national unit is nevertheless unlikely in a strongly individualistic nomadic existence.

It seems as if not only each separate group, but each shaman (*noïde*), perhaps even each father of a family, possessed a particular version of the mythology.

It would doubtless be possible by a careful study of the existing descriptions of the religion to form an acceptable and more or less clear picture. In many cases, however, the old descriptions correspond closely to the explanations of the signs appearing on the drums. It seems reasonable therefore that a synopsis of the former religion should begin with the drums, and with a study of as great a number of them as possible. The great study which Manker devoted to them makes this a feasible task.

The fact that not one of the drums preserved for us, in the original or in drawing, is similar to any other, and that the figures appear in always different combinations and order, indicates that each *noïde* and each owner of a drum possessed a particular variant of the mythological system. We find great differences above all between drums from northern and from southern Lapland. The great diversity makes it difficult to bring all of the known drums into an analysis of the representations.

The mythology.

Most of the known specimens are from southern Lapland, from Åsele and the areas bordering on it. The information from the old sources refers mostly to the southern region too. So it seems advisable to direct an attempt at further analysis towards those southern drums. It may be that later, on the basis of the results found in this study, the other drums can also be put into a context and explained more precisely.

It proved possible by a careful study and comparison of all Åsele and other southern drums to compose a schematic representation of what can be called an 'ideal' Åsele drum, which is reproduced in the accompanying diagram.

Approximately in the centre of the oval drumhead is the sun (*peive*), represented as a diamond-shape, with beams radiating from the four corners, upwards, downwards, to the left and to the right. The sun was never represented anthropomorphically. The sun is an impersonal

power above the earth, which disposes of light, warmth and fertility for reindeer rearing and fishing. Connected with the sun is the ring on a stalk (sun-ring), through which one looked towards this heavenly body during prayers to this power. White reindeer were sacrificed to it, or reindeer with white tape bound into their right ears, while at the summer solstice porridge was eaten in its honour.¹¹

On the left-hand beam of the sun we often find *Horagalles*, the thunder god, depicted as a man with hammer or hatchet and staff. For all that he is undoubtedly a genuine Lapp deity, he shows some similarity to the early Germanic Thor, with whose name his name is also connected. Earlier writers, who wanted to see in him a figure taken over from Germanic mythology, are definitely wrong, although influence from that source is certainly not out of the question.

Horagalles has power over the health, life and death of mankind. He is represented as a figure in birch wood, the root-end of which is carved into a head. A reindeer with a red string in the right ear is sacrificed to him.¹²

The right-hand beam is occupied by *Biegolmai*, the wind god, who is portrayed in human form with a scoop in his hand or sometimes in both hands. With this scoop he turns the winds out of their cave and drives them back again later.¹³

On the beam rising upwards is *Leibolmai*, the god of hunting, although sometimes he finds a place on the left-hand beam. He is the protector of game, especially of the bear, that object of the chase *par excellence*, the hunting and consumption of which is a sacred ceremony.

His abode is the forest. He is especially the god of men, and he despises the female sex. Women are prohibited from walking around a tent if a hunting gun lies in it. They are not allowed to sing together with the men in his honour. He is the great enemy of the *Akka*, the female deities. His name, *Leibolmai*, means 'alder' man. The alder tree has a special significance. As we have already seen, the red sap is apparently a substitute for blood. The signs on the magic drums were painted with alder sap. It is also a means of defence against super-

¹¹ E. Manker, a, II, p. 62 and following. The places where the signs appear on the drum parchment are taken from the analysis of the drum signs by Manker. Each of the mythological (or other) images to be discussed hereafter has been registered statistically with mention of the position on the drum parchment where it appears. The place given in the text is the one where the symbol (as interpreted by Manker) occurs most frequently on southern drums.

¹² E. Manker, a, II, pp. 68—72.

¹³ E. Manker, a, II, pp. 73—75.

natural dangers. Thus a wife will sprinkle alder sap over her husband who returns home from a successful bear-hunt.¹⁴

On the beam going downwards we find the three festal men (*Ailekes-olmak*), gods of the lower layers of the atmosphere, who are commemorated especially on Saturday and Sunday, and who play a part during the preparation of the yule festival. According to Manker the name means "holy men". *Ailes* according to him is the Lapp form of the Scandinavian word "helig", that is "holy".¹⁵

On the left-hand beam or on the left hand side of the beam rising upwards, or else in the angle between them is sometimes found *Väraldenolmai*, the "world-man";¹⁶ he is closely related to the supreme god *Radien*, and for this reason is sometimes placed in the vicinity of the latter at the upper rim. *Väraldenolmai* is the figure who exercises the power of the supreme being in the world. In his name the Old Germanic equivalent for "world" can be recognised. *Väraldenolmai* and *Horagalles* are both called "vice-regents" or "deputies" of *Radien*; sometimes *Väraldenolmai* is identified with *Radien*.

