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Change and Recollection: House Structures and Social Identification in Finnmark, Arctic Norway 2400 BC–AD 300

Introduction

My intention in this paper is to discuss how and why societies remember by engaging in actions involving specific sets of material culture. It is now generally believed that Sámi identity emerged in Fennoscandia within a multi-cultural setting during the last millennium BC, but the motivations for this, the speed, the socio-cultural processes and effects and the geographical catchment of the formation are still blurred. In this paper, I consider some of the possible socio-cultural processes involved by exploring the role of memory, history and material objects in the Sámi identity formation process. My point of departure is provided by the large, semi-subterranean dwelling structures – the so-called "Gressbakken houses" – known from Finnmark, Arctic Norway. This house type has been dated around 2000 calBC, but it also has a phase of reuse around BC/AD. I suggest that the hunter-gatherer communities in Arctic Norway around BC/AD had a notion of a past which was tied to structures in the landscape acting as mnemonic devices. Around BC/AD, remains of "Gressbakken houses", well visible above the ground, were used actively to relate the present to the past.

Identification, Habitus and Collective Memory

In daily parlance, identity is often referred to as something almost physically solid, as a kind of "thing". However, as indicated in the title, identity is a dynamic process. In the following I highlight identification instead of identity to underline that this is about dynamic, multi-faceted, changing processes dealing with relations between "self" and "the other". Identification is a shared experience, both within and between groups of people. It is relational, in being held in contrast to others, and also situational. Identification can be specifically about ethnic group signalling, as described relationally by Barth (1969), or generally about personal and group identification as explored by Goffman (1992). Although identification is not a solid substance in itself, the relational identi-

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fication processes can have clear material elements. These elements can form recognizable material patterns at different levels – patterns that can be observed and used in archaeological interpretations. The material patterns can have the form of different tools or objects produced and used within different groups, as explored by Sackett (1977; 1982; 1985; 1990) and Wiessner (1983; 1985; 1990) in their classical debate on style in archaeology. They can also be found in different ways of relating to the same or similar material objects, such as food waste or organizing space. These latter patterns are what McGuire (1982: 163) calls "(…) material correlates of ethnic specific behaviour".

The past has an omnipresent role in the present. This is described by Bourdieu (1995) in his concept of *habitus*. Bourdieu introduced the concept in his theory of sociological distinction based on modern society to deal with the social distances between the different tastes of individuals and cultural capitals. In Bourdieu's original sense, habitus describes the important distinctions between each individual's social histories within a (modern) cultural setting. At every moment, new practices integrate past experiences for the individual to be able to understand situations and act accordingly. Taken into archaeological interpretation, however, the collective systems of durable and transposable dispositions characteristic of a group condition, the underlying precondition for the distinctions illuminated by the concept of *habitus* must be considered instead of individual *habita*. Such shared social systems of actions relying on past experiences are described in Goffman's presentation of our role-playing in everyday life. According to Goffman (1992: 20), society is based on the principle that a person with certain social signs has a moral right to expect others to appreciate and treat him or her accordingly. This is related to another principle, that when a person implicitly or explicitly exposes certain social signs, that person is actually whom he or she claims to be. The definitions of who a person is, is thus fundamentally dependent on other actors' understanding of the social codes and contexts in which the person appears.

The relation between past and present in everyday life can also be described with reference to the notions of isocrestism (Sackett 1982; 1985; 1990), cultural transmission (Eerkens and Lipo 2005; 2007), technological style (Lechtman 1977), technological choice (Lemonnier 1986; 1993; Pfaffenberger 1992), or the *chaîne operatoire* (Leroi-Gourhan in Dobres and Hoffman 1994; Gosselain 1998), where one strategy among other possible strategies is selected within a socio-culturally related group of people. The theoretical approaches all describe how material culture, actions and actors are situated within a social framework where structure and actor mutually influence on each other. Also, not only practical but moral, ethical as well as aesthetical considerations are socially and historically embedded – they are learned within socio-cultural settings as "the way *we* do things". All these concepts are well known in archaeological interpretations. However, when dealing with interaction processes, most insights related to archaeological material describe how identification patterns are maintained with the aid of objects and/or practices forming patterns, and give few suggestions as to how these patterns were established. In this paper, I suggest that identification and re-collection played an important role in the establishment of Sámi identity, and that this left patterns in the archaeological material.

