

# *the sami* – an Indigenous People in Sweden



Sámediggi  
Sámedigge  
Saemiedigkie  
Sametinget  
Sami Parliament



REGERINGSKANSLIET

Ministry of Agriculture, Food  
and Consumer Affairs



## Times change

Cultures are influenced, changed and sometimes merged.

The Sami have lived alongside other peoples for many hundreds of years in what are now Sweden, Finland, Norway and Russia. Despite, or perhaps because of, the influences to which the Sami have been exposed, they and their culture have retained their distinctiveness.

This book tells the story of a people, a culture and a history that to many are new and strange. It tells of an indigenous population that has been forced to change its way of life and has elected to adapt its culture and lifestyle to modern society.

The reader is introduced to various representatives of Sápmi – Samiland, i.e. the part of Europe inhabited by the Sami – who talk about their lives and relationship with Sami culture, society and history. The topics include small businesses, young artists, older well-known handicraftsmen, Sami politics, the Sami language, hunters and reindeer-owners and different perspectives on Sami identity. The book is based on articles by researchers, writers and other experts and also contains general reportage and informative articles on a variety of subjects.

Its purpose is to raise awareness about Sami culture, history and society. Hopefully, it will stimulate readers to find out more. It does not claim to describe all the facets of something as elusive as an ethnic group, a culture and an indigenous people, but it does give a picture of some aspects of Sami life.

The book was written in connection with the government's national information campaign on the Sami and Sami culture that is being conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture. It was co-produced by the Ministry and the Sami Parliament.

Times change. Take the opportunity to learn about the indigenous Sami and what it means to be a Sami today, what it meant in the past and what it may mean in future.





The right to mother-tongue education cannot be taken for granted. Meet the Kråik family, who are fighting for their rights.

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At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century racism raised its ugly head, and some alleged that the Sami "race" was inferior to the rest of the Swedish population.

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## Politics and society

Since time immemorial the Sami have lived in an area that now extends across four countries. There are about 70,000 Sami altogether, some 20,000 of whom live in Sweden. Indigenous peoples have been oppressed throughout history, and in many countries they are among the poorest inhabitants.

## History

We know for certain that the inland part of northernmost Sweden was inhabited some 10,000 years ago by people who may have been the ancestors of the Sami. Nordic peoples are mentioned as long ago as the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. In time, the rights of the Sami in Sweden were curtailed, and discrimination increased after 1800. Sami culture and language were suppressed until recently.

## Occupations

Reindeer husbandry is a core Sami occupation, but nowadays more and more Sami are involved in tourism, food production and other sectors. Reindeer husbandry itself has been transformed by new technologies. However, tourism and other new industries are liable to encroach on the land that is needed for reindeer grazing.

## Culture

Sami arts and crafts originate from a time when the Sami, as nomads, needed light, practical utensils. Traditional Sami handicrafts still exist, but interesting new handicraft forms are evolving too.



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Function was more important than artistic decoration in traditional Sami handicrafts.

Maria Vinka is a designer at Ikea with the whole world as her workplace.

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Mattias Eriksson is a helicopter pilot and helps to round up the reindeer herds from the air. He is a reindeer herder as well as a pilot.

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## Language

The history of the Sami language is a mystery. But we do know that the language, which is actually three languages, has been spoken in Northern Europe for thousands of years and is quite close to Finnish. In 2000 Sami was declared one of Sweden's minority languages.

## Religion

Today religion is no more or less important to the Sami than to other people in Sweden. But once upon a time they believed in a cosmos divided into three spheres: the underworld, the real world and the celestial world. Shamans foretold the future and communicate with the gods with the help of sacred drums. Towards the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century the state decided to christianize the Sami by force and the sacred drums were burned.

## The future for the Sami

A new Sami generation is looking for its place in Swedish and Sami society. But many historical issues remain to be resolved. Should reindeer-herding Sami retain their grazing rights across the border in Norway? Should the Sami have more say in the use of resources in Sami areas?



Sápmi has its own "national" football team.

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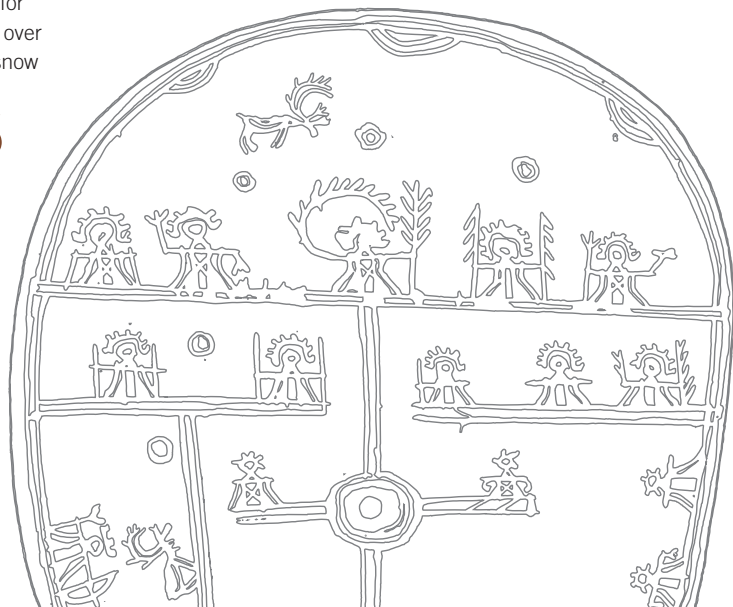
It has become a tradition to hold a two-week confirmation camp in Sápmi for young Sami.

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The Sami language is extremely rich; for example, it has over 300 words for snow and ice.

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# One people in four countries

Since time immemorial the Sami have lived in an area that now extends across four countries. It consists of the Kola Peninsula in Russia, northernmost Finland, the coastal and inland parts of northern Norway and parts of Sweden from Idre northwards. This region is called Sápmi (Samiland). The original Sami area of settlement was even larger, but they have gradually been forced back.

## 20,000 Sami in Sweden

Although many Sami still live in Sápmi, many others live in other parts of Sweden and are not involved in reindeer herding. About 2,500 of the approximately 20,000 Sami who live in Sweden are involved in reindeer husbandry.

The total Sami population is an estimated 70,000. More than half – 40,000 – live in Norway, 20,000 live in Sweden, 6,000 in Finland and 2,000 in Russia. Almost 10,000 are involved in reindeer husbandry.

## GLOSSARY

Sami words that occur in the text are generally translated

**Elk** – the European elk, known in North America as moose (*Alces alces*). The North American elk (*Cervus elaphus*) is elsewhere known as red deer.

**Gákti** – a traditional dress/outer garment used mostly on ceremonious occasions.

**Sameby** – a reindeerherding community; also the geographical area in which the community is entitled to pursue reindeer husbandry.

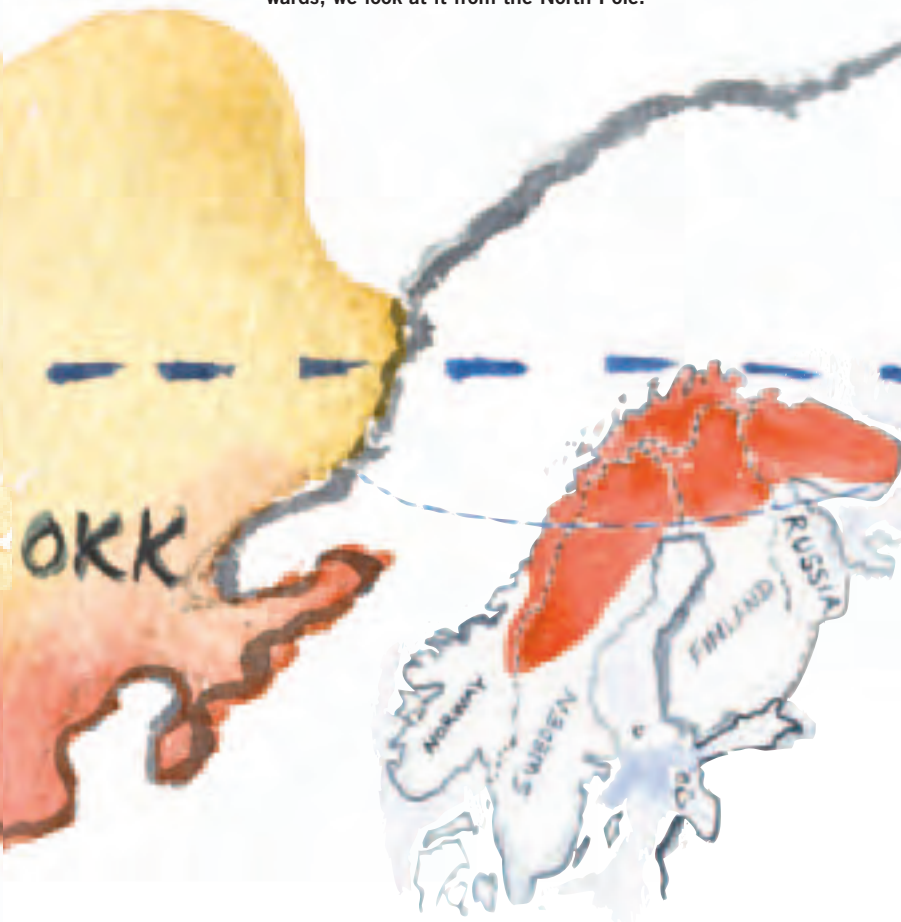
## Sami dwellings:

**Goahti** – permanent, dome-shaped structure consisting of a timber frame sealed with birch-bark and covered with peat or turf.

**Lávvu** – portable tent-like hut, similar to a tepee, with straight poles attached to a cone-shaped frame or to two central curved poles. Covered with thick woollen cloth, rugs or canvas depending on the season.

KHOLM

**Another view of Sápmi.** The area which has been home to the Sami since time immemorial is called Sápmi and extends across four countries. The world looks rather different if, instead of looking northwards, we look at it from the North Pole.



#### How do you define a Sami?

There is no definition of a Sami. But the Sami Parliament Act, which says who is eligible to vote in elections to the Sami Parliament, includes all those who regard themselves as Sami and use, or have used, Sami as a language in the home or have parents, or grandparents, who use, or have used, the Sami language. Those who regard themselves as Sami and have a parent who is, or was, listed in the electoral rolls for the Sami Parliament are also Sami.

## Sápmi in a nutshell



Photo: Jan Gustavsson

**Area:** Sápmi consists of the Kola Peninsula in Russia, the northernmost part of Finland, the coastal and inland areas of northern Norway and the inland part of northern Sweden.

**Sami population:** 70,000 (about 20,000 in Sweden).

**Area:** 157,487 sq. km (35% of Sweden's surface area).

**Language:** Sami.

**Sami centres:** Giron (Kiruna, Sweden), Guovdageaidnu (Kautokeino, Norway) and Anár (Inari, Finland).

**Currency:** Swedish and Norwegian krona, euro and roubles.

**Self-government organs:** Sami Parliaments (Sámediggi) in Sweden, Norway and Finland.

**Flag:** The common flag adopted in 1986. The circle design represents a sun and moon symbol. The colour for the sun is red and blue for the moon, and these and the other colours in the flag are the traditional Sami colours.

**The Sami national day:** 6 February.

**Sami national song:** Sámi soga lávlla (the Song of the Sami Family). The tune and the lyrics were officially adopted in 1986 and 1992, respectively.


**Religion:** Christianity.

**Main occupations:** Reindeer husbandry, handicrafts (duodji), hunting, fishing and tourism.

**Exports:** Reindeer products, handicrafts and music.

**National dress:** The gákti, a traditional outer garment.





“I am very much aware,  
especially in international  
cooperation, of the sense  
of community between  
the indigenous peoples  
of the world.”



# Ole Henrik Magga

– gives the indigenous peoples a voice

Many look up to the Nordic countries, and they must set a good example in their relations with indigenous peoples too. So Ole Henrik Magga, who is from Norwegian Sápmi and chairman of the UN Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues, expects a great deal of the Nordic governments and their Sami policies.

His mother worked in Finland, so Ole Henrik Magga grew up with his grandparents in Guovdageaidnu (Kautokeino) in northern Norway. Later his mother returned to Norway and married a reindeer owner, and he had seven brothers and sisters. After officer training in Norway he went to university, where he studied biology, chemistry and mathematics.

– Then I decided I must do something for Sami culture, so I changed track and started studying Sami linguistics.

He took a PhD in Sami linguistics in 1986, was Professor of Finno-Ugric languages at Oslo University in 1988–89 and since 1990 Professor of Sami linguistics at the Sami University College in Guovdageaidnu. Internationally, he has worked for indigenous peoples' rights for more than 25 years. He was the first President of the Norwegian Sami Parliament from 1990–1997 and is still a member.

But Ole Henrik Magga is best known for his international work. He was appointed chairman of the UN Permanent Forum when it was set up in 2002. As a result, the Maya in Central America, Inuit in Greenland, aborigines in Australia, pygmies in Congo and all the other indigenous peoples around the world are represented by a Sami from Norway.

– I am very much aware, especially in

international cooperation, of the sense of community between the indigenous peoples of the world. Especially on matters of principle, says Magga.

## **Affected by the same mechanisms**

Some say we Scandinavians should be quiet because we are so well-treated compared with other indigenous peoples.

– We do not risk being murdered, no, but the same mechanisms affect us too, irrespective of the standard of living. And it is silly to say that we have nothing to complain about because our standard of living is higher, says Magga. It's like saying that our unions should not fight for better wages because workers in Central America only earn 1% of what we earn. According to Magga, the situation of indigenous peoples is getting dramatically worse every day.

– The world's governments show little interest in improving the situation. For 10 years we have been drafting a declaration – which isn't as important as a convention – on the rights of indigenous peoples. Some progress has been made, but we cannot say if the declaration will ever be finished. In the end it is all about economic interests. It is all very, very disheartening, says Magga.

He is well aware that the UN Forum can do very little. Being an intergovernmental organization, it is the governments

of the member states that have the last word – the same governments that oppress indigenous populations at home. All the same, the Forum has given the indigenous peoples a voice.

– The governments are not worried about an advisory assembly for indigenous peoples as they are still in control politically. Our Forum is very fragile, but it is the little window that we have been given by the UN. In spite of everything, I hope that we have the drive to achieve something. It's our only hope.

## **Progress is slow**

After more than 25 years of working for Sami rights he says that progress has been made, although it is slow. Nowadays Norway is doing most to promote Sami rights, followed by Sweden, Finland and Russia. But it was not always like that. The Norwegian Sami were subjected to harsh discrimination at the start of the last century. Norway only recognized Sami culture many years after the Second World War.

– Discrimination was a sign of the times. Social Darwinists spoke of superior and inferior peoples. Discrimination in Norway also had a security policy dimension in relation to Russia and Finland. In addition, the dissolution of the union with Sweden gave rise to an upsurge of nationalist feel-



Unless their rights are enshrined in law, the Sami and other indigenous peoples will be marginalized.

ing. Discrimination increased dramatically after 1905. As a result, reappraisal has been more thoroughgoing in Norway, and in recent years Sami affairs have increasingly been integrated into other policy areas. For example, Ole Henrik Magga was appointed Member of the board of the Courts Administration by a unanimous Parliament.

– This is clearly proof of the integration of Sami interests into other policy areas.

This trend is more marked in Norway than in the other countries.

#### **Struggles for basic principles**

If the state can give the Sami rights, it can, by the same token, take them away. So Ole Henrik Magga continues the struggle to make sure that Sami rights are enshrined in law.

– This has been my goal all along. Without legal recognition we're not part of soci-

ety, we will be marginalized.

As President of the Norwegian Sami Parliament, Magga pursued a moderate course in order to keep everybody on board. But he has now adopted a more radical stance in the struggle for Sami rights.

– Today I am more radical and uncompromising, at least here in Scandinavia. In the international arena you have to be more cautious. We must always bear in mind that it is the indigenous people who will have to pay for any mistakes made by the Forum. All the same, I think we must stand up for basic principles. There must be a place where the indigenous peoples have a voice and can speak their mind, says Ole Henrik Magga firmly. ✧

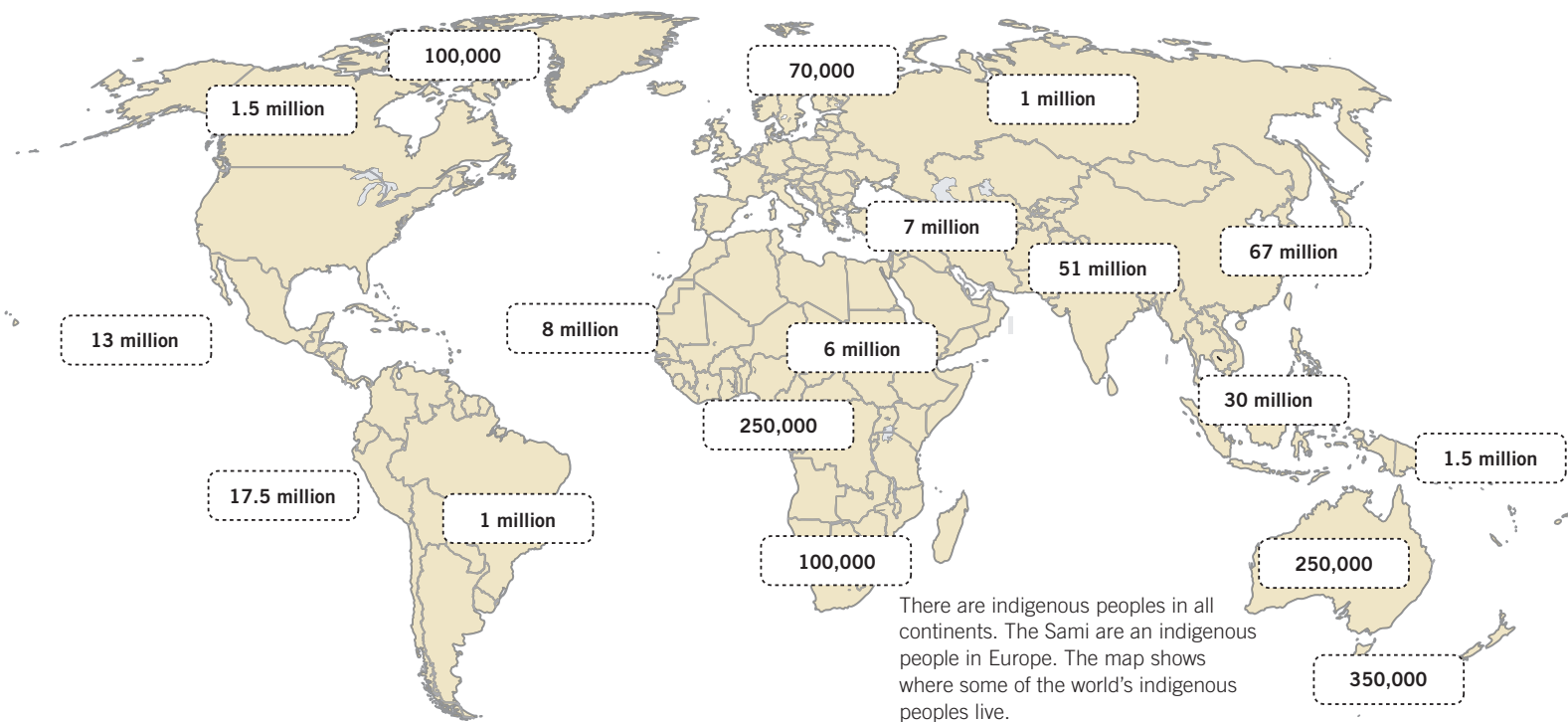
### The UN Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues

Indigenous peoples are nearly always at odds with their governments and meet with little sympathy for their demands. They did not draw the borders or create the countries we know today. That is why they have turned to the UN, which has supported them. The UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations held its first meeting on 9 August 1982, which is now the International Day of the World's Indigenous People. Since 2002 the Forum has been an annual meeting-place for representatives of indigenous peoples.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) adopted Convention 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in 1989. The convention has been ratified by several countries in Latin America and by Norway. In preparation for Sweden's ratification the question of Sami land rights and hunting and fishing rights is being investigated. A further step in these preparations is a review of the Sami Parliament and its organization.

The global population of indigenous peoples is estimated at 300 million in 70 countries. They are usually in a minority, but in Bolivia, Guatemala and Peru they make up half the population or more. The indigenous population of the USA – Indians, Inuit ("Eskimos") and Hawaiians – is about 1.6 million people out of a total population of 290 million.





# Indigenous peoples of the world

The Sami are one of the world's indigenous peoples around the world. The common denominator for indigenous peoples is that they lived in the same place before the country was invaded or colonized. They have their own culture, language and customs that differ from those of the rest of society.

Indigenous peoples have been oppressed throughout history. Their land has been confiscated, they have been displaced and their cultures have been suppressed. In some cases they have been victims of genocide. Since the 15th century indigenous peoples' land in Latin America, to mention one example, has been occupied, first by conquistadors and missionaries, then by settlers and agribusiness and in recent years by oil companies.

The survival of their cultures is proof of the resilience of these traditional societies. But oppression has made its mark; most of the world's indigenous peoples live on the fringes of society. They are held together by their identity – their culture, language and tradition. This identity is always associated

with a geographical area and the historical links with the environment that they have inhabited and used. But indigenous peoples do not necessarily live in rural areas and make the same kind of living as their ancestors. On the contrary, many of them live in towns just like other people. People who live

in towns do not saddle their horses when they go to work, and nor do indigenous peoples. Times change and people adapt. Indigenous peoples keep up some traditions, while others change in time, and their identities, like everyone else's, are constantly changing too. ✨



Photo: Meiker Dahlstrand

## The common struggle for rights

Last summer the Chilean radio reporter Eugenia Calquin, a member of the indigenous Mapuche people, visited Benny Jonsson, a Sami, in Idre. They found they had a lot in common, including both peoples' struggle for land rights. In an interview in *Latinamerika* magazine she said:

– We have a lot in common although our lives are so different. Basically it is the same struggle. Neither Sweden nor Chile has ratified ILO Convention 169. But according to Eugenia Calquin this issue seems to be much more important to the Sami in their political struggle than it is to her own people.

– Isn't it sad that we are still fighting for things like this? That we haven't moved on and found something more important to do.

# The history of the



1673 From the 1650s the state encouraged settlement in Lapland to exploit the riches of the north. Farmers who settled there were granted land and tax exemption for 15 years. Sami rights to these lands were not respected. The Lappmark Proclamation of 1673 allowed farmers to settle without even consulting the Sami. The exclusive rights of taxpaying Sami were limited to reindeer grazing, hunting and fishing on their land for as long as they needed pasture for their reindeer.

