

7. ACTORS AND THE BODILY EXPERIENCE IN SACRED PLACES

Dierpmesvárri (3) in Enontekiö, July 2010

The Dierpmesvárri sieidi is located on a westward-slanting hillslope in the middle of the fell landscape of the Käsivarsi area. Ancient offerers would have had to climb up the fell slope to reach the offering stone. In the elevated fell landscape, weather conditions also provided some part of the bodily experience of offering. Our excavation team took a shortcut to the sieidi through the air in a helicopter, but we were equally at the mercy of the weather. The wind blew hard enough to pull down one of our tents, and the fog was sometimes so thick that we could not even see the sieidi stone. The fire that we lit further away from the sieidi may have resembled ancient fires associated with offering, and even the fact that we took our meals at the site was no different from ancient activities related to offering. Based on modern finds, the sieidi stone had also been a resting site for hikers, but we found no signs of ancient offerings. Perhaps the forces of nature, erosion by the wind and meltwater flowing down from the fell in the spring, have moved the ancient offerings. Or maybe there was another reason for the lack of offerings, something related to human activities. However, a memory of the significance of the place has remained and is evidenced by coins that people have left at the sieidi.

7.1. Action as a part of ritual

People visiting sacred places for various reasons experienced the places in different ways and also do different things in these places. Activities related to offering and sacred places have also varied through time. In the following chapter, I approach action in sacred places – and especially at sieidis – from a phenomenological viewpoint that emphasizes the corporeality of action. Action and movement are a significant part of ritual.⁶⁷⁹ Corporeality is important both in performing ritual activities and in experiencing them through the senses.⁶⁸⁰ Maurice Merleau-Ponty has emphasized the corporeality of action and living through the body. Bodily experiences in sacred places are related to how people approach the place and how they move there, how they see the place and experience it with all their senses. Rituals are experienced through the body, as well as all other action in the world.⁶⁸¹ Action determines our relationship with a place. In places associated with ritual, action determines the symbolic object and provides it with new meanings. At the same time, the meanings associated with a place affect the activities that are carried out there.⁶⁸²

Our impression of the earliest activities related to offering has been constructed mainly by written sources. The best-known example of activity taking place at sieidis is probably the picture of a Sámi person kneeling in front of a sieidi in *Lapponia* by Schefferus.⁶⁸³ Written sources mention that people approached sieidis on their knees, and as late as the 1920s, there are descriptions of people falling down on their knees. In addition, it is said that people dressed in their best clothes when visiting sieidis.⁶⁸⁴ Offering activities could also be associated with yoiking, butchering animals, and taking meals at the sieidi.⁶⁸⁵ Activities related to offering have clearly been varying in nature. The descriptions in written sources of how a sacred place should be approached may also have been influenced by Christianity, which already at the time had long-standing contacts even in the north.

Action creates ritual meanings. According to Åsa Berggren and Liv Nilsson Stutz, the meaning of a ritual does not exist divorced from action, but the meaning is recreated every time the ritual is enacted and experienced. Therefore, meanings can be different at different times and for different people. The verbally expressed meaning of a ritual is subject to bodily knowledge of how the ritual is performed correctly.⁶⁸⁶ Meanings are created through a functioning body, seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching, as well as through places and things.⁶⁸⁷

The bodily experience of ritual activity was strongly connected with a social aspect when the sacred place was visited by more than one person. Eating, yoiking, or making sacrificial offerings at offering places was attributed with meanings related

⁶⁷⁹ Bell 1992; Tilley 1994.

⁶⁸⁰ Berggren & Nilsson Stutz 2010, 176.

⁶⁸¹ Tilley 2004; Tilley 2008; cf. Merleau-Ponty 1999 [1962].

⁶⁸² Edensor 2006, 62.

⁶⁸³ Schefferus, 1963 [1673], 172.

⁶⁸⁴ Paulaharju 1932, 18; Ravila 1934, 85; Itkonen 1948 II, 311; Collinder 1953, 171; Manker 1957, 88; SKS KRA. Kohonen, Marjatta 1–107.1959.

⁶⁸⁵ Äimä 1903; Paulaharju 1962 [1922]; Ravila 1934, 62.

⁶⁸⁶ Berggren & Nilsson Stutz 2010, 176.

⁶⁸⁷ Berggren & Nilsson Stutz 2010, 187.

not only to the ritual but to social relationships. The social aspect could be experienced within either the family or a group of people. Later, I will return to the people visiting sacred places.

In addition to offering activities, other non-ritual activities could also be associated with offering places. The island of Ukko in Lake Ukonjärvi is an example of a sacred place that was used also for fishing and collecting eggs, in addition to actual offering activities related to the sieidi. Otherwise, there are few signs of activities not related to offering. The landscape surrounding sacred sites has been the stage of many kinds of activities, but no signs of human activity other than offerings have been found in the immediate vicinity of sieidis studied in Finland. However, not all offering-related activities were necessarily ritualized, and activities that seem profane may have acquired ritual meanings. According to Åsa Berggren and Liv Nilsson Stutz, rituality is not determined by a certain way of acting but by the strategy or reason why people act the way they do.⁶⁸⁸

Modern activities in sacred places may also be associated with both spiritual and other aspects. Archaeological finds provide information not only on modern offerings, but also on camping and hiking, related to which we have found pieces of a thermos bottle and an energy drink bag at the sites. On the other hand, during a hiking trip, a person's relationship with nature may be experienced as spiritual. Activities organized for visitors to sieidis may include eating, praying, meditating, conversation, and healing.⁶⁸⁹ Thus, offering places were, and are, the stages of a wide variety of activities charged with various meanings that are not fully covered by written sources.

7.2. Different actors in the sphere of ethnic religion

The term *actor* means a person or community that acts. The concept of agency has been associated with the ability to make decisions that affect the surrounding world.⁶⁹⁰ According to the relational worldview, actors at sieidis could be individuals or groups of people, spirits, deities, or even the sieidi itself. Animals too were not only objects of action but actors in sacred places. Types of action could vary from carefully controlled rituals to personal encounters with the sacred. Individual persons could have their own ways of making offerings and meeting the sieidi. Sometimes offerings were spontaneous and unplanned, such as a coin tossed to a sieidi when passing by. Sometimes the ritual could be preceded by careful planning, such as choosing an animal of the right colour and waiting for the right time.⁶⁹¹

Some sacred places were associated with traditions related to their user groups. Some places were visited from an extensive area, whereas other sieidis were used by only one person.⁶⁹² When several people met in a sacred place, their experience was associated with communal meanings. Offering places were not only used for contacting spirits and deities, but they could also have other communal meanings.⁶⁹³

⁶⁸⁸ Berggren & Nilsson Stutz 2010, 184.

⁶⁸⁹ Siitonen 2011, personal communication.

⁶⁹⁰ Dornan 2002.

⁶⁹¹ Itkonen 1948 II, 313–314; Manker 1957, 47.

⁶⁹² Paulaharju 1962 [1922], 170; Paulaharju 1932.

⁶⁹³ Salmi *et al.* 2011.

During rituals, people met other members of the community and could eat, talk, and yoik together. The communal use of offering places is also thought to have been related to communal hunting.⁶⁹⁴ Other sacred places could be associated with experiences of communion within the family or a personal, private moment with the spirits or deities. The groups of people visiting sieidis nowadays might share a common cultural identity or worldview, or they might be gathered together randomly through tourism, for example. However, even today, sieidis can be places of personal meditation.