The Supreme Being, *Radien*, is mostly a trinity, consisting of *Radien-atji*, father of omnipotence — in the middle — with *Radienakka*, the wife of the All-father, on the left, and *Radien pardne*, his son, on the right. These three figures stand together at the upper rim of the drum.

They find a counterpart in *Maderakka*, the primeval mother, and her three daughters *Sarakka*, *Uksakka* and *Juksakka*, found as a rule at the lower rim, but also at times along the lower right hand edge as far as the middle of the right hand side.

These are the goddesses of women and live in the ground beneath the *kota* (hut or tent). They are responsible, together with *Radien*, for the creation and the birth of children.¹⁷

Along the right hand edge between the *Radien* group and the *Akka* we find successively:

A. in some cases a Christian village¹⁸ and most often

¹⁴ E. Manker, a, II, p. 125 ff.

¹⁵ E. Manker, a, II, p. 124.

¹⁶ E. Manker, a, II, pp. 76—89; *Väraldenolmai* is here identified with the *Radien* figures which usually appear at the upper edge of the drumhead; this conflicts with the explanations he gives when discussing the individual drums, since *Väraldenolmai* is represented in this position on only four of them, compared with the eleven where he appears on the ascending beam of the sun, and the five where he appears on the left-hand beam; sixteen drums in all, most of which are southern.

¹⁷ E. Manker, a, II, pp. 89—98.

- B. *Rota*, the demon of sickness or death, who lives deep under the the earth in *Rota aimo*. In *Rota aimo* dwell the dead who did not live according to the will of the gods. They are doomed to remain there for ever.¹⁹
- C. *Jabmeaimo*, the place where those who lived good lives on earth go after death. This abode lies under the earth, not so deep as *Rota aimo*; this is the domain of *Jabmeakka*, mother of the dead; the sacrifice to this goddess, as well as to the deceased relatives in *Jabme aimo*, is for preference a black animal, that should be buried alive. These dead people are the protectors and helpers of their relatives on earth. Sometimes they seize the soul of a relative still living to cause his death. Then the *noïde* comes forward to redeem his soul from *Jabmeaimo*.²⁰

In course of time they pass on to another abode of the dead, *Saiivo*, which can be found on the drum between the right hand beam of *peive*, the sun, and *Jabmeaimo*, in the middle of the right hand edge. This abode is still under the earth, but not so deep as *Jabmeaimo*. A lake abounding in fish near a sacred mountain is also called *Saiivo*. Each Lapp family has its own *saiivo*, where the deceased relatives sojourn and where the *noïde* learned his magic arts from the *Saiivo olmak*, the *Saiivo* men.²¹

The dead live there as on earth, but more completely and happily. In the course of time the dead can rise up from this abode and become one with *Radien*, the supreme being.

We find much that agrees with the accounts of *Saiivo* in what authors tell us about *passe* or *passe vare*, sacred places or sacred mountains where the *passe vare olmak* live. These are a sort of tutelary spirit, bound to the family. Such a tutelary spirit can be inherited from one's family, or even bought. They are praised and worshipped with *joaige*, hymns. They give counsel and enlightenment when the *noïde* requests it through his drum, a hatchet, a stone, the bone of a horse or a box tied in a sling, that has been hung up in the *kota*. Women address themselves to the *passe vare olmak* by means of their girdles, hung up in the *kota*.

These sacred districts are places of sacrifice, forbidden to women, who may pass by only at a great distance and with faces turned away.

¹⁸ E. Manker, a, II, pp. 50—54.

¹⁹ E. Manker, a, II, pp. 98—103.

²⁰ E. Manker, a, II, pp. 103—107, 110, 111.

²¹ E. Manker, a, II, pp. 108—118.

