

2. THE RESEARCH MATERIAL FROM UNDER ROCKS AND ATOP FELLS

Lake Nitsijärvi in Inari (29), July 2009

A sign directs motorists from the Sevettijärvi road to a narrow sandy track. On the bank of the River Koskikaltiojoki there is a wider space for parking cars, but there are no other signposts. Paulaharju has described the sieidi on the shore of Lake Nitsijärvi as a very ugly cracked rock “on the shore of Nitshijäyri at the mouth of the Kuoshkuljoki River.”¹³⁸ An old survey report states that the sieidi is formed by two adjacent rocks, about 1.5 m high, between which there is a crack.¹³⁹ We disperse on the banks of the river to look for the sieidi. There are plenty of larger and smaller rocks. Many of them have holes that could have been used for depositing offerings. (As evidence of this, we later find a geocache in a hole in one of the rocks.) None of the rocks seems to stand out from the others. Finally, however, our peering into holes in stones is rewarded. Right on the bank of the river there is a large stone that has split in several places into rectangular blocks with crevices between them. In one of the crevices, we can see the white gleam of the lower jawbone of a reindeer. The stone in question is, however, clearly in one piece, although cracked, not two stones leaning on each other. In addition, it is directly on the riverbank and not 20 metres away, as stated in the survey report. We then spread out to check the terrain farther from the riverbank, and right next to the road we find the pair of stones described in the report, with several bones in the hollow between the stones. We start to measure test pits near the stones to find out which, if not both, of the stones has been used as a sieidi, the cracked stone on the riverbank or the pair of stones next to the road. Only archaeological excavations together with samples and analyses can shed more light on the question of the offering activities that have taken place here.

¹³⁸ Paulaharju 1932, 35. Original Finnish text: “Nitshijäyrin rannalla Kuoshkuljoen suussa.”

¹³⁹ Torvinen 1983.

2.1. Outlining the material

In the study of Sámi sacred places, the source material naturally consists of written sources describing Sámi beliefs, as well as the sacred places themselves. According to Håkan Rydving, the existing primary sources of Sámi religion are not only in oral form. They include, for example, drums and sacred places. He considers manuscripts by missionaries and other written sources from the mission period as secondary sources.¹⁴⁰ My own primary material consists of sieidis and other known Sámi sacred places within the area of modern Finland. Even though national borders are an artificial and fairly recent phenomenon in the context of Sámi culture, they also delineate the area from which material is freely available. Most especially in connection with the elevation model required for spatial analyses, the material available for my research is restricted to the area of Finland. This broad area guarantees enough material for landscape analyses. The extensive temporal and spatial scale enables comparisons both at the regional level and at the level of studying changes that took place in the use of offering places.

In the coming chapters, I discuss the sacred landscape of the Sámi and concentrate especially on the category of offering places. Cultic places lie outside the scope of this study, but the material includes sacred places that are not necessarily associated with ritual activities. Spatial analyses take into account only offering places that are permanent features of the landscape, even though it is known that offerings also took place at dwelling sites and portable sieidis.¹⁴¹ In the Sámi worldview, however, offerings taking place in the *goahti* played an especially significant role. The *goahti* was the centre of the world that moved with the annual migration. The rest of the world was left outside the dynamic centre point.¹⁴² My own work concentrates on the sacred geography of this more permanent world. As a meeting point between these two worlds, in Chapter 5.3 of my book I discuss the connection between ritual places and settlement sites. *Keripää* (knobbed pole) places, also known as fish sieidis, are also left outside the scope of this study, because they are considered to be connected with the peasant tradition and thus exist in a different cultural context.¹⁴³

My material is formed of a database covering the sacred places, created on the basis of literature, fieldwork, and the Register over Ancient Sites kept by the National Board of Antiquities. The database contains 107 objects for which the location and feature data listed in Table 2 have been collected. However, not all feature data could be collected for every place, because the data was either not recorded in the sources or could not be measured in the field due to the destruction of the offering place. In addition to the information in the database, more detailed place descriptions of the sacred places have been recorded (Appendix I).

¹⁴⁰ Rydving 2000, fig. 1.

¹⁴¹ E.g. Paulaharju 1962 [1922], 144.

¹⁴² Rydving 1993, 100; Rydving 2009, personal communication.

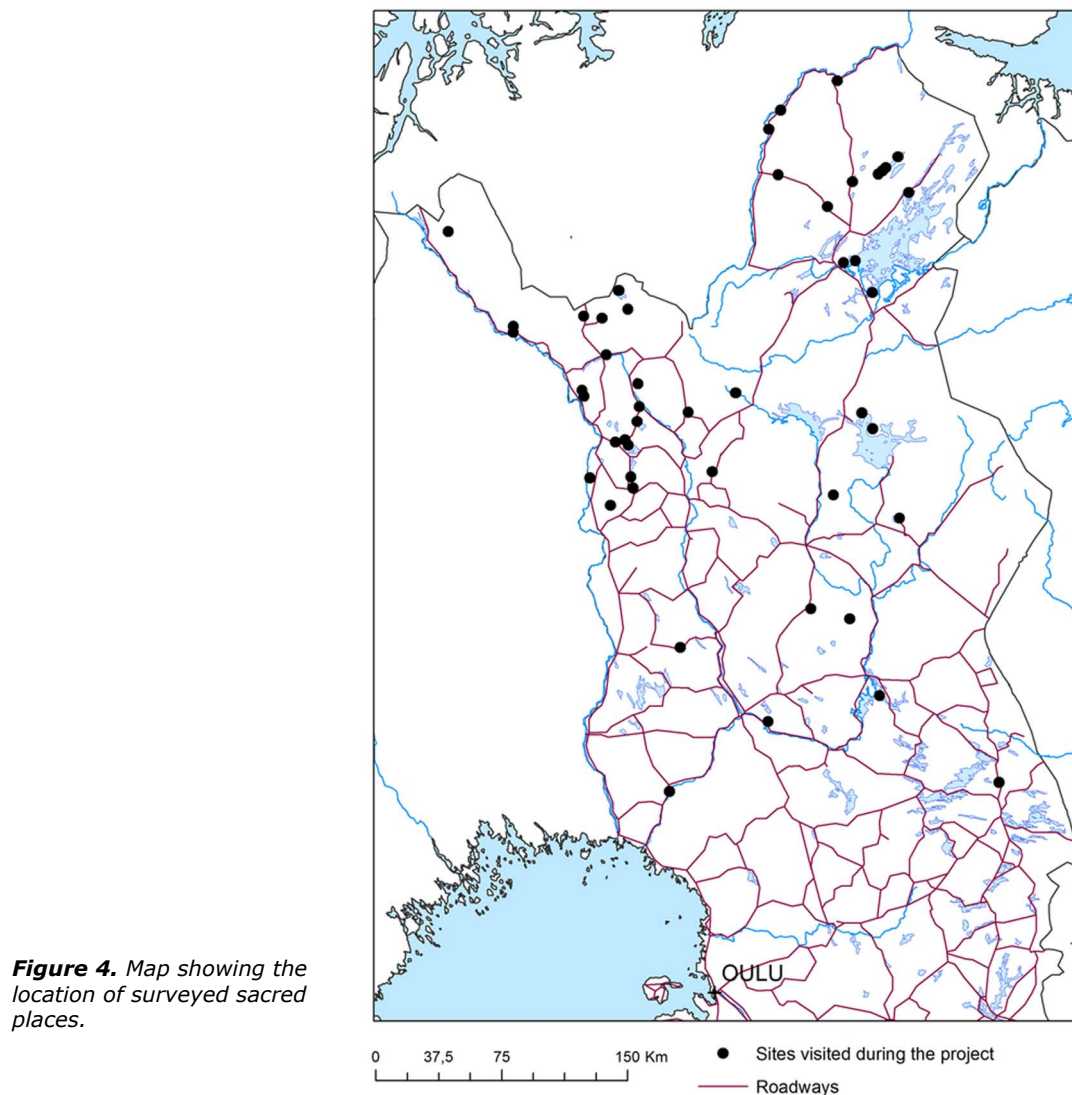
¹⁴³ Kotivuori 2003, 26.

