

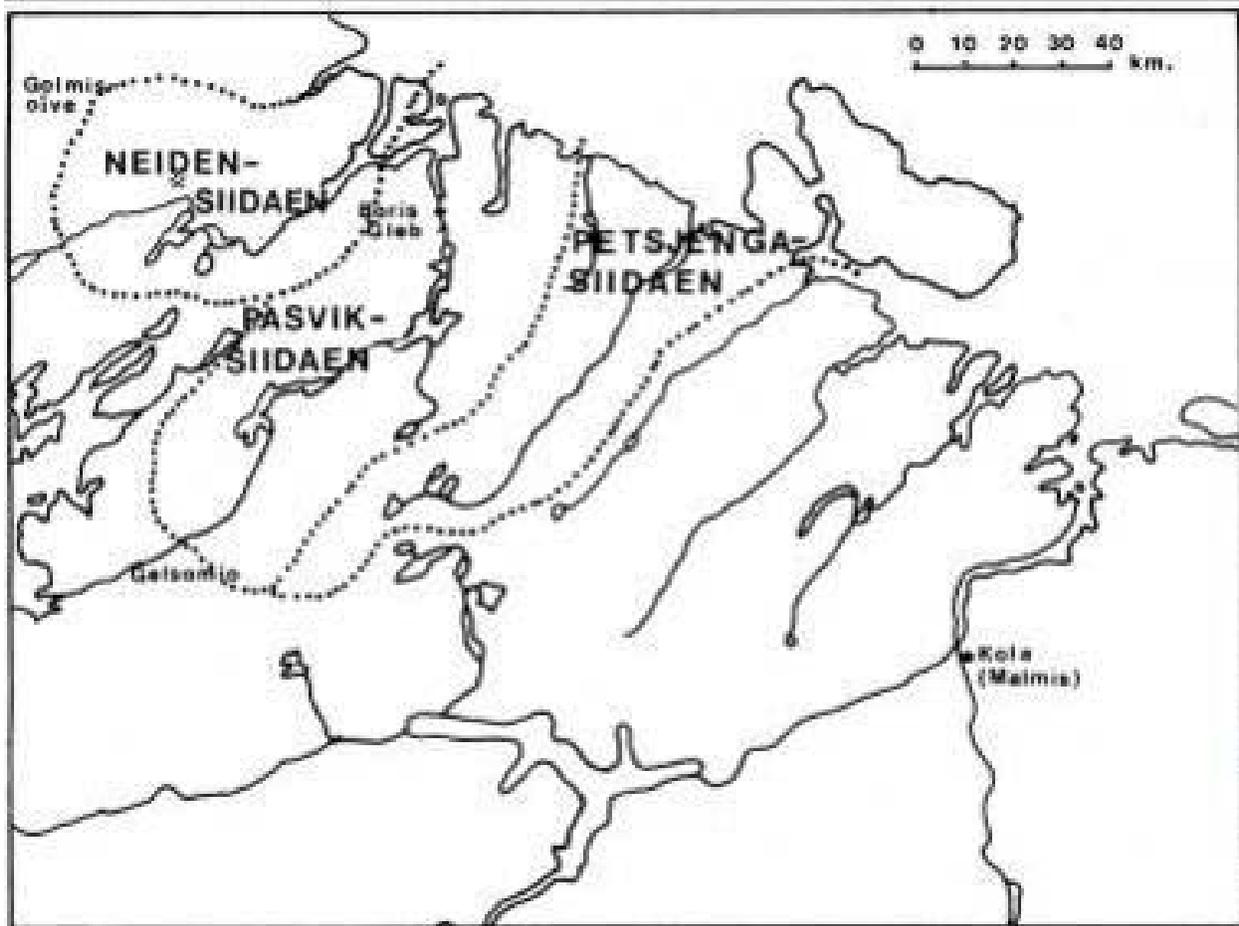
The Saami

The Traditional Saami Homeland



The traditional homeland of the Saami is located in the tundra and forests of northern Norway, Sweden, Finland and the Kola peninsula of Russia. Within this homeland, formerly known as Lapland but now referred to as *Sápmi*, the Saami tended herds of domesticated reindeer, harvested marine resources along the coast, caught fish in the rivers and lakes, and hunted wild reindeer as well as small game. Although some Saami living along the coast were relatively sedentary, most communities moved annually from sheltered winter villages to spring, summer and autumn camps located on the open tundra or up the mountain slopes.

