Language change among the Jukkasjärvi Sami

Mikael Svonni
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Résumé

Le sami de Jukkasjärvi est parlé au nord ainsi qu’au sud du lac Duortnus (Torneträsk en suédois), au nord de la Suède. Ce dialecte partageant beaucoup de traits phonologiques et morphologiques avec le dialecte de Kautokeino (Guovdageaidnu), il a été considéré comme un dialecte du sami du Nord. Toutefois, les toponymes, surtout ceux au sud de Duortnos, ainsi que les combinaisons consonantales de ce dialecte indiquent qu’il était à l’époque plus proche du sami de Lule que du sami du Nord.

Abstract

Jukkasjärvi Sami is spoken north and south of the lake Duortnus (Swe. Torneträsk) in northern Sweden. The dialect has many phonological and morphological features common to the dialect of Kautokeino (Guovdageaidnu) and it has been considered as a North Sami dialect. However, place names, especially south of Duortnus, and consonant clusters indicate that the dialect formerly has been closer to Lule Sami than to North Sami.

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1 This paper was previously published in Lapponica Investigationes et Uralica. Festschrift zum 65. Geburtstag von Lars-Gunnar Larsson, E. Winkler, H. Hermann Bartens et C. Hasselblatt (dir.), Wiesbaden, VSUA (Veröffentlichungen der Societas Uralo-Altaica, 82), 2012.
INTRODUCTION

The Jukkasjärvi dialect is spoken north and south of the lake Duortnus in the northern part of Sweden. It is a sub-dialect of Torne Sami, which is spoken in Enontekiö (Eanodat) in Finland, Karesuando (Gárasavvon) in Finland and Sweden, and in Jukkasjärvi (Čohkkiras) in Sweden.

The Jukkasjärvi dialect consists of four sub-dialects, two of which are spoken north of Duortnus, and two, consequently, south of the lake. The sub-dialects of Jukkasjärvi Sami are from north to south Saarivuoma, Talma, Rautasvuoma and Kaalasvuoma. The sub-dialects correspond to the areas of reindeer herding districts (North Sami čearru, Swedish sameby) in the area, namely Sárevuopmi, Dálmá, Gabná and Leaváš, respectively. The phonological and morphological features of Jukkasjärvi Sami have been surveyed by Collinder, and in his assessment, the dialect is closer to North Sami than to Lule Sami.

In this article, I will argue that the Jukkasjärvi dialect has formerly been much closer to Lule Sami than to North Sami, and, as a matter of fact, the features of the « old » Jukkasjärvi Sami display earlier phases of the position of the Sami languages in Sápmi, especially in the northern part of Scandinavia.

LINGUISTIC DATA OF THE JUKKASJÄRVI DIALECT

The historical development of the Sami dialects in this area, however, is difficult to survey, because we do not have written documents older than a hundred years or so. The first books written in North Sami by a Sami are only a century old, one of which being Johan Turi’s Muitalus Samiid birra from 1910. Even though Turi lived on the northern shore of the Duortnus, he didn’t write his book in Jukkasjärvi Sami. His mother tongue was in fact the Guovdageaidnu (or Kautokeino dialect of North Sami). Turi was born in Guovdageaidnu and came as a young man to the district of Jukkasjärvi. His nephew, Per Turi, who contributed texts to Johan Turi & Per Turi (1920) was

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3 Ibid.
7 Nils Erik Hansegård, op. cit., p. 11.
8 Johan Turi et Per Turi, Lappish texts, Copenhagen, Høst & Søn, 1920.
born in Talma, but his language may also have been influenced by Kautokeino Sami.

Written data of the Jukkasjärvi Sami dialect older than 100 years is difficult to find. We have to base our assumptions of the old Jukkasjärvi dialect on place names and studies conducted mainly by K.B. Wiklund and Björn Collinder in the first half of the 20th century. The oldest recordings are from the late 1940s. There are some (grammophone) records made of the Jukkasjärvi dialect in 1946 and 1947, as well as some tape recordings from the late 1950s.