Gender also determined activities at sieidis. Written sources describe mainly men's rituals, because the information was gathered by men from men.⁶⁹⁵ Both historical sources and the research literature present varying views on whether offering activities at sieidis were open to women.⁶⁹⁶ Women's participation in activities at sieidis might have followed different customs in different areas. Generally it has been suggested that both men and women could participate in some kind of offering activities.⁶⁹⁷ The division between the genders can also be seen in the fact that some offering places were meant only for men and some could be used by women, too. According to Rydving, men's rituals were related to economy, wind, and weather, whereas women's rituals were associated with the home and family.⁶⁹⁸ However, the borders were not categorical, as indicated by the facts that the female deity *Juoksáhká* belonged to the male sphere and that women could participate in ceremonies related to bear hunting, for example.⁶⁹⁹ According to Hans Mebius, sacred places in nature were forbidden to women, whereas offerings within the sphere of the *gohti* were open to both genders.⁷⁰⁰ However, Itkonen mentions a sacred natural location, Naarassaari [Female Island], where women could also participate in offerings.⁷⁰¹ In addition, offering activities within the *gohti* were also gendered.⁷⁰²

However, the division into men's and women's sacred places did not apply to all sites. In Norway, thirteen of the 492 known sacred places are believed to have had rules that restricted women's activities there. The places forbidden to women were usually lakes or fells. For example, women could not cross a sacred lake in a boat, keep their faces uncovered, or walk on the ice of a sacred lake. There are four places in connection with which offerings brought by women are mentioned separately, and they are all offering stones.⁷⁰³

⁶⁹⁴ Mulk 1996.

⁶⁹⁵ Rydving 2006, 103.

⁶⁹⁶ Paulaharju 1932; Itkonen 1948 II, 315; Mebius 2003, 111, 126; Rydving 2006, 104.

⁶⁹⁷ However, Schefferus (1963 [1673], 173) notes that women were not allowed to make offerings or approach a place consecrated to a god.

⁶⁹⁸ Rydving 2006, 104.

⁶⁹⁹ Rydving 1993, 145–149; Rydving 2006, 104.

⁷⁰⁰ Mebius 2003, 111, 126; On the other hand, it is also mentioned that all kinds of offering activities were forbidden to women (von Düben 1977 [1873], 233).

⁷⁰¹ Itkonen 1948 II, 312.

⁷⁰² Within the *gohti*, there was a clear division into men's and women's parts in ritual activity. Offerings made in different parts were carefully controlled, and, for example, the sacred part of the *gohti*, the *posio*, was forbidden to women. However, the gendered division within the *gohti* space is thought to have applied only for the duration of the ritual, as indicated by archaeological finds (Inkiläinen 1999; Fossum 2006, 176–177; Rydving 2009, personal communication).

⁷⁰³ Myrvoll 2008, 25–29.

In the area of Finland, offering places are only rarely associated with information about gender-specific restrictions. In Lake Sompiojärvi in Sodankylä, the sites of Akankivi (100) and Pyhäkivi, and in Inari, Seitasaari (38) and Ukonsaari (47) were forbidden to women, whereas Annansaari (26), Naarassaari (31), and Vesikivi (48) in Inari have been mentioned as offering places allowed for women.⁷⁰⁴ The greatest amount of information on gender-specific restrictions thus seems to be related to the area of Inari. The stone named Akankivi in Lake Sompiojärvi was forbidden to women, but still it is said to have protected women. A story relates how Sámi women escaped their enemies in a boat and landed on the stone, where they were safe. When the enemy men sought shelter on the same stone, after the Sámi had already left in their boat, the stone tipped and drowned the men.⁷⁰⁵

Both forbidden and allowed sites were either islands or stones in the water. Of the offering places forbidden to women, both Lake Sompiojärvi and the island of Ukonsaari are used by a community or a larger group of people, and several offered animals have been brought to all of them. Of the sites allowed for women, the island of Annansaari and the stone of Vesikivi are private fish sieidis, but no similar information is available for the island of Naarassaari. In the sources describing the area of Finland, the prohibitions related to women do not define in more detail what women were not allowed to do. It is only stated that they could not come there. One exception is the stone of Pyhäkivi in River Muteniajoki, related to which it is said that when passing the stone, women had to leave the boat and walk on land, and they had to be wearing trousers.⁷⁰⁶

However, the prohibitions were not always absolute; instead, they might only affect how women acted in the offering place. In some cases, women could approach the place dressed in men's clothing or within total silence.⁷⁰⁷ Women's bodily experiences in sacred places were then characterized by atypical rules of behaviour and dress. In some cases, visiting sieidis might also be forbidden to children, because sieidis were seen as frightening.⁷⁰⁸ Even today, some women follow the injunctions against approaching sacred places.

The number, gender, and age distribution of people acting in a sacred place, as well as their familiarity with each other, were all factors affecting the experience. Experiencing the sacred could be characterized by the presence or absence of other people, the sound of multiple voices or silence, a feeling of solidarity or alienation. Either communality or individual action could thus be emphasized as the actor of the rituals.

7.3. Animals as objects of action and actors

In addition to different kinds of people, animals too made up part of the environment of activity in sacred places. Animals were both objects of action and actors in offering places. Naturally, action directed at animals was usually related to offering. The

⁷⁰⁴ E.g. Andersson 1914, 44; Paulaharju 1932, 34.

⁷⁰⁵ Andersson 1914, 42; Paulaharju 1979 [1939], 145.

⁷⁰⁶ Andersson 1914, 44.

⁷⁰⁷ Itkonen 1948 II, 312.

⁷⁰⁸ Fellman 1906 I, 306–307; Manker 1957, 88.

offering of animals could take many forms and be associated with various restrictions and rules. Different parts of the animal could be treated in different ways. Niurenius relates that the head of a reindeer was hung on a branch, whereas the rest of the meat was cooked and eaten.⁷⁰⁹ Sometimes the meat was placed on wooden offering platforms.⁷¹⁰ However, there are no traces of these platforms in the archaeological material. In general, the archaeological material contains very few examples of the deliberate placing of bones. In the bone material from the sieidis studied during the project, there are only two examples of bones that seem to have been placed in their positions deliberately: pieces of a bear skull from Näkkälä (9) and two capercaillie coracoid bones, still articulated in their anatomically correct place, from the sieidi at Koskikaltiojoen suu (29) (Figure 86). Judging by the positions of the bones, the bear skull seems to have been placed on the ground upside down and the capercaillie lying on its back with its head towards the sieidi stone.⁷¹¹ The placement of bones also appears to be significant when reindeer antlers have been placed on top of a sieidi stone, even in cases where the stone is so high that putting the antlers there must have demanded some effort (Figure 87). The bones found under the flat stones at the sieidi at Koskikaltiojoen suu may also have been placed there on purpose.



Figure 86.
*Coracoideum from
the sieidi at
Koskikaltiojoen suu
[The mouth of the
River Koskikaltiojoki].*

Archaeological material found at sieidis in the area of Finland shows that particularly the heads and antlers of reindeer have been offered. The top vertebrae of the spine have also been found, indicating that entire heads were brought to the site, not only antlers and bones.⁷¹² Written sources also describe especially the significance of antlers. According to Friis, all antlers of slaughtered wild reindeer were offered by placing them in a circle around the sieidi (Čoarvvegarde, Horngjærde).⁷¹³ The offering of antlers was associated with various rules. According to Inger Zachrisson, among the South Sámi, it was important that the offered antlers came from living animals or

⁷⁰⁹ Niurenius 1905 [c. 1640], 21.

