

More than meat on the hoof? Social significance of reindeer among Finnish Saami in a rationalized pastoralist economy

Nuccio Mazzullo

*Leibniz-Institut für Länderkunde, Germany & Arctic Centre,
University of Lapland, Finland*



ABSTRACT

Through an ethnographic account of movement, herding, and social changes among the Saami people of Finnish Lapland, this article illustrates the importance of reindeer pastoralism as a subsistence that goes beyond purely economic analyses, calling for a more holistic approach. Despite a diminished economic importance, reindeer herding nowadays still plays a very important role in the social and cultural support of Saami society. The transition from intensive to extensive herding (Ingold, 1980) and the creation of the herding cooperatives have had a significant impact on both the Saami perception of the landscape and on their patterns of movement (Mazzullo & Ingold, 2008). In social terms such change can be seen in the creation, within the herding cooperative, of a somewhat artificial socio-economic structure (the herding cooperative) that initially did not follow the traditional model of the Saami herding unit (*siida*) and was later incorporated into an enlarged new *siida*. Traditionally, Saami subsistence has never been based on one particular activity but has shifted according to the season from hunting to fishing to gathering to herding. Hence, the Saami approach to the use of natural resources has reflected a holistic attitude of incorporating both in economic and cultural ways the various aspects of their relationships with the environment. This is an explanation for the resilience of those Saami who stay in reindeer herding. As a reindeer herder once explained, reindeer herding is a way of living, not a way to *make* a living, thus and in this encapsulating the very nature of the Saami worldview. Furthermore, an understanding of this concept reveals the ways in which the symbolic aspects of reindeer herding still guide people's perception of their actions in the landscape. In turn, such a realization may well help to promote the implementation of policies that would take into account these elements.

Keywords: Saami, herding, movement, domestication, social change

INTRODUCTION

The significance of reindeer pastoralism among the Saami people of Finnish Lapland can perhaps best be understood as a subsistence that reaches beyond purely economic analyses for a more holistic approach. Reindeer herding is deeply embedded in all the different social and cultural aspects of Saami life, and despite its diminished economic importance, reindeer pastoralism is fundamental for the support of Saami culture.

The Saami people are the only indigenous group in Europe. They live in the northernmost region of Europe, in a territory that stretches across the four different nation states of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and the Kola Peninsula in Russia (Figure 1). This region, called *Sápmi*¹, by Saami people, is also called in Norwegian Finnmark and in Finnish *Lappi*. According to the *Sámediggi* (Finnish Saami Parliament) the Saami number over 75,000 people, most of them—about 45,000—living in Norway; about 20,000 in Sweden; just about 9,000, Finland; and about 2,000 in Russia². The Saami language is comprised of nine main languages, overlapping with correspondent Saami groups, of which the Northern Saami is the most frequently spoken. My research³ focused on the Saami community



FIG. 1. Geographic and linguistic distribution of the Saami people (Sámi Instituhtta 1990: 155). [Courtesy of Davvi Girjis, Karasjok, Norway]

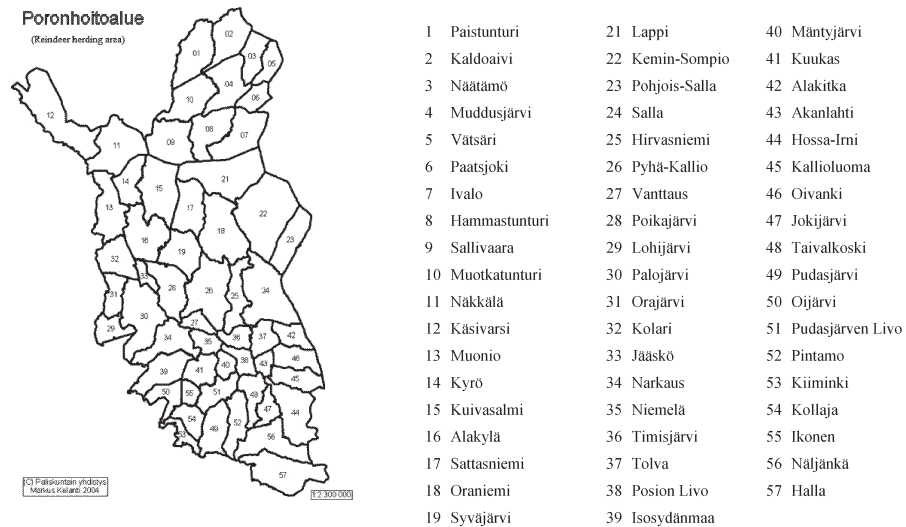


FIG. 2. Map of the reindeer area in Finland and list of the names of the herding cooperatives (Kelanti M., 2004 Paliskuntain yhdistys)

¹ In this article, except the term *Sámi*, all other terms in *Sámi* language are *italicized*, and the Finnish ones are underlined.

² http://www.samediggi.fi/index.php?option=com_content&task=blogcategory&id=105&Itemid=104

³ My research fieldwork was conducted mainly in the Municipality of Inari between 1995-97 and formed the basis for my doctoral dissertation. Most of this article is based on Chapter 2 of the unpublished doctoral dissertation (Mazzullo 2005: 82-151).

in the village of Inari, particularly on those residents who belong to the reindeer herding cooperative of Sallivaara, located about 60 kilometers south of the village (Figure 2). It shows, amongst other things, that the Saami subsistence economy is still a mixed economy, in keeping with traditional principles. The Saami economy has always been based on an ensemble of livelihoods practiced at different times throughout the year: in earlier times, with hunting, gathering, and fishing; then later, with herding; and nowadays, with seasonal work like tourism. Furthermore, the relationship between Saami people and the landscape is very intimate, validating the principle that the landscape is important in fashioning people's sense of identity and is a repository of their traditions. For the Saami, the natural world is not understood to be standing apart from the domain of human social life, but rather it is seen as a continuation of it.

HISTORICAL OUTLINE OF THE SAAMI RELATIONSHIP WITH REINDEER

During the fieldwork that I carried out in Lapland (Mazzullo 2005), Saami informants have described reindeer herding as a way of life. However, such a statement should be associated not only with the herding mode of subsistence as it was practiced and documented in the past three centuries but also with the way it is practiced now. The introduction of new technologies has changed migration patterns, the permanence of the herders in the forest, and containment of the herd's growth (Beach, 1981; Ingold, 1976, 1980; Peltto, 1973). Nonetheless, continuity in their traditional way of life is most strongly supported by the existence of a long-term relationship between the Saami people and the reindeer, a relationship which continues to have a fundamental cultural role in fashioning their identity. Saami subsistence was originally based very largely on hunting, fishing and gathering, but over the last three centuries, at different times for different groups, a greater emphasis has been placed on herding. What were traditionally subsistence activities (e.g., reindeer herding, hunting, fishing, and so on) are now carried out more as modern commercial enterprises, usually in combination with extensive involvement in seasonal work, commerce and other tertiary sector activities such as local government and administrative offices, education, social services and tourism.