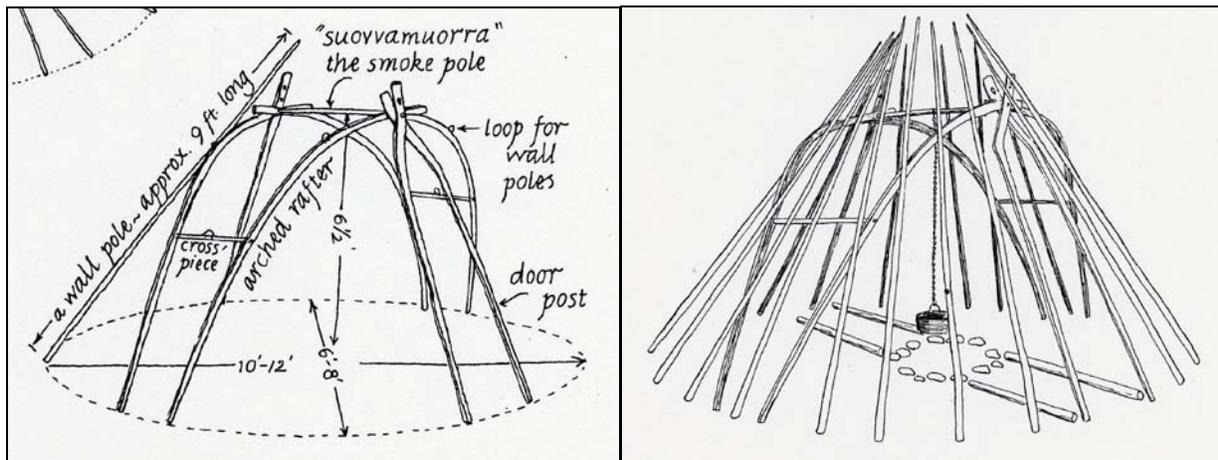
Seasonal Movement of the Saami



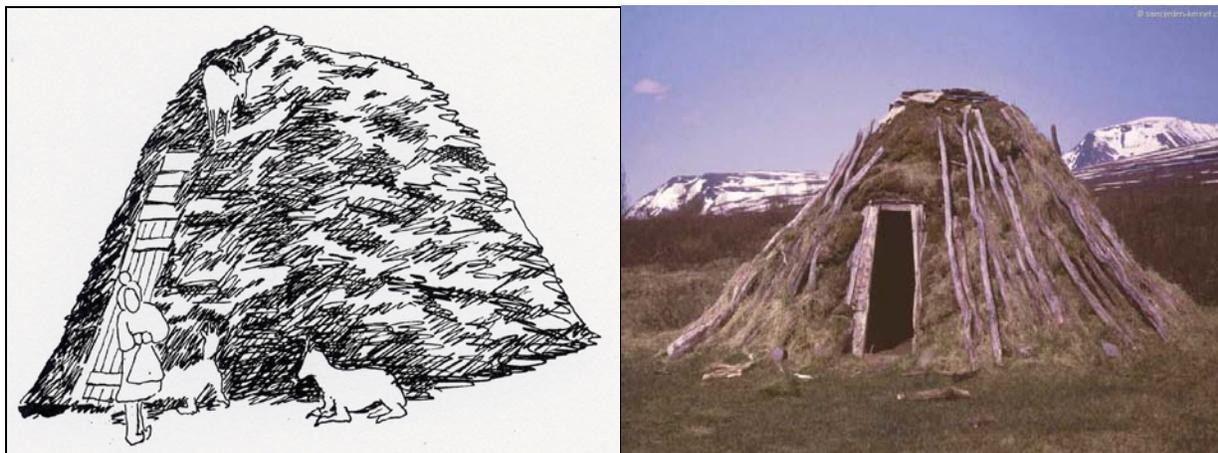
http://www.pasvikelva.no/index.php?page_id=2&lang_id=2&article_id=97

