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## The Sámi People as Witches and Fairies in the British Tradition

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**Summary.** *In this article, the attempt is made to distinguish the origins of the association of the Sámi people with the mythological characters in British culture of 12<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> centuries, and to dwell on two important stages. First are the premises for the formation of the Sámi image as witches, which was expressed in the Shakespearean “Comedy of Errors.” It is argued that the image was founded on the traditional written sources, the rise of scholarly demonology, the folk-beliefs of Orcadians and Shetlanders, the increased contacts with Scandinavian sailors and probably with the Sámi themselves.*

*The second stage is the change of the Sámi image by the time of Sir Walter Scott. The rationalization of folk beliefs in the Age of Enlightenment led to association of the Sámi with the abstract mythological characters whose general purpose was to explain the very genesis of popular mythology. This euhemeristic interpretation which also included Picts, Pechs and Pixies flourished in Victorian folk studies until it was highly criticized by Edward Tylor and other members of the Folk-Lore Society.*

**Key words:** *the Sámi, fairy euhemerism, witches, fairies, Picts, Victorian studies.*

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The reputation of the Sámi people as great sorcerers is reflected in Shakespeare’s plays, and by the time of Sir Walter Scott the Sámi had become the prototype for fairies. Such a perception of the Sámi was preceded by a long tradition of connecting these people with mythological beings.

For the first time in British fiction mention of the Sámi people as wizards appears in *The Comedy of Errors* (c. 1591), act 4, scene 3:

Sure, these are but imaginary wiles  
And Lapland sorcerers inhabit here  
[Shakespeare 1819, 56].

There are also references to the witches and sorcerers of Lapland in the works of Robert Burton (*The Anatomy of Melancholy*, 1621) [Burton 1857, 135], John Milton (*Paradise Lost*, 1667), John Dryden (*An Evening’s Love, or the Mock Astrology*, 1668, act 2, scene 1 [Dryden 1970, 244]) and William Congreve (*Love for Love*, 1695, act 3, scene 1 [Congreve 1704, 38]). These plays and other works were aimed at a wide audience. This suggests that by the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, English society was well aware of Sámi’s reputation for magical abilities; this is an interesting phenomenon, considering that Sámi had never

constituted a significant population group in the British Isles. At that time medieval authors, many of them available in English, remained sources of information about the world. There also existed many reports on the Sámi<sup>1</sup>, a non-Indo-European people of Europe who preserved the institution of shamanism but in most cases their authors had not noted any supernatural features. However, some did remark on this.

In 1397, for example, John Trevisa translated into English the work of Bartholomew the Englishman, *De proprietatibus rerum* (*On the Properties of Things*, c. 1250), and the chapter on Winlandia (Finland, XV 174) states that the inhabitants of this country, located beyond the mountains of Norway towards the ocean, “occupie themselves with witchcrafe” and sell winds to sailors by tying knots in a rope (Bartholomew points out that one was thought able to regulate the wind by untying them [Batman 1582])<sup>2</sup>. The same information appears in the famous *Polychronicon* written by Ranulf Higden in the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century and translated by the very same John Trevisa. People of “Wyntlandia” (an island west of Denmark) “selleþ wynd to schipmen, þat seilleþ to hire hauenes, as it were i-closed vnder knottis of þrede; and as þe knottes beþ vnknette, þe wynde wexeþ at her owne wille”<sup>3</sup> [Higden 1865–1886].

In 1514, the first printed edition of the *Gesta Danorum* (*Deeds of the Danes*) by Saxo Grammaticus (c. 1140–1216) [Wawn 2002, 17] — one of the largest sources of the time about the mythological history of Scandinavia — was released. In the third volume, Saxo Grammaticus reports that Odin, whom he considers to be a deified leader, learns from a prophet named Hrossthiolf the Finn about his future son who will be born from Wrinda, daughter of the king of the Ruthenians [Saxo Grammaticus 1894, 94]. In the fifth book, he recounts a three-day battle between the Swedes and the Sámi, whom he calls Finns: they are “the uttermost peoples of the North,

who have taken a portion of the world that is barely habitable to till and dwell in.”<sup>4</sup> They fought for three days, and each day the Sámi retreat, using witchcraft. On the first day, they throw down three pebbles and the deluded Swedes take them for three mountains; on the second, they cast snow upon the ground that takes on the form of a fast and wide river; and on the third they surrender [Saxo Grammaticus 1894, 203–204]. This story corresponds to the Aarne and Thompson motif of “Obstacle flight” (D672).

