

## STANDING ON THE SHOULDERS OF SCANDINAVIAN GIANTS?

### INTELLECTUAL HERITAGE IN THE “DEMONSTRATIO IDIOMA UNGARORUM ET LAPPONUM IDEM ESSE” BY JÁNOS SAJNOVICS

Per Pippin Aspaas

#### Abstract

*The Hungarian Jesuit Joannes (János) Sajnovics’ “Demonstratio” (Demonstratio that Language of the Hungarians and the Lapps is the same) is a classic of Finno-Ugrian linguistics. An astronomer without previous experience in the comparative study of languages, Sajnovics embarked upon his study, seemingly unprepared, while participating at an astronomical expedition to Finnmark in far-northern Norway in 1768–69. When spending the winter 1769–70 in Copenhagen, he interacted with members of the Royal Danish Society of Sciences and presented his theory at their sessions. His landmark “Demonstratio” was published in two editions, in 1770 (Copenhagen) and 1771 (Trnava). Close reading of the first edition strongly suggests that the novel methodology of Sajnovics was informed nearly exclusively by Scandinavian scholarship; references to central-European scholars and their theories characterize the revised, second edition of the “Demonstratio”, which was prepared after Sajnovics and his mentor Maximilian Hell had returned to the Habsburg kingdom.*

#### Keywords

*Finno-Ugrian linguistics, comparative linguistics, Sámi Language, Hungarian language, history of science*

#### Sammendrag

*Verket «Demonstratio» («Beviis, at Ungarernes og Lappernes Sprog er det samme») av den ungarske jesuitten Joannes (János) Sajnovics er en klassiker innen finsk-ugriske språkstudier. Sajnovics var en astronom uten erfaring med sammenlignende studier av språk da han i årene 1768–69 deltok på en astronomisk ekspedisjon i Finnmark. Det var først da han kom til Nord-Norge at han, tilsynelatende uten forberedelser, påbegynte sin undersøkelse. Vinteren 1769–70 var han i København. Under dette oppholdet hadde Sajnovics kontakt med medlemmer av Det kongelige Danske Videnskabernes Selskab, hvor han la frem sin teori. Hans banebrytende «Demonstratio» ble trykket i to utgaver, den første i København i 1770 og den neste i Trnava året etter. Nærlesning av førsteutgaven viser at Sajnovics’ nyskapende metodologi var basert nesten utelukkende på skandinavisk forskningslitteratur. Referanser til sentral-europeiske lærde og deres teorier er noe som gjennomsyrer den reviderte andreutgaven av «Demonstratio», men den ble ikke laget før etter at Sajnovics og hans mentor Maximilian Hell var vendt tilbake til det habsburgske riket.*

### **Nøkkelord**

*Finsk-ugrisk lingvistikk, komparativ språkvitenskap, samisk språk, ungarsk språk, vitenskapshistorie*

### **Zusammenfassung**

*Das Werk »Demonstratio« (»Beweis, dass die Sprache der Ungarn und Lappen dieselbe ist«) des ungarischen Jesuiten Joannes (János) Sajnovics ist ein Klassiker der finno-ugrischen Sprachwissenschaft. Sajnovics war ein Astronom ohne Erfahrung in vergleichenden Sprachstudien, als er in den Jahren 1768–69 an einer astronomischen Expedition in der Finnmark teilnahm. Erst als er in Nordnorwegen ankam, begann er scheinbar unvorbereitet mit seiner Untersuchung. Im Winter 1769/70 war er in Kopenhagen. Während dieses Aufenthalts hatte Sajnovics Kontakt zu Mitgliedern der Königlich Dänischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften, wo er seine Theorie vorstellte. Seine bahnbrechende »Demonstratio« wurde in zwei Ausgaben gedruckt, die erste 1770 in Kopenhagen und die nächste im darauffolgenden Jahr in Trnava. Eine genaue Lektüre der ersten Ausgabe zeigt, dass die innovative Methodik von Sajnovics fast ausschließlich auf skandinavischer Forschungsliteratur basierte. Hinweise auf mitteleuropäische Gelehrte und ihre Theorien durchziehen die zweite überarbeitete Auflage der Demonstratio, die jedoch erst nach der Rückkehr von Sajnovics und seinem Mentor Maximilian Hell in das Habsburgerreich entstand.*

### **Schlüsselbegriffe**

*Finno-ugrische Linguistik, Vergleichende Sprachwissenschaft, Samisch, Ungarisch, Wissenschaftsgeschichte*

### **Setting the scene**

In the years 1768–1769, a Hungarian Jesuit, Joannes (János) Sajnovics (1733–1785) travelled to Vardø in Finnmark. A lasting result of that journey is a ground-breaking treatise in Finno-Ugrian linguistics. It was the Imperial and Royal Astronomer of Vienna, Maximilian Hell (1720–1792) of the Society of Jesus, who had been invited to undertake an expedition in the Lutheran north. Hell's task was to observe a transit of Venus in front of the Sun on 3–4 June 1769. Because the transit was going to take place around midnight in Europe, it was necessary to travel to the realm of the Midnight Sun to observe this rare phenomenon from beginning to end.

Hell's expedition was financed by the King of Denmark and Norway. It was his status as an astronomer of international standing that had led the administrators in Copenhagen to contact Hell. The Viennese astronomer in turn needed an assistant, "someone whose personality fitted my own", he later explained. The travel companion in question "needed to be a member of the Society of Jesus, be of strong bodily constitution and be daring and unrelenting when faced with hardships and danger".<sup>1</sup> This man was Sajnovics, formerly

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<sup>1</sup> Hell's introduction to the (unfinished) *Expeditio litteraria ad Polum Arcticum*, edited with facing English translation in Per Pippin Aspaas, 'Maximilianus Hell (1720–1792) and the Eighteenth-Century Transits of

Hell's student in Vienna, but at that time an adjunct of astronomy at the Jesuit university in Hungarian Tyrnavia (Hun. Nagyszombat, Ger. Tyrnau, Slov. Trnava).

Maximilian Hell had greater plans than merely observing the transit. After all, his efforts could be spoiled in case the sky turned out to be overcast on the night of 3 June 1769. He therefore ensured they reached the destination of Vardø in the preceding October. In the end, the two Jesuits spent nearly nine months in Vardø, where they conducted a range of supplementary investigations besides observing the transit itself. They observed the aurora borealis, investigated the declination of the compass needle, measured the ebb and flow of the tides, temperature, air pressure, calculated latitudes and longitude, and so on. The southbound journey from Finnmark included a prolonged stay in Copenhagen, from October 1769 to May 1770.

The expedition gave occasion to test a hypothesis that had already been ventilated by several scholars in contemporary Europe – that of a possible linguistic link between the Hungarian language and other languages of the group now labelled Finno-Ugrian. Here, the Hungarian-speaking Sajnovics took centre-stage. On 19 January 1770, he started reading his paper comparing the Sámi and Hungarian languages for the Royal Danish Society of Sciences in Copenhagen. After two more sessions, on 26 January and 9 February, the paper was promptly printed under the auspices of the same society.<sup>2</sup> Translated into English, the title of the 83-page paper reads:<sup>3</sup>

Joannes Sainovics of the Society of Jesus, Hungarian from Tordas in the county of Fejér, member of the Royal Society of Sciences in Copenhagen as well as that in Trondheim: *Demonstration that the Language of the Hungarians and the Sámi is the same*. Read to the Royal Danish Society of Sciences in Copenhagen in the month of January in the year 1770. Printed at the Royal Orphanage in Copenhagen, typeset by Gerhard Giese Salicath.