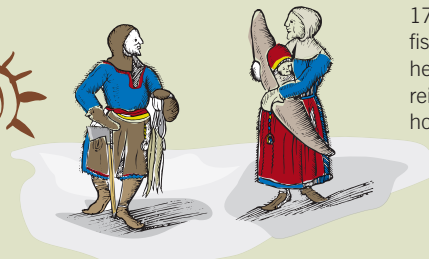
8<sup>th</sup> century  
Paulus Diaconus wrote about the “Skrid Finns”. He described skiing. They were called Skrid Finns because they caught up with wild animals in the snow with the help of pieces of wood curved like bows. There were animals in their country that looked like deer, and clothes were sewn from their skins.



17<sup>th</sup> century Hunting and fishing gave way to the herding of domesticated reindeer as the main livelihood of the Sami. ▶ page 39

9000 BC The first traces of Stone Age people in Sápmi. Wild reindeer hunting and salmon-fishing were their main livelihoods. They lived in portable hide tents. A settlement outside Arjeplog – the oldest found in Sweden so far – was recently dated by researchers. ▶ pages 12–13

890 AD The Norwegian chieftain Ottar, who was from what is now Tromsø, told Alfred the Great about his trading journeys in the north. Ottar owned 600 tame reindeer, but his main source of income was the tax he collected from the Sami in the form of hides and whale and seal skins.



1606 Charles IX, youngest son of Gustav Vasa, replaced villages by parishes as the main administrative division and the Sami were more closely integrated into the Swedish tax system. The king claimed that Finnmark and the Norwegian coast belonged to Sweden.

1553 Gustav Vasa decided that in future the Sami would pay taxes directly to the Crown through the Lapp bailiffs.



1543 King Gustav Vasa states in a letter that the Sami are to enjoy certain rights on their side of the “Lapland border”.

1613 Russia and Denmark, as well as Sweden, laid claim to the Finnmark area and the northernmost part of the Norwegian coast. As a result, the Sami had to pay taxes to three countries for many years. One cause of the Kalmar War (1611–1613) was the dispute about the Arctic coast. Sweden lost both the war and the coast and the Sami in the area became Norwegian subjects.

1635 Queen Kristina's government decided to start mining silver in Nasafjäll. The Sami were forced to transport the ore to the coast with their reindeer. They were also forced to provide transport for mining operations in other parts of Sápmi at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.



10000–5000 BC  
The inland ice receded in northern Scandinavia.

1800–900 BC  
The climate changed and wild reindeer began to graze on coastal grass pastures in summer and on lichen inland in winter. Wild reindeer were captured.

98 AD  
The Roman historian Tacitus wrote about a Nordic people called Fenni. They did not till the soil but lived off what nature provided. They were clothed in skins and slept on the ground.

550 AD  
The Byzantine historian Prokopios wrote about the peoples of Scandinavia, one of whom were the “Skrid Finns” – hunters clad in skins.

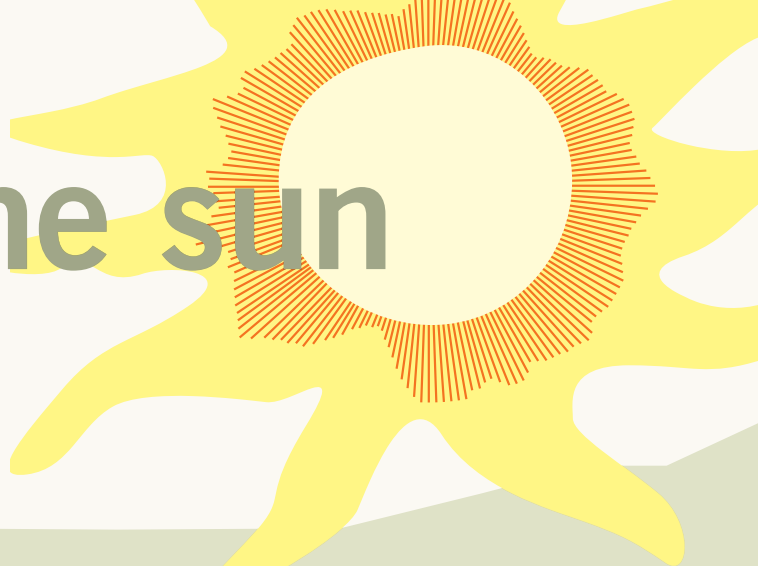
13<sup>th</sup> century  
The Sami are mentioned in Snorri Sturluson's sagas as a people who had dealings with other Nordic peoples.

1328 Birkarls are thought to be from what is now Tampere, Finland. The Swedish Crown gave them the right to trade with and levy taxes from the Sami. Under an agreement concluded in 1328, the Sami must not be prevented from hunting. The Birkarls divided the Sami lands into trade districts called Lappmarks.





# people of the sun



1751  
The Swedish-Norwegian border was redrawn. Sweden renounced its



claims to Finnmark. A codicil to the border treaty – the Lapp Codicil – is often called the Sami Magna Carta. It allowed the Sami to cross the border with their reindeer in spring and autumn as before and to use the land and the shore for themselves and their reindeer regardless of national boundaries.

► pages 34–35

1751 The Lapland border, which still exists, was fixed. Coastal farmers were not allowed to fish and hunt above this boundary. The Sami and the settlers were to share the hunting and fishing amongst themselves in this area.

1868 and 1873 An “agriculture line” dividing the mountain region from the forest areas in Västerbotten and Norrbotten was fixed. Its purpose was to protect the Sami and reindeer husbandry. The land above the line was reserved for year-round use by the Sami and their reindeer. Grazing below the line was only permitted in October–April.

20<sup>th</sup> century  
Restrictions on Sami hunting and fishing rights resulted mainly from the establishment of national parks. The legalization of small game hunting and fishing in mountain areas was also a blow to reindeer-herding Sami.



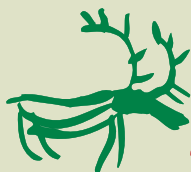
1986 The Sami flag was adopted.

► pages 4–5

1977 The Swedish Parliament recognized the Sami as an indigenous people in Sweden.

1993 The Sami Parliament was set up in Sweden. The Norwegian and Finnish Sami parliaments opened in 1989 and 1973, respectively.

► page 63



1685 The state decided to hold idolatry trials in all Lappmarks (administrative “Sami districts”). The shamans’ drums were to be burned. Disobedience was to be punished by “flogging against the courthouse wall” or running the gauntlet. Cult images (sieidi) and sacrificial sites were destroyed, and sacred Sami sites were desecrated.

► page 59

1886 The first Reindeer Grazing Act was passed and renewed in 1928. Under this Act, only reindeer-herding Sami were entitled to the hunting, fishing and reindeer husbandry rights enjoyed by samebys.

1920–39 Large groups of Sami from the far north of Sweden were forcibly relocated further south.

► pages 36–37

1922 At the beginning of the century interracial mixing was widely considered a threat to society. It was decided to test this theory by studying the Sami, since they lived alongside several other ethnic groups. The study was launched in 1922 by the National Racial Biology Institute. One of the methods used was to measure skulls. The results were reported 10 years later in the form of a photo gallery of 1,331 named Sami individuals.

► page 15

2000 Establishment of the Sami Parliamentary Council, a Nordic cooperation forum with the Sami parliaments in Norway and Finland as members and the Russian Sami as observers. The Swedish Sami Parliament joined in 2002.

# The oldest traces of Sami civilization found in Arjeplog

There are plenty of remains of prehistoric settlements in the inland part of northernmost Sweden. These remains tell us a great deal about the communities that existed in this part of the world for thousands of years. We can see how the inhabitants gradually progressed from hunting and fishing to reindeer husbandry and what sort of contacts they had with the outside world. But there are no traces of the period immediately after the melting of the inland ice. The almost complete absence of early settlements has baffled scientists for many years, and only during the last few years has the picture become clear. Archaeologist Ingela Bergman describes the methods used to find the new settlements.

Thanks to the archaeological investigations recently concluded by the Silver Museum in Arjeplog the first chapter of the prehistory of Sweden's far north can now be written. The investigations were the result of interdisciplinary research cooperation between archaeologists and ecologists. The purpose of the project was to find out when, how and why the earliest settlers moved into the inland part of Norrland (the northern half of Sweden) after the inland ice melted. The development of the landscape and vegetation after the melting was also investigated. One result of this cooperation was the discovery of the oldest settlement in Norrland so far, which has improved our understanding of people's lives almost 10,000 years ago.

## A settlement 9,800 years old

The oldest settlement that has been dated with certainty is located next to a small lake called Dumpokjauratj, about 20 km east of Arjeplog, that was once a bay of a much larger lake. Two fire pits and a small rubbish pit were found at the top of a ridge beside the north part of the lake and investigated. Charred wood in the pits shows that they were dug almost 9,800 years ago. Pieces of stone broken off during toolmaking were found next to the pits together with scrapes, bone fragments, burned

stones and small grains of red ochre. A slate knife and a portable whetstone were also found. The stone tools were made from local rocks, suggesting that the inhabitants had already located important resources in the area. The layout of the pits and other finds indicate that there were two dwellings on the site and that the settlement was short-lived. Bone fragments of identified species show that reindeer-hunting contributed significantly to the food supply. Among the bones there were also a few fragments of fish and birds.

## Hunters, fishers and gatherers

The landscape around Lake Dumpokjauratj was completely different in those days. The water that surrounded the settlement is now replaced by swamp-land. The vegetation consisted mainly of pine, birch, alder, willow and rowan, which are also present in today's forest, as well as sea buckthorn, hops and possibly larch too. Pollen analyses show that species-rich plant communities were established early on and that the landscape rapidly evolved into an environment with sufficient resources to support a population of hunters, fishers and gatherers, although strong earthquakes and forest fires modified the landscape. It was in such places that the first inhabitants, equipped with the



Traces of charcoal and burned stones are revealed as the contours of the oldest fire pit by Lake Dumpokjauratj emerge.

## Locales

1. Vaikijaure
2. Dumpokjauratj\*
3. Blomnäs \*
4. Ipmetis \*
5. Garaset
6. Vilhelmina
7. Åsele
8. Maksjön
9. Vilhelmina

\* Settlements discovered and investigated by the Silver Museum.





Photo: Silvermuseet i Arjeplog

The settlement was uncovered carefully layer by layer. The exact location of each object was determined.

knowledge and experience needed to survive, found a place to live.

#### Migration from the north and west

When the inland ice receded it opened paths for migration from east and west, north and south. The archeological material is not sufficient to allow firm conclusions about the origin of the first pioneers. But an analysis of the earliest settlements in northern Norway, Sweden and Finland does indicate probable migration paths. The oldest settlements are located around the north coast of Norway. Further south, in northern Sweden and Finland, a younger generation of settlements has been found. Those that have been dated suggest migration to northern Norrland from the north and west. We know for certain that the people who settled in areas from which the ice had recently receded had an understanding of the landscape that was handed down from generation to generation for many, many years. The long history of settlement in the far north, as confirmed by the great age of the Norwegian settlements, may well have been sufficient to prepare a people of hunters, fishers and gatherers for life in inland Norrland. ✧

The research project Man, Fire and Landscape was financed by a grant from the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation and ran from 1999 to 2003.

*Ingela Bergman*  
PhD in archaeology,  
Director of the Silver Museum in Arjeplog



Representatives of the Swedish state rarely respected Sami interests.

# Sami policy in the shadow of racism

Hundreds of years ago many people in Sweden were treated much worse than today, and this also applies to the Sami. Yet it is hardly true to say that they were discriminated against until around 1800 when new ideas began to circulate, first about superior and inferior cultures and then about superior and inferior races.

According to the first theory, nomads were culturally inferior to farmers and must therefore give way to the latter. As a result, the Sami were deprived of large land areas in Jämtland, Härjedalen, Norrbotten and Västerbotten provinces. The areas most seri-

ously affected were the reindeer's winter grazing lands in the forests.

## **Sami had to pay for their land**

Reindeer herders often had to pay to use land that used to be theirs. Sometimes they were also fined if reindeer knocked down hay-drying racks erected on previous reindeer grazing land. And farmers sometimes started forest fires to burn away the reindeer pasture around swamps where they gathered winter feed for their cattle.

Around the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century more and more people reacted to the ill-treatment of the Sami. Parliament tried to

curb the worst injustices. The transfer of Sami lands to farmers was suspended in Jämtland and Härjedalen in 1841. In the latter half of the century the state purchased land on behalf of the Sami. An agriculture line from north to south was drawn through Lapland (see map on p. 33). The land west of this boundary was supposed to be reserved for Sami reindeer husbandry, but in fact there were many non-Sami settlements in the area from the very start.

In the 1870s the Sami in Norrbotten and Västerbotten were given winter grazing rights on private land free of charge. This was confirmed by an Act, which also became applicable to Jämtland and Härjedalen in 1889. The Act permitted reindeer grazing in "customary" grazing lands. This legislation is still applicable, but it is so vague and difficult to interpret that it sometimes causes conflicts.

## **An "inferior race"**

Sweden's Sami policy in the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was influenced by racial biology. It was alleged that the Sami were born with certain "racial characteristics" that made them inferior to the rest of the population. Therefore they could not live like "civilized" people in proper houses since they would become lazy and neglect their reindeer. All the Sami would become beggars as a result, since herding reindeer was the only thing they could do. In 1928 Parliament decided that Sami who did not pursue reindeer husbandry were not entitled to Sami rights. They no longer had the right to hunt and fish in areas where their ancestors had lived, for example. The government thus drew a sharp line between reindeer-herding Sami and those in other occupations.

This racist outlook was also applied to education. Under the Nomad Schools Act of 1913 teachers moved from place to place in the mountain areas during the summer. The youngest children were taught in the



family's tent (lávvu) for a few weeks each year for the first three school years. They were then taught for three months each winter in permanent school premises for three more years. Few subjects were taught, and the educational level was to be such as to ensure that the children were not "civilized". The children of nomadic Sami were denied admission to public elementary schools. Children who stayed away from nomad school were to be fetched by the police. The Sami protested against this system and sometimes organized school strikes.

Around the early 1930s public opinion began to demand that nomad schools meet the same standards as other Swedish schools. The situation improved, especially after the Second World War. A Sami was appointed director of nomad schools in 1944.

Many Sami had to give up reindeer husbandry in the 1920s and 30s. According to several studies they lived in dire poverty. At the same time the government spent substantial sums on settling crofters on Crown land in inland Norrland, but hardly any of this aid was paid to the Sami. Although many Sami had already successfully established smallholdings the authorities did not consider the Sami capable of farming. As late as 1941 the Board of Agriculture declared that they were not suited to farming for "reasons of racial biology".

After the Second World War racist policies were no longer acceptable. The problems facing reindeer husbandry and the Sami culture in the modern age were related to the advent of large-scale forestry, hydropower exploitation, mining, roads, railways and later large-scale tourism. These developments also benefited the Sami, but there was less and less room for their way of life and their culture. ✧

*Lennart Lundmark*  
Associate Professor of History



Photo: Lef Aberg

The Swedish Institute of Racial Biology took part in the 1930 Stockholm Exhibition with a showcase displaying photographs of the country's "races".

## Policies based on racial biology

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century many people believed in the value of studying the characteristics of various "races". Some scientists proposed establishing a Swedish Institute of Racial Biology. Parliament unanimously adopted a resolution to set up such an institute, which opened in 1922. Herman Lundborg, a Doctor of Medicine, was appointed director of the Institute, whose object was to seek to safeguard the "high quality of the Swedish race". The Institute published long books in English and German, as well as Swedish Race Theory, a less theoretical work that sold 11,000 copies in 1927.

Herman Lundborg was convinced that it was a bad thing for people of different "races" to have children together. He aimed to prove this by studying mis-

cegenation between "Swedes", Sami and Finns in the north of Sweden. After a few years all the Institute's resources were used to study the Sami, mainly by measuring their skulls.

These studies did not produce anything of scientific value. Scientists and politicians started protesting against Lundborg's fixation with the Sami and interracial mixing. The Institute's budget was reduced, but Lundborg remained its director until his retirement in 1935. His successor was strongly opposed to all forms of race research. The Institute subsequently concentrated on studying hereditary diseases, but its name was not changed until 1958, when it was merged with the Department of Medical Genetics at Uppsala University.

*Lennart Lundmark*



# Between two identities

Johannes Marainen tells of his journey from SaariVuoma, a sameby in Kiruna municipality, via nomad school to a life as a teacher in a Swedish school. He has devoted a great deal of his life to lecturing about Sami identity and culture.

” As a child I had the privilege of growing up in an environment that was almost purely Sami.

Everyone in my sameby was involved in reindeer husbandry, and our way of life was still unaffected by the majority Swedish society. In terms of language and culture we lived our own lives.

But we were in contact with another culture for two months of the year,

although it was not Swedish culture but the Meänkieli (Torne Valley Finnish) culture. We were, you might say, a minority within another minority. In those days both these minority cultures were pretty much insulated from the influence of the Swedish majority culture.

My first contact with Sweden was when I started going to school. I was not even aware that I was a Swedish citizen because in those days we did not live in Sweden all the year. Reindeer-herding Sami also had access to summer pastures in Norway, and my family therefore used to spend part of the year on the Norwegian side of the border.

If you look at the parish records of those days you might get the impression that Sami parents are not very imaginative when it comes to naming their children. How could you otherwise explain the fact that there could be as many as five boys called Per or Nils or Lars in the same family? The reason was that the parish pastors used one standard name for three or four different Sami names. From their first day at school boys called Biera, Bera, Biete and Beahkka had to accept that in future they would all have the same name – Per.

I found it just as strange and incomprehensible to learn that my name was Johannes Marainen the first time we had a roll-call in school as that day in 1993 when I had flown to Sapporo, Japan for a conference of indigenous peoples and was met by an Ainu at the airport and could not understand how the name written on the placard could be mine. Johannes Marainen was just as different from my Sami name, Lásbietheaihkahónas, regardless of

whether it was written in Swedish or Japanese.

Our first years at school were on the face of it adapted to our way of life. We attended school from June to August and from the beginning of January to April, i.e. during the months when we were not moving around. And in the summer the school itself was an ordinary Sami lávvu like our own summer homes. But that was the only part of our culture that they both-ered about.

School was therefore a shock for me in terms of culture and language. “Mother tongue” lessons completely dominated the timetable for the first few years, except that it was not my mother tongue, but Swedish. I did not understand a single word. Later on I was told that according to the regulations for nomad schools Sami children were to be punished if they used their own language in school, and that applied to the breaks between lessons too. That rule was only abolished in 1956.

After the first three years I did not go to the lávvu school in the summer any more. Instead, I had to leave my parents in August and go to the “nomad school”, a boarding school in a village near our winter grounds. I did not meet the rest of my family again until they returned to the winter grounds with the reindeer around Christmas.

Most of my first three school years were spent learning our “mother tongue”, and it seemed as if the next three years would be devoted to making us feel, or at least behave, like Swedes, or like “civilized people”, as Gunnar Kieri with his Meänkieli background put it.

How do children feel when their own culture is not recognized as a culture, and



Photo: Jan Gustavsson

When Lásbietheaihkahónas started school his name was changed to Johannes Marainen.

everything that has to do with their way of life is looked down upon? We had to learn to sleep like Swedes in our own beds and sometimes to wear dreadful, unfamiliar uniform-like Swedish clothes. At home we had not learned to eat properly with a knife and fork, and we made the unforgivable mistake of putting a knife in our mouths. That was about the worst thing a Swede could do, we learned. Obviously, our parents had taught us all wrong: to cut meat and bread with a knife and then use the knife to put the food in our mouths.

Although I was very relieved to leave that school that I hated so much, I continued my school education in Kiruna. There I soon learned that the best thing to do was to draw as little attention to my Sami background as possible. But that did not stop people shouting “bloody Lapp” at me all the time. I tried to pretend that I hadn’t heard it and didn’t care. But every time it was like a thorn in my flesh however much I tried to ignore it.

More and more Sami moved to the town over the years and naturally we hung out together even if we had never met before. We used the “mother tongue” in town and our own language at the “Lapp hostel” (the only “hotel” that admitted Sami in those days) where we lived and in the “Lapp café”.

Sami like us who lived in the town soon learned that the best and simplest thing to do was to adapt ourselves and become as Swedish as possible. Unfortunately, this led to self-denial in certain situations. On one occasion it really hurt to see some Sami youths in town deliberately avoiding their parents so as not to betray their Sami origin, and I was filled with shame. To be honest, I realized that it could just as well have been me.

I continued to study and accepted that I was more and more “Swedish”. In time I became a “mother tongue” teacher in an upper secondary school in Gothenburg and



Photo: Frida Hedberg

Johannes Marainen tells young people about his youth at an activity day outside the Museum of Natural History in Stockholm.

I was quite satisfied with my life. I had never been officially discriminated against, I had had the same educational opportunities as other Swedes. I enjoyed my job. What did I have to complain about?

In Gothenburg I found out almost immediately that I was no longer a “bloody little Lapp”, but an exotic Sami. Before long people wanted the exotic Sami to lecture about the exotic Sami people. I hesitated for a long time before I could face an audience, because I really didn’t know anything about the Sami, at least not the sort of thing I thought they wanted to hear, apart from my own experiences. To remedy my ignorance about the Sami I went to the library and borrowed *The Lapps in Sweden* by Israel Ruong. When I had read to the end I finally realized that we Sami have a history of our own.

As luck would have it, my father was visiting me when I gave my first lecture about the Sami in Gothenburg. On the way home I asked him what he thought of it, and he answered: “*In mon hal ipmirdan nu*

*ollu maid don dadjet, muht, spedjo han dat goit gie'aid, amal dat lei buorre*”. (“I didn’t understand much of what you said but they applauded, so it was probably fine.”) His answer did not surprise me. My father went to school before the days of the assimilation policy, so I suggested telling him about the lecture in Sami instead.

Next day after school we sat down for some coffee and started talking. This became a turning-point. I had the shock of my life! I discovered that the “mother tongue” had got the upper hand over *eat-nangiela* – my real mother tongue. I was appalled to realize that I could no longer talk about ordinary everyday matters in my own language! For the first time as an adult I became aware of the disadvantages of assimilation. I began to realize that the Swedish education policy in relation to the Sami had deprived me of something precious, indeed perhaps the most precious thing of all, my language.

I thought that I could still speak Sami, but as I had not been in continuous contact

with a Sami environment and culture, I had been unable to develop my language in a natural way. I found that I spoke Sami rather like a child. I could cope with everyday situations, but I couldn't take part in a discussion.

Seeing that I had not been able to develop my ability to use my native language on an everyday basis with other Sami speakers, the school should have filled the gap. But what had it done? It had forced me to learn a new mother tongue. My own language, my own history and my own culture had been taken away from me and replaced by something initially alien to me, but which I mastered in time. And now my old identity had become alien.