Table 2. *The structure of the database.*

Column identifier	Contents
ID	Running number
PAIKKA	The name of the place, e.g. Seitalompolo, Näkkälä
KUNTA	The municipality: Enontekiö, Hyrynsalmi, Inari, Kemijärvi, Kittilä, Kuusamo, Muonio, Pelkosenniemi, Pello, Posio, Rovaniemi, Salla, Savukoski, Sodankylä, Utsjoki
LUONNE	The character of the place: sacred place, sieidi, offering place
TYYPPI	The place type: ridge, lake, hole in the rock, rock formation, cairn, boulder, large flat stone, pond, spring, headland, brook, tree, raised stone, island, fell, hill, carved wood
LUOTETTAVUUS	Reliability: 1.0–3.7
X	KKJ, uniform coordinates
Y	KKJ, uniform coordinates
Z	m asl
VESISTÖ	Relation to waterways: none, lake, river, pond, spring, brook
ETÄISYYS (arvio)	Estimated distance in metres from water
MAISEMA	Landscape type: river, lake, hillock, forest, headland, smaller waterway, island, fell, hill
SÄILYNEISYYS	State of preservation: complete, disappeared, extensive, broken, unsurveyed, destroyed
KOKO (m)	Height
TOPOGRAFIA	Topography: on a hilltop, on a hilltop with visibility to one direction, on a hilltop with panoramic visibility, on a shore, at the foot of a hill, on a slope, on flat land
ÄÄNET	Soundscape: silence, rapids, water
TURISMI	Tourism: no, yes, other specific definition
ANTROPOMORFIA	Anthropomorphism: no, yes
POIKKEAVA MUOTO	Atypical shape: no, yes
POIKKEAVA VÄRI	Atypical colour: no, yes
LÄHISTÖLLÄ KIVIÄ	Rocks nearby: no, yes
KOLIKOITA	Coins: no, yes
MITÄ UHRATTU (kirj. lähteet)	Offerings (from written sources): fish, fowl, wild reindeer, domesticated reindeer
LUULÖYDÖT	Bone finds: fish, bear, sheep, fowl, reindeer
KÄYTTÄJÄT	Users: public, community, private
NAISJUMALUUS	Female deity: no, yes
NAISILLE	Use by women: no information, forbidden, allowed
TARKASTETTU	Inspected: no, yes
VARHAISIN INVENTOINTI	First surveyed: year
KAIVAUUS VUONNA	Excavated: year

While writing my thesis, I personally surveyed 49 sacred places included in the database (Figure 4) either in connection with excavations or inspection visits. In addition, I visited three places that were left outside the source material because they did not fulfil the criteria for a sacred place¹⁴⁴ and four places that were added to the material after analyses. The places chosen for inspection were those where offering activities could be mapped at an accuracy of even one square kilometre.

¹⁴⁴ See Chapter 2.3 and Appendix I.



The places that were left outside the survey were either those located so far away from roads that there was no time to visit them during the fieldwork period or a part of those located on islands that could not be visited because a boat was not available. The surveyed places concentrated slightly in the Muonio area, where sacred places are located within easy reach of transport. This causes an overrepresentation in the amount of sacred places interpreted as reliable in the Muonio area (see Chapter 2.3). As the work progressed, I aimed to visit places that were as different as possible and were located in different parts of the research area. In connection with inspection visits, I could consistently collect the kind of data on sacred places that had not been recorded in earlier reports. In addition, I visited 13 places that have not been previously surveyed by an archaeologist. The precise location of offering activities could not be defined at all these places, but observations on the landscape could be carried out on site. Visits to sacred places helped me to form a picture of the diverse nature of offering places and to combine experiential data with spatial data.

However, the data collected in the database by means of fieldwork and written sources cannot be considered as fully comprehensive, because in the case of some sacred places, information is absolutely lost to researchers. As I mentioned earlier, the period when information on sacred places was collected was fairly late in relation

to the long period of their use, which has continued at least from the Iron Age, if not earlier, all the way to the 20th century and even up to today. During this long period, the places considered as sacred may have changed. Some of them fell out of use and others were destroyed, while new sacred places were created. The places were also different in character; they were used by different groups, some by larger groups of people and others perhaps by only one person. There has also been a significant number of sieidis. Written sources mention that each household had its own sieidi, and some people have visited several sieidis.¹⁴⁵

All of these places have certainly not been simultaneously in use at the time the information was collected. Because of this, the collected material represents only the situation at a given moment, and it is certain that not even all the places in use at that time were recorded. In addition, places have been selected for reports and the register over ancient sites by varying criteria. Some surveyors have reported as sieidis places that are known only on the basis of one informant's statement and which show external signs of being recent. Some, on the other hand, have surveyed only places mentioned in written sources. In Figure 5, I present the proportion of sacred places in the register over ancient sites in relation to the sacred places that make up my research material. Some of the places mentioned in the written sources have been included in my material but not in the register over ancient sites because either the offering place there has been destroyed or the sacred place is very extensive. In such cases, the place cannot be defined as an ancient site, but it may provide enough information for spatial analysis.

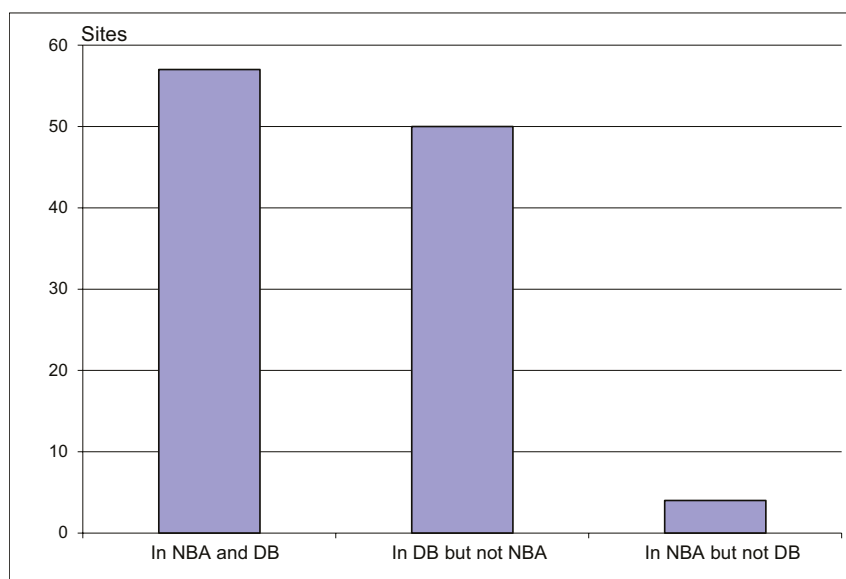


Figure 5.
The sacred places in the register of the National Board of Antiquities (NBA) and the database (DB). The places in the database are associated with written or oral traditions.

The analyses in to my thesis date to August 2009. Since that date, some updates have been made to the appendix of sacred places found at the end of this book. These updates are, however, minor, and they in fact support the interpretations made on the basis of the rest of the material.

¹⁴⁵ Tornæus 1900 [1672], 26; Collinder 1953, 172.

The southern border of the research area is drawn on the basis of sacred places mentioned in written sources, the southernmost of which is located in Hyrynsalmi.¹⁴⁶ Even though Sámi people have lived even further south in Finland,¹⁴⁷ there is no clear information on ritual ancient sites that could be unquestionably associated with them.¹⁴⁸ Furthermore, stones found in southern Finland have sometimes been considered as sieidis, mainly due to their anthropomorphic shape.¹⁴⁹ A particular shape cannot, however, be considered as sufficient evidence for the sacredness of a stone. Later in this book, I return to the question of identifying a sacred place.

2.2. The classification of sacred places

The stones weren't shaped. They weren't even positioned in any particularly significant way. There wasn't any of that stuff about the sun striking the right stone at dawn on the right day. Someone had just dragged eight red rocks into a rough circle.

Terry Pratchett 1993: Lords and Ladies, p. 38

As source material, sacred places are very diverse. Many different classifications have been proposed for sacred places, especially for offering places. The classifications have been based, for example, on the means of subsistence associated with the offering places, the size of the group using them, and the nature of the offering place. On the basis of means of subsistence, sieidis in particular have been classified into those related to fish, domesticated reindeer, and wild reindeer. It is more difficult to glean information from written sources on the sizes of the groups using offering places, but some places were used by individuals, whereas others were used by the whole community over a more extensive area.¹⁵⁰

Ørnulv Vorren and Hans Kr. Eriksen, among others, have categorized sacred places based on their physical characteristics. They divide offering places into six distinct groups: sacred fell, rock formation, stone, cave, crevice, and circular offering place.¹⁵¹ Christian Carpelan, on the other hand, has divided sacred places into three groups based on their external characteristics: landscape features, natural objects, and structures. The first group is represented by, for example, mountains, rock formations, headlands, islands, and lakes, the second by boulders, clearly outlined smallish rock outcrops, and springs, and the third by carved tree stumps, wooden poles, erected stones, and stones set on top of each other.¹⁵² I would also add hills and ridges to the group of landscape features. Natural objects also include sacred trees, such as the offering pine still standing at Markkina in Enontekiö. Paulaharju also mentions a sieidi spruce located at Kitisenjoki.¹⁵³ Sometimes a human figure would be carved in the wood.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁶ Itkonen 1946, 36; cf. Ervasti 1956 [1737], 51.

¹⁴⁷ Aikio 2004, 28.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Lehtola V-P 2008, 13–14.

¹⁴⁹ Pentikäinen & Miettinen 2003, 56–59; cf. Koivisto 2008.

¹⁵⁰ Rydving 1993, 97–98.

¹⁵¹ Vorren & Eriksen 1993, 29.

¹⁵² Carpelan 2003, 77–78.

¹⁵³ Paulaharju 1932, 51.

¹⁵⁴ Bergman *et al.* 2008, 16.