From an aboriginal group of hunters who lived in the Scandinavian peninsula several thousand years before Christ, described by Barth and Vorren as a "tribe of hunting people living off game and fish" (Barth 1982: 21, Vorren, 1982: 55), the Saami started to domesticate reindeer much later. The first documents to confirm the taming of draught animals date back only to the ninth century A.D.. It is from the account given by Ottar, a Norwegian trader to King Alfred of England, that we know the Saami people used draught reindeer and tamed some of them for use as decoys for hunting wild reindeer (Magnus, 1555; Vorren & Manker, 1962: 12; Vorren, 1982: 55). The existence of this hunting technique is also supported by numerous archaeological excavations of pitfall systems that were located in strategic places which intercepted seasonal migration patterns (Fellman, 1906: 58; Vorren & Manker, 1962; Näkkäljärvi O., 1965; Ingold 1976; Vorren, 1982; and others). Small-scale intensive herding became one of the features of Saami culture only from the sixteenth century

onwards. Lehtola argues that extensive herding developed in Finnish Lapland only at the beginning of the seventeenth century (Lehtola, 1997: 26).

There are many different views regarding the reasons that reindeer herding developed from the previous activity of hunting. Among the factors that influenced this process were the arrival of farmers, the need to rely on a more predictable source of income for the payment of taxes and for barter, political changes, and the establishment of new state borders, as well as the decreasing numbers of wild reindeer and wild game (Vorren, 1982: 55). Lehtola (1997) sees the increase in the number of reindeer and the consequent passage from intensive to extensive herding as a major cause of social and cultural changes in Saami society. Because the greater number of reindeer needed more pasture, the village had to split, and households started to live and move with the herd. Thus migration routes became longer, alternating between pasture in the summer by the coast, where there were fewer insects, to inland areas near the forest in winter, where there were shelter and food (Lehtola, 1997: 26).

By the first half of the twentieth century, the closing of the national borders reduced the semi-nomadic life to a shift between relatively close summer and winter pastures. Particularly, in the second half of the century, as Ingold points out in reference to the Skolt Saami case, the pastoral mode of existence was transformed into predatory pastoralism (Ingold, 1976: 18, 45). This transformation implied that the herdsman had become, in effect, the hunter of his own reindeer, or of their unmarked offspring⁴. That is, whenever a herder found his reindeer at the separation corral, he would often prefer to slaughter them than to let them return to the forest, where he had little hope of ever seeing them again. Ingold argues that such activity is part of the overall transformation of the herding strategy. The impoverishment of the pasture grounds, the introduction of the market economy, and the mechanization of herding work, made it impossible to run small-sized reindeer herds to meet household needs. Owners of large herds had a better probability of finding animals in the separation corrals. All these variables, together with the subsequent rise of a new category of owners known as the "big men", akin to Western entrepreneurs, have generated a new approach to herding itself (Ingold, 1976: 45-73).

In general, the creation in 1898 in Finland of herding cooperatives, with geographically defined borders that were confirmed by the first Reindeer Herding Bill in 1932, obliged the Finnish Lapland herders to graze their herds only within the borders of any given herding cooperative's territory. Subsequently, the construction of fencing ensued, as in the example shown in Figure 3. Since the Saami herders no longer needed to live with the herds, an extensive fencing program was undertaken from 1950 onwards to prevent unattended reindeer from straying onto the territories of other herding cooperatives, particularly across national borders where they might have been lost forever. As can be seen in Figure 3, after the almost complete

⁴ Unmarked reindeer (in Sámi: *goddi*, sing.; *goddit*, pl.) are those which become separated as calves from their mothers before they are earmarked. When it is impossible to establish ownership, reindeer belong to the herding association on whose territory they happen to be found or hunted. In the past *goddi* meant "wild reindeer." According to Itkonen, "probably the last wild reindeer hunted in Inari was in 1870" (Itkonen 1984: 24).

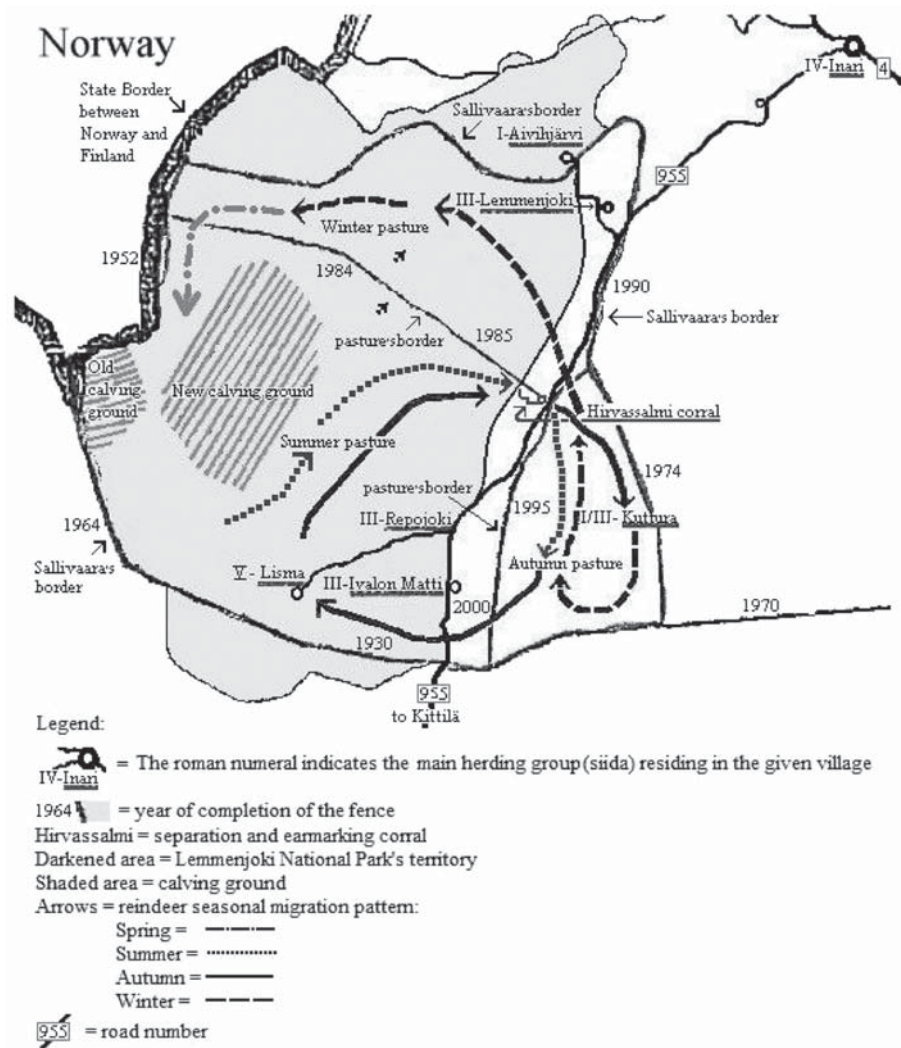


FIG. 3. Sallivaara cooperative's current herding cycle. Each arrow refers to the seasonal migration of the herd to pastures within the cooperative's borders. (Map reproduced from Mazzullo, 2005: 97)

implementation of the fencing program in the northern cooperatives territories, any further transformation of reindeer herding would, in the view of most of my informants in 2005, lead to the model of cattle breeding. Indeed, close examination of the relationship between the herder and the reindeer is essential to the traditional definition of the Saami herding tradition.

