1. INTRODUCTION

Archaeologists often approach sites as dots or areas on maps. Defining the coordinates and borders of sites may be considered important. Ancient sites are grouped into units, each of which usually has its own type, subtype, and dating. However, the past can also be approached through the landscape. In this context, landscape means the physical, social, and mental space that both shapes and is shaped by human experience. The landscape binds individual sites together.

The landscape can also be described as layered: it is a convergence of different chronological layers. In this case, the landscape is seen as a palimpsest where earlier events leave signs and memories on later events. The landscape is like a parchment from which the old text is wiped off and new text written in its stead, but with traces of the old text always remaining underneath. Places in the landscape are meaningful in relation to each other, and layers of different ages interact with each other. The old leaves its marks and future events are anticipated. In addition, the landscape is where physical and mental elements meet. We do not see the world around us only in terms of shapes, colours, light, and shadow, but our earlier experiences, beliefs, and values affect what we see.

My research starts with the dots on the map that represent Sámi sacred places and offering places, such as *sieidis*. Instead of individual sites, however, I examine the sacred places as parts of a greater whole. The sites have never existed in a vacuum, but they have always been a part of a human environment. My research focuses on the location of sacred places in relation to ancient sites and other elements of the landscape. The age, meaning, and life cycle of the place, as well as its relations to means of subsistence and ritual are key viewpoints for discussion and comparison. Other sacred places, settlement sites, and remains related to hunting and other means of subsistence are parts of the landscape surrounding sacred places. Additional archaeological sites can also provide information on the mindscapes related to sacred places. Have sacred places been considered as parts of the landscape related to hunting and everyday life? Are they distant places for silent meditation? Landscape elements of varying ages position sacred places within a long chronological continuum, during which people's perceptions of the landscape and beliefs related to sacred places may have changed. Thus, sacred places have their own life cycles, during which people's attitudes towards them have changed. All these elements together form the landscape, of which sacred places should be seen as a part.

In the first chapter of this book, I provide background information on the study of sacred places with a brief description of the significance of sacred places as a part of Sámi religious beliefs. I also present an overview of earlier research and my own position in the field. In the second chapter, I concentrate on sacred places as research material. The essential questions here are: what in fact is a sacred place or a sieidi and how reliable is the information that we can acquire related to these places? In the third chapter, I present the theoretical framework of my doctoral thesis and the key methods used.

In the subsequent chapters of my thesis, I approach the Sámi ritual landscape first through topographic features and then through ancient sites. The location of sacred places can be linked to various elements of the landscape, such as waterways and fells,

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and the sacred place itself can be central element of the landscape. The relationship between sacred places and landscape elements has often been considered as a central feature determining sacredness[1], but the connection between these factors has not been examined systematically. In my research, I answer the following questions:

- What kinds of landscape elements are typical of sacred places and can variation be observed between different types of sacred places? In particular, sieidis have often been described as being located on the shores of waterways or on fells.[2] In this study, I look into whether sieidis could also be found in other types of places. I also approach the possibility of heterogeneous locations through various types of sacred places. I pose the question of what influence, for example, the constitution of the users of the sacred place or the deity associated with the place may have had on its location (Chapter 4).
- What are sieidis like as elements of the landscape? Sacred places themselves are also elements of the landscape, and they can take very different forms from a small stone to a large fell. However, individual groups of sacred places, such as stone sieidis, have been considered as homogenous even to the extent that a scholar may identify a sieidi merely on the basis of its external characteristics.[3] In Chapter 4.1, I discuss which characteristics have usually been associated with sieidis and how common these characteristics are.
- Can sacred places be described as liminal places? In particular, a location in a high place or near water has been connected with liminality. Indeed, liminality has been considered as a key characteristic of sieidis.[4] In Chapter 4.2.2, I examine the extent to which the location of sacred places reflects their liminality and how liminality as a concept is associated with the Sámi worldview.
- What makes places sacred? On the basis of everything discussed above, I consider the essence of sacredness in landscape elements. Which factors have affected people’s perceptions of a particular place as sacred, and how similar or different are sacred places? Should the idea of sacred places as a homogenous group be dismantled?

Following this, I approach sacred places in relation to other ancient sites. The main focus is on the relationship between sacred places and means of subsistence. My hypothesis is that spatial proximity indicates a relationship between sacred places and subsistence-related sites in terms of experiencing the landscape. The study of sacred places has often focused on the examination of ritual activities.[5] By studying sacred places and subsistence-related sites together, we can obtain a broader view of activities in sacred places, as well as of the ways in which people have understood sacredness. This part of the book deals with the following questions:

[1] E.g. Mulk 1996; Mulk 2003, 125.
[2] E.g. Paulaharju 1932.
[3] Pentikäinen & Miettinen 2003.
[4] Lahelma 2008; Mulk & Bayliss-Smith 2006; Mulk & Bayliss-Smith 2007.
[5] E.g. Rydving 1993; Fossum 2006.

- Can sacred places related to different means of subsistence be differentiated in the landscape? In Chapters 5.1 and 5.2, I return to the questions of sacred places as elements of the landscape and to the locations of sacred places by comparing sites related to various means of subsistence. The division of sacred places based on means of subsistence is common, but the degree to which these places differ from each other has not previously been studied.
- What is the connection between means of subsistence and ritual activities? And what other activities are associated with sacred places? The connection between sacred places and means of subsistence has been discussed mainly in relation to the locations of offering places near hunting pits.[6] In Chapters 5.2–5.6, I examine whether ancient sites related to Sámi means of subsistence can be found near sacred places and what information they can provide on the relationship between means of subsistence and ritual activities. In addition, I study other ancient sites as a part of the landscape related to sacred places. In Chapter 6, I also discuss later activities in sacred places.
- What kinds of actors and bodily experiences are related to sacred places? In Chapter 7, I approach the question of sacred places as theatres of human activity in the light of written sources and material revealed by excavations.
- To what extent are sacred places a part of a profane landscape? The thread running throughout this book is the idea of sacred places being connected not only with ritual but also with profane activities. The study of sacred places has usually concentrated on the ritual aspects, but in order to conceive the Sámi worldview in its entirety, we must also pay attention to the profane activities related to sacred places. For example, subsistence-related sites are a part of the landscape of sacred places.
- What is the life cycle of sacred places? All the themes in this book are connected by the idea of the life cycle of sacred places. From the choice or origin of sacred places to their abandonment, the meanings attached to sacred places have changed. This is reflected in the various external characteristics of the sacred places, their relationships with means of subsistence, and activities carried out at these places. Throughout my book, I describe the life cycle of sacred places through the meanings, beliefs, and activities related to them. Whereas earlier research has emphasized the use of sacred places in prehistoric and historical times, the chronological limit of my study extends to the present day.

I approach both the relationship between sacred places and landscape elements and the relationship between sacred places and other ancient sites through spatial analyses and the theoretical framework of landscape archaeology. Experiencing the landscape and the meanings of the landscape in the past have been studied mainly in the context of farmer culture;[7] the ways in which mobile communities and hunter-gatherers experience the landscape has been studied less from an archaeological perspective.[8]

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[6] E.g. Vorren 1985.
[7] E.g. Tilley 1994; Bradley 2000; Bradley 2005.
[8] Jordan 2003.

The theme of sacred places that are not static and unchanging, but have a life cycle of their own, runs throughout my work. Simplified, the stages of this life cycle are adoption, use, abandonment, and reuse. The long timescale covered by the research enables the observation of this life cycle. My study starts from the cusp of the Iron Age and the Early Middle Ages around the 11th century, to which the first archaeological finds from sieidis are dated, and extends from this time up to the present day. Sieidis are still visited, objects are left there, and they are constantly imbued with meanings. Modern use is also a part of the life cycle of an archaeological site.

In my research, I use the term *Sámi sacred place*, except when referring directly to older sources, which use the term *Lapp*. At the end of the Iron Age, the starting point of my research, the Sámi were considered an ethnically identified group.[9] However, this does not mean that the cultural identity of the people who lived then would correspond to the modern Sámi people's view of themselves. Cultural identity is in a constant state of flux, as people define themselves in relation to other cultural groups.