Passe vare olmak do not bear names. They are designated by the name of their place of abode. They are not deceased relatives like people in the *saivo*, but lower gods; the *passe vare* is an abode of gods, a temple or an altar.²²

Manker has devoted a whole book to the sacred places (*passe vare*), "Lapparnas heliga ställen" ("The holy places of the Lapps"), Acta Lapponica, vol. 13, with a detailed summary in English. He establishes that in these sacred places on the mountains near the summer pastures in western Lapland only stone images of deities were found; these were called *seita*, or sometimes *Storjunkare*, a Norwegian term meaning great noblemen, which was used by the Norwegian Lapps as a title for the civil administrators responsible for contacts with the Lapps. In the south of Swedish Lapland, more specifically in Luleå, this name was known too. I adduce the authority of Manker's summary for the fact that stone images were the expression of the supernatural powers of the sacred places. On the one hand they were closely tied to the territory, and on the other hand to the nomadic group in whose area the sacred place was sited. A clear distinction was made in the same territory between more important stone images revered by the whole group, and others which were worshipped by families or even individuals.²³ The *passe vare* is generally found in the middle of the left-hand edge of the drumhead, sometimes just above or below this point.

Evidence of the great age of the Lapps' contact with their more civilized neighbours are the representations of a Christian village that, as we have already seen, were sometimes set on the right of the *Radien* group at the right upper edge. It was especially in the winter season that the Lapps visited the Christian village, where they ordinarily had the regular contacts which they needed for lodging and trading with the Swedes. As a counterpart of the permanent village of the settled agriculturists we find the Lapp summer camp alongside or in place of the *passe vare* at the left-hand edge. This is also the site of the *njalla*, primitive storehouses standing on one pole, found in every camp.²⁴

Reproduced herewith, then, is the "ideal" Lapp drum based on the available data. I think that any one who will go to the trouble of consulting the relevant sources will arrive at the same result.

²² E. Manker, a, II, pp. 119–123.

²³ E. Manker, a, II, pp. 129, 130.

²⁴ E. Manker, The Nomadism of the Swedish Mountain Lapps (Acta Lapponica, VII, 1953).

Attempt at a synthesis of the data.

In the spring of 1960 I had the opportunity to place the above exposition before Manker. That great authority in this matter confirmed my reconstruction absolutely. I proceeded to outline a number of deductions which can be made, I think, with the utilization of certain other facts. Here, however, he requested me to put my findings in written form, so that he could study my argument properly.

I want now to set out these further conclusions. I do not expect to be able to convince everyone by them. Nevertheless, I consider the findings of such great importance, not only to our knowledge of, and insight into, the Lapp culture, but also in its general cultural anthropological aspects, that I gladly submit my views for discussion.

We have discussed the principal notions represented on the southern drums, with the positions they generally occupy on the drum parchment. The regularity with which they appear — with exceptions — in the total image of the whole membrane of the southern drums, points to a relatively fixed system, which must be the representation of the mythological system of these people. We know from other cultures that such a system of mythology is often identical with, or closely connected with other systems demonstrable in the culture, such as that of social organization, the traditional division of the place of residence, the encampment or the village and the dwelling. Later we shall establish that such an identity, to a certain degree, occurs here too. But first we will examine what can be inferred from the systematization which is evident from the drums.

The four rays of the sun may be an indication of the existence of a twofold division of the oval drum parchment. Indeed, we shall see that we must be prepared for the existence of an internally connected dual system. Lengthways along the drum we find three regions, just as is expressly reported by the sources too: the higher spheres, above the atmosphere, lie at the top of the oval where the *Radien* group is marked. The atmosphere above the earth, where both the sun and the elements (thunder, wind) are found, and where mankind lives too, forms the middle. *Leibolmai* the god of hunting also belongs here, as do the *Ailekesolmak*. Along the lower edge however we find the goddesses of women, the *akka*, who live under the earth.

Between the higher spheres, home of the supreme being who is regarded as male, and the female deities under the earth, lies the province of nature, where the sun holds a central place, where weather

is experienced with its *Horagalles* and *Biegolmai*, the gods of thunder and of wind, and where all phases of human life are enacted.²⁵

Even without acquaintance with modern psychology these Lapps knew already that the male principle is always accompanied by a female aspect and also that masculine elements are to be found in every woman: to the *Radien* group also belongs *Radien-Akka*, Mother *Radien*, wife of *Radienatji* "father of omnipotence" and below the sun, on the vertical ray, we find *Ailekesolmak*, male figures who, as we shall see, as Christmas gods are connected with the female principle.