⁷¹⁰ Mebius 2003, 143; also Itkonen 1948 II, 310.

⁷¹¹ Salmi *et al.* 2011.

⁷¹² Salmi *et al.* 2011.

⁷¹³ Friis 1977 [1871], 141; on antler offerings, see also SKS KRA. Kohonen, Marjatta 191–773.1961.

at least were still attached to the skull.⁷¹⁴ However, finds from Sieiddakeäggi (113), among others, indicate that fallen antlers had also been offered.⁷¹⁵ Naturally fallen antlers have also been found at the top of the Guivi fell (103).⁷¹⁶ Itkonen too relates that both fallen antlers and whole heads with the antlers still attached were offered to sieidis.⁷¹⁷ Other sources mention entire heads as offerings.⁷¹⁸ The head of a reindeer was a valued part of the animal, because, for example, the Skolt Sámi considered reindeer brains a valuable type of food.⁷¹⁹ Beliefs related to heads are further reflected in the fact that, according to Itkonen, among the Skolt Sámi, women of reproductive age were forbidden to eat reindeer heads.⁷²⁰ Rules related to the treatment of antlers may reflect regional and chronological differences or may be examples of variations between the abstract rules and the actual activities carried out by people.



Figure 87. Antlers on top of the Taatsi sieidi.

In connection with the issue of identifying sieidis, I have also referred to how ideas about breaking bones might have varied. Breaking bones in order to obtain the bone marrow may have been associated with taking meals at the offering places. For example, bones found on the island of Ukonsaari have marks indicating that the head was removed while the soft tissues were still in place. The marks are consistent with butchery, but based on the bone material, it cannot be ascertained whether this took

⁷¹⁴ Zachrisson 2009, 141.

⁷¹⁵ Puputti 2008a.

⁷¹⁶ Valtonen 1999, 60.

⁷¹⁷ Itkonen 1948 II, 318.

⁷¹⁸ Itkonen 1948 II, 313; SKS KRA. Kohonen, Marjatta 1–107.1959, 108–190.1960.

⁷¹⁹ Paulaharju 2009 [1921], 119.

⁷²⁰ Itkonen 1948 I, 263.

place at the sieidi or earlier elsewhere. Also in Sweden, the place where butchery for offerings was performed was linked with various traditions – it could be done either at the sieidi or further away. Whereas mainly the antlers and skulls of reindeer were offered, bones have been preserved of all body parts of sheep or goats. This indicates that, unlike reindeer, the sheep or goats were brought to the offering place either alive or dead and that all parts of them were offered.⁷²¹ However, this does not mean that people could not have used some parts of the offered sheep also in other ways.

The burned bones found at the Koskikaltiojoen suu and on Ukonsaari island indicate that fires have been made at sieidis.⁷²² Burned bones have also been found at Ukko in Lake Ukonjärvi.⁷²³ There are no datings for the burned bones, so they cannot be used to determine the age of the tradition related to fire-keeping. As for the soil, excavations did not reveal any signs of fire there. Paulaharju mentions that offering activities were sometimes associated with keeping a fire at the sieidi or burning offerings.⁷²⁴ According to Itkonen, burning offerings was a local habit typical to the Inari area.⁷²⁵ This is also indicated by the fact that burned bones were found specifically in the municipality of Inari. On the other hand, Paulaharju also mentions signs of fire-keeping and hearths at Sieddakeädgi in Utsjoki.⁷²⁶ No mention is made of any connection between the fires and offerings. An interview conducted in 1967 also mentions hearths at Sieiddakeädgi.⁷²⁷ However, excavations at the site revealed no signs of fire-keeping.

Fire-keeping is also mentioned by Lars Jakobsen Hætta as follows: "Every spring, when he took his herd of reindeer out to pasture, he secretly went to the stone, made a fire, and boiled butter and liquor together in an iron pot. With this concoction he smeared the stone, spoke nicely to it, and asked the stone's inhabitants or the spirits from the land below to look after his reindeer so they would become beautiful, fat, and big."⁷²⁸ In Hætta's description, fire-making is related to fat boiled for anointing the sieidi. Burned bones may also be connected with meals taken at sieidis. Meals related to offering activities provided one way of communicating with the gods. It was believed that when people ate at offering places, it was the gods who were fed. The eaters themselves were left hungry, because the food went to the gods.⁷²⁹ The connection between eaters and gods is one example of how it was believed that there were also actors other than people in offering places. Earlier, in connection with the anthropomorphism of sieidis and the soundscapes of sacred places, I have referred to the ways in which sieidis themselves were also experienced as actors.⁷³⁰

⁷²¹ Puputti 2009; Salmi *et al.* 2011.; cf. Manker 1957, 92.

⁷²² Salmi *et al.* 2011.

⁷²³ Harlin 2008, 9.

⁷²⁴ Paulaharju 1932, 15, 21.

⁷²⁵ Itkonen 1948II, 313.

⁷²⁶ Paulaharju 1932, 31.

⁷²⁷ Mattila 1974, 90 referring to TKU 67/59N:11.

⁷²⁸ Hætta 1923 [1860s], 79. Original text: "Hver vaar, naar han kom frem til græslien med sin renhjerd, gik han hemmelig hen til stenen, gjorde ild op og kokte i en jernøse smør og brændevin sammen. Med denne smurning smurte han stenen, talte vakkert til den og bad stenens iboere eller uldaerne (de underjordiske) om at se godt efter hans rener, saa de kunde bli vakre, fete og store."

⁷²⁹ Äimä 1903, 115; Paulaharju 1914, 5.

⁷³⁰ See Chapters 4.1. and 4.2.3.

Animals were not only the objects of offering activities, but also active actors at sieidis. Sometimes the offered animal was left alive at the sieidi.⁷³¹ Sieidis were also associated with beliefs regarding the spirit of the sieidi itself, who attracted the animals to be offered to approach the sieidi.⁷³² Other animals also visited the place. The smell of the offered meat and blood probably attracted predators. Also dogs could become interested in the offered bones. It is said that if a dog took bones from a sieidi, a bone of the dog in question should be buried at the sieidi instead of the offering taken.⁷³³ The surroundings of the sieidis formed a rule-bound environment that affected the lives and deaths of animals in other ways, too. According to Jacob Fellman, hunting near a sieidi was allowed only to people from the village that owned the sieidi, and any animal in the immediate vicinity of the sieidi was to be left untouched.⁷³⁴ Johan Bartholdi Ervasti also tells of an area surrounding the offering place at a radius of about 2.5 to 3 kilometres that protected animals so that "if, during a hunt, any animal, hurt or unhurt, enters this sacred area, thus escaping from the hunter, it was to be left in peace, as it had come under the god's protection; the same rule applied to fishing."⁷³⁵ On the other hand, Fellman related that in some cases, fences had been built around sieidis, and if a hunter killed an animal within the enclosure, the feet and head, or wings in the case of birds, should be given to the sieidi.⁷³⁶ It was thus not absolutely forbidden to kill an animal near a sieidi.