Remarks on the supernatural abilities of the Sámi also appear in cartographic works. In 1532, as a part of his geographical treatise *Quae intus continentur Syria, Palestina, Arabia, Aegyptus, Schondia, Holmiae*, Jacob Ziegler published a map of the North which depicted “Gronlandia, Islandia, Hetlandia islands. Farenis islands, Laponia, Nordvegia, Svecia, Bothnia, Ostrobothnia, Gothia and Finlandia.” In the chapter devoted to Laponia (Lapland), Ziegler writes about Sámi witchcraft. For the first time he describes special leaden darts (“iacula”) with which inhabitants of Lapland could send diseases. Also Ziegler mentions the selling of tailwinds. Sailors were sold a rope with three knots tied in it. After the first knot was untied, a light wind would arise, after the second, the wind would grow stronger, and after the third, a storm would rage [Ziegler 1532, xcvi]. R.I. Page points out that Ziegler’s *Schondia* was widely used in England, as in Peter Martyr d’Anghiera’s *The Decades of the Newe Worlde or West India...* (trans. R. Eden, London, 1555) and R. Willes’ *The History of Trauayle...* (London, 1577), which contained some paraphrases of Ziegler’s work [Page 1962–1965, 229].

Ziegler received information about the northern territories from conversations with Eric Valkendorf, the last Catholic archbishop of Norway, who in 1516 had planned an expedition to Greenland (which came to nothing) and who collected information about this region [Seaver 1996, 32]. He also spoke

<sup>1</sup> A detailed list of historical sources on the Sámi up to the mid-18th century can be found in articles by Ian Whitaker and Christian Meriot [Whitaker 1980; Whitaker 1983; Meriot 1984].

<sup>2</sup> Ernest J. Moyne believes that Bartholomew copied this account from an unpublished geographical dictionary called *Geographia Universalis*, written by an unidentified author who lived in England in the 13th century [Moyne 1981, 14].

<sup>3</sup> A rather liberal translation: “<they> sell winds to the sailors that come to their ports, and the winds are enclosed under knots on the rope. When the knots are untied, the winds begin to blow.”

<sup>4</sup> The difference between Finns and Sámi was unclear in many Medieval and later sources up to the first appearance of classifications of human races in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

with John Magnus, brother of Olaus Magnus, who seven years later published the famous *Carta Marina (Marine Map)* — the most reliable guide to Northern Europe at the time. Olaus Magnus' *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus (Description of the Northern Peoples, 1555)*, was an extended commentary on this map, and soon became the main source of information about the peoples of Scandinavia for the whole of Europe. It was translated into English in 1658.

For the *Description of the Northern People*, published in twenty-two richly illustrated volumes, Olaus Magnus used both his conversations with the Sámi conducted in 1515 and the established tradition. Referring to Saxo Grammaticus, Olaus Magnus included the story about the magic battle, this time described as between the Danes and Biarmians, “that is to say, the people inhabiting the northern mountains and plains” [Olaus Magnus 1996, 194]<sup>5</sup>. According to this account, before the battle started, the Biarmians used magic to summon a terrible storm, which was then followed by unbearable heat. Olaus Magnus named a separate chapter (III: 16) “On the wizards and witches of the Finns,” including here the inhabitants of both Finland and Lapland. This chapter and the next one, “On the magical implements of Bothnia,” are entirely dedicated to “North wizards and magicians.” Olaus Magnus repeats Ziegler's stories about the sale of winds by tying three knots in a rope and about magic finger-length leaden darts which sorcerers launch through the air over any distance. The person struck by these darts would be infected with a tumor on his arm or leg, and in three days would die in agony. Beside this, Olaus Magnus describes the special powers of Finns and Sámi, who could change their facial features (or those of another person) and make them indistinguishable. In addition, they could make a person lose sight of home and wander. Olaus Magnus also depicts how Sámi and Finnish sorcerers could fall into a trance in which they would appear dead. When they woke up, they told about their travels and about people located at a great distance away, and they displayed objects such as a ring or a knife that they brought back from faraway lands [Olaus Magnus 1996, 174–175].

Olaus Magnus's work exceeded all that had been written before it and, along with the work of Johannes Schefferus, written more than a century later, became one of the most cited sources about Sámi culture. Schefferus released his *Laponia* in 1673 and it was translated from Latin into English in 1674. For the first time, not just a few chapters, but a full-fledged study was entirely devoted to the Sámi. Schefferus collected data about the Sámi, interviewing clergymen and travelers, as well as Sámi natives. He was also given access to the Royal Archives. In his work, Schefferus combined the data of almost all of the works mentioned above, adding to these those that had been written in Scandinavian languages.