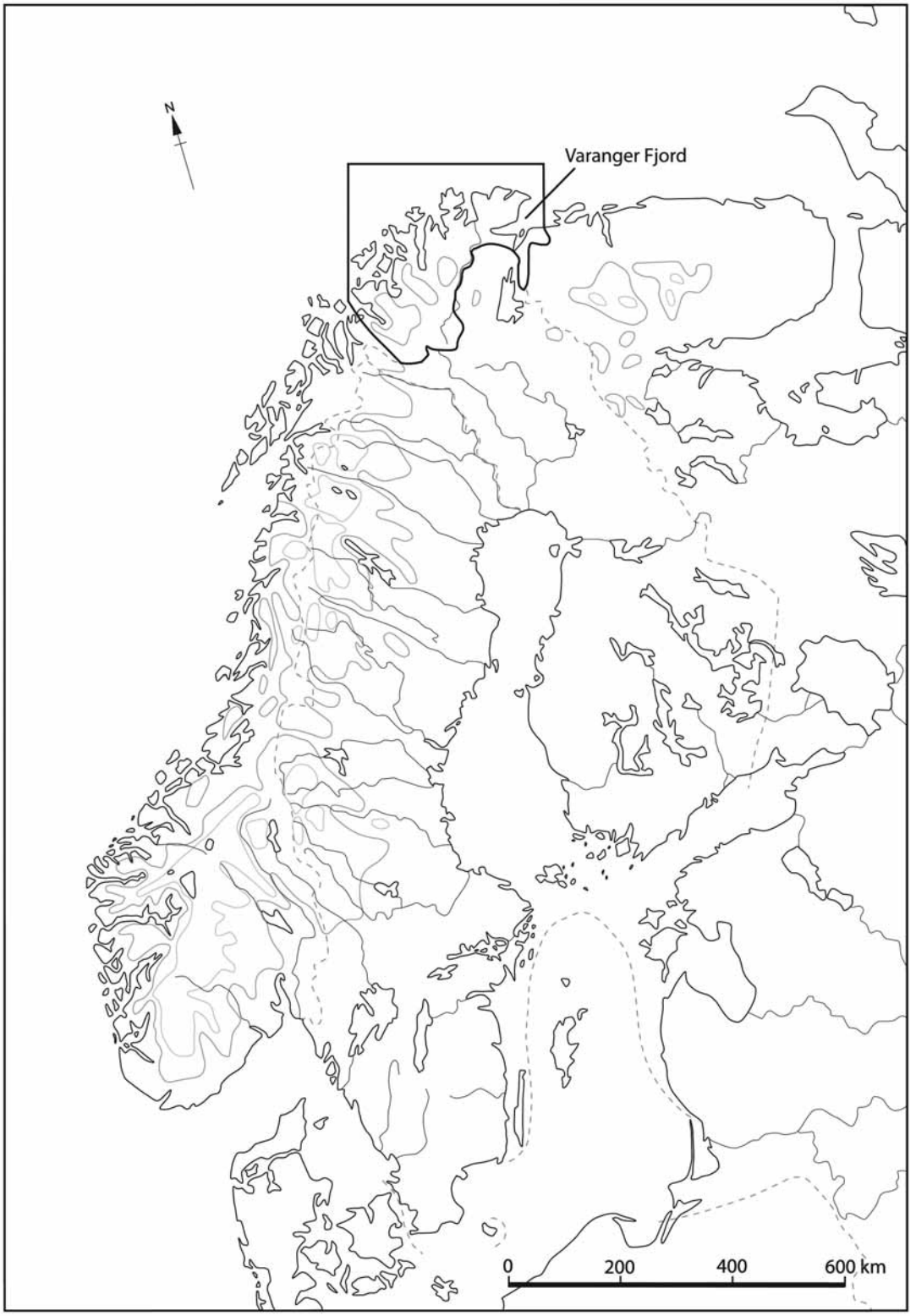

Figure 1. Map of Fennoscandia with Finnmark County marked out.

The Semi-Subterranean House as Tradition

Dwelling structures, most often in the form of semi-subterranean houses, are known from the coastal areas of Northern Fennoscandia from the Mesolithic to the Early Metal Age/Bronze Age. The oldest known house remains in Mesolithic Arctic Norway are generally small (c. 7–21 m²) round or oval slight depressions or stone-cleared areas (Grydeland unpublished; Hesjedal et al. 1996; Simonsen 1961). However, also a few much larger and at least partly semi-subterranean rectangular structures without distinct hearths have recently been dated to around 7000 BC (Henriksen, Skandfer and Valen 2010; Skandfer 2010). Around 5000 cal. BC, a small number of semi-subterranean rectangular houses with rounded corners (12–14 m²) and without stone-lined hearths appeared along the Finnmark coast (Figure 1). From around 4000/3700 cal. BC, groups of small roundish semi-subterranean houses – so-called "Karlebotn houses" – were established regularly in coastal settlements, at least from Varanger in the east and south-westwards down the North Norwegian Atlantic coast (K. Helskog 1980; Hesjedal et al. 1996: 204; Olsen 1994: 69; K. Schanche 1988). The houses lie in rows along the shorelines of their period. Some large concentrations of houses, up to more than 80 at the same locality, indicate that several houses on each site were used simultaneously (see E. Helskog 1983; K. Helskog 1984; Olsen 1994 for a discussion). This is further suggested by the fact that the houses are never superimposed on older structures. The "Karlebotn houses" initiate a tradition of building semi-subterranean houses which continued unbroken until c. 1400 cal. BC.

Although the technology of digging the house floors slightly into the ground was continued for over 2,000 years, other elements of the building technique changed during the long period of making semi-subterranean houses. I will here take a closer look at the rectangular houses of the so-called "Gressbakken type" which were built in Northern Norway from around 2400 cal. BC onwards. Characteristic features of these houses are several "entrances" symmetrically arranged on the middle of opposite walls, as well as double hearths, often arranged symmetrically along the middle long axis of the house (Figure 2). These features are only very rarely found in the older and smaller, round/oval/square semi-subterranean houses. The rectangular shape also seems to be accompanied by a markedly larger floor area: The "Gressbakken houses" in coastal Finnmark have floor areas of up to 60 m², in comparison with those of less than 20 m² ion of the older "Karlebotn houses". The large, rectangular shape is probably at least partly related to a different building technology than the smaller round or oval buildings, and it has been assumed that the "Gressbakken houses" represent a break with the earlier house forms. The structuring of the "Gressbakken" dwelling sites has been regarded as an extension of the suggested new ordering of the house, with large congregations of houses and more emphasis on symmetrical structure also in the layout of the dwelling site (Olsen 1984: 105; K. Schanche 1988: 130–131; Simonsen 1991: 364–366, see however K. Schanche 1994: 72–77).