For the Sámi, sacredness can thus be associated with the natural environment either as it is or when modified by humans. Some sacred places consist of structures, but apart from them, typical sacred places are unworked in any way. Examples of structures worked by humans could include stones set on top of each other forming a human figure at Keivitsa in Sodankylä and on an unidentified island in Lake Inarijärvi.¹⁵⁵ Sometimes stones have also been erected. An anthropomorphic shape has been considered as typical of landscape features and natural objects, such as rock formations and boulders. However, they were left in their original state and no attempts were made to modify them. To paraphrase Manker, the Sámi let their gods choose their own shapes.¹⁵⁶

Figure 6 shows how the research material is divided into various types of sacred places. Sieidi stones are the dominant group. The total number of sacred fells and hills is less than half of the number of sieidi stones.¹⁵⁷ The other groups are more or less evenly divided. Some types are represented by only one place. These include brooks (Pasmárova, Enontekiö) and ponds (Seitalampi, Inari). However, the division of offering places into groups is not entirely unproblematic.¹⁵⁸ Sometimes it is difficult to make a distinction between whether the object considered as sacred is an individual stone or the broader area in which the stone is located. This problem is heightened especially when sieidi stones are located on islands, headlands, fells, or hills, whose names refer to sacredness. For example, there is an island named Ukko in Lake Ukonjärvi in Inari. The island's name refers to a deity, and thus the entire island could be considered as sacred in some way. On the other hand, in an intensive survey in the summer of 2007, bone finds enabled the surveyors to localize offering activities to a stone situated in the lower part of the island.¹⁵⁹ Sometimes a sacred place could, however, function as a more extensive offering area, such as the island of Ukonsaari in Lake Inarijärvi.¹⁶⁰ In this case, the distribution of finds over different parts of the island indicates that the entire island was considered as sacred.¹⁶¹

What, then, was the relationship between sacred place and offering place? In toponyms, sacred (*bassi/basse-*) often refers to a larger area, such as a fell, but a sieidi could also have given its name to a broader landscape feature. According to Paulaharju, an entire fell could become sacred if it contained a place where offerings were made.¹⁶² Itkonen also states that the place where a sieidi was located, such as a fell or hill, was called sacred.¹⁶³ In this case, the name of the natural element in question may refer to a sieidi, such as the names Seitasaari [Sieidi Island] and Seitajärvi [Sieidi Lake]. The name probably indicated that a sieidi was located there, not that the entire island or lake was a sieidi.¹⁶⁴ The etymological dictionary of Finnish

¹⁵⁵ Castrén 1853, 60; Tallgren 1910, 36; cf. Äimä 1903, 114.

¹⁵⁶ Manker 1957, 306; Mulk 1996, 52; Bradley 2000, 6.

¹⁵⁷ Fells and hills, as well as lakes, are defined as unreliable, which is mainly due to the lack of sufficient precision in associating sacredness with a very large area (see Chapter 2.3.).

¹⁵⁸ On the problems of classification, see Äikäs 2011.

¹⁵⁹ Harlin & Ojanlatva 2008.

¹⁶⁰ Äimä 1903, 114.

¹⁶¹ Okkonen 2007b.

¹⁶² Paulaharju 1932, 8.

¹⁶³ Itkonen 1948 II, 310; cf. Holmberg 1915, 31.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Kivikoski 1934, 61.

defines a sieidi (*seita*) as “a stone, cliff, island, hill, or fell (more rarely, a wooden statue or image) of unusual shape, venerated and worshipped by the Lapps.”¹⁶⁵ Personally, I would rather consider a stone or wooden object and a rock formation as a sieidi, and the island, hill, or fell on which the sieidi is located as a sacred place. M. A. Castrén reports that the location of a sieidi was considered as sacred even when the sieidi itself was destroyed.¹⁶⁶ On the other hand, not all sacred fells contained a specific offering place. The fell itself may have been venerated.¹⁶⁷ However, making a distinction between a sacred place and a sieidi is not always unproblematic, as in the case of Ukonsaari mentioned above.

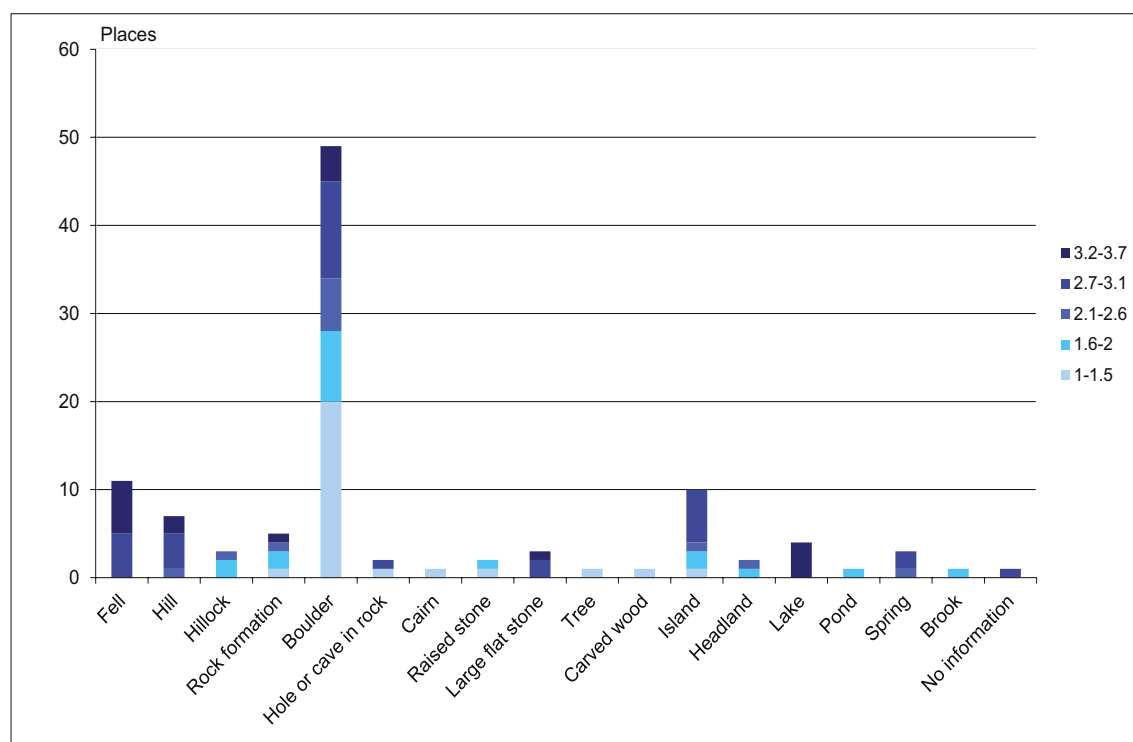


Figure 6. The distribution of sacred places according to type in a semantic order. Each place may belong only to a single type in the chart. (On the principles used to determine reliability values, which are presented by means of colour, see Chapter 2.3.)

Not all sacred places, then, were offering places.¹⁶⁸ A place could be sacred even though no ritual or other religious activities were associated with it. Nonetheless, through taboos and values, a sacred place was still a part of the religious worldview. I use the term *offering place* to describe activities that took place at sieidis. Descriptions in written sources and archaeological material are considered as evidence of offering activities. The term *offering place*, which is also commonly used in Sweden and Norway (*offerplats*, *offerplass*), is in my opinion more suitable for describing this aspect of ethnic Sámi religion than *sacrificial place*. As I mentioned earlier, offering has taken many forms, including killing animals and “giving” animal parts to sieidis, as well as the various offerings of objects and foodstuffs that could have been left

¹⁶⁵ “...poikkeuksellisen muotoinen kivi, kallioseinä, saari, vaara t. tunturi (harv. puupatsas t. -kuva), jota lappalaiset ovat kunnioittaneet ja palvoneet.” Itkonen & Joki 1979, 991.

¹⁶⁶ Castrén 1853, 123; cf. Manker 1957, 83.

¹⁶⁷ Vorren 1987, 95–96.

¹⁶⁸ Rydving & Kristoffersson 1993, 197; Myrvoll 2008, 10.

there whole. The term *sacrifice* has usually been considered to refer to activities that include destroying or killing (e.g. Insoll 2011), whereas offering means giving. In ethnic Sámi religion, both forms of ritual activities are present; in the case of destructive ritual activity, I use the term *sacrificial offering*. Other terms have also been used, including *place of worship*, *cultic place*, and *ritual place*. The term *place of worship* (in Finnish *palvospaikka*, *palvontapaikka*, *palveluspaikka*) is often used in older sources.¹⁶⁹ However, it contains nuances of worshipping an object in itself, whereas offering can also be a question of communication or of reciprocal gift exchange, as I mentioned earlier. Furthermore, the term *cultic place* contains unwanted nuances through the term *cult*. Like Timothy Insoll, I too consider the term *cult* to be negatively loaded, because it carries connotations of marginal and slightly dubious activities that do not entirely fulfil the criteria of a religion.¹⁷⁰ The concepts of cultic place and ritual place are both also associated with the problem of how to define activities. Offerings as well as other religious activities can take place at a cultic or ritual place, whereas ritual offerings are central for an offering place.¹⁷¹ I use the term *cultic place* without its negative connotation to make a distinction between offering places and those places where other ritual activities occurred.