In this book, sacred places are approached on two spatial levels. On one hand, the objects of research are all known sacred places that are connected with Sámi people and located in the area of modern Finland and that have been defined on the basis of literature or archaeology. On the other hand, the sacred places in Utsjoki and Inari are subjected to closer inspection. The Utsjoki area is characterized by river valleys, whereas Inari is a region of extensive lakes. These areas provide a comprehensive set of material, as they contain multiple sacred places at known locations. The more southern municipalities of the research area, Hyrynsalmi, Kuusamo, Pelkosenniemi, Pello, Posio, Rovaniemi, Salla, and Savukoski, are represented by one to three sacred places each. There is also reliable information available on the sacred places in the Inari and Utsjoki regions (see Chapter 1.3).

1.1. Sacred places as a part of Sámi beliefs

> *Dyrene, træerne, stenene og de andre livløse ting har mistet talens brug,*
> *men hørelsen og forstaaelsen har de endnu[.]*[10]
>
> *Johan Turi 1911: En bog om lappernes liv, p. 136*

In the following chapter, I provide some background to human activities at offering places and conceptions related to offering. My focus is on the description of those basic elements of Sámi beliefs for which similarities can be observed in different Sámi cultures. However, the entirety of Sámi beliefs cannot be viewed as a static phenomenon. The traditional region inhabited by the Sámi, Sápmi, currently extends over Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia (Figure 1). In earlier times, the area inhabited by people speaking Sámi parent languages was even greater.[11] Just as Sámi languages are different in different parts of this greater region, there are also

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[9] Hansen & Olsen 2007, 33–40; see also Hamari 1996, 53; Hamari & Halinen 2000, 156.

[10] "Animals, trees, stones, and other inanimate things have lost the ability to speak, but they still have the ability to hear and understand."

[11] Aikio 2003; Aikio & Aikio 2004, 118–124; Aikio 2007; Lehtola V-P 2008.

differences in other cultural aspects. Furthermore, religions and religious practices have varied in different parts of the Sámi region.[12] Religious differences related to means of subsistence are probably the most obvious; fishermen have offered fish, while reindeer hunters and herders have offered antlers. Chronological changes and differences between individuals and social groups have received less attention. Regional differences can be seen, for example, in different names for the same phenomenon.[13]

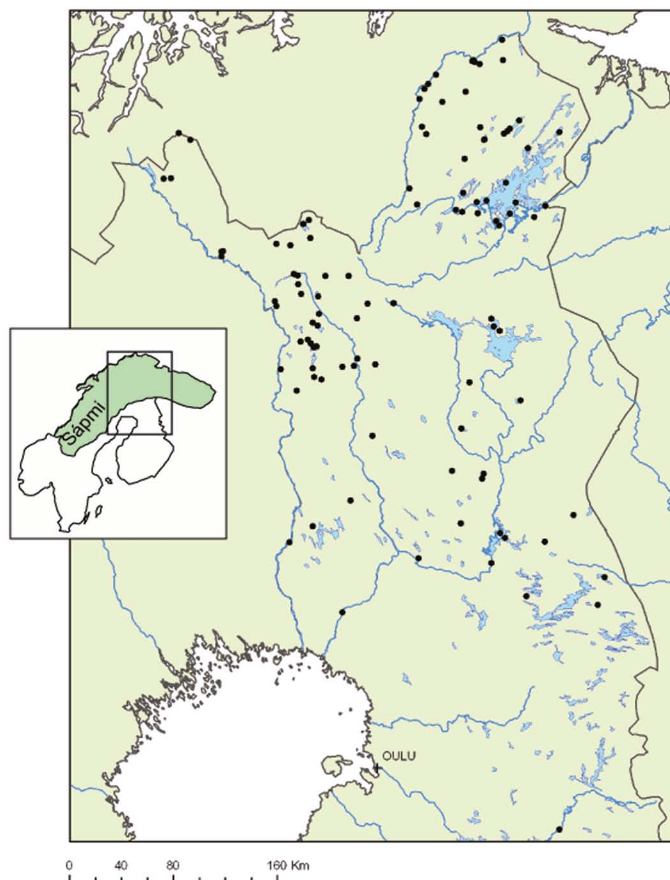

Figure 1. *Map showing the locations of sacred places (black dots) in relation to the area (Sápmi) traditionally inhabited by the Sámi.*

According to Louise Bäckman and Åke Hultkrantz, however, it is likely that the religion contains uniform characteristics throughout the Sámi area.[14] Offering, especially, has been seen as a largely homogenous activity that was very similar in different parts of the Sámi region.[15] However, there have also been variations related to offering activities, as shown by my research. In addition to regional differences, changes also took place through time. Hultkrantz has suggested that changes took place

[12] Rydving 1993.

[13] The term *sieidi* is completely absent in South Sámi, but instead the term *storjunkare* is used (Graan 1899 [1672], 62; Rydving 1993, 20–21). Circular offering places (*ringformade offerplatser*) are examples of a phenomenon that is considered to have taken place only in a restricted area, the internal part of Norrland and Northern Norway (Vorren & Eriksen 1993). However, in recent years, similar structures have also been preliminarily identified in Russia, Northern Sweden, and the South Sámi area (Broadbent 2006; Wennstedt Edvinger & Broadbent 2006). Written sources are known only from the north (e.g. Friis 1977 [1871], 140). In Finland, a structure interpreted as a circular offering place is most commonly considered as a *purnu*, a storage pit in a boulder field (Karjalainen 2007).

[14] Bäckman & Hultkrantz 1985, 9.

[15] Mebius 2003, 133.

especially when reindeer nomadism was adopted. These changes were very slight, as Christianity followed soon after and branded those practising the old religion as outlaws.[16] I return to the changes brought on by Christianity in Chapter 5.6, in which I discuss the sacred places of the ethnic religion[17] in relation to churches. My hypothesis is that the criminalization of the ethnic religion led to changes in offering activities. People moved away from known sieidis to give private offerings in isolated places and within the *goahti*.[18] In the following, I compare the traditions related to sacred places in different regions and at different times in order to find any predominant differences or similarities.

The Sámi worldview was based on the idea of a tripartite world.[19] The Proto-Uralic worldview reconstructed by V.V. Napolskikh is considered to share common elements with the Sámi worldview.[20] According to Napolskikh, the world was divided into the world above, the world below, and the world in the middle connecting these two.[21] The idea of a tripartite world was also important for offering activities, because offerings could be used to contact spirits inhabiting the other worlds. Offering places can also reflect other worlds, for example, a tree sieidi made of a tree turned with its roots up could symbolize the world below, which was sometimes seen as a reflection of this world.[22]

The sacred geography of the Sámi can be seen as consisting of places with various meanings and associated with various ritual activities. A sacred place (Figure 2) can be considered as a kind of top-level concept. Here, a sacred place means a place associated with religious significance. In a sacred place, people could approach spirits and gods.[23] Various prohibitions

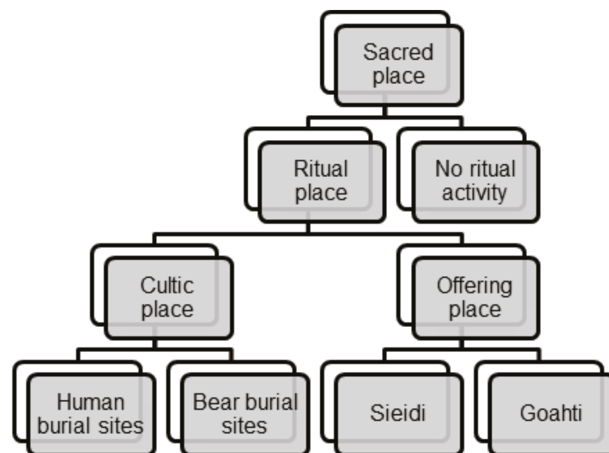

Figure 2. *Chart of the categorization of sacred places.*

[16] Hultkrantz 1985.

[17] In addition to ethnic religion, other terms have been suggested. Of these, the terms primitive religion or the religion of primitive people make value judgements, and pre-Christian religion does not fully describe the situation, as early Christian influences may have made an impact already in the Middle Ages and Sámi religion coexisted for a long time side by side with Christianity. Indigenous religion is another term, in addition to ethnic religion, that does not include the idea of a static religion that would have been preserved devoid of contacts with the outside world (Mebius 2003, 12–13). In order to avoid these connotations of changelessness and permanence, I use the term ethnic religion, which also does not exclude the idea of something else predating this religion. Furthermore, the term religion in itself is a theoretical concept applied by outside researchers and does not necessarily describe the early Sámi worldview. Aslak P. Niittyvuopio states that "it is not reasonable to speak of Sámi religion, because sieidis and sacred places were a way of life" (Lounema 2003, 173).