A chapter on Sámi magic occupies a significant place in Schefferus' book. He notes that the Sámi, often oppressed, used magic to protect themselves. He describes the tradition of transferring magical knowledge from teacher to apprentice and notes that in many Sámi families spirits are also bequeathed to from generation to generation. Schefferus also refers to those who possess witchcraft not by training, but by their very nature, and includes a description of the shamanistic initiatory illness<sup>6</sup> [Scheffer 1674, 46]. Schefferus distinguishes two types of Sámi witchcraft: one with a drum and one “to which knots, darts, spells, conjurations, and the like refer” [Ibid, 58]. To illustrate the first, Schefferus gives an extensive description of the Sámi shaman drum (the materials of which it was made, the drawings on it, its special clapper). He also describes a shamanic trance as well as the special song (“Joiike”) performed by the shaman and the song (“Duura”) sung by all who are present. According to Schefferus, witchcraft with a drum is used for four purposes, to find out: “the state of affairs in foreign Countries”; “what success will meet their current designs”; “how to cure diseases”; and to learn “what Sacrifices their Gods will be pleased to accept” [Ibid, 54].

The second type of witchcraft (without a drum) Schefferus divides into two categories. The first is selling “a cord tied with knots for the raising of wind” to sailors. Schefferus is inclined to refer this magic to “Finlanders” only, since the Sámi “live in an inland

<sup>5</sup> On his map of Scandinavia, Olaus Magnus places Biarmia at the very north of the Kola Peninsula.

<sup>6</sup> Shamanistic initiatory illness refers to the physically overwhelming spiritual crisis that is thought to occur when spirits choose a human to become a shaman [Pratt 2007, 229].

Country, bordering no where upon the Sea” [Ibid, 58]. Schefferus doubts the existence of the second category — the use of magical leaden darts, believing that Ziegler, who introduced this idea, was misled by the word “Skott,” which means both a quick lethal disease and a dart [ibid, 59]. Nevertheless, in the chapter’s conclusion, Schefferus himself describes a certain magical artifact called a “Tyre,” made in the form of a small ball of fur or moss and sold by the Sámi: “it goes like a whirlwind, and as swift as an arrow, and destroys the first man, or beast, that it lights on, so that it often mistakes” [Ibid, 60].

In the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, Schefferus’ book was considered a masterpiece in the scientific accumulation of knowledge about the Sámi, the best since classical antiquity. However, it seems highly doubtful that this book or scientific tradition itself had anything to do with Shakespeare’s works or the aforementioned poets of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. R. I. Page thought that Shakespeare might have derived his knowledge about Lapland sorcerers “from the works of certain late medieval and early modern geographers” and he pointed out that Shakespeare had actually read Eden’s translation of *The Decades of the Newe Worlde or West India*, because in *The Tempest* he used the name Setebos for the god that Caliban worshipped [Page 1962–1965, 224–229]. Even so, the plays were aimed at a fairly wide audience and such references must have been recognized by the general public, which was hardly familiar with the above mentioned sources. I would suppose that references to scholarly works in plays would hardly have been appropriate. All of this scholarly material could more likely affect John Locke, when in 1672 he asked William Allestree about Lapland witches [Talbot 2010, 51]. Allestree, who had been to Sweden, advised him to consult Schefferus’ forthcoming work.

Similar stereotypes about the Sámi appear in England precisely at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when British trade in the Baltic region experienced an unprecedented rise. However, in order to trade with the Baltic countries, one had to get there. All three straits leading from the North Sea to the Baltic (the Sound, the Great and Little Belts) were controlled by the king of Denmark. And from the late Middle Ages, the Danish crown adhered to the following policy: both Belts were blocked off and all ships passing through the Sound were charged a fee. No

matter how symbolic this fee was, the collection process itself was quite lengthy: the ship anchored and Danish customs officials carried out an inspection. Moreover, in addition to collecting taxes, Frederick II sometimes detained entire ships whose cargo eventually became the property of the Danish crown [Ramsay 1957, 123]. The more ships sailed from England to trade in the Baltic region, the more British mariners interacted not only with Danish customs officials, but also with a wide variety of port inhabitants, including, of course, local sailors, who possibly shared local superstitions. Probably, during the forced downtime, British sailors could not only hear about “Lapland sorcerers” selling winds, but also see them with their own eyes, and even use their services.

