

Saami god names in Johann Gottlieb Georgi's ethnographical description

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The study of Saami language and culture used to be a privilege of scholars coming from nations in which the Saami people were living as a minority. Saami culture first attracted some attention in the 17 and 18th centuries, at the time of the Saamis' conversion to Christianity. Mostly texts about pagan religious life (rituals, gods and mythic creatures) were published at that period. Thus, it may not come as a surprise that the authors of these first texts were missionaries who published about their own personal experience and used information gained directly from the Saamis.¹

Besides representatives of the Protestant church, the appearance, language and traditional belief system of the Saamis was also interesting for explorers, travellers and scholars arriving from other, far-off countries, trying to explore new commercial routes. The Saami people and language also appeared in their texts, and in fact, the first Saami written record, from as early as the 16th century, was written by Stephen Borrough, English captain.²

The present paper analyses Saami linguistic material from Johann Gottlieb Georgi's (1729–1804) work on the peoples of Russia. More specifically, the names of Saami gods are to be discussed in detail.

1. Johan Gottlieb Georgi's (1729–1802) ethnographic description

The Pomeranian origin Georgi was interested in natural sciences and after earning a medical degree at the University of Uppsala, he opened a pharmacy back in his hometown, Stendal, in Saxony-Anhalt. In 1770, he was invited to

¹ Manuscripts and printed texts on the topic are available in a systematic format at https://heimskringla.no/wiki/Saamisk_religion_og_mytologi.

² For more details, see Szalóczy 2020.



Saint Petersburg, and was appointed as an assistant in the Orenburg Expedition,³ led by Johan Peter Falck.⁴ Between 1770 and 1771, Falck and Georgi explored the Astrakhan, Orenburg and Tobolsk Governorates, and later on they worked in Baskhiria, Omsk, the Baraba Steppe, Barnaul and the Altai Mountains. In 1772, he was sent on another expedition with the leadership of Peter Simon Pallas⁵, and travelled around most of Middle and South Siberia. Georgi was especially interested in Lake Baikal, which he mapped and described in detail. He returned to Saint Petersburg in 1774 and decided to settle in Russia for good. In 1783, he was appointed as an academic and professor of chemistry. Between 1797 and 1802, he published the geographical-physical and natural scientific description of the Russian Empire in nine volumes⁶ (for more details about Georgi's life, see Maticsák 2020: 155–156).

Even though the main goal of the expeditions was to obtain detailed natural scientific knowledge about Russia, the explorers were also entrusted by the Academy with the task of collecting ethnographic information about the people of the explored geographical areas. Georgi fulfilled this mission by publishing his four volume book titled *Beschreibung aller Nationen des Russischen Reichs, ihrer Lebensart, Religion, Gebräuche, Wohnungen, Kleidung und übrigen Merkwürdigkeiten*⁷ between 1776 and 1780.

This remarkably sophisticated and detailed work described 80 peoples in the following order: the first volume was written on the Finnic (or Finno-Ugric) peoples, the second on the Tatar (or Turkic) peoples, the third on the Samoyeds,⁸ Manchus and East Siberian Tatars, and the fourth on the Mongolians, Armenians, Georgians, Germans and the Polish (Maticsák 2021a: 330–331).

³ In 1768, the Imperial Academy of St. Petersburg organized a large-scale expedition that intended to explore Russia. Of the five divisions of the expedition, three worked in the Orenburg Governorate and South Siberia and two in the vicinity of Astrakhan.

⁴ Johan Peter Falck (1733–1774) Swedish botanist (on his work, see Maticsák 2021b).

⁵ Peter Simon Pallas (1741–1811) German botanist, zoologist. Leader of the Orenburg Expedition. On his life and works, see Maticsák 2021c.

⁶ *Geographisch-physikalische und Naturhistorische Beschreibung des Russischen Reiches*. Königsberg, 1797–1802.

⁷ Description of all nations of the Russian Empire, their way of life, religion, customs, housing, clothing and other oddities. gdz.sub.uni-goettingen.de/id/PPN332192725

⁸ It is possible that Georgi read about the Saami–Samoyedic kinship in his sources (“Mir scheint es glaublich, dass die norwegischen Finnen oder Lappen von den Samojuden abstammen”; see above), but he wrote about the two peoples in different chapters (Leem 1771: 5).