Sacred Sámi places also include so-called *sáiva* lakes. The meaning of *sáiva* lakes has varied in different Sámi areas. In the west, *sáiva* lakes were associated with fells or mountains, but especially in the traditions of Finnish and Swedish areas, a *sáiva* lake referred to a lake with a double bottom. The double-bottomed lake is associated with the idea of a stratified world; the lake offered access to the world below. The *sáiva* lake was inhabited by spirits in the shape of humans and animals that could function as protectors or help people to hunt or fish. *Sáiva* lakes were considered as sacred and offerings were brought to their shores.¹⁷² *Sáiva* lakes are an example of offering places that were not necessarily associated with sieidis. On the other hand, sieidis in the form of stones and rock formations are known to exist at the shores of *sáiva* lakes, for example, at Enontekiö near the Proksi *sáiva*. *Sáiva* lakes are included in my research only to the extent that they are related to sieidis. They form a special group of sacred places that would require its own research.¹⁷³

Wooden sieidis as mentioned in written sources have left few traces in the archaeological record.¹⁷⁴ Hans Mebius has divided sacred wooden objects into different categories, including, among others, an offering pole made of an upside-down tree stump with the roots in the air, an offering pillar related to the concept of *axis mundi*, and an offering stick to the branches of which the meat of the offered animal was fastened.¹⁷⁵ M. A. Castrén, on the other hand, states that wooden sieidis were anthropomorphic.¹⁷⁶ Only a few objects interpreted as wooden sieidis are known from

¹⁶⁹ Andersson 1912; Paulaharju 1962 [1922]; Paulaharju 1932; Itkonen 1948 II, 313.

¹⁷⁰ Insoll 2004, 5.

¹⁷¹ Cf. Rydving & Kristoffersson 1993, 197.

¹⁷² Von Westen 1773 [1723], 64; Læstadius 2000 [1845]; Pentikäinen 1995, 146–147; Sergejeva 2000a, 221; Pulkkinen 2005, 374–375.

¹⁷³ Two master's theses have been written on the *sáiva* lakes in the area of Finland (Tikkanen 2006; Pelttari 2011).

¹⁷⁴ Niurenus 1905 [c. 1640], 20; Tornæus 1900 [1672], 27.

¹⁷⁵ Mebius 1968, 61–65.

¹⁷⁶ Castrén 1853, 59.



Figure 7. A carved wooden pole on top of Kussuolinkivaara (in the photograph: Kati Sarajärvi).



Figure 8. A *keripää*, or a knobbed pole made to commemorate a successful fishing trip, at Sorsaniemi in Lake Kemijärvi.

Finland, one on top of the Kussuolinkivaara hill in Sodankylä and two on the island of Hietasaari¹⁷⁷ in Lake Inarijärvi. However, the carved wooden pole differs from G. A. Andersson's description, which mentions a boat-shaped sieidi (Figure 7).¹⁷⁸

The wooden sieidi at Kussuolinkivaara may well have been brought there later. However, on the basis of old photographs, it has stood on top of the hill at least since the early 20th century.¹⁷⁹ Ingela Bergman *et al.* also associate *keripää* structures with the same tradition as wooden sieidis.¹⁸⁰ *Keripää* structures, also known as fish sieidis, are wooden poles about 1 to 1.5 m high with a carved knob at the end (Figure 8). They are found especially in the area of Lake Kemijärvi where they are often located on the shores of waterways. They have been interpreted as part of an old tradition related to commemorating successful fishing trips or, in some cases, fowling or hunting trips. Hannu Kotivuori believes that the habit was based on old beliefs for guaranteeing hunting or fishing success, but associates the statues themselves with a tradition more recent than sieidis.¹⁸¹ The geographical distribution of *keripää* structures in a more southern area than sieidis may indicate a peasant tradition and be an example of influences passing between cultures. G. A. Andersson associates *keripää* structures with clam fishing carried out by Russians and Finns. He cites Hjalmar Appelgren in stating that at Suuköngäs in the River Jumiskojo, there are more than ten wooden statues with dates from the 1760s to the 1860s with both Finnish and Russian initials. He does not consider the Sámi to have practised clam fishing.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁷ Svestad 2011.

¹⁷⁸ Andersson 1914, 44.

¹⁷⁹ Paulaharju 1979 [1939], 200.

¹⁸⁰ Bergman *et al.* 2008, 9.

¹⁸¹ Kotivuori 2003, 26; cf. Appelgren 1881, 50; Paulaharju 1932, 9.

¹⁸² Andersson 1912, 20–22; cf. Appelgren 1881, 50–52.

2.3. Criteria for determining the reliability of the material

Herrojen höpötystä koko jumala-touhu noissa pötkelöissä. Ei vanhatkaan niitä ennen minään jumalina pitäneet. Aikoinaan kai niitä on veistetty jonkinlaisten apajapaikkojen merkeiksi rannoille. /--/ Paljon olen minäkin niitä veistellyt, usein aina silloin kun järvillä olen liikkunut, ja kun ei ole ollut muutakaan tekemistä. Mutta en minä ole osannut kuvitella, että tässä nyt jumalia tehdään kun pahanpäiväisiä puupötkelöitä naperrellaan. Vasta herrat näistä pötkelöistä rupesivat jumalia tekemään. Ja nyt ne kortot ovat minunkin veistämän pötkelön vieneet jumalan malliksi Helsingin museoon. /--/ Eläs nyt jumala, joutessa nakerreltu kanto.¹⁸³

Veli-Pekka Lehtola 1994: Wallenius, p. 329

The interpretation of sacred places is always subject to uncertainty. Partly this uncertainty is the same as for all archaeological research: not all material is available; the material is partly wrong; it is unequally distributed, partly hypothetical, or undated. Archaeologists cannot rectify all of these problems. In the case of sacred places, however, the problem of hypothetical information needs to be emphasized. For example, in the study of offering places, some of the material may be irrelevant, because the informants may have deliberately lied. From the viewpoint of analysis, it is significant whether the interpretation of a place as sacred is based only on an individual mention in a written source or on the researcher's impression, or whether the interpretation is supported by multiple criteria.

Different methods have been proposed for identifying sacred places. Ørnulv Vorren and Hans Kr. Eriksen emphasize the significance of written sources in identifying sacred places.¹⁸⁴ On the other hand, Håkan Rydving and Rolf Kristofferson use three criteria to define an offering place: information in older sources, a "cult-related" place name, and bone finds. According to them, antlers and unbroken bones in particular signify an offering place, because written sources mention that it was forbidden to break the bones of offered animals.¹⁸⁵ Rydving differentiates between bone caches, which consisted of leftover bones buried after a meal, and offerings, which were unbroken.¹⁸⁶ Britta Wennstedt Edvinger and Noel Broadbent also add historical land use and cultural context to the factors influencing the identification of offering places.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸³ Farmer Alpi from Nampajärvi commenting on K. M. Wallenius' book *Vanhat kalajumalat* [The Old Fish Gods]. "All this talk of gods in these tree stumps is a load of rubbish. The old people didn't think they were gods either. Back in the day they were probably carved on lakeshores to mark good fishing places. /--/ I've also carved many, often when I've been spending time on the lake and had nothing else to do. But I could never imagine making a god, of all things, just fiddling around with a lowly tree stump. It's those city men who started making gods out of these stumps. And now they've even taken a stump that I carved to the museum in Helsinki to serve as a model god. /--/ Some god, if you ask me, just a stump I worked on in my spare time."

¹⁸⁴ Vorren & Eriksen 1993, 203; see also Myrvoll 2008, 13.

¹⁸⁵ Rydving & Kristoffersson 1993, 197–198.

¹⁸⁶ Rydving 2009, personal communication.

¹⁸⁷ Wennstedt Edvinger & Broadbent 2006, 46.

In my own research, I have considered the following factors to be related to offering places: information in written sources or other local tradition, place names, offering finds (also those mentioned in written sources), elevated levels of soil phosphates, or, in addition to the above, cultural context, that is, a connection with other places used by the Sámi. As I stated earlier, there are problems with written sources due to their spatial and chronological restrictions. The sources do not describe all areas in equal detail; Western Lapland, for example, has received less attention (Figure 3). In addition, some of the information was lost already at the time of writing. For example, Samuli Paulaharju sometimes describes places with some uncertainty. Some of the places that he documented were covered by only a brief mention: "Offerings probably used to be made here too".¹⁸⁸ A part of the tradition related to sieidis has been collected as late as the early 20th century. Because of this, it is worth asking just how old a tradition has to be in order to justify identifying a sacred place. What should we think about a still living oral tradition when there is no other information related to a sieidi? As some offering places were still in use in the 20th century, the possibility of a living oral tradition cannot be excluded. This study also includes sacred places associated with oral tradition documented by an archaeologist. In the study of the life cycle of sacred places, it is also taken into account that even new places may be imbued with meanings that make them a part of the living tradition of sacred places.

