# BAIKI

The North American Sami Journal

Issue 17 Winter 1998

## Aurora Borealis: the Audible Light

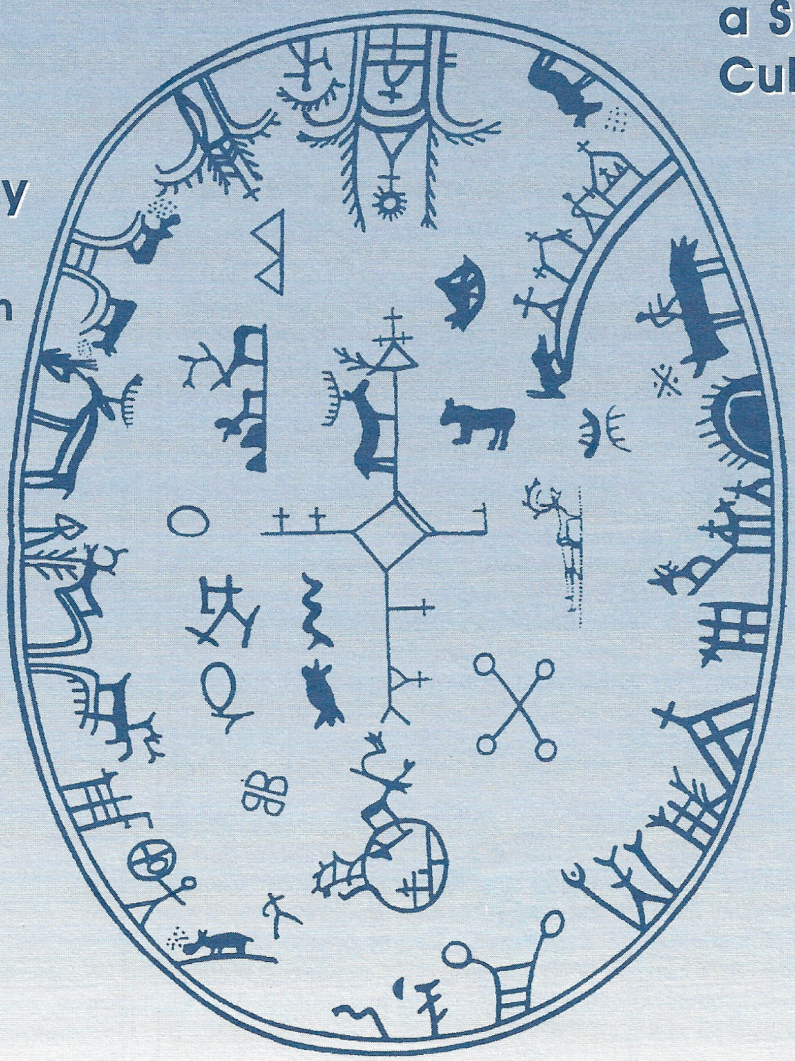
Mei Olsen

## An Ancient Way of Weaving

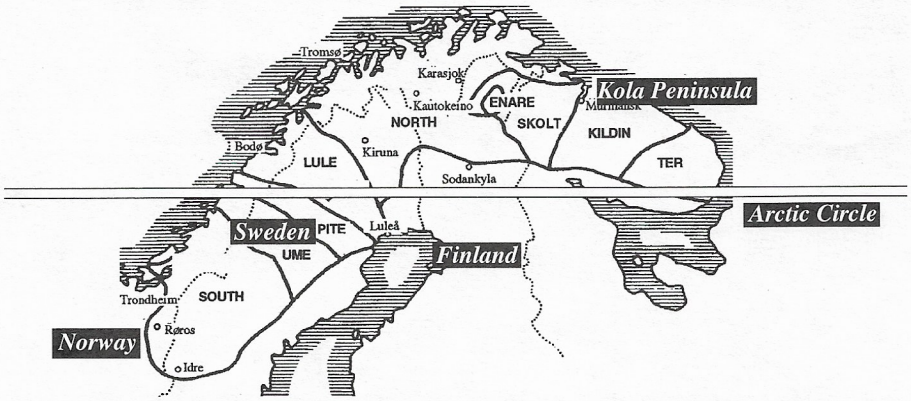
Desiree Koslin

## The Saami Drum: a Spiritual and Cultural Legacy

Nathan Muus



## WHO ARE THE SAMI PEOPLE AND WHAT IS "BAIKI?"




**The Sami (Saami or"Lapp") People are the Indigenous inhabitants of Norway, Sweden, Finland and the Russian Kola Peninsula.** About 100,000 Sami people live in the Nordic countries today, half of them in Norway. Nine versions of the Sami [Finno-Ugric] language are spoken. The North Sami word for the Sami nation is*Sápmi* and the South Sami word is *Saemien Eatneme*. **The spellings "Sami" and "Saami" are both correct.**

**Báiki is the international quarterly cultural magazine that grew out of the North American search for Sami roots.** We estimate that at least 30,000 people of Sami ancestry live in North America. They are the descendants of Sami people who, due to cultural genocide and the closing of the borders in their areas emigrated to the United States and Canada as Norwegians, Swedes, Finns and Russians. Until the publication of *Báiki: the North American Sami Journal,* their story has been completely left out of immigration history. The descendants of these immigrants are now seeking to reconnect with their culture in a meaningful way.

**"*Báiki*" ["ba-hee-kee"] is the nomadic reindeer-herding society's word for cultural survival.** It means "the home that lives in the heart" as one travels from place to place, the invisible bond that transcends linear time and physical space. *Báiki* was begun in 1991 as a simple eight - page publication. Today *Báiki* has expanded to a twenty-eight page magazine. With little publicity other than word of mouth, our first sixteen issues generated a worldwide readership of over 1000, and a loyal circle of creative support. The success of this magazine is a sign of growing interest in Sami history and culture. *Báiki* is recognized as the major source of Sami information in North America. It is read and quoted by members of the academic community as well as by those who are seeking to reconnect with their Sami roots.

**The *Báiki* logo was designed by** Faith Fjeld. A "báiki" is the basic traditional Sami survival unit, the reindeer nomad's cultural connection that migrates from place to place. Nils-Aslak Valkeapää referred to a báiki as "the home that lives in the heart." The symbols in the *Báiki* logo are pictographs from Sami Drums: The reindeer symbolizes physical support. It faces east toward *lavvus* or Sami tents which symbolize home. These are located at the base of a mountain which symbolizes spiritual support. All are connected to a *njalla* or storage shed which symbolizes group and cultural survival.

Faith Fjeld and Nathan Muus are co-editors and designers of *Báiki*. This issue was produced with Edgar Ayala, Grecia Bate, Eric Carlsen, Hollister Elkhart, Jennifer Hyypiö, Jolene Jacobs, Marilyn Jackson, Henrietta Koski, Rebecca Kycklin, Nanny Lofstrom, Zulema Maixala and Mel Olsen. 

***BÁIKI* SUBSCRIPTIONS and EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE**
**1714 Franklin St. #311**
**Oakland, CA 94612**
**tel: (510) 452-0930 / fax: (510) 834-4264**
**new E-mail address: call the *Báiki* Office**

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*Issue #17 Winter 1998*

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**Jennifer Hyypiö is a digital and fine artist who has relocated to the Bay Area from Michigan. She says: "I have just connected with my Sami heritage and I want to keep that Spirit alive in my art."**

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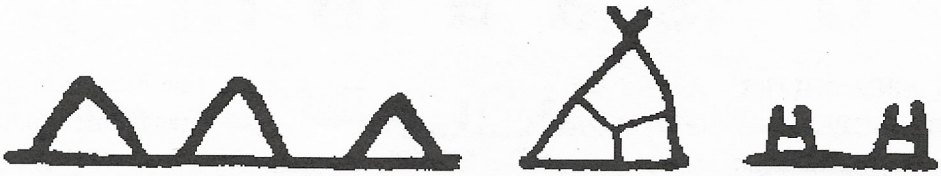


# A LIVING CULTURE AND A GROWING COMMUNITY

This issue of *Báiki* signals its re-emergence as a quarterly periodical. The past year has seen a number of important developments for *Báiki* and for the North American Sami community:

**1. The birth of The Saami Báiki Foundation as a nonprofit project of The Tides Center.** It has been exactly one year since the doors of the new cultural and resource center opened in downtown Oakland, CA in the offices of the South and Meso American Indian Rights Center (SAIIC).

**The Foundation is continuing the cultural, educational and research activities begun by *Báiki*** and the expanding North American Sami community through events, culture and language classes and the coordination and sponsorship of Sami exhibits throughout North America.

**The Foundation's research library is an outgrowth of the Sami Cultural Information Center** which began in Minneapolis in 1995. It houses close to a thousand Sami books and periodicals as well as numerous articles, videos, joik CD's, cassettes and cultural items. It includes North American Sami genealogical materials collected by *Báiki* over the past seven years, as well as materials donated by Rudy Johnson, (Duluth, MN), Lloyd Binder, (Inuvik, NWT, Canada), various Sami publishers and others.

**2. The traditional Sami Camp and exhibits at Ironworld Interpretive Center, (Chisholm, MN).** The idea began in 1992 with a visit by Faith Fjeld with Tom and Elli Scheib and their reindeer there. Mel Olsen and Rudy and Sally Johnson joined them the following year with a small exhibit as plans for a permanent installation grew from conversations with Shirley Olsen-Butterfield. Input from Anja Kitti lead to construction help from Illmari Mattus (Inari Sami) and Charlie Mayo, and with craft instruction by artists during the summer months, the Sami Camp is now a permanent reality.

**3. The continuing publication of *Árran, the Newsletter of the North American Sami Siidat.*** This periodical gives us current community news, and complements *Báiki* as a source of Sami information.

**4. The sixth annual Midwest Siiddastallen January 9-11, 1998 (Grand Marais, MN) with the first-ever reindeer races in the lower U.S.**

**We are grateful to have received two bequests.**

**from Carol Ruotsala Staats Wasilla, Alaska:**
***"In memory of my Sami connection***
**Addie Ruhijärvi Pearson**
***who died at the age of 95 . She lived most of her life in Spokane, Washington and was greatly interested in Finnish and Sami history."***

***from Mats Sexton Minneapolis, Minnesota: in memory of his Grandmother***
**Esther Sexton**
***"She was Swedish to the backbone."***

**5. The participation of the North American Sami Siidat in Høstfest (Minot, ND), Hjemkomst (Fargo-Moorhead, MN)** and many other Midwest festivals.