2. Saamis in the *Beschreibung*

Each chapter is characterized by the same conscious editing principle: the name, inhabited area, origin, external characteristic features, language, economic activities, living conditions, clothing, morality, diet, folk customs and religion of the peoples are described in various degrees of detail (cf. Georgi 1776: VIII).

In the foreword, Georgi also lists his sources. Among these, there are two seminal works on the Saamis from the 18th century: the Swedish Pehr Högström's (1714–1784)⁹ *Beschreibung des schwedischen Lapplands*¹⁰ (1748), and a 1771 work titled *Nachrichten von den Lappen*¹¹ by the Norwegian theologian, Knud Leem (1697–1774).¹²

Georgi writes about the Saamis on pages 3–14 of the *Beschreibung*, divided into the following chapters:

2.1. Location. Lapps¹³ call themselves *Same* or *Some*, and their country *Saméandna*¹⁴ or *Sameladde*.¹⁵ They live on the piece of land stretching to the north above the Gulf of Bothnia, bounded by the North Sea to the west and

⁹ Swedish priest and missionary. He participated in the Lycksele conference, organised with the aim of improving written Saami language, resulting in the acceptance of the Southern Saami literary language created by Pehr Fjellström as the official language.

¹⁰ The original book was published in 1747 in Swedish, titled *Beskrifning öfwer de til Sweriges krona lydande Lapmarker* [Description of the Swedish Lapland]. The full title of the translation is *Beschreibung des der Crone Schweden gehörenden Lapplandes*.

¹¹ This is a German translation of Leem's *Beskrivelse over Finmarkens Lapper* [A description of the Finnmark Saamis] written in Danish. The full title of the translation is *Knud Leems Proffesors der lappischen Sprache. Nachrichten von den Lappen in Finnmarken, ihrer Sprache, Sitten, Gebräuche, und ehemaligen heidnischen Religion, mit Anmerkungen von J. E. Gunner, Bischof zu Drontheim*.

¹² For more details about his life, see Kelemen 2020, Aspaas 2021.

¹³ In the discussion of Georgi's book, his *Lapps* phrase will be retained, but as the *Saami* expression is more accepted today to refer to the people and the language, latter will be applied in the rest of the paper.

¹⁴ In today's language it is *Sámieatnan*, *Sámieanan*, *Sámieana* 'Sápmi, Lapland'. Georgi's version was an incorrect one.

¹⁵ Today it is *Sámeláddi*. This form is not used anymore. Georgi apparently took over the expression from Högström (cf. Högström 1748: 4: *Sameladde*), but in turn, it also occurs in Högström's source, Schefferus's work titled *Laponia* (1673) as *Sabmienladti* (Schefferus 1673: 4). The expression was probably created through the back and forth translations of the name *Lapland*. Scandinavian country names do not contain the *-land* suffix as opposed to the names of *Finnland* (and *Russland*). This is how the word *-landa/-lanta* was adopted in Northern Saami (*láddelaš*). For more details, see Keresztes 2007.

the White Sea to the east. According to the Russian Map, they live between the 67 and 75 degrees north latitude. This area comprises the northernmost parts of the snowy mountains of the Severne area, and also the lower eastern and southern slopes that are rich in wild forests, marshlands and seas. The borders of Norway, Sweden and Russia converge here in a way that the largest area in the south belongs to the Swedish Lapland. The Russian Lapland is situated in the eastern part of the country. The Northern Lapland is made up solely of high mountain ranges. Due to the large mountain areas and the cold climate, the living conditions of the Saamis are too harsh for as large a population as the size of the country would allow for. The Russian Lapland is 1000 verst¹⁶ wide, inhabited by not more than 1200 families. The Norwegian Lapland is less extended, while the Swedish Lapland is considerably larger, but the population is similarly small (Georgi 1776: 3).

2.2. History of the Saamis. Lapps constitute a Finnish race. Six centuries ago they were called *Skritfinnen* (running, wandering Finns), and it is probable that they were wandering, looking for better living areas and more comfortable living conditions, which was the reason for their separation. They have inhabited their land since ancient times, they had their own rulers, but they were subjugated by the Swedes, and they do not have their own noble families anymore (Georgi 1776: 3).

2.3. External characteristics and personality of the Saamis. The Lapps are of medium height, with flat, sunken face, dark grey eyes, thin beard, brown, thick, straight hair, and a yellowish-brown complexion due to the air, smoke and lack of cleanliness (Georgi 1776: 3). Their lifestyle makes them tough, fast and flexible, but at the same time they tend to be lazy.