Sajnovics' membership of two royal societies for the advancement of science is conspicuous. On the pages immediately following the title, his Dano-Norwegian patronage is further highlighted in the form of a dedication to Otto Thott (1703–1785), one of the mightiest councillors at the King's court. In modern terms, Thott filled the functions of an interior minister as well as a minister of church, education, research and innovation. Sajnovics' patron was also mightily learned, an avid collector of books and manuscripts; as *praeses* of the Royal Society of Sciences in Copenhagen he hosted the sessions of the

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Venus: A Study of Jesuit Science in Nordic and Central European Contexts' (PhD diss., University of Tromsø, 2012), 383–417 (on p. 415). Fulltext: <https://hdl.handle.net/10037/4178>.

<sup>2</sup> The Protocol of the Secretary of the Royal Danish Society of Sciences, manuscript kept at Det Kongelige Danske Videnskabernes Selskab in Copenhagen, entries on 19 Jan, 26 Jan and 9 Feb 1770; also, entries on the same dates in Sajnovics' travel diary (hereafter *diary*), manuscript kept at Institut für Astrophysik der Universität Wien, Manuscripte von Hell, Chr. 90.

<sup>3</sup> Joannis Sajnovics. S. J. Ungari Tordasiensis e Comitatu Alba-Regalensi, Regiæ Scientiarum Societatis Hafniensis, et Nidrosiensis socii *Demonstratio. Idioma Ungarorum et Lapponum idem esse*. Regiæ Scientiarum Societati Danicæ prælecta Hafniæ mense Januario Anno MDCLXX. (Hafniæ, Typis Orphanotrophii Regii, excudit Gerhard Giese Salicath [no year, 1770].) All translations in this article are by the author.

society, which took place in his mansion in the city centre. At the heart of the Lutheran Kingdom of Denmark and Norway, the Jesuit visitor clearly enjoyed full support.

The printing of the *Demonstratio* was finished by the beginning of April 1770; we know from Sajnovics' travel diary that he held the first copy in his hand on the 10<sup>th</sup> of that month.<sup>4</sup> Six weeks later, the two Jesuits left the Danish capital for good. A Danish translation appeared as part of the official proceedings of the Royal Danish Society of Sciences later in the same year:

Johannes Sainovics' *Proof that the Language of the Hungarians and the Sámi is the same*. Translated from the Latin by M. R. Fleischer.<sup>5</sup>

The Danish translation is a faithful rendition of the Latin, although it lacks the dedicatory preface to Otto Thott. After he had returned to his homeland, Sajnovics published an enlarged edition. This was printed in February or March 1771, with the title:

Joannes Sajnovics of the Society of Jesus, Hungarian from Tordas in the county of Fejér, member of the Royal Society of Sciences in Copenhagen as well as that in Trondheim: *Demonstration that the Language of the Hungarians and the Sámi is the same*. Read to the Royal Danish Society of Sciences and printed in Copenhagen in the year 1770. Reprinted in Tyrnavia, by the printer of the Academic Collegium of the Society of Jesus.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Sajnovics, *travel diary*, 10 April 1770.

<sup>5</sup> Joannis Sainovics 'Beviis, at Ungarernes og Lappernes Sprog er det samme. Oversat af det Latinske ved M. R. Fleischer', *Skrifter, som udi det Kiøbenhavnske Selskab ere fremlagte og oplæste i Aarene 1765. 1766. 1767. 1768. og 1769. Tiende Deel*. (Kjøbenhavn: Udi det Kongelige Waysenhuses Bogtrykkerie, og paa dets Forlag, Trykt af Gerhard Giese Salikath. Aar 1770), 653–732. To the best of my knowledge, the identity of M. R. Fleischer has not been discussed in the literature on Sajnovics' *Demonstratio*. Since the paper was translated from Latin, we may assume that it was someone with connections to the university. The family name Fleischer was not uncommon, but judging from *Kjøbenhavns Universitets Matrikel*, Tredie Bind, ed. by S. Birket-Smith (København: Hagerup, 1912), there are no other obvious candidates for the abbreviation "M. R. Fleischer" than *Erasmus Fleischer*, or M[agister] R[asmus] Fleischer (1744–1804; Erasmus being the Latinized form of Rasmus). On 28 July 1761, at 17 years of age, he was inscribed "E schola Roeskildensi" (on p. 215). On 30 July 1762, he became a *Baccalaureus* of philosophy (p. 229) and on 27 September 1768, he was nominated *Magister* and also served as *Prodecanus* at the *communitas regia*, a special arrangement providing accommodation and subsistence to students from poorer families (p. 285). Rasmus Fleischer reputedly had a firm command of Latin. In the last three decades of the eighteenth century, he wrote numerous pieces for contemporary cultural magazines, including several book reviews, primarily on works of philology: Rasmus Nyerup, *Dansk-norsk Litteraturlæxikon*, Første Halvdel (Kjøbenhavn: Gyldendal, 1818), 170; A. Jantzen, in *Dansk Biografisk Lexikon*, ed. by Carl Fredrick Bricka, V. Bind (Kjøbenhavn: Gyldendal, 1891), 201–202; H. Ehrencron-Müller, *Forfatterlexikon omfattende Danmark, Norge og Island indtil 1814*, Bind III (København: Aschehoug, 1926), 69–71; Bjørn Kornerup, in *Dansk Biografisk Leksikon* 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (printed 1979–84), online version: [https://biografiskeleksikon.lex.dk/Rasmus\\_Fleischer](https://biografiskeleksikon.lex.dk/Rasmus_Fleischer). Ehrencron-Müller indeed lists the translation of the *Demonstratio* among Rasmus Fleischer's works.

<sup>6</sup> Joannis Sajnovics. S. J. Ungari Tordasiensis e Comitatu Alba-Regalensi Regiæ Scientiarum Societatis Hafniensis, et Nidrosiensis socii *Demonstratio. Idioma Ungarorum et Lapponum idem esse*. Regiæ Scientiarum Societati Danicæ prælecta, et typis excusa Hafniæ Anno MDCCLXX. Recusa (Tyrnaviæ, Typis Collegii Academici Societatis Jesu [no year, 1771].) The internal textual evidence for 1771 as the year of printing is summarized in Danilo Gheno, 'Sajnovics e la *Demonstratio*. Problemi e caratteri dell'edizione

As can be seen in a dataset compiled by the author of this article,<sup>7</sup> the number of references to central-European pieces of scholarship as well as names from the Hungarian literary canon had by then been raised substantially. The Tyrnavian edition thus shifted the intellectual heritage of Sajnovics' ground-breaking study away from the Scandinavian setting and turned it into a distinctly central-European piece of scholarship. While interesting in itself, it is less valid when assessing the question of Sajnovics' original sources of information and inspiration. In this article, I will therefore use the Copenhagen edition as a main source, supplemented by unprinted letters and notes written during his expedition in the Kingdom of Denmark and Norway.<sup>8</sup>

### “Sans doute le premier comparatiste moderne”

His mathematical-empirical approach was Sajnovics' main contribution, not only to Finno-Ugrian linguistics, but to comparative linguistics as a whole. The *Demonstratio* generated enthusiastic reviews by eminent scholars such as August Ludwig Schlözer (1735–1809) in Göttingen and Henrik Gabriel Porthan (1739–1804) in Åbo (Turku).<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, closer to home the linguistic fruits of the expedition were questioned when confronted by readers from the Hungarian nobility and (later) the anti-clerical, masonic élite that established itself in Vienna after the dramatic dissolution of the Jesuit order in 1773.<sup>10</sup> However, while the plight of the two Jesuits on a biographical level may be a tragic one, they have certainly earned a place in the historiography of early-modern learning – Hell on account of his unique set of data on the Venus transit observed in Vardø,

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di Trnava', *Atti e memorie: Accademia Patavina di scienze lettere ed arti*, 87 (1975), 45–49. For archival evidence pointing to February or March of that year, see Aspaas, 'Maximilianus Hell', 121–22 n235.