At right angles to this line of deities we find the sphere in which the lives of humans are enacted and where the tangible and perceptible elements of nature are found.

First of all in the middle there is the sun (*peive*) with the god of thunder (*Horagalles*) and the god of wind (*Biegolmai*). Above that we find the god of hunting (*Leibolmai*), as a very masculine figure who despises women, and *Väraldenolmai*, vice-regent of the supreme being on earth, while under the sun are to be found the *Ailekesolmak*, who are connected with Christmas or Yuletide.

On the left lies the nomadic camp of the Lapps, which is of particular importance in the summer season, which for the men means their time of greatest fulfilment: the migrations with the reindeer herds to the mountains and sometimes (in northern Lapland) to the coast of the Atlantic Ocean. Also to the left, on the edge, we find *passe vare*, the abode of deities that is forbidden to women, with the *seite*, primitive images of gods and altars, which can be approached only by men.

To the right we find *Rota*, the ruler of hell, *Rota aimo*, which lies deep under the earth, and from which there is no return for the souls of bad people.

Then the second abode of the dead, *Jabme aimo*, less deep under the ground, with its guardian the female *Jabme akka*, lies — lower down — on the right hand edge. The souls go via *Jabme aimo* to *Saivo*, which can be found between the right edge and the sun. Finally, the souls go from *Saivo* to *Radien*.

Also on the right hand side (above, near the *Radien* group) we find the Christian village, the centre to which the Lapps migrate in winter. It is the counterpart of the Lapp camp on the left hand edge, in which the summer-life is enacted. The winter village, the place of homeliness, conviviality and social activity, is of significance especially to the women.

²⁵ E. Manker, a, II, *inter alia* p. 182.

In the middle sphere too, the activities of the *noïde*, the shaman, take place. This witch-doctor acquires his professional skill from the *passe vare olmak* or the *saiwo olmak*. With his sorcerer's art he is able to descend into *Jabme aimo* to bring back the souls of persons seriously ill.

The descent into *Jabme aimo* is a normal activity for the shaman, and he pursues it purposefully. It may be true that augury with the drum will give an indication that one of the gods (*Radien*, *Horagalles*, *Biegolmai*, *Leibolmai*, *Väraldenolmai*, *Storjunkare*, or else one of the *Akkas*), desires a sacrifice, but these are not, as it were, the objects on which his attention is focussed. He learns his art from the *saiwo olmak*, or *passe vare olmak*; he has his helpers (bird, serpent, fish, reindeer) in *saiwo* or *passe vare*; it is towards *Jabme aimo* that he consciously directs his (magic) strides. Clearly his domain is an earthly one and, because of his function, no place is ascribed to him in the vertical arrangement leading from *Radien* down to *Mader akka*.

Here we clearly have the representation of a twofold division of the totality of the drum parchment. Vertically, there are three sectors: sky, terrestrial atmosphere and underworld. Horizontally we find two or three. In any case we observe on this line the contrast between summer camp and winter abode (Christian village), and between abodes of the dead and the abode of the family spirits on the mountains. We shall see later that the triple division is present here too.

Very striking is the role played by the number three in this system. Vertically there is a triple division of the cosmos. The *Radien* group, as well as the *Ailekesolmak*, is a trio; as a rule three images of gods stand on the altars. Horizontally there is apparently a division of the human world into three parts. In the same way the abodes of the dead (*Rota aimo*, *Jabme aimo* and *Saiwo*) are three in number. The goddesses of women, daughters of *Mader-akka* (*Sarakka*, *Uksakka* and *Juksakka*) also form a trio.

The mythological system reflected in the migratory area.

We shall now see whether a system showing affinity with the scheme that we have found can be discerned further in this culture.

First express mention of a connection between the division in the drumhead and the migration area of the group is that of the 17th century author Utterius (1673); his information, it is true, relates to a northern area (Torneå), but the lack of information on this subject

from the southern area does not mean that these conceptions did not exist there. The cohesion evident in Lapp culture enables us to bring forward data from the north as probably being applicable also to the southern material.