They are sober, peaceful, and faithful to their elders, they are not thieves, they are not light-hearted, they are cheerful, but suspicious and deceitful in trade. They are proud of their land and their country, and are so attached to it that they usually die of homesickness when they leave it.

The women are small, not ostentatious and often pretty. They scare easily, so as men. They will faint at the sight or sound of a spark of fire, an accidental noise, strange but not particularly alarming objects, and other trivial

¹⁶ The verst is an old Russian unit of length used before the introduction of the metric system. It was equivalent to 1066,78 meters.

things, or become frantic and start hitting themselves with the first object they see, and when they come to, they remember nothing.¹⁷

In their conversational speech, listeners are seen to move their mouths in the same way as the speakers.

2.4. The language of the Saamis. There are so many dialects in their Finnish origin language that they can hardly understand one another. They pronounce each syllable so harshly that their singing sounds like the most unpleasant howling and barking.¹⁸ They do not have letters or a writing system, they only use hieroglyphs¹⁹ on their canes, calendars²⁰ or as signatures (Georgi 1776: 4).

2.5. Livelihood, lifestyle, hunting. The hierarchical order of their society is based on age and skills. Their greatest passion is acquiring wealth, so they often sue one another for inheritance. Reindeer having been used for transporting a dead person were not allowed to be ridden anymore, so even the funerals of parents are preceded by lengthy arguments between the children.

They move from one region to another for fear of punishment even for minor crimes. For them, such a journey is as significant as moving to India for a European person.

Even after becoming Christians, the Lapps have retained their nomadic way of life: agriculture does not play any part in their lives.

¹⁷ The description of this fright probably refers to a "sacral" disease, also known in Hungarian traditional folk medicine, and includes all diseases that are induced by trauma of various degrees and results in a disease of the nervous system (Komáromi 2001: 114). Johan Turi calls this disease *terror* and explains that it primarily affects the female population and especially pregnant women and new mothers. Children also tend to be affected. Terror is not dangerous and is easily curable by bloodletting (Turi 1983: 180).

¹⁸ Evidently, this description refers to the joik, an ancient type of Saami songs. Joiks are characterised by a bouncing melody, a special vocal arrangement, and few meaningful lyrics embedded in meaningless vocalizations (*la-la, no-no, lö-lö*), so it must have sounded very strange to the ears of European people. Many contemporary accounts describe it as howling.

¹⁹ What Georgi characterised as hieroglyphs, were letters of the runic alphabet.

²⁰ Calendars, made of wood or reindeer antlers, marking weeks, were used to keep track of both natural and religious events. Crosses marked religiously significant days, while fish and leaves marked natural events. By keeping track of these markers, it was possible to predict when, for example, the fish catch would be plentiful.

The population is divided into mountain and sea Lapps. The mountain Lapps, who live in the mountains with their larger or smaller herds of reindeer according to seasons of the year, move almost continuously. They are excellent shepherds, and are very rich compared to the sea Lapps. Some have as much as 600 or 1000 reindeer, and sometimes they also own cash or silver. They mark the reindeer on their ears and divide them into so many classes that they can no longer count them, nor do they notice missing some. Those who have small herds give names to all of their animals. Bulls are gelded with teeth. Oxen are lively, not wild, big, strong and beautiful, so they are used to pull sleds. They are so popular among the Lapps that it is a compliment to call each other reindeer oxen.

Sea Lapps are also called forest or hunting Lapps, as they live by the sea in the summer and in the forest in the winter. They make their living from fishing and hunting, and they choose their place of residence accordingly (Georgi 1776: 5).

Most of them have few reindeer. They do not move much, but they are industrious and skilful hunters. Firearms have almost completely replaced bows. When a mountain Lapp is impoverished, he tends to give his reindeer to a friend to become a hunting Lapp for a while.

Big game, wild reindeer and wolves are usually killed with clubs. Bears are shot or stabbed with spears. Besides reindeer herding, fishing and hunting, the men make their own small and light boats, boat-like sledges, reindeer harnesses and all kinds of household utensils, bowls and cups. The men also cook for themselves.

The women make the nets for fishing, dry the fish and meat, milk the reindeer, make cheese and tan leather. The reindeer's nerves are spun into yarn. They sew their own clothes, decorating them with embroidery, with gold, silver and woollen thread (Georgi 1776: 6).