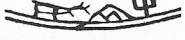
**6. The first North American Sami exhibit at the Vesterheim Norwegian American Museum (Decorah, IA).** (See *Báiki* Issue #16)

**7. Benefit for Indigenous Peoples' Day at La Peña Cultural Center (Berkeley), Norway Days at Ft. Mason (San Francisco), Skandi-fest (Turlock, CA), and Indigenous People's Pow Wow (Berkeley).**

## PLANNING AHEAD 1998

**April 17-19, Thousand Oaks, CA: The First West Coast Siiddastallen** in conjunction with the 25th anniversary of the Annual Scandinavian Festival at California Lutheran University. See page 27 of this issue for details.

**End of June or early July, Poulsbo, WA: A reunion of the descendants of the Sami reindeer herders who came to Alaska to collaborate with the Inuits.** This marks the centennial of the U.S. government Reindeer Project [see *Báiki* Issue #3, spring 1992, "The Sami in America"]. The event is being coordinated by Jan Henry Keskitalo, Kautokeino, Sápmi, Norway, and Norma Hansen and other descendants of the herders who live in Poulsbo, WA. A feature article on the Alaskan Sami in *Báiki* Issue #18, spring 1998, will include a list of the family names of the descendants.



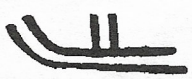
# s a a m i

## KING HARALD V APOLOGIZES TO THE SAMI PEOPLE

This came in my e-mail and I thought you would be interested in it.:

**In a rare political statement, King Harald V publicly apologized to the Sami people Tuesday for the repression they suffered under Norwegian rule.** The Sami, once called Lapps, are believed to have originated in Central Asia and migrated north at least 9,000 years ago. For more than 200 years, they endured government efforts to wipe out their culture. In recent decades, that policy has been replaced by a program nurturing Sami culture, which has its own language and traditions. "The Norwegian state is founded upon the territories of two peoples-the Norwegians and the Sami. Sami history is interwoven with Norwegian history," the King said in opening the third Sami Parliament." Today, we must apologize for the injustice that the Norwegians once imposed on the Sami People through policies of Norwegianization." His comments were believed to be the first time a Norwegian monarch publicly apologized for the treatment of the Sami.

**Ed Mentz**
**1386 S. Yale Ave**
**Merced, CA 95340-9572**



## FAMILY NAMES

**Thank you so much for taking time to answer my letter.** My father's father (surname: ANDERSSON changed to HOFF) found his mother (surname: LOOV) during a hunt "in the north" sometime around 1880; she returned with him to his home near Stockholm, Sweden. My father said she died (in her 30's or 40's) around the time of the first World War, which, I think, would make her a teenager when grandfather found her. My father (who died when I was 15, would be over 100 now) spoke of his early life during his early life during his last illness. His wife of that time [not my mother] said that he was crazy and not to take what he said as true. I have to temper her judgment knowing of her white American bias which became hatefully obvious after my fathers death; she took all of our "Swedish" things away- never to be seen again. I have two living half brothers who also remember father's story telling. So now I am trying to find my father's birth certificate, his mother's birth and death certificates, his father's birth and death certificates, and their marriage certificates. So far, I haven't been able to find addresses of where these may be on file. My father's family are all dead now, with the exception of a cousin living in Kristianstad, Sweden- who seems not to be willing to share family information other than that our grandmothers died in the same town. A neighbor (married to a Norwegian) is also doing their family's genealogy; she found your ad in *Avisen* along with an article on Lapp/Sami culture and suggested that I pursue my investigation along the Sami line because of my father's stories about grandfather "finding his wife on a hunt". It seems off the track but nothing else has matched so why not give it a try?

In the meanwhile, learning about the Sami will prove very interesting, I'm sure. I have one of Mari Boine's CD's; one of the drumming pieces reminds me of the beat my father "played" on the dining room table- no less- at midsummer as he told of gatherings he went to as a youngster. I always assumed this to be some sort of Swedish tradition. Now hearing the beat again, I wonder what he was telling us and what we missed due to his speaking/singing in Swedish or was it?

**Marie Hoff**
**P.O. Box 1424**
**Florence, OR 97439**

## A KOTA IS A WOMB

**I thought I was wrong calling the lavvu a "kota"**, but in an old book of Andreas Alariesto's paintings and stories of Sami life, he calls it a "kota". In Finnish, "kota" is the word for womb. Interesting?

**Gladys Koski Holmes**
**8122 Hay 53**
**Angora, MN. 55703-8005**

## VIKING RUNOLOGY

**I am a graphic anthropologist/ Northern European historian specializing in runology and migration** through Viking-period Scandinavian (especially Norwegian) folk life/lore/ medicine/magic

# connections

worshipped, created etc". I am very interested in the Saami culture/religion/way of life as it impacted (and was impacted by) the incoming *bomenn* settlers, settled-folk). More than a few Saami shamanistic elements were incorporated into Norse and northern Swedish pagan traditions, making them quite different from those folks (such as the Danes and southern Swedes) in regular contact with continental practices. Likewise, there were *bomenn* influences on the Saami: Tiermes/Diermes, the thunder-god, became Horagaless (from "Thor kalle", "Thor-fellow"). I went into it with some detail in my dissertation ( which is now being rewritten for submission to a mainstream pubisher). I am relatively familiar with the symbolism of the govadas (shaman drum), some of whose elements have also found their way into Norse usage. But I am always looking for more contacts/ information. I have also given a series of lectures on Saami religion/life mostly on the east coast, at various small symposia. My dissertation title is: "The Divine Thunderbolt and Related Religio -Folkloric Motifs.: Northern Europe and the Near East." The revised edition includes Asia and Africa, and will extend into early Medieval times (from prehistoric). It's a big job. And all I have is an Apple IIe to write it with... Fortunately, I have the resources of the Yale University library system available to me, plus I can read Norwegian/Swedish /Danish just fine. Many of the "first-in" missionary accounts of Sapmi and Saami customs are quite illuminating. I am very interested in seeing how *Baiki* has grown since I was a subscriber. I am looking for serious scholarly stuff, contacts (especially with E-mail; I can use the computer at Yale to access Internet) in the field, and "what's going on". I am not interested in New-Age material, "wannabees", or off-topic items. I look forward to seeing *Baiki* again. *Med hjerteling hilsen,*

**Jane T. Sibley, Ph. D,**
**P.O. Box123**
**Haddam, CT 06438**

**INVOLVEMENT THROUGH ART**

I wish, somehow, that I could get mere involved with the Sami American cultural movement. **Its a conflict in me, because I tend to shy away from joining things.** I avoid meetings like the plague, and can't afford to travel. So I guess my involvement will need to be through art, since I'm doing that, in fact, I'm downright driven!

**Eric Bergland**
**P.O. Box 186**
**Blue River, OR 97413**

**A++**

You're putting out a very interesting, historic magazine, so informative etc. I have lots of great reading from your *Baiki* these days. My, you folks do a great job in getting all the articles, pictures, etc. and assembling for printing. Takes lots of research, time, etc. You're publishing a very, very important magazine. Your editors & voluntary staff get an A++!

**Gladys Muus**
**Grand Marais, MN**
**FAN LETTER**

**This journal keeps getting better with each issue.** I would like to comment on the articles in Issue #16 by Mel Olsen, "The Coastal Sami"; Faith Fjeld, "The Home that Lives in the Hardware Store"; and Wes Ludeman, "The Sami and the Yoik". All well written and informative.

**Robert Best**
**PO Box 1496**
**Carthage, NC 28327-1496**

**RICHTER**

Congratulations on the new issue of *Báiki*. **The Franz Albert Richter series of drawings is very attractive.**

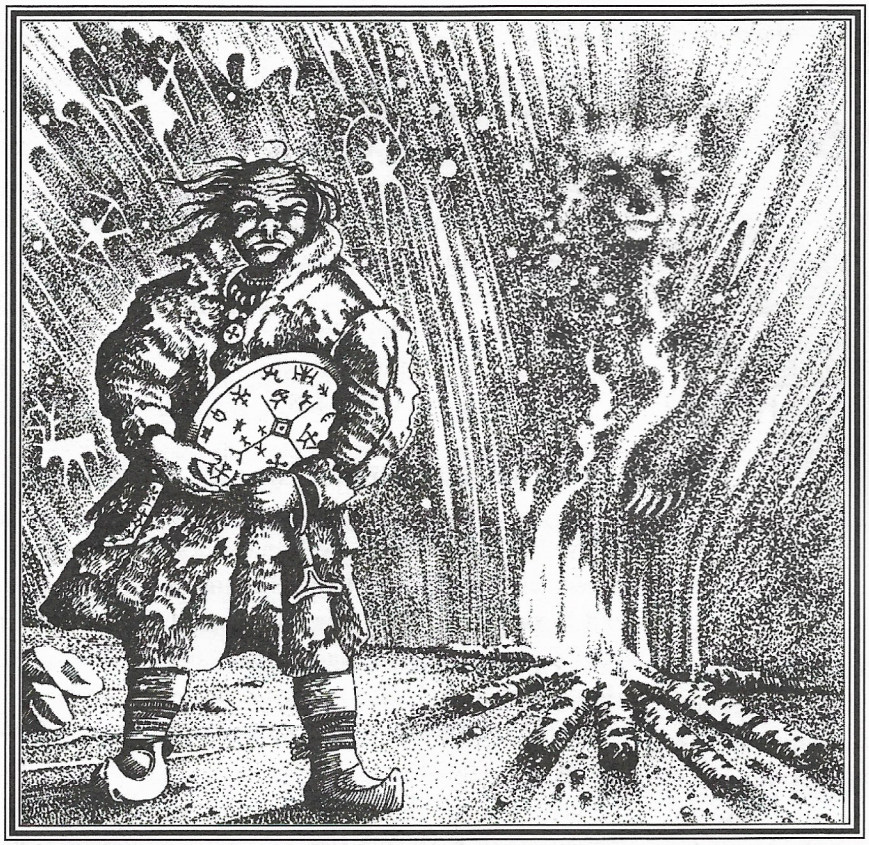
**Leif Sjoberg**
**Uppvindsg. 2, 3tr.**
**Skarpnäck, Sweden**

**SAMI VILLAGE AT SKANDI-FEST**

We enjoyed seeing your costumes at Skandi-fest. **You must have been so hot!** The Sami Village was so interesting. We read the Christmas Reindeer storybook every year during the holidays and will now have a better understanding of the culture.

**Karen Bernhardy**
**21 Cindy Place**
**Brentwood, CA 94513**

# THE SAMI DRUM




*Nathan Muus*

*map and drawings: Nathan Muus*
*illustration of noaide: Kurt Seaberg*
*Drum pictographs: traditional Sami*

The following passage was published in 1910. While we cannot be certain of the exact reference pertaining to some words, it was written by Johan Turi, and is perhaps the very first public description of the use of the Sami Drum by a Sami person since the questionable descriptions given in times of persecution.