There was another nation that lived side by side with the Sámi for a long time. In the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, English merchants opened the Northeast Passage to Russia. Queen Mary I granted the Muscovy Company a royal patent, and this led to annual visits of British ships to Russian shores. The number of ships visiting Muscovy was small: in 1581 the Muscovy Company sent 13 ships to Russia, in 1582 — 11, in 1583 — 10, in 1584 — 10, in 1586 — 9 [Willan 1956, 180–181], in 1589 — 5, and in 1590 — 14–15, but as indicated by T. S. Willan, the last figure may be overstated [ibid, 183]. For comparison, in 1585, 1586 and 1587 the number of English ships in the Baltic region varied as follows: 57–60, 109–115, 96–106, respectively (the first figure is from Sound toll registers, the second from the Elbing customs registers) [Zins 1972, 140]. Travelers to Russia, an exotic country at that time, often came into contact with the Sámi. Richard Chancellor, Anthony Jenkinson and Steven Borough, for example, depict the Sámi in their writings. The latter traveler even compiled the first vocabulary of the Ter Sámi dialect [Abercromby 1895, 1]. However, a description of Sámi magic abilities only appears in the book by Giles Fletcher, who headed a mission to Tsar Feodor I Ioannovich. Fletcher claimed that “for practice of witchcraft and sorcery, they <the Sámi> passe all nations in the world” [Fletcher 1591, 77]. According to him, the Sámi are able to bewitch ships passing along their shores, give tailwinds to friends and contrary winds to enemies — all by tying knots in a rope. Fletcher poetically compares this to the windbag that Aeolus gave to Odysseus.

The 16<sup>th</sup> century was not only an age of voyages, but also the golden age of Europe's scholarly demonology [Hagen 2014, 150]. E. William Monter points out the role of King James VI in establishing connections between British and Scandinavian witchcraft. In 1589, James traveled to Denmark to meet his bride, Princess Anna. The voyage home inspired him to create his study entitled *Dæmonologie* (1597); the journey was marked by terrible storms, and Peder Munk, admiral of the Danish fleet, blamed it on local witches. Heretofore this phenomenon of *nautical maleficia* had been unknown in the British Isles, so that by publishing his work, James VI encouraged its spread [Monter 1993, 431].

At the same time in Scandinavia the Sámi were put on trial for witchcraft. In East Finnmark, where the mixed Sámi and non-Sámi population lived, men were accused and sentenced for using magic to raise winds, sink ships, drive fish away, lift curses, bestow blessings and cure sick humans and animals [Maxwell-Stuart 2001, 79–80]. A similar type of witchcraft was attributed to *Finn-men* or *Finfolk* — shapeshifters in the folklore of the Orkney and Shetland Islands, which in the Middle Ages had been settled by Scandinavians. The islands were posted as security by the Scandinavian monarch Christian I for the dowry of his daughter, who married James III, and from the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, they became part of Scotland.

In the folklore of the Orkney and Shetland Islands, Finn-men or Finfolk were traditionally considered unsurpassed soothsayers, fortune-tellers, and weather-prophets [Saxby 1932, 95–96]. They were allegedly able to find objects lost in the ocean or on land, and to reveal where stolen goods had been hidden [Spence 1899, 22–23; Teit 1918, 194]. Finn-men were very skillful in curing deceases in men and cattle [Dennison 1891, 170], which is also a traditional ability ascribed to witches [Hibbert 1891, 269]. Acknowledged as lucky fishermen, they could catch fish whenever they wanted [Teit 1918, 194]. Finn-men could also become invisible and turn into animals, mostly seals, but also they could take the form of two species of beetle (Shetlandic witchie-clock and tur-diel), porpoises, ravens and dogs [Hibbert 1891, 267; Reid Tait 1951, 8]. Their special talent was power over the weather. They could raise winds or change a

storm into a calm. Finn-men were also great at rowing: “A Finn man could cross from Norwick in Unst to Bergen in Norway and return between the hours of sunset and sunrise, the traditional speed being nine miles to the warp (stroke of the oar)” [Spence 1899, 21–22].

Almost all of this material relates to folklore collections of the late 19<sup>th</sup> — early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is difficult to say whether Finn-men and Finfolk had similar features in Orkadian and Shetlander folklore of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, and what impact their folklore could have had on the main population of Britain. But its origins date back to the medieval Scandinavian tradition, which found its fullest expression in sagas. Scandinavian sagas began to be published in Latin in the 1630s<sup>7</sup> [Wawn 2002, 18]. A few of them carried information concerning Sámi magic. In 1665, Peder Resen first published in Latin the *Prose Edda* by Snorri Sturluson. The same year *Hávamál* from the *Codex Regius* of the late 13<sup>th</sup> century appeared translated into Latin, also edited by Resen, as well as the Latin version of the *Völuspá*, which was edited in 1673. In 1697, Johan Peringskiöld was the first to translate and publish in Latin *Heimskringla* by Snorri Sturluson.