Place names can also act as markers of the sacredness or ritual character of a place. In some cases, the name contains the word sieidi (*seita*), such as the island of Seitasaari in Inari. Other names contain words alluding to sacredness, such as *bassi* (Northern Sámi) or *áilegas* (Northern Sámi e.g. Karegasnjarga-Ailigas in Utsjoki). Sometimes a place name can refer to the name of a god or goddess. It can be the female Áhkku (Northern Sámi e.g. Golle-ahkku in Inari) or the male Äijih (Inari Sámi)¹⁸⁹ or the thunder god *Dierpmis* (Northern Sámi [Tiermes¹⁹⁰] e.g. Tiermasvaara in Kuusamo). However, not all sacred places are associated with a special name, and sometimes the offering place may have disappeared from a headland or hill with a sieidi-related name.

Bones are typically found at offering places, so the presence of bone finds can be considered as one criterion for defining an offering place. However, not all bones indicate offering activities. In Sámi culture, it was considered important to treat all bones with respect.¹⁹¹ Therefore bones were buried or placed under rocks even out of an offering context, for example, in connection with mealtimes. Bones placed in the ground are thus not always a sign of the sacredness of a place. Differentiating between these and offered bones may be difficult. Personally, I do not concur with the previously-stated view that offered bones should be unbroken. Even though there seem to have been taboos related to breaking bones, sources from as early as the 18th century relate how the marrow was taken from offered animal bones for eating. Split bones have been found in Sweden in material from the 17th and 18th

¹⁸⁸ Paulaharju 1932, 44.

¹⁸⁹ Cf. Korpela 2009.

¹⁹⁰ Ganander 1995 [1789], 109.

¹⁹¹ Lundius 1905 [1674], 29; Zachrisson 1985, 84; cf. Leem 1956 [1767], 428–429; Graan 1899 [1672], 66.

centuries.¹⁹² At Sieiddakeädgi in Utsjoki (113) and Ukonsaari in Inari (47), bones with marks of working were also found.¹⁹³ One of the broken bones from Sieiddakeädgi was dated to 1490–1660 AD and a broken bone from Ukonsaari was dated to 1520–1665 AD. They are thus chronologically slightly older than the bones from Sweden as well as geographically far away. The breaking of bones is also mentioned in a source describing the area of Finland. Paulaharju relates how, in the early 20th century, the metapodial bones¹⁹⁴ taken to the Näkkäljärvi sieidi were broken.¹⁹⁵ The treatment of bones seems to be associated with different traditions at different times and in different places. In addition, the way in which bones were dealt with in practice did not necessarily comply with the regulations.¹⁹⁶ People did not always act in ways that beliefs required. Thus, I would not consider the breaking of bones to invalidate the interpretation of a place as sacred.

Bone caches are distinguished from offered bones mainly on the basis of topography and the distribution of species within the bone material. Rolf Kjellström has noted that bone caches are located near dwelling sites, whereas offering places are located further away and at special locations. In addition, a greater amount of different bones are found at offering places.¹⁹⁷ On the other hand, offerings have been carried out also at dwelling sites and bone caches have been found in the fells.¹⁹⁸ It is sometimes difficult to draw a line between offering places and caches. Bone caches that are connected to sacred places by topography, place name, or context, may have had more ritual functions than bone caches with no such connections.¹⁹⁹

Additionally other types of offerings can be found in sacred places. It is not always easy to define which artefacts are meant as offerings and which have been left in connection with other types of activities, such as tourism. For example, coins could have been offered or left as part of a tradition related to tourism. Just like the more recent coins, older artefacts may also have been associated with different meanings. Furthermore, not all offerings leave visible traces. For example, fish fat or blood may have been spread on the stone. Offerings of fat and blood have not been identified on sieidi stones. Positive results have been obtained from the identification of old blood residues on buried stone tools.²⁰⁰ Similar analyses have been carried out on three sieidi stones, but to date, they have not yielded results.²⁰¹ Offering activities also leave traces in the soil as elevated phosphate levels. Phosphate analyses carried out around sieidis have indeed resulted in elevated readings.²⁰²

¹⁹² Iregren 1985, 105; Zachrisson 1985, 87–88; cf. e.g. Högström 1980 [1746/1747], 191.

¹⁹³ Harlin 2007a, 3; Puputti 2008a; Äikäs *et al.* 2009, 118.

¹⁹⁴ Foot bones with little meat; anatomically, the Finnish term *konttiluut* means the bones of the instep, but in sources the word is also used to mean leg bones.

¹⁹⁵ Paulaharju 1932, 17.

¹⁹⁶ Zachrisson 1985, 94.

¹⁹⁷ Lundius 1905 [1674], 29; Kjellström 1985, 116–118; see also Schanche 2000, 271–272.

¹⁹⁸ Valtonen 1999; Grydeland 2001, 10, 39–40; Fossum 2006, 123–124; Hansen & Olsen 2007, 193; Halinen 2009, 107.

¹⁹⁹ Schanche 2000, 273.

²⁰⁰ Downs 1995; Fiedel 1996; Field & Privat 2008.

²⁰¹ Äikäs *et al.* 2012

²⁰² Cf. Halinen 2006a; Wennstedt Edvinger & Broadbent 2006, 38; Tolonen 2013.

In some cases, the cultural context can also be a sign of a sacred place. The closeness of a Sámi dwelling site or a place important for Sámi means of subsistence may indicate a sacred place. In my study, in addition to identifying sacred places, I have paid attention to the reliability at which the location of the sacred place is known. For this purpose, I divided the sacred places into four categories on the basis of three criteria: certainty, preservation, and accuracy. *Certainty* refers to the criteria mentioned above that form the basis of what we know about the nature of the sacred place. The most certain group of sacred places, which receives a value of one, includes places for which several factors indicate sacredness. In the case of a sacred place that is not related to offering activities, the criteria can consist of written sources, oral tradition, place names, and cultural context. When the place is also associated with offering activities, the criteria also include offering finds and elevated phosphate levels. If two of these factors are present, the sacred place is defined as belonging in Group 1. Sacred places in Group 2 are associated with, for example, information about worshippers or other more detailed information, but the criteria of two factors are not fulfilled. Group 3 contains places associated with uncertain oral tradition. A place that “might have been a sieidi” belongs to this group. The classification of places in Group 4 as sacred places is based only on a place name preserved in written sources or the mention of one informant. Places that are connected to a place name referring to a sieidi or sacredness but that are not mentioned in sources or from which no archaeological material is known and at which no soil analyses have been made, are left outside of this study.²⁰³

Another criterion is the *preservation* of sacred places. Group 1 includes unbroken offering places and broken places of which parts still remain. For offering places of Group 2, an estimated location is known, but they have either been destroyed or the location has not been verified by an archaeologist. Places that are referred to as a broader area, such as a fell or a lake, belong in Group 3. This group also includes most sacred places that are not associated with offering activities. Group 4 is formed of lost offering places whose location cannot be estimated on the map, in contrast to that of places in Group 2. The coordinate information for this group is only approximate.

The third criterion is related to the *accuracy* at which the location of the sacred place has been identified. For places in Group 1, the GPS coordinates have been measured or the locations of these places have otherwise been accurately defined in connection with an archaeological survey. The locations of places in Group 2 are based on map estimates. Group 3 is formed of places for which the precise location is not known, but which can be connected with a certain smaller area, such as an island or a headland. For offering places in Group 4, the location is defined in terms of the top of a named fell or hill or the midpoint of a lake.

²⁰³ Cf. Aikio 2007, 178. In the MapSite service of the National Land Survey of Finland (<http://kansalaisen.karttapaikka.fi/kartanhaku/osoitehaku.html?lang=>), a search in the name field produced 51 place name starting with the word *seita*. Two of these are in municipalities from which no sieidis are known (Vaala and Kuhmo). A search for the Northern Sámi word *sieidi* resulted in six place names, two of which are included in the database. The number of names starting with *Pyhä* (=sacred in Finnish) is much higher. There are 21 lakes named *Pyhäjärvi* alone in the research area. However, this search can only be suggestive, as not all place names are included in the MapSite database and a more detailed analysis of the names requires linguistic expertise.

Each sacred place is issued points according to the groups to which it belongs on the basis of each criterion. The number of the group equals the number of points issued. The average of these three values then indicates the total reliability of the identification of a sacred place. Thus, a place associated with a strong oral tradition and finds mentioned in sources does not receive the best total score if its location is uncertain. The reliability of information related to offering places is taken into account in the analyses. Of the areas represented by more than ten sacred places, Muonio (2.0), Utsjoki (2.0), and Inari (2.3) had the best (that is, lowest) medians for reliability points (Table 3). The distribution of reliability values on the map is reasonably even (Figure 9). Western Lapland has a concentration of slightly less reliable material. This supports the selection of Inari and Utsjoki for closer examination in the study of ritual landscapes, not only on the level of all of Northern Finland, but also for a closer comparison between two areas. These two municipalities are better suited for comparison than Muonio, because the Sámi lifestyle has remained robust in both of them during the entire period covered by this study. In Muonio, colonization has also had a stronger effect on the Sámi culture than in the northern areas.

Table 3. The distribution of the number of sacred places and reliability points per municipality.