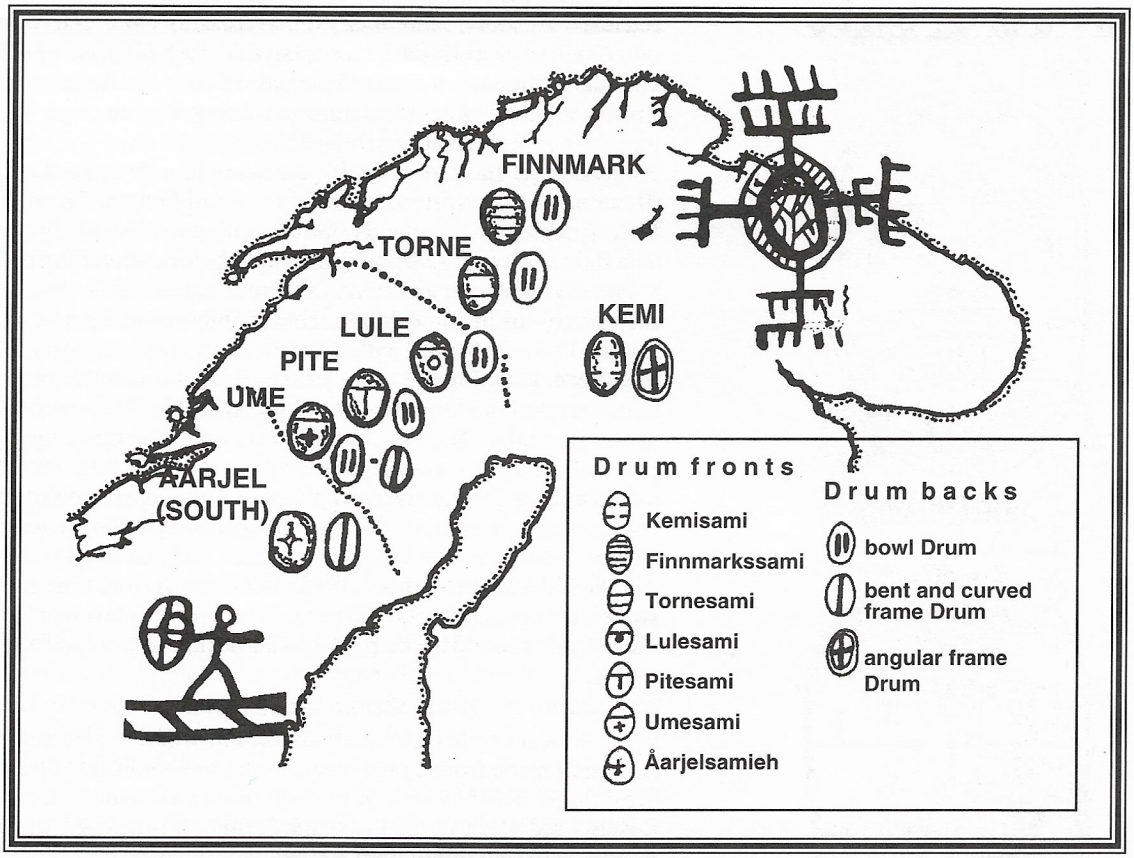
*"That magic drum was a noaide implement; and the noaides made it in this way: in it you put rings, and nine twigs from Accisaene's reindeer reins, and then they tapped with an antler hammer and whistled, and sometimes ground their teeth and in that way performed these noaide tricks."***1**

Much has been written by non-Sami about the symbolism and use of the Drum, but most is based on conjecture. The Swedish scholar Ernst Manker published extensive studies on the Drum in 1938 and 1950 **2** and although many disagree with some of his interpretations, his work is respected. Still, the use of the Drum and its meaning has been the object of much speculation and controversy.

"New Agers" and others often label the Sami "the last tribal people in Europe," but Sápmi is a circumpolar tribal nation that is Eurasian in geographical location and worldview. Linguistically and culturally, the Sami are related to the other Indigenous Arctic Peoples including the Samoyeds, the Nenet, the Komi, and others who herd or hunt reindeer and caribou and traditionally live in conical tents made of hides, birchbark, or whatever is at hand. Most have a special relationship to the bear, and consider all animals as relatives. And like other circumpolar Peoples, the Sami use round or oval hand Drums.

The earliest outside reference to the Sami Drum was in the *Chronicon Norvegicum* (c 1190). **3** From the 17th century extensive references to Sami Drums appear in accounts written by missionaries, travelers and anthropologists, i.e. outsiders. From that time on, Sami Drums were confiscated by the church and the state when found, and they were usually burned. Along with *joik*, [Sami chanting], Drums

# A SPIRITUAL AND CULTURAL LEGACY




were outlawed under both Dano-Norwegian and Swedish colonial rule and the Sami worldview was characterized as demonic and primitive. Anyone found in possession of a Drum was subject to extensive interrogation which could lead to punishment by death. Anders Poulsen from Varanger, Norway, for example, received a death sentence in 1692 for possessing a Drum, and was killed by another inmate while his appeal was in the hands of the King of Denmark. His Drum is the only known surviving Finnmark-style Drum. There are other documented death sentence cases as well. **4**

Drums not burned were often stolen and sold to wealthy Europeans as curios of a "vanishing culture." And there are documented cases of European noblemen requesting the presence of a Sami youth to "perform" with an acquired Drum. **5**

Only seventy-three of the old sacred Drums survived this period, most locked away in European museums, although a few of the ancient ones are said to still exist elsewhere. Only a very few are in Sami hands today. The largest collection - twenty-nine Drums - is in the Nordiska Museet in Stockholm. Others are in the National Museum in Copenhagen and in museums in Norway, England, Italy, France, Germany and elsewhere. They are a stolen legacy, "safe" under glass or in museum storage, far removed from their original cultural and community context.

During the centuries of persecution, Sami Drums were hidden in remote mountain sites and other places where they were used in secret. They thus remained a living part of Sami culture in spite of the claims of anthropologists and others that they had totally disappeared. Both Sami oral tradition and academic studies confirm the continued use of the Drum. **6**

In the past, while many Sami homes may have had a Drum, the *noiade* or spiritual leader of the clan, usually a man, was the specialist. Some say only the *noaide* had Drums. In most places women were forbidden to touch the Drum, but there are examples where women were *noiade* and used the Drum. Community members, both men and women, served as helpers to the *noiade* during Ceremonies, joiking and assisting those being doctored, and making sure the *noaide* returned to Earth after the journey. **7**

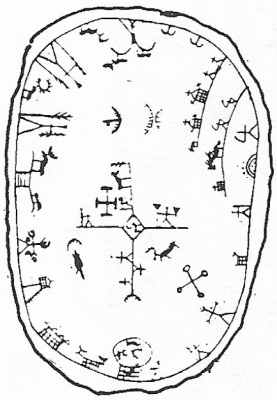
Today the Drum is used for physical, psychological, and spiritual healing to benefit the community.

*[**The Sami Drum** cont'd overleaf]*

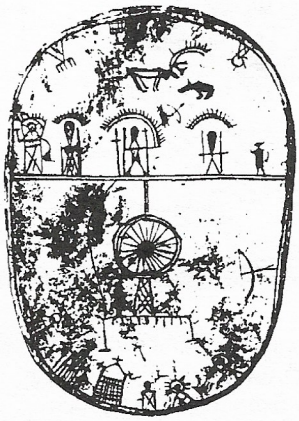
*[**The Sami Drum** cont'd from p.7]*

# THE DRUM IS A LIVING SYMBOL OF THE SAMI PEOPLE

## Drum fronts



**Åarjel (South)**



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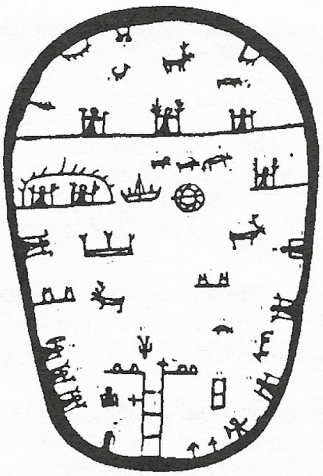


**Lule**

Using the Drum, *noaides* travel to the upper and lower worlds guided by Spirit or Animal Helpers. In this way they doctor illness, retrieve lost souls, accompany those crossing over, determine the outcome of past or future events, find lost objects, people, or animals, influence the weather, and ask for assistance from the Spirits and the Ancestors in such everyday survival tasks as guarding reindeer and catching fish.

Wood that has "grown with the Sun" in a counter-clock-wise direction east to west is preferred for Sami Drums. The hide of a fawn from a yearling doe is traditionally used for the Drumhead. The hair is singed, scraped and soaked before stretching onto the frame. Symbols are drawn on the Drum with reddish brown alder bark juice - or in some cases, reindeer blood - using a blunt tool.

The Drum is beaten with a *staura* or *vuorbe,* a Y- or T-shaped hammer made of antler. This causes a small indicator or *arpa* to dance around the Drumhead over the symbols. The *arpa* can be a small triangular carved piece of bone or antler, a brass ring, a small piece of copper, or a configuration of small brass rings sometimes called a "frog." When the *arpa* jumps and comes to rest on one spot, the answer is indicated. Joiking often accompanies the use of the Drum.

The older Drums range anywhere in length from nine inches to two feet nine and a half inches and in width from seven to fourteen inches. Most are oval or round in shape and there are four basic styles:

### *Kobdas* - bowl Drum

This Drum style is uniquely Sami. The frame is a hollowed-out half shell made from a pine or spruce nodule, or burled birch. Two long finger holes cut out of the bottom form a handle. Geometric designs are often carved into the frame and in recent times the handle has been inlaid with etched antler pieces. The bowl Drum head is made from reindeer hide which is attached with reindeer sinew to the frame through a series of small holes. Bowl Drums have been found from the *Ume* South Sami area up into Finnmark.

### *Gievre* - curved frame Drum

This Drum is formed by bending one or two three-inch strips of thin pine or birch into a rounded frame that is tied together with sinew. The hide of the Drum head is secured to the frame with a series of small wooden or bone pegs. Curved frame Drums are found throughout the South Sami areas.

### *Gievre* - ring Drum

This Drum is made from a ring of pine that is naturally round. Like curved frame Drums, ring Drums are also found in the most Southern Sami areas, and often have small brass rings, copper or silver amulets, bear claws, teeth, and other animal bones suspended in the back with leather, sinew, and silver-tin thread.

### *Kannus* - angular frame Drum

Made from two pieces of pine, this is the largest of the four Sami Drum styles. The top is a series of angular shaped wood notches curved to make an oval shape that fits tightly together to support the frame. An intricately-carved wooden handle in the back of all of the frame Drum types provide additional structural support. Angular frame Drums come from the northern Finnish *Kemi* area.