Nevertheless, available data suggest that Jukkasjärvi Sami seems to have been closer to the Lule Sami dialect in earlier times, and the scarce data are, in fact, illuminating regarding the history of the Sami languages in Scandinavia as well. Pekka Sammallahti points out in his introduction to the Saami languages that the Torne dialect group originally has belonged to Lule Sami rather than North Sami.

**Historical review**

Mikko Korhonen published a detailed map of the Sami languages and dialects in 1967, one of the best and most detailed maps of the Sami dialects at that time. Nowadays, it is in fact tremendously difficult to draw detailed maps of the Sami dialects, because people no longer live in small villages. Given this change in settlement pattern and widespread Sami urbanization, it seems to be more appropriate to speak of linguistic areas (as is shown in figure 1).

Some 40 years ago, it was common knowledge – at least among historical linguists – that the Sami had immigrated into Scandinavia and reached no further south than present-day Bodø in Norway (in the Lule Sami area) around 800 A.D., migrating further south and reaching Jämtland (in the South Sami area) during the Middle Ages. Furthermore, a common view at that time was that Sami and Finnish had a common base until 1000 B.C. and from then on a quite uniform Proto Sami language existed until 800 A.D. This theory had implications for the history of South Sami, and the interpretation of archaeological findings in Sweden and Norway.

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9 Nils Erik Hansegård, *op. cit.*, p. 11.
According to Pekka Sammallahti\textsuperscript{13}, we have to push backwards the time when the Sami and Finnish had a common base approximately to 2000 B.C., with the Proto-Sami period ending around 500 B.C. (table 1). The current Sami dialects had already developed by around 800 A.D.\textsuperscript{14}

\textbf{Table 1.} From Early Proto-Finno-Saamic to Proto-Saami according to Mikko Korhonen (1988) and Pekka Sammallahti (1998)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early Proto-Finno-Saamic</td>
<td>c. 1500 - 1000 B.C.</td>
<td>c. 2000 B.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proto-Saami</td>
<td>c. 1000 B.C. - 800 A.D.</td>
<td>c. 2000 B.C. - 500 B.C.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\textsuperscript{14} Olavi Korhonen, « Samiskan som språk och traditionskälla » (« Le sami comme langue et source de traditions »), in \textit{Språkliga och kulturella gränser i Nordskandinavien. Två uppsatser [Frontières linguistiques et culturelles dans le nord de la Scandinavie]}, O. Korhonen et B. Winsa (dir), Umeå, Kulturens frontlinjer (Skrifter från forskningsprogrammet Kulturgräns Norr, 7), 1997.
New – or revised – archaeological research in the South Sami area in the
1990s have shed new light on the history of the Sami settlements in present-day Härjedalen and Jämtland in the South Sami area\textsuperscript{15}. Archaeological findings indicate that Sami lived in this area and adjacent areas in present-day Norway more than one thousand years ago, and grave findings suggest that the Sami people did not occupy a subordinated position in the society at that time. On the contrary, the findings suggest that there must have been wealthy people as well among the Sami. Nowadays it appears widely accepted that the graves and settlements found in this area belong to Sami people. Ingrid Zachrisson has published a map of cross-border areas, in which the Sami area extends further south than in earlier studies\textsuperscript{16}. Her map may be compared with T.L. Itkonen’s map of Sami settlements in Finland in former times\textsuperscript{17}. Itkonen’s map is also published in Zachrisson \textit{et al.} (1997)\textsuperscript{18}. The Sami seem to have lived almost all over Finland around 1000 B.C. or earlier.

Another research field that has crucially changed our knowledge of Sami history in recent decades is that of literature, especially concerning studies of medieval historical texts and law tracts\textsuperscript{19}. Else Mundal’s studies suggest that Scandinavians and Sami (i.e. the South Sami) were Christianized simultaneously over a long period of time during the Middle Ages, although the Sami retained in part elements of their old religion. The reason why Sami accepted Christian baptism had to do with trade: Christian Scandinavians were, in fact, not allowed to trade with non-Christian people. Another reason for such nominal conversion may have been to facilitate contacts with Christian Scandinavians. In any case, contacts between Sami and Scandinavians were quite common in the southern parts of present-day Sápmi and in areas further south during the Viking age and at the beginning of the Middle Ages. Although Sami who lived close to the Scandinavians were Christianized, groups of Sami further away were not. And the Sami who were Christianized kept and maintained their own religious beliefs.