There is a story in the “Ynglinga saga” from *Heimskringla* about Vanlandi, Sveigthir's son, who married the daughter of the Sámi leader Snær the Old whose name was Drífa. The next spring Vanlandi left Drífa behind and “promised to return after three years, but did not <come home> within ten years” [Snorri Sturluson 2009, 16]. Drífa sent for the sorceress Huld to bewitch Valandi. He became very eager to go back to Finland, but his friends advised him against it. He suddenly became very drowsy, fell asleep, and when he woke up said that the nightmare rode him (probably a description of sleep paralysis), and then he died.

In his article on the image of the Sámi in Scandinavian sagas, Hermann Pálsson singles out a particular type of story about Sámi women referred to as “wicked brides” [Pálsson 1999, 40]. Thus Harald Fairhair (*Haraldr hárfagi*) of the eponymous saga falls under the spell of a Sámi maiden named Snœfrith, Svási's daughter. By touching her hand Harald falls in love with her, becomes engaged to her “and loved her so madly that

<sup>7</sup> Except some parts that were already included in Saxo Grammaticus' and Olaus Magnus' books.

he neglected his kingdom and all his duties” [Snorri Sturluson 2009, 80]. They have four sons, and when Snœfrith dies, her corpse remains uncorrupted for three years and Harald Fairhair keeps sitting by its side like one bewitched. Another plot from the *Harald Harfager* saga is connected with Eirík, Harald’s son, and Gunnhild, whom he met in Finnmark. Gunnhild lived there “to learn sorcery from two Finns who are the wisest here in Finnmark.” Here is how she describes them: “<Both> are so clever that they can follow a track like dogs, both on open ground and on hard frozen snow. They run so well on skis that nothing can escape them, whether humans or animals; and whatever they shoot at they hit. In this way they have killed all of the men who have approached. And if they become enraged, the ground turns about as they look at it, and any living thing falls down dead” [Ibid, 86].

In the *Saga Hálfðanar svarta* (*Saga of Hálfðan the Black*), Hálfðan is at a Yule-feast in Hathaland when all of the food magically disappears, so “he ordered a Finn who was reputed to be skilled in many hidden things to be seized.” Later, the same Finn predicts to Harald, Hálfðan’s son, that after the death of his father “you will have as your own all the realms he ruled, and all of Norway besides” [Ibid, 57]. Eyvind Kinnrifa, a sorcerer from the *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* (*Olaf Trygvason’s Saga*), turns out not to be a man, but a spirit: “I cannot accept any baptism. I am a spirit brought to life in human shape by the sorcery of Finns; my father and my mother could have no child before”<sup>8</sup> [Ibid, 211].

One of the first plots of *Saint Ólaf’s Saga* (*Óláfs saga helga*) concerns an invasion of “Finland.” The battle tactics are described as follows: the inhabitants flee into the forests, emptying their homes of all property, and when Ólaf’s men pass through the forest, they attack them from all sides with arrows. Then, when the king reaches his ships, “the Finns with their witchcraft made a furious gale and a storm at sea” [Ibid, 250]. The saga also tells about Thórir the Hound who traded with the Sámi and who “had there made for him twelve cloaks of reindeer skin charged with so much witchcraft that no weapon could penetrate them, even less than <it could> a

coat of chainmail” [Ibid, 487]. When Thórir was hit with a sword on the shoulder in battle, “the blow took no effect, and it seemed as if dust flew up out of the reindeer skin” [Ibid, 514]. And the *lausavísa* (a stanza) follows:

The free-handed king found out  
full clearly himself, how  
the mighty magic of Finns from  
maim protected Thórir <...> [Ibid, 515].