# MADE FROM WOOD THAT HAS GROWN WITH THE SUN

Each Sami Drum reflects its maker and the family, the *siida* [the extended-family community] and the cultural area it is from; in the South Sami tradition the Drum is consecrated for ceremonial use by a five year old boy in the presence of *sidda* members. **8**

The symbols on the Drum include familiar landmarks such as villages, reindeer corrals, mountains, churches, and *njalla* [storage sheds], but care must be taken in the interpretation of these images. A *njalla* may represent preparation for the coming winter as well as a physical structure. Moreover the three "churches" seen to the south of the Sun at the center of some Drums are sometimes called "the Holy Day Men" or "Weekend Spirits" by academics, but traditionally they are said to symbolize the three days at the end of the lunar month when the Moon is not seen. **9**

Other figures represented on the Drum include reindeer, moose, bear, beaver, wolves, eagles, fish, snakes and birds along with sleds and fishing boats. These figures too have many interpretations. They may symbolize the *saivo* [Spirit Helpers] that transport the user to other universes, or they may be associated with hunting, fishing, or herding activities. (Note: the Drum figures are often misnamed "gods" or "goddesses" by anthropologists.)

Spirits represented on Sami Drums include *Tiermis* the Thunder Spirit, *Bieggolmmai* the Wind Spirit, *Leaibolmmai* the Forest or Hunting Spirit, *Máderáhkká* the Earth Mother and her daughters, the three Grandmother Spirits *Saráhkká, Uksáhkká* and *Juksáhkká,* who rule over the home and assist women in childbirth and raising children. *Beaive,* the Sun or Giver of Life is often at the center.

When the Bow Man is present he stands ready to shoot the Polar Star and end this world.

The Drum is a directional map. When the Drums were being confiscated and destroyed, people often objected on the grounds that the Drum helped them find their way in travel. For example, the Polar or North Star often depicted at the top center of the Drum forms part of the constellation known as "The Great Bear." *Lodderaddares* [the Milky Way] is often portrayed in the upper right corner; it is a journey route to the sky world. *Mano* or *Aske* [the Moon], as well as various stars and constellations, are often present on the Drum, placed according to their position in the northern sky at the time of the Winter Solstice.

Looking at the face of a Sun-centered Drums held over the head will reflect the sky above as well as the spiritual and physical elements that surround the viewer. **10**

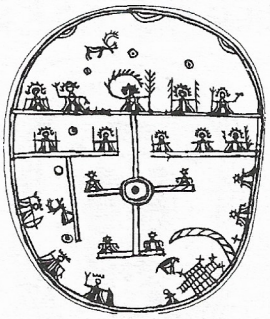
In ancient times some Sami Drums served as a thirteen month lunar calender marked by symbols around the rim. These Drums were subdivided into quarters which represented the four seasons of the year. **11**

Of the seventy-three known surviving old Drums, forty-two have a rhumboid symbol of the Sun at the center with the Four Directions moving out from it. Several writers have indicated that this represents the place into which the *noaide* "journeys." **12** The Sun-centered Drums are from the *Åarjel* South Sami area. In these Drums the roots of the "Pillar of the Universe" or North Star are located to the south.

*Ume* South Sami area Drums mark the upper universe or "sky" where various Spirits and Ancestors live with a horizontal line. Below this line are the rhumboid Sun and other Spirit symbols. Nine of these Drums are known to exist.

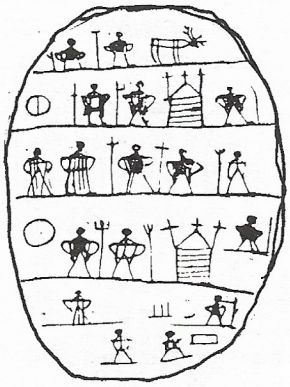
The five surviving *Pite* Sami Drums divide the upper world from the two lower worlds with a large "T." In the middle or present world there is the Sun, and in *Jabmeano* or the lower world

*[**The Sami Drum** cont'd overleaf]*

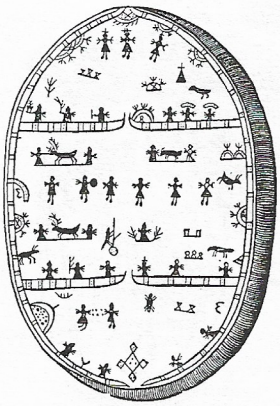


**Ume**

**Torne**



**Finnmark**

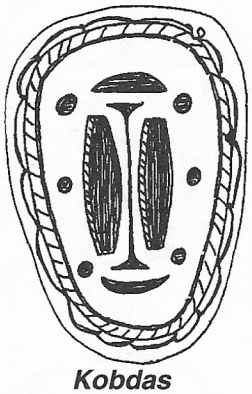


**Kemi**

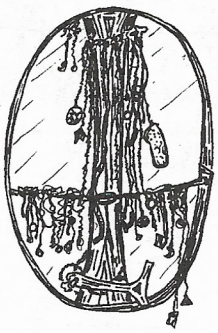
[**The Sami Drum** cont'd from p. 9]

# THE DRUM IS A DIRECTIONAL MAP

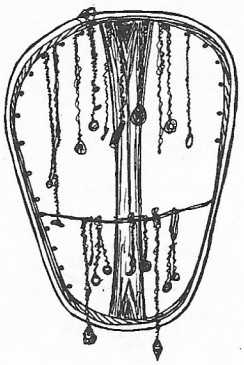
## Drum backs



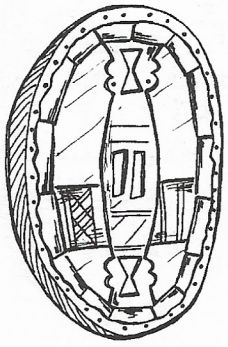
***Kobdas***
**bowl Drum**



***Gievre***
**curved frame Drum**



***Gievre***
**ring Drum**



***Kannus***
**angular frame Drum**

there are the Spirits of those who have crossed over.

Farther north in the *Lule* Sami area, eight surviving Drums show the upper world at the top, a circular Sun in the center and other Spirits and symbols around the edges and in the interior.

To the east, the three old existing *Kemi* Drums divide the Sami universe into three areas, the upper, middle, and lower worlds. So too do the *Torne* Drums of Northern Norway where the middle or present world area pertains to the *siida* the Drum is from.

The one surviving traditional Drum from Finnmark divides the universe into five to seven worlds.

Each Drum is a living symbol, from the carefully-selected natural materials, to Its use within the community context. In truth the Drum is the heartbeat of the Sami People. **13**

*Nathan Muus is co-editor of Báiki.*

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## THE ARCTIC IS OF VITAL SIGNIFICANCE TO THE HEALTH OF THE ENTIRE PLANET

*Evelyn M. Hurwich, executive director, Circumpolar Conservation Union*

When most people think of the Arctic they think of a frozen remote place, dark for months at a time, inhabited by polar bears, seals, reindeer, whales and only a few people. In fact the Arctic environment is varied and rich, with Indigenous cultures who are struggling to maintain their health, rights and traditions in the face of acculturation, resource exploitation and other developments both local and global. It is an environment every bit as endangered, as important to global health and as deserving of attention and conservation action as the tropics. Yet, unlike the tropics the Arctic is a simpler system with a relatively short and direct food chain, culminating with its Indigenous and local peoples who depend on Arctic wildlife for sustenance.

Before describing some of the challenges facing the Arctic, let me introduce you to the organization I direct, the Circumpolar Conservation Union (CCU), a public interest initiative dedicated to protecting the ecological and cultural integrity of the Arctic for present and future generations. We are the leading advocacy group in the United States focused exclusively on Arctic issues. The ultimate goal of CCU is to achieve comprehensive legal protection for the Arctic and its inhabitants.

Protecting biological diversity in the Arctic is closely linked to maintaining the ecological and cultural integrity of the circumpolar region. The region offers a rare and key opportunity for understanding the interconnections between natural and human systems — of vital significance to the health of the entire planet. In addition, the traditional ecological knowledge of Arctic Indigenous Peoples is one of the most important, yet undervalued and underutilized of Arctic resources.

Global change effects will be experienced early and dramatically in the Arctic. In 1987, the Office for Interdisciplinary Earth Studies in Boulder, Colorado reported "...global warming induced by the greenhouse effect will be particularly felt in polar regions, most likely resulting in changes in extent of sea ice, increased thawing of permafrost and melting of polar masses, with profound societal effects around the globe."

In comparison with most parts of the world, the Arctic remains a clean environment, but it is showing marked evidence of contamination by nuclear and chemical pollutants, particularly the persistant organic pollutants (POPs), whose main sources - pesticides, industrial chemicals and combustion products - are thousands of miles away, borne on air and water currents to the region. An impressive new report, documenting six years of cooperation by the Arctic countries, assesses the effects of man-made pollutants on the Arctic inhabitants. Some of its conclusions are:

- Current POP levels in animal life are high enough to exceed thresholds for immune development and reproductive effects.
- Climate change effects on vegetation are already occuring. Retreat of Polar ice and snow will affect the climate in the rest of the world.
- Ozone depletion is increasingly severe in the Arctic.
- Levels of PCBs in mother's blood in parts of the Arctic are at, or exceed levels, that have been associated with neurological effects in children.

The Circumpolar Conservation Union (CCU) has played a key advocacy role in the creation of the Arctic Council, the first high-level Arctic policy forum to focus on environmental protection and sustainable development.

The ecological and social impact of American sport fishing of Atlantic salmon on the Ponoi River in the Kola Peninsula is a good example of a sustainability project CCU has been working on. The Ponoi River has been a source of traditional subsistence for the Sami and others (Komi, Nenet and Pomor) for centuries, but local access to the river is now restricted as a result of the sale of exclusive fishing rights to foreign interests. *[See Ljubov Vatonena, "Helping the Sami or Helping Themselves," Báiki Issue #13, 1995 .]*

In response to Sami requests for assistance, I initiated contact with the foreign owners of the fish camp on the Ponoi, and arranged for a representative of the Kola Sami Association and myself to visit them.

Recently, with the involvement of the Sami Council, we have initiated a new phase of this project which will produce a comprehensive report on the Ponoi River situation which, contingent on funding, will be translated and carried back to the community.

The third phase, again provided funding is secured, will lead to a multi-stakeholder workshop in Lovozero, the main Sami village in Russia.

*Editor's note: the Circumpolar Conservation Union is at 900 17th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20006-2596; for more information: tel: (202) 429-7440, fax: (202) 429-7444, E-mail circumpolar@igc.apc.org*

official logo of the Circumpolar Conservation Union

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**Ruth Anne Cecil, Arcata, CA: complete set of S T A A R (Stierna Tribe) newsletters**

# BÁIKI REVIEWS

## FOUR NEW SAMI BOOKS

**BEYOND THE WOLF LINE: an Anthology of Sámi Poetry**, translated by Pekka Sammallahti and Anthony Selbourne, Guildford: Making Waves: 1996.