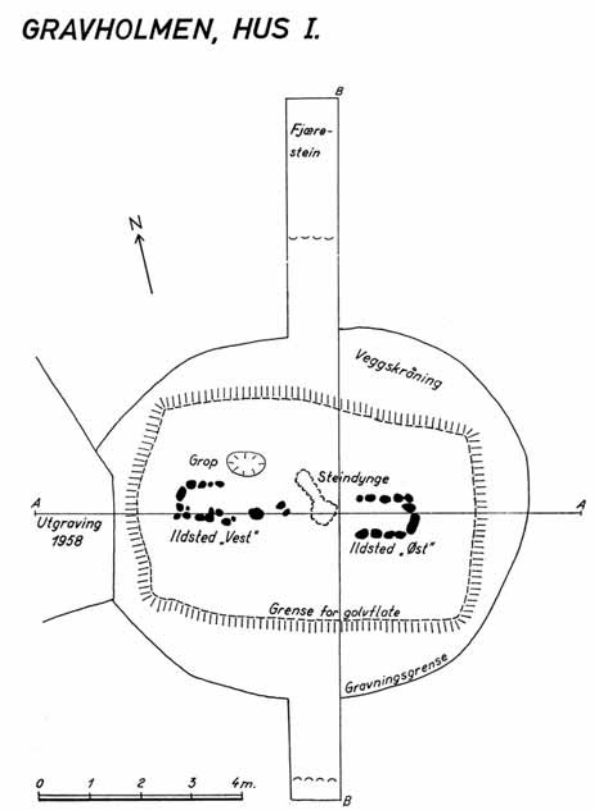

Figure 2.
Layout of a "Gressbakken house" excavated by Simonsen at Gravholmen Island, Pasvik/Paaččjokk/Báhčeveaijohka/Paatsjoki River Valley, Finnmark in 1959. ©Tromsø Museum, University of Tromsø.

The row organization of the "Gressbakken houses" as well as the house-plan itself, with double hearths along the mid-axis and several "entrances", gives the impression of homogeneity and symmetry both within each house and within each group of houses. It has been suggested that the symmetrical organization is a result of social stress in the hunter-gatherer communities, i.e. scalar stress due to larger congregations of people staying at the same dwelling site for all or at least most of the year. This in combination with increased internal social conflicts arising from struggles over prestige and political power related to external trading contacts providing access to new status goods, such as metal. The main factors – large congregations of people, sedentariness or semi-sedentariness and participation in new trading networks with assumed prestige items – are suggested to have developed as a direct consequence of the abundant and varied marine resources at hand for these settlements. (Olsen 1984; 1994; Renouf 1988; 1989; K. Schanche 1994). The Gressbakken Phase, materially defined by the large semi-subterranean houses, has been considered to cover a very short and hectic time-span, a maximum dating suggested between c. 2400 and 1800/1700 cal. BC (Engelstad 1988: 71; K. Helskog 1980: 51; Johansen 1998: 75–76; Olsen 1994: 85; K. Schanche 1994: 95–96). A re-examination of a midden at the Karlebotnbakken "Gressbakken house" site in Varanger, north Norway, including a copper implement, anthropomorphic bone figurines and various bone ornamentation, and signs of a specialized shellfish exploitation, has recently been dated

to c. 3000 cal. BC (Hood and Helama 2010). These finds have hitherto played a significant role in interpretations of settlement patterns, social complexity, status differentiation and economic interaction with early metal-producing societies in Russia for the presumed short "Gressbakken" Phase. The new dating of the midden is around a millennium earlier than the "Gressbakken houses" at the site, and demonstrates that chronologically the houses have nothing to do with the midden into which one of the houses was dug. Thus, the socio-cultural setting for the "Gressbakken houses" needs re-evaluation.

Regarding the layout of the sites, up to 20–30 "Gressbakken houses" have been registered on several coastal sites, but really large congregations are the exception rather than the rule. The most common number seems to be 6–9 houses on each site, and individual houses are observed. Strict row organization is not as salient as previously argued for the "Gressbakken houses", and it should be kept in mind that row organization of houses with their long axes parallel to the seashore is the most common organization of prehistoric dwelling sites in the Arctic coastal environment regardless of time period. Neither row organization nor large numbers of houses can thus be said to distinguish the "Gressbakken" sites from the previous sites with semi-subterranean houses. What about the enlarged size and symmetrically organized interior? Large rectangular and symmetrically organized houses are documented already from around 3200/3000 cal. BC (Simonsen 1963; Renouf 1988; 1989). It has been suggested that these so-called "Nyelv houses" represent a transitional construction between the small, roundish "Karlebotn house" and the large rectangular "Gressbakken house" (Olsen 1994: 71; Simonsen 1991: 375–376). It is noteworthy that their formal structuring was not related to signs of intensified or changed exchange networks or hunting practices, potentially bringing about social stress. A new dating of the earliest copper find in northern Norway to around 3000 cal. BC (Hood and Helama 2010) implies, however, that networks channelling metal into the Varanger area were established at this time, but not necessarily a millennium later. It should also be mentioned that several investigated "Gressbakken house" plans diverge from the symmetrical characteristic suggested by the double-heaths and several entrances: single hearths or no hearth have been documented, as well as only one or no traceable entrances.

Based on the above presentation, it could be argued that the focus on row organization and symmetry in the archaeological literature has concealed actual variation: solitary large, rectangular houses are known from several sites along the coast, and small round houses are regularly observed at the larger "Gressbakken house" sites. Thus, the dwelling structures of the "Gressbakken" type display greater variation in morphology and site structure than is often acknowledged. It could also be argued that the strong emphasis on the "Gressbakken houses" in North Norwegian archaeology has concealed variation within a long tradition of building semi-subterranean houses and replaced it with a seemingly fundamental break in dwelling forms. The "Gressbakken houses" seem to have predecessors at least in the "Nyelv houses" dated 800–600 years further back. Also of interest is the fact that the "Nyelv house" appears to represent a local

Varanger Fjord phenomenon, whereas the "Gressbakken houses", on the other hand, seem to be built in all parts of Finnmark as well as further to the east and south-west (Johansen 1998: 54–65, 74–75). This adds to the emerging picture of great variation in form, size and structuration of the large, semi-subterranean houses in coastal Arctic Norway (Engelstad 1988; Johansen 1998).