I was ashamed and full of guilt, because I felt that I had let my people down and let myself down too. It hurt to live through it

once again in my memory and above all to talk about it. But I did so all the same, in fact I felt I had to, and perhaps it would help other Sami who were searching for their identity.

Nowadays I no longer feel ashamed and I wish other Sami would not feel ashamed either, even if they have been driven to self-denial by external pressures.

And nowadays I don't accuse those who have hurt my feelings, whether deliberately or not, and gradually forced me to choose the Swedish language and culture. But I do accuse all those who are responsible for the cultural policy that has been pursued against us Sami and that has made us despise our own language, our own culture and in the last analysis ourselves. Even at school we were made to feel inferior. Our language was not good enough, it had to be

replaced by a new "mother tongue", and our history was not worth studying.

How has this realization affected my life? Well, outwardly there is no great difference. I have not physically returned to my roots, but nonetheless I feel that I am back there. I have found my identity and I now know that I have my own valuable culture and history to fall back on.

I am a Sami among Swedes, but I do not feel the same sense of a common identity with them as I do together with other Sami among Norwegians or among Finns. National boundaries criss-cross our Sápmi, but what do we care, they're not on our "maps". ✨ ”

*Johannes Marainen,  
headteacher and chairman of the  
Gothenburg Sami Association*

## From lávvu school to teleteaching

There was no concerted approach to the teaching of Sami children until the end of the 19th century. Various school systems were tried with varying degrees of success up to about 1880, when the Sami school system started to resemble the non-Sami elementary school system.

From the early 1900s to the beginning of the 1960s Sami school education was organized around lávvu schools. According to the Swedish government, the Sami should live in a goahti or lávvu; if they lived in houses there was a risk that they might become like Swedes. However, the lávvu schools were only for the children of reindeer-herding Sami, and about two-thirds of Sami children attended municipal schools.

The lávvu school system was gradually phased out by 1952 and was replaced by nomad schools that were run as boarding schools. The Sami language was first introduced as a school subject in nomad schools on an experimental basis in 1953/54.

In 1962 Parliament decided that all Sami children should be allowed to attend nomad schools if they wished, and the length and content of the education should be equivalent to that provided in nine-year compulsory schools.

The period of compulsory school attendance for Sami children, including the children of reindeer-herding Sami, was therefore nine years, as for other children. But the education provided by these schools was considered substandard, and the number of pupils gradually fell to a mere hundred or so by the end of the 1970s.

At present there are six Sami schools (1st to 6th forms) in Karesuando, Lannavaara, Kiruna, Gällivare, Jokkmokk and Tärnaby, as well as "ordinary" schools that offer Sami-language teaching. There are also several Sami pre-schools. There is, in addition, an upper secondary school in Jokkmokk that offers a Sami programme, including Sami-language instruction and specific Sami subjects. The Sami Education Centre in Jokkmokk, which is Sami-run, offers special programmes in Sami handicrafts, language and culture.

It is also possible to study Sami linguistics and culture at university. Much of this education is provided with the help of computer-aided teleteaching techniques. The teacher may be in Jokkmokk and the students in Malmö in the south. Apart from computer-aided teleteaching, the ICT support that is provided for Sami-



Photo: Kiruna photo library

language activities facilitates data communication between Sami in different parts of Sápmi. Read more about the mother-tongue education situation on page 54.



# Symbols strengthen identity

Sami symbols such as language, dress and handicrafts are overt expressions of ethnic identity, and by adopting them people signal their affiliation with a group. But identity is much more complicated than that according to Christina Åhrén, an ethnologist engaged in research into Sami identity at Umeå University.

Everyone has to address the question of identity in youth when they relinquish the identity given them by their parents and seek their own identity. At the same time, they seek a group to belong to.

– Our identity places us in a social context where we define our self-perception, says Christina Åhrén. This search is constantly repeated: Do I want to belong to this group? Is this me? Do I believe in this identity and the symbols that are associated with it? Our answers to these questions lead us to our true identity.

## Difficulty dealing with the Sami legacy

Christina Åhrén, a Sami from Jämtland, became interested in this question when younger Sami she met at university mentioned their difficulties in dealing with their Sami legacy. In her research she has followed up a group of 30 Sami from their teens to their late 20s who represent the whole gamut of Sami attitudes, from those who play down their Saminess to those who embrace all things Sami.

Some of them have had to decide whether to keep up the family's reindeer husbandry tradition or seek another future. Others, who are not members of a sameby, have had to decide to what extent they want to be part of Sami culture.

– The older generation who went to Sami schools were ashamed of their origins and did not teach their children Sami because they did not want to create problems for them. This shame has disappeared and young Sami take more pride in their roots. Today, children want to learn the lan-

guage and traditions and often influence their elders too.

Symbols help people to feel part of a group and the wider community. But it is not quite as simple as that, says Christina Åhrén, since people do not always agree about the value of Sami symbols. Some Sami think that being a reindeer herder is more important than being able to speak Sami, and vice versa, and some also consider it better the more Sami symbols they have “collected”.

– These differences represent a sort of cultural ladder, and people can argue for hours about what the most genuine elements of the culture are. “You’re a reindeer herder, but you’re married to a Swede”. “You know how to sew leather, but you’re not a reindeer herder”. The result is that you will never find the “perfect” Sami.

## Innate cultural competence

Some people are born with “cultural competence” – the ability to distinguish between true and false. Others need a cultural ladder to acquire this competence.

– Anyone can adopt the symbols, wear a gákti (a traditional dress) or learn the language, but being brought up as a Sami confers a degree of cultural competence, a personal Sami identity, without the need to acquire all the Sami symbols and show the world that you are a Sami.

Some feel under pressure to affirm their Sami identity. Not the pressure of tradition



but the pressure to choose between all the conflicting influences in the modern world. However, in the group being studied by Christina Åhrén no one has opted to abandon the Sami community, far from it. A new generation is finding ways of reconciling its Swedish and Sami interests and cultural competences.

– People take their interests with them into the Sami world. Those who are interested in music start yoiking. An environmental commitment in Swedish politics becomes a similar environmental commitment in Sami politics.

– Adoption of Sami culture is, at the same time, an aspect of globalization, says Christina Åhrén. Countries mean less and less, there is a general trend towards fragmentation, and people are keen to represent something unique.

– People feel comfortable belonging to something, such as an ethnic or sexual group. ✧



Elle Márjá (left) together with her daughter Monika in the corral. Many reindeer remain to be caught before the day's work is over.

– Nowadays reindeer no longer feed their owners, she says.

Many studies have been made of the economics of reindeer husbandry, and they all show that motorization has led to an enormous increase in expenditure.

#### **Many worries for a reindeer herder**

It started in the mid-60s with the snowmobiles. Today motorbikes, helicopters and lorries are used too. Only a fraction of sales revenue stays in the reindeer herder's pocket. Expenses vary little, but income certainly does. In bad years some of the herd may die, and the number of calves can vary considerably, which is one reason why Elle Márjá started giving her reindeer winter feed a few years ago. Another factor is the government's decision to maintain certain predator levels in Sweden.

– Wolverines, lynxes, eagles and bears cull some of the herd. It is mostly we reindeer herders who feed these predators. The compensation paid by the state for these losses is far from sufficient, according to Elle Márjá. So the size of the herds fluctuates sharply, as it always has.

Elle Márjá's life revolves around reindeer all the same.

– I suppose I'm just hooked on reindeer, she says, laughing.

She not only makes her living from reindeer, they are her chief company and allies too. Elle Márjá's two daughters work with the herd too. They're both married to reindeer herders and have other jobs too, but they help out whenever the need arises.

– I married just before they started using snowmobiles in the forest. We stuck to reindeer husbandry when I realized we could make a go of it and I gave up the idea of taking another job.

## *Elle Márjá*

### – reindeer herder in a world of men

Elle Márjá Nutti's home and workplace are immense. It is almost 300 km between the conifer forests east of Vuolle Sohppar in the far north of Sweden and the snowclad Norwegian mountains. This is where she lives and works.

It is July and time to round up the reindeer herds and mark the year's calves. Although she has worked most of the night, she found time to empty some nets in a small lake nearby. Like everyone else in Saarivuo- ma sameby, she is spending a few weeks on a high plateau in the Norwegian mountains. Every evening some reindeer herders go out on their motorbikes to fetch a herd of rein-

deer that they gather in a corral. Each yearling calf is marked in the ears to show who its owner is.

Elle Márjá's marking system is rather unusual, however. As she feeds her reindeer in the winter, she keeps the pregnant herd in large enclosed fields during the spring. The cows calve in mid-May. She lets them grow for a few weeks before rounding up all the animals, marking the calves and turning the herd loose to graze. So she does not have much to do up here in Gáicáčahca village. She may find an unmarked calf or two, but even if she does not she would not want to be anywhere else during calf-marking ("harvest time" as it is called).

Photo: Tor Lundberg

Her employers are the reindeer and nature. She hunts elk for a few weeks in the autumn. In November when the reindeer are gathered and split up into winter groups she separates the ones that belong to her siida (group of sameby families) and takes them to the winter grazing land. Nowadays she feeds the herd in the winter. Each reindeer eats 2 kg of feed a day, and since she has the herd there until the beginning of June the feed bill is expensive, she says.

– But my reward is the large number of strong calves that I get. After calf-marking she goes to her house in Vuolle Sohppar, where she spends a good part of August picking cloudberries. In good years she picks enough to sell the surplus. When asked about her hobbies she laughs and says that she has just one hobby: taming reindeer bulls.

– Some of them are good at leading the herd, but I do it mostly because it is fun working with them. Not that I get any help when I need it, she says. Since she is neither large nor heavy, it can be quite a

struggle to catch a reindeer and get it to go where she leads it.

#### **Hard for women to be members of a sameby**

Elle Márjá is humorous and cheerful. But when we start talking about her position as a woman in the sameby she turns serious. Her two daughters married some years ago. As unmarried working women they were full members of the sameby, but they lost this status when they married. The sameby board suggested that their husbands become full members instead. But after a long struggle with the sameby the authorities decided in favour of the women.

Very few reindeer herders in Sweden today are women. Much of the work is hard. The applicable legislation is an inferior copy of the rules relating to agriculture and the only member of the reindeer-herding family who can vote at sameby meetings is the “master of the household”. Although Elle Márjá spends all her time with the reindeer and does her best, she does not feel she has the same status as the men in the sameby.

Her sameby is one of the largest in the

country and has about 70 reindeer-herding members. Only a few of these support themselves by reindeer husbandry alone. To do so a reindeer herder must have at least 400 reindeer, and not many reindeer herders have that many. This is nothing new. People have always needed several sources of income in order to survive in Sápmi. The usual combination has been reindeer husbandry, hunting, fishing and agriculture. Most reindeer herders therefore have side-lines or part-time jobs to support themselves. In many cases the husband works in the reindeer forest, while his wife has a paid job. The herders have always had to adapt to new conditions. In the beginning they only had to adapt to nature. But when other people appeared on the scene the Sami adapted once again. Today, Elle Márjá’s life is not only determined by the weather, it may equally be affected by negotiations conducted in Oslo or Stockholm. Today, however, she has her mind on other things. At the moment it is the weather that will decide whether the gatherers bring in a reindeer herd tonight, and if so how big will it be? ✧







Photo: Lulebild

# Driving reindeer from the air

– I'm a speed freak!

Mattias Eriksson from Arvidsjaur has bought a roadracing bike. It is really powerful and has a top speed of 280 kph. He has done well in the few races that he has taken part in so far.

He has some trophies on a shelf. The problem is that the nearest roadracing tracks are in northern Finland and central Norway, so he has to travel halfway round Scandinavia to race.

– One reason why I started racing is that it gives me the chance to meet other people as a change from reindeer herding.

Mattias Eriksson also works a good deal as a helicopter pilot. Although he is only just over 30 he has been a pilot for 10 years. One reason for this is that he was interested in flying, but he also realized early on how useful helicopters are in reindeer herding. He was a boy when they

started using helicopters in his home district. When they rounded up the reindeer herds he was always close to the helicopter, helping and learning as much as he could.

## **Rounding up reindeer by helicopter**

During the summer he works for an aviation company, flying out tourists and transporting material around the forest and mountain areas of Norrland. But he puts in most of his flying hours gathering reindeer. This is a dangerous job as he has to fly just above the treetops all the time, which leaves no margin for error.

– It's easier flying in the mountains. In the forest there are so many things in the way, like power lines and masts, so you have to watch out all the time. Although helicopters move faster than reindeer, he says that it is the reindeer who call the shots.

– If they want to go in a certain direction there's no way you can stop them.

He does not exaggerate the importance of helicopters.

– It's the people on the ground who gather the reindeer, helicopters help but cannot do any miracles on their own.

The summer of 2004 was a bad one for calf-marking in all the forest samebys. Owing to the wet weather the herds never gathered as they usually do in the early summer.

– But without helicopters it would probably have been even worse, says Mattias Eriksson.

## **Time is money**

– Nowadays time is much more important in reindeer husbandry than it used to be. A few days' bad weather or gathering problems can cause trouble. As all the samebys are doing the same things at the same time, it would be great if you could clone the helicopters, abattoirs and reindeer trans-

Mattias Eriksson is a helicopter pilot, but his main interest in life is roadracing.

port trucks. Everyone needs them at the same time.

Reindeer gathering does not always go according to plan, mostly due to the weather. Sometimes the autumn slaughter may have to be postponed for a year because it never stops raining.

### Preserving traditions

After the elk hunt, the slaughter of the sarvs (bulls) and all the other things that have to be done before the snow comes, Mattias Eriksson's life as a reindeer herder begins. With his father he moves the winter herd to the coast near Piteå. If possible, they use the migration routes, but sometimes they load the animals on to trucks and trailers that take them to the winter grazing lands much faster. Mattias Eriksson and his father keep up traditions wherever possible.

– It's nice to see that dogs have made a comeback. Good reindeer dogs are worth their weight in gold.

But motorbikes are what Mattias Eriksson really wants to talk about.

– Dad's not so keen on my hobby. But if you relax while you're driving, grip the bike tightly between your legs and keep a relaxed hold on the handlebars you can go really fast.

There is no doubt that speed is what makes Mattias Eriksson tick. ✧



Even as a boy Mattias helped to round up the reindeer herds with a helicopter.



Photo: Tor Lundberg

## Technological developments in reindeer husbandry

Until about 1950 the only means of transport used in reindeer husbandry was skis. With the help of herding dogs called reindeer dogs the herders could control and move the reindeer herd. More reindeer herders were needed than is the case today when herds are moved fast with the help of modern means of transport.

Snowmobiles and walkie-talkies started to gain ground among reindeer herders towards the end of the 1960s. However, it was only at the end of the 1970s that snowmobiles had been improved to such an extent that they could be used as a labour-saving vehicles in reindeer herding. The new technologies spread rapidly in the 1980s, and reindeer dogs began to be replaced by motorcycles and helicopters.

Nowadays, the old and new technologies are used side by side. This is partly because the cost of modern technology can be prohibitive for the individual reindeer herder. A good example of the parallel use of new and old technology is the frequent use of reindeer dogs together with four wheelers and snowmobiles. The most up-to-date technologies are also being tried out in reindeer herding. Satellites and the Internet can now tell reindeer herders where good reindeer pasture is to be found and they also make it possible to communicate in sparsely populated areas where there are no

roads, cellphone networks or electricity. Nowadays, satellite telephones are being used more and more instead of walkie-talkies and NMT phones. Technological developments in general are leading to new applications in reindeer husbandry and other Sami occupations too.

### Technologies that have influenced reindeer husbandry and life in Sápmi over the years

Trains  
Radio  
Electricity  
Outboard motors  
Cars  
Snowmobiles  
Walkie talkies  
Seaplanes  
Helicopters  
Walkie-talkie telephones  
NMT (Nordic Mobile Telephone – the predecessor of GSM)  
Motorcycles  
GSM (Global System for Mobile communication)  
Computers  
Internet  
ATVs  
Satellite telephones



Photo: Bengt Eric Genhardsson/Scampix



Like many other Sami, Ingemar Blind has to combine various jobs to make both ends meet.

ner started a reindeer meat processing company. His theory is that people do not want to spend a lot of time cooking, so they have developed products that make cooking fast and simple. All of these are based on reindeer meat. One of them is individual portions of smoked reindeer meat, riced potatoes and vegetables. The initial target is to produce 500 portions a day.

– We can't go on giving away good-quality reindeer meat for SEK 35 per kg, says Ingemar. You can't make a profit that way.

#### **Less reindeer meat than elk meat**

Reindeer meat is not an important item of the Swedish diet. About 1,500 tonnes of reindeer meat are produced every year in Sweden. This is less than the amount of elk meat and only a fraction of beef production. Not many reindeer herders in Sweden process reindeer meat. The vast majority sell the animals to buyers waiting by the corral gate. Consequently, reindeer owners see very little of the money that is earned by processing the meat into sausages, fast food and dried meat.

Although it is difficult to make a profit from reindeer husbandry, Ingemar will never give up. He grew up with reindeer and looking after them is what he is best at.

#### **More varied industries**

Not many other reindeer herders are involved in such projects. Most of them try to make a living from reindeer husbandry, hunting and fishing.

– My businesses are far from risk-free. If they are not successful I will have to pay for it. But I've got to give it a try. ✧

## A life full of sidelines

Reindeer owner, taxi driver, food producer – Ingemar Blind can put many titles on his business card.

– Not many Sami today can make a living from selling reindeer meat alone, says Ingemar Blind.

Ingemar is chairman of Girjás sameby and a member of the board of the National Union of the Swedish Sami. One of his top priorities is the right for members of samebys to have sidelines so that they can earn extra income. The average wage of reindeer herders today is very low.

The members of the sameby are trying to establish small-scale tourism, but under the Reindeer Husbandry Act a sameby can

only pursue reindeer husbandry. Small game and fishing resources have scarcely been exploited in connection with tourism. The same applies to elk hunting. Issuing hunting licences could be a good source of income, but it is not feasible at present.

– There is some doubt as to whether the sameby has the right to allow non-members to hunt elk, says Ingemar Blind.

#### **Taxi-driving and cooking**

But Ingemar has found ways of making extra income. Reindeer husbandry tends to be a seasonal occupation. At some times of the year there is time to do other kinds of work. Three years ago he and a friend bought a taxi. Last summer he and a part-



# Dashing between Paris and Mittådalen

To all appearances Marja Ek looks like a typical young Stockholm career girl. She lives near the city centre, works in Stockholm's most fashionable district and travels between Europe's capitals in her job.

– Get back to me before Tuesday, because after that I'll be away in Paris for ten days.

Marja works with trade fairs and marketing at a Swedish-American company. That is one side of her.

The other side is that she spent all her spare time as a child in Mittådalen sameby in Härjedalen, and still spends her summers there. That is where her roots are on her mother's side.

– I've never made any a secret of my Sami origin. And I've never regretted it. In my job it is often better to be a Sami than a Stockholmer ...

## Sami lessons in the 4<sup>th</sup> form

Marja grew up in Sollentuna near Stockholm. Her mother, Gudrun Thomasson Ek, is from Mittådalen sameby. Her cousins, who are active reindeer herders, and many other family members are still there. Her grandparents were Klara and Tomas Thomasson, and her mother's grandfather was the well-known Sami photographer Nils Thomasson.

– My Sami origin has always been a natural part of me, mainly because I spent so much time with my grandmother in Mittådalen when I was a girl.

Marja laughs as she tells how she succeeded in getting mother-tongue education in south Sami in the fourth form in Sollentuna near Stockholm.

– It was a project I and my mum had. I remember how difficult it was to get hold of a teacher and text books. If I remember right, the books were in Norwegian.

Marja never continued her studies. She needs to know other languages in her job. But she has considered another kind of life.

– I have thought about “moving north” from time to time. But to be honest I think it would be difficult today. I have to admit that I am a city person and enjoy living here. Perhaps the best thing would be to spend half the year in Mittådalen and half the year here.

## A graduate of Grythyttan Restaurant Academy

As a child Marja used to take part in activities arranged by the Stockholm Sami Association and for a time she was also a member of Sáminuorra (Sami Youth organization). But Mittådalen is her real link with Sami culture.

Marja studied at Grythyttan Restaurant Academy. Her interest in food runs in the family. Her mother runs a shop and a catering services specializing in Norrland and Sami foods and her father Bill Ek exports Norrland foods, including cowberries, and used to export reindeer meat too.

– My mother still runs a shop in a goahti in Mittådalen during the summer. It was started by my grandmother in the 1960s. I used to work there in the summer holidays when I was a girl. Marja talks of all the chance events in her life that are the reason why she now works with trade fairs and marketing. She had a job at the county administrative board giving advice about



Marja Ek lives near the city centre and works in Stockholm's most fashionable district, but her roots are in Mittådalen.

small-scale food production and she took part in various projects to do with the marketing of Swedish food and raw materials in Europe. She also worked in the family firm, selling food products in Mittådalen during the summer and helping with catering and sales in Sollentuna for the rest of the year.

– I have a typical small business background and this helps me in my present job. I enjoy doing a bit of this and a bit of that.

And she intends to keep in touch with her roots in Mittådalen. ✧



Henrik Sarri still works as a guide in the family business at the age of 75.

Photo: Nikkaluokta Sarri AB

## A balancing act in the reindeer grazing lands

– Being reindeer owners ourselves makes it easier for us to understand the potential conflict of interest between reindeer herding and tourism. As reindeer herders we know all the pitfalls.

Anna Sarri manages a tourist enterprise called Nikkaluokta Sarri AB. Many Swedes know Nikkaluokta as the gateway to Kebnekaise, Sweden's highest peak, where the road from Kiruna ends and the mountains start. The village stands on the site of an old Sami settlement near the intersection of three valleys and the source of the Kalixälven river. It is home to the Sarri family's tourist centre, with holiday cabins, a restaurant, a shop and conference rooms all facing the mountain tops.

The tourist centre is more than a mountain resort, it is living proof that it is possible to combine Sami culture, reindeer husbandry and unspoiled nature with large-scale tourism. The centre has almost 25,000 visitors a year in spite of being situated between the Laevas and Girjás samebys, which herd reindeer in the area. Every spring and autumn the reindeer herds from the two samebys pass by Nikkaluokta. And Kebnekaise –the destination for many tourists – towers over reindeer pastures.

### A tightrope

– It's like a tightrope act, says Anna, who succeeded her father Henrik Sarri as managing director of the business in 1996. We are "selling" something that we share with the

rest of our people. If you can strike the right balance, it works, and it has worked for us.

Anna says that one reason why there have not been any real conflicts is that the family never gave up reindeer husbandry. Both her brother and her partner are reindeer herders, and her father made sure that the family's interest in reindeer husbandry was handed down to the younger generations.