*Reviewed by David Salmela*

This is a readable book of poetry. In its pages there is something for each reader. The five Sámi poets opened their hearts to the song then let the words out for us to read. Between these five poets there is a range of Sámi experience and expression.

Nils-Aslak Valkeapää, Stina Inaga and Inghilda Tapio embody more traditional Sámi culture. Whereas Synnøve Persen - educated in the Norwegian language - and Inger-Mari Aikio - who studied Sámi at Oulu University in Finland - pffer poetry influenced to some degree by outside culture. Aikio writes, "...why not ask about the ways, beliefs of the Finns, then I will know and feel ashamed." Her expression is heartfelt.

Most of the translations are also faced by the same poem in the original Sámi language. This adds an element of reality and earthiness to the book. Also, four of the poets have illustrated portions of the book. The illustrations help to set the mood.

Complete with short biographies, a synopsis of Sámi language, culture and history; as well as an introduction by translator Anthony Selbourne, this book is a good read, whether by the light of the setting sun, by lavvu firelight or even by an electric lightbulb. There is a nugget to be found by each avid reader.

*David Salmela is a Finnish-American poet and author of the children's book, "The Sauna," and co-author with Will Lahti of "Karhun Otsa," a poetry book. His poetry appears in* Báiki.

**IN THE SHADOW OF THE MIDNIGHT SUN: Contemporary Sami Prose and Poetry**, Harald Gaski (ed.), Karasjok, Davvi Girji o.s.:1996.

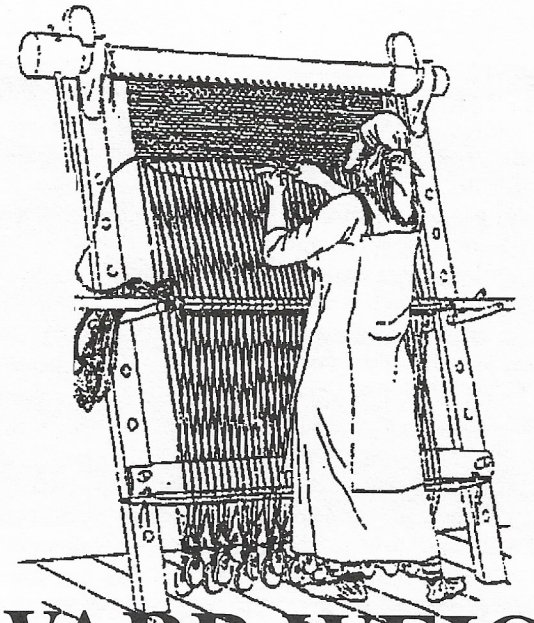
*Reviewed by Troy Storfjell*

Trying to find Sami literature in English translation has, for a long time, been all but impossible. A few books and poetry collecions have been translated, most notably Nils-Aslak Valkeapää's *Trekways of the Wind* (see *Báiki* Review, Issue #11 Summer 1994), but it has been extremely difficult for English-language readers to get any sense of range and scope from this still tiny body of texts.

*In the Shadow of the Midnight Sun* is an important step in the direction of introducing a number of Sámi authors to a global reading public. Professor Harald Gaski of the University of Tromsø has collected texts from 21 authors (and seven translators) in a sweeping survey of many of the high points of Sámi literature. From Matti Aikio and Johan Turi, writing in the early years of this century, to Inger-Mari Aikio's 1995 contribution, the anthology offers tidbits from most of the better-known Sámi authors.

In the pages of *Shadow* the reader encounters narrative representations of traditional life in selections like Turi's "Songs of the Sami," Matti Aikio's "Rafting Down the Tana River," and in "Winter Night," Hans Aslak Guttorm's tale of fending off maurading wolves. Eino Guttorm's "On Bloodied Paths" echoes the style and content of oral tradition in its telling of a struggle between good and evil over matters of love and death while Jovnna-Ande Vest simply tells of his own father's life in "The Cloudberry Trip." John E. Utsi's "The Waves" is a classic tale of man against the forces of nature.

*[**FOUR BOOKS** cont'd on p. 20]*



# THE WARP-WEIGHTED LOOM

*Desiree Koslin*

*This is the fourth in the Desiree Koslin series on Sami duodji. This article on warp-weighted weaving serves as a companion piece to Mary Erickson's article on the loom installed last summer at Ironworld Discovery Center,Chisholm, Minnesota, which follows. On p. 22 you will find a glossary Koslin has prepared to be used with these articles.*

## AN ANCIENT MODE OF WEAVING

There are two main traditional ways of Sami weaving: bandweaving on a *nijskom* for narrow and long textiles, (see *Baiki*, Issue #15, 1996) and the warp-weighted loom for *grene* [large blankets]. Easy assembly, flexibility and portability make this loom ideal for the Sami way of life and accounts describe their use both indoors and out.

In the Middle Ages, reindeer provided the basic materials for clothing and bedding. The fine woolen cloth needed for more festive *gakti* and the wool needed for weaving the intricately patterned shoe bands was usually obtained by trade. Sami hunters brought the finest pelts southward to be sold and made into fur-lined, high fashion garments of the time. The prestigious wool cloth which the Sami purchased in exchange was dyed in bright shades of red, blue,green and yellow, colors that still appeal to Sami sensibilities and taste and require expensive, imported dyes.

The warp-weighted loom has been in use for thousands of years among sheep- and goat herding cultures both nomadic and sedentary, and the earliest depictions of it are on archaic Greek pots. This loom, a simple upright structure, was capable of making large, wide woolen textiles by utilizing the force of gravity. The weaving process itself was equally inventive being a 'twice-woven' maneuver in which warps became wefts and wefts became warps, manifesting the magic of the weaver's art. Most textiles produced this way were heavy and substantial, but very fine ones were also possible. Surviving examples from the Iron Age have over a hundred warpthreads to the inch.

The Sami used this ancient mode of weaving in the regions where sheepswool was readily available. Variations were common and were affected by the introduction of the horizontal loom. The Coastal, Kautokeino and Finnmark Sami women wove heavy woolen blankets for trade, barter and tax payments, a parallel to North America, where Hopi, Zuni, and Navajo weavers were famous for the blankets which they, too, bartered and exchanged.

It was possible for the nomadic Sami to have sheep since they could be left with neighbors during the winter and kept by their owners during the summer. One family could produce three or four blankets per year limited in number by the wool available and the time required for spinning and dyeing the yarn because a Sami woman's life included so many other activities.

From the sixteenth century the Sami *grene* and *rana* blankets and goahtti panels are mentioned in written documents. They were woven on warp-weighted looms and featured handspun, probably local sheepswool in natural colors ranging from white to black, with occasional accents of red and other bright colors.

While even simpler versions exist, the typical warp-weighted loom is a lightweight, two-member upright structure with cross pieces securing its stability, the lower one also serving as a stationary shedding device. A beam is suspended on brackets at the top of the uprights. For plain-woven fabrics, only one shedrod is used, for twill weaves three heddlerods are needed. A smaller bracket set a short distance above the stationary shed one keeps the shedrod in a raised position during weft insertion. This upright loom is leaned against a support, such as a goahtti wall or a large boulder. Preserved Sami looms made of birch show that they have been used outdoors where the angle of incline causes the sheds.

## PREPARATION FOR WEAVING

The *nijskom* 'rigid heddle' or other narrow weaving device, such as a set of tablets, is used for weaving the starting-band in preparing the warp for the warp-weighted loom. Archaeologists have helped establish that tablet weaving certainly is more ancient than the apparently medieval nijskom, and since Sami weavers are known to have used the warp-weighted loom at least since the eighth century, some other weave technology must have been in place for their starting-bands. The process is largely the same whichever method is used, and among the Sami now the nijskom is preferred.

While the warps had to be strong and tightly twisted to withstand the tension and the shedding motions, the weft could be thicker and more loosely spun to pack together more easily, and to yield a soft

*[**KOSLIN** cont'd overleaf]*

[KOSLIN cont'd from p.13]
fabric face, suitable for blankets. The traditional patterns display dark bands of several thinner stripes against a light ground, but bright colors are also mentioned. The weaver prepares a narrow warp to weave a band as long as the blanket will be wide, enters it in the *nijskom*'s slots and eyes, and mounts this on a simple peg frame. She weaves the starting-band by pulling a loop (thus a double strand) of the weft from a ball of yarn, extending it out to the desired length for the warp of the blanket project. Here enters the first bit of magic, as the weft creates the warp-to-be! When the starting-band is finished, the long weft/warps are bundled into sections, and the band is 'blanket-stitched' to a perforated strip of wood, in its turn fitted into a groove on the beam. The starting-band wefts have now definitely been transformed into warps, hanging in bundles from the beam. Next the warp loops are separated, alternately placed in front of and behind the stationary shedrod. At this point the weights (be they in the ancient shape of ceramic 'doughnuts', rocks, or Baggies filled with sand) need to be tied via intermediary cords to small groups of warps, first to the back-layer of warps, then to the front-layer. The amount of weight applied to each warp bundle is crucial and must take into consideration the number of warp threads and the size of the yarns in order to achieve an even weaving tension.

The first weaving shed is thus already established by the division between front- and back-layers of alternating warps. A shedrod is needed to provide the second shed. Around it heddles are 'knitted' in fishing twine making carrying loops for each back-layer thread, one between each pair of front-layer warps. Temporary spacing devices and rods are used to give uniform length to the heddles. The result is a second shed created by the shedrod which, when raised, brings the back-layer threads above the front-layer ones. When the shedrod is released, gravity returns the back-layer warps to a plumb vertical position, recreating the first shed 'by default', another 'magic' element! A plain weave structure is thus accomplished.

For twill weaves, two further shedrods are required for the paired, diagonal progression. In units of four warps, the following sheds are needed: the first and second warpthreads together (stationary shedrod), second and third, third and fourth (plain weave shedrod), and finally, the first and fourth warps. Before weaving can begin, spacing cords made of smooth fishing twine are also applied to both warp layers. These rows of chained loops keep their respective warp layers in order and evenly distributed.

## WEAVING

Two weavers sometimes worked together on the wide blanket warp, standing up and passing the *ud'do* between them through the shed, then changing the shedrod to repeat the procedure. A weaver frequently worked alone, however and this involved a good deal of walking from one side of the loom to the other, moving the ud'do through the shed from selvage to selvage for a warp-width between five and six feet. In fact, each weft passage required three trips for the single weaver; the first to pass the *ud'do* along; the second to walk back and lightly push the weft upwards and change the shedrod at one side; a third time to move the shedrod at the other side. Six or seven such wefts insertions were done before bringing up the wefts firmly. This was done by grasping sections of front-layer warps in one hand and back-layer ones in the other and pulling them firmly apart, thereby forcing the wefts upwards. Keeping the edges even and straight also required skill and consistency. This was helped by the method above, and by establishing selvage cords consisting of four threads to make a firm edge and this cord was given an extra wrapping with the ud'do at frequent intervals.