Sapmi was subdivided into a series of smaller territories whose common pastures, fishing spots and hunting areas were exploited by small kinship-based communities, known as *siida*. To exploit their territory, each *siida* made seasonal movements along established trails from winter villages to spring, summer and autumn camps. The winter villages consisted of several sod covered dwellings called *kota* (also known as *goathi*, *goahte*, *kata*, *kåhte* and *kåta*) and storage sheds or *balagan*, wooden structures set on poles or on the ground. In late spring, the occupants of the large winter village broke up into several smaller families who moved along the trails to their respective spring, summer and autumn camps where they could pasture their reindeer, catch fish and hunt small game. At these small camps, Saami families lived in tents called *lavvu* (also known as *kuvak*).

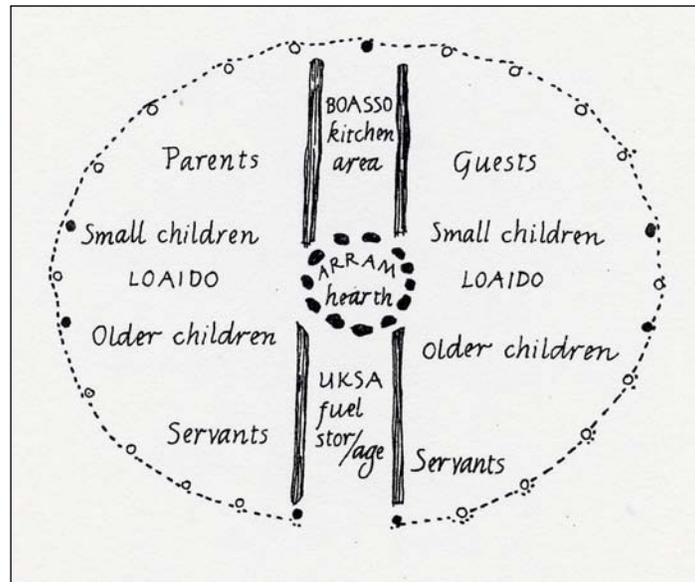
The Traditional Saami Home



The framework of the traditional *lavvu* consisted of pairs of naturally bow-shaped pines or rafters with holes bored near the ends and in the middle. Each pair of rafters was held in place by a smoke pole and two cross pieces which fit into the top and middle holes respectively. Two door posts, shaped like hockey sticks, were attached to the front of the smoke pole while a single pole fit on the back of the smoke pole. Twelve to eighteen slender poles from nine to fifteen feet long were laid against this framework. The tent cover was made of two halves, each of which was tied to the rear post and then stretched around the frame and tied to the two door posts. The summer cover was made of birch bark whereas reindeer skins were used in colder weather. The skin door had wood battens to hold it flat against the door posts. The winter dwelling used the same basic framework but the frame was much heavier and the structure was covered with logs and sod or turf.



The Living Space

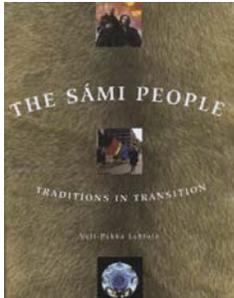


The traditional Saami home, whether a *goathe* or *lavvu*, was a well-organized living space and a representation of the cosmos. In the center of the home was the hearth or *arram* surrounded by a ring of stones. Pots were suspended over the fire on a hook at the end of a chain fastened to the smoke pole. Two parallel logs extending from the hearth to the door posts defined the *uksa*, the place to store firewood. Behind the hearth, two more logs outlined the *boasso* or kitchen area where food was prepared. The spaces on either side of this central passage were called the *loaido* and were used by the occupants for day-to-day living, sleeping and storage. The floor of the *loaido* was covered with a thick layer of spruce boughs and reindeer skins. Each space within the Saami home was associated with a specific deity who made certain that household members behaved appropriately.

Learn More

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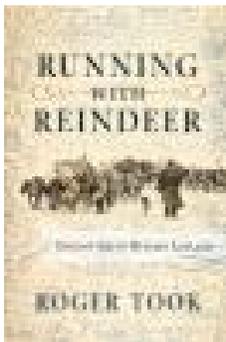


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