A decade ago, German linguists in Berlin drew attention to linguistic phenomena in some of the Scandinavian dialects in Norway and Sweden,

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{16} \textit{Ibid.}
\item \textsuperscript{17} T. L. Itkonen, \textit{« Lapparnas förekomst i Finland » [« La présence des Lapons en Finlande »], \textit{Ymer}, 67, 1947, p. 43-57.}
\item \textsuperscript{18} Inger Zachrisson \textit{et al.}, \textit{op. cit.}
\item \textsuperscript{19} Else Mundal, \textit{« Kong Håkon Magnussons rettarbot for Hålogaland av 1313 og andre kjeller till kristinga av samane i mellomalderen » (« La charte du roi Håkon Magnusson pour Hålogaland de 1313 et autres sources sur la christianisation des Samis au Moyen Âge »), in Sápmi Y1K – \textit{Livet i samernas bosättningområde för ett tusen år sedan [Sami Y1K – La vie dans les terres samies il y a mille ans]}, A. Amft et M. Svonni (dir.), Umeå, Université d’Umeå, 2006.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
particularly in the area inhabited by both Sami and Scandinavians one thousand years ago and earlier. They argued that some of the Swedish and Norwegian dialects were influenced by Sami language. The common view has been, and still is, that Sami has borrowed words from and been influenced by Scandinavian languages and not vice versa. Jurij Kusmenko suggests that Sami did not occupy a suppressed position in the society during the Viking age; in fact, Sami and Scandinavians were equal in a sense. The Sami were superior with regard to skiing and hunting, and of course noaidevuohta (i.e. supernatural practices). Hunting skills were extremely valuable because trading with skins was profitable both for the Sami and for Scandinavians at that time, and knowledge of noaidevuohta was accepted and quite common both among the Sami and the Scandinavians during the Viking age and in the beginning of the Middle Ages, although forbidden in connection with Christianity. As a matter of fact, according to one of the Norwegian laws in the beginning of the Middle Ages, people (i.e. Christian people), were forbidden to make contact with people who utilized noaidevuohta (i.e. the Sami), which in turn indicates that the Sami really were present in the society.

Consequently, research during the last two decades within archaeology, medieval studies and historical linguistics, has provided evidence that Sami have lived further south in present-day Sweden and Norway already in the Viking age and earlier, and that the contacts between Sami and the Scandinavians have been extensive over many centuries. The Sami and the Scandinavians were in a sense of equal standing at the time. Later, in the Middle Ages, the Sami lost their equal position in society, as agriculture spread to areas where Sami were living, and the fur trade lost its importance.

**Contacts between Sami and Scandinavians**

There is no doubt, however, that Sami language has acquired a great many Scandinavian loanwords while linguists have identified only a few Sami words that have moved in the opposite direction, i.e., from Sami to the Scandinavian languages. J.K. Qvigstad reported some 3 000 Scandinavian loanwords in


21 Jurij Kusmenko, « Jätten Thjazi och det samiska elementet i nordisk mytologi » (« Le géant Thjazi et l’élément sami dans la mythologie nordique »), in Sápmi Y1K – Livet i samernas bosättningområde för ett tusen år sedan [Sami Y1K – La vie dans les terres samies il y a mille ans], op. cit.

22 Else Mundal, op. cit.
Sami in his book « Nordische Lehnwörter im Lappischen »\textsuperscript{23}. This fact has been taken as evidence for the assumption that the Scandinavians influenced the Sami language and Sami culture. The reverse influence was regarded as impossible, since the Scandinavians were superior to the Sami in every area and in every aspect.

However, most of the Scandinavian loanwords in Sami were not borrowed before the Middle Ages, but during the Middle Ages and afterwards. Only some 300 words appear to have been borrowed during the period from 300 to 800 A.D. according to Pekka Sammallahti\textsuperscript{24}. The process of borrowing Scandinavian words must have been more accentuated when the proportion of Scandinavians increased in the Sami area, which in turn had consequences for the power relationship between Scandinavians and Sami, with the Sami acquiring an inferior position.