7.4. The use of space as a part of offering activities

The description of a protected sphere for animals around a sacred place shows that the use of space during offerings could be associated with special meanings. Activities at sieidis were not distributed equally; all areas around a sieidi were not used in the same way. The corporeality of action is also associated with experiencing space. Areas located nearer and farther may acquire different meanings.⁷³⁷ The near vicinity of a sieidi up to a certain distance could be forbidden to women or reserved as a sanctuary for animals. Also the concentration of offering activities in certain areas around the sieidi reflects the ways in which space was experienced.

At sieidis studied within the area of Finland, offering activities seem to have concentrated in the immediate vicinity of the sieidi. An enquiry conducted in Sweden in the 1940s also indicates that offerings are predominantly located close to the sieidi stone or under it.⁷³⁸ The remaining bones from the offering activities are usually found close to the sieidi. This was the case, for example, at Taatsi (65), Näkkälä, and Koskikaltiojoen suu. At Näkkälä, the bones are concentrated at a radius of at most 2.5 metres from the sieidi stone (Figure 88), and at Koskikaltiojoen suu they are right next to the stone, under its protruding parts (Figure 89). At Taatsi,

⁷³¹ E.g. Tuderus 1773 [1670s ?], 50.

⁷³² Mattila 1974, 136 referring to TKU 67/81:8, 67/84a:6.

⁷³³ Manker 1957, 44, 76, 93.

⁷³⁴ Fellman 1906 II, 223–224.

⁷³⁵ Ervasti 1956 [1737], 39. Original Finnish text: "[j]os siis metsästettäessä joku eläin, haavoitettuna tai haavoittumattomana, oli joutunut tälle pyhälle alueelle, päästen pyytäjän käsistä, tuli se jättää rauhaan jumalan suojelukseen joutuneena; samoin oli laita kalastettaessa."

⁷³⁶ Fellman 1906 II, 18.

⁷³⁷ Cf. Tilley 2004, 11.

⁷³⁸ Manker 1957, 92.

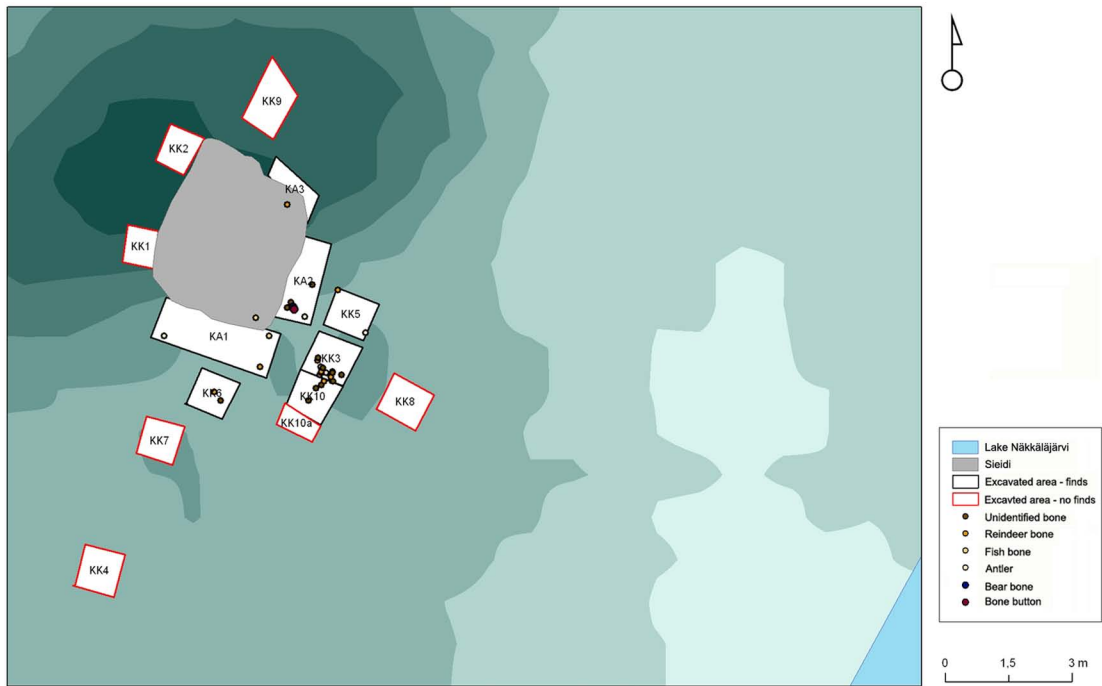


Figure 88. Map of the distribution of finds at the Näkkälä sieidi.

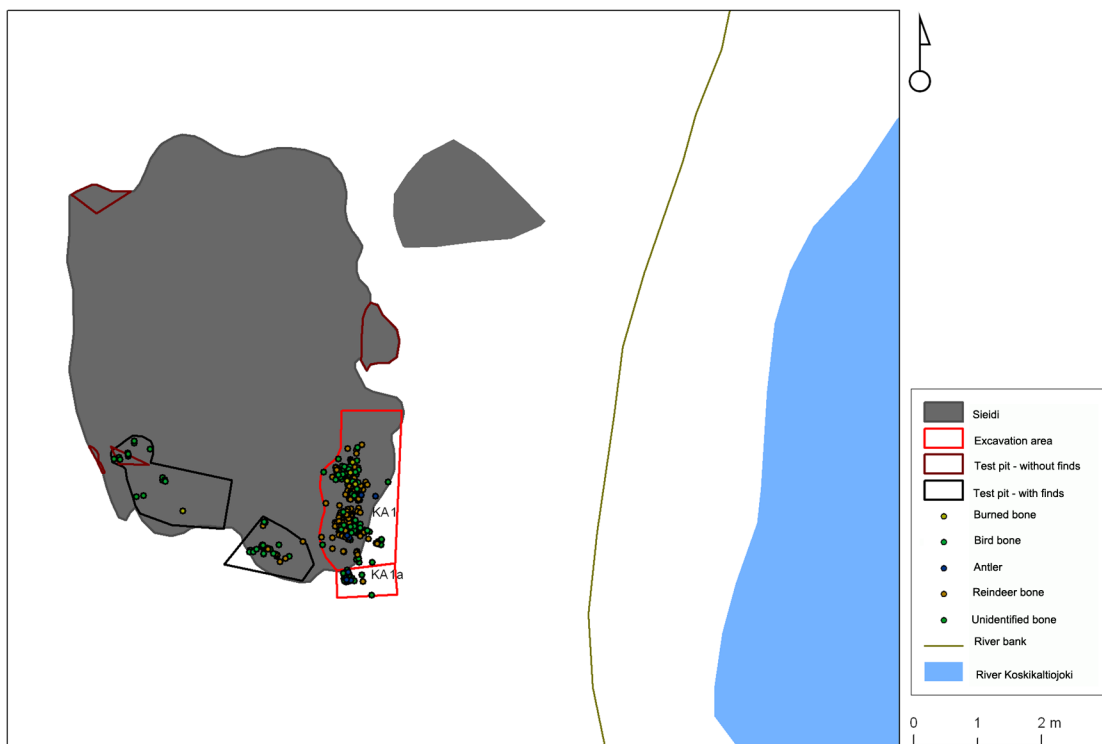


Figure 89. Map of the distribution of finds at the sieidi at Koskikaltiojoen suu [The mouth of the River Koskikaltiojoki].