In contrast to breeding, which is based primarily on the ability to exercise human control over the processes of selection and reproduction of the herd, as, for example, among cattle breeders, the Saami approach to reindeer herding tended towards the idea of intervening as little as possible and maintaining a symbiotic relation with the herd by defending it from natural predators and famine. Even with herding in its current stage, referred to in the anthropological literature as "extensive," physical

contacts between the herder and the reindeer are limited to twice a year; for the remaining part of the year contact is merely visual, through binoculars. In general terms, this approach to reindeer herding is what distinguishes it from cattle breeding. Animals are not kept in stables, but roam freely throughout their lives and, until recently, large-scale artificial winter feeding was not widely practiced⁵.

WILD VERSUS DOMESTIC: THE SAAMI APPROACH TO HERDING

The symbiotic aspect of Saami reindeer herding is in tune with the notion of symbiotic domestication, as suggested by Beach and Stammer. Their argument is that the process of domestication is not a one-way process but rather the result of a circular and reciprocal process of communication between the human and the animal that implies learning at a deeper level by both reindeer and herders (2006: 10).

Among the Saami, a distinction between the wild and the domestic may once have existed, but only in practical terms, bearing on the division of tasks between men and women, between forest and village, and between more or less unfamiliar environments. These divisions were always flexible and susceptible to change. In the Saami language, the distinction between wild and domestic is portrayed in various ways: terms that define the nature of an animal as wild or unruly, such as *vilddas*; and for being wild—frisky, lively, spirited—such as *vilddáskit*. To become wild is *meahcáiduvvan*, meaning “to become huntable.” This term also applies to trained reindeer that may have become feral again (Takakura, in this volume; Beach & Stammer, 2006: 8). The opposite is represented by the terms *lodji* or *lojes* that translate as domestic, docile, calm, and humble. To domesticate or to calm is *lodjudit*, and to become domesticated, calm, is *lodjut*.

According to the Saami dictionary (Sammallahti, 1993), the terms used to describe the condition of such animals are, for a wild animal, *luonddueal’li*, which can be translated as “nature[natural] animal,” and for a domestic animal, *šibit*. However, whenever I asked Saami friends about the meaning of *šibit*, they would explain that it meant “cattle” rather than “domestic animal.” Hence, although *šibit* is translated in the Saami-Finnish dictionary as a general term for a domestic animal, it is, in reality, understood by Saami people as referring to the only animal they see as domestic: the cow. A similar distinction applies to the terms *eallu* and *oamit*, pl., (*oamastit*, to possess, to own). Although these are translated into Finnish as *karja*, “cattle,” in fact, the term *eallu* is used to refer only to reindeer herds. *Oamit* refers to domestic animals in general. The latter term is applied to animals that are entirely dependent on human help and in that sense in the possession of their caretakers. During my fieldwork it became clear to me, from conversations and interviews, that Saami reindeer herders take pride in saying that their reindeer are wild, i.e., independent. To have a tame herd is, for them, the same as having *šibit* or *oamit*, a cattle herd, which could not survive in the forest. Thus, in this sense and in contrast to the Western approach, Saami prize wild animals more than domestic ones precisely for their characteristic

⁵ In most Saami herding cooperatives fodder and feed are brought to the hills by snowmobile at the end of harsh winters, in spring time, and only when they are sure that most of animals are too weak to make it through the winter. In contrast among Finnish reindeer herders this practice is more popular.

independence. Perhaps also for this reason, the notion of domesticity is not extended to pets. Pets, particularly dogs, which are typically not kept in captivity, are regarded as autonomous members of the family. Although dogs are employed these days to a lesser extent in herding than in the past, they have still retained an important place in Saami society.

In Saami language, in addition to specific terms for identifying a reindeer according to gender and age, there are also terms to distinguish reindeer bucks according to different degrees of domestication. For example a reindeer buck that has been castrated the previous year but not harnessed is called *spáillit*. If it is kept alive to grow fatter for slaughter, it is called *nulppu*. A draught reindeer trained to pull a Saami sledge for transporting people is called *vuoján*, whereas an animal trained to pull a sledge for transporting goods is called *geasehanheargi*. However, given the pragmatic nature of such distinctions, they are not acknowledged by the Saami in the reports of the herding cooperative for the Finnish officials, and all castrated bucks are included with the castrated and domesticated bucks under the general term, *heargi*. With the introduction of the snowmobile in the sixties, reindeer are not used as they once were for transporting people and goods; on the other hand, reindeer have been rediscovered as valuable resource in the tourist industry, particularly by those companies that organize reindeer-safaris, hence making those traditional distinctions still valid.

The linguistic aspects of the reindeer terminology illustrate the accuracy of the Saami language in differentiating between certain terms; in other cases, such differentiation is blurred, as its translation applies across both the human and the animal domains as a remnant of the hunting and gathering past. Most importantly, in the Saami case even where distinctions are apparent, they are not organized hierarchically, but rather as descriptions of behavioral characteristics, for example, of the subjects.

Challenging the distinction commonly made between “wild” plants and animals that “just grow” and “domesticated” plants that are “produced” through human intervention in nature, Ingold argues that the work people do, for example in farming or herding, “does not literally make plants and animals, but rather establishes the environmental conditions for their growth and development” (1995: 20). Ingold’s position is in tune with that of the Saami herder and writer Johan Turi (1910), who quotes a Saami yoik, *juoiggus*, sung by a herder to “mother earth,” *eatnan*, on his return to the previous year’s pasture (Helander, 2000: 175). As the herder traveled to this pasture he would sing the yoik to thank *eatnan* for having nourished the herd in the previous season. The introductory lines of the yoik are as follows:

“Welcome my herd and take care of it
just like you have done before
be now, little mother, my friend again
little mother, feed now my reindeers well ...” (Turi, 1979: 99).