<sup>7</sup> Per Pippin Aspaas, *References to scholars and linguistic sources in the two editions of Sajnovics' Demonstratio idioma Ungarorum et Lapponum idem esse (Hafniae, 1770; Tyrnaviae, 1771)*, <https://doi.org/10.18710/XOYEHP>, DataverseNO, V3.

<sup>8</sup> A substantial body of literature on Sajnovics and his *Demonstratio* has been published in recent decades. In contrast to the first edition, which until recently was only available in Latin and Danish, the Tyrnavian edition has been accessible in a facsimile (1968) as well as in German (1972) and Hungarian editions (1994). Most research is therefore based on the revised Tyrnavian revision, not the *editio princeps* from Copenhagen. See the facsimile edition with an introduction by Thomas A. Sebeok: *Demonstratio. Idioma Ungarorum et Lapponum idem esse*, Uralic and Altaic Series, 91 (Bloomington: Indiana University, [1968]); German translation by Monika Ehlers, with commentary and afterword by Gyula Décsy and Wolfgang Veenker: *Beweis, daß die Sprache der Ungarn und Lappen dieselbe ist*, Veröffentlichungen der Societas Uralo-Altaica (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1972); Hungarian translation by Zsuzsa Vladár, edited by Enikő Szij: *Bizonyítás. A magyar és a lapp nyelv azonos*, Bibliotheca Regulyana, 2 (Budapest: ELTE, 1994). Most recently, however, a richly commented edition of the first edition came out in Budapest: *A koppenhágai Demonstratio. Bizonyítás: A magyar és a lapp nyelv azonos. 1770*, translated and commented by Zsuzsa Vladár Constantinovitsné, edited by Enikő Szij. Bibliotheca Regulyana, 7 (Budapest: Pytheas, 2021). For want of Hungarian language skills, I have only been able to make superficial use of the Hungarian editions and other relevant literature in that language.

<sup>9</sup> August Ludwig Schlözer, *Allgemeine Nordische Geschichte* (Halle: bey Johann Justius Gebauer, 1771), 306–307 and Henrik Gabriel Porthan, in: *Tidningar Utgifne Af et Sällskap i Åbo*, N:o 1 (Den 15 Januarii 1771), 3–8; N:o 8 (Den 30 April 1771), 61–62; N:o 18 (Den 30 September 1771), 138–141; N:o 19 (Den 15 October 1771), 148–150; N:o 23 (Den 16 December 1771), 180–181; N:o 24 (Den 31 December 1771), 186–188.

<sup>10</sup> On this, see now Per Pippin Aspaas and László Kontler, *Maximilian Hell (1720–92) and the Ends of Jesuit Science in Enlightenment Europe*, *Jesuit Studies*, 27 (Leiden: Brill, 2020), esp. 322–329, 362–366, 378–387. <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004416833>

Sajnovics due to his landmark contribution to Finno-Ugrian linguistics. One commentator has even hailed the latter as a pioneer not only so far as the comparison of Finno-Ugrian languages is concerned: allegedly, Sajnovics was “sans doute le premier comparatiste moderne”,<sup>11</sup> without a doubt the first modern comparative linguist overall. But what did the modern aspects of the *Demonstratio* consist in?<sup>12</sup>

First, Sajnovics perceived quite clearly the necessity of moving beyond books and other written sources. He argues that *the phonetics of a language is among its primary characteristics*. His study took place long before the invention of the tape recorder and more than a century prior to the establishment of an international phonetic alphabet. In order to compare Sámi with Hungarian properly, he simply could not base himself upon the rumination of written sources – he had to hear the voice of a native speaker.<sup>13</sup>

Second, he found it necessary to use *words outside the sphere of religion*, focusing instead on common concepts such as ‘snow’, ‘stone’ and ‘road’. The Lord’s Prayer (*Pater Noster*) was often the very first piece of text to be translated by missionaries on foreign soil. This made it a convenient starting point for scholars that attempted to compare the many native languages of the world. But methodological rigour spoke against this practice. A missionary’s choice of words was likely to be influenced greatly by his cultural background. Even syntactic and morphological characteristics were often misrepresented in such translations, as the elevated style of the Bible tended to overrule the natural idiom of languages that had not yet become codified.<sup>14</sup>

Third, when searching for pairs of words of common etymology, Sajnovics was keen to establish *general laws of sound shifting*. Rather than looking for striking similarities, patterns of dissimilarities needed to be established. He illustrated this to his Scandinavian audience by pointing to the German sentence “Gib mir einen Trunk Wasser” (‘Give me a drink of water’). In Danish, it would be “Giv mig en Drik Vand”, in Swedish “Vatten”.<sup>15</sup> There is a systematic shift, Sajnovics explains, between *Wasser ~ \*Watter ~ Vatten ~ Vand*.<sup>16</sup> Among further analogous examples we can single out *Mutter* (mother) ~ *Moder* ~ *Mor*,<sup>17</sup> where, interestingly, the final spelling represents the Norwegian version, a variant that Sajnovics no doubt had heard with his own ears (Norwegian was not yet a written language in the eighteenth century). The point is that neither *Mor/Mutter* nor *Vand/Wasser* are strikingly similar pairs, but by comparing various variants of Germanic language, one can decipher systemic patterns of sound shifts.

Fourth, besides phonology and etymology Sajnovics believed that the *grammatical structure of languages* provided information of relevance when comparing them. To him,

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<sup>11</sup> Michel Dessaint, ‘De Societatis Iesu Artibus Grammaticis’, *Amerindia*, 19–20 (1995), 457–471 (on p. 458).

<sup>12</sup> The following paragraphs are built upon the argumentation of several scholars with expertise in Finno-Ugrian studies, see especially the ‘Nachwort’ by Décsy and Veenker in the German edition of Sajnovics, *Beweis*, 159–163 and Zsuzsa Vladár, ‘Sajnovics’ *Demonstratio* and Gyarmathi’s *Affinitas*: Terminology and Methodology’, *Acta Linguistica Hungarica*, 55:1–2 (2008), 145–181.

<sup>13</sup> Sajnovics, *Demonstratio* 1<sup>st</sup> ed., 11, 22–23.

<sup>14</sup> Sajnovics, *Demonstratio* 1<sup>st</sup> ed., 9–12.

<sup>15</sup> Sajnovics, *Demonstratio* 1<sup>st</sup> ed., 17.

<sup>16</sup> Sajnovics, *Demonstratio* 1<sup>st</sup> ed., 26.