finds were distributed up to a distance of approximately 10 metres from the sieidi. The finds were to the west of the sieidi, in an area dominated by a view to the nearby sacred place of Taatsinkirkko (66). At Näkkälä and Koskikaltiojoen suu, the finds were on the side of the sieidi with a view to the water, either a river or a lake (Figures 90 and 91). In this context, the connection between the finds and water may be due not only to visibility but also to the best direction for accessing the sieidi or to ritual meanings attributed to water. On the other hand, it might be a question of an illusion related to the choice of excavation areas and the preservability of bones, as phosphate analyses carried out at Näkkälä indicate that offering activities were performed on all sides of the stone (Figure 92).⁷³⁹ At Näkkälä, excavation areas were opened on all sides of the stone, but at Koskikaltiojoen suu, only the southern side of the stone provided suitable space for a more extensive excavation area. At Taatsi, signs of recent activity, such as a thermos bottle broken by a hiker, were also found farther away from the sieidi, whereas in other cases these finds were restricted to the immediate vicinity of the sieidi.

Samuli Paulaharju writes of the location of the offering place at a certain side of the stone. He relates that Niilas-Niila Saara placed offerings at different sides of a sieidi stone depending on the direction from which he approached the stone. When he migrated to the Arctic shore, he left the offerings on the northern side of the sieidi, and when he returned to the south, he left them on the southern side.⁷⁴⁰ The selection of offering place could thus also be related to the direction from which offerers approached the sieidi.

Approaching the offering place formed a part of the bodily experience of the ritual; when people arrived at the offering place, they acted physically and in contact with the environment. They could arrive on foot, in a boat, or pulled by reindeer. The amount of physical effort required to arrive at the offering place depended on its location. Of the 49 sites inspected, the majority (69%) was easiest to reach by water. This naturally required using a boat or waiting until the water was frozen. Four offering places were located on flat land, but five required climbing up a hill. The sieidi of Erkuna (4) is located in fairly easily accessible fell terrain, but Sieiddakeädgi and Keivitsa (95) require climbing up a steeper slope. At Taatsi and Taatsinkirkko, the offering places could be approached either by water or along a steep bank, if the aim was to give the offerings on the shore, which is where the majority of the bone finds came from. Some of the activities may also have taken place at the top of the bank, which could be accessed through a flat forested area. A smaller amount of bones was also found on the plateau at the top of the sieidi. At Lake Äkäsjärvi (79), the sieidi could be approached either from the lake side, by climbing up a steep shore bank, or from the east, with a gentler slope. The physical effort required could not be controlled in all cases. For sieidis located on the slopes and tops of hills and fells, there was only one access route – up the slope. The location of the offering place could restrict visits by physically impaired people. On the other hand, in some cases people could choose the locations of their own sieidis in places that suited them.

⁷³⁹ Tolonen 2013.

⁷⁴⁰ Paulaharju 1932, 17–18.

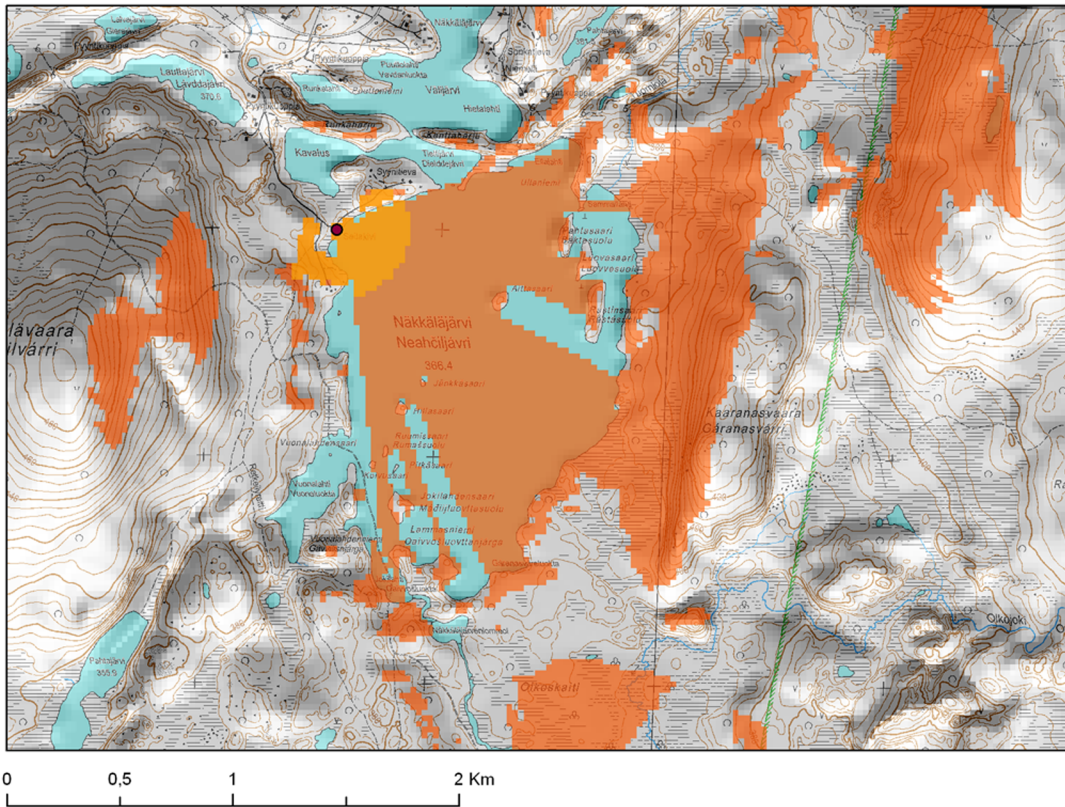


Figure 90. From the Näkkälä sieidi, the view is mainly towards Näkkäläjärvi. Basic map sheet © National Land Survey of Finland, licence no. 051/MML/11.