[18] Rydving 1993, 101–102.

[19] However, some sources mention the division of the world into as many as five parts (Leem 1956 [1767], 409).

[20] Mulk & Bayliss-Smith 2006, 97.

[21] Napolskikh 1992.

[22] Bradley 2000, 12.

[23] Cf. Rydving 1993, 97.

and beliefs could be related to a sacred place, but it was not necessarily the theatre of ritual activities. Examples of this are sacred fells, which are not necessarily traditionally associated with ritual activities.

Sacred places with ritual activities can be divided into cultic places and offering places, and they can be collectively termed ritual places. Offering places were used to make offerings, as the name indicates. Sieidis can be considered as a subtype of offering places. In sources describing the area of Finland, stone and wood objects are mentioned as sieidis, sometimes only stones (Table 1). Other offering places included, for example, *goahti*s, in which daily offerings were made in connection with eating. Cultic places, on the other hand, were connected with ritual activities not related to offering.[24] Examples of cultic places could be human burial sites and bear burial sites, where bears, who had gained a special place among all animals in Sámi beliefs, were ritually buried.

Table 1. *The definition of a sieidi in the sources depicting the region of Finland.*

A sieidi is	Source	Region
A non-representative stone or wood sieidi	Tornæus 1672	Tornio and Kemi Lapland
A stone and wooden god	Schefferus 1673	Tornio and Kemi Lapland
A stone	Ervasti 1737	Kemi Lapland
Made of stone and wood	Castrén 1853	Inari
A stone	Andelin 1859	Utsjoki & Inari
Usually a stone or a place more widely regarded as sacred	Äimä 1903	Inari
A stone or wooden god	Fellman 1906	Utsjoki
An idol made of stone and wood	Andersson 1912	Kemijärvi
A stone, cliff, pillar, fell	Paulaharju 1932	Northern Finland
An unusual stone or cliff, maybe also a tree stump or wooden pole	Itkonen 1946/1948	Northern Finland

Offering places can also be categorized on the basis of the means of subsistence practised by the people visiting them. Means of subsistence and the natural environment are considered as having been very significant for Sámi beliefs.[25] Inga-Maria Mulk emphasizes the connection between offerings given to sieidis and the economy of Sámi hunter communities. The functioning of the community was based on general reciprocity and economic cooperation.[26] For instance, redivision of food in the community was based on reciprocity, starting from the idea of a gift exchange in which the return gift was not expected to be given immediately. According to Mulk, the members of the community had a right to lands and resources, and food was also guaranteed for those who could not take part in providing it. Economic cooperation, on the other hand, refers to the necessary collaboration most especially for extensive hunting trips. The cooperation and reciprocity practised in a *siida*[27]

[24] Rydving 2009, personal communication.

[25] E.g. Vorren 1985, 79; Rydving 1993, 85; Sergejeva 2000a; Mebius 2003, 11–12.

[26] Mulk 1996, 47.

[27] The Sámi word *siida* means a Lapp village, a Sámi community functioning as an independent social and economic unit.

are also connected with acts of offering.[28] The giving of gifts to gods at sieidis corresponded to the exchange of gifts related to the everyday division of resources.[29] According to Audhild Schanche, offerings taken to sieidis should not be seen as sacrifices to supernatural powers, but as return gifts or requests to take something from nature.[30] Paulaharju describes the relationship between the sacred lake and the sacrificers as a host-guest-relationship, a kind of reciprocal hospitality.[31] Sieidis were thus connected to the Sámi worldview on both a cosmological level, explaining the meaning of the universe, and a very concrete level guaranteeing everyday subsistence. These levels cannot be separated, because they were interconnected in the Sámi worldview.

Based on the mode of subsistence practised, sieidis are divided into those belonging to the domains of hunting, fishing, and reindeer herding. However, the division was not strict, but a sieidi could be used by several groups or its meaning could change.[32] Written sources emphasize the desire for hunting success as the main function of offerings.[33] Other motives for offering could be related to rites of passage, crises, or the calendar.[34] Especially offerings made in connection with annual migration can be considered as related to rites of passage (see Chapter 5.4.). Motives for crisis-related rites included pleas for the alleviation or curing of diseases, as well as help during pregnancy, or indeed for getting pregnant. Motives were also often related to a crisis situation such as an epidemic or catastrophically bad hunting misfortune.[35] Calendar-related offerings were made, for example, in the autumn connected with reindeer slaughter and in midsummer to honour the sun god. Sieidis were thus tied not only to subsistence but also to the annual cycle. Sometimes sieidis were approached for luck for travelling, or a spouse, general good fortune in life, or oracular pronouncements related to making important decisions.[36]

The offerings given were, by nature, diverse. Animal remains were the most common offering type.[37] Written sources also mention offerings of cheese, tobacco, alcohol, and household items, among other things.[38] After animals, drinks were the most important offering type, but the offering of alcohol was a fairly late phenomenon.[39] Based on written sources, Peter Sköld suggests that spirits were offered especially to female deities, *áhkkus*.[40] Offerings were often connected with Sámi means of subsistence. Fish was offered in order to catch more fish and wild reindeer to boost reindeer hunting.[41]

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[28] Bergsland 1964, 244–245.
[29] Mulk 1996, 63–65.
[30] Schanche 2004, 5.
[31] Paulaharju 1979 [1939], 152.
[32] E.g. Paulaharju 1932.
[33] Äimä 1903; Paulaharju 1932; Itkonen 1948 I.
[34] Rydving 1993; Mebius 2003, 141; cf. Honko 1975. In the study of religions, a rite is described as a small part of a ritual (Spiro 1971, 199).
[35] Acerbi 1802, vol. II, 131; Mebius 1968, 42–45; Rydving 1993, 104–106; Mebius 2003, 141.
[36] Itkonen 1948 I, 312–318; SKS KRA. Kohonen, Marjatta 1–107.1959.
[37] Manker 1957, 40–52.
[38] Lundius 1905 [1674], 29; Leem 1956 [1767], 428; Manker 1957, 88; Äimä 1903, 115; Itkonen 1948 II, 312.
[39] Sköld 1999, 66.
[40] Sköld 1999, 70; see also Solander 1910 [1726], 27; Kildal 1910 [1730], 96; Andelin 1859, 244; Mebius 1968, 74.
[41] Collinder 1953, 173.

Written sources indicate that the offering methods varied. Sometimes a living animal was left at the sieidi, sometimes only the antlers or head or only the bones. The sieidi could also be brushed with the blood or fat of fish or game animals. Itkonen notes that the best meat and fat were left as offerings.[42] On the other hand, Graan states that only antlers and bones were offered to sieidis once the meat was eaten.[43] Offerings could also be made in the form of a meal eaten at the sieidi. It was believed that the gods also became nourished when people ate at the offering place.[44] There were certain rules related to the handling of offered animals. Written sources emphasize that the bones of offered animals should not be broken.[45] This prohibition was based on the idea that the gods were believed to create a new animal from the bones left at the offering place.[46] Leem describes a meal at an offering place and the belief in the creation of a new animal as follows:

> *Som oftaste slagtede man Dyret, kogte og add det, undtagen Benene, hvilke man lod blive paa Stedet til Afgudens Tieneste, værende i den fulde Tanke, at han kunde skabe Kiød paa dem igien. Man og med Offerets Blod besmurte og imod Offer-Stedet opreyste lange Kieppe, hvilke bleve kaldede: Liet-Morak.*[47]

Both at sieidis and elsewhere, offerings were given to the natural elements, which were especially important to the Sámi, such as thunder, wind, water, and sun, and to the gods, who were considered to have influence on various areas of life. Offerings were also given to so-called invisible powers. They could be related to spirits from the world below or masters of animals and the nature, or they could be code names for old deities.[48]

Sieidis were thus used to make contact with various spirits and deities. However, the sources do not provide an unambiguous picture of how these spirits were manifested at the sieidi. In some written sources, the sieidis themselves are described as godlike.[49] Inga-Maria Mulk approaches the idea of sieidis as gods when she states that they are: "both the images and incarnations of the local divine masters who protected land and animals within a defined area."[50] As I have noted earlier, sieidis were, however, not related to one single deity. There were many deities, as there were many sieidis. Sometimes a sieidi was dedicated to a particular deity, like Ukko in Lake Ukonjärvi. However, one sieidi could represent different deities in different situations.[51]

Additionally the connection between sieidis and deities was heterogeneous. Paulaharju depicts sieidis as actually being gods on the one hand, dwelling sites of *háldis* on

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[42] Itkonen 1948 II, 311; see also Schefferus 1963 [1673], 177–178; Paulaharju 1932.