3. Georgi's account on the religion and the gods of the Saamis

As introduction to the section about the belief system of the Saamis (on pages 12–14), Georgi explained that although the majority of the Swedish, Norwegian and Russian Lapps have Christian names, their religion is full of superstition and it is characterised by a mixture of Christian and pagan customs.

The Lapps retained their nomadic way of life regardless of converting to Christianity, as farming would have been very hard work in their country (Georgi 1776: 12). In his description, Georgi included 33 Saami words, the largest group of which is made up of 18 lexemes related to the religion and

belief system.²¹ The current paper analyses 13 god names from this word group.

3.1. Gods living in the sky (*Jubmel*, *Radien*)

(1) *Als Heiden glaubten und glauben sie in dem Jubmel einen allgeimainen Gott und außer ihm gute und böse, männliche und weibliche Untergottheiten. Die wohnen und regieren im Himmel, wie Jubmel und Rádien der die frommen Todten zu sich nimmt* (Beschr. 1: 12). 'As pagans, they used to believe and continue to do so in *Jubmel*, a general god, and in good and bad male and female gods in addition. They live and reign in the sky, like *Jubmel* and *Radien*, who takes the pious dead with him.'

3.1.1. *Jubmel*. The original source is the Finno-Volgaic origin **juma*, cf. Fi. *Jumala* 'god', Mari *jum̄* 'sky; god',²² Md. *jon-* (*jondol* 'lightning' < *tol* 'fire'). It has possibly been adopted from Finnish to Saami with Swedish mediation (UEW 638; SSA 1: 247). In the traditional Saami belief system, this is the highest god's name (Northern *Ipmil*, Lule *Jubmel*, Southern *Jupmele*), who is superior to all other gods. The Christian missionaries borrowed the same lexeme to refer to the Christian God (Solbakk 2009: 31–32).

Other variants: *Ibmel*, *Jibmel*, *Jubmel*, *Jubmele*.

3.1.2 *Rádien*. *Radien* 'ruler' (*ráđđit* 'to reign'; Scandinavian loan word, cf. ON. *ráða*; Sw., No. *råda* 'to reign', Qvigstad 1893: 253). He is the god of the sky, who rules and maintains the order of the world. He is the sovereign Lord of all, ruling over gods, men and all living creatures. He is an invisible god who is not personified in the form of any natural phenomenon. His task is to give a soul to the developing foetus in the womb, which is then taken by *Maderakka* (see below). *Radien* is also the god who takes the dead souls (Kerezsi 2009: 277). His name is *Raedie*, *Radien*, *Mailmen-Radien* (< Fi. *maailma* 'world') at the Southern and Ume Saami areas, and *Veralden Olmai* 'man of the world' (< Sw. *värld* 'world', Sm. *olmmai* 'man, person') or *Veralden-Radien* 'the world's Radin, lord of the world' at the Pite, Lule and

²¹ Among the remaining set of phrases there are astronomical expressions (3), a greeting (1), a month name (1), an expression for a human relationship (1), names of household objects (4), the name for reindeer (1), the name for the people (1) and the name for Lapland itself (1). These are to be analysed in a future paper.

²² In the Mari section of the *Beschreibung*, Georgi mentioned the highest god of the Maris, *Jumo* (Beschr. 1: 33, 36), and his wife, *Jumo-ava* goddess (Beschr. 1: 33, 35, 36) (cf. Maticsák 2022: 257).

Northern Saami, Finnmark (earlier Tornio) areas. The expressions reflect a strong Scandinavian influence. The word occurs in the second constituent (see above) or first constituent of god names: *Radien-attse* 'ruler-father' (< Sm. *attse*²³ 'father') (Tamás 2007: 55). The cult of Radien has versatile elements, but Finnish Saamis are not acquainted with these (Pentikäinen 1995: 235). It is possible that his figure has merged with the figure of *Horagállis/Ukko*. At the Kildin Saamis, the equivalent of *Radien* is *Jimmel-aaja* (*Jimmel* 'god', see 3.1.1. + *aaja* 'old man'), who took part in the creation of the animal kingdom. The figure of the god himself was probably not very clearly defined before the Christian era to start with, and it became even more complicated after the conversion to Christianity (Kulonen et al. 2005: 280).

Other forms: *Raedia*, *Radien*.