When we meet Henrik at the calf-mark-



Photo: Krauz o Co

Anna Sarri is the Managing Director of Nikkaluokta Sarri AB.



ing he is overjoyed because one of his grandchildren has just phoned to tell him that he managed to mark two calves by himself.

– I have always regarded reindeer husbandry as our main livelihood, and even if there is a conflict of interest with tourism we have always managed to combine the two, says Henrik Sarri, who still works as a guide at the age of 75.

Another reason why the family has managed to avoid conflicts with the environment and their neighbours is that they have expanded the business very cautiously, say Anna and Henrik. The family will soon be celebrating its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in Nikkaluokta.

### Immigrants from Norway

Henrik's parents, reindeer herder Nils Olsson Sarri and his wife Maria, settled by the bay back in 1910. They were one of five Sami families from northern Norway who settled in Nikkaluokta after several severe winters during which they lost a large part of their reindeer herds. They were looking for a sideline to reindeer husbandry.

Nils soon got a job as an inspector with the Swedish Touring Club, which built its first cabin at the foot of Kebnekaise in 1908. Interest in mountain tourism was growing in those days, and what could be a better tourist draw than the highest peak in the country?

The whole family were soon involved in the business. Henrik and many of the other 13 children worked in the tourist sector. The family set up their business in 1946. In 1957 Henrik became managing director of the firm, which was then called Nikkaluokta Turisttrafik and mainly transported tourists by boat between the Kiruna area and Nikkaluokta. When the Kiruna road was finished in 1971 the number of visitors increased rapidly. The present large tourist centre, which was carefully designed to fit into the surroundings, was opened in 1988.

– Our main asset is our location and we

have made the most of it. First we provided transport, then other services, accommodation and food, says Anna.

In the last few years we have also started briefing the tourists about the Sami and their culture. Not that anyone asked for it, but it seemed the natural thing to do.

### New target groups

One way of finding new target groups is to work the international market. Anna has taken part in an exhibition of Sami tourist businesses from Kiruna held at the Swedish Embassy in London. This is a new market, and it needs developing. Its very existence is proof of the growing interest in the unique culture and nature of northern Scandinavia.

– We are growing steadily and are seeking a new public. Pooling resources makes it possible for several small enterprises to position themselves in new markets.

Modern means of transport, like helicopters, have paved the way for a new type of visitor to the Swedish mountains. Tourists who come to Nikkaluokta are no longer all hikers. There are frequent helicopter services all the way up to the Touring Club's centre at Kebnekaise and the nearby cabins. Nowadays you can arrange conferences in

Photo: Jonas Sundberg



The new tourist centre in Nikkaluokta was opened in 1988.

the mountains without seeing a single hiking boot. A new challenge, and an opportunity, says Anna.

– More and more people want to explore the countryside and see what we have to offer. Tourism is a new chapter in the history of the Sami, and I believe we can continue to expand without any adverse effects on our main livelihood. ✧

## Tourism in Sápmi

There are about 40 Sami tourist enterprises in Swedish Sápmi. Many of them are run by women, and about half the owners combine tourism with reindeer husbandry. The tourist activities include participation in everyday Sami life, hiking with reindeer, yoik performances, accommodation in goahtis, Sami food, story hours, lasso throwing and sled-driving. Museums, festivals and sales of Sami handicrafts are also features of Sami tourism.

### Some places worth visiting

Ájtte – the Swedish Mountain and Sami Museum in Jokkmokk, the Silver Museum in Arjeplog, the county museums in northern Sweden and the Laponia world heritage site.



Photo: Nikkaluokta Sarri AB



# Culture-oriented tourism

Sami tourism has considerable development potential. But according to researcher Robert Pettersson, success depends largely on better adapting its content to tourists' expectations. There are about 40 Sami tourist enterprises in Sweden, and most of these have operated for less than 10 years.

– There are various incentives for starting a Sami tourist enterprise, says Robert Pettersson. It is one way of making money without having to leave the area, and it creates jobs. It is also a way of raising awareness about Sami culture. Tourism can therefore be a learning meeting-place between Sami and non-Sami.

In his thesis *Sami Tourism in Northern Sweden* Robert Pettersson discusses the risks of “disneyfication” or over-commercialization of Sami tourism, as in the case of tourist ventures linked to indigenous peoples in Australia, New Zealand and North America, for example.

– We haven't seen any examples in Sweden yet of excessive commercialization, says Robert Pettersson. People in the industry are very much aware of the risks and the need to know where to draw the line.

Apart from the social and cultural aspects of increased tourism, attention must be paid to economic and environmental issues. Tourism can make money and create jobs, although there are great seasonal variations. It can also cause adverse effects on the physical environment in the form of increased littering, wear and tear and noise.

– These risks are real, but when it comes to Sami tourism in Sweden the advantages



Photo: Staffan Widstrand

For tourism to be successful, the entrepreneurs must fulfil tourists' expectations.

outweigh the disadvantages, says Robert Pettersson.

## On stage and backstage

The Sami entrepreneurs in the tourism sector that Robert Pettersson has met talk about “on stage” and “backstage”, i.e. meeting tourists as representative of the Sami people and culture and being off duty.

– It's a thin line. We're here to sell them our everyday lives, but these lives are the same as other people's lives. So there has to be a touristification. Entrepreneurs must decide for themselves where to draw the line, but they must create a saleable and interesting product.

Robert Pettersson has identified different categories of tourists. Some are interested in the genuine, unspoiled, exotic article. They are prepared to pay good money for the experience. Others pass through Sami areas, but they are not particularly interested in Sami life and culture. Nonetheless, they may be willing to spend a little money on a Sami attraction. It's a question of matching supply and demand.

One obvious disadvantage of tourism in Sápmi is distance; Sápmi is far away for almost everybody. But this is also its strength.

– It is the paradox of the periphery. The more inaccessible something is, the more interesting it is. On paper, the Jokkmokk Winter Fair seems to have nothing going for it. Very few people live there, the Fair is held in the first week of February, and the weather is freezing. But this is precisely its attraction. If tourism is to be developed further there must be greater awareness of the consumer point of view, says Robert Pettersson. You can't just put up a sign and expect the tourists to come.

## Networking

– More networking is needed to create a sustainable tourism industry. Those who offer adventure tourism should send the tourists on to a colleague who offers informational tourism. Up to now, Sami tourism has often operated on the opposite principle: if you've got a good idea, don't share it with anybody.

Robert Pettersson considers that the most rational method is to plan a combination of reindeer husbandry and tourism. In that way, reindeer herders would earn money from both activities.

– The tourists will come anyway, and this way you could offer them a good tourist product, while remaining in control. ✧



Photo: Benny Jonsson

## Three Tops – a threat and an opportunity

Northern Dalarna, in the middle of the mountain area in the photograph, is the scene of a dispute between a sameby and the Three Tops tourism project. The plan is to link up Idre Fjäll and Fjätervålen ski resorts by a large lift system. At the core of the dispute are Idre sameby's interests and the prospect of increased tax revenue and new jobs in a depopulated municipality. The main players are the sameby, the Idre Fjäll tourist company, state and private landowners, and Älvdalen municipality. ▶

# Conflict of interest in the mountains

On the one side is the sameby with its 13 reindeer owners, and on the other investments worth more than SEK 1 billion and the promise of 300 new full-time jobs. Idre is already one of the five largest ski resorts in Sweden and the leading year-round holiday resort in Scandinavia. But Idre Fjäll says that Idre needs new attractions, more and longer slopes and purpose-built accommodation to meet ever keener competition for tourists.

– The sameby is not opposed to developing tourism as long as it does not put us out of business, says Jörgen Jonsson, chairman of Idre sameby.

The purpose of the project is to link Idre Fjäll and Fjätervålen ski resorts by means of a ski tow, build new ski runs in a

nature reserve on the eastern and western slopes of Mount Stådjan and increase the number of tourist beds by about 6,000 and the number of ski days by 178,000. The new facilities will be environment-friendly and aesthetically attractive. The total investment will be about SEK 1 billion. The sameby and other stakeholders have been consulted during project planning, which started in 1997.

– We said early on that the project would have a negative impact on reindeer husbandry and we have suggested alternatives in a detailed impact assessment, says Jörgen Jonsson.

This is not the first threat to reindeer husbandry in Idre sameby. Holiday homes and the many tourist facilities already encroach on the sameby's lands. The increase in tourists has led to heavier traffic and more snowmobile trails. A golf course has been built in the middle of the reindeer grazing area.

– The worst part is that Three Tops would cut off the reindeer's migration routes between summer and winter pastures. The pastures are crucial; no pasture, no reindeer husbandry, says Jörgen Jonsson. Disrupting the migration routes would seriously impact reindeer husbandry.

– Reindeer are creatures of habit and it would take time to change their migration routes and involve a lot of work and expense for the sameby, says Jörgen.

The sameby is also very critical of the planned development of state-owned land, which up to now has been available for year-round grazing. This land is situated in the nature reserve around Mount Stådjan, which is the subject of an unlimited agreement with the National Property Board.

## All interests should be taken into account

About 80% of the population in the Idre-Särna-Grövelsjö area currently depend on tourism, directly or indirectly. Three Tops would increase the number of full-time jobs by about 300.

– Idre Fjäll supports the whole area, says Mayor Bengt Welin, who is in charge of the revision of the comprehensive plan prepared by Älvdalen municipality, of which Three Tops is an important element.

The municipality has lost one-third of its population in 40 years. This is the backdrop to the land use conflict in Idre.

– There is lot of toing and froing and Idre Fjäll is piling on the pressure, but the planning process cannot be rushed. We must take all interests into account, says leading councillor Herbert Halvarsson (Social Democratic Party).

– Reindeer husbandry is very important from the point of view of our culture and as a livelihood. But we have no bargaining chips; it is up to the municipality to get a dialogue going between the parties. And a dialogue is already in progress between the reindeer owners and forest owners.

## The Sami culture is exclusive

– The Sami culture is exclusive and makes the area more attractive. I don't mean that the Sami themselves should try to attract tourists, but they should carry on with developing their reindeer husbandry. As I see it, Three Tops could make it possible for the Sami to process and sell their products, says Lars Axelsson, Managing Director of Idre Fjäll.

– Everyone must accept responsibility – Idre Fjäll, the municipality and, not least, the landowners. We cannot cut off any of the reindeer migration routes. We are making efforts to find land to compensate the Sami, says Lars Axelsson. ✦



Photo: Nisse Schmidt

Jörgen Jonsson, president of the sameby, together with his daughter Erica at a calf-marking.





# A landscape of myths, memories and traditions



In the dawn of history the Sami were a people of hunters and fishers. They have left traces in the course of the centuries, for example paths and tracks, hearths, goahtis, storage structures and fence poles.

Often it takes a trained eye to discover Sami remains. Many of them have been reclaimed by nature. Most known remains are to be found along the old migration routes and consist of encampments, with or without remains of buildings, basement pits and reindeer corrals. The vast expanse that extends across both sides of the Scandinavian mountain chain and far off into the forest areas towards the coast is the Sami cultural landscape. When tourist brochures talk of the wilderness, what they mean is the landscape managed by the Sami, the mountain scenery shaped by grazing reindeer. People met their need of heat, food, rest and company in interaction with nature and the landscape. Here the Sami survived and thrived.

The Sami cultural heritage is also a landscape of the mind, full of memories, myths

and oral traditions, sometimes with religious overtones. The Sami names for terrains, places, mountains and lakes are also part of the Sami cultural environment, and the latest topographical maps, complete with the original Sami names, now give a true picture of the country shaped by the Sami.

More and more people have begun to realize in the last few decades how fragile and vulnerable the Sami cultural heritage is. Not only nature reclaims her own. There is a risk of Sami remains being swept away by intensive forestry, roadbuilding and community development. The disruption and wear and tear caused by tourism are a further threat in sensitive areas. In view of this situation it is high time to investigate, document and restore Sami cultural environments, although sometimes old models are simply rebuilt instead. But it is also important to listen to the diminishing number of tradition bearers and record their memories to help us understand the spiritual dimensions of the cultural heritage.

Various initiatives have now made it possible to preserve hundreds, perhaps even

thousands, of Sami structures and environments. The old handicraft skills have once more come into favour. All over Sápmi this work is now being carried out with enthusiasm both by the Sami themselves and the relevant authorities and museums. Public grants have been provided, as they have for the restoration of castles and stately homes. The value of the Sami cultural heritage for that of Sweden as a whole is now recognized.

Nowadays, culture and cultural heritage are generally regarded as a resource for economic and social development. This is especially apparent in the field of cultural tourism. A visit to a Sami cultural environment, where many objects have immediate appeal, is a good way of training one's senses. ✨

## The Laponia World Heritage Site

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) designates world heritage sites. This is one way of preserving irreplaceable natural and cultural assets. World heritage sites are considered important for all humankind and should therefore be protected and preserved for future generations. Laponia, the "Sami" world heritage site, is one example. It was designated a world heritage site on account of its rich biological diversity, its historical value for Sami culture and its value as a Sami cultural landscape. Sarek, Padjelanta, Stora Sjöfallet and Muddus national parks are located in the area.

Few world heritage sites are inhabited by an indigenous people. Laponia is one of them. Seven samebys are located in Laponia and pursue reindeer husbandry both inside and outside the boundaries of the site. Thanks to one of Sweden's Agenda 21 processes, the seven samebys have produced a "Sameby Laponia Programme" on environment and industry development, culture and information. It also includes proposals for the management of Laponia by bodies with a Sami majority.

# Sami land rights being decided in the

The Sami have the right to pursue reindeer husbandry in about a third of Sweden's surface area. This includes the right to use the land and water to sustain themselves and their reindeer, which is an essential condition for reindeer husbandry.

The right to reindeer husbandry includes the right to use real property, i.e. the right to use land and water without owning them. Other examples of rights of use (usufructuary rights) are tenancies, hunting leases and easements, e.g. the right for the owner of a property to use a well on another property. Under the present system the Sami do not own the reindeer grazing land itself; it is owned by the state, forest companies, farmers and others.

About 2,500 of the 20,000 or so Sami in Sweden are members of one of the country's 51 samebys, which represent both geographical areas and economic associations. A person must be a member of a sameby in order to exercise the right to reindeer husbandry. Sami members of samebys are thus entitled to use land and water that they do not own.

## Immemorial rights

A right of use is often laid down in an agreement. A person who leases land concludes an agreement with the owner of the land. No agreements are necessary in the case of the right to reindeer husbandry since this is an immemorial right, i.e. people have used the land for so long that they have earned the right to use it. The Sami have acquired this right by using land and water for the purposes of reindeer husbandry, hunting and fishing for a very long period of time.

The ancestors of the Sami and other

people have lived in what is now Sweden since the Stone Age. From time to time the use of the land by representatives of different cultures has led to conflicts. The first official letter that refers to land rights is from 1584. In this letter the king declared that the Sami had an immemorial right to the land north of Songamuotka and forbade the Torne Valley farmers to trespass on these lands.

## Recognition of Sami rights

During the following centuries the Crown issued a number of letters and proclamations claiming the right to all vacant land, although at the same time it recognized the immemorial right of the Sami to use "vast mountain expanses such that only the Lapps and their reindeer can earn a livelihood there" (Government Bill 1886:2).

The boundaries of the year-round and winter grazing lands of the Sami are specified in the Reindeer Grazing Act of 1886 and subsequent relevant legislation. Reindeer husbandry rights are currently gov-

erned by the Reindeer Husbandry Act of 1971. The Act does not precisely specify the boundary of the winter grazing lands, and the courts still rule on these matters. Since immemorial rights must be proved, the burden of proof is on the reindeer owners.

## Much-publicized judgments

The Sami have pursued reindeer husbandry in what are now Jämtland and Dalarna counties for a long time. They were displaced by the more numerous new settlements and smallholdings earlier here than in the northernmost counties. Things even went so far that, starting in the mid-19th century, the state repurchased mountain areas and reserved them for reindeer husbandry. This enlarged the "reindeer grazing mountains", the year-round grazing lands in Jämtland.

The right to winter pasture outside the reindeer grazing mountains is a matter of controversy. In 1990 almost 600 landowners in Härjedalen whose land was used for

## Reindeer husbandry areas in six counties

A sameby is both an economic association and a specific geographical area. Its members have the right to engage in reindeer husbandry in this area. In certain areas they also have fishing and hunting rights.

The areas where reindeer husbandry is permitted represent about one-third of Sweden's surface area from Idre in the south to Treriks-röset in the north, i.e. in the following six counties: Norrbotten, Västerbotten, Jämtland, Väster-norrland, Dalarna and Gävleborg.

Mountain samebys move with their herds to the mountains in the summer and east to the

forest areas in the winter, while forest samebys remain in the forest all the year round.

"Concessionary" reindeer husbandry is pursued in the Torne Valley. A unique feature of this arrangement is that even non-Sami are permitted to own reindeer.

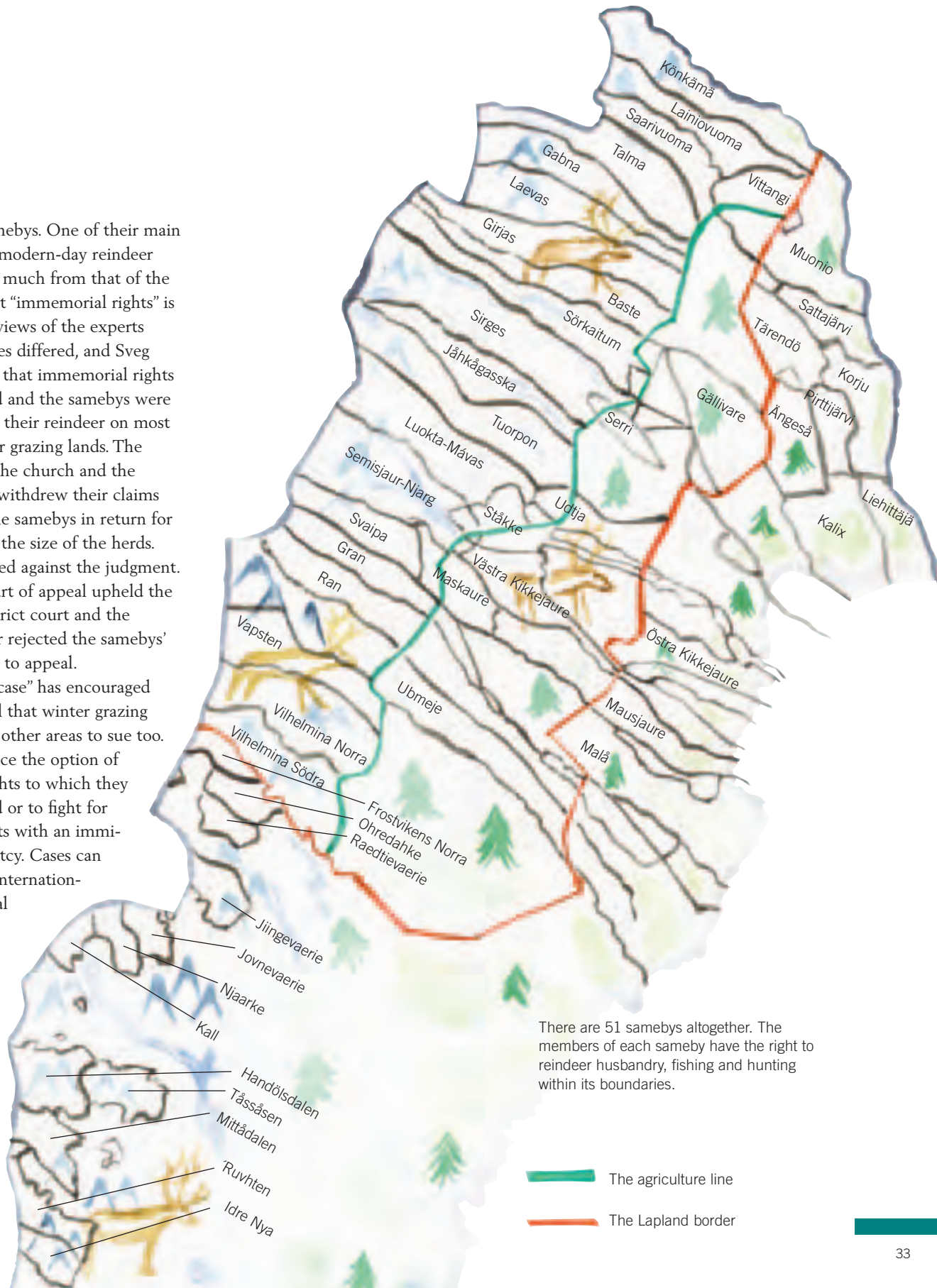
The area used by a sameby is divided into year-round grazing land and winter grazing land. The right to reindeer husbandry may be exercised on the year-round land throughout the year. Reindeer can graze in the winter grazing lands, which are often located in forest areas, from 1 October to 30 April.

# courts

grazing sued five samebys. One of their main arguments was that modern-day reindeer husbandry differs so much from that of the past that the concept “immemorial rights” is not applicable. The views of the experts retained by both sides differed, and Sveg District Court ruled that immemorial rights had not been proved and the samebys were not entitled to graze their reindeer on most of the present winter grazing lands. The largest landowners, the church and the forestry companies, withdrew their claims after settling with the samebys in return for a promise to reduce the size of the herds. The samebys appealed against the judgment. In substance the court of appeal upheld the judgment of the district court and the Supreme Court later rejected the samebys’ application for leave to appeal.

The “Härjedalen case” has encouraged landowners who feel that winter grazing rights are unclear in other areas to sue too. The samebys now face the option of relinquishing the rights to which they feel they are entitled or to fight for them in higher courts with an imminent risk of bankruptcy. Cases can only be tried by an international court if all national remedies have been exhausted, as they have in the Härjedalen case.

In Norway the burden of proof is the reverse: there, landowners must prove that immemorial rights do not exist. ✦







Sweden and Norway have conducted negotiations on a new reindeer grazing convention for many years. In July 2004 Ann-Christin Nykvist, the Swedish Minister for Sami Affairs, visited some of the reindeer grazing areas in Norway that are used by Swedish Sami.

## Cross-border reindeer husbandry in Sweden and Norway

The Swedish Sami were given the right to graze reindeer in both countries when the Swedish-Norwegian border was drawn in 1751. Sweden and Norway have concluded several reindeer grazing conventions since then, the last one in 1972. But Norway has demanded that this right be restricted for over 100 years, and the discussion continues.

The first such convention was concluded in connection with the 1751 border treaty. The border also constituted the longest part of the border between Norway and

Finland (then part of Sweden). A 30-paragraph codicil concerning the rights of the Sami to cross the border with their herds – often called the Lapp Codicil – was attached to the treaty. The purpose of the Codicil was to secure the future of the Sami people, at least those who were affected by the fixing of the border.