[43] Graan 1899 [1672], 63.

[44] Äimä 1903, 115; Itkonen 1948 II, 312.

[45] Zachrisson 1985, 87–88; see e.g. Högström 1980 [1746/1747], 191.

[46] Acerbi 1802, vol. II, 302; Ravila 1934, 50; Mebius 2003, 143.

[47] Leem 1956 [1767], 428–429. "Animals were often slaughtered, cooked, and eaten, except for the bones, which were left at the offering place to wait for the god, in the belief that he could create meat on them once again. The stone was also smeared with offering blood and long sticks were raised up against it and called Liet-Morak."

[48] Mebius 2003, 89–91, 147.

[49] For example, Rheen 1897 [1671], 39; Schefferus 1963 [1673], 152–153.

[50] Mulk 1996, 52.

[51] Friis 1977 [1871], 138.

the other hand.[52] As for Itkonen, he makes a distinction between a stone or rock in which a deity or *háldi* was believed to live and a tree stump or wooden pole that were dedicated to deities.[53] The stone itself was thus not a god or its personification, but a kind of godly dwelling site. Mebius suggests that considering a sieidi as a deity is one interpretation, but there were other variations. I agree with his view that different individuals could have different conceptions of what a sieidi actually was.[54] The problem has also been approached with a loose definition according to which sieidis were central to Sámi beliefs and could be described as something manifesting deities and spirits.[55] Just as the views of individuals on the nature of a sieidi may have differed, conceptions have most probably also changed with the times. The tradition is still alive today. For instance, as I was walking in Muonio with a student, the sieidi guide told us, "I hope you girls know that offerings were not made to the sieidis themselves, but *through them* to request help from above." This view probably reflects the modern idea that deities are rarely concretely in this world and among us, but instead we only have devices to help us establish a connection with them.

Sieidis were not the only places for making offerings. Håkan Rydving has divided ritual space among the Sámi of Luleå into three levels. The first level was formed by those few offering places in which the entire community and also members of other communities gathered. The mid-level places, according to him, are those in which families belonging to the same working community (*siida*) gathered. The third level consisted of the places near the *goahti* where daily rituals were carried out.[56] Offering places were located in the immediate vicinity of the *goahti*, and offerings were given in the *goahti* itself. For example, daily mealtime offerings to *Sáráhkka* made up a part of women's duties.[57] This division can also be applied to sacred places in Finland: some of them were visited from an extensive area, whereas others were used by smaller groups of people. In my research material, the third level can be considered to consist of those sieidis or other offering places that are said to have been used by a single person only.[58] Not all offerings were related to particular places. Rites of passage could be carried out in many places and crisis rites anywhere. Some places were visited regularly in connection with the annual migration. In this way, the environment formed an irregular network of ritual places.[59]

Sieidis were only one way to make a connection with spirits that were held to be present everywhere in nature. Schanche considers sieidis to be the power centres of personified nature.[60] According also to Mulk, the landscape has a soul in Sámi beliefs.[61] On the other hand, Mebius denies the idea of a personified landscape and notes that literary sources contain no indications of this. Instead, there is folklore related to spirits being

52 Paulaharju 1932, esp. p. 26; cf. Qvigstad 1926, 319.
53 Itkonen 1948 II, 311; cf. Friis 1977 [1871], 137.
54 Mebius 2003, 52.
55 Hultkrantz 1962, 291.
56 Rydving 1993, 97–98; cf. Tornæus 1900 [1672], 26.
57 Mebius 2003, 136, 138.
58 For example, Paulaharju 1932.
59 Helskog 2004, 269–270.
60 Schanche 1995, 43.
61 Mulk 2000, 26.

associated with different places.[62] In more recent research, the connection between humans and natural elements has been described through the old concept of animism. Animism means providing plants, animals, and "lifeless" things, such as rocks, with interactive characteristics as a form of social interaction. For example, not all rocks were considered as alive, only those that reacted in a certain way.[63] Sieidis were examples of reacting rocks; they became lighter or moved to answer questions.[64] Such living creatures that interacted with humans could be endowed with characteristics such as sentience, a soul, mortality, the ability to grow, social behaviour, and morals. The difference between humans and what we would consider nonhumans was not fixed.[65]

Elina Helander-Renvall describes the animism that is a part of the Sámi worldview as an equal relationship between humans, animals, and spirits. There was a social relationship between humans and nonhumans that changed the space between nature and community into a social space. Humans were thus not separate from nature. According to Helander-Renvall, the Sámi do not consider themselves as separate from nature but as actually a part of it. Humans and other living creatures are connected with each other through their shared existence in the world. In the Sámi worldview, animals and all living creatures are seen as subjects, persons, and companions. Therefore the border between human and nonhuman could be very thin.[66]

Animism is related to a broader worldview in which spirits are everywhere, influence all parts of life, and allow people to communicate with them.[67] In more recent interpretations, animism is no longer seen as superstition that considers nonliving things as living, but as a way of interaction between humans and their environment.[68]

A worldview in which the relationship between humans, animals, and natural elements is seen as interactive has been called relational.[69] Where Inga-Maria Mulk states: "Allt levde och allt levande vördades,"[70] the relational worldview is better described by the idea that certain things that are considered nonliving according to the current view had characteristics that made them a part of the network of social interactions. Spirits, animals, and natural elements were defined as living according to how they reacted and were reacted to. The Sámi lived in a world in which the actors were not only humans, but also spirits, animals, and perhaps also special stones or other natural elements. A connection to nature was maintained not only with offerings, but also with general rules, for example, not boasting while out in nature. Just like conceptions of sieidis as gods or devices for communicating with gods had changed over the times, also the role of a sieidi as an actor or the dwelling site of a *háldi* could also be experienced in different ways across different times and regions.

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[62] Mebius 2003, 25.

[63] Scarre 2008, 210.

[64] Ervasti 1956 [1737], 36; Äimä 1903, 115; Itkonen 1948 II, 311.

[65] Descola 1996, 82.

[66] De Castro 2004, 481; Helander-Renvall 2008, 315–317, 330.

[67] Jordan 2008, 233, 236.

[68] Bird-David 1999.

[69] Viveiros de Castro 1998; Bird-David 1999; see also Ingold 2005, 43–52; Harvey 2006; Herva 2006; Ingold 2006; Puputti 2010b.

[70] Mulk 2000, 26. "Everything was alive and all living things were honoured."

1.2. Research history: from reminiscence to DNA analysis

In Lapland, the philosopher has an opportunity of studying among wandering tribes the first elements of social life; of society in its most ancient and primitive form.

Acerbi 1802: Travels through Sweden, Finland, and Lapland to the North Cape in the years 1798 and 1799, vol. II, p. 131

Attitudes toward ethnic Sámi religion have not always been similar to those described earlier. The ideologies and prevailing scientific paradigms of the times have affected researchers' views of the Sámi worldview.

Even though information on the Sámi, their culture, and religion has been actively collected since the 17th century, the earliest extensive sources in particular are impaired by a source-critical problem related to the circumstances of their collection. At the time, Sámi beliefs and culture were recorded by clerics who also carried out missionary work and conversions. The primary task of the clerics documenting ethnic Sámi religion was to convert the Sámi to Christianity, not to research the old religion. The information is coloured by the collector's own attitudes towards the Sámi and their religion. The missionary worker's own prejudices, cultural values, misjudgements, and misunderstandings have had an effect on the contents of the information.[71]

The accuracy of the information has depended not only on the reliability of the recipient but also of the provider of the information. Especially in matters related to religion, the informant might purposely provide clerics with wrong and misleading information; after all, they had come to eradicate the old religion. For example, a story about Gabriel Tuderus recounts that he "has been especially industrious and productive here in Kemi Lapland; not only has he completely removed and destroyed many Lappish (noaidi) drums, but he has also thoroughly eradicated several offering places in which the Lapps earlier prayed to their heathen gods and made offerings to their sieidis."[72] This kind of criminalization of the old faith certainly did not lay the most optimal groundwork for collecting information.