The passage from Utterius, in Manker's translation, runs as follows:

"Die drei ersten Figuren sind Teile des Systems von Linien, das die Figurenfläche einteilt: Fig. 1, „Torne Träsk“, Torne See, und Fig. 2, „Torneå Aå“, der Torne Fluss, als Grenze zwischen Sekt. I : a und I : b, sowie die Fig. 3, „Torneo Elff“, der Torne Strom, als Grenzlinie zwischen Sekt. II und III. Diese Linien, im gewissen Sinne die primären und zentralen im Linien-system, bezeichnen also die wichtigsten Gewässer in der Torne Lappmark. Von der Fig. 1 als vom Quellsee Torne Träsk gehen die nächsten Linien als Torne „Aå“, Fluss, und „Elff“, Strom aus“. Manker proceeds: "Deshalb kann man sich fragen, ob dieses System von Linien auch als Ganzes einem Flusssystem entsprechend gedacht und die Membranbemalung im Einklang damit gewissermassen als eine schematisierte topographische Karte aufgefasst wurde, wobei die Flüsse (Linien) die verschiedenen Provinzen oder Distrikte voneinander trennten. Das Vorhandensein eines Himmelsrichtungszeigers... erhärtet diesen Gedanken. Dass die Zeichnungen der Lappentrommel teilweise den Charakter einer Karte haben können, tritt hier und da in alten Deutungen zutage und geht manchmal aus der Gruppierung gewisser Figuren hervor. Das beste Beispiel in Bezug auf die Tornetrommel liefert Tornaeus, der das unterste Feld als... Norrland und mehrere Teile von Schweden, das oberste als... Norwegen, und das Mittelfeld als... Lappland selbst, bezeichnet. Wege, Dörfer, Fischgewässer usw. sind manchmal auch ungefähr wie auf einer Kartenskizze aufgezeichnet worden."²⁶

The division into three parts which we found on the drums appears therefore to exist also in the migration area, as Tornaeus indicates. This is in agreement with the recent migratory habits of the present-day Swedish Lapps. They pass the winter in the Swedish lowlands with the settled farmers ("Christian village"). In the spring they follow the herds of reindeer into the uplands where, on the plateaux, the calves come into the world, and then they move on further towards the high fells or towards the Atlantic coast. In the autumn they return to their spring restingplaces for the partition of the reindeer, at which each *sida* or owner selects his own deer out of the large herd, to take

²⁶ E. Manker, II, p. 159.

them back to the winter abodes. The number of fixed points in the migratory area is thus three: the winter abode, the stopping place for spring and autumn, and the residence for the summer.²⁷

In actual fact the three-part division of the migration area lies southeast-northwest, but on the drums it is represented on the east-west axis, often even northeast-southwest. Manker told me that according to the notion of the Lapps themselves the migratory route lies east-west, which thus agrees fairly well with the situation on the drums. The Christian village, however, normally lies upper right, that is in the northeast. As we have seen it is to the Lapps, first and foremost, the usual winter abode and is connected with the female principle. Towards Christmas the Lapp goes to the settlements of the Christians where, even in the time when most of the drums originated, he was expected in the church for the Christmas celebration. It was a period of transition to the new faith, which had to be professed under compulsion, while the people still followed the old ways in their hearts.²⁸ There were those who already had some notion of the God of the Christians, who in a few cases was conceived as being higher than *Radien*, and sometimes was even portrayed, it would seem, on the upper side of the drum.²⁹

The Christian village, the church, Christianity, the God of the Christians had certainly already exerted some influence on the old religion. The place of the Christian village near to *Radien*, to the right at the upper edge, seems to be a concession to the new faith.

Furthermore, the dead were transported if possible to the winter abodes for burial, which then became more and more a Christian burial. It is not only a contrast between *saivo* and *passe* which gives the abodes of the dead their place on the left hand side of the drum. The place where as a rule the dead were committed to the earth also agrees with this arrangement.

For the women the winter in the settled village was the great time of social activity and conviviality, while the men found things more to their liking during the trek in the mountains.

In a Lapp territory the religious tripartition on the long axis of the drum co-incides with the west-east line. *Passe* is male, the winter settlement reflects the female principle. The migratory area of each

²⁷ E. Manker, Nomadisme.

²⁸ E. Manker, a, II, p. 90 and following, *inter alia*.

P. L. Smith, Kautokeino och Kautokeino Lappane, Oslo, 1938, p. 521.

²⁹ E. Manker, a, II, p. 77, 88.

sida, however, is left and right (north and south, or northeast and southwest) limited by the migratory areas of other groups with which one maintains social relations. The social tripartition, in which one's own group lies in between two others, is likewise pivotted here.