In the historical context described in the yoik, the herder knew that it was “mother earth” who nourishes the reindeer so that they can grow, while he assists by attend-

ing to the herd, thus ensuring the best possible conditions under which the herd can draw sustenance from the earth, unmolested by predators, insects, and other hazards. Similarly, among the Kabile peasants of Algeria, described by Bourdieu, the earth is the “*alma mater*, the nourishing earth, rather than *materies*” (Bourdieu 1963: 57). The earth brings forth; the herdsman assists. Likewise, the peasant farmers of Boyaca, described by Stephen Gudeman and Alberto Riviera (1990: 25), say that the earth gives birth to crops, while the farmer acts as a midwife.

The Saami attitude towards reindeer ownership reflects the notion that herders are only assisting, that they do not fully control the herd. Ownership becomes apparent and meaningful only when reindeer have been driven from the forest to the corral. Whilst the reindeer are in the corral, every herder must be able to distinguish his own animals from the rest of the herd. As soon as the reindeer are released back to the forest, ownership ceases to be relevant, and the reindeer are once again perceived as, and become, wild. In the same way, the notion of breeding is limited to a specific situational context. Unlike farmers, who have full control over which animals are allowed to mate, the only moment when Saami herders are able to handle the reindeer bucks, after the mating season, is during the winter separation. It is at this time, therefore, that they can have some control over the reproductive process of the herd. By means of castration and slaughter, the herders, each one acting independently of the others, leave only the bucks that have the best chances to survive until the following mating season. From these bucks the whole herd stands to benefit. In this context the Saami definition of the beauty of the herd, *čappá eallu*, is represented by its heterogeneity instead of a rationalized homogeneity that would otherwise increase its vulnerability. The herd is beautiful because its diversity allows it to survive under changing or unfavorable conditions (Tyler *et al.*, 2007: 197). Hence the breeding skills of each herder are, in the end, perceived as part of the bigger picture, reflected in the beauty of the cooperative’s herd.

REINDEER HERDING AS A SOURCE OF SAAMINESS

Although Saami life and livelihood still revolve around the reindeer, in fact, only a small part of the Saami population practice reindeer herding as a primary occupation. In Finnish Lapland, the Saami represent only about 20 percent of approximately 5,000 reindeer owners; the rest are Finnish owners who practice agriculture and forestry as a primary occupation and reindeer herding as a secondary source of income.

Saami subsistence has been traditionally based on a mixture of herding, hunting, berry collecting, and fishing. It is still common even for people who may have occupations that do not relate to reindeer herding or fishing to practice some form of gathering, to fish from time to time, and to have a few reindeer. However, the significant difference between Finnish and Saami reindeer herding is, as Saami informants have always said, that for the Saami, reindeer herding is essentially a way of life in itself. Most importantly, it is inextricably linked to the rich vocabulary that refers to all aspects of the herding. For instance, in the Saami language reindeer have many different names. These depend on their age, gender, the color of their hide, the type of antlers—shape, size and inclination—and also their character. The resulting name, a combination of all these qualities, can specify a reindeer almost uniquely. Table 1

shows the names used to indicate age and gender.

This richness of the terminology of herding, as well as that related to geographical features and climate conditions, for example, particularly applies to herding as it was practiced until the early part of the twentieth century. Nonetheless, the Saami still talk about present-day reindeer herding in the same terms. The existence in their language of such a rich and precise terminology that defines the reindeer in all possible and different ways accentuates the existence of the long-term relationship between the Saami and the reindeer. On the contrary, the Finnish herders' main connection is to the farm, and, as noted by Ingold, the forest and livestock belong to it and are resources to be cultivated and harvested. For example, Ingold says (1988), although in Finland both Saami and Finns practice reindeer herding, the fundamental styles are based on two different worldviews: one, the Saami, is based on the reindeer; and the other, the Finns, on the forest.

A fundamental difference between Saami and Finnish husbandry is that whereas for the Sami the herds traditionally constitute a repository of wealth and value, for the Finns reindeer are regarded as things which, like crops, are to be grown and harvested, or in other words, to be farmed. The repository of wealth for the Finnish farmer is his reserve of standing timber, held on a private, bounded plot, or as a fixed share in common forest (Ingold, 1988: 130).

Ingold further reinforces this statement in another article in which he refers to the difference between Finnish and Saami herders:

Most revealingly was that when asked to give the size of a separation, reindeer men from Salla usually reported the number of carcasses it yielded, whereas Saami informant always presented an estimate of living animals collected to the fence (Ingold, 1997: 56-7).

As this account illustrates, reindeer herding, despite being integrated both for the Saami and for the Finns in the same market logic, the perception of reindeer is fun-

TABLE 1. Saami names for reindeer according to age and gender

Age	Gender		
	Male	Neutral	Female
up to 6 months		<i>Miessi</i>	
From 6 months until about 15 months		<i>Čearbmat</i>	
From 1 ^¼ to 2 ^¼ years	<i>Varit</i>		<i>Vuonjal</i>
From 2 ^¼ to 3 ^¼ years	<i>Vuobirs</i>		<i>Ál'do</i>
From 3 ^¼ to 4 ^¼ years	<i>Goddudas</i>		<i>Njiŋŋelas</i> (age neutral)
From 4 ^¼ to 5 ^¼ years	<i>Goasuhás</i>		
From 5 ^¼ to 6 ^¼ years	<i>Mákkán</i>		
From 6 ^¼ years and older	<i>Nammaláppan</i> (name-lost)		

damentally different. The Saami are still embedded in a culture that in the past represented the reindeer on the membranes of their drums as a sacrificial animal or as a wild reindeer (*goddi*), as game for hunting, or as a domesticated animal (*sarvvis*). There is not a single shaman drum on which the reindeer would not be represented. Of course, shamanism has lost its original importance; however, much of its meaning remains close to the Saami heart and still exercises a strong influence.

THE NOTION OF *SIIDA* AS THE EPITOME OF SAAMI IDENTITY

The traditional herding cycle among the Saami was based on three main features: the herd (*eallu*), the herding group (*siida*), and the seasonal migration (*johtin*). The cycle revolved around the community of herders, the reindeer and the shift between the summer and winter pastures. The herd was the basic unit on which the herder could rely. The term in Saami is *eallu*, which literally means life, herd, wealth, possession. It is related to other similar terms that indicate its importance in Saami life: *ealli*, meaning animal, or alive; *eallin*, life; and *eallit*, to live. Although the number of reindeer that form a herd, *eallu*, can vary, there should be at least a couple of hundred reindeer per family in order to provide a living.

The second concept is the *siida*. The *siida* is not the village, which in Saami is *gilli* and refers only to stationary settlements with fixed dwellings. The *siida* is, instead, the herd, *eallu*, together with those who tend it. It is an indissoluble union between the herd and a band of herders. According to Emilie D. Hatt, a *siida* used to be "The name given to a collection of Lapp tents, together with their herds. This name is also given to a single tent with its herd, or herds" (Turi, 1931: 239).