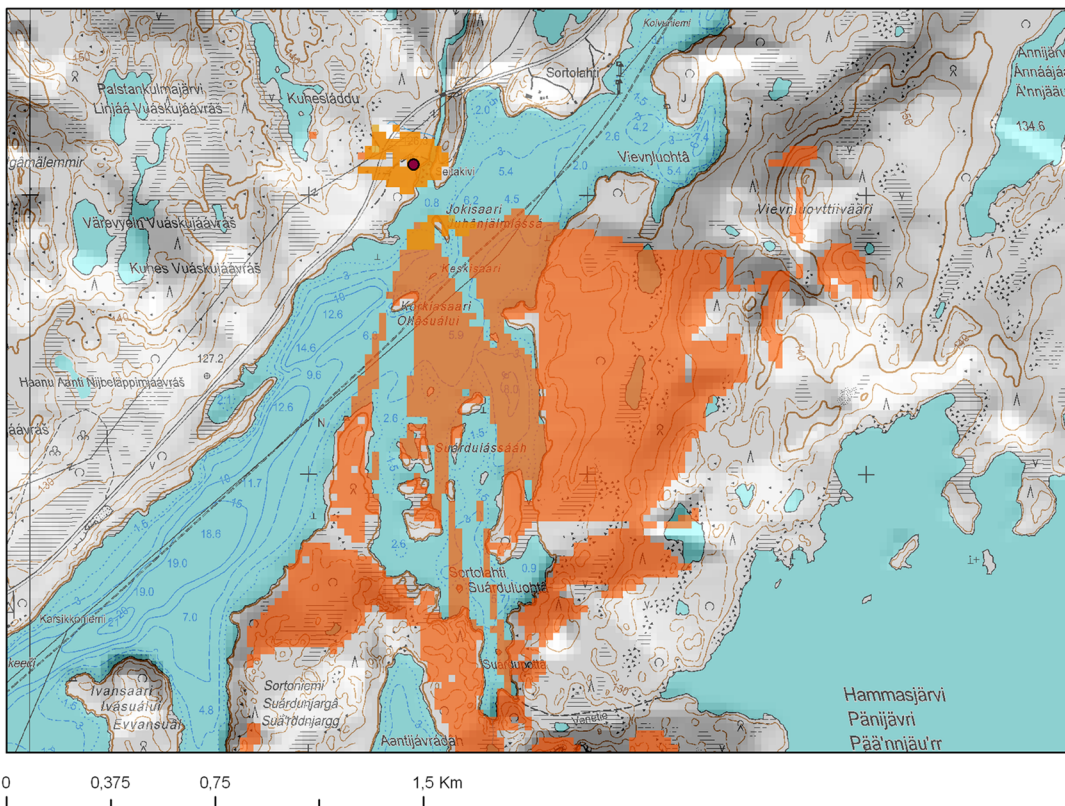


Figure 91. From Koskikaltiojoen suu, the view is towards the river. Basic map sheet © National Land Survey of Finland, licence no. 051/MML/11.

People's activities in sacred places were also influenced by how they could use the surrounding space. In addition to ritual-specific rules, the use of space was restricted by topographical features. Most (76%) of the inspected sites featured open spaces where topographical features such as a shoreline or a cliff did not restrict human activity in more than one direction. On islands, such as Ukonsaari or Seita-laassa (36), the water confined activities to the island. Also narrow headlands, such as Porviniemi (75), were topographically restricted. However, some other sites, such as Kirkkopahtha (74) and Dierpmesvárri (3), placed no topographic restrictions on human activities, but a wide area around the sieidi could be used. It should still be kept in mind that even in these cases, restrictions are created by humans. Water did not necessarily confine activities, but rather could function as one stage of action. People might have participated in rituals from boats or, in the winter, from the ice. In some cases, people may not have landed on an island at all but made the offerings from upon the water. On Ukonsaari, however, archaeological finds indicate that people also performed activities on the island itself. In other cases, area that seems to be free for activity might have been restricted by symbolic meanings. Whether borders were symbolic or naturally created, they affected people's experiences of ritual activities.

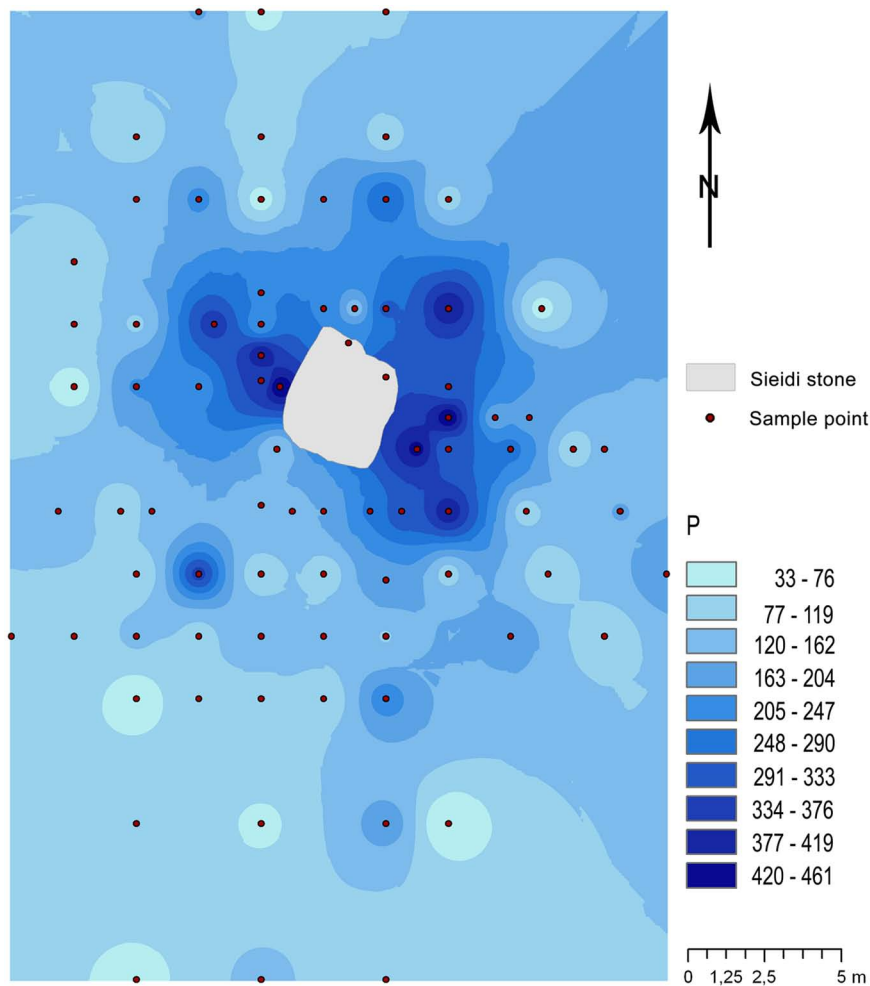


Figure 92. The results of the phosphate analyses carried out at the Näkkälä sieidi (map by Siiri Tolonen).

7.5. Offering activities as a part of the landscape of memory

Even though offerings seem to be concentrated near sieidis, people could use a broader area around the offering place for ritual activities. In all cases, the greatest concentration of finds was not found in the immediate vicinity of the sieidi. At Sieiddakeädgi in Utsjoki, a relatively small amount of bones was found around the sieidi stone. However, Kaarina Vuolab-Lohi from the house of Seitala told us that some years ago, bones could be seen on the slope running northwest and down from the sieidi. Test pitting revealed a bone concentration about 10 metres from the sieidi, in addition to which bones were found here and there on the slope, all the way up to the natural embankments restricting the valley-like area (Figures 93 and 94). The results of the phosphate analyses also indicated activities in the same area (Figure 95).⁷⁴¹ The stratigraphy of the bones in the test pit showed that the bones had not collected there through the years. Older bones lay on top of younger ones and bones of different ages were mixed together, indicating that the bones were moved onto the slope from their original locations. The cleaning up of Sieiddakeädgi is also implied by the fact that, as late as in 1967, Ola S. Rasmus reminisces that as a child, he found “penny coins from the Tsarist period” at the sieidi, but



the excavations revealed only younger coins.⁷⁴² The example of Sieiddakeädgi also shows that offered bones were not always allowed to rest in peace. Gustaf Hallström also tells of offerings being spread around at Unna Saiva in Sweden.⁷⁴³ In addition, the artefacts of the metal hoard at Gråträsk in Sweden are considered to have been brought there from destroyed offering places in the area.⁷⁴⁴

Figure 93.

A bone concentration at Sieiddakeädgi (in the photograph: Ville Hakamäki).

⁷⁴¹ Tolonen 2013.