<sup>17</sup> Sajnovics, *Demonstratio* 1<sup>st</sup> ed., 26–27.

parallels in the syntactic and morphologic systems of Hungarian and Sámi were evidence of their common roots. In fact, he found that “the way of constructing nouns and verbs” and “the way in which affixes and suffixes are used” were “especially important” to take into account when comparing languages.<sup>18</sup>

Fifth, Sajnovics makes a contribution to the old discussion of *the concepts of language and dialect*. His study took place more than fifteen years prior to the famous speech by William Jones on an Indo-European family of languages. One of Jones’ principal achievements was the theory of a lost proto-language, from which languages such as Sanskrit, Latin and Ancient Greek all stemmed.<sup>19</sup> Sajnovics is less explicit, but he does talk of a *lingua primæva* that the Sámi and the Hungarians had in common thirteen centuries earlier, before they became separated as a result of migration. Back in the fourth century, Hungarian tribes had settled in the Carpathian Basin, where they had lived ever since, separated from their relatives in the far north. An assumption “that each of the two tribes [i.e. the Sámi and the Hungarians] has preserved its language of origin (*lingua primæva*) intact against all significant alterations throughout thirteen centuries, will not be deemed credible by anybody that has insight into the regular fates of languages”, he writes.<sup>20</sup> Various dialects of one and the same language may not be mutually comprehensible, but they are still the same language, according to his thesis.

The originality of Sajnovics’ methodology can be summarized thus:

- 1) the phonetics of a language is among its primary characteristics,
- 2) words outside the sphere of religion should be used when comparing languages,
- 3) general laws of sound shifting are more important than striking similarities,
- 4) the grammatical structure of languages is key when assessing kinship,
- 5) kindred languages are merely dialects of a shared – often lost – language of origin.

One might add that as a piece of text, the *Demonstratio* is tailor-made for an audience of generalists, not specialists. Sajnovics is very explicit on methodology and presupposes no prior knowledge of either Sámi or Hungarian. His achievement is one of pedagogy as well as linguistics. The question remains: where did he learn all this? As Newton’s dictum famously claims, if he has seen farther than others, it must be because he was standing on the shoulders of giants.

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<sup>18</sup> Sajnovics, *Demonstratio* 1<sup>st</sup> ed., preface “Ad Regiam Scientiarum Societatem” (no page): “Et, quod præcipuum est, Nomina ac verba construendi modum, Affixis, & Suffixis utendi rationem inter se comparare.”

<sup>19</sup> William Jones, ‘The Third Anniversary Discourse Delivered 2 February 1786. By the President’, *Asiatick Researches: or, Transactions of the Society instituted in Bengal, for inquiring into the History and Antiquities, the Arts, Sciences, and Literature, of Asia*, Volume the First (1788), 415–431 (on p. 422–23).

<sup>20</sup> Sajnovics, *Demonstratio* 1<sup>st</sup> ed., 1–3 (on p. 2): “quod utraque Gens linguam suam primævam ab omni notabili mutatione per 13 Secula immunem conservaverit, nemo eorum credet, quibus Linguarum consvetæ vicissitudines perspectæ sunt”. (The misprint “Lingarum” in 1<sup>st</sup> ed. has been corrected in 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p. 2.)

### **The birth of a linguist**

In his paper, Sajnovics admits not being an expert on grammar, nor could he even speak or understand the Sámi language. His field of expertise was astronomy and other branches of applied mathematics. However, as a native speaker of Hungarian and a mathematically inclined scholar, he had undertaken linguistic field work in Finnmark, where the Sámi lived.<sup>21</sup>

Upon their return to Vienna and Tyrnavia, Hell claimed that he had chosen Sajnovics as a travel companion precisely because he wanted him to investigate the language question. He also posed as the sole authority under whose guidance and surveillance Sajnovics conducted his work.<sup>22</sup> This is misleading at best. There are no signs of preparation. All credible evidence suggests that the study happened spontaneously.

As the travelled northwards in the summer of 1768, Hell and Sajnovics were welcomed by representatives of the local civic and ecclesiastic administration along the way, including a dilettante of learning in Christiania (now Oslo), the *Stiftamtman* (diocesan governor) Caspar Storm (1718–1777). In addition to some scientific equipment, Storm lent the two Jesuits a couple of books: a Sámi grammar and a mini dictionary. The author of both works was professor of the Sámi language at the *Seminarium Lapponicum* in Trondheim, Knud Leem (1697–1774).<sup>23</sup> Through this seminar, established in 1752 in what was then the northernmost town of the kingdom, Leem offered lectures in the Sámi language for gymnasium pupils who sought careers as missionaries in the far north of Norway. Although after their visit to Storm in Christiania, Hell and Sajnovics spent more than three weeks in Trondheim, in July–August 1768, it seems from their surviving letters and detailed travel diary they did not pay a single visit to Leem. If the study of Sámi had been on their agenda, a visit to the main academic authority on the Sámi language would have been an obvious priority. Instead, the books by Leem appear to have been resting in their luggage until they finally reached Vardø, many weeks later.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Sajnovics, *Demonstratio* 1<sup>st</sup> ed., preface “Ad Regiam Scientiarum Societatem” (no page).

<sup>22</sup> The most striking expression is found in the preface to the Society of Sciences in Copenhagen, where the second edition contains a new paragraph dictated by Hell claiming that he had picked Sajnovics “as his companion to the Arctic, and as an assistant in his works, in particular those that were to be undertaken in order to investigate the Sámi language”: “Ipse [scil. Hell] enim me [scil. Sajnovics], eadem benevolentia, qua olim jam biennio integro Viennæ in Astronomicis sibi ad manus esse voluit, Expeditionis quoque hujus ad Arctos delegit comitem, & laborum suorum, ac potissimum (disquisitionis Idiomatis Lapponici causa suscipiendorum) futurum socium, secum in Finmarchiam detulit” (Sajnovics, *Demonstratio* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., [no page]). There is no trace of such a claim in the first edition, in which Hell is merely thanked for his perseverance in encouraging Sajnovics to bring his study to completion and for being a good mentor that gave him the necessary *otium* and used his authority to inspire others to help him along the way (see especially 1<sup>st</sup> ed., 81). For further discussion, see Aspaas, ‘Maximilianus Hell’, 117–131.

<sup>23</sup> *En Lappisk Grammatica Efter den Dialect, som bruges af Fjeld-Lapperne udi Porsanger-Fiorden* (Kjøbenhavn: Paa Missionens Bekostning, Trykt af Gottman Friderich Kisel, 1748); *En Lappesk Nomenclator efter Den Dialect, som bruges af Fjeld-Lapperne i Porsanger-Fjorden* (Tronhiem: Trøkt hos Jens Christensen Winding, 1756).

<sup>24</sup> The travel diary does, however, bear witness to Sajnovics’ knowledge of another publication by Leem, the richly illustrated *Beskrivelse over Finmarkens Lapper / de Lapponibus Finmarchiae descriptio* (Kjøbenhavn: Trykt udi det Kongel. Waysenhuses Bogtrykkerie af G. G. Salikath, 1767). But that was above all a work of ethnography, not linguistics. Sajnovics, *diary*, 25 September 1768.