Municipality	Number	Average	Median
Inari	25	2.2	2.3
Enontekiö	21	2.3	2.7
Utsjoki	15	2.1	2.0
Kittilä	11	2.7	2.7
Muonio	11	2.1	2.0
Sodankylä	6	1.9	2.0/2.0
Kemijärvi	4	2.7	2.7/3.0
Pello	3	3.1	3.3
Kuusamo	2	2.5	2.3/2.7
Pelkosenniemi	2	3.0	2.3/3.7
Rovaniemi	2	2.2	1.7/2.7
Salla	2	2.5	2.0/3.0
Hyrnsalmi	1	2.7	2.7
Posio	1	3.7	3.7
Savukoski	1	1.0	1.0

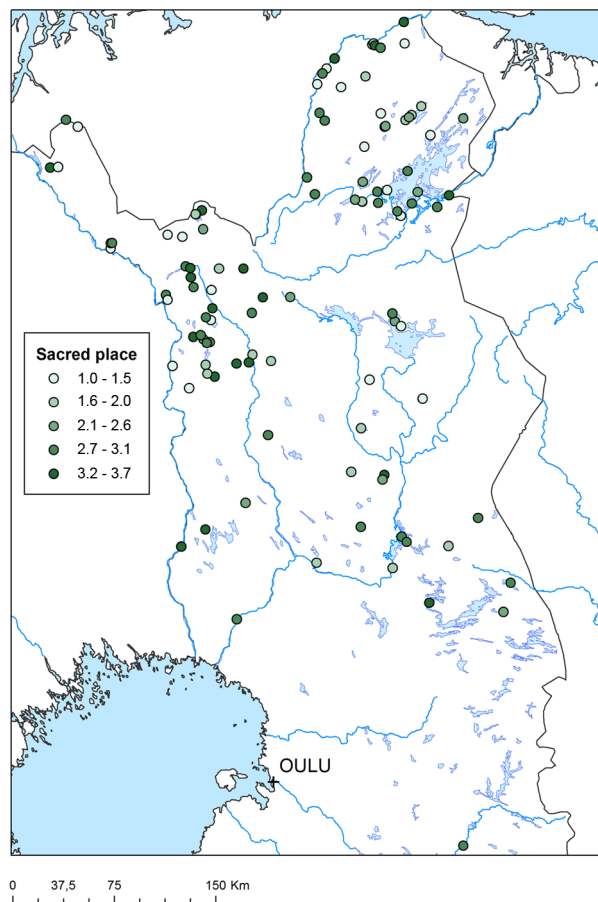


Figure 9. Map showing the reliability values of sacred places.

2.4. Archaeological research in sacred places: chronology and finds

The use of offering places has a long chronological range. Traces of the prehistoric roots of ethnic Sámi religion have been sought in the similarity of subjects in rock art and noaidi drums and the consistency of sieidi and rock art locations.²⁰⁴ Antti Lahelma has also studied the shared features of sieidis and rock art. The rock art tradition began during the Early Comb Ceramic period (5100–4100 B.C.) and seems to end at the beginning of – or at the latest sometime during – the Bronze Age (1500–500 B.C.). According to Lahelma, this could signify a change in ritual behaviour, a transition from paintings to offerings.²⁰⁵ However, the great chronological difference between the use periods of rock art and noaidi drums makes comparison difficult.²⁰⁶ Rock art imagery could even have been borrowed later for noaidi drums.

Finds made in connection with sieidis indicate a later period of use than for rock art.²⁰⁷ Datings from Sweden show that metal artefacts have been offered starting from 700 A.D.,²⁰⁸ but mainly from 900 to 1300 A.D.²⁰⁹ An earlier dating is suggested by Kjelmøy were found in Jokkmokk, Seitaure, the use of which in the Sámi area ended around 200/300 A.D.²¹⁰ Metal finds end in the beginning of the 14th century, but bones and antlers have been offered as late as the 1450s–1650s.²¹¹

Ernst Manker's book *Lapparnas heliga ställen [The Sacred Places of the Lapps]* provides a picture of the material found at known offering places in Sweden. Manker has listed the places known at the time of writing, the 1950s. According to him, domesticated reindeer bones and antlers were the most common bone finds. Places at which other domesticated animals had been offered numbered only a quarter of the number of places containing domesticated reindeer bones, and bear bones were even rarer. There was also direct evidence of bird and fish offerings. Offering places in Sweden have also yielded finds of domesticated animals, such as cattle, sheep or goat, and fowl.²¹² In addition to bone, numerous other materials have been offered, including quartz, flint, glass, and metal artefacts.²¹³ In offering places in Sweden, metal artefacts are a typical find group, including weights, coins, spearheads, utilitarian items, and jewellery.²¹⁴ Inga-Maria Mulk has divided the material found in offering places into categories of animal remains, items for everyday use, coins, and jewellery.²¹⁵

²⁰⁴ Luho 1970, 9–10; Luho 1971; Núñez 1995; cf. Nordman 1922, 9.

²⁰⁵ Lahelma 2008, esp. 41.

²⁰⁶ Cf. Günther 2009; on the other hand e.g. Shumkin (2000, 225) has associated the younger rock art tradition with the same tradition as sieidis.

²⁰⁷ On the other hand e.g. Åke Hultkrantz (1962) views the sieidi tradition as the local variant of a circumpolar phenomenon with roots in the Stone Age.

²⁰⁸ Mulk 1996, 73.

²⁰⁹ Serning 1956; Hedman 2003, 161–189; Fossum 2006, 108.

²¹⁰ Serning 1956, 135; Fossum 2006, 108.

²¹¹ Serning 1956; Mulk 2005; Fossum 2006, 108; Mulk 2009.

²¹² Zachrisson 1976, 86.

²¹³ Manker 1957, 40–52.

²¹⁴ See e.g. Hallström 1932; Serning 1956; Hedman 2003, 161–189.

²¹⁵ Mulk 1996, 53.

The most intensively studied offering place in Finland is the island of Ukonsaari in Lake Inarijärvi (47). Arthur Evans, known for his study of Knossos in Crete, visited Ukonsaari in 1873 and found a piece of silver jewellery.²¹⁶ Before him, Jacob Fellman visited Ukonsaari in 1825 and 1826.²¹⁷ Additionally, the Itkonen brothers visited the place later during their ethnological fieldwork in Inari from 1910 to 1912, and a small research team consisting of Erkki Itkonen, Jouko Hautala, and Matti Hako visited the place in 1953.²¹⁸ The first actual archaeological excavations on Ukonsaari took place in 1968, when Anja Sarvas and her team studied the south-western slope of the island for three days. They found a large amount of fragmentary animal bones, antlers, and teeth. The research continued in 2006, when the entire area of the island was studied in closer detail. In connection with the excavations, bones dating from the 14th century to the early 17th century were found on the island, as well as a Russian coin from the 17th century.²¹⁹

With the exception of Ukonsaari, early research by excavation has been rather infrequent. Also, we only have fragmentary data of the earliest excavations due to insufficient documentation. In 1937, Lauri Ilmari Itkonen, lawyer and finder of Stone Age *goahti* sites in Juusuansuu, organized test excavations at Lake Sieddesaiva (Somasjärvi) (19) in Enontekiö. A surviving photograph of the excavations shows six men digging with pickaxes and shovels at the foot of a sieidi stone (Figure 10). No finds from the excavation are documented, nor is a report available.²²⁰ Earlier, in 1873, a “hammer-like offering artefact made of reindeer antler” from the sieidi at Sieddesaiva was deposited in the collections of the National Museum (Figure 11). The T-shaped piece of antler has marks of working at the end of each prong.²²¹ In connection with the antler artefact, pieces of reindeer antlers and birds’ nests have also been reported from the sieidi. Paulaharju notes too that money and reindeer antlers were found at the sieidi as late as in the 20th century.²²²

The next time that a sieidi was studied in the area of Finland was in 1957, when Aarni Erä-Esko organized a three-day test excavation on the headland of Seitaniemi (Seitasaari) (99) in Lake Orajärvi in Sodankylä. A tubular axe made of iron had earlier been found at the site. Several photographs and hand-drawn maps still remain of the excavation’s documentation material. On the basis of these, it seems that a test trench was opened at Seitaniemi in the southern half of a round knoll with a diameter of 20 metres. The test trench was oriented from north to south, and it was 1.5 m wide in the northern end, 1 m wide in the southern end, and 6 m long. The test trench was excavated down to the stony layer revealed under the sand, a depth of about 0.25 to 0.50 m. In addition, five test pits were dug. There were apparently no finds or atypical layers (Figure 12).

²¹⁶ Nordman 1922, 1.

²¹⁷ Fellman 1906, I, 251, 411.

²¹⁸ Itkonen 1962; Okkonen 2007b, 31.

²¹⁹ Okkonen 2007b.

²²⁰ The report has been sought at the Department of Archaeology at the National Board of Antiquities and the manuscript archive of the ethnological collections.

²²¹ Cf. Hallström 1932, fig. 3. Similarly decorated artefacts have been interpreted as hammers for noaidi drums. An artefact found in Rendalen, Hedmark, has been dated to 1160–1260 A.D. (Hansen & Olsen 2007, 107). In Finland, similar finds have been dated to the 16th to 17th centuries (Carpelan 2003, 79).