Apart from *Heimskringla*, two more sagas were published in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries that include descriptions of Sámi magic. The first one is the *Saga of Hrólfr Kraki*, composed around 1400. In 1715, Thormod Torfæus translated it into Latin and published it with commentary [Thormod Torfæus 1715]. Hvít, the illegitimate daughter of the Sámi *konung* (king), is married to *konung* Hringr. She tries to seduce her stepson Björn. When she is rejected, Hvít turns him into a bear using a glove made from bear’s fur and arranges that he be hunted. This the “wicked bride” motif described by Pálsson appears once again in plotlines related to the Sámi. The second saga is the *Örvar-Odds saga* (*Saga of Odd the Arrow*) which was retold in Latin as part of the *Antiquitatum danicarum* (*Danish Antiquities*, 1689) by Thomas Bartholin. Odd owns three magic arrows which are called “Gusisnautar” (the gifts of Gusir). His grandfather Ketil Salmon had received them from Gusir, the Sámi *konung*. These arrows always hit their targets and always return to their archer [Bartholin 1689, 120–121].

Else Mundal notes that Sámi magic in these medieval sagas is described in the same terms as the magic used by other Scandinavians. The Sámi were considered to be greater sorcerers than the Norwegians, but they both use magic weapons and armor, can cause bad weather, can transform themselves into new forms, foretell the future, and use their magic to heal or harm. It is not clear whether this shows the similarity of magical practices that existed in both cultures or whether it is simply demonstrates the fact that Norwegian and Icelandic authors described the magical practices of the Sámi in terms that were familiar to their own [Mundal 1996, 112].

<sup>8</sup> In *Heimskringla* the main part of the sorcerer’s speech is missing; from this it turns out that his childless parents had gone to Sámi sorcerers who placed a spirit in Eyvind’s mother. This episode is included in Snorri Sturluson’s main source, *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* (1190) by Oddr Snorrason.

However, certain aspects of the descriptions of Sami practices stand out as unique. First of all, there are shamanistic practices, including traveling during a trance and various manipulations with spirits. The use of leaden darts described above shows an even more interesting pattern. Traditionally, in Scottish folklore elves and fairies are armed with darts with similar lethal action (they were associated with Neolithic and Bronze Age flint arrowheads), and Victorian folklorists paid attention to these darts and the ones attributed to the Sámi [Wilson 1851, 178–180; Campbell 1862, 344]. This provides a curious connection between the Sámi and fairies. The exact same darts were allegedly used by those accused at Scottish witch trials (most often with the suggestion that fairies forced them to be used), and as Emma Wilby convincingly argues, this may be another practice directly related to shamanism [Wilby 2013, 140–158].

In the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, fascination with Scandinavian mythology was widespread. In 1756, the Swiss professor Paul Henri Mallet translated the *Prose Edda* into French (and fourteen years later his book was translated into English by Thomas Percy). In the notes to the main text, Mallet expresses the idea that the Sámi could be a prototype for Scandinavian mythological dwarfs: “There was perhaps some neighbouring people, which bordered upon one of the Celtic or ‘Gothic’ tribes; and which, although less warlike than themselves, and much inferior in strength and stature, might yet excel them in dexterity and addicting themselves to manual arts, might carry on a commerce with them sufficiently extensive, to have the fame of it spread pretty far. All these circumstances will agree well enough with the Laplanders: who are still as famous for their magic, as remarkable for the lowness of their features <...> The stories that were invented concerning this people, passing thro’ the mouths of so many ignorant relations, would soon acquire all the degrees of the marvelous, of which they were susceptible. Thus the Dwarfs soon became, (as all know, who have dipped but a little into the ancient romances) the forgers of enchanted armour, upon which neither

swords, nor conjurations, could make any impression” [Mallet 1770, 46–48]<sup>9</sup>.

This idea was in the air. In the second volume of *Travels through Europe, Asia and into part of Africa*, published in London in 1727, Aubrey de La Mottraye also speaks of the Sámi: “when Laplanders were first seen at some Distance, cloath’d from Head to Foot in hairy Skins, they were call’d Satyrs, Fairies, and two-legg’d hairy Beasts, which walk’d upright like Men” [La Mottraye 1732, 334]. La Mottraye develops this idea by saying that observers prone to empty fantasies endowed the Sámi with even more monstrous features, and that all this stemmed from a simple difference in costumes that had made a strong impression.

La Mottraye likewise explains away other supernatural features of the Sámi. Sámi’s alleged shapeshifting, according to La Mottraye, was by no means due to magic, but rather to the effects of alcohol. The ability to cause winds and storms, attributed to the Sámi, seems ridiculous to La Mottraye: “as to the Northern Storms and Whirlwinds, which the above-mention’d Authors ascribe to the Laplanders, they are by no means comparable to the Hurricanes in the Caribbee Islands” [Ibid, 335]. La Mottraye’s arguments may seem somewhat naive now, but this was one of the first attempts to criticize the established supernatural image of the Sámi and to explain its features from a rational point of view. Mallet could have been familiar with La Mottraye’s book, at least French was both their native tongue, and both addressed the topic of the Sámi. However, whether Mallet built his theory based on the conclusions of La Mottraye, or whether both authors came to similar conclusions, is not so important. Their methods and conclusions reflect the general course of science in the age of Enlightenment.