The first edition of the *Demonstratio* strongly suggests that the very idea of including language studies in the scientific programme of the expedition was conceived in Maursund, a trading port close to Skjervøy north of Tromsø. On their northbound sea voyage in the autumn of 1768, they rested here for several days due to adverse winds. In the travel diary, we find ethnographic observations on the local Sámi, who are compared to the rustic population of Hungary.<sup>25</sup> Such ethnographic descriptions are absent from the *Demonstratio*. It does, however, include this curious anecdote:

As we due to adverse winds were anchored at Maursund, a port close to the borders of Finnmark, we paid a visit to the local merchant. The venerable Mister Dass was also present, missionary for the inhabitants that live along the shores of the sea, where they make a living by fishing. They name themselves Carelians and are said to have migrated to these parts from Carelia once upon a time. As it happened, one of these Carelians entered the room. The missionary asked him to recite the Lord's Prayer, which he did. And, lo and behold! Except for some single words that we fully understood, the general mode of pronunciation of all the rest was exactly as one would have had reason to expect from a Hungarian, and from a Hungarian only.<sup>26</sup>

Ironically, it was the *Pater Noster* that was the starting point. However, characteristic of Sajnovics is his emphasis, already here, on the general sound of the language. Phonetics counts more than the existence of one or two words in a familiar prayer that were immediately comprehensible. Another point is that it was a 'Carelian' who recited the Lord's Prayer. The local population of the Maursund area included not only Sámi speakers, but also immigrants from Finnish-speaking parts of the Kingdom of Sweden, nowadays called Kven, but at that time often designated Carelians. The general impression of the sound was, however, similar enough. The anecdote concludes with Sajnovics' remark that:

This fully confirmed Honourable Father Hell's conjecture, that the Finnish and Sámi people had a relation to the Hungarian. And from that time onwards, he did not stop encouraging me to investigate the quite close relationship between the language of the Hungarians and the Sámi.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Sajnovics, *diary*, 28 September 1768.

<sup>26</sup> Sajnovics, *Demonstratio* 1<sup>st</sup> ed., 14–15: "Dum Mauersundii, qui portus est ad Finmarchiæ limites, adverso vento detineremur, loci Mercatorem invisimus; aderat quoque Venerandus D. Daass Missionarius illius Gentis, quæ ad oras vicini maris piscatu vivens, Carelianam se appellat, & ex Carelia olim huc advenisse traditur. Horum Careliorum quispiam fortuito cubile ingressus, jubente Missionario, orationem Dominicam recitavit. Ecce autem, præter voces aliquas, quas omnino intelleximus, reliquas enunciandi modus is erat, quem non nisi ex Ungarico ore sperare posses."

<sup>27</sup> Sajnovics, *Demonstratio* 1<sup>st</sup> ed., 15: "Res ista R. Patris HELL suspicionem, Gentem Fennicam, & Lapponicam, cum Ungarica affinitatem habere penitus confirmavit. Atque ex illo jam tempore, me incitare non cessavit, ut in propiorem convenientiam Idiomatis Ungarorum, & Lapponum, ipso gravioribus occupato negotiis, inquirerem".

In the modified narrative of the second *Demonstratio* edition, this has been rephrased, so that it is *Hell* that asks the missionary to have the Lord's Prayer recited. In addition, it is specified that this idea came from Hell's reading of the *Lapponia* by Schefferus and the *Erdbeschreibung* by Büsching.<sup>28</sup>

Be that as it may, when the two Jesuits were installed in Vardø, the arrival of the polar night gave them plenty of opportunity to read and study. During overcast weather there was, quite simply, little else for the two astronomers to do than sit by their lamps and study. Besides reading, they interacted with the limited population at the Vardø island, including the local vicar, Henning Junghans Kaurin (1737–1797). Sajnovics, when put under pressure from Hell to persevere in his investigations of Sámi, was at a loss:

But how was I to undertake this investigation? I had no other means of assistance available than a *Grammatica* and a *Nomenclator* [mini dictionary] authored by Leem, for these books had been offered us by his excellency privy counsellor Mister von Storm when we passed by Christiania, as a token of great generosity, without our asking for this at all. When opening the *Grammatica*, I did find a long series of descriptions, but these were written in the Danish language, which I did not master. And when consulting the *Nomenclator*, I encountered Sámi words expressed almost exclusively by means of vowels and amazing clusters of consonants, so that I had no clue as to how to parse or pronounce them.<sup>29</sup>

As for the Danish language, Sajnovics possessed a Latin–Danish dictionary called *Nucleus Latinitatis*, but this was cumbersome to use not least because many uncommon words and compounds used in Leem's *Nomenclator* were missing from the Danish index appended to the *Nucleus*.<sup>30</sup> In order to get around this hindrance, Sajnovics asked for help from the vicar of Vardø island, the above-mentioned Kaurin. He helped him translate the entire mini-dictionary of Leem, so that he after some weeks possessed a 'Sámi-Latin Nomenclator'. Sajnovics also wanted to compare the morphological and syntactic elements of Sámi; Kaurin helped him translate the *Grammatica* as well. But another fundamental

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<sup>28</sup> Sajnovics, *Demonstratio* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 22–23. As for the relevant passages in Schefferus and Büsching, see *Lapponia, id est regionis Lapponum et gentis nova et verissima descriptio* (Francofurti: Ex Officina Christiani Wolfii Typis Joannis Andreae, 1673), pp. 177–189 and *Neue Erdbeschreibung: Erster Theil, welcher Dänemark, Norwegen, Schweden, das ganze russische Reich, Preussen, Polen, Hungarn und die europäische Turkey, mit denen dazu gehörigen und einverleibten Ländern, enthält* Fünfte Auflage (Hamburg: bey Johann Carl Bohn, 1764), esp. p. 584.

<sup>29</sup> Sajnovics, *Demonstratio* 1<sup>st</sup> ed., 15: "At! quam via disquisitionem aggredere? nihil subsidii habebam ad manum, præter Grammaticam, & Nomenclatorem Lapponicum, Authore Leemio editum, utpote, quos libros Exc. Consil. Int. D. a STORM Christianiam transeuntibus magna humanitatis significatione, ne pentibus quidem obtulerat. Quod si Grammaticam hanc aperui, longam præceptorum seriem vidi quidem, sed Danico sermone, mihi ignoto conscriptam. Si Nomenclatorem inspexi, vocabula Lapponica meris fere vocalibus, & mirabiliter collocatis consonantibus, ita expressa inveni, ut, qua ratione legi, aut enunciari possent? nullo modo assequerem."

<sup>30</sup> [Hans Gram,] *Nucleus Latinitatis, quò pleræque Romani sermonis Voces, ex classicis Auctoribus aureæ argenteæque ætatis, ordine Etymologico adductæ, et interpretatione vernacula expositæ comprehenduntur, Adjecto & indice Danico: in usum scholarum Daniæ & Norvegiæ* Editio Secunda (Havniæ: Ex Reg. Majest. & Universit. Tyographéo, 1722). Altogether five editions were published during the years 1712–1763.

problem remained, namely, the peculiar system of Sámi spelling alluded to in the above quotation. Again, Kaurin's assistance was crucial.

After the end of the polar night, Sámi reindeer herders visited the Vardø island to trade with the local inhabitants. Sajnovics seized the opportunity. Sámi visitors were interviewed in the following manner: the Hungarian Jesuit selected a word in Latin. The Lutheran vicar read it aloud in Danish and asked the Sámi about its equivalent in his native language. Only then, when Sajnovics heard the word pronounced by a native speaker, was he able to write it down in a manner intelligible to himself. He realized (or so he claims in the *Demonstratio*) that all Sámi phonemes could be found in Hungarian as well, which was why he was fully capable of pronouncing Sámi words without an accent.<sup>31</sup>

This was the material that Sajnovics assembled in Vardø: the *Nomenclator* and *Grammatica* by Leem, translated into Latin by himself in collaboration with the local vicar, and interviews with Sámi that enabled him to write down a long range of words as he heard them, rather than as they appeared in print. Unfortunately, Sajnovics' original fieldnotes from Vardø are lost, but his practical approach is in any case amply described in the *Demonstratio*.