Another problem in the use of written sources is that in some cases, the writers had not even visited Lapland in person. Their descriptions were based on hearsay and the quoting of earlier sources, often with no reference to the original text. Even clerics who worked in Lapland often had only sporadic contact with the Sámi.[73]

References to a people interpreted as Sámi can be found already in sources dating from antiquity and the Iron Age and Early Middle Ages. Among others, peoples such as "fenni",[74] "phinnoi",[75] "skrithiphinoi"[76] and "screrefennae"[77] have been connected

[71] Comp. Rydving 1995.

[72] Andersson 1912, 104. Original Finnish text: "erityisellä wakawuudella, uutteruudella ja näppäryydellä on täällä Kemin Lapissa häwittänyt ja kokonaan poistanut ei ainoastaan monta Lapin (noita-)rumpua waan myöskin perin pohjin häwittänyt muutamia uhripaikkoja, joissa lappalaiset ennen palwelivat epäjumaliaan ja harjoittiwat seitojensa palwelusta."

[73] On the formation of written sources, see Rydving 1993; Rydving 1995.

[74] Tacitus 46.3.

[75] Ptolemaios II.11.19.

[76] Procopius vi.xv.16–25.

[77] Jordanes III.21–22.

with the ancestors of the Sámi.[78] However, the search for connections between ethnonyms and modern ethnic groups has been criticized.[79] It may be misleading to describe past ethnic groups in modern terms. In the case of the Sámi ancestors and sources from Classical antiquity, there is also a great geographical distance between the description and the people being described. In addition, the descriptions in these earliest possible sources are fragmentary and do not concentrate on religious traditions.

The central sources for my research, those in which the Sámi and their ethnic religion is described more extensively, were not created until the 17th century when information was more actively collected. At that time, clerics and missionary workers were obliged to collect information on Lapland. The aim was to debunk the rumours floating around during the Thirty Years' War, according to which the Swedes had won their battles with the help of "Lappish" witchcraft.[80] Therefore the writings did not want to place any special emphasis on ethnic Sámi religion and rituals. As a result of this collecting activity, Schefferus published his book *Lapponia* (1673), in which he combined the clerics' stories with sources from antiquity and the 16th century without ever personally visiting Lapland.[81] Contrary to its aim, the book bolstered the general opinion of the Sámi as witches, because the section on ethnic religion aroused the most interest abroad. In addition, this book, which described mainly the Western Sámi in Sweden, was seen as describing Sámi culture in its entirety.[82]

In the 18th century, the Sámi religion was the subject of writings by clerics who were influenced by the rationalist ideas of the Enlightenment, and they were not as hostile towards early religion as earlier writers. Pehr Fjellström, Pehr Högström, and Knud Leem showed greater understanding towards the Sámi religion and even learned the Sámi language.[83] The writings of clerics from the 17th and 18th centuries are the most important written sources about ethnic Sámi religion. However, they must be read in full consciousness of the attitudes and motives of the writers. The written sources are also subject to geographical and chronological restrictions. I mentioned above how *Lapponia*, which described the Western Sámi, was taken as a description of the entire Sámi culture. Already by the early 20th century, the idea was circulating that a written source describing one area cannot be generalized to cover other areas. Even so, the geographical origin of sources is often neglected in many studies.[84] Descriptions of ethnic Sámi religion were not collected from all areas (Figure 3). As the map shows, the sources concentrate on the regions of Inari, Kittilä, and Sodankylä in Finnish Lapland. Studying the map by municipality does not, however, tell the whole story. For example, no sacred places are known from the area of Saariselkä in Inari, which is probably due to the fact that this area is very scantily described in written sources, although there are descriptions from Lake Inarijärvi, north of this area, and Lake Sompiojärvi, south of it. From an archaeological viewpoint, it is also significant

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[78] E.g. Sergejeva 2000b, 156.
[79] Wallerström 2006; Hansen & Olsen 2007, 45–51; Ojala 2009, 83.
[80] Itkonen 1963b, 6–7.
[81] Rydving 1995, 19.
[82] Pulkkinen 2005, 192.
[83] Fossum 2006, 12–14.
[84] Rydving 2000, 29.

that the written sources describe a fairly late period in Sámi history. The culture and habits of the 17th and 18th centuries cannot be directly applied to the study of the Iron Age or Early Middle Ages.

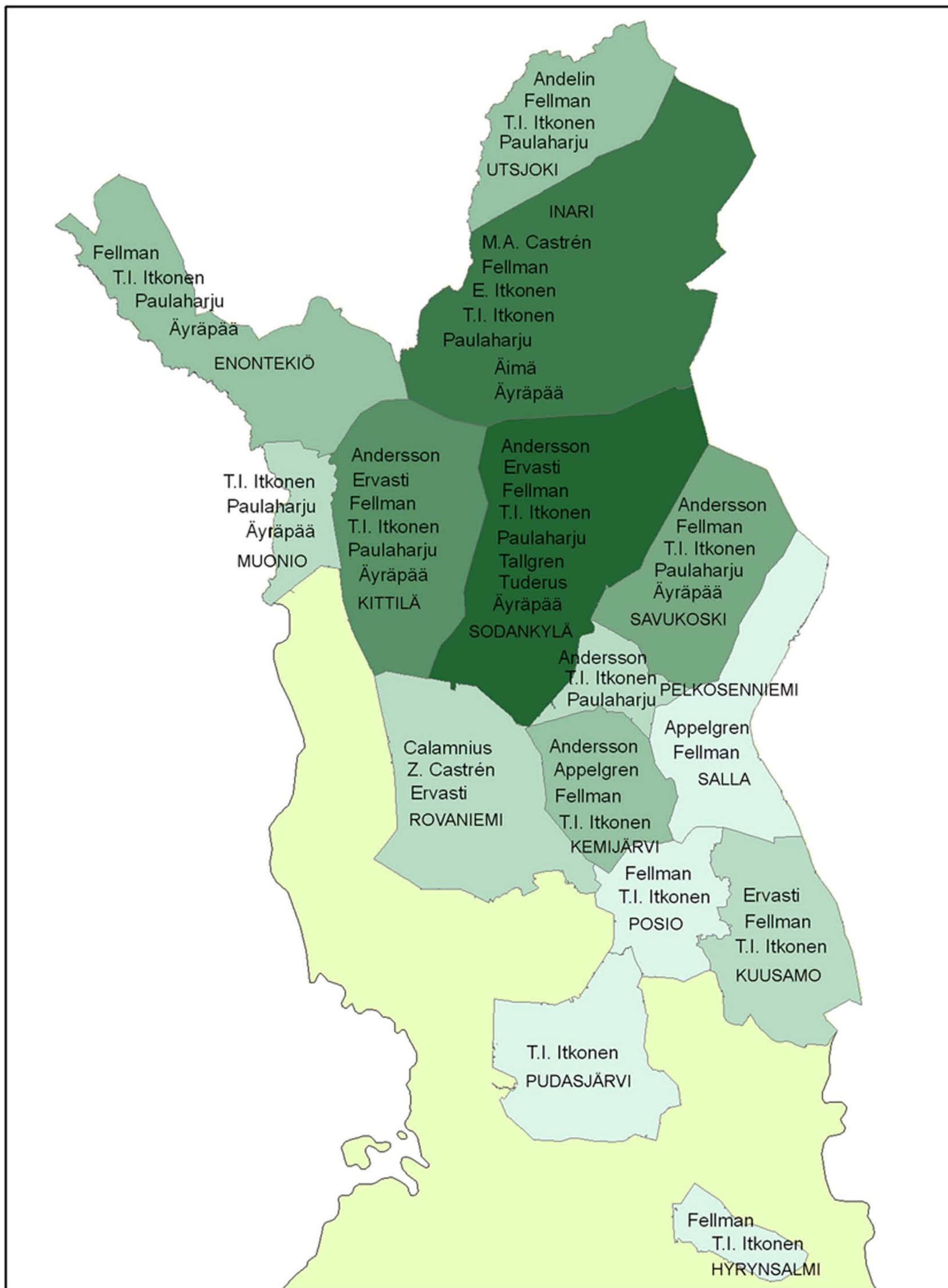

Figure 3. *Map of the sources describing sacred places in Finland by municipality. A darker colour represents a larger number of sources.*

In addition to clerics, 18th-century European travellers, such as Giuseppe Acerbi, have written about Lapland.[85] In travel stories, Lapland was often seen as an exotic and distant land. However, travelogues included few descriptions of ethnic religion.