As we have seen, the goddesses of women have a task in the creation of new people. Before a child can be born, a certain preparation must take place in the domain of the gods. *Radienatji* creates a soul which he transfers, via his female counterpart *Maderakka*, to her three daughters: *Sarakka*, who forms a body around the soul, *Uksakka*, who makes boys from the female embryos, consecrated to her enemy *Leibolmai*, the god of hunting, and *Juksakka*, who keeps watch over and takes care of the children after their birth.³⁰ This is a process that is enacted in the religious sphere on the long axis of the drum head. Birth brings the child into the sphere of human life on the middle sector of the drum where sun, thunder and wind play their part, and where the annual trek from winter abode to summer camp and back takes place. Thus the whole process is in accordance with the system that we found on the drums.

Division of the tent.

The tent too is pitched and divided up in accordance with a fixed system, a system connected with the cosmic system of the magic drum. According to the old custom the tents of nomadic Lapps always stand on a slope facing from north to south, or from the northwest towards the southeast.³¹ From a matter-of-fact point of view this arrangement seems to be no more than eminently practical. In this land which for part of the year gets very little sun, the southern slope offers most advantage from the light and warmth of that heavenly body. And for cold winds the tent opening is sheltered best there. In case of melting snow or during rainy weather it would be particularly unwise to place the tent door anywhere except facing downhill. The mode of pitching the tent is very well chosen on practical grounds.

But do these practical considerations exclude an idealistic justification on the grounds of the old cosmic system? We shall see that the positioning of the tent and dividing up of its floorspace is also in accord with the cosmic system.

³⁰ E. Manker, p. 77, 80, 90, 92, 94, 95, 96.

³¹ B. Collinder, *The Lapps*, New York, 1949; p. 66.

The floor of the tent is oval like the drum and divided up into five parts, each with its own purpose. In the centre is the hearth, surrounded with stones, above which the kettle hangs from the cross-piece of the poles, exactly under the smoke-vent in the ridge of the tent. The hearth is central in the tent, just as the sun stands centrally on the drumskin.

Two small wooden beams reach from the sides of the fireplace to the front doorposts. The space enclosed by these two beams, the front door and the fireplace comprises a sort of vestibule where visitors stay in expectation of an invitation to occupy another spot in the tent. It is also the storage place for fuel.³²

Ignorance of the elementary courtesy of waiting in the "porch" until asked to move further inside was apparently the cause of the stiff and forbidding attitude which strangers sometimes ascribed to the for the most part kind and jolly Lapps. Perhaps this is connected also with the ascetic and puritanical attitude to life of adherents of Laestadianisme, a Christian sect which originated in Lappland.

There is a similar space behind the fireplace too, enclosed by two small wooden beams, the fireplace itself and the rear wall of the tent. Nowadays this spot, the *possjo*, is reserved for household goods and foodstuffs. According to tradition it was the sacred part of the tent, forbidden to women. That is where the back door was — in fact nothing more than a chink, or a piece of the tent fabric that could easily be raised, so that an opening appeared. That back door was equally forbidden to women. If a man went hunting or got ready for a sacrifice he used this door. The spoils of the hunt, bear meat especially, but also reindeer and other game, and fish too, could only be brought into the tent through this back door. Even now reindeer are invariably slaughtered at the back of the tent, where women do not come, and still the flesh is always brought into the tent through the back.³³

For sacrifices to the great gods (*Radien*, *Väraldenolmai*, *Horagallas*, *Leibolmai*, *Biegoalmai* and also the sun) an altar used to be constructed the distance of a bowshot behind the tent. Sometimes the ground between the altar and the rear of the tent was covered with birch

³² E. Manker, *Nomaden van het Noorden* (Nomads of the North), catalogue of an exhibition at the Museum voor Land- en Volkenkunde, Rotterdam, 1960, p. 35; B. Collinder, *The Lapps*, pp. 65–68; H. Helms, *Lappland und die Lappländer*, Leipzig, 1868; pp. 78–81; Ian Whitaker, *Social Relations in a Nomadic Lappish Community*, Oslo, 1955; p. 84, 88.

³³ B. Collinder, *op. cit.*; H. Helms, *op. cit.*; J. Schefferus, p. 51.

branches, so that altar and tent sanctuary were linked together through the sacred rear door.³⁴

Sometimes a special tent would be erected for the festivity that took place after the killing of a bear. This special tent would then stand a stone's throw behind the living tent.³⁵

The magic drum too could only be put into the tent through the rear entrance, and brought out again the same way. I have already made a few observations on the sacredness of the drum and the fact that it could not be touched by women. It is enough to state here that women must avoid the magic drums at all costs. Sometimes the depositary of this shaman instrument was a covered sledge, placed against the rear wall of the tent.