During their southbound journey, Sajnovics and Hell met several vicars and missionaries stationed in the Sámi regions of northern Norway. Their discussions with these local informants are however poorly documented. Furthermore, in August and September, they spent another couple of weeks in Trondheim. This time, they did meet Leem. The cryptic sentence in the travel diary does not, however, yield much: "Mister Leem, professor of the Sámi language, was visited."<sup>32</sup>

In terms of archival evidence, we are better served in Copenhagen. While they had been in a great hurry when visiting the capital on the northbound trip in the summer of 1768, this time they lingered there for eight months. A combination of Sajnovics' travel diary and the last chapter of the *Demonstratio* documents close collaboration with several influential characters in the intellectual milieu of the capital. In all probability, it was not until the autumn and winter of 1769/70 that Sajnovics began systematizing his fieldnotes, supplementing and contextualizing them with a wide range of existing scholarship that had previously been unknown to him.<sup>33</sup> We have already seen how he introduces the books by Leem by pointing out that these were a gift from the diocesan governor Storm. The *Demonstratio* is an excellent source for the study of the sociology of science, in that Sajnovics so meticulously mentions the private persons providing the infrastructure for his research. Especially the last chapter abounds in such namedropping. A full list of names mentioned in the *Demonstratio* is provided in the dataset accompanying this article.<sup>34</sup> Many have been credited as helpers, very often in the form of assistance with providing books that were of use. The above-mentioned Thott and Storm were only two

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<sup>31</sup> Sajnovics, *Demonstratio* 1<sup>st</sup> ed., 14.

<sup>32</sup> Sajnovics, *diary*, 7 September 1769: "Visitatus D. Leem. Prof. ling. Lapponicæ."

<sup>33</sup> As regards the process of 'translating' Leem's system of spelling to Hungarian, Sajnovics in the second edition of the *Demonstratio* says that this was finalized in Vardø and verified by a native speaker of Sámi in Copenhagen (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 38).

<sup>34</sup> Aspaas, *References to scholars and linguistic sources*.

of the many book collectors that lent him a hand in this regard. Another example is the nobleman, historian and *littérateur*

Illustrious Mister von Suhm [...], who as another token of his great benevolence sent me a book that has been published in Göttingen very recently, in this very year 1770, namely: Fischer's *Quæstiones Petropolitanae*.<sup>35</sup>

After quoting some sentences from this work, Sajnovics states that "I submitted this to the printer afterwards, for inclusion at this very place in the text."<sup>36</sup> From Sajnovics' travel diary we can pinpoint the date, 19 February 1770. After this date, the first edition of the *Demonstratio* was closed for editing.<sup>37</sup>

This is not the place for a comprehensive examination of the interactions of Sajnovics and Hell with members of the Dano-Norwegian branch of the Republic of Letters during their visit on Scandinavian soil. Rather, we shall point to the way in which Sajnovics made use of the learned literature that he gained access to.

### **Standing on the shoulders of Scandinavian giants**

With his professorship in Trondheim and the pioneering *Grammatica* and *Nomenclator*, Knud Leem was a living legend in Sámi language studies in the Kingdom of Denmark and Norway. He is introduced in Sajnovics' first chapter, under the heading "The language of the Hungarians and the Sámi may be the same, without speakers understanding each other", in the following manner:

As for the Sámi of Finnmark, I have a witness more reliable than any other in famous Mister Leem, professor of the Sámi language in Trondheim, who once served for four years as a missionary, followed by six years as a pastor, in the diocese of Alta in Finnmark. Having spent ten years of his life using this language, he embarked upon the most laudable of tasks, namely, to be the first to establish the rules of the language of the Sámi in Finnmark and writing them down, accompanied by illuminating remarks, in the form of a *Grammatica*. This grammar, printed in Copenhagen in the year 1748, is now at many people's fingertips. This famous author noticed sharp-sightedly that the Sámi of the coasts of Finnmark were not understood by the Sámi of the mountains, and vice versa. He did not, however, explain this by referring to them as diverse languages, as

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<sup>35</sup> Sajnovics, *Demonstratio* 1<sup>st</sup> ed., 81: "Jam Demonstratio hæc mea typis exscribenda erat, cum Illustr. D. a SUHM Conferentiæ Consiliarius, nova benevolentia suæ significatione libellum mihi submitit hoc plane anno 1770. recentissime Göttingæ editum, nempe: Fischeri *quæstiones Petropolitanas*."

<sup>36</sup> Sajnovics, *Demonstratio* 1<sup>st</sup> ed., 82: "*Hæc Typographo tardius submisi isto præcipue loco inserenda*" (italics in original).

<sup>37</sup> Sajnovics, *diary*, 19 February 1770: "Obtinui Quæstiones Petropolitanas Fischeri. de Or[i]gine Ung[a]rorum tractantes" (I obtained a copy of the *Quæstiones Petropolitanae* by Fischer, on the origin of the Hungarians). On 2 March, Thott excused that the work was not yet ready, because the printer had been ill. Finally, on 10 April Sajnovics received a copy that he personally delivered to Thott.

people without expertise tend to do. Instead, he acknowledged that this was a case of diverse dialects.<sup>38</sup>

Further weight to the ‘Language–Dialect Question’ is added by several Swedish authorities. Next in line after Leem’s *Grammatica* is the work *Beschreibung des der Crone Schweden gehörende Lapplandes* by the missionary Pehr Högström (1714–1784), which was published in Swedish in 1747 before being reissued in a German translation in Copenhagen and Leipzig in the following year.<sup>39</sup> Sajnovics includes two full pages consisting of a string of quotations from Högström’s *Beschreibung* in the following manner: “This man, having acquired an outstanding mastery of the Sámi language during the many years in which he served as a missionary and vicar among the Sámi of Sweden, says [...]”<sup>40</sup> Essentially, what Högström says is exactly the same as Leem: there are many different dialects of Sámi that are not mutually intelligible. Two Sámi grammars published in Sweden, by Pehr Fjellström (1697–1764) and Henrik Ganander (c. 1700–1752) respectively, are consistent with Leem in claiming that the difference between Swedish forms of Sámi and the Finnmark Sámi (North Sámi) studied by Leem rests on the level of dialect only. “In sum, the syllogism that ‘a Hungarian cannot understand a Sámi speaker, therefore they speak different languages’, is an argument that is both false and without any weight whatsoever,” Sajnovics concludes.<sup>41</sup>

As mentioned, when discussing the concept of dialect Sajnovics moves beyond the examples of various forms of Sámi and Hungarian. He also points to different forms of Germanic as “dialects” instead of separate languages. In this, he follows yet another Swede, the Uppsala professor Johan Ihre (1707–1780). In his ambitious *Glossarium Suiogothicum* (two vols, 1769), Ihre is quite explicit in pointing to various languages and their subordinate “dialects”. Its full title can be translated as:

Suiogothic Glossary, in which words that are frequently used in everyday life are explained alongside such that are encountered in the old laws of the fatherland and other writings from the Middle Ages, and are illustrated on the basis of

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<sup>38</sup> Sajnovics, *Demonstratio* 1<sup>st</sup> ed., 4: “De Lapponibus quidem Finmarchiæ testem habeo omni exceptione majorem Cl. D. Leem Linguae Lapponicæ Professorem Publicum Nidrosiæ, olim quadriennio Missionarium, & Sexennio Altensis Communitatis in Finmarchia Pastorem. Postquam is 10 annorum usu Idioma hocce pertractavit, rem aggressus est omni laude dignissimam, primusque linguam Lapponum Finmarchiæ ad regulas revocare, observationibus illustrare, & Grammaticam conscribere instituit, quæ dein anno 1748 Typis Hafniensibus excusa in multorum hodie manibus versatur. Adverterat optime Cl. hic author Lappones Maritimos Finmarchiæ non intelligi a Montanis, & vice versa; neque tamen hoc in diversitatem Idiomatis retulit, ut imperiti faciunt, verum ex diversitate duntaxat dialectorum oriri agnovit.”