Although a large degree of on-site, local, regional as well as temporal variation must be acknowledged, the "Gressbakken house" can still provide a useful archaeological category as a prototype of the building technology prevailing around 2000 cal. BC in coastal Finnmark. Along with this technology follows a certain way of physically structuring the large house interiors. This, in turn, should be interpreted as bearing information about social entities and structures relating to the houses.

Archaeological investigation over the past few years has revealed that houses of the "Gressbakken type" are commonly found also in the inland parts of Finnmark in northernmost Norway, although not in the same numbers or in as large congregations as at some of the coastal sites (Skandfer 2009). In the interior, 1–3 houses at each site are the most common. Also here, they are row-organized along the river-banks or shores. The inland houses point to the ending of the initial "Gressbakken" building tradition around 1300 cal. BC, which is several hundred years later than previously suggested for the coastal houses. However, the suggested dating around 2000 BC for the formerly presumed short "Gressbakken Phase" under-communicates the fact that several of the dates obtained for charcoal from the fire-places and floor layers also in the coastal house structures extend to the 17th, 16th and even 15th centuries BC (K. Schanche 1994: 98). The late dates are further in accordance with several datings from "Gressbakken houses" outside the inner Varanger Fjord (Andreassen 1988: 16; K. Schanche 1994: 98). The new dates from the inland in general support Johansen's (1998) claim for a longer period of use for this kind of house structures. For the time being, the "Gressbakken houses" are the oldest known semi-subterranean houses in the interior, which thus seemingly lacks the long tradition of digging dwelling structures into the ground. In the inland, older settlements lack semi-subterranean house structures.

Investigations in the inland have revealed that here the "Gressbakken houses" had a second phase of use – in the form of reuse of old structures as well as building of new ones – around 300 cal. BC–300 cal. AD. This is probably not an exclusive inland phenomenon, although it has not been given attention in presentations of the coastal sites. Younger dates from houses with datings primarily around 2000 cal. BC are also known from the coast, indicating a period of re-use between ca. 1000 and 400 cal. BC (E. T. Helskog 1983: 35; K. Schanche 1994: 96). A kind of re-use concurring with the even later second use-phase in the inland is most strongly indicated by an asbestos-tempered vessel found inside a "Gressbakken house" at Kalkillebukta in Varanger, While the house midden is dated to 1965–2135 cal. BC, the vessel is dated between cal. AD 35 and cal. AD 550 and a floor layer is dated to cal. AD 340–125 (K. Schanche 1994: table 23).

To sum up, elements of the "Gressbakken house" structure could have been transmitted from an older local Varanger Fjord phenomenon to become a regional "type" around 2400/2000 cal. BC. With variations, this was maintained until around 1400/1300 cal. BC, at least in certain regions. After a "void period" of around a millennium, from which we have very little knowledge of what the dwellings looked like, the structure was re-introduced, at least in the inland. So far, we have no indications of new-built "Gressbakken houses" on the coast in this period. After cal. AD 300 the more than 5000-year tradition of building semi-subterranean houses ended completely.

Resource Availability

As pointed out by Friesen (1999) for coastal North Alaska and the Mackenzie Delta, Northwest Territories in North America, the characteristic "resource structure", i.e. the physiological and behavioural characteristics of the exploited resources in the northern landscapes are often that many of the most nutrition-rich, potentially exploitable resources are migratory and thus only seasonally available. This is also the case for the Arctic landscapes of Northern Fennoscandia. Here, different types of fish (e.g. Arctic cod, salmon), marine and land mammals (e.g. seals, whales, elk, wild reindeer) as well as birds are only seasonally present in the various regions. During the season, they are in abundance and can be relied on as predictable food resources. The "Gressbakken" dwelling sites, both along the coast and in the inland, relate potentially to varied exploitation of seasonally migrating resources. The strategies that the hunter-fisher-gatherer groups chose in relation to this resource structure would probably be based on several factors, among them social factors, and would in turn have impacts on the society.

The coastal "Gressbakken" sites relate closely to sea-mammal hunting and fishing. Hodgett's (2010) analyses of the faunal remains from several "Gressbakken house" middens in the Varanger Fjord demonstrate that there are marked differences in the resources that the people at individual "Gressbakken" sites chose to rely on, suggesting that people at sites with otherwise similar material culture exploited locally available species within relatively small hunting territories close to the sites. Resource availability is clearly linked to localized environmental (topographical) qualities, which were then among the factors conditioning the occupation season, length and reoccurrence of occupation. Similarities between inner fjord sites and south (outer) fjord sites respectively, suggest that inner fjord sites were most intensively occupied during winter and early spring and possibly occasionally used year-round, whereas most south fjord sites seem to be shorter-term spring and summer dwelling sites (Hodgetts 2010: 44).

The inland "Gressbakken houses" lie in clusters in relation to good reindeer hunting and salmon fishing localities, and close to pitfall systems for catching wild reindeer. In concordance with Hodgetts observation of localized resource

exploitation close to the dwelling sites at the coast, the locations of the inland "Gressbakken "sites suggest that reindeer hunting and/or salmon fishing could have been practiced from the inland sites. Unfortunately, no faunal remains are preserved. Salmon move upriver to spawn during the summer and in historically recorded times reindeer have migrated through this inland area in the spring and autumn, on their way to and from the coast. After a long winter the animals are thin and their fur is of poor quality, but by the time they start up their autumn migration, the adult animals as well as the new calves have put on weight, and the fells are of good quality. Autumn is thus traditionally the slaughter season among the Sámi reindeer herders in this area today.