The euhemeristic idea of Paul Mallet was developed at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century during the Romantic era, when an interest in national history and folklore flourished. At that time, there were only two methods of analyzing folk beliefs. One was the attempt to explain them from a rational point of view, but this method was inevitably limited to the

<sup>9</sup> Paul Mallet might have drawn this idea from the *Völundarkviða* (*The Song of Völund*) from the *Poetic Edda*. Its protagonist, a magical blacksmith, is both the son of the king of Finns (Finnakonung) and the lord of the elves (alfir). But *The Song of Völund* was only published in 1787, as part of the first volume of the Copenhagen edition of the *Poetic Edda*.

suggestion that such visions were the result of a drunk imagination or the product of an ignorant mind that fell under the spell of illusion. The second, the historical method, remained more promising; here the described phenomena were explained by reference to historical events that (it was argued) had become part of the folk tradition. However, much to scholars' regret, this method could only be applied in a limited number of cases.

Paul Mallet's euhemeristic ideas were probably seen as a significant step forward in the development of methodology<sup>10</sup>, and his approach was applied in Walter Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802–1803). In his essay *On the Fairies of Popular Superstition*, which served as the preface to the *Tam Lin* ballad, Scottish indologist John Leyden also utilized Mallet's ideas, remarking that the same type of process could have occurred in Scotland: "A similar transformation has taken place among the vulgar in Scotland, regarding the Picts or Peghs, to whom they ascribe various supernatural attributes" [Scott 1803, 176]. Robert Southey did the same for the Picts and Pixies, and Jacob Grimm used his ideas in *Deutsche Mythologie* to show the universal character of such euhemeristic perception: "The retreating before mankind dwarfs make the impression that Jöttnar, Thurs and Giants etc. could thus be oppressed races. In Devonshire and Cornwall the Pixies are considered to be the old population of the land. In Germany they are the same as the Wends (and the Elves as the Celts?), in Scandinavia — as the Lapps" [Grimm 1878, 131]. This conception was elaborated by Sir George Dasent and Friedrich Max Müller, and thus the foundation was laid for seeing the most ancient population of Britain as the prototype for supernatural beings.

Since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the native population of the British Isles was mostly associated with the Picts. The obscure origin of them made scholars wonder if they were related to the Sámi, who were considered the

ingenious population of the Scandinavian Peninsula. John Francis Campbell travelled to Lapland and came to the conclusion that in Scottish folklore a fairy hill could be an actual Sámi "goahti" (hut or tent). He referred to the legend that was "told in Scotland within this year by persons who can have no knowledge of what is called the 'Finn theory,' and given in the very words in which they came to me, from various sources. Lord Reay's forester <the protagonist in the legend> must surely have passed the night in a Lapp cota <goahti> on Ben Clibric, in Sutherland, when Lapps were Picts" [Campbell 1860, CVII]. The euhemeristic "Sámi theory" successfully functioned in British academic thought throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Among its supporters might be counted William Wirt Sikes, Frederic Thomas Hall, Sabine Baring-Gould and David MacRitchie; but by the end of the century it came under criticism from Sir Edward Taylor and other comparative-anthropological authorities [Silver 1999, 47–50].

The supernatural image of the Sámi thus went through a whole evolution in the British tradition. The Sámi were not an indigenous group in the British Isles, and in Shakespeare's time both English and Scottish authors drew information about them from translated sources. As for the ordinary people, they likely knew the stories of sailors, especially in the years when English trade was closely connected to the Scandinavian region. When the age of Enlightenment began, the image of the Sámi was radically revised. There was an attempt to rationalize superstitions related to the Sámi, so instead of sorcerers in folk beliefs they now came to be seen as mythological characters whose general purpose was to explain the very genesis of popular mythology as a product of the cultural conflict between the native and colonizing population. With the development of science and the accumulation of knowledge, this idea gradually became one of the components of theory concerning the origin of the popular mythology.

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Batman vppon Bartholome his booke *De proprietatibus rerum*, newly corrected, enlarged

<sup>10</sup> It should also be noted that in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the euhemeristic method would have one great rival: the allegorical interpretation.