The best-known writer describing 19th-century Lapland must be Lars Levi Læstadius. He was a churchman who worked as a cleric and parson mainly in Swedish Lapland. His book on Sámi mythology, *Fragmenter i lappska mythologien* (1845), has been considered as more critical than earlier research in the interpretation of ancient sources.[86] Læstadius' study on Sámi beliefs was completed already in 1845, but only published over a century later. Læstadius himself had a Sámi background, which can be considered to have advanced his understanding of Sámi culture. He also added elements of Sámi beliefs, such as ideas of gnomes, to his sermons.

Sources of special importance for this book are works that describe Lapland in the area of modern Finland. The earliest writings on Sámi research and description concentrated mainly on the Western Sámi and their religious tradition. The earliest writers describing Finland were Johannes Tornæus (early 17th century to 1681) and Gabriel Tuderus (1638–1705). Tornæus spoke Sámi and had lived in Lapland for 32 years before his work on the Sámi was completed. He can therefore be considered to be very well versed in Sámi culture. By the standards of his own times, Tornæus can be considered as a liberal and tolerant observer.[87] Tuderus, on the other hand, was a contradictory figure. Sometimes, like in the quote cited above, he is described as an oppressor of the Sámi and an ardent eradicator of the old religion, but in other sources, he is viewed as a true friend of at least those Sámi who converted to Christianity.[88] Other descriptions of the Sámi in the area of Finland were not written until the 19th and 20th centuries. Jacob Fellman's *Anteckningar under min vistelse i Lappmarken I–IV* (1906) is based on the writer's own observations during his years working as a cleric in Inari and Utsjoki from 1820 to 1831. Fellman documented plenty of material on Sámi religious tradition, beliefs, sacred places, stories, and yoiks.

Later sources on sacred places in the Finnish Sámi area include the works of schoolteacher Samuli Paulaharju, which are based on extensive fieldwork and interviews. Paulaharju writes about sacred places in many of his books, but concentrates more closely on the sieidi and its essence in the book *Seitoja ja seidan palvontaa [On sieidis and their worship]* (1932). Samuli Paulaharju had an enormous influence on Finnish sieidi studies. Of all the sieidis known in Finnish Lapland, 67% were described by Paulaharju, and 24% of the sieidis are mentioned only in Paulaharju's writings and have not been referred to in any other sources. Paulaharju's writings make it clear that even during his time, the traditions related to all sieidis were not certain. In addition, he describes a geographically limited area mainly in Northern Lapland. There are no sacred places known by Paulaharju in Kemijärvi, Kuusamo, Rovaniemi, and Salla.

[85] Acerbi 1802.
[86] Pentikäinen 1995, 42–45.
[87] Pulkkinen 2005, 416.
[88] Pulkkinen 2005, 418.

T. I. Itkonen wrote about Sámi beliefs and religious tradition, as well as sacred places, offering places, and sieidis, especially in his doctoral thesis *Heidnische Religion und späterer Aberglaube bei den Finnischen Lappen* (1946) and his work *Suomen lappalaiset II [The Finnish Lapps II]* (1948). Itkonen, who carried out extensive fieldwork, also relies on older sources, such as Fellman, in connection with the sacred places covered in his thesis.

Like sources describing sacred places, research literature too has always been a product of its times. The research of the first half of the 20th century is characterized by evolutionist influences. Edgar Reuterskiöld's work *De nordiska lapparnas religion* (1912) employs the evolutionist terminology of the times. According to Reuterskiöld, a sieidi was a concentration of the life force of a particular place, a location in which the animatistic power of nature was manifested. The later, animistic phase of the religion would then be characterized by associating a sieidi with personified, god-like features. Uno Harva (1915) and Rafael Karsten (1952) were also influenced by evolutionism. Harva associated the sieidi cult with ancestor worship. Karsten, onthe other hand, considered the sieidi cult as a manifestation of animism and fetishism.[89]

Ernst Manker's great work on sacred places, *Lapparnas heliga ställen* (1957), is one of the first studies of Sámi religious tradition in which sources, enquiries, interviews, and personal fieldwork are analysed systematically. This book concentrates especially on sacred places in the area of Sweden, and deals only cursorily with places in areas of Norway, Finland, and Russia. The fact that Manker did not personally visit many places but rather relied on informants forms a source-critical problem. As a result, he was even given information on places that did not actually exist.[90]

In the later part of the 20th century, attention was paid to regional and chronological changes in ethnic Sámi religion. In his book *The End of Drum-Time – Religious Change among the Lule Saami, 1670s–1740s* (1993), Håkan Rydving wrote about chronological change in ethnic Sámi religion, especially among the Lule Sámi. Rydving has emphasized that sources describing one area cannot be directly applied to other areas, rather there have been differences in beliefs in different parts of the Sámi region. At the same time, researchers still felt a need to create lists of Sámi sacred places. Attempts were made to bring the fragmented information in written sources between one set of covers per area. Offering places in the Varanger area have been studied by Ørnulv Vorren and Hans Kr. Eriksen in *Samiske offerplasser i Varanger* (1993). Vorren (1985) has also discussed the connections between offering places and ancient sites related to means of subsistence. Scandinavian research dating from the late 20th century saw Sámi offering places as a part of a broader cultural landscape that not only included ancient sites, but also stories, place names, and other traces of memory. Inga-Maria Mulk has connected offering places with the broader cultural landscape, and also paid attention to the significance of offering in relation to social change. With the help of offering finds, she has discussed questions relating to, for example, the fur trade or the social stability of a community.[91]

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[89] Bäckman & Hultkrantz 1985, 8; Pulkkinen 2005, 391–392.

[90] Fossum 2006, 126.

[91] Mulk 1996; Mulk 1997.

The themes of temporal scope, offerings, and means of subsistence have also repeated themselves in the research of the 21st century.[92] At the same time, an attempt has been made to introduce more concepts into the research in order to better understand ritual activity. Especially liminality and the relational worldview have been connected with Sámi beliefs.[93]

In the second half of the 20th century, the study of Sámi ritual places in Finland has been made more from the viewpoint of comparative religion than that of ethnology. Two master's theses have been produced on the sieidis of the Inari and Utsjoki areas, Maarit Mattila's *Seidoista ja seitojen funktioista [On sieidis and their functions]* in 1974 and Matti Aho's *Pyhä paikka saamelaisessa uskontoperinteessä [The sacred place in Sámi religious tradition]* in 1997. In addition, Juha Pentikäinen has studied Sámi mythology extensively. He has published, for example, the books *Saamelaiset pohjoisen kansan mytologia [The Sámi - The mythology of a Northern people]* (1995) and, together with Timo Miettinen, *Pyhän merkkejä kivess*ä *[Signs of the sacred in stone]* (2003).

Research carried out in Finland on Sámi sacred places has been fragmentary, and the role of archaeology, in particular, has been minor. The themes of the research have included, among others, the significance of sieidis as border markers, the identification of sieidis with phosphate analysis, and the possibility of sieidis located in the south.[94] In the area of the Paistunturi fell, one research subject has been the stratification of the Sámi cultural landscape, one level of which is formed by sacred places. That particular study represents a holistic view of the Sámi cultural landscape and its chronological layers.[95] In relation to the project mentioned above, Taarna Valtonen has also used spatial analysis for studying ancient Sámi sites.[96] However, no sacred places were included in that project. In recent years, methods from the natural sciences have also come into use in the study of sieidis: phosphate surveys of the soil and DNA analyses of the offered bones have been carried out.[97] However, Finnish scholarship has lacked a single work that would provide an overview of the archaeology of sacred places in Lapland. Written sources have mainly described an individual area (e.g. Paulaharju 1941: Sodankylä) or the ethnic Sámi religion in its entirety (e.g. Itkonen 1948 II). Sacred places have not been studied as part of a more extensive landscape context, which would be well enabled by spatial analysis. Approaching the primary sources of ethnic Sámi religion, that is, the sacred places themselves, from an archaeological viewpoint allows us to broaden the scope of research beyond the geographical and chronological restrictions set by written sources.

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[92] Schanche 2000; Hedman 2003; Mulk 2005; Fossum 2006; Mulk 2009; Zachrisson 2009.

[93] Mulk & Bayliss-Smith 2006; Mulk & Bayliss-Smith 2007; Lahelma 2008; Zachrisson 2009; Halinen 2010.