<sup>39</sup> Sajnovics evidently used the German edition (Copenhagen und Leipzig: Verlegts Gabriel Christian Rothe, 1748).

<sup>40</sup> Sajnovics, *Demonstratio* 1<sup>st</sup> ed., 5: “Vir hic, & Missionarium, & Pastorem inter Lappones Suecicos multis annis dum ageret, insignem Idiomatis Lapponici peritiam assecutus, operis sui pag. 73 sic loquitur.”

<sup>41</sup> Sajnovics, *Demonstratio* 1<sup>st</sup> ed., 7–8: “Adeoque Enthymema hoc: *Ungarus Lapponem loquentem non intelligit, ergo diversa habent idiomata*. Falsum esse, & nullius ponderis argumentum.”

related Moesogothic, Anglosaxon, Alemannic, Icelandic dialects as well as dialects of Gothic and Celtic origin.<sup>42</sup>

“Suiogothic” in Ihre’s parlance has more than a hint of Gothicism in it. Gothicism refers to Olaus (Olf, Olof) Rudbeck the Elder (1630–1702), a giant of Swedish intellectual history whose multivolume, bilingual *Atland / Atlantica* formed generations of Scandinavian historical thinkers since the last quarter of the seventeenth century.<sup>43</sup> As a language, Ihrean Suiogothic (i.e. the Gothic language of the *Suiones*, or *svear*) encompassed both the contemporary Swedish vernacular and its Old Norse antecedents. The aim of the *Glossarium* was not simply to explain the meaning of Swedish words in Latin, but to investigate their roots by comparing them to a whole range closely and remotely related languages, both dead and living. In other words, Ihre’s glossary is first and foremost an etymological dictionary.

The concept of a lost, common proto-language was not unknown to Ihre. This is manifest in his *Prooemium* (Introduction), for example in a section on the *Lingua Latina*. Here, he speaks of a common root for old Germanic, ancient Greek and Latin – namely, the lost Scythian language, which to some extent can be reconstructed by pointing to general patterns of sound shifts.<sup>44</sup> Such patterns, similar to those later established with great stringency by the brothers Jacob (1785–1863) and Wilhelm Grimm (1786–1859), are listed towards the end of Ihre’s proem.<sup>45</sup> Sajnovics’ way of pointing to contemporary Swedish, Danish, German and Norwegian follows this logic quite closely, although his concrete examples are different. More importantly, Ihre’s method of identifying regular patterns of sound shifts are the basis for the argumentation “That the language of the Hungarians and the Sámi is the same is shown by means of words that the two peoples have in common” in the eighth chapter of the *Demonstratio*. Ihre has less to say about Hungarian and Sámi, but he does present some evidence of Sámi–Finnish–Hungarian relations in a section on the *Lingua Fennica et Lapponica*.<sup>46</sup> Exactly like Sajnovics, Ihre assumes that the correspondences between Hungarian, Sámi and Finnish originated in a shared past, before speakers of the same language were separated from each other.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> *Glossarium Suiogothicum: In Quo Tam Hodierno Usu Frequentata Vocabula, Quam In Legum Patriarum Tabulis Aliisque Aevi Medii Scriptis Obvia Explicantur, Et Ex Dialectis Cognatis, Moesogothica, Anglosaxonica, Alemannica, Islandica Ceterisque Gothicae Et Celticae Originis Illustrantur*. Auctore Johanne Ihre (Upsaliæ: Typis Edmannianis, 1769).

<sup>43</sup> On Rudbeck and his intellectual heritage, see now Bernd Røling, *Odins Imperium: Der Rudbeckianismus als Paradigma an den skandinavischen Universitäten*, 2 vols (Leiden: Brill, 2020), esp. the chapter ‘Zion in Lapland: Sprachspekulation zwischen Schweden und Finnland’, II:1114–1370. [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004434516\\_006](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004434516_006)

<sup>44</sup> Ihre, *Glossarium Suiogothicum*, i–xlvi (on pp. xxiii–xxix). See also Røling, II:1312.

<sup>45</sup> Ihre, *Glossarium Suiogothicum*, xli–xlvi.

<sup>46</sup> Ihre, *Glossarium Suiogothicum*, xxxix–xli. This section is quoted by Sajnovics, *Demonstratio* 1<sup>st</sup> ed., 76–78.

<sup>47</sup> Ihre, *Glossarium Suiogothicum*, xl: “Ex allatis satis constare arbitror, hasce regiones, Fennicam & Hungaricam, quas tot aliæ gentes, tot Linguæ dissonæ separant, & post tot seculorum dissidium nihilominus in sermone oppido multa communia habere.” (“As far as I see it, the above evidence proves that the two regions – the Finnish and the Hungarian – despite being separated from each other by so many different peoples speaking dissimilar languages and after so many centuries still have a great number of things in common in their language.”)

As we saw from Ihre's title, the word dialect figures prominently where modern comparatists would rather speak of (sub)branches of the same language family. To Sajnovics, Hungarian and Sámi were definitely "dialects", exactly like Swedish, Danish and German were dialects of one and the same language. Ihre does not define these concepts in the introduction to his glossary. However, another Uppsala professor, Olaus (Olof) Rudbeck the Younger (1660–1740) had published a *Specimen usus linguae Gothicae* in 1717. Here, we find a discussion of Estonian and Latvian as "dialects" of Finnish, along with a theory that Sámi and Finnish had originally been one and the same language. As for Hungarian, Rudbeck found:

that the Hungarian and Finnish languages are connected to each other by such a close affinity that they certainly merit being called relatives. In order to corroborate this, I have decided to present a list of words that are in frequent use in everyday life and hence less likely to undergo change or even disappear, so that the harmony between the Hungarian language and the Finnish becomes evident.<sup>48</sup>

In sum, we may safely conclude that through reading the likes of Leem, Högström, Gannander, Ihre and Rudbeck the Younger Sajnovics found more than simply information about the Sámi language, he also encountered the methodological rigour needed to compare his mother tongue with the vernacular of the Sámi in far-northern Finnmark.