The preparation of food (in former days principally meat and fish) used to be exclusively the man's task. Next to the seat of the father of the family, on one side of the sacred *possjo*, there was always kept the hatchet used for chopping up bones on the wooden beam which enclosed the *possjo* on that side.³⁶

The rear side of the tent is the place which is clearly sacred according to the male principle, which is connected with the *Radien* group and the other male gods, and with the *passe*.

Only milk products were of old under the care of the women. In accordance with this they too were brought in through the front door.³⁶ The front door was also the place of one of the deities of women, *Uksakka* ("door"-*akka*), who lived under the floor of the tent with her two sisters *Sarakka* and *Juksakka*. The "vestibule" is the place of the "female" sanctity, *ailes*.³⁷

Formerly people used to have a fixed place in the tent, depending on their position. The father of the family and the mistress of the household stayed together towards the back of the tent to the left or right of the *possjo*. Opposite them on the other side of the *possjo* was the place for the guest of honour, should there be one, with the less important guests near him. The remaining space was occupied by children and servants and any other visitors there may have been. However, the servants always had their place near to the front door.³⁸

³⁴ E. Manker, b. p. 301, 313; T. I. Itkonen, p. 13; G. Ränk, b. p. 200 and following.

³⁵ B. Collinder, p. 161; G. Ränk, b. p. 202.

³⁶ G. Ränk, b. p. 196; O. Petterson, *Jabmek* and *Jabmeaimo*, p. 109, note.

³⁷ E. Manker, a, II, pp. 89—98.

³⁸ B. Helms, *op. cit.*, p. 81; B. Collinder, *op. cit.*, p. 68; Ian Whitaker, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

It is clear that the way the tent was pitched and the division of the floor corresponded to the scheme that we found in the concept of the world as represented on the drums, and in the division of the migration area. North (or west, as the case may be) is sacred and male; south (or east, as the case may be) is profane and female — always with the reservation that another kind of sacredness, that of the female deities, is associated with this southerly or easter quarter, and with the front door and the lower part of the drumhead. The long axis of the drum shows a division of religious order. Along the other axis, at right angles to the north-south axis, the division has a social aspect.

The sun, which is so important for and in the life of these nomads and is worshipped as a vivifying and fertility-bringing power, has the central place on the drumskin, just as the fire in the hearth, that makes life in the tent possible in winter, is central.

Double tripartition and the social organisation.

Thus we find the double tripartition equally in the world as it is imagined, in the drum parchment, in the tent and in the migratory area. The tripartition that is obvious in the cosmic system of the drums, the partition of the migration area and the ground plan of the tent, is reflected perhaps in the threefold nature of the various groups of deities: *Radienatji*, *Radienakka* and *Radien pardne*; sun, wind and thunder, three *Ailekesolmak*, three daughters of *Mader-akka*, the threefold character of the images on the altars, three abodes of the dead.

This double classification of the mythological system, with one trend clearly representing the religious sphere, and the other trend the social aspect of human life, is a classificatory grouping which we could expect in a culture with a double-unilateral social organisation.

It was fully thirty years ago that a start was made, both at the University of Leiden and in Australia, with the study of this system of social organisation and its consequences in culture. From this it transpired that a number of phenomena which people had commonly tried to explain through local historical hypotheses, or which they had been inclined to see as transitory forms between a matrilateral and a patrilateral system or the other way round, were in fact connected with the phenomenon of the double unilateral systems.

If I understand it aright, in practically every culture we can expect to come across elements which could be connected with a double unilateral system. It can be established anywhere in the world that a

distinction exists between the behavioural pattern of a child in relation to its mother and the behavioural pattern in relation to the father. Furthermore there is a difference in this behavioural pattern when the child is a boy and when a girl. The emotional ties of a child to each of its parents are similarly varied according to the sex. This phenomenon is common to humans, and to some degree it is biologically determined. That the forms in which these phenomena appear vary according to the culture does not alter the fact that a distinct biological substratum exists. The result of the full development of this general phenomenon in a culture is the double unilateral kinship system, with the concomitant reflection in the other parts of the culture. For this reason it is a matter of some surprise to me that the double classification of the mythological system of the Lapps, which we recognised in the living area as well as in the partition of the tent, is not encountered in the social organisation.