A common opinion some fifty years ago was that the first contacts between the Scandinavians and the Sami occurred in the northern parts of present-day Norway at the end of the Viking age. Knut Bergsland has however convincingly shown\textsuperscript{25}, for example, that there were independent contacts between Scandinavians and South Sami on the one hand and Scandinavians and North Sami on the other hand around 500 A.D. or earlier. An example is a Scandinavian loanword found in place names both in the South Sami area as aavtjoe and in the North Sami area as avju - aivu, both derived from the proto-Scandinavian word agju, with the meaning ‘edge’. The North Sami word cannot be explained as a phonological development of the South Sami word, nor is the reverse possible.

There is a lake in northern Sweden, some 20 kilometers south of Duortnus, known as Rávvtašjávri. Around this lake are the remains of old Sami settlement sites. Quite close to one of these old settlements is a sieidi, a sacred site, located on a place called Orrit. Orrit in turn lies beneath a mountain called Viddja. Both place names are of very old origin, but we do not actually know the meaning of the words. Viddja seems to be a Scandinavian loanword from the Proto-Scandinavian era. It probably refers to some sort of sacrifices, and according to K.B. Wiklund\textsuperscript{26} the same word stem is found in the Swedish name Visby. In any case, these Sami place names suggest that there have been contacts between the Sami and the Scandinavians during the Viking Age or earlier.

\textsuperscript{23} J. K. Qvigstad, \textit{Nordische Lehnwörter im Lappischen}, Christiania, In Commission bei Jacob Dybwad, 1893.

\textsuperscript{24} Pekka Sammallahti, \textit{The Saami Languages...}, op. cit.

\textsuperscript{25} Knut Bergsland, \textit{Bidrag till sydsamenes historie} [\textit{Contributions à l’histoire des Samis du Sud}], Tromsø, Centre pour les études samies, 1996.

\textsuperscript{26} K. B. Wiklund, « De lapska och finska ortnamnen vid Kiruna och Torneträsk » [« Toponymes lapons et finnois à Kiruna et à Torneträsk »], \textit{Le Monde Oriental}, IV-V, 1910, p. 28.
There are, however, Scandinavian loanwords in Sami which indicate a time when Scandinavians and Sami occupied equal positions in the society, probably during the Viking age or earlier. The prerequisite to lexical borrowings in large scale is some degree of bilingualism. At the very least, one must understand the meaning of the words one is borrowing. The large amount of Scandinavian loanwords in Sami suggests that the Sami have been bilingual, at least to some degree, but what about the Scandinavians? According to Jurij Kusmenko, Sami has influenced some of the Swedish and Norwegian dialects with respect to vowel balance, level stress, metaphony and consonant lengthening. Kusmenko’s cautious conclusion is that the Sami have been bilingual and that many Sami actually were assimilated into the Scandinavian culture, probably during the Viking Age, eventually losing their Sami language. The Scandinavian language, however, which from the beginning was their second language, was transmitted to the next generation as a fossilized language and became eventually the community’s standard.

Another linguistic field that indicates close relations between the Sami and Scandinavians is the terminology concerning people who were married into the Scandinavian group on one hand and into the Sami group on the other. Sami terminology concerning close relatives is very old and seems to be quite similar in the different Sami languages. Words like eadni ‘mother’, ähčči ‘father’, viellja ‘brother’, oabbá ‘sister’ are by and large the same in all Sami languages. It is interesting to note that the words for mother-in-law and father-in-law, vuoni and vuohppa respectively, have a common stem in all Uralic languages, extending deep into the past.

There are two Scandinavian kinship loanwords, however, that seem to trace back to the Viking age. The words are máhka (< mágr) and sivjjot (< sifjungr), both concerning people who are married into the family. These loanwords are still used and are in fact regarded nowadays as fully Sami words. Both terms refer to varieties of male or female in-law relations, including brothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, the male relatives of one’s husband, and the husband of a blood relative.