3.2. Gods living in the air (*Beiwe*, *Horangelis*, *Biag Olmai*)

(2) ...in der Luft z.B. **Beiwe**, (die Sonne), **Horangelis**, der auch **Aja** und **Thor** genen-
net wird und den Donner bedeutet, **Biag Olmai** der dem Sturm gebietet... (Beschr.
1: 12). '...in the air e.g. *Beiwe* (the Sun), *Horangelis*, who is also called *Aja* and
Thor and it refers to thunder, *Biag Olmai* who commands the storm...'

3.2.1. Beiwe. The Uralic origin word *beaivi* 'sun' belongs to the early layer of Proto-Saami (**peajvē* PS < FS **päjvā* < PU *pājwā* 'fire', Sammal-lahti 1998: 230), and it can also be found in other Finno-Ugric languages: cf. Fi. *päivä*, Est. *päev*, ??Zyr. *bi*, ??Kha. *päj*. In Finnish, the meaning has changed over time: 'fire' > 'sun' (UEW 360; SSA 2: 456).

The worship of the Sun as a god is found all over the world and has been observed since ancient times (cf. e.g. *Ré* in ancient Egypt or *Tonatiuh* of the Aztecs). Thus, it is not surprising, that the sun cult occupies a prominent place in the belief system of the Saamis as well. They associate it with fertility and with the origin of the reindeer. It is curious that while Saamis living in the Scandinavian Peninsula depict the sun as a woman, the Saamis of the Kola Peninsula refer to it as a man who travelled the world on a sledge and married a Saami girl, thus forming a family bond with people (Frog 2016–17: 54; Kerezsi 2009: 277; Kulonen et al. 2005: 32–33; Lundmark 1982: 50; 1985; Tamás 2007: 56). There was a legend in the Northern Saami territories that the daughter of the Sun (*Beaivi nieida* 'Daughter of the Sun, Sun

²³ The present day Saami form is *áhčči*.

Virgin') taught people to herd reindeer. According to the Eastern Saamis, the Sun herself owned the reindeer herds and she gave her daughter a large reindeer herd as a dowry when she got married to a Saami reindeer shepherd. After this, the reindeer herds of the earth grew. In times of disease or when the reindeer herd diminished, the Saamis offered sacrifices to the Sun. Early sources report that a white thread was drawn through the right ear of the reindeer to be sacrificed, indicating that the sacrifice was intended for the Sun. Later records, written by missionaries, show that the sacrificial animal itself was white. The Sun often appears on the centre of shaman drums, in the shape of a circle in the northern Saami areas and a square in the southern Saami areas. According to 18th century descriptions (cf. Leem 1767: 411), in mid-summer, the Saamis ate porridge, which they offered as a sacrifice to the Sun (Kulonen et al. 2005: 32–33; Tamás 2007: 56).

Other forms: *Beivve*, *Biejvve*, *Beaivi*, *Biejjie*, *Paive*.

3.2.2. *Horangelis* ~ *Aja* ~ *Thor*. He is the god of thunder. He chases evil spirits with his thunderbolts, and the sound of thunder is the sound of the god himself walking on clouds. His image was inspired by the Scandinavian Thor, the god of storms (Tokarev 1988: 538). His name has various forms depending on geographical distribution: in the mid-western and north-western religious regions, the *Aja* ~ *Aijeke* (< **Ājjē* < **ājjē*²⁴ 'grandfather') form was in use, and this meaning-variant can be found at the Ume, Arjeplog, Lule, Inari, Kemi areas and in most of the northern Saami areas. In parallel, the god of thunder is envisioned as a grandfather (*Āijä* < Fi. *äijä* 'grandfather'), or an old man (Fi. *Ukko*) in Finnish culture as well (Frog 2016–17: 58; Tamás 2007: 55). In the southern Saami regions²⁵ he was called *Horagállis* or *Thor-gállis*. The *-gállis* second constituent also means 'old (man)' (Frog 2016–17: 59), while the first constituent contains the name of the Scandinavian god, *Thor*. *Horagállis* was depicted on shamanic drums as holding a hammer, which (together with the name of the god) is a proof of Scandinavian cultural influence (Kulonen et al. 2005: 414).

In the eastern Saami communities the god of thunder was called *Tiermes* ~ *Tiirmes*. This name is presumably of Finno-Ugric origin and was derived from the same etymon as the Khanty *Torem*. In Kildin Saami, the rainbow is

²⁴ The present day form is *addjá*.