Discussion

As shown, there is a long tradition of semi-subterranean houses along the Finnmark coast, as well as in the adjacent north Atlantic and Arctic coastal areas. This long tradition is not found in the inland. In the inland, the first houses with sunken floors are of the "Gressbakken type" dating from c. 2000 cal. BC, and prior to this only open dwelling sites have been found. It seems that for the first time the inland region was included within an already long building tradition. The investment in large and (more) permanent dwelling structures suggests that around 2000 cal. BC settlement became more regular in the inland region of Finnmark. A similar situation can be suggested for the northernmost inland regions of neighbouring Sweden (Nordberg 2008: 126) and Finland (Pesonen 2002: 15–16), where houses of "Gressbakken type" occur from the same time.

The inland Finnmark "Gressbakken houses" lie in clusters in relation to good reindeer-hunting and salmon fishing localities, these being summer and autumn activities. On this basis it can be suggested that the inland "Gressbakken" sites were summer and autumn dwellings. The houses lie close to the pitfall systems for catching wild reindeer, but never in direct visual contact with them (Figure 3). This stands in contrast to later dwelling structures which can be found located in between the pits, thus indicating that the later occupations occurred after the pit-falls had gone out of use. None of the hunting-pit systems close to the dwelling sites have yet been dated, but datings of pits in other systems in interior Finnmark suggests a marked intensification in pit-hunting from around 2500 cal. BC (Furset 1995; 1996), probably related to an increase in the interest or need for this primarily inland resource (meat, fur) from c. 2500 cal. BC. A direct relation between the houses and the hunting-pit systems can further be suggested by the dramatic drop in datings of the systems from around c. 1600–1400 cal. BC, concurring with the last dates for the older semi-subterranean houses. Catching reindeer in hunting-pit systems would have demanded the effort of several hunters, probably belonging to different households. From this it can be suggested that during the reindeer autumn trek (members of) several households gathered in the inland to take part in the reindeer hunt, and that this activity

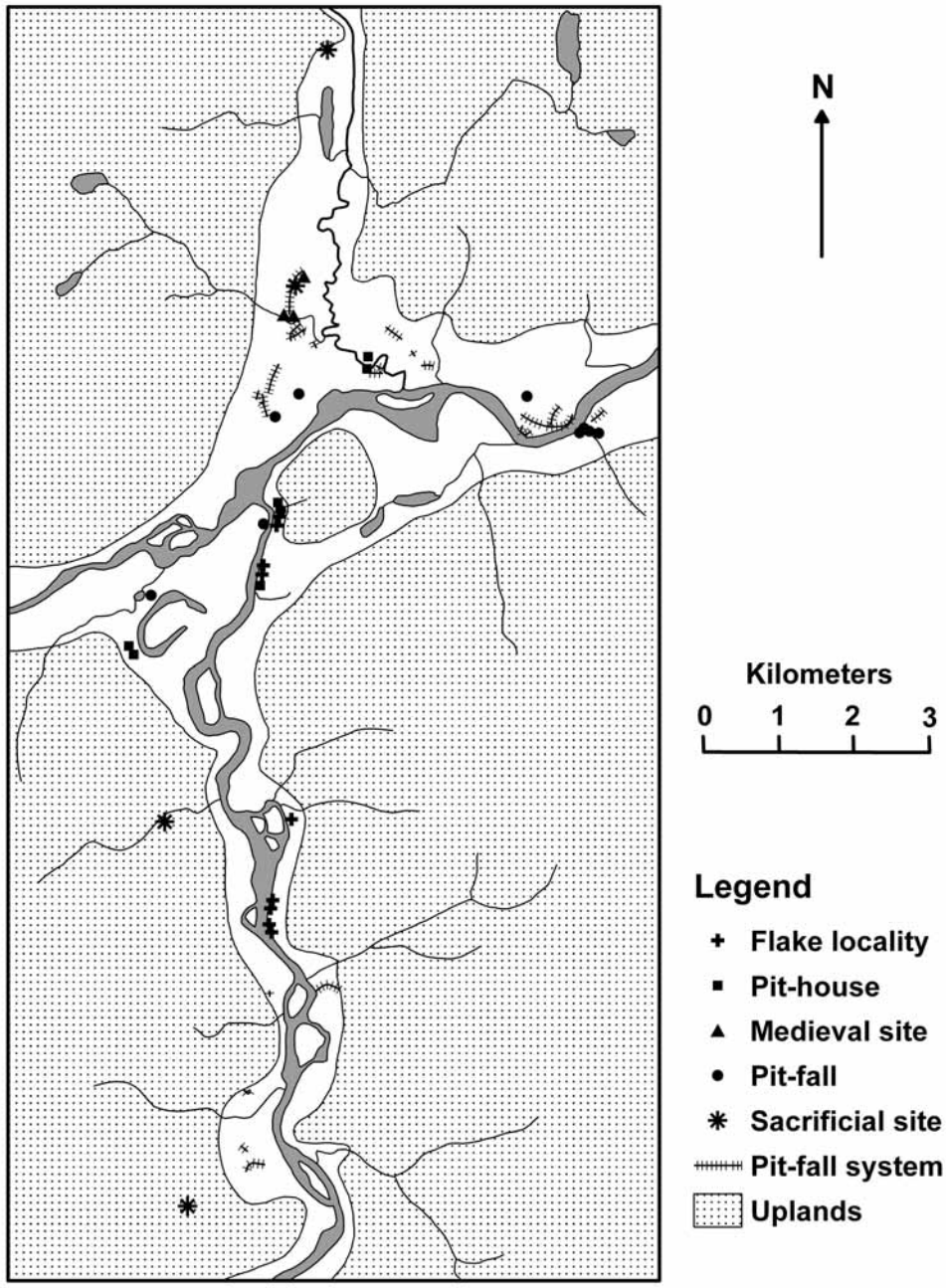

Figure 3. Mapped archaeological structures around the Kárasjohka and Iešjohka confluence. Note the geographical relation between semi-subterranean /pit-houses and pit-fall systems (Map by B. Hood).