This definition does not apply today because Saami have settled in villages, nor can we follow the definition given by Itkonen, that a *siida* has to include at least one thousand reindeer (Itkonen, 1984: 114). Nonetheless, the *siida* evokes notions of solidarity and cooperation that are still fundamental to reindeer herding. Today the *siida* is a heterogeneous group of siblings, affines, and some outsiders not directly connected to the main kin groups. Hence the idea that the "basis for the *siidâ* is a network of kinship ties" (Whitaker, 1955: 57) still generally holds true, as well as the fact that "a certain dominant group usually forms the nucleus in the composition of a *siida*" (Manker, 1953: 15; in Whitaker, 1955: 57). But this is not a general rule. The concept of *siida*⁶ as a fundamental marker of Saami identity comes from its geo-socio-political property of being fully inclusive. When Saami use the term *siida*, they still refer to the pasture, the place where the herders camp, the *eallu*, and the social relationships shared among its members.

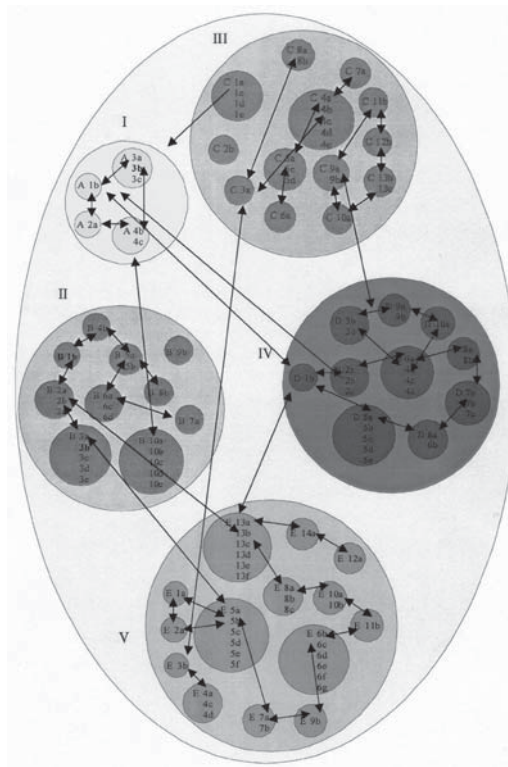
In the herding cooperative of Sallivaara, where I did my fieldwork, all the families are in one way or another related through consanguineal or affinal ties. Herding activities are conducted in teams, or "bands" (Ingold, 1980), and there is a great deal of solidarity, particularly among those who are closely related. In the region where the Sallivaara cooperative was established there was originally only one local *siida*. At the beginning of the twentieth century, when other *siida* migrated to the same region, each *siida* carved out pastures and looked after its own herd because the territory had not yet been fenced. Inter-marriage did eventually create kinship bonds

⁶ In Finnish, *tokkakunta*; literally translated *tokka*, means "herd" and *kunta* means "community."

between different *siida*, but reindeer herds were still cared for autonomously by each *siida*.

Kinship bonds extended the level of solidarity beyond the *siida* itself, so that whenever reindeer went astray, they would be returned to their legitimate owners. It was only with the imposition by the Finnish government of clear and fixed geographical and administrative boundaries in 1932 that a different concept of solidarity and cooperation gradually developed. As Lehtola (1997) argues, although reindeer herding laws had been issued at the same time (in 1898) in Norway, Sweden and Finland, in Finland they had a greater impact on the cultural and socio-economic landscape. Although reindeer herding has always been an occupation open only to the Saami in Norway and Sweden, in Finland it has also been practiced as a secondary activity by Finnish settlers for almost two centuries (Lehtola V-P, 1997: 42). Thus when the Reindeer Herding Law was enacted in Finland, in 1932, the cooperatives were shaped to match existing Finnish organizations. As Lehtola notes, the term in Finnish for the head of the cooperative, *poroisäntä*, is based on the Finnish *talonisäntä*, a peasant proprietor. This concept has no counterpart in the traditional social organization of Saami reindeer herding. Lehtola's point is that the Finns regarded the headman as a representative, but the Saami instead regarded each herder as representative as any other. Giving importance to one herder over the others clearly goes against Saami ideals of autonomy. Such a rigid economic structure greatly influenced herding as a whole. In particular the establishment of cooperatives with boundaries, called in Finnish *paliskunta*, led to the aggregation of different *siida* that had otherwise followed different herding cycles.

Traditional patterns of kinship were also affected. Marriages, once a matter of



Legend:
 Large circle = Cooperative (*paliskunta*) ;
 Medium circle = band, *siida* (*tokkakunta*);
 Small circle = households;
 Low-case letters:
 a = male household head; b = female household head;
 c, d, ... = other members/residents of the household;
 Arrows indicate the existence of kinship bonds among the household members.
 (Roman numerals correspond to herding band affiliation)

FIG. 4. Diagram of current kinship and marriage patterns in the Sallivaara herding cooperative between different *siida* that were once separated (Mazzullo, 2005: 136)

absolutely free choice among people of neighboring *siidat*, were refocused within the boundaries of the cooperative. Figure 4 illustrates kinship patterns. The five different circles indicate the *siida* present at the herding cooperative before the imposition of the cooperative system (paliskunta), and the outer circle represents the cooperative's outer border after the constitution of the paliskunta. The marriage pattern of the cooperative is thus characterized by a shift from an initial exogamic pattern indicating movement and flexibility to one that becomes more focused within the borders of the cooperative, leading to a kind of endogamy, a pattern that involved members of the same cooperative but from different *siida*. Kinship, affinity and locality overlap. In the past, exogamous marriages occurred, but they were not mechanically determined by the relationship itself. When such exogamous marriages did take place, they either created new alliances or reinforced existing ones. After the Finnish government issued the bill for the institution of the cooperatives of reindeer herders, the *siidat* (pl) present in the designated area were incorporated into a single paliskunta and thus, through intermarriage, an extended *siida* was created.

In short, the *siida* developed a new form, while maintaining traditional values. In fact, the notion of *siida*, based on the principle of autonomy, is still in flux, encompassing relationships among a given group of people, the reindeer, and the landscape. In the 1950s Pehrson was led to say about the Swedish Saami that "flexibility, variability and the absence of extensive corporate groups are undoubtedly the most striking characteristics of Könkämä Lappish social structure" (Pehrson, 1957: 107). My informants constantly emphasized that herding is based on internal cooperation and participation. These are traits that also characterize the other communities of reindeer herders of the Arctic (Stammler, 2005; Anderson, 2000; Kerttula, 2000). According to my informants, successful cooperation entails careful attention to one's own social and personal relationships with the members of the group, a matter of great importance to them. Within the Saami cultural universe, reindeer herding has played, *de facto*, the fundamental role of social catalyst in these processes of disruption and reappropriation.