My conclusion regarding these terms has been that these loanwords emerged in Sami at a time when intermarriage between Sami and Scandinavians was quite common and bilingualism was widespread, probably at the

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29 Pekka Sammallahti, The Saami Languages…, op. cit.

beginning of the Viking age or earlier. Afterwards, when intermarriage became more uncommon, the Scandinavian loanwords were also used as ethnic markers, in part explaining the reason why such Scandinavian loanwords have been maintained.

**The historical background of Sami dialects**

Sami dialects or languages show different degrees of similarity and difference vis-à-vis a reconstructed Proto-Sami language, and, as the examples in table 2 show, the South Sami language seems to have preserved phonological aspects of the Proto-Sami language, which indicates that South Sami has been more conservative to innovations and more isolated from influences than other Sami dialects.

**Table 2.** Examples of word stems in South Sami, Lule Sami, Torne Sami and North Sami compared with reconstructed Proto Sami stems (Pekka Sammallahti 1998: 34ff).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>South Sami</th>
<th>Lule Sami</th>
<th>Torne Sami</th>
<th>North Sami</th>
<th>Proto Sami</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/gešnedh/</td>
<td>/kas’niet/</td>
<td>/kas’niet/</td>
<td>/kas’tiih/</td>
<td>*kešnedēk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/šijjie/</td>
<td>/sadjie/</td>
<td>/sadjie/</td>
<td>/sat’ii/</td>
<td>*sejē</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/damtedh/</td>
<td>/tob’tot/</td>
<td>/tog’tat/</td>
<td>/tov’ah/</td>
<td>*tomdedēk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The examples in table 3, drawn from K.B. Wiklund’s notes are interesting. The first example has a consonant cluster (b’) in the word hab’ja, which is no longer used in the Jukkasjärvi dialect and the other words, with the exception of ápnas, are no longer found in the dialect of Jukkasjärvi, i.e. people do not know the meaning of these words. But all examples resemble the Lule Sami dialects. Some of the notes concerning the Jukkasjärvi dialect in Wiklund’s observations point backwards to an older variety of the Jukkasjärvi dialect.

**Table 3.** Example of Jukkasjärvi Sami words according to K.B. Wiklund (1911) Notes (in Uppsala University Library) compared to Lule Sami and North Sami equivalents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jukkasjärvi Sami</th>
<th>Lule Sami</th>
<th>North Sami</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hab'ja</td>
<td>hab'ja</td>
<td>hádja</td>
<td>'smell'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>áihtar</td>
<td>áihtar</td>
<td>isit</td>
<td>'master'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ápnas</td>
<td>ápnas</td>
<td>ávnnas</td>
<td>'stuff, material'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hab'lie</td>
<td>hab'lek</td>
<td></td>
<td>'(kind of) snow'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

31 K. B. Wiklund, *Anteckningar från Talma* [Notes de Talma], manuscrit, 1911.
The examples in table 4\textsuperscript{32} show similarity between Lule and Jukkasjärvi dialect with reference to phonological form, especially consonant clusters. Jukkasjärvi Sami has the initial j- in *jipmil ‘God’ as in Lule Sami, as opposed to *ipmil in North Sami. The consonant clusters in words like *dabdidi ‘spleen’, *sibjuk ‘sister-in-law’, *čoaivi ‘stomach’, *sasni ‘tanned skin’ and *geargi ‘stone’ are similar in Jukkasjärvi Sami and Lule Sami in contrast to North Sami.

Table 4. Example of Jukkasjärvi Sami words according to Björn Collinder (1949), *The Lappish Dialect of Jukkasjärvi* compared to Lule Sami and North Sami equivalents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jukkasjärvi Sami</th>
<th>Lule Sami</th>
<th>North Sami</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>jipmil</td>
<td>jupmel</td>
<td>ipmil</td>
<td>‘God’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dábdi</td>
<td>tab’di</td>
<td>dávdi</td>
<td>‘spleen’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sibjuk’</td>
<td>sibjuk</td>
<td>sivjjot</td>
<td>‘sister-in-law’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>čoaivi</td>
<td>tjåi’ve</td>
<td>čoavji</td>
<td>‘stomach’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sasni</td>
<td>sas’ne</td>
<td>sasti</td>
<td>‘tanned skin’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>geargi</td>
<td>kier’ke</td>
<td>geadgi</td>
<td>‘stone’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are some lexical differences as well between Jukkasjärvi Sami and North Sami, but equivalent words are found in Lule Sami (table 5). The old Sami word for ‘fox’ *rebēs* is preserved in Jukkasjärvi Sami (*rebes*) and in Lule Sami as well (*riebij*). In North Sami the corresponding word (*rieban*) seems to be reborrowed from a Scandinavian language. In southern Jukkasjärvi Sami and Lule Sami the word for ‘liver’ is a Scandinavian loanword (*libri* and *lib’re/rib’re*, respectively). There are a few words not found in North Sami but present in Jukkasjärvi Sami, such as *vearál(t) ‘world’, vuohčit ‘to shoot’, čavil(k) ‘back, backbone; ridge’. The corresponding words in North Sami are *mailbmi, bāhčit* and *čielgi*.