was intensely practised in interior Finnmark at the time when the "Gressbakken houses" were built. Perhaps each dwelling site with semi-subterranean houses represents a hunting unit.

The number of house sites identified in the inland challenges the suggested heavy dependence on marine resources for the "Gressbakken" society, which has been linked to sedentism, high population density and hierarchical social organization (Renouf 1989; Olsen 1994; K. Schanche 1994). It must be kept in mind that these previous settlement interpretations were solely based on the coastal (Varanger) sites, and did not include the inland houses. Instead, the interpretation put forward here of the "Gressbakken houses" as dwellings for seasonally mobile groups falls in line with an earlier ethnographically based model suggesting seasonal movements between winter coastal and summer inland dwellings (Simonsen 1991). The interpretation is supported by Hodgett's (2010) observation that people exploited relatively small hunting areas with site-specific resources close to the dwelling sites and the acknowledgement shared by many scholars that the degree of sedentism varied between sites as well as on shorter and longer terms (c.f. Engelstad 1984; Renouf 1989; Olsen 1994; K. Schanche 1994; Hood 1995; Hodgetts 2010). Compared with the large settlements along the Finnmark coast, the sites in the interior are few. It seems that semi-subterranean houses were built only at a few selected sites. The building of houses and adjacent hunting-pit systems could relate to a degree of social regulation of the access to (a) certain resource(s). Perhaps the geographical distribution of the houses indicate that the inland region was divided into territories, each settlement exploiting different parts of the seasonally available resources and with a focus on river salmon but possibly primarily on wild reindeer. A similar territorial model has been suggested for the "Gressbakken houses" along the coast (K. Schanche 1994), with the watersheds marking the territorial boundaries between coastal *siidas*[1], as known ethnographically from the later Sámi social structure.

Based on the suggested general connection between "Gressbakken" sites and localized resource availability, I suggest that there was a situation around 2000 calBC when seasonally predictable rich resources, varying both seasonally as well as locally and regionally, were exploited from similarly structured houses and dwelling sites both along the coast and in the inland. Seasonal movements between sites with "Gressbakken houses" in different landscape settings, for instance between winter camps along the coast and summer – autumn camps in the inland, could be suggested. Reliance on at least partly seasonally migrating resources would mean that the "Gressbakken" societies were practising delayed return, probably with storage of food supplies for longer seasons. Some degree of transportation of food supplies between the different camps would have been necessary, although a strategy of moving seasonally between areas with vari-

1. S*iida* was the notion used for both people ("the group"), the political organization as well as the resource area/territory used by each group in Sámi society.

ous abundant resources, as suggested here, would probably speak against bulk transportation. Based on the suggestions made in this paper, it seems reasonable to think that the migrations and resource use were structured within territories, and that access to resources was regulated by social identification relating to the territories (see also K. Schanche 1994) where labour had been invested in the building and maintaining of houses as well as hunting-pit systems. I suggest that it was the same group of people who practised shorter periods of intensive exploitation of specific resources from various sites in different parts of a larger area, including inland as well as coastal landscapes. Further investigations are needed before such a model can be further elaborated.

As mentioned, the tradition of dwelling in large, rectangular semi-subterranean houses at least in the interior has a separate second phase after a "void" period of more than a millennium, from c. 300 cal. BC until c. cal. AD 300. This phase can, I suggest, be related to the forming of Sámi self-identification, and needs a different explanation than the first phase of building semi-subterranean houses in the inland. I posit that the formation of Sámi identity came about through a process of change, probably in several of the socio-cultural networks in which hunter-gatherers in Scandinavia took part (see Hansen and Olsen 2004: 36–42). Several indications of changes in contact networks can be pointed out. The sparse import of bronze implements from the Seima-Turbino culture in Central Russia during the second and early first millennium cal. BC took place some time after 900 cal. BC, lasting until c. 300 cal. BC (Olsen 1984: 66–68; Hood and Olsen 1988; Olsen 1994: 108), and was replaced by the introduction of iron technology in combination with moulded bronze technology from the Ananino societies. After that, it seems that the eastern network ceased to provide metal. In Northern Finland local iron smelting is dated from c. 400 cal. BC (Kotivuori n.d.), and there are also several indications of local iron working in relation to the Kjelmøy (Sär-2) asbestos tempered ceramics in Northern Norway and Sweden (Hulthén 1991: 34; Olsen 1994: 103). Asbestos Ware was a shared material trait over Northern Fennoscandia including North-western Russia and South Finland and Karelia (Jørgensen & Olsen 1988; Lavento 2001). Based on several 14C-datings it has recently been suggested that the two youngest asbestos ceramics, the Kjelmøy (Sär-2) and Risvik ceramics, should probably be dated between c. 900/700 cal. BC–0/ 100 cal. AD (Jørgensen and Olsen 1988: 65, Olsen 1994: 106) and 880–400 cal. BC (Andreassen 2002: 71) respectively, finishing a more than 2,000-year long ceramic tradition among the hunter-gatherer groups. Both the Risvik and the Kjelmøy ceramics point to comprehensive knowledge and use of metal (Sundquist 2000; Andreassen 2002). A depiction of two human figures with swords and shields at the youngest rock carving site in Alta, western Finnmark, suggests that the northern hunter-gatherers now experienced direct contact with southern Scandinavian Early Iron Age societies (K. Helskog 1988: 87), possibly in the form of expeditions travelling along the coast.

