

**At the beginning of North Saami literacy in Norway:
the life and work of Isaac Olsen**

Isaac Olsen (1680–1739) was a traveling teacher of the Finnmark Saamis since 1703, and then (1716–1720) a teacher in the seminaries (Seminarium Scholasticum, Seminarium Domesticum) founded by Thomas von Westen (1682–1727), who was the leader of the Saami Mission. In addition to his teaching activities, he also translated religious texts and wrote the first ethnographic and cultural-historical descriptions of the Saamis. His manuscript of about 1000 pages, which is regarded in the literature as a "copybook", is a faithful illustration of his wide-ranging activities, but it is far from being a mere copy. Based on the themes of the writings the manuscript is divided into three parts: the first part contains texts on historical and moral topics, mainly used in his teaching work, and the second part contains copies of official documents and a glossary of words (names of holy places and gods in North Saami) relating to traditional beliefs in the Saami world. The final, third section contains translations of religious texts (prayers, psalms, the Lord's Prayer) and other writings on religious themes. In my study, I describe Olsen's life and work, with special reference to the copybook.

Keywords: North Saami, Isaac Olsen, copybook, 18th century, Danish-Norway, North Saami writing

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