⁷⁴² Mattila 1974, 90 referring to TKU 67/59N:11.

⁷⁴³ Hallström 1932, 123.

⁷⁴⁴ Zachrisson 1984, 64–68; Aronsson 1991, 67.

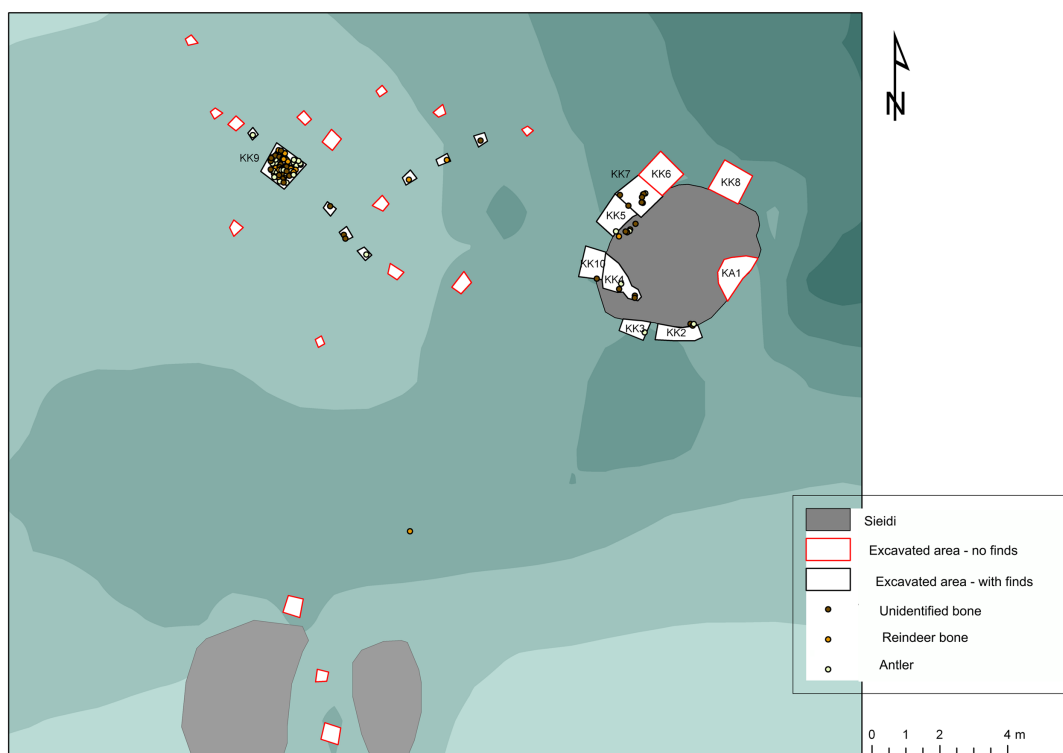


Figure 93. Map of the distribution of finds at the Sieiddakeädgi sieidi.

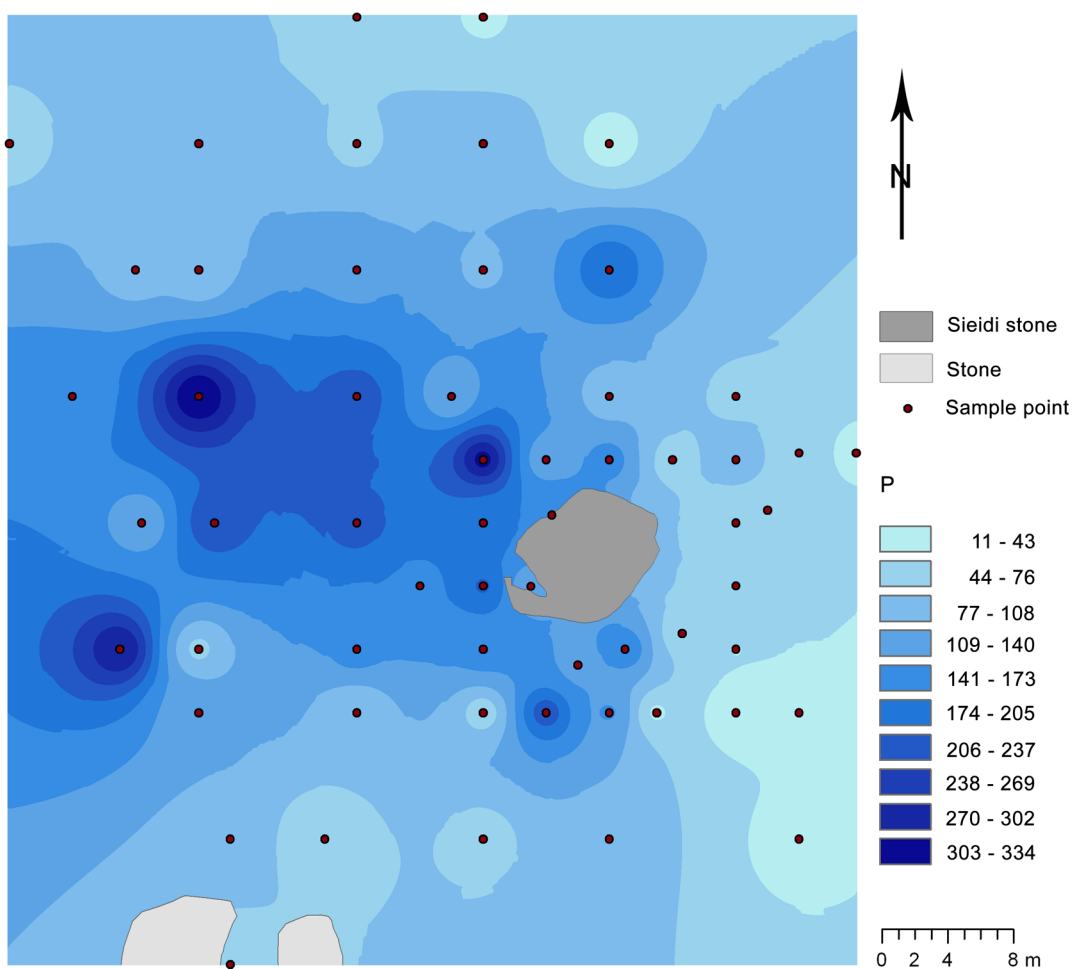


Figure 95. The results of the phosphate analyses carried out at the Sieiddakeädgi sieidi (map by Siiri Tolonen).