[94] Pentikäinen & Miettinen 2003; Viinanen 2003; Viinanen 2006; Viinanen 2007; Halinen 2006a; Koivisto 2008; Halinen 2010; Tolonen 2013.

[95] Manninen & Valtonen 2006.

[96] Valtonen 2006.

[97] Halinen 2006a; Heino 2010; Tolonen 2013.

1.3. Positioning or who is allowed to tell stories of the past

Der er én måde at förstå en anden kultur på. At leve den.
At flytte ind i den, at bede om at blive tålt som gæst, at lære sig sproget.
På et eller andet tidspunkt kommer så måske foståelsen.[98]

Peter Høeg 1992 [2010]: Frøken Smillas fornemmelse for sne, p. 192

Er jeg videnskabsmanden, iagttageren?
Er jeg den, som har fået chancen til at se livet delvis udefra?
Fra et udsigtspunkt af lige dele ensomhed og overblik?[99]

Peter Høeg 1992 [2010]: Frøken Smillas fornemmelse for sne, p. 233

As I started my research in the field of Sámi archaeology, I often came across the question, posed by various parties, of who is entitled to deal with these matters. Sámi research has long been carried out from outsiders' perspectives. Research originating from outside (*etic*) the culture studied has been considered as enabling new, fresh viewpoints, because it is not bound by intracultural traditions of interpretation. As late as the 1980s, the *unfamiliarity* of the research subject to the researcher was self-evidently a good thing.[100] At that time, etic research was seen as being more objective. Here, objectivity may be taken to mean *remaining uncommitted to the community's values, norms, and intentions*. On the other hand, the scientific community can also be conservative or even politically involved, and the researcher's being an outsider cannot automatically be associated with objectivity. Research originating from outside the culture studied has, however, long been considered as methodologically more reliable and the status of an outsider has been seen as furthering the understanding of cultural processes.[101]

The role of the researcher is emphasized in the research of indigenous peoples. The question of just whose voice is heard in the research has often been posed. The term *appropriation* has been used to signify a situation in which one person is speaking for another and using another's ideas and experiences for his or her own purposes.[102] Whether researchers come from inside or outside the culture being studied, they should always make sure whose mouth they are speaking with and which factors affect their interpretations. Self-reflection, where a researcher clarifies his or her relationship with the subject of research, is an important part of research, whether it takes place on paper or in the researcher's head. An objective researcher, such as I referred to above, is an illusion. The mere selection of the research subject is influenced by factors depending on the researcher's personality. The selection of a subject in itself implies assigning a value judgement.[103]

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[98] "There is one way to understand another culture. Living it. Move into it, ask to be tolerated as a guest, learn the language. At some point understanding may come." Peter Høeg 2005: Miss Smilla's Feeling for Snow, p. 169. Translated by F. David.

[99] "Am I the scientist, the observer? Am I the one who has been given the chance to get a glimpse of life from the outside? From a point of view made up of equal parts of loneliness and objectivity?" Peter Høeg 2005: Miss Smilla's Feeling for Snow, p. 205. Translated by F. David.

[100] Ruotsala 2002, 47; on the objectivity of etic research, see e.g. Siiriäinen 1996.

[101] Ruotsala 1998, 90.

[102] Ruotsala 1998, 94–95.

[103] Pekkala 2003, 93.

In the 1970s, voices were heard demanding research originating from within the community.[104] Intracultural (*emic*) research has been considered as benefiting from a better understanding of the subject matter. A member of the culture may have access to information that is not disclosed to outsiders. In my own research, this can be seen, for example, in connection with secret information on the locations of sieidis, which is not disclosed to people outside the community. In addition, a member of the culture understands cultural codes, which makes interpretation easier. Living within the culture also provides background information and the ability to understand intracommunity dynamics. In contrast with emic research, etic research has even been described as misrepresenting reality, because the researchers lack the skills to understand nuances. For example, the Sámi have not always recognized themselves in descriptions written by researchers who belong to the majority people.[105] Taken to extremes, this approach maintains that a culture can be understood only by someone who is born to it and has been enculturated in it.[106]

On the other hand, the problems of emic research have also been noted; a researcher who has grown up within the culture may not be able to view his or her position and relationship to the research clearly, because his or her mode of thinking originates from within the culture in question. Restricting interpretations to within a certain community may also decrease the diversity of viewpoints and create a biased picture of the subject of research.[107]

Since then, it has been pointed out that neither mode of research alone, whether etic or emic, can answer all questions. The right to carry out research cannot be granted to only one group of people. Dividing history into "our history" and "your history" robs research of the opportunity to present multiple interpretations. As Robert Kelly has put it, "You can't dig that pueblo because you're not Hopi; this is *my* history, that is *your* history. Such an approach will lead us nowhere, and destroys the value of diversity."[108] Both emic and etic viewpoints are needed. If research is tied to the researcher's ancestry, science is no longer free. Ethnicity would be monopolized if only those belonging to a certain ethnic group could carry out research.[109] Etic and emic interpretations both have their benefits and flaws. A diversity of knowledge could also be considered a useful approach.

Relating to my own research subject, I have heard it said that landscape studies are certainly interesting, but the Sámi and the Finns have different conceptions of landscape. My position as an outsider to the subject has thus been seen as a factor impeding my research. However, it should be kept in mind that an archaeologist always deals with a foreign culture. The thoughts and habits of modern people can never be projected directly into the past, whether those modern people be Finns or Sámi. Modern Sámi conceptions of the landscape are certainly different than those of

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[104] Ruotsala 1998, 96. A similar trend can be observed, for example, in Australia, in the research of Aborigines (Colley 2002, 61). In the 1970s, anthropology was divided into two major directions: intracultural and intercultural research (Sarmela 1984, 38).

[105] Suojanen 1997, 150–151; Ruotsala 1998; Ruotsala 2002, 47; Heikkilä 2006, 73–75.

[106] Sarmela 1984, 37–38.

[107] Ruotsala 1998, 99; Heikkilä 2006, 80.

[108] Kelly 2003, vii.

[109] Thuen 1995, xi–xii.

the people who lived in the area in prehistoric times, or even a century ago. We could even go so far as to say that every individual's conception of landscape is unique. In the study of sacred places, the long temporal continuum of their use plays its own part in the change of conceptions and ideas. It would be most fruitful to be able to compare chronological changes and differences.

Even though archaeologists are always on foreign ground when studying cultures, there *are* similarities between modern and past cultures. A past culture may not be directly connected to a certain people. However, it may be thought that certain peoples and individuals have closer cultural ties to the past of a certain area than others. Even though archaeologists usually study past cultures, they nonetheless work within a living community. The people whose ancestors are studied by archaeologists may still be alive.[110] On the other hand, archaeologists may study peoples with a cultural affiliation[111] that reaches deep into the past. These people have a right of ownership to their past. They have their own interpretations of the past that are not subject to archaeological approval. R. F. Langford has criticized archaeological interpretations because they, like other scientific interpretations, are culturally biased and represent only a white, Western way of dealing with information. Elevating the scientific mode of thinking above other modes is, according to Langford, one form of control.[112]

Due to the academic weight of archaeological interpretation, it is often authoritarian and often accepted as correct. But is archaeological information the only kind of correct information? History can be viewed through different lenses, with different eyes, which opens up different interpretations. History can be defined from various viewpoints: individuals, families, and groups can all have different experiences of what really happened. Additionally, the remains of the past can have a different kind of mental and emotional significance to different people.[113] Michael Shanks and Christopher Tilley have recommended research that recognizes the fact that various ethnic, cultural, social, and political viewpoints actively create not only one but *multiple* pasts. This requires of archaeologists the ability and willingness to accept that there is not only one way of knowing about the past.[114] Archaeological research carries the baggage of a Eurocentric, scientific worldview imbued with the notion that by choosing the "best" of several competing ideas, we can always come closer to a more accurate interpretation of the past.[115] I would describe archaeological information as a data-based, well justified story. By *story* I do not mean something fictional or untrue, but mean to emphasize the fact that in addition to presenting data, archaeologists must attempt to say something about the life and culture of past people, to make the data seem alive. However, a more accurate interpretation of the past might

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[110] Meskell 2003, 167.