As a result of the treaty the reindeer-herding Sami now had to cross a national border when they moved with their herds as they had always done. The reindeer grazing conventions were, and still are, legal

agreements on the reindeer herders' use of the land on both sides of the border. The Lapp Codicil laid down the right of the Sami to cross the Norwegian-Swedish border in connection with reindeer husbandry. They also had the right, for a small fee, to use the land and water in the other country on the same terms as the citizens of that country. This applied both to pasture, hunting and fishing in the seas and lakes. The Codicil also provided for a measure of Sami self-government, Sami neutrality if war broke out between the two countries and

trading rights in Norway for the Sami who lived in the northernmost part of Sweden.

Finland ceased to be part of Sweden in 1809 and became a Grand Duchy of Russia with new borders. Norway was separated from Denmark in 1814 and forced to enter into a personal union with Sweden.

Although this meant that Norway was subordinate to the Swedish king, the Lapp Codicil remained in force and the reindeer-herding Sami continued to move their herds across the Swedish-Norwegian border.

A joint Swedish-Norwegian commission was appointed in the early 1840s to evaluate and propose amendments to the Lapp Codicil. Norway wanted to curtail the right of the Swedish Sami to reindeer grazing as much as possible. It also wanted to apply strict rules on checks and compensation. The commission agreed in 1844 that the rights provided by the Codicil should be curtailed, but in practice it took many years before the new rules were implemented.

### “Savages”

The negative Norwegian attitude at that time was closely linked to the ongoing agricultural colonization of parts of northern Norway and racist and colonialist views were gaining ground. Reindeer-herding Sami were referred to in the 1840s as “savages”, for example. According to a newspaper article, the Norwegian farming pioneers were treated much worse by Swedish reindeer-herding Sami than colonialists in other parts of the world were treated by “savage aborigines”.

The border between Norway and Finland was closed in 1852, which made it impossible to cross over with a reindeer herd. This was a disaster for reindeer herding in the North Calotte area as a whole. One result was the large-scale exodus of reindeer-herding Sami from Kautokeino in northern Norway to Karesuando in Sweden during the 1850s. These Sami continued to use the winter grazing lands in Finland, but now as Swedish subjects.

The Finnish authorities asked the Russian government to close the border with Sweden in order to put an end to the use of Finnish grazing land by Swedish Sami. The government did not comply with this demand at first, but in 1889 the border between Sweden and Finland too was closed to cross-border migration with reindeer herds and represented a further major obstacle to intra-Sápmi reindeer herding. Consequently, many of the Kautokeino Sami who had registered as residents of Karesuando returned to Norway, even though many families remained.

Later, cross-border reindeer grazing was one of the most intractable issues in connection with the dissolution of the union between Sweden and Norway in 1905. Norway wanted to abolish the Lapp Codicil and reindeer grazing rights in Norway for Swedish Sami. But the Norwegian demands were rejected and Norway was obliged to accept the fact that the Codicil could not be cancelled.

### Bitter struggle

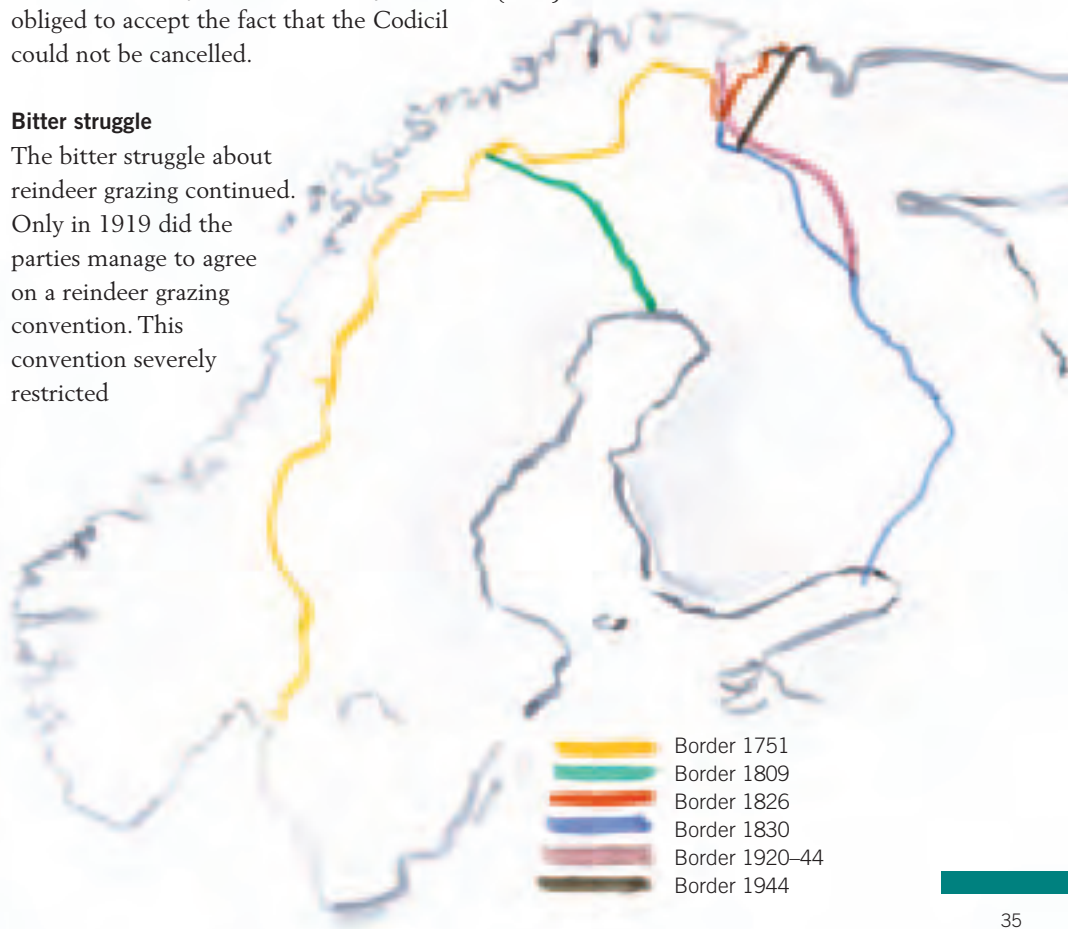
The bitter struggle about reindeer grazing continued. Only in 1919 did the parties manage to agree on a reindeer grazing convention. This convention severely restricted

the access of Swedish Sami to reindeer grazing in Norway. A precarious situation arose in the northernmost reindeer grazing lands in Sweden, and many reindeer-herding families were forced to move south. The reindeer grazing convention was revised in 1949, although no major changes were made. But the 1972 reindeer grazing convention did contain significant amendments which further restricted access.

Sweden and Norway have been negotiating a new convention for several years. One interesting issue in this connection is what will happen if they cannot agree. Will the Lapp Codicil once again govern reindeer husbandry across the Swedish-Norwegian border? ✨

*Steinar Pedersen*

*Cand. philol. (MA), Managing Director of the Sami Industry and Research Centre (SEG) in Deatnu-Tana.*





## Hunting as a livelihood

If you are in northern Västerbotten and pass Sorsele you will be on the road to Ammarnäs. Where your cellphone goes dead you turn to the right and drive along a narrow forest road for a few kilometres. The road ends by a lake, and you will be met by silence and Torsten Jonsson. He meets visitors and takes them to his home by boat across the Vosträsk, a small lake full of fish.

A few houses are spread out around the lake, most of them empty holiday houses nowadays. Torsten's house is situated on a small hill close to the shore. Behind the house there are some outhouses, barns and embankments. For all his 70 years he is a lively, talkative helmsman. He says he is a little hard of hearing.

– So if I answer the wrong question you'll know it's because of my hearing.

– One of my ancestors lost all his reindeer one winter and decided to settle down here, says Torsten. When spring came, he borrowed a heargi (a tame castrated reindeer) to transport his belongings. And when he arrived here he let the heargi loose and settled here.

### Lived by hunting

The ancestor and his descendants managed to make a living in these forests. They had a

few animals, fish in the lake and, best of all, a source of income – hunting. In those days, when there was a bounty on wolves and wolverines, it was the settled Sami who hunted. The reindeer herders had no time for it.

Small game – capercaillie, black grouse, ptarmigan, hares, squirrels, martens – were a source of food and income too. If they shot an elk in the autumn, they had food for most of the winter. In time, the land and lakes around Vosträsk were registered as homesteads. They led a good life by the lake.

But things took a turn for the worse many years ago, according to Torsten. The settled Sami were abolished by legislation. They were neither farmers nor reindeer herders, and the 1928 Reindeer Husbandry Act said that the only Sami were reindeer herders. So those who had no reindeer

were no longer Sami. There were not many settled Sami, and they were scattered from Härjedalen to the far north. They had never organized themselves like the reindeer-herding Sami in associations such as the National Union of the Swedish Sami.

### Bear-hunting at 13

– I was 13 the first time I borrowed my dad's gun and went bear-hunting on my own. My mother was anxious but I went anyway. I walked a long way and had planned to spend the night in the forest, but when the shadows lengthened I realized it would be better to sleep in my own bed than under a spruce. So I hurried home in the twilight. When I got home my mother was relieved, but my father looked at me sternly and said he had waited a long time for me to come home.

Torsten's life as a youth consisted of hunting and fishing. Sometimes they spent weeks hunting away from home. Each animal had its own season: elk and bear in the autumn, grouse and other birds in the winter.

– One day we shot more than 20 squirrels and we got 5 krona for each skin. Those were real red-letter days for us! And if there was no meat in the house we could always put out some nets.





Photo: John Erling Utsi

Torsten and his wife Elli alternate between Vosträsk and Sorsele. Sorsele has electricity and running water, unlike Vosträsk. So they live in Sorsele for part of the winter. But as soon as the sun is warm in the spring and until the real winter cold arrives in November they live out here.

– We get along fine with wood, LPG and solar cells.

### Silent no longer

Torsten's son is now involved in politics. He and some other people have started a party – the Hunting and Fishing Sami – that got into the Sami Parliament. They represent a group of Sami that hardly anyone knows about. Their demands for the same rights as reindeer-herding Sami have given politicians, public authorities and others something to think about. And they refuse to be silent, says Torsten. But they have a long struggle ahead to regain the right to the lands that their forefathers, who owned no reindeer, managed and lived off.

As I was just going Torsten said that there had been many hunters in his family.

– So if you ever find the book about Klomma the bear-hunter, please get me a copy. I would really like to read it. He was my great-grandfather. ✧

## Difficult to assess the value of hunting

There are about 300,000 active hunters in Sweden who shoot about 100,000 elks, double that number of roe deer and large quantities of other game every year. It is difficult to assess the value of hunting. For Torsten Jonsson (see last article) and other Sami who depend on hunting and fishing for their livelihood, the value of every elk they shoot is very significant. But the value can also be seen in a wider perspective.

Hunting value is usually divided into the value of the meat and the recreational value of hunting as a pastime, i.e. what hunters are prepared to pay for the pleasure of hunting.

One way of assessing the value in accordance with the above “formula” was presented by the Swedish Association for Hunting and Wildlife Management for the year 1997.

94,300 elks were shot in 1997. Given an average carcass weight of 135 kg and a price for the meat of SEK 35 per kg (paid by the abattoir), the total value of the meat would be about SEK 445 million. According to earlier estimates made by Associate Professor Leif Mattsson at the Swedish University of Agricultural Science in Umeå at the end of the 1980s, the recreational value in the case of elk is about 60% of the total hunting value. This means that the total hunting value for elk could be estimated at about SEK 1.1 billion. In addition to this, there is what might be called the “wellness

value” – for many people hunting is the main reason for walking outdoors, and this benefits the individual and society as a whole.

This is not a comprehensive analysis of the economic effects of hunting, which would take into account the cost of damage to forests and crops, accidents etc., as well as the effects of hunting on employment, production and sales of goods and services. The value of wild animals for biodiversity is another factor that would have to be taken into account.





Photo: Peter Rosén

## Finding the right mark

The gentle glow of the midnight sun has just descended upon the snowclad mountain tops. Down below, thousands of bellows and the odd shout are heard on a trampled hill in Dividalen national park. This is a calf-marking in Lainiovuoma sameby.

To the outsider the corral is chaos. Amid the bellowing animals, shouting people and hurtling reindeer walks Tomas Marakatt.

His hands firmly holding a lasso and his eyes glued to the cows' ears, he walks in circles searching for a special mark: a right ear cut half away, with a V-shaped cut in the middle; a left ear with a row of semi-

circular cuts – ears that Thomas would recognize in his sleep.

Hundreds of reindeer dash over stony ground that has been trampled by tens of thousands of black hooves over the years. High above the din you can hear the small calves' pitiful cries and anxious mothers calling to their young. If you listen long enough to the clamouring reindeer you will notice that they all have individual voices, just like two-legged animals. The smell is a blend of dung and dogs, but to the reindeer herders it is as familiar as the smell of their own sweat after hours of lassoing. The lasso colour of the year seems to

be yellow, but Thomas's is purple, with a piece of plastic on the end with two holes in it through which it is threaded to form a loop.

While the mothers look for their calves, Thomas looks for calves that have found their mothers and are following them.

– Calf-marking is when you see the result of your work in the autumn and winter. Although it's no holiday, mind you, says Thomas, wiping the sweat from his brow.

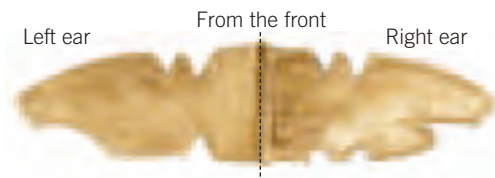
200 metres away on the other side of the corral Per-Ola Blind shouts in Sami:

– Per-Anders, I can see it.

A short middle-aged man lopez across the corral, taking care not to slip on the round stones.

– What did you see? asks Per-Anders Blind.





Reindeer marks consist of cuts in the ears that identify their owner. All the marks are different and are often handed down from one generation to the next. They are all recorded in the county administrative board registers.

– Your brown calf, the one we tried to catch a few hours ago. And they continue their hunt.

Others are looking for calves elsewhere. Lassos whistle through the air. Some miss and some are spot on, landing round the reindeer's neck.

Suddenly Thomas catches sight of something, his pace quickens, his breathing is tense. His eyes are fixed on a brown calf with a spot of white around the nose. His mother has the right mark. Quick as lightning, Thomas raises his right hand and makes seven loops, his eyes never straying from his target. His brown boots trample on the reindeer dung and the loose stone while he raises his right arm slowly higher. No sudden movements now. Then suddenly, fast as a viper, the brown calf is caught before he knows it. He tries to break free with a roar, but in vain. The purple lasso is round his neck and Thomas draws the calf towards him with both hands.

– Practice makes perfect, says Thomas, smiling, and lifts the metre-tall calf and, much to the calf's surprise, sits on him.

He gets his knife out of his jacket pocket. With a few fast turns of the knife the calf's ears are transformed and now have exactly the same mark as its mother's. The calf bounds off, Thomas picks up the lasso and puts his knife in his pocket. He, the reindeer and the 50 or so other reindeer owners have many more hours of searching ahead of them tonight. ✧



Photo: Peter Rosén

## Reindeer husbandry adapted to the animals' way of life

The reindeer roam and are moved from one grazing land to another within each sameby. The grazing areas have different properties that make them suitable for reindeer husbandry at different times of the year. Migration routes, which are often very old, are used to move the animals between the different areas. Apart from these routes the reindeer herders also use enclosures to gather, separate, mark and/or slaughter the reindeer.

The work with the reindeer is adapted to the

animals' natural behaviour and weather and grazing conditions. Reindeer husbandry is sensitive to interference from other land users and predators. It is especially important not to disturb the reindeer in the spring at calving time. They are also sensitive to disturbance at other times of the year, for example during migration. If they are disturbed in a narrow passage or crossing a road, the whole herd may scatter, which involves a great deal of extra work for the reindeer herders.

## Adapted to the climate

Reindeer are cervids and live in flocks. The species found in northern Scandinavia is called tundra reindeer. There are about 225,000 reindeer in Sweden (in 2000). Reindeer are the only deer species in which both males and females have antlers. They shed their antlers every year. Large antlers confer high status in the flock. A male may have a harem of 25–30 females whom he guards. After the rutting season the males shed their antlers, but the females keep theirs until the spring. Having antlers helps the females to chase the males from the best grazing sites during the winter.

Reindeer are adapted to the climate. Their fur is dense and covered with insulating hairs and their hooves are big enough to allow them to run on snow and dig through it for lichen.

They grow to a height of 85–120 cm. (Elks are twice as tall and weigh five or six times as much).

In May the females go up to the mountains to calve. The calf follows the mother for the first year until she has a new calf. Reindeer put on a lot of weight in summer to get them through the winter. Reindeer owners often slaughter some of the males in autumn when they are at their heaviest before the rutting season.





# Handicrafting with heart and soul



Although Sune Enoksson is one of the best-known Sami handicraft artists he has never been able to live by his art. His knives, boxes and drinking-cups are in great demand among collectors, and customers may be on a waiting-list for years, but his art has never made him rich.

Not in terms of money, that is. But in terms of quality of life he has – together with his handicrafting wife Astrid and four grown-up children – had ample compensation. He met Astrid at the Sami Folk High School in Jokkmokk in 1951. They have lived and worked together for over 50 years, Sune with “hard handicraft” and Astrid with soft materials such as leather and textiles.

They radiate rare harmony and well-being when we meet in their combined studio and home on the slope leading up from Tärnaby. It is a fine late summer’s day and the view of Gautajaure and the mountains to the south is magnificent.

**Name:** Sune Enoksson.

**Family:** Handicrafting wife Astrid, four children and seven grandchildren.

**Education:** Sami Folk High School in Jokkmokk, craft teacher education in Nääs.

**Profession:** Handicraftsman and teacher. He is represented in Västerbotten Museum, where he and Astrid also exhibited in the 1960s and in 2002. Received the Västerbotten Culture Grant in 1964 and 1999.

**Background:** The family used to be reindeer herders in Vapsten sameby, Tärna. In the 1920s the family bought a farm with some land and cattle in Sandnäset.

## Long days and hard work

Astrid has a little sheath-knife hanging in a twined leather cord round her neck. It is a full-horn knife, with a sheath and handle of reindeer horn, richly ornamented. These knives are one of Sune’s specialities, this one being one of his many gifts to his wife.

– I use it for everything. To cut paper with, for sewing ... everything!

– I chose my wife carefully. She has reindeer luck, says Sune and gives Astrid a loving glance.

I took it with me when I went to China, says Astrid.

His most beautiful works remain in the family. The four children each have a collection of their own. Sune Enoksson, always a hard worker, has made many things in his day.

– I had long working days when I had a full-time job. First I worked at school and then in the studio until 10 or 11 in the evening. We used to end the day with thinly sliced reindeer meat, water and crisp-bread!

He worked as a craft teacher in Tärnaby for 40 years alongside his work as a handicraftsman. Now aged 70, he is retired.

Why have you been so successful?

– You must have a consuming interest, a passion for what you do. You need a little talent of course, but pigheadedness is what you need most. And you must be able to afford to be poor at times!

Sune says that it is impossible to make a living from handicraft. To make a reasonable income he reckons that you must have a turnover of about SEK 400,000–500,000 a year. And that is impossible when you work as an artist.

– That's the real problem, says Sune Enoksson, who says that he did time and motion studies on himself for quite some time.

– Only five hours out of an eight-hour day are actual work. The rest is spent on other things, visitors, customers etc.

### High artistic quality is all-important

The workshop is in a small red building just outside the house. His raw materials are packed in boxes: reindeer horn, elk horn, curly-grained birch, roots and wood of various kinds.

Here are several machines – a saw, a grinding machine, a lathe – that he uses for initial shaping, unlike older generations of craftsmen. But most of the time he sits at the worn table under the window and

## A working year in Sápmi

As Sami handicraftspeople and life companions, Astrid and Sune Enoksson live close to nature. There is an annual rhythm to their work. Astrid herself describes their working year.

In the winter months from **November to March** we are busy processing the materials in the deep freezers, such as raw reindeer skins of various ages, tendons for spinning thread and various barks.

We are also busy preparing Sami food throughout the year. Freezing and drying are good ways of making nature's delicacies last longer. Apart from that, there are always things on our workbenches that need finishing.

When the **March** sun rises over the horizon this means that spring is on the way, and that is the signal to remove the nets from under the ice and dismantle the grouse snares. As the days get longer it becomes more difficult to stay indoors to work.

When the snow crust is hard enough to walk on in **April-May** we collect material for knives from the gnarled, storm-beaten birches around the timberline in the mountains. Before the stream melts in May we dehair the skins and dye them with bark that we have gathered and dried the year before.

works with his knife. He cuts the ornamental patterns by eye directly in the material without any models.

– The knife is my main tool, says Sune and emphasizes how important it is to keep the lines pure.

None of Sune's knives, boxes or drinking-cups is exactly like any other. Some detail always sets them apart. His decorations are always strictly geometrical in the South Sami style without any trace of the north Sami organic, figurative style of decoration. But he does experiment with new combinations of materials such as inlaid pewter and silver in reindeer horn.

Quality is essential if you want to make a name for yourself in handicrafts, says Sune.

– With a reputation for quality you will always have buyers.

What is your advice to anyone who wants to go in for handicrafts?

In **early June**, before the vegetation has started growing properly, we go searching for curly-grained birch roots and collect angelica, alder and tormentil roots to dye skins and wool with and to use as medicinal herbs.

From the end of June to the latter half of July we dress skins and hides. The trees are sapping then and it is easy to gather bark for drying. We dye wool for tapestries and bands and dry and deep-freeze herbs and plants. The dog days are upon us at the end of July and last until the **end of August**, and during this period it is humid and hot. **September** is what we call the slaughter month when we prepare and preserve reindeer and elk meat for the coming year, as well as preparing hides and tendons for craft purposes. The rutting season for reindeer is a month from 16th September and for elk a little later.

Some years we go walking in the woods in **September and October** looking for chanterelles, although we do not always find any owing to drought or because the frost and snow start early that year.

Tärnaby  
Astrid Enoksson

– To learn how to run a business. It is important to know about book-keeping, tax rules and that kind of thing so as to avoid setbacks that can be very troublesome.

– Sami culture will not disappear without government grants. But it would certainly help if there was an investment fund for Sami handicraft businesses. Our organizations have discussed the matter. Working as a professional handicraftsman often calls for substantial investment in equipment, premises, education and marketing. But Sami handicrafts can never be mass-produced, says Sune Enoksson.

After thinking for another minute or two, as so often, he adds:

– Although the right person, with the right interest and the right ambition, will go on creating works of art, grants or no grants. ✧







# *The design group from the north* makes Sami-inspired modern clothes

The sewing machines in Lapland stop when the elk hunt starts. At least that is true of Sara Svonni and Ann-Sofi Fjällström, two of five members of a design group whose common denominator and source of inspiration are their Sami origins.