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LANDSCAPE AND MOVEMENT

The Saami relationship with the landscape is, indeed, very intimate, despite the numerous technological changes that have affected the ways in which people talk about, engage with, and move in it. Saami cosmology shares many similarities with that of other circumpolar indigenous peoples. Anderson, who has carried out extensive research in Siberia, describes this type of mutual relationship by introducing the concept of "sentient ecology." This concept conveys the idea that "the Evenki hunters act and move on the tundra in such a way that they are conscious that the animals and the tundra itself are reacting to them" (Anderson, 2000: 116, footnote 1). According to Kerttula, among the Chukchi the spiritual connection with the tundra was expressed in their relationship with the reindeer and in the belief that they were the reincarnation of the reindeer. The Yup'ik, similarly, drew spiritual protection from sea mammals (Kerttula, 2000: 123–137).

The Saami shaman was surrounded by animal "helpers," from whom he⁷ received

⁷ The shamans were mostly, but not exclusively, men.

power and wisdom. During the propitiatory or healing rituals, particularly when he had to travel to the realm of the dead (*Jábmeáibmo*) in order to reclaim the soul of a victim, the shaman made use of shape-shifting powers to transform himself into a reindeer, a bird, or a fish (Pettersson, 1957: 166). The *sieidi*, constituted by mountains, lakes, rock, or trees, was another aspect of the sacrality with which the landscape was imbued. The *sieidit* (pl.) were, and to a certain extent still are, important features of Saami cosmology, but their relevance was also extended so that they were geographical and social reference points in the landscape, not only places of worship. Each *sieidi*, whether it was a private, family or village one, had a delimited area of influence, and all these areas were interconnected. Thus the *sieidi* was the nexus between geographical, social, religious, and political domains of Saami life. Because people were not moving in a landscape that was separated from their “self,” they could feel perfectly comfortable in any place. This intimate relation must be understood not only in spatial, social, religious, and political terms, but, as mentioned, as the fully encompassing concept of the “self-in-the-world.”

CHANGES IN MIGRATION PATTERNS

The historical development of reindeer herding may roughly be divided into seven main stages representing the different forms of Saami relationships with reindeer, as shown in Table 2. Although the table is somewhat arbitrary in the choice of historical landmarks in herding practices, nevertheless, it serves to outline the major stages in the historical development of herding and the corresponding social and economic changes among the Saami people.

Table 2 illustrates that from the original hunting mode of subsistence, on skis and using arrows as described by early sources, the Saami entered a phase in which they started to keep reindeer as decoys for hunting wild reindeer. In the third phase they had already started to use reindeer as draught animals and for milking. In the fourth phase, the pattern of migrating with herds was well established, and this custom continued, at least in Finland⁸, until the beginning of the twentieth century. In Sweden, and particularly in Norway, migrations are still practiced today; in Finland, customary migrations came to a halt with the setting up of the reindeer herding

TABLE 2. Stages in the development of Saami reindeer herding

<i>Stages in the Saami relationship with reindeer</i>							
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII
<i>Stage</i>	Hunting	Hunting, Taming decoys	Hunting, Taming, small herds	Intensive herding, Hunting	Extensive herding	Extensive herding	Extensive herding
<i>Method</i>	Traps, Pits	Traps, Pits	Traps, Pits	Moving with herds	From wooden fencing to metal nets	Snowmobile, Motocross Vaccination	Mobile phones, Artificial feeding, Quad bikes, Airplanes, Helicopters
<i>Period</i>	Ante VII c.	VII c.	XVI c.	XVIII c.	early XX c.	mid XX c.	late XX c.

⁸ Except in the interior forest of Kemi-Sompio and Petsamo



FIG. 5. Map of the migration patterns of ten Saami families before their final migration to the Sompio District, according to Samuli Aikio. Each arrow indicates the family name and its route between summer pastures by the sea and winter pastures inland (Map reproduced from Aikio, P. & M. Aikio 1989: 124).

cooperatives. This fifth stage is the phase in which fencing became necessary to separate the cooperatives' pasture grounds within the reindeer herding districts in the north of Finland. In the sixth stage the introduction of the snowmobile further accelerated physical movement within the fenced territories of the cooperatives. Finally, in the last stage, the introduction of airplanes and helicopters, used to search for and round up the herds, has further accelerated the speed with which herders can gain access to information about the herds and direct herd movements.

Most literature about Saami studies (Pelto, 1973, Pelto & Müller-Wille, 1987) most strongly emphasizes of all these changes the sixth and seventh stages as shown in Table 2. However, other previous changes, such as fencing, may have had an equally important role in the overall social and cultural change in Saami society. What is fundamental is that the construction of fences relieved herders of the need to supervise the herd day and night, allowing them to pay quick visits to the herd and return home the same day.

A comparison of the map of the migration routes of some Saami families, according to Aikio at the end of 19th century (Figure 5), and the new migration routes in the Sallivaara reindeer herding cooperative (Figure 3) points up the differences in migratory patterns. These maps reveal the drastic political changes which transformed the shift between inland pastures in winter to coastal pastures in summer into a circular pattern within a much smaller territory; for example, Sallivaara's territory is about 3,600 square kilometers. But this change brought another significant change from a migratory pattern that included people to one that is executed only by the reindeer, thus affecting the very meaning of *siida* as a comprehensive term that holds together the pasture, the herders, and their herd as a meaningful social unit.

The two maps clearly demonstrate how radical is the change that has occurred

and the severity of its impact on Saami culture. A correlation of a summary of the changes and Ingold's model on the transition from hunting to pastoralist to rancher societies allows for a connection between this transition and parallel social changes as illustrated in Table 3.

TABLE 3. Changes in the Saami relations to landscape, movement and livelihood

	Change in modes of subsistence		
	<i>Hunting mode/hunters</i>	<i>Pastoralist model/pastoralists</i>	<i>Ranching mode/ranchers</i>
Type of movement	Moving separately	Moving together	Moving separately
Strategy	Intercepting herd's route	Negotiating routes	Intercepting herd's route
Technology needed	Making pits (fixed)	Making Saami tents, <i>lavvu</i> , (mobile)	Making fences (fixed)
Appropriation	Lack of direct control due to natural variables	Direct control, slaughtering according to needs	Lack of direct control due to natural or administrative variables

With respect to the Finnish case, the change of type of subsistence from hunting through pastoralism to ranching has brought about a change in the type of movement, and as can be seen from Table 3, those changes point to a return to the original hunting patterns. The rationale that guides the pattern is the same, but the type of movement reverts to the hunting stage. However, despite these changes, Saami people emphasize movement; it is through movement that they connect to the place where their reindeer are grazing:

The bodily experience of the Saami person is not however confined within a somatic shell but rather extends as it grows and is laid down along the multiple paths of the person's movement through the forest. Thus to be, for a Saami, is to be not *in* but *along*. The path, not the place, is the primary condition of being, or rather of becoming. (Mazzullo & Ingold, 2008: 32).