²⁵ Rydving highlights that the *Horangelis* form was probably only used by a group of southern Saami people and the *Addjá* form was more common in the western areas (Rydving 2010: 97–101).

called *tiirmes-jukks* 'Tiermes's bow', and the lightning is referred to as *tiirmes-tooll* 'Tiermes's fire'. In the north-eastern religious region, in the coastal Northern Saami, the name *Dierpmis* (< Proto-Saami **Tiermés*) was used. Ante Aikio considers this an Indo-European loan word (cf. Aikio 2012: 84).

Other forms: *Aijeke, Aja, Atja, Baja, Äjjih, Horagallis, Hovrengaellis, Toragallis, Dierpmis/Tiermes*.

3.2.3. Biag Olmai. He is a god known by all Saami communities. He was believed to have influence over the main sources of livelihood: initially he governed hunting and later reindeer husbandry (he guided the reindeer on their annual migration to good pastures, cf. Pentikäinen 1995: 238–239). He is the god of weather and was offered sacrifices especially in times of windstorms, which is suggested by his name as well: *biegga* 'wind, air' + *olmai*²⁶ 'man, person'. On the shamanic drums, he was depicted as holding a shovel in his right hand (which he used to chase back the winds into their den) and a mace in his left (with which he set the forces of destruction in motion) (Kulonen et al. 2005: 280; Tokarev 1988: 539). Henric Forbus (1674–1737), Swedish missionary and priest of Tornio, wrote in one of his letters that "When a sacrifice is being offered to *Bieggolmai*, a shovel is lifted up high in his honour and it is left there afterwards." The shovel is not the sacrifice, just a kind of signal, indicating which god is worshipped (Reuterskiöld 1980: 244).

Other forms: *Bejxolmái, Bieggolmái, Bieggagáliis*.

3.3. Gods living on the earth (*Leib Olmai, Maderakko, Saiwo Olniak*)

(3) ...auf der Erde, auf heiligen Bergen, z.B. **Leib Olmai**, der Gott der Jagd, **Maderakko** mit ihren drei Töchtern, Göttinen, über weibliche Angelegenheiten; **Saiwo Olniak** Berggötter der Zauberer (Beschr. 1: 12). '...on the ground and in the holy mountains, like for example *Leib Olmai*, the god of hunting, *Maderakko* with her three daughters, who are the goddesses of women's things; *Saiwo Olniak*, the mountain gods of sorcerers.'

3.3.1. Leib Olmai. He is the god of hunting, to whom people used to offer sacrifice for granting hunting luck. The word might derive from the *leib*²⁷ 'elder tree' + *olmmái* 'man, person' constituents. The bark of the alder tree

²⁶ The present day forms: *biegga, olmmái*.

²⁷ The present day form is *leaibi*.

turns red like blood when chewed or boiled. Alders were very important in Saami culture, for example, people used a solution of alder bark to paint on shaman drums (Reutersköld 1980: 240–241; Tokarev 1988: 546). Different types of trees had their own elves, such as *Leibolmái*, who turned into a ghost later on and ruled over all forest creatures, and then in time rose to divine status.

3.3.2. Maderakko. She is the most important and most popular female god (*madder* 'origin, provenance' + *akka* 'wife, mother, grandmother' > the ancestress of the clan). She and her daughters (*Sarakka*, *Juksakka*, *Uksakka*) were the protective goddesses of women, who were associated with women's lives and activities, and were very popular among both the northern and the southern Saamis (Kerezsi 2009: 276; Kulonen 2005: 280; Tamás 2007: 56; Tokarev 1988: 548). According to Knud Leem, some thought that *Maderakko* herself helped women, others believed that she only guided her daughters, who were in fact the helpers (Leem 1767: 413).

Other forms: *Máttaráhkká*, *Maderacha*.

3.3.3. Saivo Olniak.²⁸ The word *sáiva* occurs in all Saami dialects, meaning 'sweet/fresh water, lake; underground mythical creature' (S *saajve*, P *saaj'va*, L *sai'va-*, N *sáiva* ~ *sájva*, I *savja*, Ko *saujj*, Ki *sav̄j*, T *saj̄v̄*; Lehtiranta 2001: 120–121). Lehtiranta derives the Saami variants from a **sāvje* form, and thinks it to be of Scandinavian origin. *Saivo* referred to creatures that led similar lives to people, but underground, in water or in mountains. Neighbouring Christian peoples also believed in the existence of elves and fairies, and in the case of Saamis, this belief merged together with the faith in *saivos*, so that *saivos* functioned similarly to elves (e.g. helping families) (Kerezsi 2009: 277). *Saivo* cult involves one of the most difficult issues within Saami religious history, as in the western religious areas, the *sáiva* was related to mountains, while in Swedish and Finnish areas, it was associated with lakes. According to historians of religion, the relation to lakes was the original one, and association with the holy mountains and the supernatural is a secondary layer of meaning, having been developed later on. The connection to mountains might be of Scandinavian origin, as Scandinavian people believed that the dead go into a holy mountain to live a happier life than in their earthly existence.