They all attended the Sami Education Centre in Jokkmokk. They graduated from the new fur and leather garments programme in 2000. They held their first exhibition at Jokkmokk Fair the same year.

Now they all have their own design businesses and live hundreds of kilometres apart. But they meet regularly and collaborate on fashion shows and marketing under the name Davvebiegga – the North Wind.

They make modern clothes with a distinct Sami style. They have exhibited their clothes in Stockholm several times and reg-

ularly stage shows in Norrland despite the distance between them.

## **Sami, but innovative**

Åsa Päiviö lives in Jokkmokk, Hanne Lena Wilks in Norway, Lise Tapio-Pittja in Nattavaara and Sara Svonni and Ann-Sofi Fjällström in or near Tärnaby.

All five of them grew up in Sami homes where sewing and handicrafts were everyday chores. When they appear together in public they are often dressed in the traditional Sami gákti.

– When you sew clothes it's important to know what is traditional and what is new, says Sara Svonni. She says that the

Anja Pärson, the world-famous alpine skier, phoned to say she wanted something good for the Sports Gala. She gave Ann-Sofi Fjällström and Sara Svonni a day's notice.



Photo: Carl Gustaf Gustafsson





Five designers who have all studied at the Sami Education Centre in Jokkmokk. Today, Åsa Päiviö, Sara Svonni, Hanne Lena Wilks, Ann-Sofi Fjällström and Lise Tapio-Pittja run the Davvebiegga design group together.

culture, history and dress. No one can make a living from sewing alone. We have to be jacks of all trades, like many other Sami.

– You have to make a name for yourself if you're going to succeed as a designer, says Sara Svonni. That is why she and Ann-Sofi have exhibited their clothes at Rookies, a fair for young designers in Stockholm. And they plan to go south again if necessary, although Jokkmokk Fair is the most important event of the year.

– We usually sew round the clock a couple of weeks before the Fair! ✨

Sami sources of inspiration are the materials themselves – usually reindeer skin and wool – and colours and details.

– For instance, if I'm going to put tassels on an anorak, it is natural for me to use red and yellow woollen cloth. Those are the colours in my gákti from Jukkasjärvi.

She shows the reindeer skin anorak with tassels and other specifically Sami features, such as twined leather cords and inset woollen cloth triangles at the ends of the sleeves.

Sara describes her style as youthful. But she reverts to a traditional style in the details, for example simple pewter embroidery on what is otherwise a modern-looking dress. She sews most kinds of clothes, but leather trousers are something of a speciality.

#### Anja phoned

Since both Sara and Ann-Sofi live near Tärnaby, they keep in close touch. Sometimes they work together too, as they did on the reindeer suede dress for Anja Pärson, the alpine skiing star who also lives in Tärnaby.

– Anja phoned and wanted something special for the TV Sports Gala. She was in a hurry and gave me a day. So I phoned Sara and she took the measurements. Then we went to work. We got it finished in time and

the dress attracted a good deal of media attention. They called it the “Lord of the Rings dress”, says Ann-Sofi.

Every garment that Sara and Ann-Sofi sew is made to measure in accordance with the customer's wishes. The material – often leather or fur – is expensive, so you'd better know what you're doing before you put a needle in it!

Sara Svonni's dressmaking shop is in her parents-in-law's red guest-house in Tärnafors. Ann-Sofi often comes visiting and they sit down and exchange ideas or discuss design problems.

– It's nice to have someone to talk to. At the moment I do everything myself: designing, measurements, making patterns, sewing, marketing, daily bookkeeping and selling. I also do a lot of alternations. But eventually I only want to work with design and marketing, says Sara, who grew up outside Kiruna.

#### Reindeer of her own

Ann-Sofi has reindeer of her own and belongs to Ubmeje sameby. She is also a trained pre-school teacher and sometimes works extra in a pre-school. She occasionally works as a receptionist and school-teacher too. She also gives lectures on Sami



Photo: Marit Baer

### Studying handicrafts (duodji) at Samin Åhpadusguovdás in Jokkmokk

Ylva Pawal is studying at *Samin Åhpadusguovdás* (the Sami Education Centre) as the Davvebiegga designers did. She has already learned the rudiments of duodji and is keen to learn more. The handicrafts programme which Ylva is taking is one of several longer programmes that students can choose. The Centre has its roots in the Sami Folk High School, which was established in 1942 and is now run as a foundation. The school offers courses in both Sami and Swedish, and it is the only one of its kind in the whole of Sápmi.



Photo: Jan Gustavsson

# From utility goods to works of art

The origins of duodji go back to the days when the Sami were self-sufficient nomads. As they were often on the move, they needed light, practical utensils. Function was the important thing and artistic decoration – food for the soul – was a secondary consideration.

Traditionally, the materials used by men are wood and horn, while women sew and work with skins and roots. These are called hard and soft handicrafts, respectively.

Knives are used for everything from hunting to household chores and for making leather bags, chests and boxes to pack things in, drinking-cups and milk pails. Utility goods like these were, and still are, made from natural materials.

Reindeer contribute horn, bone, fur, skins and tendons that can be used as

called knurs. Thanks to thousands of years of experience, craftsmen know when and where to get the material they need.

Today, artistic design is just as important as utility. There are many collectors of quality duodji all over the world, and skilled handicraftspeople are admired. Sami handicrafts are strongly traditional, with an easily recognizable local style, and families such as Fankki, Poggats, Sunna, Kitok, Huuva, Pirak and many others have made a lasting mark on the history of this art form. The younger generation is still developing the tradition.



Photo: Kurt Kihlberg

Full-horn knives by Esse Poggats. The sheath is made out of two pieces of horn that are glued or riveted together.

Handicrafts made of birch roots are an ancient Sami tradition. This *náhppi* (milk cup) was made by Ellen Kitok Andersson, daughter of Asa Kitok, a legendary root handicraftsman.



Photo: Thorbjørn Bjørkli/Varanger Samiske Museum



Photo: Kurt Kihlberg

Nils Nilsson Skum (1872–1951) was one of the great pioneers of Sami art. He mainly worked with pencil and chalk. He depicted the landscape and the work of the reindeer herders with the reindeer caravans in great detail and often from a bird's eye view.



Photo: Thorbjørn Bjørkli/Varanger Samiske Museum

Bead bag of reindeer skin by Åse Klemensson, Undersåker.



## Traditional Sami dress

The traditional Sami dress is called a gákti. It is an important identity symbol, especially in connection with ceremonious occasions such as christenings, funerals, weddings, confirmations etc.

The gákti varies between different areas in Sápmi. The cut is also different depending on the sex of the owner and, in some areas, the owner's age and civil status too. There are differences in cut due to the fact that men's gáktis are shorter than women's and that gáktis tend to be longer in the southern Sápmi areas than in the north. Fashion also plays a part in the differences between gáktis. Depending on the imagination of the dressmaker, there may also be individual differences in colour, decoration and band patterns.

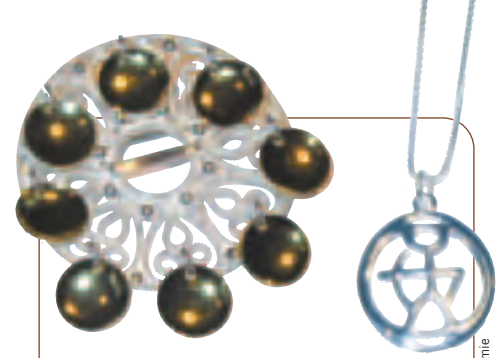
Previously most clothes were made at home. The basic materials were derived from reindeer and other fur-bearing animals; both clothes and shoes were made from fur, skins and tendons. Frieze and broadcloth, as well as wool for band weaving, were bought from tradesmen. The gákti of today is still sewn from broadcloth and



Photo: John Erling Utsi

Ann-Ristiinna Anti, Nils Anders Appfjell-Utsi and Anna Caroline Siri-Fyhn.

frieze, but materials such as silk, velvet and synthetic fabrics are used just as often. The traditional accessories for gáktis are belts, shoes and shoelaces and, in the case of women, shawls or bosom-cloths. Accessories such as storm collars, jewellery, gloves, trousers and caps are often used too.



Jewellery by Kautokleino saŋsme

Silver – bank and status symbol

For centuries silver was used as a status symbol and bank in Sami society. Silver was used on ceremonial occasions as a sign that a person was a successful reindeer herder or tradesman. It also had the function of a bank, guaranteeing the financial security of the family and future generations.

Old silver bears witness to historical meetings between cultures, for example Christianity and shamanism. Today's Sami silver jewellery is inspired both by the Sami tradition and modern influences.

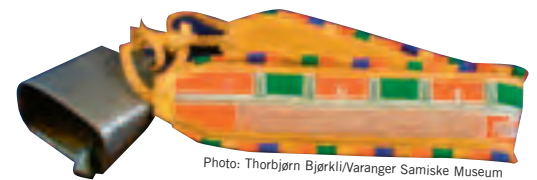
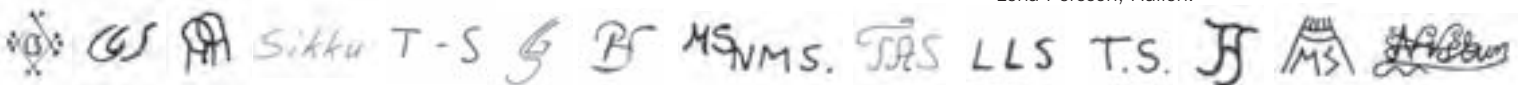


Photo: Thorbjørn Bjørkli/Varanger Samiske Museum

Leather reindeer collar decorated with red and green broadcloth and pewter embroidery. By Lena Persson, Hallen.



The signatures of some Sami handicraftspeople. From the book *Masters of Sami Handicraft* by Kurt Kihlberg.



Photo: Kurt Kihlberg

Lars Pirak (born in 1932) is considered a great renewer of Sami visual art and handicrafts. In 2003 he became the first Sami artist to be made an honorary doctor at Umeå University.

A full-horn needle holder by Anders Sunna, son of Erik Knutsson Sunna (1894–1976), a well-known craftsman and one of the first to work full time in the Kiruna area.



Photo: Kurt Kihlberg



Photo: Kurt Kihlberg

John Pålsson Fankki (1880–1961), “the godfather of the Lapp knife”. Highly personal and artistically distinctive decoration is a feature of his work.





# Monica L Edmondson A WINTER PERSON WITH A FEELING FOR GLASS

Her technique comes from Italy, and Monica L Edmondson is the only person in Sweden who uses it. Sami culture is her source of inspiration, especially for her colours.

A little detail in the nape of the traditional Lulesami gákti, a multicoloured broadcloth square (called gávlos), is the source of Monica L Edmondson's impressive glass art. This is her palette: fiery red, yellow and blue. The rest is winter, winter, winter.

– My Australian husband is also a winter person, says Monica L Edmondson casually, and tells the story of her somewhat erratic career which, when she was 33, led to a four-year degree course in visual arts and glass at the Canberra School of Art in Australia. After that she got off to a good start as an artist.

– Winter has always been important to me. I have found that glass is a material that can express the feeling of being in a winter space.

Today her large glass dishes, bowls and closed vessels are in great demand on the global art market. Almost all her work is made for galleries and to order. There is a long waiting-list.

### **Sami school in Tärnaby**

She first trained to be a junior school teacher, but after a few years, some at the Sami school in Tärnaby, she gave up teaching to see the world.

For many years she tried to live a winter life all year round, commuting as a professional ski coach and instructor between Japan, Australia and Sweden. Then she met Simon, acquired a taste for glass and went to the University of Canberra.

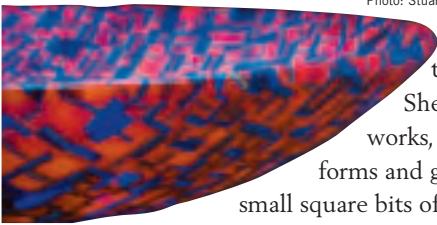
In 2000 she returned to live in Tärnaby and set up a studio and workshop in a con-

verted barn in nearby Bäcknäs, with a view of Lake Gäutan and the mountains behind. She lives with her husband Simon and of course their four-year-old daughter Aana. The family always planned to return to Västerbotten.

– I would never have dared take the plunge without Simon, she says. Perhaps I would have made do with a garage with a small kiln and had glassmaking as a hobby. Australians are different, they go in for things in a big way, says Monica, and that also goes for the machinery she has bought for the workshop after much careful research.

### **Italian technique**

Three kilns and some powerful grinding machines are essential for her special glass-



making technique.

She hot-works, kiln-forms and grinds small square bits of glass called murrini that she makes herself.

First she melts down sheets of specially hardened glass in selected colours into a large block. The block is drawn out into a long cane and then cut into smaller pieces that look like liquorice allsorts. Murrini is an ancient Italian technique that was used to make glass look like precious stones. She then places these murrini in the patterns and shapes that she wants and melts them down in the kiln. After that she wheel-cuts, grinds, engraves, etches and polishes the glass before putting it back in the kiln for the fourth time to bend it into its final shape.

– It's a long process, but that's the way I like to work. It takes time and the objects can talk to me and that way they have a little more soul, says Monica.

– No two pieces are alike. But some basic shapes recur – large curved bowls, square curved surfaces, small blown closed vessels that make you want to cup your hands round them. These vessels remind



Monica L Edmondson, the glass artist, returned to Tärnaby where she used to be a teacher at the Sami school. Her studio has a view of Lake Gäutan and the mountains behind. Large curved dishes and bowls are among her favourite pieces.

one of the encircling shape of a drinking vessel (like the one Anja Pärson gave Crown Princess Victoria on her birthday in 2004).

### A fervent heart

Her Sami origins – especially the bright colours, perhaps the most easily recognizable feature of her work – are an instinctive source of inspiration.

– A fervent heart – life itself – amid the winter space, as she says.

Monica was born and grew up in Gällivare. Her father Lasse Larsson was a Sami from the Lulesami area around the Stora Lulevatten lake.

– I have always been aware of my Sami background, but it isn't something I go and think about all the time. May, my mother, is not a Sami, but she always encouraged me to learn sewing and handicraft. I was surrounded by Sami influences.

– I never thought about becoming an artist. The word didn't exist for me. But I've always written a great deal and felt the need to express my feelings and thoughts. And if you feel the need to express yourself, that means you have the artistic urge. Then when I came into contact with glass everything fell into place.

She has taken part in many prestigious glass exhibitions all over the world, in Venice, the USA, Japan and, of course, several times in her second homeland Australia. She has also had many exhibitions at home, including the exhibition Sami Church Art in the Ájtte Museum in Jokkmokk.

– I think it was a great advantage for me to learn glassmaking in another country. It was a good art school with many good teachers who gave me international contacts. This gave me a down-to-earth attitude to the art world. I am not afraid to apply for exhibitions. I know you can be accepted even if you are unknown, says Monica modestly but very determinedly. ✧

## Contemporary Sami art



Marja Helander's ironic photograph "Njalah-toaivi" is one of the photographs on show at the Umeå BildMuseum.

Britta Marakatt Labba is an embroiderer and well-known Sami visual artist.



With his thought-provoking art and mixture of styles Per Enoksson has created a personal means of expression. This painting is called "A Taste of Paradise".



Lena Stenberg's monumental installation "Lavvo" was staged at the exhibition "Same Same but Different" at the Umeå BildMuseum.

Photo: Mikael Lundgren



# Maria Vinka

## – a designer at Ikea with the world as her workplace

Maria Vinka lives in Älmhult (Ikea's birthplace) in the forests of Småland, a province in the south of Sweden. Her roots are in Västerbotten and she grew up in Karlskoga, but now the whole world is her workplace. Maria is one of 10 permanent designers at Ikea.

Maria spent all her childhood summers in the family's summer house in Tärnaby. There, near Lake Björkvattnet, was the home of her Sami relatives.

Maria describes the global nature of her dream job.

– Nowadays I spend more time in New Delhi than in Stockholm. As a designer in a large transnational company I spend a lot of time travelling. Instead of sending samples between the head office and the producer countries, designers nowadays go to the country in person.

### All materials

There is no niche or material that she is not familiar with. She designs everything from furniture, carpets and lamps to flower pots, cutlery and glasses, from fabrics to toys. Plastics, textiles, glass, china, rattan, wood... you will find Maria Vinka's name on all kinds of products.

Maria Vinka is a designer at Ikea. She has a Sami-inspired tattoo on her elbow and is proud of her Sami origins.



Photo: Anna-Stina Lindén Ivarsson





The Nean textile print is one of Maria's favourites.

– After seven years in this business I've tried almost everything, but I tend to return to textiles in the end. Images are what I like most. Among her personal favourites is a textile print called Nean.

– It was about peace and it stood for something. It's been discontinued now, unfortunately. Another favourite of mine is the Gullholmen rocking chair, partly, perhaps, because it is so popular and has sold so well.

Maria calls it a "rocking chair", but the small chair, woven of banana leaves and with a narrow handle-like back, is full of associations.

– "A grouse", said dad the first time he saw it. Other people say it reminds them of a drinking vessel. And it's possible that I was unconsciously influenced by my Sami roots.

#### Proud of her background

Her great-grandfather was a reindeer-owning Sami, while her grandmother kept mountain cattle. Her father was born in Tärnaby, but moved south to Värmland in his youth and took a job at a sawmill. Her grandparents moved to inland Västerbotten in the 1960s.

– I have always liked making things with my hands. My grandparents were my role models. Granny wove fabrics, knitted stockings, crocheted bedspreads, everything. Granddad was a carpenter. They made everything they needed themselves and later I realized I could do the same.

– I am proud of my background. Even though I'm not a "full-blooded Sami", I'm near enough to have the right to wear Sami dress, says Maria, and confesses that she still doesn't have a gákti. But she would very much like to have one.

#### Sami tattooing

She has already designed a tattoo with Sami symbols, a large jagged

circle enclosing Maria's left elbow.

– I looked at some old pattern collections. This triangular shape is the symbol for goahti, and this one means a settlement, she says pointing at the rather conspicuous decoration on her slender arm. The tattooer misunderstood some of my instructions and the lines turned out too thick.

Often, when she feels free to do so, she tries to give her designs a more pronounced Sami look, although you would hardly notice it yet. But she is working on a new, more conspicuously Sami design as a tribute to the Sami people and all other indigenous peoples. ✧

The Gullholmen rocking chair suggests many associations, such as a grouse or a drinking-vessel.



Photo: Ikea

### Sámi Duodji (Sami Handicraft Foundation)



Sameslöjdstiftelsen  
**Sámi Duodji**

Sami handicrafts – duodji – are strongly linked to the Sami way of life. The products were traditionally crafted to meet the needs of people in a forest and mountain environment. The old skills have been handed down

from generation to generation and have deep roots and a long tradition in Sami culture. Handicrafts are one of several integral elements of Sami culture.

Sámi Duodji was founded in 1993 by the national Sami organizations to promote, support and develop Sami handicrafts. Its work encompasses three areas: handicraft and cultural heritage, business development, and research and development. Among its aims are to encourage training, develop marketing and improve the handicraft situation. The work of the Foundation is funded by grants from the Sami Parlia-

ment Council of Cultural Affairs and the National Swedish Handicraft Council. The Foundation has offices all over the country and its head office is in Jokkmokk.

The Foundation is also responsible for the Duodji label, which is a trademark for Sami handicrafts. The purpose of the label is to inform buyers that the product is made by Sami. It protects handicraft products against plagiarism and unfair competition. Products that are designated souvenirs and do not serve any useful purpose are not labelled.

# The Sami language

## – a historical mystery

The history of the Sami language is still a mystery in many respects. It is difficult to know where the language was spoken previously and who the speakers were in contact with. But there is no doubt that Sami has been spoken in present-day Sápmi for thousands of years and that it is quite closely related to Baltic Finnic languages, including Finnish.

Actually, Sami is not one language, but at least three: East Sami, which is spoken in the Kola Peninsula, Central Sami, which is spoken in Finland, Norway and Sweden, and South Sami, which is spoken in Sweden and Norway. These languages can in turn be divided into dialects. The Central Sami dialects North Sami and Lulesami, as well as South Sami, are spoken in Sweden. The languages are not always mutually intelligible. Linguistic variations over such a large area are not surprising, especially since the language variants have developed differently for hundreds and even thousands of years.

### Hunters from the East

Thousands of years ago speakers of the Proto-Sami language were in contact with hunters to the east. Some of the words in modern-day Sami are related to words in languages spoken east of the Urals, e.g. *njuolla* 'arrow', *juoksa* 'bow' and *suotna* 'tendon'. Some words are only related to words in languages west of the Urals, e.g. *goahti* 'Sami dwelling' and *njuovvat* 'slaughter'. These contacts may have taken place as long ago as 6,000–8,000 years!

The vocabulary of a language can suggest conclusions about contacts with other lan-

guages in the past and also about the way of life of the speakers, although such conclusions are rather uncertain. It may be concluded that earlier generations of Sami were in contact with Germanic peoples for thousands of years and borrowed words such as *bassi* 'sacred'. There are also loanwords from Proto-Nordic that were borrowed during the first few centuries AD, e.g. *áiru* 'oar', *gáica* 'goat' and *vuostá* 'cheese'. Loanwords like these in Sami not only give a picture of the contacts between the speakers of the different languages, but also of the pronunciation of the Nordic words.

### Many Sami do not speak the language

There are about 70,000 Sami in Sápmi, and perhaps 20,000 of these have a knowledge of one of the Sami languages. Most of them speak North Sami, maybe 85% of all Sami speakers. Most of the Sami speakers in the Kola Peninsula speak Kildin Sami (about 600–800 persons). Skolt Sami and Inari Sami are spoken in Finland (by about 500 speakers in each case). The number of

North Sami speakers is estimated at 16,000–18,000, 5,000–6,000 of whom live in Sweden, 9,000–10,000 in Norway and 2,000 in Finland. There are estimated to be 600–800 Lulesami speakers, and a similar number of South Sami speakers. However, all these figures are uncertain, since no reliable statistics exist.

The Sami language is highly inflected. A verb like *borrat* 'eat' is inflected for each of the persons in the present, e.g. *mon boran* 'I eat' and (*mii*) *borrat* 'we eat'. The verb forms are different for each of the persons, in addition to which there are three forms for the different combinations of two persons, e.g. *moai borre* 'you and I eat'. There are therefore nine verb forms altogether in the present tense. Since there are also nine different verb forms in the past tense and in the imperative, conditional and potential mood (the last of these is used to express uncertainty), each verb may have as many as 45 different forms.