²²² Paulaharju 1932, 39. Money and coins have been found at sieidis even in the 21st century (Halinen 2010, personal communication).

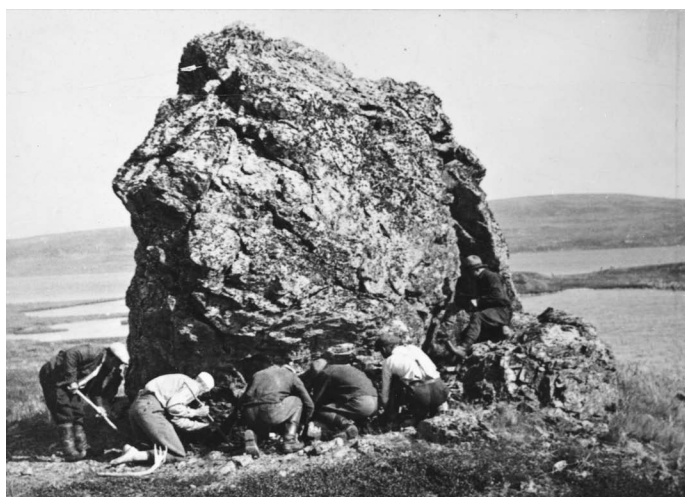


Figure 10. Test excavations at Sieiddesaiva in Enontekiö in 1937 (SUK 434:22).



Figure 12. Test excavations at Seitaniemi in Lake Orajärvi, Sodankylä, in 1957 (National Board of Antiquities / The Archive of the Department of Archaeology, Picture Collections).



Figure 11. A reindeer antler artefact (length 13.1 cm) from Sieiddesaiva (SU 1346, photograph by Risto Hakomäki).

The Ukonsaari excavations of 2006 were followed by a group of other studies at sieidi sites. In the following year, an archaeological survey and a small-scale excavation were carried out at Ukko (46) in Lake Ukonjärvi, Inari, which was followed by the *Human-Animal Relationships among the Finnish Sámi 1000–1800 AD. DNA and stable isotope analyses of bones found at worship sites* project, funded by the Academy of Finland. Eight sieidis were studied in connection with this project (Figure 13). I led the fieldwork in the excavations carried out during the project, and I was also responsible for choosing the sites studied. In the summer of 2008, we excavated at Taatsi (65) in Kittilä, Näkkälä (9) in Enontekiö, and Sieiddakeädgi (Seitala) (113) in Utsjoki, in the summer of 2009 at Koskikaltiojoen suu [The mouth of the River Koskikaltiojoki] (Lake Nitsijärvi) (29) in Inari, as well as at Porviniemi (75) and Kirkkopahta (74) in Muonio, and in the summer of 2010 at Dierpmesvárri (3) in Enontekiö and Äkässaivo (80) in Muonio (Tables 4 and 5 and Appendices II and III). The sieidis studied within the framework of the project were chosen in order to acquire a sample as geographically representative as possible. In this way, we could obtain more information on the differences in offering activities than by, for example, selecting

sites only in Inari and Utsjoki, the comparison areas of my study. Therefore, we could study areas from which sieidis had not been excavated earlier. In addition, we wanted to focus our studies on places in which it seemed probable that bone material could be preserved. Thus, places left unexcavated included places with no certain known location or places that were not mentioned in written sources. In addition, the accessibility of the sieidis had an influence on the selection of research object. Excavation and documentation material had to be carried as far as 12 kilometres from the road.

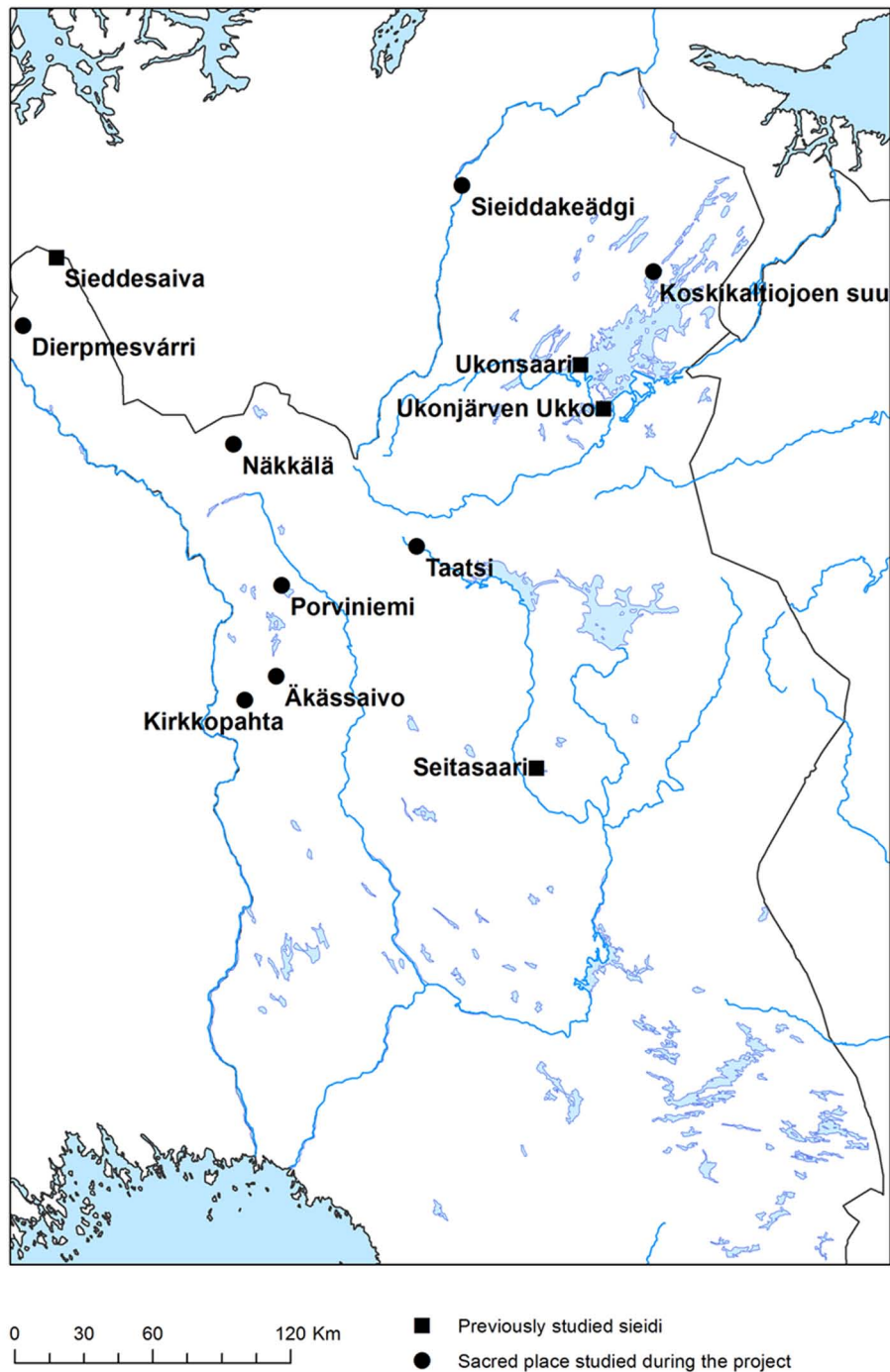


Figure 13. Map of the sieidis studied by means of excavation before and during the project.

Table 4. The amount of area covered by excavation and the number of bone fragments at the studied sieidis.

Site	Excavated area (m ²)	Bone fragments (pieces)
Taatsi	c. 4	258*
Näkkälä	c. 16.45	50
Sieiddakeädgi	10.74	116
Koskikaltiojen suu	c. 8	430
Porviniemi	11.96	1
Kirkkopahta	9.33	0
Dierpmesvärri	5.25	4

* 225 of these probably originated from one perch.

Table 5. Animals identified in the excavations.

Site	Reindeer (<i>rangifer tarandus</i>)	Sheep/goat (<i>Ovis aries/Capra hircus</i>)	Bear (<i>Ursus arctos</i>)	Mole (<i>Arvicolinae</i>)	Capercaillie (<i>Tetrao urogallus</i>)	Whooper swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>)	Scaup (<i>Mergus sp.</i>)	Osprey (<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>)	Pike (<i>Esox lucius</i>)	Perch (<i>Perca fluviatilis</i>)	Trout (<i>Salmo trutta</i>)	Fish (<i>Pisces</i>)	Burned bone
Ukonsaari	x	x			x								x
Ukko in Lake Ukonjärvi	x	x		x	x	x		x	x				x
Taatsi	x				x		x		x	x	x		
Näkkälä	x		x									x	
Sieiddakeädgi	x												
Koskikaltiojen suu	x				x								x
Dierpmesvärri	x												

Sources: Harlin 2007a; Okkonen 2007b; Harlin 2008; Puputti 2008a; Puputti 2008b; Puputti 2008c; Puputti 2009; Puputti 2010a; Salmi 2010.