The presentday kinship structure is clearly bilateral, with strong emphasis on the marriage tie and strong ties between members of one generation, especially between brothers and sisters. Another remarkable feature is the distribution of the society over three generations: the old members, the working men and the children. The oldest and the youngest generation are joined in a latent antagonism with respect to the middle generation. On the other hand, the working men in a group have strong ties between them arising from their joint duties guarding the herds in the loneliness of the mountains, sometimes far away from the temporary settlement.³⁹ The only distinct connection with the mythological system is the strong emphasis on the division of the society into three generations. The only piece of information that can be connected with the dual system of the mythology is a report from Finnish Lapland that people have their own, individual tutelary spirits, which are inheritable, and in such a way that the tutelary spirit of the mother passes to the daughter, and that of the father to the son.⁴⁰ It is no great step from this to propose that the former, the tutelary spirits of females, are connected with the *saivo* deities and the others with the world of *passe*.

We have no information at all about the social structure of this nation in the period before they went over to Christianity. We know

³⁹ Robert N. Pehrson, The Bilateral Network of Social Relations in Könkämä Lapp District (International Journal of American Linguistics, vol. 23.1, 1957; publication III of the Indiana University Research Center).

⁴⁰ O. Petterson, *op. cit.*, p. 64; T. I. Itkonen, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

that the cooperative group known as *sida*, by which the herds were cared for in common, and which engaged in nomadic wanderings within the same migratory area, was already functioning at that time. According to Gjessing the word *sida* originally meant 'hunting community', and derives from the time when the Lapps still lived in the main from reindeer hunting. Reindeer breeding had not been developed then. We are well informed, however, with regard to the composition of the *sida* in the present Kōnkämä in Karesuando (North Lapland).⁴¹ But we do not know what it is like elsewhere or what it used to be like formerly. Only Gjessing relates of the northern Lapps that the *sida* was still clearly exogamous in fairly recent times.⁴²

We may suppose, however, that the social structure of this people has changed very considerably in the last few centuries. Christianity has completely replaced the old religion. Nothing is to be found any more of the old mythology. In addition, the economy has changed to a great extent. Originally a hunting people, drawn in pursuit of the herds of wild reindeer, and almost completely self-supporting, the Lapps became an equally self-supporting people of nomadic herdsmen, who gradually changed over to a new form of economy which entailed production for a foreign market and a supply of goods brought in from elsewhere. It is not strange that with this the social structure also underwent fundamental changes. It seems improbable to me that this nomadic people would formerly have had a fully functioning double-unilateral kinship system. The ties which are still maintained with members of other groups (*raide* and *verdi*, marriage relationships and the relationship of godparents)⁴³ and which appear to have rested originally on kinship, indicate that formerly a more complicated system might well have existed, that might have reflected, more or less, the system in the religion.

I have given a résumé of the old religion of the Lapps, to bring some shape into what at first sight seems to be an amorphous collection of facts. Of the Scandinavian authors only Gjessing has endeavoured to find system in the extant material, but he does not pay sufficient attention to the religious aspect of the culture.

He is of the view that the 'gods' of the western Lapps do not genuinely belong to Lapp culture; he suggests that they may have been derived, under the influence of the early Germanic religion, from the spirits

⁴¹ R. N. Pehrson, *op. cit.*, Chap. V.

⁴² Gutorm Gjessing, *Changing Lapps*, London, 1954; p. 18.

⁴³ R. N. Pehrson, *op. cit.*, Chap. VI; Ian Whitaker, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

connected with nature and with the *sida*.⁴⁴ There seems to be little support for this view, when we remember how those gods have their own precise places in the system of the drums, and therefore in the mythology, and how closely they are integrated in the whole.

I have followed up my résumé, which remained very close to the known facts, with the conclusions which I have drawn. I shall not mind in the least if these are dubbed speculations — their details will certainly be seen to be assailable in the light of a more thorough study. I have made bold, however, to make known these provisional — and perhaps speculative — conclusions, so that they might lead to further research by others, be it only from the urge to contradict.

I perceive very clearly therefore that what I have written here will not be the last word to be spoken on the subject of this religion from the past.

C. NOOTEBOOM

⁴⁴ G. Gjessing, *op. cit.*, p. 25 and following.