Since the scholars mentioned so far focused primarily on etymology and – in Ihre's case – patterns of sound shifts, the part of Sajnovics' system dealing with grammar is probably derived from another source. Paradoxically, his main inspiration appears to be a scholar whose conclusions he actually disagrees with. In 1746, the late professor at Copenhagen University Marcus Wöldike (1699–1750) had published a paper on the Greenlandic (Inuit) language and its possible relation to Hungarian.<sup>49</sup> According to Wöldike, the affinity of the two languages could be proved by looking at similarities in grammar. Although he disagrees that Hungarian and Inuit grammar had anything in common, Sajnovics does follow Wöldike's logic quite closely and devotes three full chapters to a comparative investigation of morphology and syntax. Moreover, a weighty argument for Sajnovics in his methodological skepticism towards religious texts such as the *Pater noster* is explicitly taken from Wöldike, who claimed that:

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<sup>48</sup> Rudbeck, *Specimen usus linguae Gothicae, in eruendis atque illustrandis obscurissimis quibusvis Sacrae Scripturae locis: addita analogia linguae Gothicae cum Sinica, nec non Finnonicae cum Ungarica* (Upsalis, impressum à Joh. Henr. Werner, reg. typogr., 1717), p. 77: "cum equidem Hungaricam & Finnicam linguas tam propinqua sibi cognatione junctas deprehenderim ut consanguineae veluti dici merito queant. Quod quo constet luculentius, vocabula heic quaedam usu quotidiano trita atque adeo mutationi & interitui minus obnoxia recensere volui, ex quibus Hungaricae linguae cum Finnica consensus pateat".

<sup>49</sup> Marcus Wöldike, 'Betænkning om det Grønlandske Sprogs Oprindelse og Uliighed med andre Sprog', *Skrifter, som udi det Kiøbenhavnske Selskab af Lærdoms og Videnskabers Elskere ere fremlagte og oplæste*, II (1746), 129–156. Sajnovics used the Latin translation: 'Meletema, de lingvæ Groenlandicæ origine, ejusque a cæteris lingvis differentia', *Scriptorum a Societate Hafniensi Bonis Artibus Promovendis Dedita Danice editorum nunc autem in Latinum sermonem conversorum, pars secunda* (1746), 137–162.

Danish missionaries have over a period of 24 years imported more Danish words into the Greenlandic lexicon than their old Norwegian predecessors did over the course of the four centuries that they spent in Greenland.<sup>50</sup>

One final source of inspiration is harder to pin-point. In keeping with his emphasis on phonetics, Sajnovics was extremely sensitive to the process of writing down the spoken language. In contrast to modern English and French, with their seemingly chaotic orthographies, Sajnovics argued for the principle that each phoneme should be consistently represented by a single grapheme. This, he argued, had been successfully implemented in contemporary Hungarian, but not so in the Sámi books edited by Leem. While he praises Leem for his brilliance and pioneering spirit in the study of Sámi, he criticizes his system of spelling for being both inconsistent and overloaded with letters. The problem is not restricted to the Dano-Norwegian side, however:

Never before has Vertumnus [i.e., God of Changes] dressed himself in so many shapes and forms as he has up until now in the orthography of the language that I am dealing with. Every single writer of a [Sámi] book claims the right to furnish it with whatever orthography he sees fit.<sup>51</sup>

As authorities for this claim, Sajnovics points to a Latin dissertation by Ihre, as well as to Ganander, whose grammar included a list of five different systems of spelling used for the Sámi language, by five different Scandinavian authors.<sup>52</sup> To this list Sajnovics added Leem. Sajnovics was convinced that Hungarian spelling should come to the rescue. In a lengthy chapter on orthography, he presents a table in which all the sounds of the Sámi language, with the spelling of Leem, are converted into Hungarian.<sup>53</sup> With this, he targeted the ‘language policy’ of the Dano-Norwegian ecclesiastical authorities, who should mandate that the Hungarianized system be used in all Sámi prints. A reform of the spelling of Sámi according to Sajnovics’ instructions very nearly came to pass - the idea appears to have been dropped only because Sajnovics’ chief patron on Dano-Norwegian soil, minister Thott was stripped of power late in the year 1770.<sup>54</sup>

## Conclusion

If we return to the above list of novel aspects of Sajnovics’ *Demonstratio*, we can summarize his main sources of inspiration:

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<sup>50</sup> Sajnovics, *Demonstratio* 1<sup>st</sup> ed., 10: “*Missionarii, inquit [scil. Wöldike], Danici 24 annorum spatio plures voces Danicas in linguam Grælandicam induxerunt, quam veteres Norwegi quatuor, quæ in Grælandia exegerunt, integris Seculis*” (italics in original). The quotation is from Wöldike, ‘Meletema’, 149.

<sup>51</sup> Sajnovics, *Demonstratio* 1<sup>st</sup> ed., 11.

<sup>52</sup> Sajnovics, *Demonstratio* 1<sup>st</sup> ed., 11–12.

<sup>53</sup> Sajnovics, *Demonstratio* 1<sup>st</sup> ed., 22–25.

<sup>54</sup> Per Pippin Aspaas, *Forordet til Knud Leems Lexicon Lapponicum (1768–1781): Oversatt til norsk, med en innledning og kommentarer*, Bibliotheca Neolatina Upsaliensis, XVII (Upsala, 2021); Ivett Kelemen, ‘The life and work of the Saami theologian and linguist: Anders Porsanger’, *Studia Uralo-Altaica*, 51 (2021), 71–79. <https://doi.org/10.14232/sua.2021.54.71-79>

- 1) the phonetics of a language is among its primary characteristics: *Leem, Högstöm,*
- 2) words outside the sphere of religion should be used when comparing languages: *Rudbeck the Younger, Wöldike,*
- 3) general laws of sound shifting are more important than striking similarities: *Ihre,*
- 4) the grammatical structure of languages is key when assessing kinship: *Wöldike,*
- 5) kindred languages are merely dialects of a shared – often lost – language of origin: *Rudbeck the Younger, Ihre.*

Sajnovics' style of writing is humble and earnest. He does not pretend to have been an expert on linguistic methodology prior to his first-hand experience with spoken Sámi in northernmost Norway. His mother tongue was Hungarian, a language that he had used in service for several years. Sajnovics was a priest and a mathematician that turned linguist when encountering native speakers of Sámi.

Nobody can produce an academic classic without access to previous scholarship. Professional and amateur scholars in the Kingdom of Denmark and Norway, primarily in Copenhagen, supplied him with the learned literature he needed to systematise and analyse his field notes from Finnmark. Luckily for Sajnovics, he did have a Sámi grammar and small dictionary to hand while in Finnmark; this slim but essential body of literature was supplemented vastly during his stay in Copenhagen, where he prepared his talk for the Royal Danish Society of Science. With epithets such as “a witness more reliable than any other” (Leem) and “[a man] with an outstanding mastery of the Sámi language” (Högstöm), a pantheon of authorities is constructed in the *Demonstratio*. Research into the Sámi language, as well as other “dialects” now characterized as part of the Finno-Ugrian or Uralic family of languages, had already taken place in Germany, Russia, Sweden (including Finland) and Denmark-Norway for more than a century when Sajnovics visited Scandinavia in the years 1768–1770.

Unsurprisingly, it was by standing on the shoulders of giants that Sajnovics was able to break into the scene of contemporary comparative linguistics. And yet, despite the substantial output of well-informed scholarship on Sajnovics in recent decades, it appears to have been overlooked until now that most of these giants were actually Scandinavian. It is only when focusing on the first, original edition of the *Demonstratio* that this – for a Hungarian Jesuit – rather unusual intellectual heritage becomes visible.<sup>55</sup>

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