There is great variety not only in inflections but in other forms. For example, new words can be formed with the help of derivative suffixes. For example, starting with the verb *borrat* the verbs *borastit* 'eat a little', *borralit* 'eat fast', *boradit* 'eat for a long time', *borahit* 'get a bite to eat' can be formed. Passive verbs can also be formed by means of such suffixes, e.g. *borrojuvvot*

### Yoik – a way of remembering

It is often said that yoiking is one of the oldest forms of music in Europe. But it has not always been appreciated by the powers that be. The Danish-Norwegian king Christian IV proclaimed in 1609 that those who practised Sami witchcraft, which included yoiking, would be condemned to death.

Yoiking attracted little attention for many centuries but there has been a renaissance for in the last few decades, and many young Sami are now becoming aware of their cultural heritage. The interest in the music of other minori-

ty peoples around the world has probably stimulated the revival. Both Sami and non-Sami singers today are renewing the yoik and creating modern music. Mari Boine is one of the most well-known of these singers.

The tune and the lyrics are interwoven in a yoik. You do not yoik about something, you yoik something. The subject of the yoik may be a mountain, an animal or a person. It may also describe a feeling, joy or sadness. As in the Sami language, there are many yoiking dialects depending on where the yoiker is from.

'be eaten'. Nouns also have many forms, i.e. cases with different endings that are used instead of prepositions to denote place or provide other information, e.g. *dáhus* 'in the house'. Here are some examples of the seven cases: *mánnái* 'to the child', *mánáin* 'with the child', *mánnán* 'as a child'.

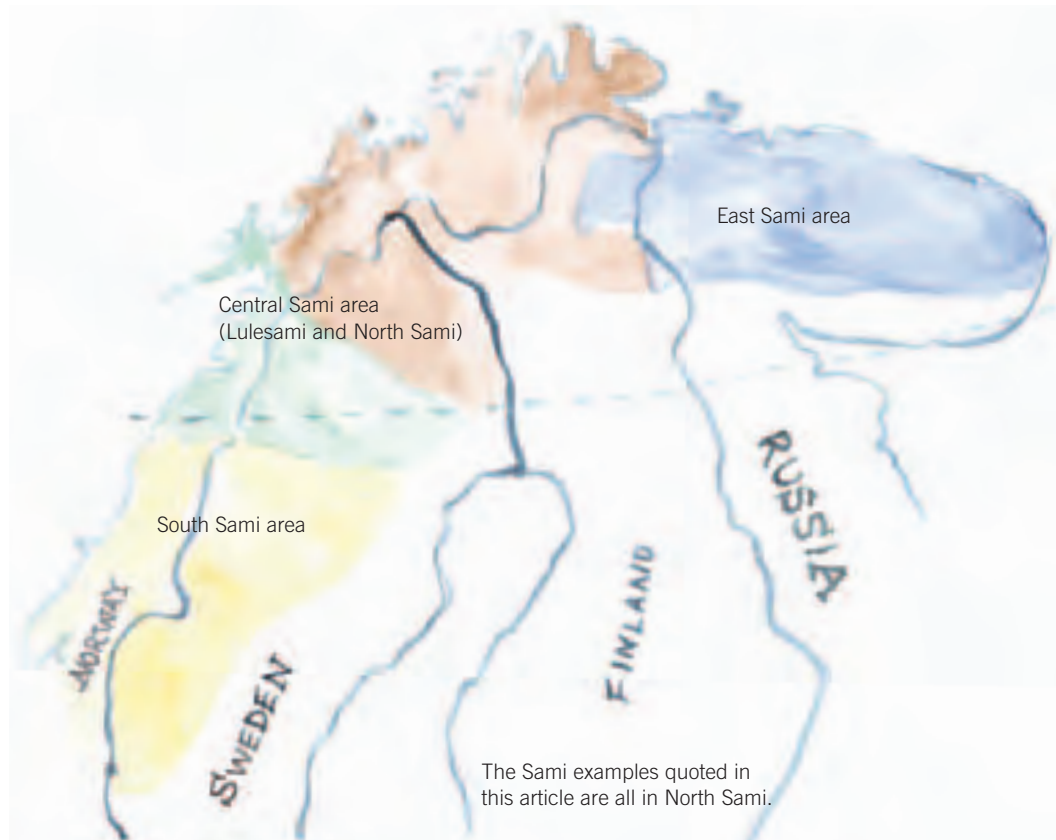
The language is well equipped to form new words with the help of endings. For example, a few years ago the word *čálan* 'printer' was formed from the verb *čállit* 'write'.

### Rich vocabulary

A language spoken by a people of hunters obviously developed a rich terminology in matters relating to the weather and terrain. The rich vocabulary in these areas is also useful in connection with reindeer husbandry. A word like *sealli* 'free of snow and hoar-frost' was useful in connection with the laying of snares for grouse, for example. Pens used to be set up for the grouse snares by putting birch or willow twigs in the ground and leaving an opening for the snare. By removing the hoar-frost from these pens they enticed the grouse to come and eat. Grouse look for places that are *sealli*. The verb *seallat* means to remove the hoar-frost from trees. There are many different words for snow depending on the conditions with respect to skiing, depth, new or old snow and grazing conditions. There are words to describe the snow cover where reindeer have recently grazed in the area or a long time ago. The word *suovdnji* indicates that new holes have been made in the snow to graze underneath while the word *čiegar* is used in the case of old holes.

Such distinctions were important not only in connection with wild reindeer hunting, but also in modern reindeer husbandry.

There are many terms for different types of terrain. The word *njoaski* means a small hollow in a ridge, and people are



The Sami examples quoted in this article are all in North Sami.

likely to pass the ridge at that particular spot so that there are paths over the *njoaski*. The large number of words used to describe the terrain make it possible to describe routes and destinations very precisely. If the name of a valley ends in *-riehppi*, this means that it is at the bottom of the valley and inaccessible, which means in turn that reindeer that have gone into it must return the same way.

### Crucial importance

A knowledge of the terms used for weather and terrain conditions is important and

perhaps of crucial importance to people who live close to nature in varying conditions.

As times change, new Sami words are found for new phenomena, just as in other languages. Thousands of new Sami words have been invented in the last few decades with the help of derivative suffixes, neologisms or loans, for example *dihtor* 'computer', *dáidda* 'art', *girjeráđju* 'library' and *interneahtta* 'Internet'. ✨

Mikael Svonni, Professor, Department of Sami Studies, Umeå University

### Sami theatre

It is possible to see theatrical performances with Sami actors speaking in Sami in several parts of Sápmi. Like other theatre traditions, Sami theatre is developing dramatic art in various ways. Its performances help to spread and strengthen the Sami language and culture. Both Hamlet and Macbeth have been performed in the Sami language.



Photo: Harry Johansen



# Learning your own language

Imagine moving to a place where you don't know anybody. And you cannot talk to the people either, because they speak a completely different language. Perhaps you can understand what I felt when I arrived in Kautokeino in northern Norway five years ago to learn Sami, my own language. The strange thing about Kautokeino was that we were all Sami and we all found it extremely difficult to understand each other although we were brought up in a Sami environment with Sami culture. This was the beginning of the most difficult journey in my life.

I grew up in Vallenäs, which is in the Tärna mountains in Västerbotten. I spent my first few school years in the Sami school in Tärnaby. The schoolchildren were from the whole of Västerbotten, some from reindeer-herding families and some not, and from other parts of Sápmi. The school subjects were largely the same as in the municipal school except for Sami language and Sami handicrafts. Since hardly anybody speaks Sami where I come from, we hardly ever heard Sami spoken. True, we sang songs in Sami sometimes and we performed parts of plays in Sami, but that was all.

I can't remember ever thinking that this made me less Sami than other people. Hardly anyone thought it strange that I could not speak Sami although I grew up in a reindeer-herding family. Hardly anyone else could speak Sami either.

## Changed to North Sami

My first encounter with the Sami language was when I moved to Jokkmokk at the age of 16 to study handicrafts at the Sami Education Centre. Of course I knew that there were students there who spoke Sami, but I didn't give it much thought.

At first I studied South Sami, but I soon realized that this form of Sami was not a top priority. I needed the support of a teacher for more than the two weeks a term that was offered to those of us who studied South Sami. So I decided to study

North Sami instead. My own Sami dialect would have been South Sami, or Umesami as they call it, but I thought North Sami would be better than no Sami at all.

For almost four years I studied North Sami for beginners and became more and more interested in learning more. The biggest difference compared with Sami language teaching at the Sami school was that I heard the language around me all the time both at school and in my spare time. This made it much easier to understand why I needed to learn the language. I think it is just as hard to motivate yourself to learn algebra as it is to learn a new language if you cannot see that it is alive and may be useful to you.

## No simple language journey

By the time I had finished studying at Jokkmokk I had decided that I wanted to learn Sami, although I knew it would take time.

The most difficult thing about Sami is that you cannot go abroad and take a language course, as you might go to England and just inhale the language for a year. It is much more difficult with Sami. True, there are places like Kautokeino and Karasjok in Norway where you can hear the language every day, but there are no language courses you can sign up for and it is definitely not easy to get a job as an au pair.

I'd already been thinking about becom-

Photo: Marie-Louise Nila



Jenny Israelsson went to Kautokeino in the north of Norway to learn her own language – Sami.

ing a journalist. In that case the obvious thing to do would be to try to get a job in the Sami media, and this would fit in well with my plans to learn the Sami language. I thought of the language as something that would help me to get the kind of job that I wanted.

Many people I talked to were pes-

simistic and of course they often told me how difficult it was to learn Sami. Someone said she had studied Sami for 10 years and still could not speak the language fluently. I cannot say that really frightened me off. And I didn't need to learn the language to confirm my identity, like many other people. I regarded it as a part of my education, something I needed to make my dreams come true.

#### **Did not understand a word**

So one fine autumn day, having plucked up courage and bought a map of the area, I went north. I knew roughly where I was going, but I had no idea what it would be like. I and another girl who had been admitted to the same course had packed the car and were on our way to Tanabru in northern Norway to study Sami.

If I had known when I started off what hard work it would be, I would probably never have gone. I understood absolutely nothing, and everybody talked Sami, all the lessons were in Sami and all our assignments had to be done in Sami. Many a time I thought of giving up. What's the point of taking a course that is too difficult for you? What's the point of studying for an exam when you know from the start that you're not going to understand the questions, let alone pass it? It was not easy to find answers, but I was stubborn. After six months and exam papers that I could not understand my appetite was whetted. I would learn. And now I have!

Many people I know have studied Sami, but few of them speak the language. I'm not quite sure why this is, but I think it is often because of a mental barrier that prevents them talking. They think everyone will start laughing if they make mistakes. They don't realize what fun it is to learn a completely new language! I thought of the language as something that would help me to learn new things, to make friends and learn more about our Sami society.

#### **I felt left out**

When I went to Kautokeino and Tanabru it was the first time anyone asked why I did not know Sami. It was also the first time I felt the need to know the language and felt left out.

Feeling left out in the community you're supposed to belong to was awful. To start with, everything seemed hopeless and everything sounded like Greek, but with the help of friends who never gave up and went on talking although I didn't understand what they were saying I learned more and more of this incredibly difficult language. To start with, I didn't dare to speak, but with the help of a family where I worked and their Sami-speaking children it did not take long before I started speaking the language.

It is a very special feeling when you realize that you have mastered a language. You understand the songs you sang as a child, you understand what they're saying on the radio and you start to understand the society you are living in. Only afterwards did I realize what a privilege it is to

be able to understand and speak Sami.

As a South Sami you live in the Sami community, but you're still an outsider. For North Sami speakers the language is more alive and most of what happens in our community is reported in North Sami. If you don't know the language you miss a great deal.

#### **Light at the end of the tunnel**

I have sadly given up my own language and learned another one. But I now realize I would never have experienced the same change if I had opted for South Sami.

Sometimes I feel really depressed and I have mixed feelings about the language, but the positive change in my life is like a light at the end of the tunnel. It is never too late to learn something new. Who knows, perhaps I will learn my own language – South Sami – one day? ✨

*Jenny Israelsson – now Sami-language reporter on SVT Sápmi (the Sami-language Swedish Television channel)*

### **Sami language prize**

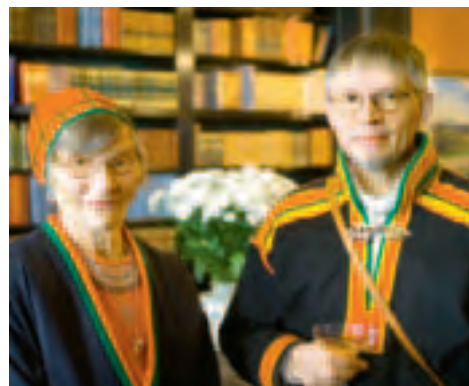
Gollegiella, the Nordic Sami language prize, was awarded for the first time in 2004. The prize, which is worth NOK 100,000, was shared between Ella Holm Bull for years of untiring efforts to preserve and develop the South Sami language and Anaráškielâ servi (the Society for the Inari Sami Language) for its dedicated and successful language vitalization efforts.

The prize was instituted by the Ministers for Sami Affairs and presidents of the Sami parliaments in Norway, Finland and Sweden. Its object is to promote, develop and preserve the Sami language.

The prize is awarded biennially to individuals or organizations that have done valuable work to promote the Sami language.

– The prize plays an important part in stimulating efforts to promote the Sami language, says Professor Mikael Svonni, Umeå Universi-

ty, who is the Swedish government's representative on the assessment committee. It should also encourage the use of Sami in society, and it is the use of a language that assures its future.



Ella Holm Bull and Matti Morottaja, chairman of Anaráškielâ servi, received the 2004 language prize.

Photo: Pawel Flato



Photo: Måna Roos

Alexander, Ida and Simon Kråik are proud of their origins and would like to be able to speak Sami with their relatives.

## Mother-tongue education – a right for the few

When 8-year-old Lisa Kråik's best friend was given Finnish lessons she wondered why she couldn't learn her mother tongue, Sami. But there were no resources for that in her home town in the 1970s.

– I was very angry, but I accepted it as nothing could be done about it.

To her surprise, things have not changed

much since then although Sami now has the status of a national minority language and according to the Compulsory School Ordinance Sami pupils must be offered mother-tongue education even if Sami is not used at home on an everyday basis.

– I wanted my three children to have mother tongue education and I found a teacher. The headteacher thought it sound-

ed OK, but after discussing it with the municipality she said no.

### Many objections

Today Lisa Kråik lives outside Norrtälje and, like many other Sami parents around the country she is fighting for Sami teaching for her children. First the municipality said the fee asked by the teacher was much



too high, although it was normal for the teacher's qualifications. The next objection was that Lisa did not speak Sami with her children and should have a better knowledge of the language herself.

– But how could I when the state has deprived us of our language for two generations? It's not my fault that people were ashamed of being Sami. My mother's generation were put in the corner if they spoke Sami. She was sent to a boarding school in Jämtland where the Sami children were made to feel ashamed of their origins. They used to be called "bloody Lapps".

But Lisa was proud of her origins and



Lisa Kråik thinks everyone should be entitled to mother-tongue education.

didn't mind being called "Lapp Lisa" when she went to school in her large Sami bonnet. In the summer she used to stay with her relatives in Tjallingén in southern Jämtland and learned more about Sami culture.

– To me it's extremely important that the language survives, especially South Sami which is dying out. My cousins have married Sami and speak the language at home. Why shouldn't my children be able to understand their own relatives?

The question of mother-tongue education for the children has been examined by the National Agency for Education, which criticized Norrtälje municipality for not arranging a proper test of the children's proficiency. But no such test has been made, and the municipality still insists that Lisa and her husband should speak Sami at home.

– The municipality has really behaved very badly. Instead of being proud of having Sami here, they do everything to keep us back.

#### Studying on their own

Alexander is 16, Ida 14 and Simon 8, and at present they are at three different schools. When their parents started demanding mother-tongue education for them they went to the same school.

– They've started studying on their own

and they're cleverer than me. But they need help from a teacher.

Lisa says that it is important for the children to learn about their Sami heritage. They have a right to feel like Sami, but it is up to them to decide whether or not they want to adopt the Sami culture.

– My mother's generation never had that option. It's important to understand the culture so that you can understand yourself. It's not about owning reindeer. It's more like a feeling. Am I Swedish? Yes and no. I want my children to be able to choose.

No one can say how the dispute will end, but the Sami flag is still flying outside the Kråiks' house and before it is over they may well finish building the goahti in the garden so that they can smoke fish and meat. ✨

## National minority language

In 2000, Parliament declared Sami a national minority language in Sweden. Later that year the Sami were given the right in some municipalities in Norrbotten county to use their language in communications with administrative authorities and the courts. They also have the right to use Sami in connection with pre-school education and elderly care.

All school pupils with a mother tongue other than Swedish are entitled to study their mother tongue both at compulsory school

and upper secondary school, provided that they use the language on a daily basis with at least one parent or guardian. Mother-tongue education is optional for the pupils, but the municipality is required to arrange it if there are at least five pupils in the municipality who want such education.

Sami pupils are entitled to mother-tongue education even if they do not use Sami on a daily basis. The municipality must arrange such teaching even if there are less than five pupils in the municipality who want it.

## The Sami Library

The Sami Library, which is located in the same building as the Ájtte library in Jokkmokk, has a large collection of literature in Sami, as well as literature about the Sami and Sami affairs.

Anyone who is interested can borrow books directly from the library or through the Libris inter-library loan service.

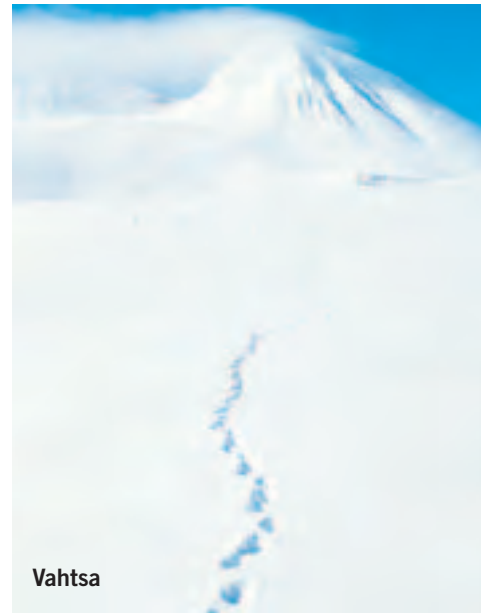
The Sami Library not only has non-fiction, but also works of fiction by Sami writers. There are a number of Sami writers writing in Swedish or Norwegian, or whose books have been translated, for example:

Nils-Aslak Valkeapää  
Andreas Labba  
Harald Gaski  
Johan Turi  
Rose-Marie Huuva  
Rauni Magga Lukkari





Bulltje



Vahtsa

## A language with infinite variation

Snow that will barely hold a person, snow with a hard, rugged crust and light, fluffy snow are some of the hundreds of types of snow for which Sami words exist.

Yngve Ryd and the reindeer herder Johan Rassa have described the many words in Lulesami for types of snow in their book Snow. “Snow is a big subject that includes

snowfall, the thickness of snow cover and snowmelt. Snow ages and changes during the winter, which affects its consistency, bearing capacity and skiing properties”, writes Yngve Ryd. “Snow also occurs in different contexts, which is reflected in the language. Snow words used in connection with skiing and reindeer grazing are different, even though the snow is the same”.

*Vahtsa.* One or two inches of new snow on top of old snow. If the new snow is watery, other words, such as *slahutte*, are used.

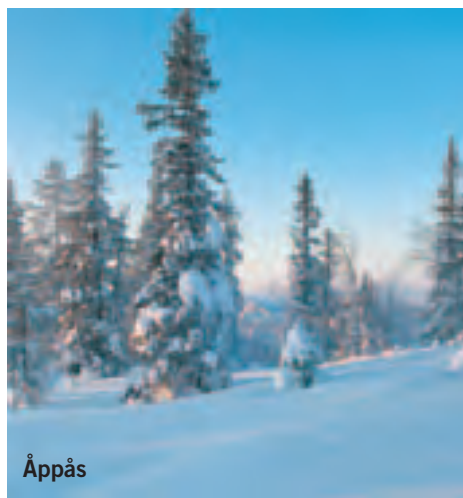
*Slabttse.* Falling rain mixed with snow. If lying on the ground it is called *släbtsáadahka* or simply *släbsát*. As long as *släbsát* is untouched it is white, but the moment a person or animal walks on it the water comes to the surface and it darkens.

*Skilltje, bulltje* and *tjiluve* are used about lumps of snow and ice that become attached to objects, reindeer moss and trees. Large lumps of snow that stick to a house are nearly always called *bulltje*.

*Áppås* is virgin snow without any tracks. The word is used mainly when reindeer are looking for pasture. Where the absence of reindeer tracks shows that no reindeer have been grazing, people say: “It’s *áppås*”. ✧



Släbsát



Áppås



## Sport intertwined with history

Many modern-day Sami sports mirror Sami life in former times, but new influences have also made an impact.

There are annual reindeer herding contests that test the participants' skill in handling lassos, rifles and skis. Reindeer sled races are increasingly popular in northern Sápmi. Cross-country and track running, downhill skiing and floorball are also well-established. After skiing, football is the most popular sport in Sápmi. There is a Swedish Sami Sports Association and a Sami Football Association.

In the summer of 2004 Sápmi played its first friendly football match against Northern Cyprus in Tromsø in Norwegian Sápmi.

The match ended in a 1–1 draw, which was a symbolic victory for friendship and solidarity. The Sami also take part in the Arctic Winter Games, a new international sporting event for provinces, autonomous districts, territories and minority nations in the circumpolar region.

### Sami skiers were pioneers

The Sami may be said to have laid the foundation for the modern sport of skiing. The first ski races in Sweden were organized towards the end of the 19th century. Sami skiers were often successful participants. The first major, well-known and properly organized ski event in the world was probably the Nordenskiöld Race in 1884, which started and finished in Jokkmokk. The race was longer than a double Vasa Ski Race, i.e. 220 km. It all started with an unsuccessful polar expedition to Greenland the year before. The Nordenskiöld Race dispelled any doubts about the ability of Sami skiers.

### Never-ending Greenland ice

A.E. Nordenskiöld prepared an expedition in 1883 to find out whether Greenland was completely covered with ice. Pavva

Aslak Sokki (left) scored a goal for Sápmi in the friendly match against North Cyprus.

Lasse Tuorda and Anders Rassa from Jokkmokk were two Sami members of the expedition who were well-known for their skiing stamina. After travelling across the ice for 30 days the expedition was running out of provisions and strength. The expedition decide to return, but before starting for home Nordenskiöld wanted to make one last attempt. Rassa and Tuorda were asked to ski as far as the edge of the ice, if possible. They left the camp and set off at a brisk pace. By the time they had returned they had gone 460 km in 57 hours. An impressive performance, but there were many doubters when the expedition returned to Sweden.