After a ten to sixteen inch section of weaving was complete, the cloth was lightly napped on the surface with a teasel or woolcomb, and wound up on the beam. The spacing cords were moved down towards the weights, and the weaving continued. Only when the weights were too close to the web to allow shedding and weaving were the ties undone, the warpthreads lengthened and the weights retied at the floor level. A skilled Sami weaver could weave a full-length blanket only undoing the weights three times. This was done by untying two weights at the time, one from the front-layer, one from the back. When the weaving was completed, the chaining cords were first unraveled and wound into a ball for later reuse, then the warpthreads were cut and the weights dropped. The shedrod was pulled out, and the heddleloops were similarly retrieved and wound into a ball and saved. Finally the warp threads in groups of six doubles were tied into a fringe with an overhand knot. The bits of leftover warps still attached to the loom weights were of course also salvaged, to be spliced and reused in the next blanket.

Again, this method of weaving in which every element is brought to closure and reuse is in stark contrast to the production of fabric on the horizontal loom, where warps are usually made as long as possible for continuous yardage, and labor-saving devicesare continually invented to streamline and speed up the process.

## CONCLUSION

Early Sami blankets woven on the warp-weighted loom were very thick and heavy, weighing from ten to twenty pounds each. They were much in demand for trade and barter, and were even used as sails! From the sixteenth century on Sami blankets were also used to pay taxes. They had a long life but when showed wear, they continued to serve as *goahtti* cloths.

This may explain why this ancient loom technology was retained for so long among the Sami, after it had been abandoned by so many other societies. Most importantly, only the warp-weighted loom could produce the inimitably thick and wide blankets for which the Sami were famous - standard, domestic horizontal looms only wove fabrics about three feet in width. Goahtti-dwellers had little use for such space-intensive pieces of equipment during the long periods between weaving sessions, when the few parts needed for the warp-weighted loom could be found in the nearest stand of birches, grown complete with forks for beam-brackets! These, and many other reasons make weaving on a warp-weighted loom a cultural practice which ought to form a strong and vital part of the North American Sami movement.

*Desiree Koslin is a textile historian and frequent contriibutor to Báiki. She teaches textile design at the Fashion Institute of Technology, NYC.*

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Warp-weighted looms, $150. plus shipping, sold by Indigo Hound, 2367 Bryansville Road, Delta, PA 17314, phone: 717-456-7645

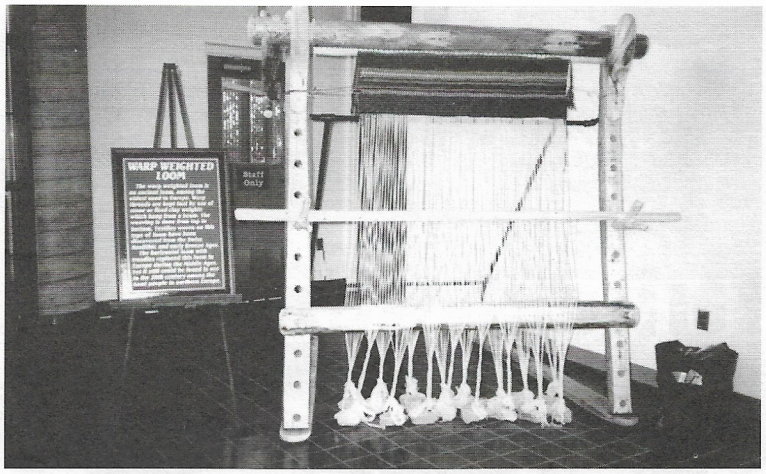



photo: Mary Erickson

*The warp-weighted loom at Ironworld Discovery Center, Chisholm, Minnesota*

# THE WARP-WEIGHTED LOOM AT IRONWORLD

*Mary Erickson*

The opportunity to explore the warp-weighted loom came this past summer as part of the Sami exhibit at Ironworld Discovery Center in Chisholm, Minnesota. I had demonstrated belt weaving at the first lavvu site but was thinking that a warp-weighted loom would be appropriate for this exhibit. At a planning meeting last winter it was decided that we would build one and weave a Sami *grene* [lavvu blanket].

Gareth and Harold Andrews, a father and son team, agreed to construct the loom. We turned to Marta Hoffman's book, *The Warp Weighted Loom*, as a source for dimensions. We tried to make it as authentic as we could with what we thought would work. The loom needed to be free standing for the weaving demonstrations.

Gareth and Harold constructed a beautiful loom, using wood from their own land. The top beam was maple and the upright beams were Norway pine. Other parts were constructed from white pine, jack pine and balsam. In order to make the loom free standing, a frame work of pipe was used to support it from the back. For the weights, they drilled holes in limestone rocks which were approximately three pounds each.

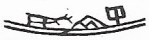
Carol Sperling, also a weaving demonstrator at Ironworld, helped with the planning and setting up of the loom. She built a small protoype of the loom so that we could figure out how it worked. We used a warping frame to make the warp threads similar to that mentioned in Hoffman's book and also *Samisk Husflid i Finnmark* by Anny Haugen. I wove the belt for the starting border with a rigid heddle as Carol pulled the threads out to create the length of the warp. Once completed, this starting border with the warp was tied to the top beam. We then tied the warp threads to the rocks, chained or separated the warp threads and then made or "knit" the heddles. These steps all worked best with two people working together. The wool which we used for the warp was the Bemidji Woolen Mills Homespun and the weft was Icelandic Lopi.

The weaving of the *grene* progressd throughout the summer. I looped the weft yarn into an *ud'do* (a Sami way of interlocking the yarn in order to more easily weave with it.) I would pass the *ud'do* through the shed or space between the warp threads. The weft yarn was pushed up, not down as on a Navajo loom. Standing at the loom, I would use a beater to beat the wool yarn up.

I wove about three inches a day as I demonstrated this weaving technique. The finished *grene* was taken off the loom at the end of the summer. It is 41 inches wide and 56 inches long, plus fringe. It will be used as a blanket in the Sami Camp at Ironworld.

As I used the warp-weighted loom I was amazed at the ingenuity of the designers of this ancient way of weaving. It was such a simple idea and it worked so well! Thanks to Mel Olsen and Anja Kitti for their input on this project.

*Mary Erickson is a Minnesota weaver.*



## GLOSSARY

*Desiree Koslin*

**WARP**

threads arranged on the loom; held under tension by means of applied weights, usually ceramic pieces, rocks or small sandbags. The beam controls the supply of warpthreads and also becomes the repository for the woven cloth.

**WEFT**

threads inserted at right angles to the warp; and the wefts are pushed into place from below simply with the use of the hands.

**SHED**

space between warpthreads into which the weft is inserted; the sheds derive from gravity's action on the warpweights. Shedrods connected to selected warpthreads determine which warpthreads the weft will pass under.

**HEDDLE**

a loop of fishing twine that connects the warpthreads to the shedrod.

**PLAIN WEAVE**

a simple weave in which wefts interlace with warps in even alternating pattern: 'over and under'; then 'under and over.;

**TWILL WEAVE**

a simple weave in which wefts interlace with warps in regular or irregular progression; many variations exist - a common feature to all twills is the diagonal.

**UD'DO**

the weft bundle used for insertion.

*Our small Nation is colored by the Northern Lights.*
*We are one of the colors.*
*The many Peoples of the Earth are all the colors together.*
*Every human being is colored by the Northern Lights.*
*Beaivi, this is Your gift to humanity.*
*Beaivi, let the Northern Lights be Your gift to humanity forever.*
*We Sami unite with those who are equals on the Earth,*
*neither more nor less than others.**

# AURORA BOREALIS

NIKOLAS SKUM

# The Audible Light

*Mel Olsen*
*with Faith Fjeld*

The *aurora borealis* - the northern lights - can be seen in the dark of winter in the vast area that includes Greenland, Hudson's Bay and most of Canada, northern Minnesota, North Dakota, Montana, Alaska, Siberia, and Sápmi, the Land of the Sami People. In the Sami language the northern lights are known as *guovsahasat,* a name that is based on "*guovso*" the word for "dawn" or "dusk." Viewed from outer space this phenomenon would most certainly look like a vast undulating halo of fire centered around the north pole. Ancient teachings say that *guovsahasat* is the cosmic blending of fire and water corresponding in symbolism and function to the thunderstorms of summer.

Indigenous Peoples throughout the Arctic area combine their spiritual understanding of the northern lights with their physical relationship to them, often through stories. Teachings about death and struggle are common. The Russian Samit relate the movement of the northern lights to the torment of the dead, and Western Sami people see them as embodying the spiritual powers of competing *noaide* who represent the interests of differing *siida*. Some say that we become part of *guovsahasat* when we cross over to the Spirit World. "My Finnish Sami Mother told me that the northern lights are our Ancestors," Aina, a young Oakland, California woman told *Báiki*. "She said that deep inside we are the northern lights!"

Some say that *guovsahsat* has its origin in the moon. As the moon rises the lights emerge.

In the Finnish language *guovsahasat* is called *revontulet* , "fires," or - more rarely - *ruijanpalo*, "Fires of Finnmark," referring to the Norwegian Sami area where the most spectacular activity takes place. *Tulire,* "foxfire," is also used because the shiney coat of the fox is thought to be the legendary source of the northern lights, and in the area of "Sami's mountain," it is considered a particularly auspicious time to hunt foxes and wolves when the northern lights appear.

KNUD LEEM

Fear often surrounds the appearance of *guovsahasat* because it can produce threatening light storms in which sheets or funnels of light swoop down and burn the careless. Women will not go out bareheaded when the aurora is bright, as its internal force can even become entangled in the hair. Silence is maintained within the *goahti* during these periods of extremely bright light so as not to irritate the force of the light storm, and for the same reason, bells are removed from reindeer.