Between c. 300 cal. BC and 300 cal. AD several new material elements, recognizable and ethnographically known as culture-specific Sámi elements,

were established, at least in (parts of) Finnmark. Among them are new housing, burial and handicraft customs. The scree graves (A. Schanche 2000), *goahti* dwelling structures (Olsen 1993; Hesjedal et al. 1996: 227–229) and bone decoration schemes (Solberg 1918; Olsen 1984; Myrvoll 1992) are new material expressions indicating changes in several fundamental everyday as well as ceremonial practices. These elements can be seen as expressions of culture or identity-specific and ritualized behaviour, related to house structuring, religious ideas and handicraft, elements which are now established as material correlates to such a degree that they form patterns. The material changes from around 300 cal. BC can be interpreted as signs of a change in self-identification among the northern hunter-gatherers of Scandinavia and an ensuing establishment of Sámi ethnicity. The second phase of use and construction of "Gressbakken houses" in the interior should – I believe – be seen in this context.

Everyday activities and perceptions are structured, among other things, by past experiences through identification and recollection. Collective and individual identities have always been in constant flux. Within the overall flow of human action, some sets of actions are picked out and seen as more important than others. Ritualization is the process of choosing some actions and making them special (Bell 1992). Ritualized actions, formalized, repeated and bodily performed, will have time-binding properties and be important for maintaining and producing collective memory (Connerton 1989; Bourdieu 1995; Gosden & Lock 1998). In the context of a socialization process with competing identities some memories would have been highlighted, whereas other, competing, memories would have had to be forgotten.

One of the features that unite particular communities is their sense of sharing a common origin, and expressions of a common past or origin can be connected with such formalized sets of activities. Gosden & Lock (1998) propose that all prehistoric societies had a notion of a past (see also Bradley 2002; Knutsson 2004, Knutsson 2005; see however Bergman 2006; Knutsson 2007 for a discussion), and that in everyday life there was always a tension between "(..) the inheritance of the past, the intentions of the present and the possibilities held by the future." (Gosden & Lock 1998: 4). Gosden & Lock suggest that past societies dealt with this tension by treating time as genealogy or myth, and that the two concepts of time were not mutually exclusive, but could coexist in the same society. In genealogical history, relations of blood and kin are specified and form the basis for recounting histories. Other sets of mnemonics are also relied on, the nature of the landscape being the most prominent one. By treating history as myth, the past is thought of as a previous state of the world when humans had little or no power and processes of cause and effect manifested themselves differently.

Relationships between material culture, including landscape features, and social memory have been discussed to a great deal in archaeology, social anthropology and ethnography over the past few years (e.g. Van Dyke & Alcock 2003; Collignon 2006; Hautaniemi, Jarman & Macdonald 2006). It has been observed that sites and features in the landscape could be fundamental for the creation of

genealogical history, if ritualized acts aimed at maintaining and reworking these elements were linked to named antecedents. More ancient features would allow for a mythological as well as genealogical history with less familiar elements, according to Gosden & Lock (1998). They could be powerful in maintaining, negotiating and reworking history. Material relics from the past were present and open to interpretation and new meaning and significance also in prehistoric societies. As oral history operating in a continuum with the present lapse, the surviving physical remains would have yielded particularly significant information about the past, considered in terms of a genealogical as well as mythological history. In the following, I discuss how history and memory could have functioned in relation to the semi-subterranean houses known as "Gressbakken houses" in interior Finnmark.

The inland landscape of Finnmark, Arctic Norway was physically transformed through the performance of digging and building semi-subterranean houses from around 2000 cal. BC (and hunting-pit systems from c. 2500 cal. BC onwards). The house-building process would have demanded a collective effort in excavating the ground, finding building material and raising a structure above the floor. The structuring of the sites, most often with more than one house, suggests that one or several households were present at the same time, cooperating in the house-building as well as other activities on and around the site, perhaps including the building and maintaining of hunting-pit systems. It may be possible to see the initial inland houses around 2000 calBC as an extension of established "habitas" into new domains: The semi-subterranean houses are introduced to new landscapes and new resource exploitation activities. The bodily practices and collective performative memory related to resource management and long-house building traditions at the coast, as well as the performing of daily practices around the houses, were maintained in a new setting. This would have made the use of a different environment more familiar, and perhaps a genealogical concept of history was at work, placing the new activities (migrations into new areas, different resource exploitation activities) into the trajectory of the society's history.

Taking the starting point that myths as well as bodily incorporated memory can be important structures in producing and maintaining a collective memory of the past, I suggest that in the centuries around BC/AD the "Gressbakken houses" were understood as remnants of the past (Skandfer 2009), and that the bodily performance of re-building and re-dwelling in large semi-subterranean houses according to the original house structures was used as a strategy to remember. The long period of absence – around a millennium – indicates that an underlying continuity of human memory actually existed in these societies, probably in the form of mythical history. The repeated use of old sites and structures as well as the rebuilding of "Gressbakken houses", documented in the inland between c. 300 cal. BC and 300 cal. AD, point to a situation when reusing old marks and creating new, similar ones in the landscape seems to have been an important set of actions. It may have been a formalized and ritualized way of (re-)connect-

ing with past patterns of action and related socio-cultural values. The houses left permanent marks in the ground which are clearly visible today, 4000 years after the first ones were built. It can be mentioned that the depressions were still acknowledged as house remains in local Sámi oral tradition in the early 20th century (Qvikstad 1927; Tanner 1929), interestingly then attributed to a fairly recent period referred to as the time (…) "When my father was but a boy (…)" (Skandfer 2009). The several-thousand year old house remains are, in this tradition, understood within a short genealogical historical framework (see Bergman 2006 on the Sámi conception of time), but at the same time accounting for events of more mythical character which should be attributed to medieval times. This shows how a kind of social memory related to structures in the landscape can be maintained through long periods, even when the structures have gone out of use.

