

**Anders Porsanger's report
on Knud Leem's (Northern) Saami orthography**

The work of Knud Leem (1697–1774) is outstanding in the history of Norwegian Saami linguistic research. The importance of his activity as a theologian and a researcher of Saami language and culture is well represented by the honorary professor title given to him by Danish-Norwegian king Christian VI (1699–1746). He was the only one to bear such title from 1754 until his death in 1774. Due to his interest in the Saami language and people, he wrote several papers in this area of interest, applying a spelling method developed by him based on the Danish set of letters to spell Saami words. This spelling method was often criticised subsequently.

His first critics were among his contemporaries: Anders Porsanger (1735–1780) was a junior “language master” working under Leem’s supervision and later as his colleague. As an assistant professor of the Seminarium Lapponicum he was invited to send multiple reports to the College of Missions on the spelling method applied by Leem.

The present paper discusses the earlier report of the two available to us in a copied format today. This nine page long report was sent to the College from Trondheim, on 19 September 1767. In this study, Porsanger compared the way of spelling used in Sweden for the transcription of Saami language with Leem’s spelling, and highlighted some of the problematic elements in Leem’s method. These observations reflected mostly on the overly difficult nature of his sound notation. Porsanger also mentioned the problem of the multiple kinds of notations for the same sound; the reading difficulties caused by the large number of diphthongs; and the issue of the notation of the phoneme *a*. Although Porsanger introduced his notes as simple “remarks”, in fact, he also offered possible solutions for the issues discussed, e.g. the introduction of Greek letters in Saami spelling (the use of the Greek letter λ for *lj* [ʎ]).

Porsanger’s report deepened the conflict between the two theologian-linguists. The situation peaked in 1770, when Porsanger wrote another letter to the College of Missionaries, one that has Hungarian relevance as well. In this letter, based on his 1769–1770 cooperation with János Sajnovics, he discussed the suitability of Hungarian spelling for the transcription of Saami language.

Keywords: Knud Leem, Anders Porsanger, Saami orthography.

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