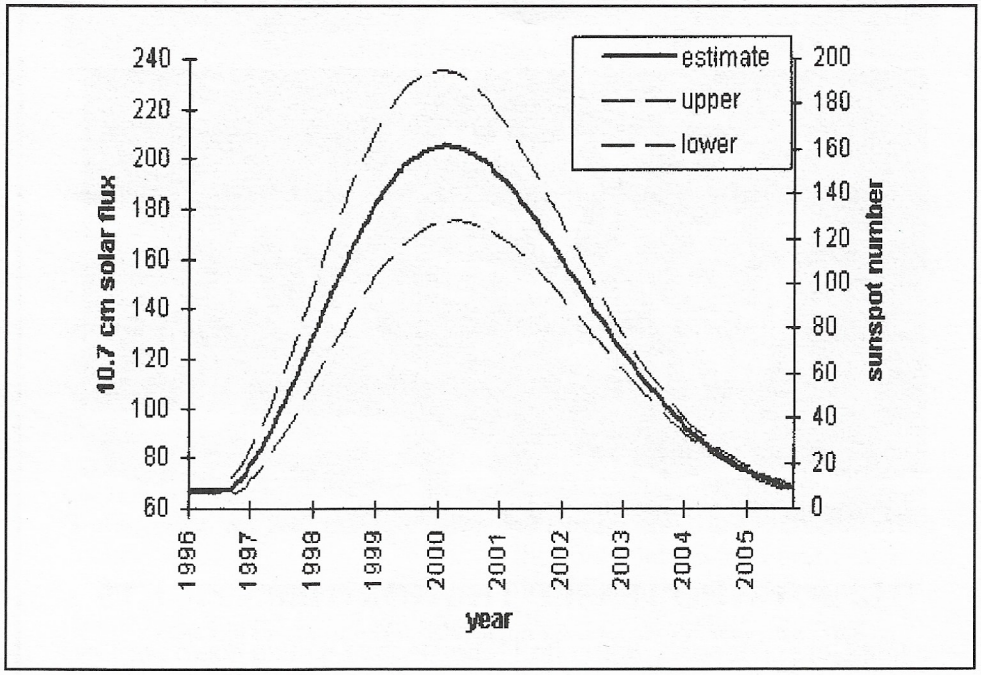
Signs from *guovsahasat* predict the weather and sound can influence them. If the lights arrive in the form of an arc, especially when the horizon is white, colder weather can be expected and the sharp chill that follows is not pleasant for humans or animals. Swedish Mountain Sami in the Jokkmokk region, as well as the forest Sami in the Måla region, will shout something like "Northern lights, flutter, flutter!" to change the pattern of the lights and cause *guovsahasat* to flutter so the weather will warm up. In South Sápmi if *guovsahasat* is red there will be snow.

From an early age, Sami children are taught respect for *guovsahasat.* Sami-American elder Sally Johnson remembers that boys and girls in her Finnmark home of Kirkenes would tease the northern lights, as in this poem from "*Sámiædnamis*," a Norwegian-Sami school book, then run and hide:

** from the final act of "Even If a Hundred Ogres," the Beaivvas Sámi Theatres, the masked performance at the 1994 Lillehammer Olympics, the noaidde returns to give the Sami People power and guidance for the future. His words, translated into English. The Sun , Beaivi, is addressed in Sámigiella.*

*Guovsahas, guovsahas*
*ruona gávtkin viegada,*
*buoi'di-bit'ta njalmis nábár-juol'gi!*
*Hárdá: Ciii!*
*Niila-guovtus, Lássiin hár'diba*
*guovsahasa*
*Ák'ko boatta álgus ja daddjá:*
*Al'li bil'kit dan mii Ibmilii gullá!*

Northern lights, northern lights
running around in green gakti
[liar, liar, pants on fire couldn't jump
over a telephone wire
nyah nyah nyah nyah njaaah njah]*
Niillas and Lássiin
are yelling at the northern lights.
Grandma comes out and says,
"You must respect that which belongs to
the Creator!"




*Estimated geomagnetic activity with regard to the approximate total number of sunspots and solar fluxes for the current cycle, Cycle 23. This profile indicates a high level of activity during the years 1999-2005.*

Early Arctic explorers, too, recorded close encounters with *guovsahasat* in their journals. Reports from Norway often described how the aurora borealis seemed to touch the earth itself, producing a windlike effect on the faces of mountain travellers. In 1825 Sir William Edward Parry reported aurora reaching the height of 675 feet and in 1882 a Norwegian government official wrote in his journal: "The aurora this morning was a very low one, and we are, I think, the only party that could ever say we were in the midst of electrical light. At times the aurora could not have been more than 100 feet from the earth. I raised my hand instinctively, expecting to bathe in the light."

The phenomenon of *guovsahasat* hovering close to the tundra is very much a part of the Sami experience along with reports of hissing and crackling sounds. Nonethless, these Indigenous accounts are often doubted by Western scientists who tend to dismiss them as "legends," which for them means "inaccuracies." For example, National Oceanic / Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) scientists working with state of the art equipment on the island of Svalbard concluded that traditional beliefs regarding the manifestations of the aurora borealis are merely "human psychological reactions to the awesome dynamics of strong light storms."

No other area of natural science has inspired so much experimentation and theoretical study, especially in Norway. Western scientists explain the aurora borealis and the solar winds as being the atmospheric response to the storms associated with sunspots. They believe that the "void" between the sun and the earth is actually a "maelstrom" with interludes of calm that is always bathed in the harsh glow of ultraviolet and x-ray light. The Space Environment Center (SEC) in Boulder, Colorado has developed techniques for forecasting solar disturbances which SEC scientists continuously monitor from a number of ground-based observatories and satellite sensors around the world. So strong is the outpouring of solar wind, they say, that the earth's magnetic envelope is distorted, creating geomagnetic field disturbances that may damage power systems, disrupt communications, affect navigation systems, and produce the phenomenon called the northern lights.

According to their findings, the magnetic activity falls into eleven-year cycles, with spikes of more intense flares occurring irregularly.There will be increased activity as we near the year 2000, they say.

As the flow of particles reaches the earth, the natural movement of the planet on its axis causes a waxing and waning of the aurora in polar regions. Magnetic streams fall around the poles in the form of "the northern lights oval," a magnetic belt that is wider on the night side of the earth than on the day side and is tuned to the magnetic poles around which the earth revolves. Outbursts of the aurora borealis in any given region depend on the movement in and out under the effect of the northern lights oval, and within the oval itself, the effects of strong gusts of solar wind. One location on the tundra may have extremely intense activity, while another location at the same latitude may not have any at all. The cycling oval hovers and slips on as the earth turns.

In spite of efforts to interpret and explain the northern lights scientifically, Western science may soon come to *see* that Sami tradition regarding natural phenomoneon has something to teach them. If in the past the aurora borealis *did* come near to the earth as chronicled in the oral stories of the Indigenous People and the written accounts of explorers, and if today scientific measurements are rarely closer than 90 kilometers, shouldn't this suggest that *guovasahasat* actually *did* come closer to the earth in the past than now?

And while scientific instruments have failed to verify auroral sound, at least one of the scientists at Svalbard admitted that sound from the northern lights *did* exist under certain conditions, perhaps caused by the accumulation of electrical charges building to the point where a coronal discharge jumped between what he called "fine twigs." Multiplied infinitesimally over a region, he said, such static electrical activity *could*

*[**OLSEN** cont'd overleaf]*

MARGARETHE WIIG

## THE BOY WHO TEASED THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

Báiki*'s popular storyteller Grey Eagle (Ken Jackson) shares this story:*

One evening two brothers drove off in their *pulkas* [reindeer-drawn sledges] to separate the reindeer herds that were in the mountains. In the morning when the sun came up the younger one began to joik: ***"The sun man shines, what a cold load he carries ice and snow he melts, to each feather he gives life."*** **"Don't make fun of God's creations!"** the older brother warned.

Soon the sun went behind a cloud and a heavy snowstorm set in and made it impossible for them to go any further. They set up a tent where they were forced to stay. A few days later it finally cleared up and there was moonlight. Once more the younger brother began to joik: ***"Little moon little moon, la la, sits like a dope shining in the dark night, naina forcing the frost to come out, wrecking the sun's work..."*** The older brother tried to stop his younger brother but he didn't pay any attention to him. They were halfway up the mountain when suddenly they were covered by dense fog which lasted for three days and nights. **"See what happens when you make fun of God's creations!"** the older brother exclaimed.

When the fog lifted there was clear weather and starlight and the younger brother began to joik again: ***"Small stars light up, ja ja, shine and blink, ja ja..."*** Suddenly a ball of fire fell from the sky and struck the boy's sled reindeer in the neck, knocking him dead. ***"If one reindeer dies, there's always another one,"*** he shrugged. **"What does it take to stop you?"** asked the older brother, **"You've gone crazy!"**

They continued on but without his reindeer, the younger brother was forced to pull his own sled. In the evening the older brother stopped to wait for his brother to catch up and let his reindeer graze. Making a fire, he put some snow in a kettle to melt. When the food was ready, the younger brother showed up. After the two had eaten, the northern lights started to glimmer brightly. The younger once again started joiking: ***"The northern lights run, lip lip lip, with fat in their mouth, lip lip lip, with a hammer in their forehead with an axe on their back..."*** The older brother tried to stop him but he joiked even louder.

The northern lights began to flutter. The older brother dashed to his *pulka*, turning it upside down and diving underneath it. The northern lights slammed wildly against the surface of the snow as if it were a drumskin. They hit and killed the younger brother, setting his reindeer skin tunic on fire!

So the older brother drove on alone with a heavy spirit and much sadness in his heart because his brother had made fun of the northern lights.

A frequent contributor to *Báiki,* Grey Eagle (Ojibwe - Danish) is founder of Sacred Circle Storytellers, Seattle,Washington. He works with Wounded Warriors, an American Indian organization for Viet Nam veterans in recovery.

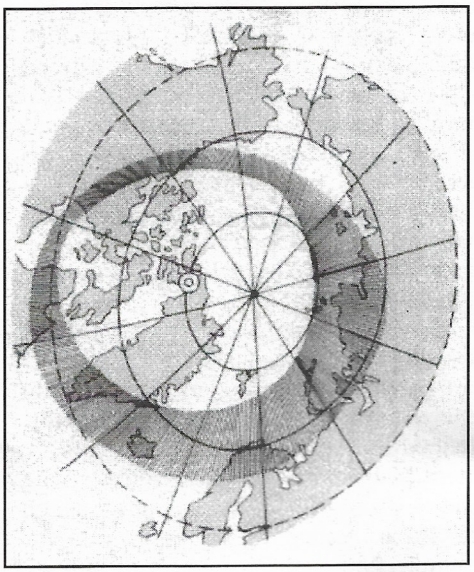
*[**OLSEN** cont'd from p.17]*

produce sound.

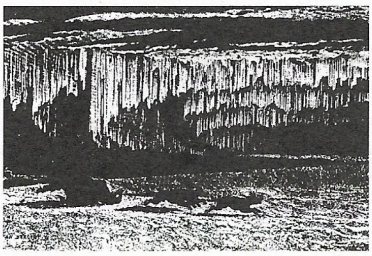
Nonetheless *guovsahasat* remains a spellbinding force to all. As awesome light descends in sheets, undulating, rolling, hissing, advancing and receding, the objectivity of scientific data gives way to the older, deeper subjective Indigenous relationship. One begins to experience the mysteries and visions of the Ancestors who knew the multiplicity of the aurora's character and understood its symbolism. *"Here there is a little of everything and if you have eyes to see you don't need to search."* (Nils-Aslak Valkeapää)

Postnote: The motivation for this article was the many accounts of threatening sounds present with the aurora. Every rural person traveling in Sápmi has heard the northern lights. The title was chosen as work developed. Contact with Gunni Öberg, research librarian at Umeå University produced an article in Västerbotten, from 1976 called "Det Hörbara Ijuset," by Bo Lundmark. Elements of that article, translated from Swedish by Arden Johnson, have been used here. Apologies to Bo Lundmark for the use of the title.