The sites were very different in nature.²²³ Of all the sieidis studied during the project, Taatsi had the widest range of species in animal bones. Identified bones found at the sieidi come from wild or domesticated reindeer,²²⁴ capercaillie, and scaup, as well as the fish species pike, perch, and trout. The large amount of fish bones corresponds with Paulaharju's mention that Taatsi has been not only a reindeer sieidi but also

²²³ The descriptions of the excavations are based on the following reports: Puputti 2008a; Puputti 2008b; Puputti 2008c; Äikäs & Núñez 2009a; Äikäs & Núñez 2009b; Äikäs & Núñez 2009c; Puputti 2010a; Salmi 2010; Äikäs & Núñez 2010a; Äikäs & Núñez 2010b; Äikäs & Núñez 2010c; Äikäs & Núñez 2011a; Äikäs & Núñez 2011b, and for Ukonsaari Harlin 2007a, Puputti 2009, Okkonen 2007b, and for Ukko Harlin 2008; Harlin & Ojanlatva 2008.

²²⁴ Wild and domesticated reindeer cannot be identified to a species by means of osteological analysis in the field. In the following, I use the term reindeer to indicate a bone that could be from either wild or domesticated reindeer. Furthermore, the term sheep is used to indicate a bone that could be from sheep or goat according to osteological analysis.

a fish sieidi.²²⁵ Some of the fish bones seemed very recent, but a dating of 1040–1220 A.D. from pike bones confirmed that at least some of the fish bones belonged to an earlier period of activity at the sieidi. Out of other sieidis studied in Finland, more than three animal species have been identified only at Ukko in Lake Ukonjärvi. A total of seven species have been identified there, although the mole is probably not associated with offering activities.²²⁶ In other cases, the number of identified species has varied from one to three. In addition to the fish finds from Taatsi, pike has also been found at Ukko and further unidentified fish bones at Näkkälä. However, the fish bones from both sites are undated.

In addition to Taatsi in Kittilä, capercaillie bones have been found at Ukonsaari, Ukko, and Koskikaltiojoen suu. With the exception of Taatsi, all sieidis at which capercaillie has been found are within the area of Inari. Capercaillie has been a common bird in this area, and it has been hunted by snare. However, the capercaillie also has a mythological significance. It has been mentioned as an offered animal and the Skolt Sámi considered it a shamanistic bird.²²⁷

Sheep or goat is another typically offered animal species in the Inari area. Bones have been found only at Ukonsaari and Ukko. In the excavations carried out during the project, sheep bones were not found at any of the sites.

As in Sweden, reindeer is also the most commonly offered animal in Finland. Reindeer bones were found at all studied sieidis. At Sieiddakeäldgi and Dierpmesvárri, all identified bones were reindeer bones, in the other cases, reindeer was found together with bones of other animals. At all studied sieidis, reindeer bones dominated the bone material.

The Näkkälä sieidi is the only sieidi in Finland at which bear bones have been found. Altogether 43 bear burials are known from Sweden and Norway, and many of them are located near offering places and sieidis.²²⁸ The bear has been significant both as a mythical animal and as prey. Bear bones near a sieidi can be related to ritual activities like bear burials or they can have been brought to the sieidi as a hunting offering. These two options are also not mutually exclusive.

Burned bone was also found at the sieidis. Further unidentified pieces of burned bone were found at Ukonsaari, Ukko, and Koskikaltiojoen suu. The presence of burned bone at sieidis is a third factor shared by sites in Inari, in addition to the sheep bones found at two sites and the capercaillie bones found at all sites.

Sieidis studied in Inari have also yielded metal finds in addition to bones. A piece of silver jewellery dating to the 13th century, a piece of copper sheet, and a Russian coin from the 17th century have been found at Ukonsaari.²²⁹ Copper sheet pieces and a wire coin dated to 1606–1610 have been found at Ukko.²³⁰ Of the other sieidis studied in Finland, only artefacts later than the late 19th century have been found, mainly coins. Samuli Paulaharju also mentions that coins, the oldest of which dates

²²⁵ Paulaharju 1932, 50.

²²⁶ Harlin 2008.

²²⁷ Äimä 1903, 115; Paulaharju 2009 [1921], 174; Harlin 2008, 10–11.

²²⁸ Fossum 2006, 101.

²²⁹ Okkonen 2007b.

²³⁰ Harlin & Ojanlatva 2008.

from 1747, and “a couple of iron arrowheads” were found at the Dierpmesvárri sieidi.²³¹ The situation is different in Sweden, where great quantities of metal were offered until to the 14th century. Additionally, the number of other artefacts found in Finland is small compared to Sweden. Besides metal, other finds at the studied sieidis included a bone ring from Taatsi, a bone button from Näkkälä (Figure 14), and bottle glass from the late 19th century from Sieiddakeäddgi.



Figure 14. A bone ring (KM 37853:1) from Taatsi in Kittilä and an antler button (KM 37851:3) from Näkkälä in Enontekiö (photograph by Eeva Miettinen).

Based on the sites studied, offering activities in Finland seem to start later than in the area of Sweden. The earliest offerings are of different species. The oldest dating is from the pike found at Taatsi, mentioned above. In addition, swan and bear bones have been dated to the 11th through to 13th centuries. The dated sheep bones are from the 14th through to 15th centuries,²³² whereas the capercaillie bones are from the 15th century.²³³ An exception is formed by the extensive material from Koskikaltiojoen suu, which includes both earlier and later material. The capercaillie bones found at Taatsi have not been dated, because at the time they were not considered to be related to the central research questions of the project. Reindeer is the most commonly offered animal both geographically and chronologically. Reindeer bones have been dated from the 12th century to the second half of the 17th century. In addition, one dating from Taatsi might be even younger. The dated bones probably reflect the beginning of the offering tradition and not the preservation of the bones. This is supported by the fact that there was no notable difference in the condition of older and newer bones. Thus, it does not seem likely that old bones would be in poor shape and even older ones perhaps disintegrated. In addition, the old datings were obtained from different parts of the animals and not only from the best preserved parts, such as teeth. If the tradition were older than the datings from bones, the oldest datings would probably be obtained from bone types with the best rate of preservation.

The dating results showed that the bones from Dierpmesvárri are modern. Of the other sieidis, the datings from Näkkälä indicate the shortest period of use. All datings fall between 1165 and 1290 A.D. According to the bone finds, the use of other sieidis seems to have started in the 11th through to the 14th centuries. In the area of Finland, there seems to be no geographical difference in the beginning of offering activities. Bone finds from sieidis stop in the second half of the 17th century, just like in Sweden. However, written sources and the oral tradition make note of people

²³¹ Paulaharju 1932, 40.

²³² Okkonen 2007a; Harlin & Ojanlatva 2008.

²³³ Okkonen 2007a, 9.

making offerings to sieidis as late as the turn of the 20th century.²³⁴ Even members of the current generation personally remember people who they know to have visited sieidis. Known, dated finds thus seem to represent only one period in the long use of sieidis.²³⁵

In addition to the sites presented above, two sieidis from which no bones were found during the excavations may also be related to the later use of sieidis. These two are the southernmost inspected sites, Kirkkopahta and Porviniemi in Muonio. I return to these sites later, in Chapters 6.1–6.2. and Chapter 7.

Altogether, the research material covers an extensive area and enables the making of regional comparisons. From different parts of the research area, there are also sites studied by means of excavation. Only the southernmost sites were not excavated. The sites with the worst reliability values are also concentrated in the southern parts of the area. The sacred places in the area of Muonio have received good reliability values, but no bone material related to offering was found there in connection with excavation. It seems therefore that the best potential research area, based on excavation results and reliability values, is the Sámi area, in which the municipalities chosen for closer study are also located. The heterogeneity of the research material from fells to stones, and from reliable to less reliable, can be a feature that makes the research more difficult or more rewarding.

2.5. Summary

The source material of the study consists of 107 sacred places, some of which are known to have been used for offering activities. Cultic places, such as burial sites or bear burials, are not included. Sacred places – and especially sieidis – have been categorized according to, for example, the means of subsistence related to them, their user group, and their external characteristics. When my research material is divided into types based on natural formations, sieidi stones emerge as the largest group. However, the division between sacred places and sieidis is not always unproblematic. Furthermore, the available information on sacred places is not always equally reliable. I have based the identification of a place as a sacred place on six criteria: information in written sources, other folklore, place name related to sacredness, offering finds, soil phosphate levels indicating offering activities, and cultural context. In addition, the state of preservation of the sacred place and the accuracy of the location data also influence the determination of a place's reliability.

Detailed information is available from eight sieidis studied by means of excavation during the writing of this thesis and two places studied earlier. The studied sieidis are dated from the 11th century to the late 17th century, but according to local knowledge, they have been used as late as in the 20th century. Wild or domesticated reindeer is the most commonly offered animal. The number of offered species at a place varies from one to six, and some of the sieidis yielded no bone material at all. Indications of a regional variant of the offering tradition are found in the area of Lake Inarijärvi, from which more capercaillie bones than usual were found, as well as sheep bones, missing from elsewhere, and burned bones. Additionally, metal finds are known from Inari. There are none from the other places in Finland, although they are common in Sweden.

²³⁴ Paulaharju 1932; Kjellström 1987.

²³⁵ Bradley 2000, 5.