[111] Cultural affiliation means a common group identity that can justifiably be traced from the current group to an identified historical or prehistoric group (http://www.nps.gov/history/nagpra/TRAINING/Cultural_Affiliation.pdf). I would also see a need for a broader definition, the descendant community. This means a non-uniform, self-identifying group, whose members, no matter what their backgrounds, identify with a certain place or past through common traditions, proximity, or collective memories (Nicholas & Hollowell 2007, 1).

[112] Langford 1983, 2.

[113] McDavid 2003, 50–62.

[114] Shanks & Tilley 1994 [1987], 11, 245; Wylie 2000, viii; Zimmerman 2001; Meskell 2009.

[115] Nicholas & Hollowell 2007, 5.

not necessarily be reached through one single archaeological interpretation that is considered correct, but rather by multiple interpretations by different researchers and other information about the past together can show various aspects of the past. Different viewpoints onto the past can be equally true.

The post-processualists have stressed that one must take an individual's own worldview into account as a factor that influences interpretations. The concept of cultural relativism includes the idea that we always view things through certain mental models, our own personal ones and those formed within our own culture.[116] Everything from the selection of research subject to the interpretations we present is viewed from within our own cultural context. Our interpretations are influenced by the conceptual framework and ethical, moral, and ideological values of our own community, as well as the researcher's own life experience and even physical attributes.[117] In archaeological research, this means that the past is formed by the present. Archaeology is not generated in a vacuum, and we researchers are inevitably influenced by the social and political circumstances that surround us.[118] In Sámi archaeology, this has been observed, for example, in the question of who should administer the ancient sites in the Sámi area and how old a site has to be in order to be "Sámi". In my own research, the questions of ownership of ancient sites are less important than my views – which are partly personal and partly based on a theoretical background – of the nature of religious activity and the role of the sacred in people's lives. Cornelius Holtorf emphasizes the links between academic interpretations and the present, "academic knowledge is constructed in the present and not directly related to past realities, but follows fashions and changes according to larger political, ideological and academic trends."[119] We tell stories of the past from the viewpoint of the present.

Instead of one correct past, researchers also create multiple pasts[120] depending on their theoretical approach, cultural background, and personal history. I agree with Holtorf in that not all interpretations are equally justified and valid.[121] In the realm of science, the interpretations supported by the best arguments naturally carry the most weight. As descriptions of the past, however, they are not necessarily the only correct interpretations and perhaps not even the ones closest to the truth.[122] If we accept only one correct interpretation, we lose all other possible ways of understanding past times.[123] Multivocal research accepts different ways of interpreting the past. Alternative worldviews and histories are seen as valid ways of providing meaning.[124] Archaeology adds a new thread to the tapestry of history. We tell a story[125] that may not be the only correct one but is still a worthwhile viewpoint onto the past.

116 Shanks & Tilley 1994 [1987].
117 Ruotsala 2002, 56.
118 Johnson 1999, 175.
119 Holtorf 2005a, 546.
120 For example, Holtorf 2005a; Ransley 2007.
121 Holtorf 2005a, 549; also Nicholas & Hollowell 2007, 15 on the validity of knowledge.
122 Cf. Okkonen 2009, 277.
123 Ransley 2007, 234.
124 Nicholas & Hollowell 2007, 4–5.
125 E.g. Denison 1997; Barker 2006, 80.

In addition to archaeological knowledge, meaning can be provided also by local knowledge, values, and beliefs.[126]

As an example of alternative ways of knowing, let us take the oral tradition of Native Americans. It and archaeology represent two separate but partly overlapping ways of knowing the past. Native American oral tradition contains unquestionably real history, which is the same history studied by archaeologists. Both folklore and archaeology represent history as palimpsest. Oral tradition contains the cultural knowledge of many generations that has acquired several levels of meaning. Likewise, the stratigraphy of artefacts and units at archaeological sites functions as a complex archive of ancient human activity. Both require interpreting the structures in the source material. Oral tradition and scientific knowledge are both valid in their own cultural contexts. Scientific knowledge is not automatically the only correct interpretation of the past. It is only another way to know the past.[127]

1.4. Is there an area forbidden to researchers?

Researchers make choices not only in relation to their own roles as researchers, but also through their research subjects. As I mentioned earlier, the mere act of choosing a subject is a value judgement. Researchers often approach their work with the attitude that nothing human should be alien to the scientist. Researchers should be able to address any subject.[128] However, there are subjects and places that are associated with values independent of science. In carrying out my own research, I have thought about the nature of a sacred place as a research subject.

A sacred place is defined as something diverging from the profane.[129] Its use may be regulated by various prohibitions and restrictions. For example, the Australian Aborigines have places that must not be approached because they are considered sacred, powerful, and dangerous. In such a case, archaeologists may insult Aborigines merely by walking in the area. Excavations, in which the ground is dug up and covered objects revealed, are especially difficult.[130]

Finds from excavations certainly present their own set of problems. Finds from sacred places are strongly related to their contexts.[131] For this reason, bones from sieidi sites excavated in Finland (from 2006 to 2010) have been returned to the sieidi after they have been analysed by an osteologist and the necessary datings and DNA analyses have been carried out.[132] On the other hand, researchers also have a responsibility towards other researchers. By documenting the bones, we can ensure that the validity of the analysis can be checked afterwards, even though the material itself is no longer accessible to future researchers.

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[126] Ferguson *et al.* 1995.

[127] Anyon *et al.* 2000, 62–64. The idea of using oral tradition together with archaeology to represent the past and the concept of multiple ways of knowing has also been criticized, see e.g. Mason 2000.

[128] Pietarinen 1991, 72.

[129] On the definition of sacredness, see Chapter 3.2.

[130] Colley 2002, 75.

[131] For example, the Zuni, a Pueblo people, demand the return of their sacred objects, the *Ahayu:ta*, from museums to their sacred places, because they believe that disturbances in the world are due to the *Ahayu:ta* being removed from their rightful place (Ladd 2001).

[132] Äikäs & Núñez 2012.

Building a relationship of trust between local people and researchers is also important for obtaining information. A large amount of information related to sieidis can be assumed to have been lost because it was collected by clerics who were seen as eradicators of the old faith. Furthermore, esoteric knowledge is not necessarily revealed to an outside researcher. In Australia, a team studying the history of the *waanyi* women made an agreement with the locals not to publish information related to sacred places even if it was acquired during the research.[133] Similarly, during the cultural environment survey in Lapland, previously unknown sieidis were not mapped, because their locations were considered as secret knowledge.[134] In my work, I aim to respect the secret knowledge related to sacred places by using source material consisting only of public places mentioned in written sources or archaeological reports. In addition to sacred places, secret knowledge may deal with, for example, medicinal plants,[135] folklore related to places, or archaeological sites. Methods of cartography and spatial analysis can be used to fudge the accurate location data or make it subject to permission.[136] The researcher's responsibility is not only to disseminate information, but also to act respectfully towards the providers of the information.

In the worst case, archaeologists are seen by local people only as takers of knowledge. Along with postcolonialist critique, demands have focused on the "ownership" of the research results, that is, the production of useful information that benefits the research subjects and returning the research results to the local community. Reciprocity in research includes producing data in a format that is familiar also to the locals and benefits them. Scientific colonialism means not returning information produced by researchers to the local people and allowing them to benefit from it.[137] Archaeologists are responsible for producing data on the research also for local parties. In connection with this research, the returning of information was carried out by informing primarily the local media of the excavations. Also the results of the project will be presented to local parties at public seminars.

1.5. Summary

The sacred landscape of the Sámi includes many phenomena from sacred fells to offerings given at dwelling sites and special wooden or stone offering places, sieidis. Offering at sieidis was reciprocal communication with the hereafter. Ethnic Sámi religion has been described from the 17th century particularly from the viewpoint of clerics. The early descriptions were often coloured by a negative attitude towards traditions considered as heathen. In the 20th century, Sámi beliefs have been described, among others, from the viewpoints of ethnography, comparative religion, and archaeology. In recent decades, emphasis has shifted from the research of religion as a singular phenomenon to the understanding of connections between religion, means of subsistence, and social change, and the conception of the stratigraphy of the cultural landscape. In addition, in the research of indigenous peoples, more commonly raised questions now include how a researcher's background guides the research and whether it is permissible to study everything.

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133 Smith *et al.* 2003.
134 Magga 2007b, 21.
135 Rambaldi *et al*. 2007, 120.
136 Harmsworth 1998.
137 Kupiainen 1997; Nicholas & Hollowell 2007.