²⁸ This is evidently a misspelling. The correct form would be *Olmak*, the plural form of *Olmái* 'man, person' (see earlier).

In saivo lakes both people and animals lived. The names of human inhabitants were *saiva olmah*²⁹ 'saivo men' and *saivo nieidah*³⁰ 'saivo women'. The saivo ghosts taught and protected the shamans (*noaidi*). The Lapps also had such guardian spirits, but only shamans could communicate with them. These helping creatures were usually inherited, but they could also be traded.

Saivo animals also existed and they were helpers of the shamans. The hierarchy among them depended on the power and function of the helpers. The saivo bird (*Saivo-Loddi*) showed the way, the saivo fish (*Saivo-Guolli*) led the shaman into the kingdom of the dead, and the saivo deer (*Saivo-Sarva*) fought the saivo animal of the enemy during the shaman fight (Tamás 2007: 60).

The saivo was also in connection with the idea of the kingdom of the dead. It was believed that the deceased shaman joined the saivo people, and the sacrificed animals risen as saivo animals. The sacrificial animals were carried upside down to the sacrificial site, and the sacrificial tree was also erected with its roots upwards (Kulonen et al. 2005: 374–375).

3.4. Gods living underground (*Jabme Akko, Peskal, Rota*)

(4) *Unter der Oberfläche der Erde Jabme Akko, die Mutter des Todes, bei der die abgeschiedenen Seelen bis zur Entscheidung ihres Schicksals sind und im Mittelpunkt der Erde oder der Hölle, wo Peskal der oberste der bösen Gottheiten, Rota und andere über die Gottlosen gebieten; auch im Wasser glauben sie böse Gottheiten* (Beschr. 1: 12) 'Under the ground there is *Jabme Akko*, the mother of death, who holds the deceased souls until their fate is decided; and in the centre of the earth or in hell there is *Peskal*, the greatest of all evil gods, *Rota* and other unholy rulers; evil gods are also thought to live in water.'

3.4.1. *Jabme Akko*. Among the gods of the underworld, *Jabme Akko* is the ruler (*jábmi* 'death' + *akka* 'wife, mother, grandmother'). She is the supreme female underworld goddess who reigns under the earth, in Jamajmo (*jabmi* 'death' + *áibmu* 'air, sky', i.e. dead world). Here, the dead live as they did on earth (they are given new bodies as well), but *Jabme Akko* allows dead souls to spread serious diseases among the living. Saamis used to offer sacrifices to her to stay alive (Reutersköld 1980: 241; Tokarev 1988: 542).

Other forms: *Jábmiidáhkká, Jabmiakká, Jameakka, Jabmi-akka, Jam-Acha*.

²⁹ Plural nominative, the present day form is *olbmát*.

³⁰ Plural nominative, the present day form is *nieiddat*.

3.4.2. *Peskal* (= *Perkel*).³¹ He is one of the underworld's gods, the leader of evil spirits. The Finnish loan word *perkele* 'devil' can be found in all Saami dialects besides Kildin and Teri, and it is used as a swearword (S *biër-gele*, U *bär'gala*, P *pier'kal*, L *pär'kal*, N *beargalat*, *pærgaloh*, Ko *peärggâl*; Lehtiranta 2001: 100–101). The word was originally adopted from the Baltic languages (cf. Lith. *perkūnas* 'the god of thunder' *perkūnija* 'thunder', Latv. *pērkons*, SSA 2: 340)³² and after the conversion to Christianity it came to be used in all the dialects to refer to the "opponent" of the Christian God, with the meaning 'devil, Satan'.