Table 5. Example of Jukkasjärvi Sami words according to Björn Collinder (1949) *The Lappish Dialect of Jukkasjärvi* compared to Lule Sami and North Sami equivalents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jukkasjärvi Sami</th>
<th>Lule Sami</th>
<th>North Sami</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>rebes</td>
<td>riebij</td>
<td>rieban</td>
<td>‘fox’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>libri/vuoivvas</td>
<td>lib’re/rib’re</td>
<td>vuoivvas</td>
<td>‘liver’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vearál(t)</td>
<td>vărál(t)</td>
<td>máilbmi</td>
<td>‘world’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vuohčit</td>
<td>vuochtjet</td>
<td>bāhčit</td>
<td>‘to shoot’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>čavil(k)</td>
<td>tjávelk</td>
<td>tjávelk</td>
<td>‘back, backbone; ridge’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{32} Björn Collinder, « The Lappish Dialect of Jukkasjärvi : a Morphological Survey », *op. cit.*
There are in fact many place names (or parts of place names) south of Duortnus whose meaning is unclear to local Sami (table 6, marked in bold).

**Table 6.** Example of Jukkasjärvi Sami place names according to K.B. Wiklund (1910) (The place names are written in new orthography.)

| Álde várri | Earjo johka | Sevddet várri |
| Áptas várri | Gearbbil | Snánnaveadji |
| Árnahal uoppal | Hoiggam johka | Snárapláhku |
| Ávre várri | Jolppájohka | Subásgorsa |
| Basá savu | Leavás johka | Vándneváráš |
| Čábrak | Orrit | Vasseoaivi |
| Doblí čohkka | Rávttasjávri | Viddjá |
| Durke johka | Seahppo gorsa | Viektahajávri |

A few place names in Wiklund (1910) look backwards in time. The consonant clusters **bt** as in **Gobtariehppi** and **ps** in **Ruopsukjaure** are not found any more in the Jukkasjärvi dialect, but remain intact in Sami dialects further south.

**Conclusion**

The picture that emerges is that the Sami have lived continually in Fennoscandia for thousands of years, perhaps since time immemorial, and there have been contacts between Sami and Scandinavians beginning probably more than two thousand years ago. The South Sami and the Scandinavians were close neighbors until the beginning of the Middle Ages, and many Sami were actually assimilated into the Scandinavian culture.

Sami lived almost all over present-day Finland during the Viking Age and at the beginning of the Middle Ages, but as the Finnish population increased in the early medieval period, the Sami moved northwards. Some groups of Sami may have been assimilated into the Finnish culture, but it is more difficult to observe whether the Sami language has influenced the Finnish language, because both are Finno-Ugric languages.

A similar process has been going on in present-day Sweden and Norway from the beginning of the Middle Ages.

Furthermore, there have been small migrations of North Sami speakers during the past two or three centuries to areas formerly occupied solely by Jukkasjärvi Sami speakers. These migrants changed their language gradually,
but such migration had not reached the areas south of Duortnus until the 19th and 20th centuries. The two sub-dialects of Jukkasjärvi Sami spoken south of Duortnus have preserved many features of the « old » Jukkasjärvi Sami up to the present time, and many old placenames in this area bear witness to a Sami dialect which was closer to Lule Sami than to North Sami, i.e. the « old » Jukkasjärvi Sami.