The moving or cleaning of offered bones seems a curious thing to do, because according to ethnographic examples, the handling of bones is a ritual activity in Sámi communities. Offered bones were not to be touched, and the handling of bones was controlled by various rules.⁷⁴⁵ On the other hand, it must be kept in mind that the rules regarding the handling of offered bones may have shown regional and chronological variation. I have already earlier provided examples of such variation regarding the breaking of bones and the offering of antlers. In addition, people did not necessarily always act according to the rules, and individual sieidis could also have their own rules. Samuli Paulaharju mentions examples of both cases where it was forbidden to move offerings and cases where it was allowed. He describes a fish sieidi with a hole in the stone. The best offering success was achieved by placing a fish in this hole. However, there was room for only one fish. It was permissible to move the earlier offering aside one day after it had been offered.⁷⁴⁶ In other cases, it was absolutely forbidden to move offerings brought by others. Paulaharju mentions a man who went blind after making spoons out of offered antlers. Sometimes offerings taken from sieidis also made their way back to the sieidis.⁷⁴⁷ The permissibility of moving offerings was sometimes dependent on the need of the person doing the moving. However, not all offerings left material traces.⁷⁴⁸

The Sieiddakeädgi sieidi is not the only sieidi stone from which offerings have been moved. The Dierpmesvárri sieidi is associated with a strong tradition, and it is said that offerings were seen at the sieidi as late as the early 20th century.⁷⁴⁹ In connection with the excavations, however, only four pieces of bone were found at the sieidi. In anatomical terms, the fragments of reindeer antler and bones corresponded to offerings found at other sieidis, but the two dated bones turned out to be modern. This raises the question of where the offerings have gone. The sieidi is located on a hillslope in a place where meltwater forms fast-flowing streams, which may have caused the bones to move downhill with the water. On the other hand, humans could also have moved the bones, as was done at Sieiddakeädgi. Test pits were dug at a radius of about 20 metres around the Dierpmesvárri sieidi, but the place where the bones might have been moved was not found.

The sieidis at Porviniemi and Kirkkopahta in Muonio and the offering place at Lake Äkässaivo (80) form a sort of a continuum of the lack of archaeological material associated with the use of sieidis, as no bone material at all was found at these sites in the excavations. The written tradition related to the Porviniemi sieidi relies only on a rather vague mention by Paulaharju, "it was probably worshipped by the Lapps in the past",⁷⁵⁰ but the place is associated with still-living oral tradition regarding its use in connection with fishing. Kirkkopahta, on the other hand, is said to have been a communal sieidi where the Sámi who lived on the shore of the nearby Lake Pakasaivo in the summer gathered and which was visited all the way from Sweden.⁷⁵¹

⁷⁴⁵ E.g. Graan 1899 [1672], 66; Högström 1980 [1746/1747], 191; Leem 1956 [1767], 428–429; Acerbi 1802, vol. II, 304; Hallström 1932, 123.

⁷⁴⁶ Paulaharju 1932, 15.

⁷⁴⁷ Paulaharju 1932, 25.

⁷⁴⁸ Cf. Insoll 2010.

⁷⁴⁹ Paulaharju 1932, 40.

⁷⁵⁰ Paulaharju 1932, 49. Original Finnish text: "sitä ennen vanhaan lappalaiset luultavasti ovat palvelleet".

⁷⁵¹ Paulaharju 1962 [1922], 141; Paulaharju 1932, 47–49.

In the light of the traditions related to these places, it would seem likely that they have been used as sieidis. At Porviniemi, the lack of archaeological material may be due to the use of the stone as a fish sieidi. The fish bones may have decomposed or perhaps only fat was offered. At Lake Äkäsaivo, offering activities may have concentrated in a broad area on the shore of the *sáiva* lake, so that offering activities were perhaps not located correctly in connection with the research. The lack of finds at these sites may, however, also be due to the cleaning of the sieidis in the same way as at Sieiddakeädgi.

On the other hand, it should be kept in mind that not all activity at sieidis necessarily left any material traces. Ritual activity did not always have to involve offering, but the acts of yoiking or eating could also have a ritual nature. In terms of ritual, activities that leave no traces in the material culture may be important as well, such as moving around the offering place and the emotions evoked by the place.⁷⁵²

When sieidis were cleaned, there might be several reasons for doing so, such as keeping the place neat, Christian influence, or the desire to hide a tradition seen as pagan or threatened. People could also have a relational attitude towards the offering of bones, in which case the significance of the bones could change from offering to trash or usable material during and after the act of offering.⁷⁵³

Because sieidis have been in use for a long time – Taatsi and Näkkälä as long as from the 11th century to today – the amount of offerings could sometimes become so great that cleaning was necessary. Even at sites with a narrower range of radiocarbon dates, such as Sieiddakeädgi and the Koskikaltiojoen suu, the period of use could be several centuries. In this time, such a great amount of offerings could collect at the site that the oldest had to be moved away even though a part of them had already decomposed. On the other hand, old offerings were probably for some time a part of the experience of the sieidi for people visiting the place. Activity at the sieidi involved old bones, decomposing animal carcasses, the smell of rot, and flies. As shown by Friis' description earlier, old offerings could be prominently displayed and affect how people experienced the place.

Ritual activity was thus associated with elements of continuity and remembrance. The prominence of old offerings could link today's rituals with those performed by the ancestors.⁷⁵⁴ As time went by, visual reminders of past activity could disappear, but people visiting the place still felt a connection to the customs and traditions of their ancestors. Knowledge of rituals taking place at the sieidi is transmitted as oral tradition when visual reminders are long since buried. At the same time, new forms of action are created that reinforce continuity through changed meanings. A visitor today may see coins or candles that indicate others too have visited the sieidi.

Bodily action in offering places was associated with not only a social dimension and the related elements of memory, but also experiencing the place through all the senses. Earlier, I gave a broad description of soundscapes in sacred places. In addition to sounds, sacred places and especially offering activities were also associated with other sensations and emotions. The smell of blood and rotting meat hung around

⁷⁵² Insoll 2009.

⁷⁵³ For more information, see Salmi *et al.* 2011.

⁷⁵⁴ Cf. Lucas & McGovern 2007, 24–25.

offering places. These places also evoked feelings of fear and respect.⁷⁵⁵ According to Friis, respect shown to sacred places could be seen in the fact that people did not like to settle down near them.⁷⁵⁶ Additionally prohibitions against moving offerings could be related to the respect felt towards these places.

Activities related to offering were multisensory, social, and continuous, but not static. The act of offering was at the same time associated with strong traditions and continuously found new forms.

7.6. Summary

Different kinds of activities and actors have been associated with sieidis. Gender is often mentioned as a limiting factor for participating in offering activities at sieidis, but restrictions concerning gender are mentioned in written sources for only a few places. Animals could have been both actors, in consuming offered bones and enjoying the sieidi's protection, and acted upon in the form of offerings. Also the ways of offering animals varied. There are only a few examples of the deliberate placing of animal bones. Heads and antlers had special significance as offering material, and they are also found in great quantities in the archaeological material. The offering of fallen antlers and broken bones is sometimes said to be forbidden, but due to either regional differences or the contradiction between rules and human action, they are found among the offered bones. Fire-keeping at sieidis and burned bones associated with it seem also to be a regional feature typical to Inari.

Based on archaeological finds, the sphere of action seems to be limited close to the sieidi. The finds are often in the immediate vicinity of the sieidi or only a couple of metres away. In addition, phosphate analyses indicate that activities were concentrated near the sieidi. Offerings could also be located on a certain side of the sieidi depending on factors such as visibility and the direction of approach. Most sieidis are best approached by water. Most are also surrounded by open space that does not restrict the sphere of action. Instead, restrictions could be placed by cultural factors and rules. Beliefs related to offerings were not static, but the meanings attributed to offerings could change. At Sieiddakeädgi, offered bones have been moved, and the same might also have been done at sites from which no bone material has been found. Findless sieidis could also be examples of ritual activity that leaves no material traces.

⁷⁵⁵ Leem 1956 [1767], 443–444; Acerbi 1802, vol. II, 303; Paulaharju 1932, 24; Mebius 2003, 22.

⁷⁵⁶ Friis 1977 [1871], 136.