*Mel Olsen is co-editor of* Árran, *the newsletter of the North American Sami Siidat, and a frequent contributor to* Báiki.



*Above: The Northern Lights Oval. Particles which stream down from the magnetic tail reach the earth in a belt called the northern lights oval. This belt is wider on the night side of the earth than on the day side and is centered around the magnetic pole. The earth revolves around the geographic poles.*



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### WEB PAGES


http://cat.apg.ph.ucl.ac.uk/eiscat_intro.hyml

http://www.uit.no/npt/nordlyset/waynorthj/02.en.html


*Children's verse from Maragethe Wiig translated from Sámigiella version by Mark Iddings, with commentary on the Norwegian version by Sally Johnson and Sigvor Thornton. **Free American slang translation. Bracketed segment reads "*buoidi-bittá njálmis, nábár-juolgi*" in Sámigiella], and "*fett-bit i munnen, navar-bein*" in Norwegian. Thanks to Harry Siitonen for help with Finnish words.

## BÁIKI REVIEWS

### FOUR NEW SAMI BOOKS *[cont'd from p. 13]*

Other selections deal with transitions and conficts caused by colonization and industrailization, like Ellen Marie Vars' tale of Kátjá, a coastal Sámi girl who endures the taunting of both Norwegian and reindeer-herding Sámi pupils in "Boarding School." In "The Day is Dawning," an earlier, highly programmatic, narrative, Anders Larsen writes of the struggle for Sámi rights in the political and cultural arenas.

But the selections from Inger Haldis Halvari and Aagot Vinterbo-Hohr are much more personal and psychologically honest. In fact, Halvari's short story "Little Lake, Hear Me!" may well be the most memorable and moving tale in the anthology, though Kirsti Palto's "Looking Back" is a strong rival. Both texts deal convincingly with women who have suffered under emotionally harsh conditions and endured.

Both texts read as complete narratives within the anthology and thus work very well here. Unfortunately, not all of the selections function quite as well - in many cases the shorter selections lifted from larger texts read as just that, excerpts from a narrative whose whole is frustratingly inaccessible to the English-language reader.

Some excerpts from novels work much bettter than do others in this collection. The excerpt from Matti Aikio's *Bygda ved elveneset* stands on it own internal merit rather nicely. On the other hand, the selections from Vinterbo-Hohr's *Palimpsest* do little to reveal the breadth and depth of that complex book.

But these are the problems inherent in this type of anthology. Being the first such English language collection, it tries to offer a sampling of everything, and must necessarily cut some of the samplings rather short. Fortunately the poetry selections don't face quite the same sorts of challenges. Individual poems, while losing some of their effect by being read out of their context, still tend to function better as aesthetic units that can be contained in such an anthology.

Represented in this collection are the poets Oktyabrina Voronova, from the Russian Kola Peninsula; Paulus Utsi, a *duodji* instructor at the Sámi Folk High School in Jokkmokk, Sweden, and his wife Inger Huuva Utsi; Nils-Aslak Vålkeapää, winner of the Nordic Council's Prize for Literature; Rauni Magga Lukkari, a Finnish-born resident of Tromsø who is the most prolific Sámi author; Synnøve Persen, a Norwegian Sámi multimedia artist; Marry A. Somby, whose poems are inspired by her time spent living in Latin America; the Lule Sámi author Stig Gælok; and the cosmopolitan Inger-Mari Aikio, who with Vinterbo-Hohr, points toward a new "worlding" of Sámi literature.

Perhaps the best reason to read *Shadow* is Gaski's introduction, which cogently and intelligently sketches out an overview of the development of Sámi literature and of the lives and works of the authors represented in the collection. Thus the selected texts are placed in the biographical contexts of their authors, and the authors are placed in a larger historical/cultural context.

This introduction is a must for anyone unfamiliar with, yet interested in, Sámi literature. And while the vast majority of English-language readers can be assumed to be unfamiliar with Sámi literature, we can only hope that they become

*[**FOUR BOOKS** cont'd on p.20*

[**FOUR BOOKS** cont'd from p.19]

BAIKI
THE NORTH AMERICAN SAMI JOURNAL

## CALL FOR PAPERS

"My Ancestors Hid Their 'Lapp' Identity, as Black Norwegians, Brown Swedes, flat-faced Norwegians, and Finns."

*Baiki: the North American Sami Journal* is seeking personal anecdotes, family stories, jokes and interviews with grand parents about being Sami for the "Sami Identity" Issue, #18.

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**or call the office for our E-mail address**

## BÁIKI REVIEWS

interested in it, so that the market can support further translations, including many of the larger texts from which the selections in this anthology were excerpted.

*Troy Storfjell has lived on both sides of the Atlantic with his Sámi and American relatives. He has studied at the University of Tromsø and is currently working on his Ph.D. in Scandinavian Literature at the U. of Wisconsin-Madison. His dissertation examines constructions of Sámi identity in 19th and 20th century Norwegian literature.*

**NORTH SCANDINAVIAN HISTORY.** Kjell Lundholm, Östen Groth and Rolf Petersson, Luleå, Sweden: 1996. ISBN 91-630-4383-1

*Reviewed by Nathan Muus*

This is an important book because the subject is not often covered. However the book has some serious flaws. This region is the homeland of the northern Sami Peoples, as well as a pivotal place for the northern Europeans with their own interconnected past. Three or more dominant states fought over control of the area for centrueis, dividing Indigenous Sami lands with political boundaries.

Three Swedish authors divide the subject into sections. Rolf Petersson's contribution on emigration from north Sweden to North America is particularly laudible and well researched. But for a history of the area known for many centuries as "Lapland" or "Finnmark," the chapter on Sami culture comes off as obligatory. Imagine a book on north Scandinavian history that does not contain one single map of the Sami culture areas!

Otherwise, as a work on Scandinavian political and social history in the north, it is a valuable resource.

**SAMI CULTURE IN A NEW ERA: the Norwegian Sami Experience.** Harald Gaski (ed.), Karasjok, Norway: Davvi Girji o.s. 1997. ISBN 82-7374-354-3

*Reviewed by Nathan Muus*

This collection of articles by contemporary Sami scholars is a must read for all those interested in Sami culture today. The emphasis is mid-20th century onward, North Sami culture in Sápmi (Norwegian Finnmark) in particular.

The articles cover a wide range of topics such as the history of North Sami land rights, ethno-political development among the Sami after WW II, traditional technology, language relating to salmon, reindeer and snow, aspects of managing renewable resources, development of health services, post-secondary education, mass media and Sami literature.

Each article extensively covers its own field, and there is an obvious interrelatedness that gives the reader a vivid portrait of Sami culture in the 20th century. The impact of the environmental / political / cultural stuggle over the building of the Alta River dam had an enormous effect in many areas, and these articles reflect that. This book is not all-encompassing. There is little on either the south or coastal Sami cultures. It does, however treat Sami history realistically, contrasting with the romanticized and objectified versions all too often found in English. *Sami Culture in a New Era* mirrors the present as well and challenges us to think about the future.

*Nathan Muus is co-editor of Báiki.*

**WHERE TO GET THESE BOOKS:**
**BEYOND THE WOLF LINE** is available from the Finnish American Bookstore, P.O. Box 549, Superior, WI 54880, tel: (715) 394-4961, fax: (715) 394-7655. **IN THE SHADOW OF THE MIDNIGHT SUN & SAMI CULTURE IN A NEW ERA** are available through the University of Washington Press, Seattle, WA or your local book seller. **NORTH SCANDINAVIAN HISTORY** is available through the Swedish Institute, 2600 Park Ave, Minneapolis, MN (612) 871-0593.

# BÁIKI PAGE

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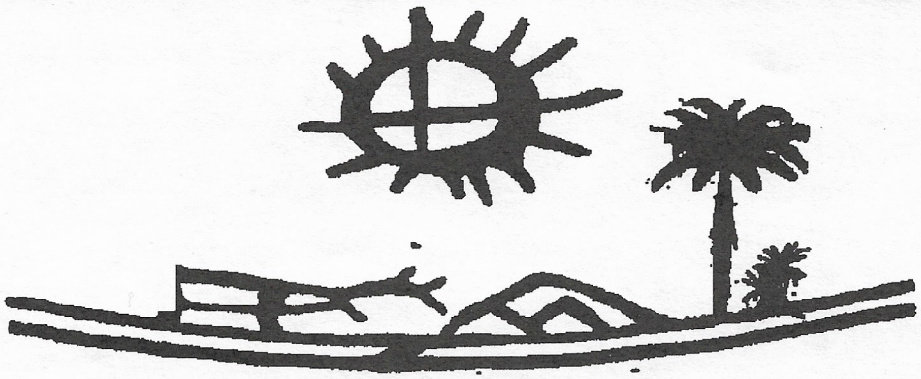

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# •WEST COAST•

# SAAMI SIIDASTALLEN

**at the 25th Annual Scandinavian Festival at California Lutheran University Campus 60 W. Olsen Road, Thousand Oaks, CA**

## April 17, 18 and 19, 1998

### Friday evening, Saturday and Sunday

- Outdoor Saami Camp with a lavvu, a goahtti and a crafts *marknand*
- Saami community mixer Friday evening
- Visitors from Samiland, Alaska, Canada, the West Coast, the Midwest
- Planning for the centennial reunion of the descendants of Alaskan Saami reindeer herders
- California reindeer (if we have reindeer luck)

### Siidastallen Highlights at the Festival:

• Grete Kvaal, Norwegian photographer and her exhibition "Karen Anna and Her Siidda," photographs and slides of Saami reindeer-herding women part of the Festival's tribute to Scandinavian women • Johan Mikkel Sara, Norwegian Sami Parliament • Finnish Sami film-maker Paul-Anders Simma's full-length film "The Minister of State" • Video of the Beaivas Sami Theatre production at Lillehammer Olympics 1994 "Even If a Hundred Ogres" produced by Joel Freedman and narrated by Joanne Woodward.

**Also: Saami craft demonstrations - knife-making, birchbark baskets, pewter embroidery, shawl fringing, band weaving - joikers, storytelling, Indigenous survival skills, youth activities**

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*The First Annual West Coast Siiddastallen is sponsored by The Saami Báiki Foundation (a non-profit project of The Tides Center) andBáiki: the North American Sami Journal. The Scandinavian Festival at Thousand Oaks is sponsored by the Scandinavian Cultural and Historical Foundation and California Lutheran University.*