### The race proved it

A.E. Nordenskiöld therefore arranged a race to prove that Rassa and Tuorda were telling the truth. The race was held on 3 April 1884. Some of the skiers gave up after a mere 10 km. At the halfway mark in Kvikkjokk, a stone's throw from the Bear Mountain, Per Olof Lanta and Pavva Lasse Tuorda were in the lead. The home lap went just as fast. After 220 km Pavva Lasse Tuorda won with a time of 21 hours, 22 minutes, which proved once and for all that the Sami were very good skiers.

Pavva Lasse Tuorda and Anders Rassa received medals from the King for their achievement. The Society for the Promotion of Ski Sport (established in 1892 and later renamed the Association for the Promotion of Outdoor Life) included a Sami skier in its logotype. The Society erected a monument in honour of the Sami for having popularized skiing and as a "reminder of the debt of gratitude that Swedish skiers owe to their Sami brothers". ✧

*Håkan Kuorak, Vice-President of the Sami Football Association*



Reindeer sled races are becoming increasingly popular.





The confirmation camp is attended by Sami youngsters from all over Sweden who often make lifelong friends there. Group photograph of the 2004 confirmation candidates.

Photo: Jan Gustavsson

## Sami confirmation camp

Henrik is one of the 48 young Sami to take part in the traditional Sami confirmation camp. They are all in their early teens, Henrik is 15.

The last two weeks have been hectic, what with studying, listening to the pastor and – most important of all – hanging out with all my new friends. We’ve hardly slept a wink in the last day or two here in Jokkmokk.

Henrik Israelsson does look rather sleepy sitting among his fellow confirmation candidates and listening to the last sermon.

### New friends

– I can’t understand why I remember so little about the word of God and the lessons. That part is a bit hazy to tell you the truth, says Henrik.

But he has other memories for life. For many years now confirmation camps lasting

a couple of weeks have been arranged for Sami boys and girls by Sáminuorra (Sami Youth Organization). The confirmation candidates are from Idre in the south to Karesuando in the north, and from northern Norway too. Many young Sami look forward to the camp. It is their first chance to meet other Sami of their own age and make new friends, sometimes for life.

– I was awfully nervous at first and I just wanted to get it over and done with, but before long we became close friends and were having a great time, says Henrik.

### A huge tent

On the last day there was a beautiful service in a huge tent. Somehow the service was not churchy and solemn as you would expect. One after the other they went forward and took communion and sat down relieved. Then they filed out into the sun-



Photo: John Erling Ursi

Henrik Israelsson having his photograph taken. All the boys and girls had their portrait taken that day.

light and the worst part, the farewells. Tears and hugs and red-eyed questions – You will keep in touch, won’t you?

– We formed a large circle. No one wanted to part or go home. It was really tragic, Henrik remembers.

At last the youngsters moved, the close-knit band of friends dispersed, jumped into cars, waved cheerfully and spread to all corners of Sápmi.

– As soon as we got home we started phoning each other and text messaging, so we still keep in touch. ✧

# Religion interacting with nature

Nowadays, religion is no more or less important to the Sami than to everyone else in Sweden. But there was a time when religion played a much more dramatic role in Sami culture.

Before they were converted to Christianity the Sami had their own beliefs. Since all living things had a soul, human beings must live in harmony with nature. The Sami performed special rites to ensure beneficial interaction with nature.

Their cosmos was divided into three spheres: the underworld, the real world and the celestial world. All three worlds had their own gods and spirits. Human beings and animals inhabited the earthly world and the dead inhabited the underworld.

## Shamans and sacred drums

Men's rites had to do with hunting and fishing and the weather and women's with home and family. The shaman (noaidi) played a key role in religious ceremonies as a mediator between people and the gods. The sacred drum helped the noaidi to make contact with the gods. The sound of the drum helped him to transport himself in a trance to the celestial world, the kingdom of the dead or far-away countries where he could experience



The picture of the noaidi with his drum is from Professor Johannes Schefferus's book *Laponnia*, published in 1673.

and later tell people about things they could not see. The noaidi was also a seer, doctor, healer and herbal expert.

In some areas all families had a sacred drum that helped them to foretell the future. The Christian missionaries regarded the noaidis' contacts with spirits as communion with the devil.

Certain natural phenomena, such as unusual stones, rocks or other formations, were regarded as religious centres of force and sacred areas. They were places visited by the supernatural and were chosen as sacrificial sites. Special stones and wooden figures, sieidi, were placed on these sites. Animals, especially reindeer, were sacrificed there and the sieidi were smeared with the blood and fat of the sacrificed animal.

## Sacred bears

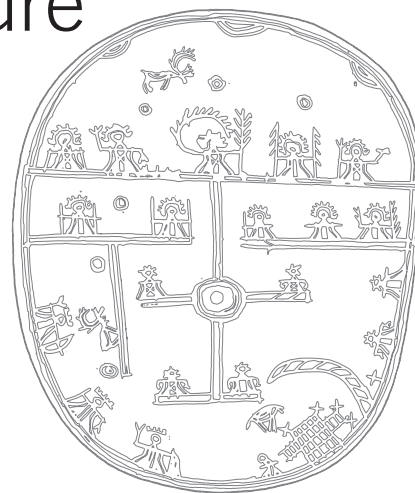
The pre-Christian Sami believed that bears were sacred. It was wise to be on good terms with bears since they were possessed by mighty spirits. Many rites were performed to neutralize this force and placate and revere the spirit of the bear. Bears were eaten, and after the meal their bones were buried in the same order as on the live body. This was done to conciliate the bear so that it would not take revenge.

## Forced Christianization

The first efforts to convert and teach the Sami were closely related to the objective of integrating them into Sweden. Churches were built and schools started in Lapland in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century.

This created an urgent need for Sami-speaking pastors and parish clerks. In 1632 Skytteanska Skolan in Lyckselse became the first school in which selected Sami boys were taught reading and Christianity.

In 1685 the state decided to Christian-



Drums were used to foretell the future. In the middle is the sun, surrounded by images of objects and people, as well as gods and spirits that the person or family that owned the drum considered particularly important.

ize the Sami by force and idolatry trials were held at courts set up in all Lappmarks. The shamans' drums were to be burned. Disobedience was to be punished by "flogging against the courthouse wall" or running the gauntlet. Cult images (sieidi) and sacrificial sites were destroyed, and sacred Sami sites were desecrated.

In 1723 a decision was taken to build schools beside the Lapland churches. They were small boarding schools, and the Crown paid for board and lodging for six pupils at each school. The pupils normally spent two years at school studying reading and Christianity.

## Laestadius had Sami ancestry

The Laestadian revivalist movement reached Sápmi in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Lars Levi Laestadius was appointed pastor of Karesuando, Sweden's most northerly parish, in 1826. He had Sami ancestry on his mother's side and grew up in a Sami environment. Laestadius taught the Christian gospel in a new way and referred to pre-Christian Sami religion in his preaching. ✧



# Sara takes the future into her own hands

Sara Omma's mother is from the southern province of Småland and her father is a reindeer herder. But she thinks it is simpler for a Sami to live in Kautokeino, Norway.

It is a Sunday morning in September and Sara Omma is spending a long weekend in her family's red house in Gällivare. Like many other people of her age she is studying, but instead of taking the plane south she journeyed by car to the Sami University College 350 km north of Gällivare.

– I could have chosen to study journalism in Sundsvall, but I chose Kautokeino instead. There I don't have to explain who I am and I can use my own language, she says.

Kautokeino is one of two municipalities in northern Norway where the Sami are in a majority. There, unlike Gällivare, you can speak Sami both in cafés and banks. Fluency in Sami is a requirement for admission to the University College, although Sara almost lost her language.

## Half Sami, half Swedish

Gällivare is one of six towns in Sweden where Sami children can go to a Sami school for their first six school years. But



Photo: Lars Ole Marckatt

Sara Omma dreams of becoming a reindeer herder, but is studying to be a journalist so as to have a good education to fall back on if her reindeer herding dreams do not materialize.

## Youth organizations

**Sáminuorra** is a Sami youth organization in Sweden. It seeks to promote the economic, social, cultural, legal and administrative interests of Sami youth with special reference to Sami occupations. It has several local branches in different parts of Sweden.

**Infonuorra Sápmi** is a public information centre for Sami youth in Sápmi. The purpose of the centre is to provide information about education, work, culture and recreation, rights and society so as to enable Sami youth to make choices on the basis of their own language and cultural iden-

tity. It has an office in Bodø, Norway, and a website.

**Davi Nuorra** is a youth organization in Norwegian Sápmi. One of its most important goals is to promote cohesion between Sami youth and create meeting-places for them. It has a number of local branches in various parts of Norway.

**DoajmmaSiebrre Julev-sábme (DSJ)** is a nationwide organization for young Sami in Norwegian Sápmi. The aim of the organization is to promote Sami language, identity and culture.

**Suoma Sámi Nuorat (SSN)** is a Sami youth organization in Finland. Its purpose is to strengthen the identity of Sami youth and their knowledge of their own culture. It seeks to increase contacts between Sami youth in Finland and other countries and to increase the use of the Sami language and support Sami culture.

## Meeting-places for Sami youth

Apart from organizations such as those mentioned here, many events are arranged in different parts of Sápmi at various times of the year that provide meeting-places for Sami youth. Here are some examples.



going to a Sami school does not necessarily mean that you speak Sami.

– Although my mother is from Småland I think she's more Sami than many Sami people I know. But this fact did mean that Sami was not my mother tongue and I learned Sami from my father, says Sara.

Many of the children in the Sami school were in the same boat as Sara. Several of them had one Sami parent and one Swedish parent.

– We spoke Swedish in between lessons so that everyone would understand, says Sara.

Although she has studied Sami after Sami school, Sara says that she still does not have a perfect command of the language, but at least she is not afraid to speak it, unlike some of her friends. Sara thinks this is because they are afraid of being corrected.

– There is a counterproductive tendency among the Sami to give people who do not speak perfect Sami a hard time. But of course there are others who encourage you for trying and accept the fact that you sometimes make mistakes.

#### **Wants to be a reindeer herder**

Sara's father is a reindeer herder in Sörkai-tum sameby, which extends from Gällivare to the Norwegian border north of Sarek. Sara wants to follow in his footsteps.

– The Sami language and reindeer husbandry are at the core of my Sami identity. I wish things were as they used to be, when you could spend weeks on end in the reindeer forest, but to make both ends meet nowadays you have to have a regular income on the side.

That is why she decided to study to become a journalist.

#### **Disappointed with the Sami Parliament**

Reindeer-herding Sami are in a minority. Sara Omma thinks it is important, if reindeer herding is to survive, to have parties in the Sami Parliament that are involved in reindeer husbandry issues. That is why she joined the Reindeer Owners Association party.

– I have always committed myself, even as a little girl. I have always had opinions and wanted to change things and inform people, says Sara Omma, who is not impressed by the Sami Parliament.

– I was disappointed when I realized that the Parliament doesn't have much say really. It is after all a central government agency, and I think it is mostly there to make the government look good. The government still takes most of the decisions.

The Reindeer Husbandry Act divides the Sami into two camps. Sami who own reindeer and are members of a sameby are

entitled to pursue reindeer husbandry, hunting and fishing in the designated areas, while other Sami do not have these rights.

– This division of the Sami makes it difficult for the Sami Parliament to get anywhere because of all the conflicts of interest. Putting reindeer-owning Sami and other Sami on different sides is asking for trouble.

– But the Sami Parliament is still young. I hope and believe that it will start working properly in the near future.

#### **Together for the future**

Sara Omma is also a member of Sáminuorra (Sami Youth Organization), which she tries to influence together with other young Sami. Although she has only been on the board for a few months, Sara says this job suits her down to the ground.

– It's terrific trying to do something together to make life better for young Sami people, says Sara who has great plans for the future including demonstrations in Stockholm and changes in the school curriculum.

– I'd like to change the curriculum so that all Swedish schoolchildren learn more about the Sami. If people knew more about the Sami and reindeer herders they would understand the Sami way of life better and accept it. That's important, says Sara. ✨

**Riddu Ridđu** A large indigenous peoples festival in Olmmáivággi, Kåfjord, Norway. Indigenous artists from all over the world give performances each day of the festival.

**All Saints Cup** An indoor football championship for teams of all ages from different parts of Sápmi. The championship is held in Gällivare, where dancing and a "pub evening" are also arranged for the grownups.

**The Sami Cup** Perhaps the biggest football tournament for teams from the whole of Sápmi. Matches in various Sápmi venues.

**Márkomeannu** Festival Mostly Sami artists from the whole of Sápmi. Held in the area between Harstad and Narvik in Norwegian Sápmi.

**Swedish Sami championships** These championships are arranged in various venues in Sápmi. Lasso-throwing contests and races in the summer, skiing in the winter.

**South Sami Cup** A football tournament held in southern Sápmi for teams from Sweden and Norway.

**Easter in Kautokeino** The Sami Grand Prix is held during the Easter holiday – the Sami equivalent of the Eurovision Song Contest. There are also concerts, reindeer sled races and snowmobile cross races.

**The Jokkmokk Winter Fair** Held on the first weekend in February. The Fair is an opportunity to meet people, enjoy yourself and experience art and culture. The origins of the Fair go back to the 16th century, when it was a centre for trade between Sami, traders and other visitors. The Fair's 400th anniversary was celebrated in 2005.



Lars-Anders Baer during a plenary assembly of the Sami Parliament.

# Time to open the door to a new era

The land of the Sami was colonized for hundreds of years. Pioneers settled and tilled the land and the state took its riches. But Sweden has never come to terms with this period in its history. Its colonial policy was never that blatant.

– Perhaps Sweden has never come to terms with its colonial past because the Swedish brand of colonialism was never as brutal as that in Norway, says the Sami politician Lars-Anders Baer. Here the policy towards the “Lapps” was more paternalistic. As a result, the structures that were created then are still in place.

– There was never any reappraisal, the issues were never discussed. The big question marks about land and water management

remain since the Sami were not considered competent to manage land and water.

Bureaucrats and politicians today do not know what happened a hundred years ago. But in Norway everything came to a head in connection with the protests against the Alta hydropower project in the early 1980s.

– We in Sweden never went that far, and politicians and the public never had to address the past. Compared with other sectors, therefore, the Sami question is still a non-issue in Sweden in the sense that it is not integrated into other policy areas, explains Lars-Anders Baer.

– Our existence must be recognized in politics and Sami issues must be integrated into politics at all levels.

Lars-Anders Baer does not want to break free from Sweden and establish an independent Sápmi.

– The Sami live in four countries, and there is sometimes talk of creating a state of our own. But nation-states are going out of fashion. What we need to do instead is to open up the borders. We are demanding, more and more specifically, the right to manage our own affairs. Lars-Anders Baer specifies the areas in which most Samis want autonomy.

**School education** Good cooperation on Sami schools and with municipalities.

**The Sami language** The Sami language is recognized as an official language in the northern counties, but progress is slow. It used to be an official language in the 17th and 18th centuries and much of the 19th century. When Sweden was a great power no one minded people speaking Sami, but after 1809 Sweden was cut down to size. We should restore the situation that existed before colonization left the Sami in the cold.

**Culture** The culture situation is satisfactory. In the 1960s an MP said that when two cultures meet, the stronger one wins. But now there is a new attitude to Sami culture although many people still have a static approach and cannot realize that, like other cultures, it changes with the times.

**Resource management** The most important issue is resource management and ownership. Given the paternalistic attitude that prevailed during the colonial era, the Sami were not considered capable of managing resources. Our opposite number is central government. I don't think anything can be done about the pioneers who were given our land. You can't turn the clock back. But a lot of land is not owned by anybody. The Sami don't have a title to this land, nor does the state. So it's the same for both sides.

Lars-Anders Baer does not consider it feasible to take the government to court. It was not the courts that put an end to

apartheid in South Africa, but the political system, he says. In Canada, for example, the Inuit – the indigenous people – have succeeded in acquiring land rights through negotiations.

– The important thing is information. Not enough people in Sweden realize that the Sami are not a threat. We're not about to fence the land in, after all we belong to the state of Sweden too.

– Our existence must be recognized in politics and Sami issues must be integrated into politics at all levels.

An important step for the Sami is the fact that the draft EU Constitution recognizes them as a people. Indeed, it has sometimes been easier to gain a hearing in Brussels than in Stockholm, says Lars-Anders Baer.

– Most of the other member states have experience of a colonial past and know what it means. And we are a unique group in the EU since we are Europe's only indigenous people.

By and large, Baer thinks that globalization benefits the Sami. The EU Northern Dimension speaks of the inherent right of the Sami to self-determination.

– We don't worry whether the EU is

good or bad for Sweden, but whether it is good or bad for us. And the EU has been good for us. Membership has improved the prospects of a dialogue in the North. It has boosted integration, and there is now a completely different kind of cooperation between municipalities and county administrative boards.

He thinks that the regional policy trend in Sweden is good for the Sami too.

– Previously, the general view was that the Sami should stick to herding reindeer. But things have changed as policies for sparsely populated areas have changed. The general exodus from such areas gives the Sami a chance. It makes Sami society more visible. We can help to maintain employment levels and levels of economic activity.

#### **Dependence on the state**

In Norway, Sami are more likely to return home after graduating from university than other Norwegians. Lars-Anders Baer believes the situation is similar in Sweden.

– We need even more well-educated people to manage our self-determination than Swedish society does.

The fall of Communism led to détente in Europe's Arctic region. Besides, substantial oil and gas deposits are now being extracted in the Sami areas of Norway and Russia. In Russia the Nenets receive a percentage of the revenues from the oil extracted in their areas.

– It is important for us in Sweden to have a source of income too. We are very dependent on government funding for things like the Sami Parliament since we do not have a tax base. We need income of our own, perhaps in the form of a percentage of the revenues from natural resource exploitation. If the Sami were allowed to administer hunting and fishing, we would be able to exercise better control and improve our cash flow too.

Lars-Anders Baer is an active politician in the Sami Parliament.

– It would be better for the region if we had our own administration and revenue base so that we could make the Sami system work. We could create an economic and cultural growth area. It has happened in other areas where indigenous people live and it could happen here too. Our strait-jacket has made it impossible to exploit our full potential. ✧

### The Sami Parliament

As an indigenous people who lived here a long time before today's national boundaries and countries existed the status of the Sami differs from that of other minorities in Sweden.

The Sami Parliament was set up by Act of Parliament in 1993 in recognition of the fact that the Sami are a separate people. This has made it easier for the Sami to make their voices heard and given them a say in community planning. The Sami Parliament has decision-making powers in matters relating to Sami culture, language and schools, and it allocates predator compensation paid by the government. It is elected by the Sami in general elections every four years and consists of 31 members. About 7,000 Sami in Sweden are registered in the electoral roll.



**Sámediggi  
Sámedigge  
Saemiedigkie  
Sametinget  
Sami Parliament**

### Apology by the government

In 1998 the Swedish government apologized to the Sami people for Sweden's oppression of the Sami. The refusal to let the Sami use their own language and forcible displacements of Sami groups were mentioned as examples of such oppression.

Today, there is a closer dialogue with the Sami Parliament and other bodies in order to build openness and agreement. Regular meetings take place between the government and Sami representatives. The question of increasing Sami self-determination, for example by transferring new tasks to the Sami Parliament, is at the top of the agenda.



Photo: Frida Hiedberg



### SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING ...

**Beach, Hugh.** A year in Lapland: guest of the reindeer herders. University of Washington Press, 2001. – xiii, 242 p. ISBN 0-295-98037-0. An excellent introduction to the life of Sami reindeer herders, with a new Afterword.

**Borchert, Nanna.** 2001, Land is Life: Traditional Saami Reindeer Grazing Threatened in Northern Sweden. Ed. Kenyon Fields. 2001. Available as a PDF file: <http://www.oloft.com/landislife.pdf>  
Starting with an excellent brief introduction to Sami reindeer herding past and present, it presents the Sami case for a solution to the legal actions brought against Sami reindeerherding communities by private landowners.

**Hætta, Odd Mathis.** The Ancient Religion and Folk-Beliefs of the Sámi. Alta Museum. 1994. 42 p. (Alta Museum pamphlets, ISSN 0805-9101). ISBN 82-7784-004-7.

**Hætta, Odd Mathis.** The Sami: an Indigenous People of the Arctic. Karasjok. Davvi Girji, 1993. 79 p.

**Kuoljok, Sunna, John E. Utsi.** The Saami: People of the Sun and Wind. Ájtte, 1993. 59 p.

**Manker, Ernst.** People of Eight Seasons. Stockholm. Wahlström & Widstrand, pr.1972. 214 p. ISBN 91-46-19958-6. Richly illustrated “classic”.

**Pettersson, R.** 2004. Sami Tourism in Northern Sweden. Etour, Östersund–Umeå.

**Valkeapää, Nils-Aslak.** Greetings from Lapland: the Sami – Europe’s Forgotten People. Translated by Beverley Wahl. London. Zed Press, 1983. 128 p.

### ... AND SURFING

#### **[www.samer.se](http://www.samer.se)**

Information portal of the National Sami Information Centre. Will contain pages in English.

#### **[www.sametinget.se](http://www.sametinget.se)**

Swedish Sami Parliament website. Information about current Sami issues and politics; links to the Sami Parliaments in Norway and Finland, Sami organizations in Sápmi and relevant international organizations.

#### **[www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/index.html](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/index.html)**

Website of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

#### **[www.utexas.edu/courses/sami/index3.html#](http://www.utexas.edu/courses/sami/index3.html#)**

The large number of articles offered at this Texas University site represent an encyclopaedia in miniature of Sami history, pre-Christian religion, livelihood, culture, literature and thinking.

**[www.samitour.no](http://www.samitour.no)** Concise briefing on a wide range of Sami topics based on Hætta, The Sami: an Indigenous People of the Arctic (see above) from a Norwegian Sápmi angle.

**[www.somban.com](http://www.somban.com)** A well-made yoik site. Includes 14 full-length yoiks in MP3 format that can be listened to online or downloaded.



### **The Sami – an Indigenous People in Sweden**

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## A book about Sami life in today's society

*The Sami – an Indigenous People in Sweden* describes what it is like to be a Sami today, what it was like in the past and what it may be like in the future. The book gives a picture of the Sami as an indigenous people, their culture, history and society. It is based on reportage and factual material, as well as texts written by researchers, writers and other experts.

The book was written in connection with the government's national information campaign on the Sami and Sami culture in cooperation with the National Sami Information Centre. The government has conducted an information campaign during the period 2001–2004 in order to raise awareness about the Sami and their culture. A new aspect of these efforts is the establishment of the permanent National Sami Information Centre attached to the Sami Parliament. The Centre will provide relevant and credible information about the Sami and Sami culture and increase knowledge about the Sami in a long-term, broad perspective. One channel of information used by the Centre is the information portal [www.samer.se](http://www.samer.se).



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