Hence, despite the changes in their modes of subsistence and of movement, outlined in Table 3, the relationship of Saami herders to the reindeer continues through place. During my fieldwork among the herders of the cooperative of Sallivaara, whenever a herder returned from a patrol and was told the last location where the reindeer had been spotted, everyone else knew how long the reindeer would stay there, what they could eat, where would they go. That is, herders could follow their reindeer, i.e., herd them, albeit remotely.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is important to stress that traditionally Saami subsistence has never been based on one particular activity but has comprised a mixture, in accord with the historical period and the season, of hunting, fishing, gathering, and herding. Hence the Saami approach the use of natural resources with a holistic attitude of

incorporating various elements of their relationship to the environment, both in economic and in cultural ways.

Political and border changes have also brought about changes in patterns of migration, particularly with respect to the Finnish case. As can be seen from the maps, earlier migration patterns between inland pastures and the coast ended with the introduction of the reindeer herding cooperatives when migratory patterns had to be reestablished within the newly set borders of the cooperative's territory. Similarly, the change in the *siida* social dynamics shows the adaptive capacity of the community to adjust to change, as seen in the Saami response to the creation of the Finnish state and the establishment of the herding cooperatives, which brought about a somewhat artificial *siida* that did not follow the traditional exogamous model and to which their response was the re-naturalization of the social patterns, through a temporary endogamy, within the borders of the newly created herding cooperatives.

However, flexibility, in the terms suggested by Stammler and Beach as "the realm (of usage) between that which is minimal for survival and that which is 'rational' (used here in the sense of complying with the aims of rationalization), in effect, the realm of sustainability" (Stammler & Beach 2006: 16), has become minimal due to the increased necessity to rationalize. In fact, at the reindeer separation (*rátikka*), Saami herders in earlier times separated reindeer on the basis of "which animal has the best chance of survival over the winter, judged by condition of its teeth, etc." Nowadays, they are compelled to adopt the official rationale established for the herding cooperative (*paliskunta*, Fin.), determined by the number of reindeer over the carrying capacity of its pastures; the increase of one of the variables has immediate repercussions on the others. As a Saami herder once told me, in the old days, if there were too many reindeer, then the reindeermen, no matter how skilful, would not be able to keep the herd (*eallu*) together. Some reindeer would have gone back to nature, meaning they would have gone astray, or joined wild reindeer herds; others would have become weakened and fall prey to wild animals. The imposition of stringent slaughter percentage indexes, that obliges herders to slaughter about 60 to 70 percent of the calves, has, in effect, limited and constrained the ability of the herders to make judgments about how to deal with the reindeer during the separations in the corral. Hence, instead of seeing a *miessi* or *čerbmat* (see Table 1) as a calf, they must see it as a head and make a decision accordingly.

Nowadays Saami people may have only a few reindeer, but they keep them because they regard them as important for their identity and for their language. They are regarded by older generations as a fundamental way to join modern Saami society and traditional values. More and more herders recognize the importance for Saami culture of keeping a connection to reindeer herding alive. For this reason, herders have increasingly defined their reindeer subsistence not only as an economic activity but also as a cultural one.

The way to understand the resilience of herders who persist in pursuing a subsistence that may be seen as marginal and at times low-profit is to understand that reindeer herding is a way of living, not a way to make a living. This concept is the distillation of the very nature of the Saami worldview. An apt conclusion to any discussion of the importance of reindeer for the Saami is to express feelings through

singing, as the Saami prefer to do. The following yoik, one among many that are dedicated to reindeer, captures most poignantly such a relationship:

*I still yoik about Ultevis
Yoik about the high hills
And the grunting of the reindeer cows
And the ringing from the bells
Is heard together with my yoik
Let the reindeer cows on Ultevis grunt
Let the reindeer bulls clean their antlers
Against the willow bushes
On Ultevis
Those are the reindeer cows
Which have been left by my ancestors
We can still hear
The voices of the reindeer cows and the grunting of the calves
On the slopes of Ultevis
Where the birch still grow
(Kuoljok, 2005)*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For the fieldwork I wish to acknowledge a three-year studentship (1995–1998) from the UK Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). I also wish to express my gratitude to the Finnish Academy (Suomen Akademia) for the funding that allowed me to participate in the conference at the Tohoku University, Sendai, Japan; the Arctic Centre, Rovaniemi, Finland; and the Leibniz-Institut für Länderkunde, Leipzig, Germany, who allowed the time to attend.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aikio, P. and Akiko, M.
1989 A chapter in the history of the colonization of the Sámi lands: the forced migration of Norwegian reindeer Sámi to Finland in the 1800s. In *Conflict in the archaeology of living traditions*, ed. R. Layton, 116–130. London: Unwin Hyman.
- Anderson, D. G.
2000 *Identity and Ecology in Arctic Siberia. The Number One Reindeer Brigade*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Barth, E.K.
1982 Ancient methods for trapping wild reindeer in South Norway. In *The Hunters. Their culture and their way of life*, Tromsø Museum Skrifter Vol. XVIII, ed. Vorren and Hultkranz, 21–46. Tromsø, Oslo, Bergen: Universitetsforlaget.
- Beach, H.
1981 *Reindeer-herd management in transition: the case of Tuorpon Saameby in Northern Sweden*. Uppsala Studies in Cultural Anthropology 3. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell.
- Beach, H. and Stammer, F.
2006 Human-animal relations in pastoralism. In *Nomadic Peoples*, ed. F. Stammer and H. Beach, vol.10: 2, 6–30. Oxford: Berghahan Journals Ltd.