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## Образ саамов как ведьм и фейри в британской традиции

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**Аннотация.** Автор статьи предпринимает попытку обнаружить истоки ассоциации саамов с мифологическими персонажами в британской культуре XII–XIX вв. и останавливается на двух важных этапах развития этих представлений. Во время первого этапа появились предпосылки для формирования образа саамов как ведьм, что было зафиксировано в шекспировской «Комедии ошибок». Утверждается, что этот образ был основан на традиционных письменных источниках, научной демонологии, народных верованиях оркнейцев и шотландцев и связан с расширением контактов британцев со скандинавскими морями и, вероятно, самими саамами.

Второй этап — изменение образа саамов ко времени сэра Вальтера Скотта. Рационализация народных верований в эпоху Просвещения, одной из целей которой было объяснить само происхождение народной мифологии, привела к объединению саамов с абстрактными мифологическими персонажами. Эта эвгемеристическая интерпретация, также соотносившая пиктов с мифологическими персонажами пехами и пикси, процветала в викторианской фольклористике, пока не подверглась резкой критике со стороны Эдварда Тайлора и других ведущих фольклористов.

**Ключевые слова:** саамы, эвгемеризм, ведьмы, фейри, низшая мифология, пикты, Викторианская эпоха.

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## КРАТКОЕ СОДЕРЖАНИЕ

Слава о саамах как величайших колдунах находит отражение еще в «Комедии ошибок» Уильяма Шекспира, а в сборнике баллад сэра Вальтера Скотта они выступают в качестве прообраза персонажей низшей мифологии. Такому восприятию саамов должна была предшествовать достаточно длительная традиция ассоциации этого народа с персонажами народной демонологии.

В статье подробно рассматривается процесс формирования образа саамов как колдунов и ведьм в британской научной традиции, ориентированной на произведения Ранульфа Хигдена, Бартоломея Английского, Саксона Грамматика, Якоба Циглера, Олауса Магнуса, Иоганна Шеффера и др. Но помимо научной традиции существовала и другая, народная, на которую опирался и сам Уильям Шекспир, и другие британские поэты XVI–XVII вв., так как отсылки к научным трудам в пьесах, рассчитанных на широкую аудиторию, были едва ли уместны.

В этот период английская торговля в балтийском регионе переживает расцвет, и английские корабли, стремившиеся попасть из Северного моря в Балтийское, вынуждены проходить через единственный открытый пролив — Зунд, а также платить пошлину датской короне и дожидаться довольно-таки продолжительной инспекции скандинавских чиновников. Вероятно, в это время английские моряки могли не только слышать о «лапландских колдунах», продающих ветра, но и видеть их своими глазами и даже пользоваться их услугами. В середине XVI в. английские мореплаватели также открывают Северный морской путь в Россию и контактируют там с саамами (Стивен Барроу даже составляет первый словарь слов терско-саамского диалекта). В Скандинавии в то же время саамы становятся обвиняемыми на ведьмовских процессах, а благодаря

путешествию Якова I Стюарта в Данию и изданию его «Демонологии» (1597) Британия узнает о феномене «морского колдовства» (nautical maleficia).

Похожее колдовство приписывалось демонологическим персонажам — финнам в фольклоре жителей Оркнейских и Шетландских островов. Они могли управлять морской стихией, а еще превращаться в животных и находить потерянные вещи. Истоки фольклора оркнейцев и шетландцев восходят к средневековой скандинавской традиции, наиболее ярким выразителем которой являются саги.

Скандинавские саги начинают публиковать только с 30-х гг. XVII в. В 1756 г. на волне увлечения скандинавской мифологией швейцарский профессор Поль Анри Малле переводит на французский язык «Младшую Эдду». В примечаниях к основному тексту он высказывает идею о том, что саамы могли быть прообразом карликов из скандинавской мифологии. Это эвгемеристическое толкование было подхвачено британскими фольклористами, соотнесшими пиктов (древнейший из известных народов Шотландии) с мифологическими персонажами пехами и пикси. Благодаря Якобу Гримму распространяется идея, что сам феномен низшей мифологии возникает из-за универсального конфликта между аборигенным и пришлым населением.

В викторианской науке недостаток сведений о происхождении пиктов приводит к тому, что они были приравнены к саамам, индигенному населению Скандинавии. Все это положило начало эвгемеристической теории о саамах как прообразе персонажей британской низшей мифологии. Теория успешно функционировала в британских научных кругах, пока не была раскритикована Эдвардом Тайлором и другими ведущими фольклористами конца XIX в.

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