3.4.3. *Rota* or *Ruto* (< Sm. *rohhtu* < Fi. *rutto* 'plague', SSA 3: 112) is one of the underworld's gods causing diseases. He was depicted on shamanic drums as a horse, which symbolized the rapid course of epidemics. Because of horse sacrifices³³ and horse symbolism, *Ruto* is thought to be an adopted element of the Saami pantheon. In the earlier literature, he was thought to be identical with Odin. However, as Siberian Finno-Ugric peoples also have equivalents to *Ruto*, it seems plausible to assume that originally *Ruto* was not only a demon of the plague, but a greater and more general (evil) god whose figure was modified first by Odin, and then by the opponent of the Christian God, the Devil (Kulonen et al. 2005: 339–340; Petterson 1987; Reuterskiöld 1980: 241–242; Tokarev 1988: 554).

Other forms: *Ruotta*, *Ruto*, *Ruttu*.

*

It is worth looking into how Georgi used his above mentioned two sources, the works of Leem and Högström, to write about this topic. The description of gods seems to be following Leem's work. The five-fold categorization of the dwelling places of gods (sky, air, earth, shallow underground, deep underground) evidently show Leem's influence, and the listed gods also largely

³¹ In the foreword (1776: XI), Georgi provided a kind of errata, and he mentions there that the *Peskal* form is erroneous and should be *Perkel* instead.

³² The word was also adopted in Mordvin (mdE *pu'giñe*), also with the meaning 'thunder'. In the Mordvin part of the *Beschreibung*, Georgi also writes *Pu'giñe paz*, the god of storm and thunder as well (*Purgini Pas*, *Beschr.* 1: 51) (cf. Maticsák 2020: 164).

³³ When a severe plague outbreak occurred, a valuable horse was sacrificed, buried alive. The sacrifice was interpreted as allowing a way for *Ruto* to ride away to his home, *Rotáibmu* (*Rota* + *áibmu* 'air, sky'). However, this was not only a form of sacrifice; it was also a symbolic rite: the disease was transferred to the horse and was buried with it (Kulonen et al. 2005: 339–340).

match with those presented by Leem. Georgi picked out the best-known gods skilfully, but understandably, he could not go into detail about all of them (for example, the three goddesses of women are only superficially mentioned). Högström's book seems to have been used by Georgi only for the sake of clarifications or as additional information. In the description of *Horangalis*, Högström's material must have been also used, because his work referred to the fact that the *Thor*, *Tiermes* and *Aja* variants are also used to refer to this god (cf. Högström 1748: 196). Furthermore, *Jubmel* and *Perkel* were also only mentioned by Högström (ibid. 194).

Apparently, Georgi only wanted to give a brief summary of the pagan gods, without claiming to be exhaustive, still he wrote a very thorough and detailed description.

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Számi istenségnevek Johann Gottlieb Georgi néprajzi leírásában

A 17–18. században a protestáns egyház hittérítő tevékenysége következményeként egyre nagyobb figyelmet kapott a számi kultúra megismerése. A számi nyelvű nyelvtanok, szótárak és vallásos szövegek fordításai mellett egyre több etnográfiai jellegű munka is napvilágot látott. A számik megjelenése, nyelve, tradicionális hitvilága azonban nemcsak a protestáns egyház érdeklődését keltette fel, hanem az új kereskedelmi útvonalak, a távoli országok felkutatásával megbízott, egyéb nációkat képviselő felfedezők, utazók, tudósok leírásaiban is megjelentek a számi népről, nyelvről szóló beszámolók.

Tanulmányomban a német származású Johann Gottlieb Georgi (1729–1804) Oroszország népeit ismertető *Beschreibung aller Nationen des Russischen Reichs, ihrer Lebensart, Religion, Gebräuche, Wohnungen, Kleidung und übrigen Merkwürdigkeiten* című munkájának számi anyagát – azon belül is a számi istenségek neveit – ismertetem. Georgi részletesen informál a számikról (a nép elnevezéséről, lakóterületükről, eredetükről, külső jegyeikről, nyelvükről, gazdasági tevékenységeikről, lakóköörülményeikről, ruházatukról, erkölcsükről, étkezésükről, népszokásukról, vallásukról), s mindeközben 33 számi szót is közzétesz, melyek legnagyobb csoportját, 18 lexémát a számi hitvilághoz kapcsolódó szavak alkotják. Tanulmányomban a 13 istenségnevet Georgi (és az adott kor) lejegyzéseit követve az istenek lakhelyének jellemző öt csoportja alapján (az égben, a levegőben, a földön, a föld alatt, a föld alatt mélyen élő istenek) teszem közzé.

Kulcsszavak: *orenburgi expedíció, Johann Gottlieb Georgi, néprajzi gyűjtemések, számi istenségnevek*

KELEMEN IVETT