- Bourdieu, P.
 1963 The attitude of the Algerian peasant toward time. In *Mediterranean Countrymen: Essays in the Social Anthropology of the Mediterranean*, ed. J. Pitt-Rivers, 55–72. Paris: Mouton.
- Fellman, J.
 1906 *Anteckningar under min vistelse i Lappmarken*. Vols. I-IV [Notes from my stay in Lapland]. Helsinki: SKS.
- Gudeman, S. and Rivera, A.
 1990 *Conversations in Colombia: the domestic economy in life and text*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Helander, E.
 2000 *Beaivvi Mánát; Saamelaisten juuret ja nykyaika* [Children of the sun; the Sámi roots and nowadays], ed. Irja Seurujärvi-Kari. Helsinki: SKS.
- Ingold, T.
 1976 *The Skolt Lapps Today*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
 1980 *Hunters, pastoralists and ranchers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
 1988 Land, Labour and Livelihood in Salla, Northeastern Finland. In *The social implications of agrarian change in Northeastern Finland*, ed. T. Ingold, 121–139. Helsinki: Finnish Anthropological Society. Mäntä: Mäntän Kirjapaino Oy.
 1995 Growing plants and raising animals: an anthropological perspective on domestication. In *The Origin and Spread of Agriculture and Pastoralism in Eurasia*, ed. R.Harris, 12–24. London: UCL Press.
 1997 Work, Identity, and Environment: Finns and Saami in Lapland. In *Arctic Ecology and Identity*, ed. S.A. Mousalimas, 41–68. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó.
- Itkonen, T.I.
 1984 *Suomen Lappalaiset Vuoteen 1945*, Voll. I-II [The Finnish Saami until 1945], (Orig. Vers. 1948). Porvoo: WSOY.
- Kelanti, M.
 2004 map reproduced from Paliskuntain yhdistys. <http://www.paliskunnat.fi> (accessed Jan. 07, 2010).
- Kerttula, A.M.
 2000 *Antler on the Sea. The Yup'ik and the Chukchi of the Russian Far East*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Kuoljok, M.
 2005 *DAVVI JIENAT Boazoolbmuid luodit* [Northern Voices: Reindeer People Yoiks]/Disk 1, *Juoigama suopmanat /Disk 2* (Compilation). DAT-CD38, DAT O.S. Kautokeino / Guovdageaidnu, Norway.
- Lehtola, V-P.
 1997 *Saamelaiset: Historia, Yhteiskunta, Taide* [Saami People: History, Society, Arts]. Jyväskylä: Gummerus.
 2000 *Nickul: rauhan mies, rauhan kansa* [Nickul: a man of peace, a people of peace]. Kustannus-Puntsi, Jyväskylä: Gummerus.
- Magnus, O.
 1555 *Historia de gentibus Septentrionalibus* [Description of the Northern Peoples]. Rome. [(1998), Translated by P. Fisher and H. Higgens; ed. P. Foote, London: Hakluyt Society].
- Manker, E.
 1953 *The Nomadism of the Swedish Mountain Lapps. The Siidas and their migratory routes in 1945*, Nordiska museet: Ada Lapponica VII: 129 (Sweden No. 23, St. Sjöfallet): 173 (No. 37. Hangajaure) 205 (No. 7 Lilla Arksjon). Stockholm: Hugo Geber.
- Mazzullo, N.
 2005 *Perception, tradition and environment among Sámi people in Northeastern Finland*, unpublished PhD Dissertation. Manchester, UK: University of Manchester.
- Mazzullo, N. and Ingold, T.

- 2008 Being Along: Place, Time and Movement among the Sámi People. In *Mobility and Place: Enacting European Peripheries*, ed. J.O. Bærenholdt and B. Granås, 27–38. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd.
- Näkkäljärvi, O.
 1965 Preliminary Report on Investigation of Wild Reindeer Trapping Pits in Finland. In *Laponica: Studia Ethnographica Upsaliensia*, vol. XXI, ed. A. Furumark, 228–233.
- Pehrson, R. N.
 1957 *The Bilateral Network of Social Relations in Könkämä Lapp District; Slavic and East European Series*, Vol. 5. Bloomington: Indiana University Publications.
- Pelto, P.
 1962 *Individualism in Skolt Lapp Society*; Kansatieteellinen Arkisto 16. Helsinki: Suomen Muinaismistoyhdistys.
 1973 *The snowmobile Revolution; technology and social change in the Arctic*. Menlo Park, Ca.: Cummings Pub. Co.
- Pelto, P. and Müller-Will, L.
 1987 Snowmobiles: Technological Revolution in the Arctic. In *Technology and Social Change*, eds. H. R. Bernard and P. J. Pelto, 208–41. Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press Inc.
- Pettersson, O.
 1957 *Jabmek and Jabmeaimo. A comparative study of the dead and the realm of the dead in lappish religion*, ed. C.W.K. Gleerup, Lund: Acta Universitatis Lundensis 1 afd, 52: 6.
- Sammallahti, P.
 1993 *Sámi-Suoma-Sámi Sátnegirji* [Dictionary Saami-Finnish-Saami]. Ohcejohka/Utsjoki: Girjegeiäs Oy.
- Schefferus, J.
 1673 *Laponia*; Frankfurt: Ex Officina Christiani Wolffii. Typis Joannis Andreae, [Itkonen T. (1963), *Laponia*. Translation of the original publication in Latin by Itkonen], Hämeenlinna: Karisto.
- Stammler, F.
 2005 *Reindeer Nomads Meet the Market. Culture, Property and Globalisation at the 'End of the Land'*. Halle Studies in Anthropology of Eurasia Vol.6. Verlag, Berlin: LIT.
- Turi, J.
 1979 *Kertomus Saamelaisesta*. Porvoo: Werner Söderström Osakeyhtiö.
 1931 *Turi's Book of Lapland*, ed. and translated into Danish Emilie D. Hatt; Traslated from Danish E. Gee Nash. Oxford: Alden Press.
- Tyler, N.J.C. et al.
 2007 *Saami reindeer pastoralism under climate change: Applying a generalized framework for vulnerability studies to a sub-arctic social-ecological system*, Global Environmental Change, Volume 17, Issue 2, 191–206. Guildford, Surrey: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Vorren, Ø.
 1982 The wild reindeer hunt and offering sites. In *The Hunters. Their culture and their way of life*, Tromsø Museum Skrifter Vol. XVIII, ed. Vorren and Hultkrantz, 55–68. Tromsø, Oslo, Bergen: Universitetsforlaget.
- Vorren, Ø. and Hultkrantz, Å. (ed.)
 1982 *The Hunters. Their culture and their way of life*, Tromsø Museum Skrifter Vol. XVIII, Tromsø, Oslo, Bergen: Universitetsforlaget.
- Vorren, Ø. and Manker, E.
 1962 *Lapp life and customs: a survey* (Orig. ed. *Samekulturen: 1957*; Tromsø: Universitetsforlaget). London: Oxford University Press.
- Whitaker, I.
 1955 *Social relation in a nomadic lappish community*. Samiske Samlinger: Oslo. Whitaker.



NORTHEAST ASIAN STUDY SERIES 11

**Good to Eat, Good to Live with:
Nomads and Animals
in Northern Eurasia
and Africa**



Edited by

Florian Stammler

*Arctic Centre, University of Lapland, Finland &
Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge, UK*

Hiroki Takakura

*Center for Northeast Asian Studies,
Tohoku University, Japan*

Center for Northeast Asian Studies

Tohoku University, Sendai

2010