According to Eriksen (1996) myths can be a means of legitimizing a certain social order, including uneven power relations. Myths are understood as moral stories about ourselves, making the flux from past to present understandable and meaningful as a continuum, the past leading up to the present which in turn leads further into the future. At least in contemporary societies, times of crisis can give room for updating old myths and creating new, for making or underlining shared experiences. Feelings of break-ups and insecurity, discontinuity with the past, provide a golden opportunity for revolutionary forces to create something qualitatively new. In contrast, those who seek to conserve will do their best to create strong, positive emotions relating to the peoples' consciousness about the past. In this process, selected past events can be projected forward and given special status as shared history (ibid.). The re-building and re-dwelling in "Gressbakken houses" around 300 cal. BC–300 cal. AD falls into a period with several signs of socio-cultural change in Northern Fennoscandia, leading to an established Sámi identity. I therefore propose that the actions involved in the re-use of "Gressbakken houses" served as an arena for structuring and negotiating collective memory in a time of socio-cultural change.

Interestingly, another older material tradition – the asbestos-tempered pottery – which already seemingly had played an important role in social identification among the Northern Fennoscandian hunter-gatherer-fishers (Jørgensen and Olsen 1988; Hansen and Olsen 2006: 36–42), was maintained through this period, which I suggest was an important transitional phase in the establishment of Sámi ethnicity, from c. 300 cal. BC into the first centuries AD, but was then abruptly given up. Prior to this phase the pottery seems to have expressed regional and social differentiation and identification, and overlapping elements between the styles occur, illustrating the dynamic nature of identity (Jørgensen and Olsen 1987; 1988; see Skandfer 2011 for a discussion). In its last phase, however, in the centuries around BC/AD, the asbestos ceramics divided into two separate styles, Kjelmøy and Risvik, with complementary geographical distributions. The styles became more standardized, and now with an emphasis on minor, and as it seems more local, variations than earlier. The making and use of asbestos-tempered pottery in daily life could be another ritualized bodily

performed way of remembering, maintained in times of changing identities but then given up when a new social order was established. The deposition of late asbestos pottery vessels in an older "Gressbakken house" by the Varanger Fjord (K. Schanche 1994: 40) as well as in the earliest scree graves (A. Schanche 2000: 172–174) suggest that the pottery in its latest phase also had a religious and/or ceremonial meaning attached to it.

In contrast to the making and use of asbestos pottery, when the use of the "Gressbakken" building was resumed around 300 cal. BC, the activities related to its construction and use had not been practised for a very long time. I therefore suggest that this second phase of making and using semi-subterranean houses is related to an ascribed mythical value, representing perhaps a "Golden Age" long gone, or more substantially perhaps referring to rights to resource exploitation and landscape use (for a similar view concerning the Mesolithic in Northern Scandinavia, see Knutsson 2005). Relating to changes or intensifications in the network alliances between the hunter-gatherer in Finnmark and structurally different societies with a demand for hunter-gatherer products, perhaps most prominently furs and leather from land mammals as well as marine mammal blubber, oil and skins, the inland resources could again have been more sought. In a short transitional phase, the hunter-gatherer communities, among other strategies, used the past as a vital social resource as they put effort into reviving the mythical time of the "Gressbakken era".

Conclusion

While the trajectory of the past is shared, the same does not necessarily apply to history. The subjectivity and selectivity of written, Western history has become evident in the last few decades as parallel and even competing histories are being presented by women, indigenous peoples and various minorities. In this paper, I presuppose that notions of a past were present also in non-literate prehistoric societies, and that history was appreciated and negotiated within these past societies. In addition to oral transmission, history was recalled through sets of repeated actions which could be related to specific material phenomena, such as structures in the landscape. The past must necessarily be described selectively and subjectively. Although there are potentially indefinite numbers of histories that can be told and transmitted through time, only some are. Selected past events can be projected forward and given special status as shared history. Such events can be recollected through bodily performances of ritualized actions, related to mythical or genealogical history, following Gosden & Lock's (1998) distinction.

Identification is a dynamic process. In this paper I suggest that a uniting of past and new practices was part of the process of forming a distinct Sámi identity in the last centuries BC. The archaeological material indicates that ritualized bodily practices related to a mythical past, as well as practices relating to new and what was to become long-lasting burial customs, handicraft technology and

dwelling structuring, were among the activities taken on within at least some of the hunter-gatherer communities of Arctic Norway. This specific combination of past, present and future seems limited in time, and could well be limited in space (for instance north-eastern and mostly inland areas in Finnmark, Swedish and Finnish Lapland), but a general increased ritualization of activities in the landscape has been suggested for hunter-gatherer communities in various parts of Northern Fennoscandia from around 300 cal. BC (Fossum 2007: 2), concurring with the earliest dates for the second phase of use for the "Gressbakken houses". The use of the past in the past at this time in Sámi history could be the outcome of social strategies played out by different members of some of the hunter-gatherer communities, and it need not have come about without conflicts and disputes within and between individuals, families and different hunter-gatherer groups.

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